

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Sri Lanka's National People's Power (NPP) alliance achieved a historic landslide victory in the November 14 general elections, securing a two-thirds majority.

- This win reflects island-wide support, overturning traditional ethnic voting patterns and empowering President Dissanayake's reform agenda.

President's coalition sweeps Sri Lanka polls

NPP wins 159 seats in 225-member House, securing over two-thirds majority; SJP follows with 40 seats

Compared to the September election, NPP wins in regions that are home to Tamils and Muslims

The Rajapaksas' party was nearly wiped out with just 3 seats; it had won 145 in the 2020 general elections

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's ruling alliance secured a landslide win in Sri Lanka's November 14 general elections, shattering records of strong governments of the past and making history in the island's ethnic minorities-dominated north, east, and hill country.

The National People's Power (NPP) won a total of 159 seats in the 225-member House, securing over two-thirds majority, official results declared on Friday showed. The Opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) or United People's Force followed, with just 40 seats. The formerly powerful Rajapaksas' party, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, was nearly wiped out, with its presence in the legislature shrinking to

three seats from the 145 it won in the 2020 general elections. The poll outcome gives President Dissanayake ample power in the legislature to take forward his pledges on political and economic reform.

Compared to the September presidential election, the NPP's vote share rose considerably across the island in the parliamentary polls, but its especially remarkable mandate in the north and east that are home to Tamils and Muslims drew attention.

In Jaffna, the NPP won three out of six seats, becoming the first mainstream party from the south to topple prominent northern Tamil parties, including the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK). The poll results in this region overturns the image of the NPP's chief constituent Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP or People's Liberation



Confident stride: President Anura Kumara Dissanayake walking out after casting his vote in the election on Thursday. REUTERS

Front] as an "anti-Tamil rights" party, based on the JVP's fierce opposition in the 1980s to Tamils' self-rule and the merger of the north and east.

"It [Jaffna] is the crown of this victory," Prominent JVP member and former

MP Bimal Rathnayake told *The Hindu*.

Signalling a change

Tamils and Muslims who voted for Mr. Dissanayake's political rivals – mainly former Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa – in the

presidential election appear to have now voted for the NPP. In almost all districts, barring Batticaloa in the east, the NPP beat prominent regional parties, representing Tamils and Muslims, signalling that the call for change that

dominated the Sinhala-majority south ahead of the September presidential election had found island-wide resonance more recently.

'Tamil parties suffering'

According to senior journalist and political commentator V. Thanabalingham, Tamil political parties "are suffering the consequences of not introspecting the political path of the past" and believing they could "fool" the Tamils for a long time, going to Parliament with "only emotional nationalist slogans". "It is too late for even an introspection," he noted on X.

Mr. Dissanayake's alliance also recorded big wins in the hill country across the island's Central, Southern and Uva provinces, outdoing traditional parties representing the Malaiyaha Tamils.

This would be the first instance of a political party garnering a two-thirds majority in Parliament under Sri Lanka's proportional representation system, observed senior lawyer Saliya Peiris in a social media post. "The result will also pave the way for the NPP government to quickly honour its promise to abolish the Executive Presidency," he said. While the landslide win is a testament "that most people are happy with the direction of the country since the election of President Dissanayake", the NPP must resist the temptation to enact laws that will erode democratic rights and freedoms, Mr. Peiris cautioned, while managing "extraordinary expectations" of the electorate on political and economic fronts.

CHANCE TO CHANGE HISTORY
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Analysis of the news:

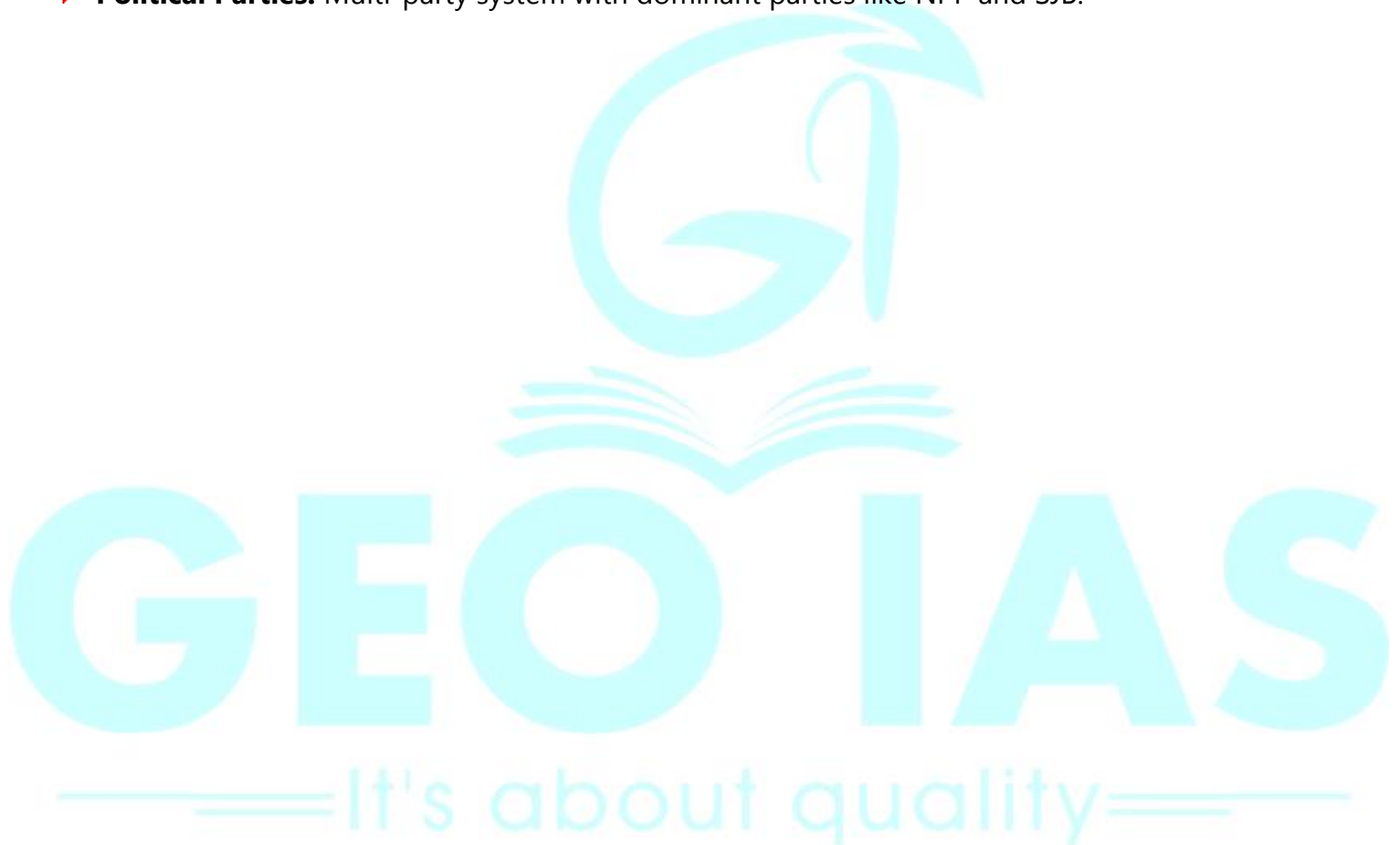
- President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's National People's Power (NPP) alliance secured a historic landslide win in Sri Lanka's November 14 general elections.
- The NPP won 159 seats in the 225-member Parliament, achieving over a two-thirds majority, while the Opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) won just 40 seats.
- The Rajapaksas' Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna suffered a massive defeat, reducing their presence to just three seats from 145 in 2020.
- The NPP's remarkable mandate in Tamil and Muslim-dominated regions like Jaffna and the hill country signalled a shift in voting patterns.
- This marks the first two-thirds majority under Sri Lanka's proportional representation system, paving the way for political and economic reforms.

Political System of Sri Lanka

- **Type of Government:** Sri Lanka is a unitary democratic republic under a semi-presidential system.
- **Constitution:** Operates under the Constitution of 1978, establishing a strong executive presidency.

Daily News Analysis

- **Executive Branch:** The President is both the Head of State, Head of Government, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.
 - The Prime Minister is the senior minister and assists the President.
- **Legislature:** The Parliament is a unicameral body with 225 members, elected for a 5-year term. It is responsible for making laws, approving budgets, and overseeing the executive.
- **Judiciary:** An independent system with the Supreme Court as the highest authority.
- **Decentralisation:** Governed through provinces with limited autonomy under provincial councils.
- **Elections:** Conducted under proportional representation.
- **Political Parties:** Multi-party system with dominant parties like NPP and SJB.



The National Task Force (NTF) report, submitted in response to the Supreme Court's suo motu case on the R.G. Kar rape and murder, rejected the need for a separate Central law for healthcare professionals' protection.

- It recommended enhancing State laws and utilizing the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. This decision contrasts with calls from doctors' bodies for stricter national legislation.

No need for separate Central law to tackle crimes against health workers: NTF report

The report filed in Supreme Court says States have enough laws to keep healthcare professionals safe, while the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita could take care of heinous offences committed against them; it calls for deployment of trained security personnel in hospitals, night-shift safety protocols

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The National Task Force (NTF) report filed in the Supreme Court in the suo motu case concerning the R.G. Kar rape and murder case has said there is no need to enact a "separate Central law" to protect healthcare professionals.

The NTF said States had enough laws to keep healthcare professionals safe. Besides, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) could take care of heinous offences committed against doctors and medical staff, the report said.

"It has been observed that State laws have adequate provisions to address day-to-day minor offences and serious offences can be addressed by BNS. A separate Central law to deal with offences against healthcare professionals is, therefore, not required," the NTF reasoned.

The report was dealing with the question whether enforcement mechanism



Loud and clear: People take out a protest march in Kolkata demanding justice for the doctor who was raped and murdered at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital. ANI

under existing laws need strengthening.

"It is noted that 24 States have already enacted laws to address violence against healthcare professionals, whereby the terms 'healthcare professional' and 'medical professional' have also been defined. Two more States have already introduced their Bills in this regard. Most of

the State laws cover minor offences and prescribe punishment for them. The major offences/heinous offences are adequately covered under BNS," it noted.

The report said in States where there were no specific laws to protect medical professionals, the BNS could be used to immediately address acts of violence against them.

The NTF recommendation is diametrically opposite to a persistent demand from doctors' bodies to have a separate Central law. In fact, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) had written to the NTF, which was also mandated by the Supreme Court to formulate an enforceable national protocol for the safety and security of med-

ical professionals, demanding a "deterrent Central law" dealing with violence against doctors and hospitals and to declare hospitals as safe zones.

Protests by doctors

The NTF was constituted by the apex court in the wake of the protests by doctors and medical professionals following the horrific rape and murder of a postgraduate doctor at the State-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

"The only preventive strategy that could be applied across the board and across all States is a deterrent Central law in statute... We, the medical professionals of India expect the National Task Force to live up to our expectations," the IMA had written to the NTF.

The recommendations of the NTF has been divided into three categories - short-term, medium-term and long-term - after receiving suggestions from

53 associations and 1,700 individuals/hospitals.

The measures suggested deployment of trained security personnel in hospitals, coordination with local police, high walls, limited biometric access, night-shift safety protocols and transportation for medical staff, augmentation of mobile network, CCTVs, restrooms and toilets, internal complaints committee to act on sexual harassment complaints, etc. Recommendations also include having "round-the-clock presence of a senior doctor in emergency service area".

The NTF said FIRs, including zero FIRs, should be filed within six hours of the reporting of any act of violence committed against medical professionals at their workplaces.

The task force identified "poor communication" between medical professionals and patients' families as a major source of frustration, mistrust and tension leading to violence and even mob attacks.

Opposition to a Separate Central Law

- The National Task Force (NTF), in its report filed in the Supreme Court concerning the R.G. Kar rape and murder case, stated that there is no need for a separate Central law to protect healthcare professionals.
- The NTF argued that State laws already have adequate provisions to address minor offences, while heinous offences can be addressed under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS).

Daily News Analysis

- ➡ The report concluded that existing laws at the State level are sufficient for day-to-day offences, and a separate law was unnecessary.

State Laws and Enforcement Mechanisms

- ➡ 24 States have enacted laws protecting healthcare professionals, defining terms like "healthcare professional" and "medical professional."
- ➡ The NTF report acknowledged that two more States have introduced Bills for the same.
- ➡ Where no specific State laws exist, the BNS can be used to address violence against healthcare professionals immediately.

Doctors' Demand for a Central Law

- ➡ The NTF's recommendation contradicted the demand from the Indian Medical Association (IMA), which advocated for a deterrent Central law and the designation of hospitals as safe zones.
- ➡ The IMA had highlighted the need for a national protocol to ensure the safety and security of medical professionals, especially following the tragic incident at R.G. Kar Medical College.

NTF Recommendations for Immediate and Long-Term Measures

- ➡ The NTF proposed short-term, medium-term, and long-term measures, including the deployment of trained security personnel, coordination with local police, and installing CCTVs.
- ➡ It emphasized that FIRs should be filed within six hours of reporting any violence against healthcare workers.
- ➡ The NTF identified poor communication between healthcare professionals and patients' families as a major source of violence, leading to mistrust and mob attacks.

At COP29 in Baku, India emphasised equitable climate finance, urging developed nations to fulfil their obligations under the Paris Agreement by mobilising \$1.3 trillion annually until 2030.

- India also opposed unilateral trade measures like the EU's CBAM, labelling them discriminatory and a hindrance to global cooperation.

India's Position on Climate Finance

- India emphasised that climate finance should not be viewed as "investment goals" by developed countries.
- It highlighted that the Paris Agreement mandates developed countries to provide and mobilise climate finance unidirectionally to support developing nations.
- India reiterated that \$5-6.8 trillion of climate finance is required globally until 2030, as per ongoing discussions.
- A New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance is under deliberation, aiming to replace the outdated \$100 billion annual target set in 2009 for 2020-2025.

Focus of COP29: New Climate Finance Target

- The COP29 discussions are critical for establishing a new operational target by 2025 to support developing nations' transition to renewable energy without hindering developmental progress.
- India, representing developing nations, stressed that developed countries must commit to mobilising \$1.3 trillion annually till 2030 to address climate adaptation and transition needs.

India's Stance on Unilateral Trade Measures

- India strongly opposed "protectionist" trade measures linked to carbon emissions, stating that they are discriminatory and violate principles of equity.
- Such measures, India argued, shift the financial burden of low-carbon transitions onto developing and low-income countries.

China-Led Petition Against Trade Restrictions

- A petition led by a grouping of major developing countries proposed a formal agenda item to address unilateral trade measures linked to climate change.

India says climate finance is not an 'investment goal'



Green image: Women posing for a picture by the logo of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Baku on Friday. REUTERS

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

At the ongoing COP29 negotiations in Azerbaijan's Baku, India stated that climate finance – the money that's necessary to incentivise and facilitate developing countries' adoption of renewable energy sources over fossil fuels – should not be seen as "investment goals" by developed countries.

"Climate finance cannot be changed into an investment goal when it is a unidirectional provision and mobilisation goal from the developed to the developing countries. The Paris Agreement is clear on who is to provide and mobilise the climate finance – it is the developed countries," said a statement by India's lead negotiator, Naresh Pal Gangwar, on late Thursday (November 14, 2024). The statement was formally made public by the Union Environment Ministry on Friday. Currently, \$5-6.8 trillion worth of climate finance until 2030 is being mooted at Baku.

Several technical issues are being deliberated upon at Baku. The key moment, however, that the hundreds of negotiators are working upon is the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance. This is an estimate of the money

that developing countries will collectively require from developed countries to adapt to climate change and shift to renewable sources without compromising on developmental needs. The existing estimate, agreed upon in 2009, was to mobilise and deliver \$100 billion annually from 2020-2025 but was fulfilled – not to universal agreement – only in 2022. However, in 2021, the countries collectively decided to increase it.

They decided to come up with a new number and make it operational by 2025. This is why the Baku COP is expected to deliver on a new number to make the COP a success.

Intervening on behalf of a collective called 'Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs), at the High-Level Ministerial on Climate Finance in Baku, India, highlighted that the impacts of climate change were increasingly becoming evident in the form of unfolding disasters.

India's intervention reiterated that the developed countries need to commit to providing and mobilising at least \$1.3 trillion every year till 2030.

INDIA VOICES DISSENT

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WARS DISTRACTING TALKS

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Daily News Analysis

- ➡ These measures primarily target the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a tax on imports not meeting EU carbon norms.

What is Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)?

- ➡ **Purpose:** The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is a European Union proposal designed to impose a carbon tax on imported goods from countries with less stringent environmental regulations.
- ➡ **Goal:** It aims to prevent carbon leakage, ensuring that EU industries are not disadvantaged by stricter climate policies compared to foreign competitors.
- ➡ **Products Affected:** CBAM targets goods like cement, steel, aluminium, fertilisers, and electricity that are imported into the EU.
- ➡ **Implementation:** Currently in a transitional phase, CBAM will come into full effect on January 1, 2026.
- ➡ **Controversy:** The mechanism has faced criticism for being seen as a protectionist measure and discriminatory against developing nations, which might not have equivalent carbon policies.

Key Concerns with CBAM

- ➡ India and other nations described CBAM-like policies as "arbitrary and unjustifiable unilateral measures".
- ➡ These measures are seen as undermining multilateral cooperation on climate goals while disproportionately impacting developing countries.

The Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh witnessed the tragic deaths of 10 elephants, likely due to Kodo millet contaminated with cyclopiazonic acid.

- This incident highlighted concerns over human-wildlife conflict, inadequate resources for elephant management, and the need for research into Kodo's effects. The government is working on preventive measures.



A six-month-old elephant calf, part of a herd of 13 that lost 10 members in October, being treated at the Rama Elephant Camp of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh. A. A. RAJGUPA

A jumbo crisis in Madhya Pradesh

Ten elephants died at the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve between October 29 and 31. Lab reports found that they had eaten large quantities of fungus-infected Kodo millet, which had caused acute toxicity. Mehul Malpani reports on the tragic incident in a State that is struggling to deal with its increasing jumbo population

It was business as usual at the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh on the morning of October 29. All the officers were headed to the BTR headquarters at Umaria for a review meeting. Some had already gone home for Diwali, while some were to leave in the next two days.

Arpit Malai, the forest range officer of Patur range, was running late for the meeting. On his way, at around 11 a.m., he got a call from the beat guard of Salkhanji village, who told him that a herd of 13 wild elephants was behaving strangely. "The guards and the beat officer had spotted the elephants some 200 metres away. They told me that four of them were lying on the ground and not moving, while some were sitting or standing in unusual positions," says Malai. Elephants do not usually lie down or sit for long as they find it difficult to get back on their feet.

Malai immediately drove for an hour and a half to the spot on the border of the Patur and Khatnoli core ranges near Salkhanji. He and some guards found 10 elephants lying on the forest floor in a radius of 100-150 m.

Malai called the Bandhavgarh Deputy Director, Prakash Kumar Verma. He asked Verma to cancel the meeting and rush to the spot with all the rangers and sub-divisional officers (SDOs). "Four elephants were dead. Six were barely moving – they were flapping their ears or moving their tails slowly," he recalls, as he prepares a detailed report sought by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Malai says Verma despatched all the officials to the spot and stayed back at the headquarters to call veterinarians from other national parks and from Umaria. BTR's lone wildlife vet, Dr. N. S. Gupta, who was on his way to Jabalpur for personal reasons, rushed back to the reserve. By 5 p.m., there were 150-200 guards, rangers, senior officials, and private and government vets, apart from a few heavy machines, tractors, and medical equipment at the spot. When it became dark, the two halogen lights installed for treatment proved insufficient. The officials positioned 10-12 cars in a half circle and used the vehicle lights. They also made small trenches and lit a fire to keep away other wild elephants.

For the next 36 hours, the spot turned into a makeshift hospital. However, despite their best efforts, four elephants died on October 30 and the remaining two passed away the next day. A post-mortem was conducted at the same spot and the pachyderms were buried nearby. During the burial, other elephants turned up, stood at a distance, trumpeted, and flapped their ears.

A crop that can kill

The death of the 10 elephants – nine female and one male – brought the BTR into the national limelight. Multiple teams of Central and State agencies visited the reserve for investigation. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav sent a three-member high-level team to Bandhavgarh. The State government suspended the Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director as well as an SDO for negligence. Earlier this week, the Central government sent the Director General of Forests and Special Secretary in the Environment Ministry to Bhopal to report on the incident and the measures taken on elephant management.

The post-mortem report stated that the ele-



After the elephant deaths, the forest officials thought many fields where kodo had been grown.

RAPAL SINGH

GOND

Verma

phants died after eating Kodo millet. Forensic examinations confirmed this. A toxicology report from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly, said that a high concentration of cyclopiazonic acid was detected in multiple organs of each elephant and that the animals might have consumed a large quantity of Kodo plant grains. A report from the School of Wildlife Forensic and Health (SWFH), Jabalpur, found acute toxicity in the vital organs of the animals. The BTR management also sent samples of Kodo crop and seeds to the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics, Hyderabad, which found extremely high contents of cyclopiazonic acid in the crop samples, a source says.

Meanwhile, test results from the State Forensic Science Laboratory, Surat, ruled out poisoning from pesticide, insecticide, or any other chemical, alleging that the jumbos were killed by poachers were also found to be baseless.

On November 12, the National Green Tribunal issued notices to the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; the Wildlife Institute of India; IVRI, Bareilly; the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Madhya Pradesh; and the Umaria Collector into the deaths of the animals and the connection with Kodo.

Days after the 10 elephants died, a wild elephant killed two men and critically injured one. This led to concerns about a serious human-animal conflict in the region. Officials at BTR suspect, based on the description of the elephant and the location of the two deaths, that a male elephant, aged 10-12 years, captured after the killings, is from the same herd of 13. While another fully grown adult male remains untraced, a six-month-old calf of the herd was rescued in a distressed condition about a week later in Katni, about 80 km from the spot where the rest died. It is now at BTR's Rama Elephant Camp.

A perfect storm

Known as a 'wild cereal', Kodo has been grown in India for centuries, but was largely limited to forests and tribal regions. As it is high in protein and fibre, Kodo has now become popular among people with lifestyle diseases. Kodo, once sold

for about 400-50 per kilogramme in local farmers' markets in Madhya Pradesh, is now priced at ₹90-120 per kg.

Bandhavgarh Deputy Director Verma says Kodo used to be grown on small patches of land. Now, farmers have started cultivating it on a large scale for commercial purposes.

The farm where the elephants ate Kodo belonged to Manoj Kumar from Salkhanji. Verma says Kumar and two or three other farmers had grown Kodo in about 10 acres of land that was on the boundary of the core zone and the village. Dr. A.B. Shrivastava, founder-director of SWFH, Jabalpur, who has been roped in to help at BTR, says symptoms of Kodo toxicity can be easily detected and treatment given for both animals and people. But in BTR, symptoms could not be detected and help provided in time because the animals were in the wild. They had eaten nearly 8 acres of Kodo, say officials.

Dr. Shrivastava highlights the need for a study on the health impacts of Kodo so that there is a designed treatment in place. "Right now, we only give treatment to animals based on the symptoms they display. Treatment includes fluid therapy with IV drips and other fluids to dilute Kodo, as well as multivitamins," he says.

There is also limited research available on Kodo and more specifically, its relation with elephants. A 1983 research paper says, "Farmers believe that Kodo millet is poisonous after rain. It is known to produce unconsciousness or delirium with violent tremors of the voluntary muscles. There are reports that elephants have died from eating Kodo millet."

A 2023 research paper titled 'Potential Risk of Cyclopiazonic Acid Toxicity in Koda Poisoning', says, "Although millet is cultivated in dry and semi-arid regions, sometimes environmental conditions like spring and summer strike as being suitable for a certain kind of poisoning which leads to greater economic crop loss." It adds that such conditions make millets more susceptible to fungal infections, especially from ergot fungi. The infection produces cyclopiazonic acid.

Dr. Shrivastava explains that such climatic conditions are rare, but are mostly seen in October when the sun is bright, the crop is ready for harvesting, and the region receives heavy rainfall. In the BTR case, high contents of fungus were also found in the harvested crop that was kept in bundles in the farm where the elephants ate.

A struggle in the wild

The eastern forests of Madhya Pradesh have always had elephants as visitors. In November 2018, a batch of 41 elephants arrived at BTR from Chhatargarh and stayed. Within a year, they bred two calves. Since then, three forests in Madhya Pradesh – BTR, the Sangai Dohar National Park in Sidihi, and the Kanha National Park in Mandla – have received multiple batches of elephants, mainly from Chhatargarh and Odisha. The estimated jumbo population is 150. Bandhavgarh alone has more than 65-70 elephants, Malai says.

But the State does not have the resources to deal with this increasing population. Forest guards, tasked with tracking the movements of animals such as tigers and elephants, are not pro-



I think the 13 elephants were part of a larger herd of 32. When the others returned and I saw the scenes during the post-mortem, they began to roar loudly.

PUSHPENDRA DWIVEDI

Former honorary wildlife warden of Umaria

vided with transmitters or vehicles to protect themselves in case of an attack. Gyan Singh, a forest guard, survived an attack by a tiger in 2014. "The animal left me alive simply because it wanted to. I had no way of saving myself," he says. Chhatu Singh, a fellow guard posted closest to the spot where the 10 elephants died, carries an axe and rides a bicycle. He says the door and the windows of their quarters were broken by an elephant three years ago. "I wrote to senior officials many times but nothing has happened," he says. Verma says the department started building elephant-proof trenches around these quarters last year but is yet to cover all of them.

The tragedies show various other lapses on the part of the BTR management and at the policy level. "We don't have a training team to work with wild elephants, especially orphans, when we rescue them," says Verma. "We don't know how to rehabilitate them. We need special enclosures to keep elephants which come away from their herd. We also need them to treat elephants that get hurt." These facilities are available in Chhatargarh. Talks are on with the Madhya Pradesh government to work on these aspects, he says.

The State government is also sending officials to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which have large elephant populations. They are expected to gain exposure on best practices on elephant management. The first batch is leaving on Sunday.

The government plans to use satellite collars on one or two members of a herd to track movements. Verma says a proposal to use thermal imaging to locate the animals easily is also being discussed. Another official at BTR says this can also be used to alert villagers about the movements of elephants. If these measures work, the forest department can use trap cameras to identify individual elephants, Verma contends.

Officials also admit that one or two of the elephants could have been saved if another doctor had been available. Dr. Gupta, the only vet at Bandhavgarh, recalls the events of October 29-31 as being "extremely stressful".

BTR is running around giving instructions to all the other vets we had brought in. Local vets mostly deal with domestic animals and don't have expertise in dealing with wild animals," he says. "It is difficult to give an injection or a drip to an elephant as it keeps moving and could hurt people. In such cases, we have to sometimes give it quick sedatives through the animal's rectum."

Dr. Gupta says there is no permanent facility at BTR to treat animals and that he always travels to the spot to do his job. The new field director, Anupam Sahay, says the forest department is considering providing an assistant to Dr. Gupta, who has been with BTR for about 15 years.

Madhya Pradesh Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Wildlife, L. Krishnamoorthy, says there is no separate budget for elephants in the State. Two years ago, Project Elephant was merged with Project Tiger in Madhya Pradesh. "As part of this, we get funding from both the Central and State governments," he says.

"They were family"

Meanwhile, locals are concerned that the human-animal conflict could become worse. Nine WhatsApp groups, one for each range of BTR, have suddenly become active. The groups have village heads, members of Hathu Mitra Dal (a designated group in each village to create awareness about elephants), local beat officers, rangers, and the Deputy Director as members. They receive messages every hour from people asking about elephant movements, and provide updates.

There is a tense silence in Salkhanji village, about 1.5 km from the farm where elephants ate Kodo. Manoj Kumar's house is locked.

A farmer, Rajpal Singh Gond, is one of the few who is willing to talk. "After the elephant deaths, the forest officials ploughed many fields where Kodo had been grown. Farmers were not even allowed to harvest and store the yield," he says. "Nobody here will talk against the forest department as we have to rely on them for compensation in case of crop damage by animals."

Sahay says Kodo had been cultivated in about 1,500 acres of land within the boundaries of BTR and more than half had been harvested. For the unharvested crop, farmers were given the option of handing over their yield to the forest department and getting compensated. Some agreed.

"Kodo is itself is not harmful, but at the moment we don't have a way of identifying the fungal infected crop. So, we considered all Kodo as harmful in the current circumstances," he says.

Elsewhere, there is sorrow. Pushpendra Dwivedi, former honorary wildlife warden of Umaria, recalls the distress of other elephants during the post-mortem. "I think the 13 elephants were part of a larger herd of 32. They must have split up in search of food. When the others returned and saw the scenes during the post-mortem, they began to roar loudly. We had to use stress and other noises to keep them away and continue the examination," he says.

After the incident, patrolling teams have spotted smaller groups of elephants wandering in the forest. "We suspect that they are searching for their herd members. They generally end their search once they find evidence that their herd members are not there," Malai says.

Most officials say the three days were "traumatic and sad". P.K. Kishor Barman, a beat guard with Khatnoli range, doubts if anyone could forget Diwali. "You don't celebrate festivals when someone in your family dies," he says. "Here, we lost 10 of them."

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Cause of Death

- Toxicity from Kodo Millet:



An elephant being treated by veterinarians. It died along with nine others. OFFICIAL ASSOCIATION

Daily News Analysis

- Post-mortem reports confirmed that the elephants died from consuming Kodo millet contaminated with cyclopiazonic acid, a toxin produced by a fungus found in Kodo crops.
- The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) and ICRISAT confirmed high levels of the toxin in both the elephants' organs and the Kodo crop from the affected farm.
- Symptoms of Toxicity: The elephants showed signs of distress, including difficulty moving, loss of balance, and lethargy before their deaths.

Official Reactions and Investigations

➡ Government Response:

- The State Government sent a high-level team to investigate the deaths, suspending key officials for negligence.
- The National Green Tribunal issued notices to various government agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Wildlife Institute of India, regarding the deaths and Kodo millet's role.

➡ Kodo Millet Cultivation:

- Kodo millet, traditionally grown in forests and tribal areas, has gained popularity as a commercial crop due to its health benefits.
- However, its widespread cultivation has introduced risks, such as fungal infections under certain climatic conditions, affecting wildlife and ecosystems.

Agricultural Practices and Environmental Impact

➡ Fungal Infections:

- Environmental conditions in October, characterised by heavy rainfall and the ripening of Kodo millet, led to the growth of toxic fungi in the crops, which produced cyclopiazonic acid.
- Experts suggest that the toxicity might be common in Kodo millet during such climatic conditions but has received limited research attention, especially regarding its impact on elephants.

Bandhavgarh's Elephant Management Challenges

➡ Increased Elephant Population:

- The elephant population in Madhya Pradesh has risen, with elephants from neighbouring states like Chhattisgarh and Odisha migrating into the region. Bandhavgarh alone hosts 65-70 elephants.

➡ Management Issues:

- The reserve faces challenges in tracking and managing this growing population.
- The lack of proper resources, such as tranquillisers, vehicles for protection, and trained personnel, hinders effective elephant management.
- Forest guards, such as Gyaan Singh, have faced threats from tigers and elephants without adequate safety measures.

➡ Lack of Infrastructure:

- The reserve lacks a dedicated veterinary facility for wildlife and relies on a single veterinarian.
- In the case of the elephant deaths, additional veterinary help was required but unavailable.

- The local community has expressed concerns over escalating human-animal conflict.

Future Actions and Proposals

➡ **Elephant Monitoring:**

- The forest department plans to use satellite collars on elephants to track their movements and prevent conflicts. There are also proposals to implement thermal imaging and trap cameras for better monitoring.

➡ **Training and Infrastructure:**

- Madhya Pradesh officials are being sent to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to learn best practices in elephant management, including techniques for managing orphaned elephants and improving wildlife treatment facilities.



India needs a globally recognised public policy school

Why is it that the world's largest democracy has yet to produce a world-class public policy institution? The United States and Europe boast of institutions such as the John F. Kennedy School of Government (Harvard Kennedy School) and the London School of Economics which train leaders who shape not only national but global governance. Yet, India, with its complex democratic structure and urgent developmental challenges, sends its finest to be trained abroad. This is not for lack of policy schools – India has many – but it has to do with the structure of India's political and institutional landscape.

The executive has the reins

Public policy institutions thrive only when they influence power and decision-making. However, in India, there are limited access points for public policy commentators, academics, and civil society groups to influence policy. This is because much of the decision-making power is vested in the executive and operationalised primarily through the political elite, government officials and bureaucrats rather than through a deliberative legislative process. The oversight role of the legislature over the executive too is limited, leading to a fundamentally different policy ecosystem than in other major democracies.

In the U.S., Congress' power to craft legislation independently of the executive creates space for a thriving policy ecosystem based on analysis, debate, and expertise, with each public representative providing a possible entry point into the deliberative process. This decentralised process sustains a vibrant ecosystem of policy schools, think tanks, and advocacy groups, that can secure funding and find paying clients because their analysis and expertise can meaningfully influence lawmaking.

But in India, the centralisation of power within the executive – and of party leadership within political parties – diminishes the influence of these groups unless they have access to top leadership and are aligned with their political



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The structure of India's political and institutional landscape is why there is no such school till now

priorities. The weak formalisation of the Indian state further creates a disconnect between politics and policy, relegating policy discourse to a downstream role rather than making it constituent of the larger political platform. Consequently policy professionals lack the top-tier influence of other countries.

The power factor and where the wind blows

Further, influence on decision-making is closely tied to who is in power. The executive's ability to realign the public sphere when power changes hands is more extreme in India than in more institutionalised democracies. This creates fragility in public life, where those central to decision-making can find themselves sidelined when regimes change. In more institutionalised democracies, think tanks, media and civil society groups can maintain relative influence regardless of who is in power, which helps stabilise the policy ecosystem.

These factors are unique to India among other large democracies and demand a different approach to policy education. To create a top-tier public policy school in India, we must design an institution suited to our political reality – where power is informal, personalised, and heavily dependent on executive control. Such an institution must serve dual purposes: first, equipping students with both traditional policy expertise and an understanding of India's unique power dynamics; and second, facilitating a more stable policy ecosystem.

Unlike western policy schools that focus on formal institutions and assume straightforward paths to influence, an Indian institution must teach students to navigate a complex web of informal networks, regional power structures, and social dynamics. The curriculum must go beyond traditional policy education to map how power actually works – through relationships, caste hierarchies, regional elites, and grassroots movements. Students need to learn not just policy theory but also how to be effective in a system where power is opaque and unevenly

distributed, where idealism must meet pragmatism and the ability to adapt to local conditions to create real change.

Most importantly, to truly train development leaders who want to do good for their country, the school must select for, and cultivate, empathy for the people of our country. Too often, empathy for the lived reality of people's lives is overlooked and leads to top-down diktats that can wreak havoc in people's lives.

The need for space

Finally, the current situation where political legitimacy and influence are tied too closely to the executive leads to sycophancy, opportunism and instability. A school focused on nation-building must thus facilitate a broad institutional space in which legitimacy and influence would be based on the depth and the quality of public interventions instead of proximity to power. At its deep end, this would require a series of structural reforms in our politics and governance, but a foundation could be built through diverse partnerships and the identification of nation-builders across the political spectrum and sectors. Such a network cutting across politics, bureaucracy, civil society, academia, think tanks, and media would provide depth as well as opportunities for influence and collaboration across all regimes.

By creating this non-partisan, yet politically aware, space, the institution could nurture development professionals who maintain relevance despite regime changes. This would create more stable channels for policy input, improving the quality of public debate and governance in India.

It is this dual role that would allow the school and its graduates to influence power instead of operating at lower levels. Such an institution would set an example for other developing nations and gain global prominence by demonstrating that effective policy education must arise from local realities rather than mirror western models

GS Paper 02 : Governance & Social Justice

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Examine the challenges faced by public policy institutions in India in influencing governance and policy making. Discuss how an India-centric approach to policy education can address these challenges and strengthen democratic governance. (150 words/10m)

Context :

- ▶ India, despite being the world's largest democracy, lacks a globally renowned public policy institution. Centralised executive power and limited legislative influence undermine the policy ecosystem's vibrancy.
- ▶ An India-centric institution must address local power dynamics and foster non-partisan, empathy-driven governance to create meaningful developmental and policy impacts.

Lack of Influence in Power and Decision-Making

- ▶ Public policy institutions thrive when they can influence power and decision-making processes.
- ▶ In India, decision-making is centralised within the executive, led by the political elite and bureaucrats, sidelining public policy academics and civil society groups.
- ▶ The legislative oversight over the executive is limited, leading to a less deliberative policy ecosystem compared to other democracies.

Comparison with the United States

- ▶ In the U.S., Congress independently crafts legislation, creating multiple entry points for public policy schools, think tanks, and advocacy groups to influence policymaking.
- ▶ This decentralised process sustains a vibrant ecosystem where funding and influence are linked to analysis, debate, and expertise.
- ▶ In contrast, India's centralised power limits the role of these institutions unless they align with top leadership and political priorities.

Fragility and Dependence on Power

- ▶ The influence of policy professionals in India is heavily tied to who is in power, leading to instability when regimes change.
- ▶ In institutionalised democracies, think tanks and civil society groups maintain influence regardless of political transitions, ensuring a stable policy ecosystem.

Designing an Institution for India's Reality

- ▶ A world-class public policy institution in India must account for the informal, personalised nature of power.
- ▶ **The curriculum should include:**
 - Traditional policy expertise.
 - Understanding of India's unique power dynamics, including caste hierarchies, regional elites, and grassroots movements.
 - Pragmatism in navigating opaque and unevenly distributed power structures.
 - Empathy for the lived realities of Indian people should be cultivated, moving away from top-down diktats to people-centric governance.

Building Institutional Space for Nation-Building

Daily News Analysis

- Political legitimacy and influence in India are overly tied to the executive, resulting in sycophancy and instability.
- A public policy institution should foster a space where legitimacy is based on the quality of public interventions, not proximity to power.
- Diverse partnerships across political, bureaucratic, and civil society sectors can provide stability and opportunities for influence regardless of regime changes.

Global Impact of an India-Centric Policy Institution

- A public policy school grounded in local realities can influence power effectively and set an example for developing nations.
- Such an institution would demonstrate the importance of adapting policy education to specific political and social contexts, gaining global prominence.

Conclusion

- It is this dual role that would allow the school and its graduates to influence power instead of operating at lower levels.
- Such an institution would set an example for other developing nations and gain global prominence by demonstrating that effective policy education must arise from local realities rather than mirror western models.