

THE PERFECT VOICE



Haryana outcome will boost BJP's morale in Maharashtra, Cong may lose bargaining edge ... pg 3



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Father demands Rs 5 cr prize, flat in Pune for Swapnil ... pg 10



BJP pehalwan of Haryana

By Correspondent

New Delhi: Bucking anti-incumbency, the ruling BJP pulled off a hat-trick of wins in Haryana to retain power and halt Congress' comeback attempt in the assembly elections, results of which were announced Tuesday.

While the BJP ended up with its best-ever haul of 48 seats, 11 more than the Congress, parties like the JJP and the AAP were decimated and the INLD managed to win just two seats.

Proving wrong exit polls which predicted a comfortable Congress win, the BJP will be forming government in Haryana for the third consecutive term.

The party had contested 89 of the 90 seats. It did not contest Sirsa seat, from where its ally Gopal Kanda was a sitting MLA, though Kanda lost his seat.

The Congress also contested 89 seats leaving Bhiwani constituency for the CPI (M).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the win saying

Prominent winners: Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini (Ladwa), Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda (Garhi Sampla-Kiloi), BJP's Anil Vij (Ambala Cantt), Shruti Choudhry (Tosham), INLD's Arjun Chautala (Rania) and Aditya Devi Lal (Dabwali), Congress' Vinesh Phogat (Julana), Aditya Surjewala (Kaithal), Geeta Bhukkal (Jhajjar), BJP's Arti Singh Rao (Ateli) and Independent candidate Savitri Jindal (Hisar).

Prominent losers: INLD's Abhay Singh Chautala (Ellenabad), JJP's Dushyant Chautala and Digvijay Chautala (Dabwali), Speaker in outgoing Assembly and BJP's Gian Chand Gupta, Congress's Brijendra Singh, Aam Aadmi Party's Anurag Dhanda (Kalayat), BJP's O P Dhankar (Badli), Capt Abhimanyu (Narnaund), Haryana Lokhit Party's Gopal Kanda (Sirsa) and Ranjit Chautala, an Independent (Rania). Haryana Congress president Uday Bhan and BJP's Bhavya Bishnoi, son of Kuldeep Bishnoi and grandson of former chief minister Bhajan Lal, also lost.

“It will not be business as usual in Haryana and I am sure the Congress high command would identify those who negated the efforts to bring the party to power after 10 years.”

- Kumari Selja, Leader, Congress

it was due to good-governance that all communities voted for the BJP.

Our guarantee of 'vikas' prevailed over the pack of lies spread by the Congress and people wrote new history electing us for a third term, he told party cadres in Delhi.

“Once the people throw out Congress, they do not let it come back. They put 'no entry' boards for Congress... it is a party that always thought power was its birth-right,” the prime minister said.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge termed the Haryana results “unexpected” and said his party will assess the people's mandate.

Haryana went to polls on October 5 in a single phase.

In the outgoing assembly, the BJP had 41 MLAs (including the Adampur seat won in 2022 bypoll), the Congress 28 MLAs, the JJP (6), while the Haryana Lokhit Party and Indian National Lok Dal one member each. There were four Independents, while nine seats were vacant.

NC-Cong to rule J&K

Srinagar/Jammu: The INDIA bloc is poised to form the first elected government in Jammu and Kashmir, having secured a victory in the assembly elections by securing 49 out of 90 seats on which polls were held for the first time since the abrogation of Article 370 five years ago.

The National Conference (NC), the oldest regional party in J&K, emerged as the clear frontrunner, winning 42 seats and falling just six seats short of a majority of its own.

The elections in J&K virtually turned a nightmare for the Congress as it won only one seat from the Jammu region.

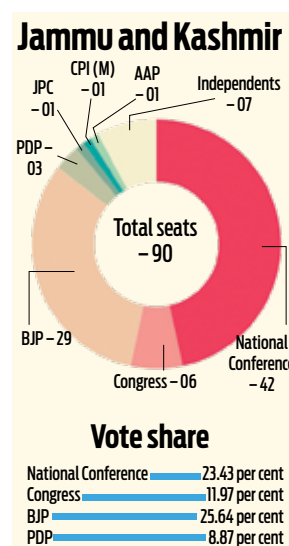
The BJP also made notable gains, winning 29 seats -- its best performance in J&K to date, up from 25



“A lot of things can be done as a Union Territory, clearly some things can't but we expect that J&K will not remain a UT forever.”

- Omar Abdullah, Leader, National Conference

The key losers include former deputy chief minister Muzaffar Hussain Baig (Independent), Congress leader Tara Chand, PCC working president Raman Bhalla, former PCC president Vaqar Rsool Wani and NC provincial president Nasir Aslam Wani.



seats in the 2014 elections. The BJP's vote share increased from 23 per cent in 2014 to 25.64 per cent this year. However, political analysts do not read much

There are only three women winners -- Sakina Masood, Shamima Firdous (both NC) and Shagun Parihar (BJP) -- among the 90 successful candidates. Two NC veterans -- Abdull Rahim Rather (Chrar-e-Sharief) and Ali Mohammad Sagar (Khanyar) -- have won for the seventh term.

into the increased tally of the BJP and mainly attribute it to the recent delimitation of assembly seats in which many strongholds of the BJP were bifurcated into two like Kishtwar and Nagrota and others in Jammu district.

The NC saw a rise in its vote share as well, improving from 20.77 per cent in 2014 to 23.43 per cent this election cycle.



WARRIORS OF THE NIGHT
We name our daughters Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati; we worship the divine feminine power in the temples but oppress, repress and even attack the feminine power amidst us. That is the irony in the way India sees its women. After the safety of the daylight fades, women are seen as easy prey by the predators of the night. We mark the nine nights of Navratri, the festival of the goddess, by celebrating the dedication and valour of nine real-life women who brave the challenges of the night to pursue their dreams.

PART - 7

Fearless Caregiver

THE NURSE AT JJ HOSPITAL ADVISES WOMEN TO REPORT EVEN A SMALL UNWELCOMING GESTURE OF ANYONE WHILE AT WORK IN A WRITTEN FORMAT

By Ruddhi Phadke

Round-the-clock shifts, emotional outbursts of relatives of the patients and at times, being the only woman on the floor at night in a huge hospital—Shweta Kondvilkar, 38, has had various experiences as a medical caregiver. Her motto is—“do not react and report immediately”.

She's experienced ward boys not wanting to take instructions from her because she is a woman, has seen “unfriendly gestures” from colleagues and faced aggression from patients' relatives in case of an unfortunate outcome of the treatment. “I report everything in the written form. For example, usually people understand a relative's misbehavior out of emotional outburst, but if a nurse reacts while on duty, no one will understand or support her. Hence, I believe in being vocal, and submit all concerns in the written format which leaves proof behind. The moment you sense even a small intimidating gesture, you must raise it by writing about it officially and not by entering into a verbal altercation,” says Kondvilkar, who works as a staff nurse at the J J Hospital in Mumbai.

The hospital has its security measures in place round-the-clock. When nurses take rounds in the night to check patients' details, a security guard accompanies them. Citing the example of the gruesome Kolkata rape and murder of a woman doctor, Kondvilkar asserts that it's important for women to be vigilant and aware of their surroundings. “What others do is beyond our control. We must learn to defend ourselves,” she says.

While performing her duties, Kondvilkar emphasizes that one should not trust anyone blindly and



SHWETA KONDEVILKAR, 38, staff nurse in JJ hospital, Mumbai

always be aware. “Never trust a guard. Not even another woman. I am very saddened by the fact that from what I have read in news about the Kolkata case, the victim had dinner with a group of colleagues that included females. The ones who tied

racket. It's not possible to physically fight back. The victim was exhausted after three days of rigorous duty. My humble advice to all women is, sometimes reacting makes matters worse. Be aware of the people around you, and try to keep safe distance from individuals whose gestures are doubtful and immediately take official action to keep potential predators on check.”

Nurses, she says, are more vulnerable than doctors because they are present with the patient round the clock attending to all the needs and also patiently handling the relatives. “Hospitals are well equipped and they usually stand by every woman who feels intimidated,” she says. Kondvilkar recalls the example of Aruna Shanbaug who, while working as a junior nurse at King Edward Memorial Hospital in Mumbai, was sexually assaulted in 1973 by a hospital janitor. “She was bed ridden for years. The hospital stood by her and took very good care of her.

A dedicated professional, she states that she is proud to be part of a hospital that felicitated nurses for the care given during Covid. “Usually doctors are felicitated but no one appreciates a nurse,” she says.

50 doctors of RG Kar hospital resign

Kolkata: Around 50 senior doctors of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here on Tuesday tendered their resignations in a mark of solidarity with medics who have been on fast-unto-death demanding justice for the deceased woman doctor, sources in the health facility said.

The decision to resign en masse was taken at a meeting of the heads of various departments of the state-run hospital on Tuesday morning, they said.

“This has been decided at today's meeting of the HoDs. All 50 senior doctors of our hospital have signed their resignation letters. This is to express our solidarity towards those young doctors who are fighting for a cause,” a senior doctor told PTI.

Senior doctors at NRS Medical College and Hospi-



tal were also mulling to follow the footsteps of their colleagues in the RG Kar hospital, he said.

The Joint Platform of Doctors, West Bengal pledged solidarity with the junior medics who have been demanding justice for the rape and murder of the woman doctor of R G Kar hospital and an end to the “corruption-ridden”

healthcare system.

While junior doctors have been on fast-unto-death for the last four days voicing their demands, there has been “no response from the appropriate authority to solve the issues”, a statement issued by the platform said.

The doctor's platform also voiced concern over the health condition of those who are on the fast-unto-death and said they are fighting for “campus democracy and patient-friendly system”.

“In this situation, we will stand in solidarity,” the statement added.

Meanwhile, on October 8, a Kolkata court on Monday extended the CBI custody of former House Staff of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital Ashish Pandey for 11 days, an official said. - PTI

Journalist arrested in GST 'scam'

Ahmedabad: The Ahmedabad Crime Branch on Tuesday arrested a senior journalist with a leading newspaper in Gujarat in an alleged Goods and Service Tax (GST) scam, officers said.

Following detailed questioning, journalist Mahesh Langa was arrested by the Crime Branch on Tuesday morning, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ajit Rajjan said.

“The central GST had found some suspicious transactions in bogus firms floated in the name of Mahesh Langa's wife and father using forged documents. Langa has been arrested for further investigation,” he said. - PTI



Veteran actors Mithun Chakraborty and Sharmila Tagore during the 70th National Film Awards at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Hezbollah says more Israelis will be displaced

Beirut: Hezbollah's acting leader said Tuesday that even more Israelis will be displaced as the militant group extends its rocket fire deeper into Israel, in a defiant televised statement marking the anniversary of fighting that escalated into war last month.

Sheikh Naim Kassem, the acting leader of Hezbollah, said its military capabilities are still intact and that it has replaced all of its senior commanders after weeks of heavy Israeli airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon, including targeted strikes that killed much of its top command in a matter of days.

He also said Israeli forces have not been able to advance after launching a ground incursion into Lebanon last week. The Israeli military said a fourth division is now taking part in the incursion, which has expanded to the west, but operations still appear to be confined to a narrow strip along the border.

The Israeli military says it has dismantled militant infrastructure along the border and killed hundreds of Hezbollah fighters. On Tuesday, it said a strike in Beirut had killed Suhail Hussein, who it de-

scribed as a senior commander responsible overseeing logistics, budget and management of the militant group.

There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah, and no way to confirm battlefield claims made by either side.

"We are firing hundreds of rockets and dozens of settlements and cities are under the fire of the resistance," Kassem said in a video address, speaking from an undisclosed location. "Our capabilities are fine and our fighters are deployed along the frontlines."

He said Hezbollah's top leadership was directing the war and that the commanders killed by Israel have been replaced. "We have no vacant posts," he added.

He said that Hezbollah will name a new leader to succeed Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in a bunker in Beirut last month, "but the circumstances are difficult because of the war."

Israel's aerial defence intercepted most of the rockets, the military said. A 70-year-old woman was moderately wounded by shrapnel and Israeli media



People hold up candles during the UJA Federation memorial marking the one-year anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel

aired footage of what appeared to be minor damage to buildings near the coastal city of Haifa.

The military also said that it struck Hezbollah targets in the southern Beirut suburbs, known as the Dahiyeh, where the militant group is headquartered.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into northern Israel on October 8, 2023, the day after Hamas' surprise attack into Israel ignited the war in Gaza. Hezbollah and Hamas are both allied with Iran, and Hezbollah says its attacks are aimed at aiding the Palestinians.

Israel began carrying out airstrikes in response and the conflict steadily escalated, erupting into a full-fledged war last month.

The Lebanese militant group has said it will stop the attacks if there is a cease-fire in Gaza, but months of diplomatic efforts on that front have repeatedly stalled.

Israel has inflicted a punishing wave of blows against Hezbollah in recent weeks and says it will keep fighting until tens of thousands of displaced Israeli citizens can return to their homes in the north.

More than 1,300 people have been killed in Lebanon and over a million displaced since the fighting escalated in mid-September.

Since then, Hezbollah has extended its rocket fire into central Israel, setting off air raid sirens in the country's commercial hub of Tel Aviv. Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have also launched missiles that reached central Israel. Most of the projectiles have been intercepted or fallen in open areas, disrupting life in Israel but causing few casualties and little property damage.

Last week Iran launched its own barrage of some 180 ballistic missiles at Israel.

US spends USD 17.9 bn on aid to Israel

Washington: The United States has spent a record of at least USD 17.9 billion on military aid to Israel since the war in Gaza began and led to escalating conflict around the Middle East, according to a report for Brown University's Costs of War project, released on the anniversary of Hamas' attacks on Israel.

An additional USD 4.86 billion has gone into stepped-up U.S. military operations in the region since the Oct 7, 2023, attacks, researchers said in findings first provided to The Associated Press.

That includes the costs of a Navy-led campaign to quell strikes on commercial shipping by Yemen's Houthis, who are carrying them out in solidarity with the fellow Iranian-backed group Hamas.

The report — completed before Israel opened a second front, this one against Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, in late September — is one of the first tallies of estimated U.S. costs as the Biden administration backs Israel in its conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon and seeks to contain hostilities by Iranian-allied armed groups in the

region.

The financial costs were calculated by Linda J. Bilmes, a professor at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, who has assessed the full costs of U.S. wars since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and fellow researchers William D. Hartung and Stephen Semler.

Record military aid to Israel

Israel — a protege of the United States since its 1948 founding — is the biggest recipient of U.S. military aid in history, getting USD 251.2 billion in inflation-

The U.S. had 34,000 forces in the Middle East the day that Hamas broke through Israeli barricades around Gaza to attack. That number rose to about 50,000 in August when two aircraft carriers were in the region, aiming to discourage retaliation after a strike attributed to Israel killed Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran. The total is now around 43,000.

1,400
No of people including Hezbollah fighters and civilians killed in Lebanon since Israel expanded its strikes

85
No of projectiles launched from Lebanon toward northern Israel on Tuesday

180
No of ballistic missiles launched by Iran at Israel

USD 4.86 billion
Money spent US in the region since the October 7, 2023

adjusted dollars since 1959, the report says.

Even so, the USD 17.9 billion spent since Oct. 7, 2023, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is by far the most military aid sent to Israel in one year.

The US committed to providing billions in military assistance to Israel and Egypt each year when they signed their 1979 US-brokered peace treaty, and an agreement since the Obama administration set the annual amount for Israel at USD 3.8 billion through 2028.

Much of the US weapons delivered in the year were munitions, from artillery shells to 2,000-pound bunker-busters and precision-guided bombs.

Expenditures range from USD 4 billion to replenish Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defense systems to cash for rifles and jet fuel, the study says.

Unlike the United States' publicly documented military aid to Ukraine, it was impossible to get the full details of what the US has shipped Israel since last Oct. 7, so the USD 17.9 billion for the year is a partial figure, the researchers said.

Funding for the key US ally during a war that has exacted a heavy toll on civilians has divided Americans during the presidential campaign.

But support for Israel has long carried weight in U.S. politics, and Biden said Friday that "no administration has helped Israel more than I have." -AP

Haiti survivors face uncertain future

Pont-Sonde: Under the cover of night, dozens of gang members crept toward the small town of Pont-Sonde in central Haiti armed with knives and assault rifles as families slept.

The gang had travelled from nearby Savien in vehicles they ditched halfway through the trip, climbing into canoes for the last stretch for a quiet approach.

Gunfire and screams woke the town. Those not shot dead were stabbed. Fires consumed homes.

The Gran Grif gang killed babies and young mothers, older people and entire families, angry that a self-defence group had tried to limit gang activity in Pont-Sonde and prevent

HUNGRY, THIRSTY AND HOMELESS

Thousands walked west to the coastal city of Saint-Marc. Days after the massacre, a crowd of men, women and children gathered around a Good Samaritan standing atop his car distributing food and drink.

The newly homeless crowded into a church, a school and a public plaza shaded by trees. Those lucky enough to receive food sat on a dusty curb and ate. At night, they curled up on concrete floors and tried to sleep.

it from making money off a makeshift toll it had recently established on a nearby road.

The gang escaped by foot through nearby rice fields after Thursday's attack, leaving more than 70 bodies strewn through the town.

It was the biggest massacre that Haiti's once peaceful central region

had seen in recent history. Thousands now face an uncertain future, stripped of their jobs, homes and families.

Jameson Fermilus, who had crouched in a corridor next to his house as smoke and gunfire filled the air, later joined more than 6,000 other survivors who walked for hours, seeking safety.

PM Modi to visit Laos

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a two-day visit to Laos on October 10 and 11 during which he will attend the 21st ASEAN-India Summit and the 19th East Asia Summit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday.

Laos is the current chair of ASEAN. On the invitation of his Laos counterpart Sonexay Siphandone, Prime Minister Modi will visit Vientiane on October 10-11, the MEA said in a statement.

Modi will attend the 21st ASEAN-India Summit and the 19th East Asia Summit being hosted by Laos as the current chair of ASEAN.



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina Diana Mondino. Pic: AP/PTI

France tightens steps to prevent Bin Laden's son

Paris: France's interior minister said Tuesday he has taken additional steps against any effort by one of the sons of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden to return to France.

Omar bin Laden had been living in France's Normandy region but left the country in October

2023 after French authorities withdrew his residency papers and ordered him out, the Interior Ministry said. At the time, authorities also barred him from returning to France for two years. French daily Le Parisien reported that Omar bin Laden now lives in Qatar.

Kim threatens to use nuclear weapons

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned again that he could use nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with South Korea and the United States, as he accused them of provoking North Korea and raising animosities on the Korean Peninsula, state media reported on Tuesday.

'Attempt to murder' case against Imran Khan

Islamabad: Former prime minister Imran Khan and his party's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur were on Tuesday booked in a new case of 'attempt to murder' linked to the death of a policeman during their party's protest here over the weekend.

"The case has been reg-

istered on the state's behalf at federal capital's Noon police station under the sections of attempted murder, arson, attack on the state and violence against police personnel as well as anti-terrorism act (ATA) on Tuesday," The News International newspaper said.

Pakistan government

charged incarcerated Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Gandapur with attempt to murder of Islamabad Capital Territory Police's constable Abdul Hameed, who was allegedly attacked by miscreants during PTI's D-Chowk protest on Friday night and died during treatment two

days later.

Khan has been incarcerated at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail for more than a year. Upon his call for the rally, the PTI planned the rally at D-Chowk here demanding Khan's release, independence of the judiciary, and protesting rising inflation.

D-Chowk here is the


same venue where the PTI had organised a sit-in for 126 days in 2014.

When the government tried to prevent the rally on Friday, there were clashes between security personnel and the party supporters, resulting in Hameed's death and left several others injured.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Democrats in tight races, for the most part, are calculating that the risk of embracing Biden far exceeds any reward that his efforts would bring to their campaign."



Christopher Borick, Director, Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, Pennsylvania.

Physics Nobel to two scientists for AI discoveries

HINTON IS KNOWN THE GODFATHER OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. HOPFIELD IS AN AMERICAN WORKING AT PRINCETON

Stockholm: Two pioneers of artificial intelligence – John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton – won the Nobel Prize in physics Tuesday for helping create the building blocks of machine learning that is revolutionising the way we work and live but also creates new threats to humanity, one of the winners said.

Hinton, who is known as the Godfather of artificial intelligence, is a citizen of

Canada and Britain who works at the University of Toronto and Hopfield is an American working at Princeton.

"This year's two Nobel Laureates in physics have used tools from physics to develop methods that are the foundation of today's powerful machine learning," the Nobel committee said in a press release.

Ellen Moons, a member of the Nobel committee at the Royal Swedish Acade-

my of Sciences, said the two laureates "used fundamental concepts from statistical physics to design

artificial neural networks that function as associative memories and find patterns in large data sets."

She said that such networks have been used to advance research in physics and "have also become part of our daily lives, for instance in facial recognition and language translation."

While the committee honoured the science behind machine learning and AI, Moons also mentioned its flipside, saying that "while machine learning has enormous benefits, its rapid development has

also raised concerns about our future. Collectively, humans carry the responsibility for using this new technology in a safe and ethical way for the greatest benefit of humankind."

Hinton shares those concerns. He quit a role at Google so he could more freely speak about the dangers of the technology he helped create.

On Tuesday, he said he was shocked at the honour.



John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton

EDITORIAL

BJP Boost

As the dust settles over the recent Assembly elections, the BJP, defying anti-incumbency prediction of political Cassandras and exit polls, is set for a historic third term in Haryana. This will buoy the party after its underwhelming performance in the Lok Sabha polls. The Haryana outcome not only reinforces the BJP's foothold in national politics but also presents a counter-narrative to the INDIA bloc's post-election fervour.

Despite the bogey stoked by lingering farmer protests and discontent surrounding the controversial Agniveer scheme, the BJP strategically diversified its approach, relying not solely on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's star power—evidenced by his reduced number of rallies—but also on a ground-level consolidation of anti-Jat votes. The Congress's over-reliance on the Jat community backfired, rallying other groups against it. Interestingly, the Dalit vote, which the Congress anticipated would tilt in its favour, has not completely abandoned the BJP.

At the forefront of the BJP's campaign was Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, whose relatively short tenure allowed him to distance himself from the decade-long rule of the previous administration. By introducing measures to benefit the backward classes, including a significant income limit increase for OBC employment from Rs. 6 lakh to Rs. 8 lakh, the BJP effectively shifted the narrative in its favour. Their mantra of 'bina parchi, bina kharchi Naukri (promising jobs without bribes) resonated with voters.

The BJP's rejuvenated team, led by key figures such as Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and state leaders, has seemingly addressed concerns that arose following its poor showing in the Lok Sabha elections. The incorporation of new candidates in place of established leaders provided a fresh face that contrasted sharply with the Congress's decision to recycle incumbents.

In contrast, in Jammu and Kashmir, the National Conference, in alliance with the Congress, having crossed the majority threshold, reclaimed its historic dominance and is set to form the government. Here, the BJP's performance in the first Assembly election held after the abrogation of Article 370, fell short despite its strenuous attempt to position itself as a proponent of development.

The electorate's apparent rejection of hardline factions like the PDP reflects a nuanced response and win for democracy. Notably, the results have shown a significant rejection of separatist candidates, including those from Engineer Rashid-led Awami Ittehad Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, who failed to make a meaningful impact in the polls.

The BJP's emphatic victory in Haryana redeems its Lok Sabha misstep but also signals a broader political resurgence, giving the party renewed vigour to march into future contests like the crucial Maharashtra Assembly election.

PUBLIC INTEREST

Towards Future-Ready Urbanscapes



By Abhijit Mulye

The term 'NITI' in NITI Aayog stands for the 'National Institute for Transforming India.' Through its Growth Hub or G-Hub mission, NITI Aayog has developed comprehensive plans for cities like Mumbai, Surat, Visakhapatnam, and Varanasi. These plans adopt a fresh, innovative approach, inspiring hope for the future of India's rapidly urbanising landscape.

Urbanisation in India has grown rapidly over the past few decades. In 2001, 28.61 crore people lived in cities (27.82% of the total population), and by 2011, this number had risen to 37.71 crore (31.15%). By 2020, it was estimated to reach 48.3 crore (34.9%).

During this period, the count of urban households living in slums increased from 1.01 crore to 1.37 crore. However, urban households living in slums decreased from 23.5% in 2001 to 17% in 2011. Urban poverty also dropped significantly, from 25.7% in 2004-05 to 13.7% in 2011-12. Cities played a vital role in the economy,

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) is poised to evolve into a \$300 billion economy, driven by NITI Aayog's Growth Hub (G-Hub) mission.

contributing 60% of India's GDP in 2011.

The demand for urban infrastructure and urban services is continuously increasing, and it is being compounded by other related trends—a large share of the young population, the increasing population numbers of urban poor, and their low-income levels. As per the high-powered expert committee report of 2011, the urban infrastructure investment deficit is estimated at Rs 39.2 lakh crore at 2009-2010 prices for the period 2012-2031. While the government of India is working towards addressing this investment requirement, it is also designing schemes to make Indian cities more liveable. The five flagship centrally sponsored schemes in the urban sector are working towards these objectives.

In a review of the schemes for urban transformation, it came to the fore that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of several major city regions worldwide appears to match the GDP of entire countries. This reflects urban centres' growing economic prominence and vitality, highlighting their pivotal role in shaping the country's economic development and that the Indian cities hold the potential to propel unparalleled economic growth, which needs to be realised. This led to the initiative focused on developing city regions as Growth Hubs, which plan for leveraging urbanisation for economic growth in line with NITI Aayog's mandate of fostering cooperative federalism.

The study revealed that although Indian cities occupy just 3% of the country's land, they contribute a significant 65% of the GDP. Projections suggest that this urban area is expected to expand to 50% by 2047, up from the current 36%.

A prime example of this economic concentration is the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), which plays a vital role in India's economy. MMR accounts for:

- 4% of the national GDP
- 24% of the country's income tax collection



- 36% of corporate tax collection
 - 25% of India's industrial output
 - 40% of foreign trade
 - 70% of maritime trade
- In Maharashtra, MMR holds 20% of the population but only 2.8% of the land area. It contributes 31.2% of the state's GDP and 18.1% of its jobs. The region's per capita income is 1.5 times higher than Maharashtra's and nearly double that of India's national average.

The G-Hub mission aims to take a proactive approach by focusing on economic strategy before land use planning. It will identify job growth drivers, define city resources, support global trends, and assess resource needs. The mission will also boost the business environment, propose new ideas and interventions, and prioritise major projects. Apart from building and boosting economic activity, it also focuses on improving quality of life and inclusivity while promoting sustainability.

NITI Aayog has identified seven key growth drivers, covering 30 projects, eight sector policies, and nine institutional changes to establish the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) as a financial hub. The goal is to attract Rs 10-11 lakh crore in private investment and

speed up ongoing projects worth \$65 billion. The vision includes transforming Mumbai into a global fintech capital, contributing Rs 1 trillion to India's GDP. It also meticulously addresses various factors affecting citizens' lives. This includes developing 3 million affordable housing units by 2030, developing MMR as a global service hub built on seven champion services, creating 3 million affordable homes by 2030, making MMR a global hub for tourism and urban recreation hub and port-proximate manufacturing and logistics hub having world-class urban infrastructure and transport, and becoming an inclusivity and sustainability leader of India with planned urbanisation.

The G-Hub mission by NITI Aayog represents a forward-looking approach to leveraging India's rapid urbanisation for economic growth by transforming urban spaces into thriving economic hubs while promoting sustainability and inclusivity. With ambitious projects, targeted investments, and a clear vision for the future. These growth drivers are expected to shape MMR as a \$300 billion economy and play a key role in India's journey towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy.

Israel's Long War in Lebanon: From Sharon's 'Mailed Fist' to Precision Strikes against Hezbollah



By Shoumojit Banerjee

Israel's tangled tryst with Lebanon has been one long, dark waltz in the violent ballroom of the Middle East. Once known as the 'Paris of the Middle East' before being consumed by the flames of a horrific civil war, Lebanon, for much of the mid-20th century, coexisted with Israel in a state of relative calm.

Unlike other Arab countries, cosmopolitan Lebanon had refrained from participating in the major wars against Israel that defined the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. Despite the broader Arab-Israeli animosity, Lebanon—a mosaic of Christians, Sunni and Shia Muslims, and Druze—kept its distance from open conflict with its southern Jewish neighbour.

However, by the 1970s, that fragile calm began to unravel, leading both nations into a tangled web of violence and proxy battles that persist to this day with Israel locked in mortal combat with Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Shia militant group.

Lebanon's delicate political system, carefully crafted to balance its reli-



gious sects, had kept the country relatively stable during Israel's early wars with its Arab neighbours. While Lebanon did not officially make peace with Israel, there was no active conflict between the two. Lebanese Christians from Maronite factions, had a pragmatic relationship with Israel, viewing it as a buffer against hostile forces like Syria and Palestinian militants.

By the 1960s, Lebanon's internal balance shifted dramatically with the influx of Palestinian refugees following the Six-Day War of 1967, during which Israel decisively defeated the Arab states. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat, established bases in southern Lebanon—having previously set up strongholds there after being expelled from Jordan in 1970—and began launching cross-border raids into Israel, which in turn provoked Israeli retaliation.

In his monumental and judicious 1,300-page masterwork 'A History of Israel', historian Howard Morley Sachar observes how the frustrated Palestinian refugees became "fair game for the PLO," already entrenched in Lebanon. Arafat and his colleagues, says Sachar, had at their disposal some \$400 million in annual subsidies from Saudi Arabia and Gulf

Oil states, with which they organized labour welfare and generated employment for their kinsmen, becoming a semi-autonomous government in Lebanon.

In 1975, Lebanon's social fabric ruptured into a brutal civil war. What began as sectarian clashes between the Maronite Christians and Muslim factions, snowballed into a full-blown proxy war, involving regional and global powers. Amid the chaos, the PLO gained strength, making southern Lebanon a launching pad for attacks into northern Israel.

In response, Israel cultivated relationships with Lebanese Christian militias, particularly the Maronites, who were fighting the PLO and its Muslim allies. One of the key figures in this alliance was Bashir Gemayel, a charismatic Maronite leader and head of the Lebanese Forces, the main Christian militia.

By the early 1980s, Israel had had enough. The situation in Lebanon, particularly the constant threat of PLO attacks, had become untenable. Ariel Sharon, Israel's hawkish defence minister at the time, saw an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone: oust the PLO from Lebanon



and install a friendly Christian government under Bashir Gemayel, creating a pro-Israel buffer state to the north.

What was Sharon's Gamble?

In June 1982, Israel launched 'Operation Peace for Galilee,' sending its troops deep into Lebanon. The stated objective was to push the PLO back from Israel's northern border, but Sharon's ambitions went far beyond that. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reached Beirut within days, laying siege to the capital city and bombarding Palestinian positions, prompting Arafat to flee Lebanon.

Yet this invasion would become one of the most controversial chapters in Israeli military history. It was during this period that Israel's Christian allies, under the leadership of Bashir Gemayel, found themselves in the international spotlight for all the wrong reasons.

In September 1982, Gemayel was assassinated in a massive bomb attack just days after being elected president of Lebanon. His death, a devastating blow to Israel's plans, triggered a horrific massacre at the

Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. In retaliation for Gemayel's death, members of the Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia (They drew inspiration from the Nazi and Italian Fascist movements, while also embracing the Catholic nationalism and imperialist nostalgia of the Spanish Falange), with the tacit approval of the Israeli military, stormed the camps, killing between 700 and 3,500 Palestinian civilians.

The world was outraged, and Israel's moral standing suffered greatly. (The Kahan Commission, an Israeli government inquiry, found Sharon personally responsible for allowing the massacre, leading to his resignation as Defence Minister)

The operation saw Israeli forces occupy the southern half of Lebanon and eventually reach Beirut, where, in a controversial move, they laid siege to the city. While Israel succeeded in driving the PLO out of Lebanon, the occupation sowed the seeds of a far more dangerous foe: Hezbollah.

Initially founded as a small resistance movement to fight Israel's occupation, Hezbollah would grow into a formidable paramilitary force. Bolstered by funding and arms from Iran, and taking advantage of Lebanon's weak central government, Hezbollah emerged as both a military and political player. For Israel, the group's emergence was a bitter unintended consequence of its military intervention. By the time Israeli troops withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000 after an 18-year occupation, Hezbollah had established itself as a potent guerrilla force and the dominant power in southern Lebanon.

The 2006 war, a 34-day conflict sparked by Hezbollah's abduction of Israeli soldiers, revealed Hezbollah's ability to strike deep into Israeli territory using rockets revealing the extent of its military capabilities. Though Israel claimed to have damaged Hezbollah's infrastructure, the group emerged as the epitome of 'resistance' against Israel in the Arab world.

Since then, the two adversaries have engaged in sporadic but lethal confrontations that has now metastas-

ized into an Armageddon following Israel's pounding of Gaza in retaliation to the October 7 attacks launched by Hamas and other Palestinian terror outfits.

As Israel today launches strike after strike to decapitate Hamas leadership, killing the once-elusive Hassan Nasrallah and his potential 'heir apparent'—senior Hezbollah leader Hashem Safieddine—the Lebanese government is nonplussed at the mounting casualties of its civilians.

While Sharon's 'mailed fist' of the 1980s was all about overwhelming force against the PLO in Lebanon, Israel's military claims that today its military operations are surgical, aimed at eliminating key Hezbollah figures and neutralizing the group's rocket and missile stockpiles in the benighted country.

Today, it seems endgame for Hezbollah. But as Gaza and Hamas—once the focal points of conflict since October 7 last year—give way to Iran, Hezbollah's primary backer, the question remains whether the IDF can eliminate the hydra-headed Lebanese militant outfit.

In a visceral scene in German filmmaker Volker Schlöndorff's haunting Circle of Deceit (1981), the finest film on the Lebanese Civil War, a journalist, portrayed by Bruno Ganz, frantically runs toward the camera, chased by a carload of militiamen from one faction, only to stumble upon the lifeless bodies of another. Overwhelmed, he clutches his head in a moment of paralyzing despair. As the IDF continues to maul Lebanon, the scene serves as a chilling shorthand for the relentless cycles of bloodshed that continue to define the country today.

(Tomorrow, we explore the 'special relationship' between Israel and the United States. As the Left across the globe censures Israel and students in American campuses stridently condemn it, we look at the so-called 'Jewish Lobby', the forgotten history of left-wing support for Zionism and the future of the Israeli-American relationship in the context of the ongoing war in Gaza)



The Jewish State's heavy-handed intervention in 1982 to today's targeted strikes on Hezbollah, Israel's enduring conflict in Lebanon has ravaged a country that was once at peace with it.



KALEIDOSCOPE

1. Devotees take part in a religious procession during the Navratri festival and the 'Langoor Mela' celebrations at Durgiana temple in Amritsar on Tuesday.
2. Veteran actress Shobana performs Bharathanatyam at the Soorya Dance Festival in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday.
3. Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel during the 92nd Annual Day celebrations of IAF, at Air Force Station in Tambaram in Chennai on Tuesday.
4. Sex workers during the inauguration of Durga 'puja pandal' on the 'Maha Chaturthi' of Goddess Durga Puja festival, at Sonagachhi in Kolkata on Monday.
5. Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu with wife Sajidha Mohamed during a visit to Taj Mahal in Agra on Tuesday.

All Pictures PTI, AP

READERS' CHOICE

Domestic Turbulence: A Direct Impact on National Security



By
Madhura Kulkarni

The strength of our armed forces depends on personnel's mental well-being, supported by healthy family relationships. Weak familial ties can jeopardise operational effectiveness and national security.

Lieutenant Commander Mohan (all names changed to protect identities) faced marital problems and a separation that left him in emotional and mental distress. This turmoil led to his being declared unfit for a sea exercise—a role he had trained for his entire life. The decision, tied to his personal struggles, deepened his descent into clinical depression. Though the matter is still in court, the slow judicial process has offered no quick resolution, leaving him contemplating resignation from the service.

Mohan's situation reflects a troubling trend within the armed forces. Major Rohit is also experiencing marital turbulence, which has intensified his stress, especially with no one to care for his 2-year-old daughter. This strain has significantly impacted his ability to serve, prompting him to consider quitting as well. Conversely, Commander Arvind has displayed abusive behaviour toward his wife and child before deserting them. His case, too, remains under court review, with no signs of resolution.

These personal struggles are not isolated incidents; they highlight a growing concern within the armed forces. Marital and family issues increasingly compromise the emotional stability of military personnel, ultimately affecting their ability to serve. These cases reflect a broader trend that poses significant challenges to the operational readiness of our defence forces.

Multiple instances of defence fami-



lies facing severe difficulties are emerging, often resulting in broken homes. Many of these cases are either in court or undergoing consultation and counselling, with attempts at reconciliation. Regardless of the outcome, the personnel involved often find themselves emotionally and mentally unfit for duty.

This issue is particularly concerning when trained individuals are unable to perform at their best in critical operations. In Cdr. Arvind's case, whose violent behaviour is unbecoming of an officer, raises questions about the reliability of such personnel within the national security establishment.

A larger question arises: if these officers are relieved of their duties, how will it impact the efficiency and workload of their respective units? Would this create a vacuum that would be difficult to fill, especially in critical roles? Given the overall demographics and the number of personnel facing domestic issues, the challenge of managing unstable individuals could escalate into a significant human resources problem within the defence ecosystem. As adversaries outnumber our forces, losing personnel due to non-performance or failure to complete their service would amount to a substantial strategic setback for national security.

The personnel tasked with safeguarding our nation must maintain optimal emotional and mental well-being, supported uniquely by their families. A strong family backing fosters personal peace, enabling individuals to perform at their best.

The character of our unique social fabric is a direct reflection of the strength of our family units. Indian traditional family units have been the source of strength of our cultural construct, which is thus the basis of

every problem and solution that we refer to as 'Uniquely Indian'. The family is an important institution that plays a central role in the lives of us Indians. As a collectivistic society, Indians often emphasise loyalty and interdependence. The interests of the family usually take priority over those of the individual, and the decisions affecting one's personal life, such as marriage and career paths, are generally made in consultation with one's family. People tend to act in the best interest of their family's reputation, as the act of an individual may impact the perception of the entire family by their community.

Social constructs, values, and the concept of family have evolved, and Indian society is undergoing a significant transformation. The traditional structure is shifting towards a more westernised, global working culture with smaller, nuclear family units. Divorce, once considered taboo, is now more accepted, but it brings financial, emotional, and societal challenges. As dysfunctional marriages rise, the pressure on both the family system and society grows.

Research should be conducted to identify the specific challenges faced by serving individuals, their counterparts, extended families, and their respective service institutions. The goal of this study is to develop realistic and implementable recommendations for all stakeholders involved.

Ultimately, the national security apparatus comprises the men and women serving; its strength is determined by its weakest element. Unfortunately, the human element is both the strongest and weakest part of this apparatus, necessitating urgent measures to insulate serving personnel from changing family dynamics.

(The Writer is a lawyer based in Pune. Views personal.)

EXPLAINER

GMRT Uncovers the Longest-Ever Black Hole Jets in a Distant Galaxy

A team of international astronomers has utilized the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) to identify the largest pair of plasma jets ever recorded, emanating from a supermassive black hole in a remote galaxy located 7.5 billion light-years away. Spanning an astonishing 23 million light-years from end to end, these jets exceed the size of the Milky Way by more than a factor of one hundred.

"This pair is not just the size of a solar system or a galaxy; we are talking about 140 Milky Way diameters!" asserts Martijn Oei, a postdoctoral scholar at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) and lead author of a recent paper published in 'Nature.'

Dubbed Porphyryon after a Greek giant, this jet megastructure emerged when the universe was just 6.3 billion years old. These powerful outflows, with a combined power output of trillions of Suns, symmetrically emanate from either side of a supermassive black hole at the galaxy's center. "Every major galaxy harbors a significant black hole, ranging from one million to one billion solar masses," explains Oei. "It consumes nearby stars, dust, and plasma, with a small fraction being expelled as jets."

The discovery of this colossal jet system is part of a larger survey that identified thousands of faint megastructures initially detected using Europe's LOFAR (Low Frequency Array) radio telescope. "While the existence of these giants was known prior to our campaign, we had no idea that there would be so many," remarks Martin Hardcastle, a professor of astrophysics at the University of Hertfordshire and co-author of the study.

Determining the jets' length required a powerful radio telescope to trace their galactic origin, which the GMRT provided. Oei's team used high-resolution GMRT observations to identify the host galaxy and then employed the Keck I optical telescope in Hawaii to measure the distance. Porphyryon is located 7.5 billion light-years from Earth, when the universe was less than half its



current age of 13.8 billion years.

Without GMRT's precise positioning, identifying the optical host galaxy and gauging the scale of the radio megastructure would have been impossible. "Until now, these giant jet systems appeared to be a recent universe phenomenon," Oei observes.

The influence of Porphyryon's black hole reaches a third of a cosmic void, the vast empty spaces between filaments. "If jets can reach such scales, no corner of the universe is safe from black hole activity," Oei warns.

The extensive reach of these jets implies they may also exert a broader influence on nearby galaxies. "We believe that galaxies and their central supermassive black holes co-evolve, and a key aspect of this interaction involves the immense energy output of jets that can affect the growth of both their host galaxies and neighboring ones," explains co-author George Djorgovski, a professor of astronomy and data science at Caltech.

Oei suggests that humanity may only be observing "the tip of the iceberg." "Our LOFAR survey has only covered 15 percent of the sky. Many of these giant jets are likely difficult to detect, leading us to believe that numerous similar behemoths remain undiscovered." The collabora-

tion among LOFAR, GMRT, and Keck could yield the identification of many more giants like Porphyryon in the coming years.

The mechanics behind the jets' extensive reach without destabilizing remain a mystery. "Martijn's research has shown that there's nothing particularly unique about the environments surrounding these giant sources that allows them to achieve such sizes," states Hardcastle, an expert in black hole jet physics. "The increasing number of giants suggests that this phenomenon is relatively common."

Oei's next step is to investigate how these megastructures influence their surroundings, particularly the role of giant jets in spreading magnetism. He explains, "Magnetism is essential for life, so we want to trace its origins." While it's known that magnetism starts in the cosmic web and permeates galaxies, stars, and planets, the researchers aim to determine its initial source and whether these giant jets contribute to its dissemination across the cosmos.

The study of supermassive black hole jets in radio galaxies has been a vibrant research area, with the GMRT making significant contributions over the past two decades. The discovery of Porphyryon marks another milestone for the GMRT in astrophysical research.

