

THE CURRENT AFFAIRS DIGEST

DAILY

"The news you need to know, and remember."

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TOP STORY • SAUDI ARABIA AND YEMEN

Second Strike on Riyadh Airport in 24 Hours as Yemen's War Escalates

A missile killed 12 people on Saturday. The Houthis claimed attacks on Sunday, and another strike followed. Saudi Arabia vows to retaliate.

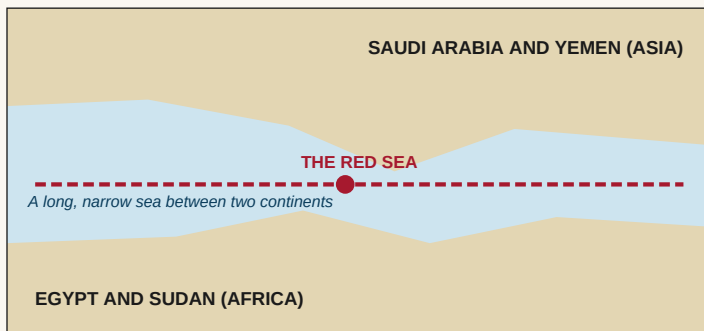
Written and fact-checked by AI · News Pebbles

On Saturday 10 October a missile struck King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh. Saudi civil aviation authorities said 12 people were killed and 309 wounded, the deadliest attack on the kingdom in more than a decade. The dead included four Saudis, two Bangladeshis and one citizen each of the US, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Sudan.

On Sunday the Houthis, an Iran-backed movement in northern Yemen, claimed multiple operations against the airport, and a second strike that evening caused injuries. Airport operations were suspended and Riyadh schools moved to remote learning for a week. Saudi Arabia has promised to retaliate "firmly".

The escalation follows the collapse of a UN-brokered truce that had largely held since 2022. On 4 October the Saudi-backed Yemeni government launched the "Dawn of Yemen" offensive to retake Houthi territory, including the port of Mocha. Al Jazeera could not verify the rival battlefield claims. The Houthis imposed a maritime embargo on Saudi Arabia in July.

President Trump said the US "may" join Saudi operations; Democratic Senator Chris Murphy warned the war is "spiraling out of control". Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia agreed on 5 October to activate "deterrence measures" under a mutual defence agreement signed in August.



Saudi Arabia and Yemen sit on the eastern shore of the Red Sea.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Attacks on civilian infrastructure far from the front line change the war's character: the Houthis are now hitting a capital's main airport, while Yemen's conflict also links to the US-Iran war, in which talks remain stalled. For India, the Gulf is a major source of crude oil and home to a large Indian workforce, so escalation matters for prices and for citizens abroad.

WORLD • RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

Trump Declares an 'Energy Ceasefire'; Moscow and Kyiv Have Not Confirmed It

The US president gave no terms. Ukraine says it will stop hitting Russian refineries if Russia stops hitting its energy system.

On Sunday 11 October President Trump said Russia and Ukraine had agreed to an "energy ceasefire" effective immediately. Neither Moscow nor Kyiv immediately confirmed it and the White House did not clarify the terms. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine would stop striking Russian refineries if Moscow halted attacks on Ukraine's energy system.

A White House official said a deal to stop hitting power plants and energy grids could come next if refinery attacks stop. The announcement followed a deal Mr Trump struck on Friday for Russia to supply diesel to the US, which Ukrainian and European officials criticised as funding Russia's war. On Saturday Mr Trump said it was time for Ukraine to get a new president.

Ukraine's constitution bars elections under martial law, in place since February 2022, and Mr Zelenskyy said a vote during the war would be unlawful; he said elections could be held if Russia agreed to a 60-day ceasefire, with security guarantees. Roughly a fifth of Ukraine is under Russian occupation.

The war is increasingly fought from the air: both countries are conducting long-range strikes while their armies remain largely deadlocked on the ground. On Sunday a Ukrainian drone attack shut down a data centre run by the Russian technology company Yandex, the third strike on its facilities in four days.

The new US stance adds a political layer. Mr Trump had blamed Ukraine for high US diesel prices rather than the US-led war in Iran, and energy experts quoted by FOX 13 said the Russian diesel deal is unlikely to lower prices meaningfully. Whether the ceasefire is real will show in whether strikes on refineries and power plants actually stop.



Both sides have been striking each other's energy sites from the air.

CONNECT THE DOTS

Geography and economics meet here: crude oil is pumped in one place, refined in another and burned in a third, so a strike on a refinery changes prices far away. US diesel averaged \$6.28 a gallon on the latest AAA figure, against \$3.68 a year earlier, which is why a diesel deal with a country at war became a political issue. In history, attacks on enemy fuel supplies are an old tactic; what is new is that drones now make them cheap.

INDIA • DEMOCRACY AND DISSENT

Over 2,000 Detained in Delhi as 'Cockroach' Protest Targets the Election Chief

The movement's founder was released on Sunday. The Election Commission and the BJP deny the allegations of voter-list manipulation.

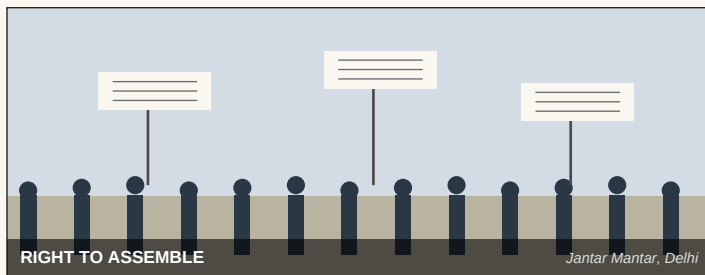
On Saturday 10 October police in Delhi detained more than 2,000 people, according to Reuters citing a Home Affairs official, before and during a protest by the Cockroach Janta Party, a youth movement that began online in May. The protesters demand that Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar resign over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter lists, which reportedly removed roughly 130 million names.

Authorities sealed off Jantar Mantar, closed dozens of metro stations and markets, and suspended mobile internet in the central business district. Those detained included opposition leaders, journalists and lawyers. Founder Abhijeet Dipke and two other leaders were released on Sunday by an executive magistrate on condition of no breach of peace for one year.

The trigger was an Indian Express report that two election commissioners had questioned Mr Kumar's revisions. Protesters say the exercise favours the BJP; the Election Commission and the BJP deny wrongdoing, and the Commission says it removes duplicate and ineligible entries. A BJP spokesman called the demonstrators "anarchic elements"; Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge accused the government of muzzling democracy.

The names detained on 10 October included YouTuber Dhruv Rathee, Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan, CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, AISA president Neha Bora and former chief ministers Mamata Banerjee, Arvind Kejriwal and Pinarayi Vijayan. ANI reported about 600 detentions in Mumbai. Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists criticised the detentions.

This is not the movement's first political impact: its protests over exam paper leaks led to the education minister's resignation in July, according to NBC. Police had denied permission for the 10 October protest, saying the request came in late.



Gatherings of five or more people were banned in parts of the capital.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Elections rest on two things: an accurate voter list and public trust in the body that keeps it. Both the right to peaceful protest and the state's power to restrict gatherings are part of the constitutional picture. The UN Human Rights Office expressed concern over the detentions; India's UN mission called the concern misplaced. Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat vote in 2027, and national elections are due in 2029. Under Article 324 of the Constitution, the superintendence, direction and control of elections, including the preparation of electoral rolls, is vested in the Election Commission, which is why who runs it, and how it is held to account, is a constitutional question and not only a political one.

POLITICS & CIVICS • UNITED STATES

Three Weeks Before the Midterms, Trump's Approval Sits at a Record Low of 32%

A Reuters/Ipsos poll finds the cost of living is the top issue for voters. Congress is at stake on 3 November.

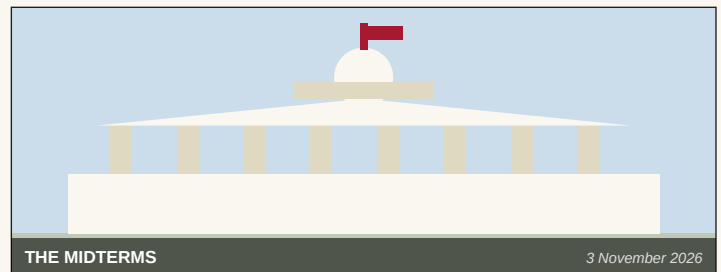
US midterm elections are held on 3 November 2026, halfway through the president's four-year term. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives, 35 Senate seats and 39 governorships are up.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll published on 5 October put President Trump's approval at 32%, a record low first reached in September. 52% of respondents ranked the cost of living as the most important issue, including 53% of Republicans and 49% of Democrats. Among registered voters, 44% planned to vote for Democrats and 37% for Republicans. In a September poll, just 17% approved of his handling of the cost of living.

The campaign is also shaped by foreign affairs. Mr Trump said on Truth Social that the US will not attack Iran before the midterms, and that the naval blockade of Iran will stay.

The foreign-policy backdrop is the Iran war and the Riyadh attack. Senator Chris Murphy, a Democrat, argued on "Face the Nation" against US retaliation on Saudi Arabia's behalf, citing the 12 people killed at the airport. Mr Trump criticised the Nobel Peace Prize committee at a New York rally on 9 October, calling it "crooked".

How should a student read such numbers? Treat them as evidence with limits. The approval figure and the vote-intention figures come from different groups of people, a September poll found only 17% approving of the president's handling of the cost of living, and a poll cannot tell you who will actually turn out on 3 November. Competing readings are possible: supporters of the president may argue that opinions can change before voting day, while critics point to the combination of low approval and price worries.



The whole House and 35 of 100 Senate seats are up.

WHY THIS MATTERS

In the US system the president proposes, but Congress passes laws and approves spending. Midterms are the main check voters have between presidential elections, so even a poll average that favours one party shapes what a president can get done. A poll is a snapshot, not a result. For exam purposes, note the separation of powers: the president leads the executive branch, while Congress, elected separately, writes laws and controls spending.

ECONOMY • FUEL

US Diesel Averages \$6.28 a Gallon as Oil Stays Near \$100

Diesel is up from \$3.68 a year ago. The G7 has agreed to release oil from stocks.

Diesel averaged \$6.28 a gallon in the United States, according to AAA, against \$5.94 a month earlier and \$3.68 a year earlier. The record is \$6.53, set on 22 September. Brent crude, the global benchmark, was about \$103 to \$105 a barrel on 9 October.

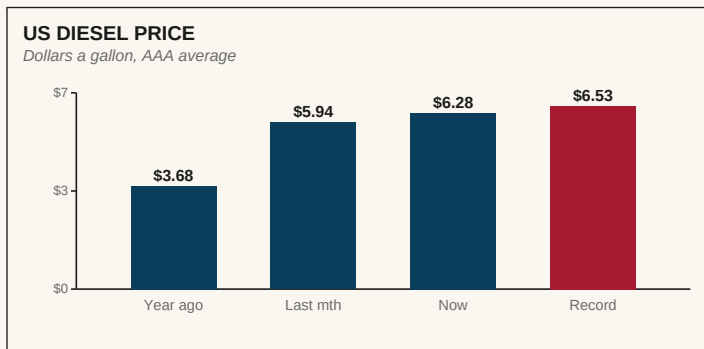
Governments are responding. On 2 October G7 leaders agreed to coordinate the release of 100 million barrels of oil over four months, with most of the diesel portion in the first 20 days. Germany will release up to 15 million barrels of diesel, crude and heating oil. Mr Trump said Russia would release 300,000 tons of diesel immediately, 500,000 in November and 1 million in December, and the US Treasury temporarily waived sanctions on Russia's energy sector.

Behind the prices is the Iran war, which began with US-Israeli strikes in late February; a ceasefire collapsed in July and a US blockade of Iranian ports began on 14 July. Iran's Revolutionary Guard has warned that ships in the Strait of Hormuz switching off tracking systems will be treated as hostile.

Eurozone inflation hit 3.8% in September, and the euro fell to a 17-month low during French market turmoil, which shows that fuel and borrowing costs are interacting. Fuel is only one input into prices, but it is one that governments can try to influence through stock releases, sanctions policy and diplomacy.

Europe is also under pressure from borrowing costs: investors demanded up to 5% a year to lend to France for 10 years, the highest since July 2002.

Reading the chart: the record price, \$6.53 on 22 September, is slightly above today's \$6.28, so diesel has eased a little from its peak but remains far above a year ago. Whether it keeps easing depends mainly on Hormuz shipping, which oil traders are watching closely, and on whether the proposed energy ceasefire holds.



The record, \$6.53, was set on 22 September.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Diesel moves trucks, trains, farm machinery and ships, so its price is built into the cost of food and goods. A fuel shock spreads through the economy before it shows up in official inflation numbers, and it lands hardest on households that spend most of their income on essentials. Governments also have to weigh the fiscal and diplomatic costs of their responses, as the temporary waiver of sanctions on Russian energy shows.

THINK LIKE AN ANALYST

Think like an analyst: Which would reduce the price faster, releasing stored oil or ending the war that raised it? What are the trade-offs of waiving sanctions on a country at war to get more diesel?

SCIENCE & TECH • PHYSICS

First Self-Stabilising Nuclear Clock Runs for More Than 24 Hours

Researchers in Vienna and Germany built a prototype clock that uses the nucleus of thorium-229, reported in Nature.

Atomic clocks keep time using electrons jumping between energy levels. A nuclear clock uses a transition inside an atom's nucleus instead. Researchers at TU Wien in Vienna and Germany's PTB, led by Thorsten Schumm and Ekkehard Peik, built a prototype from a calcium fluoride crystal containing thorium-229 nuclei, and report it in Nature.

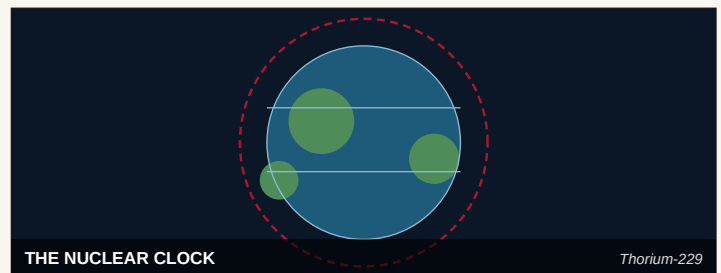
A laser excites the thorium nuclei and the measured absorption of light drives automatic corrections to the laser, so the clock stabilises itself. It ran for more than 24 hours without anyone adjusting it. It does not yet beat the best optical atomic clocks, and a preliminary dark-matter search found no significant signal.

A separate thorium-229 clock from Tsinghua University in Beijing was published the same week; the South China Morning Post reports that it is more stable than Vienna's.

The numbers explain why the work is hard: the transition energy is roughly 8.4 electron volts, near 148 nm in the ultraviolet, and the clock's fractional frequency instability was in the low 10^{-14} range in continuous operation. Run-to-run reproducibility was about 5×10^{-13} . The team compared the clock with an ytterbium-ion optical clock at Austria's BEV and worked with the Max Born Institute in Berlin.

Limits remain. The researchers suspect local crystal strain limits reproducibility, though this is unconfirmed. The dark-matter search placed only upper limits on possible interactions, and those limits depend on uncertain nuclear sensitivity.

For a student, the key idea is the difference between a demonstration and a standard. Seconds are defined internationally using caesium atomic clocks today; a new type of clock has to be shown to be more accurate and reproducible, in several laboratories, before it could ever replace them. The same week's two competing results, from Vienna and Beijing, are typical of how a new field matures: independent teams test the same idea and compare their numbers.



The transition lies at about 148 nanometres, in ultraviolet light.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Better clocks make better tests of physics. Because the nucleus is far less disturbed by outside fields than electrons are, nuclear clocks could one day be more precise and be used to look for tiny changes in the constants of nature. This is a working prototype, not yet a record-setter.

ONE-LINE BRIEFS

- Iran: Security chief Mohsen Rezaei called the latest US reply to Iran's seven conditions "insufficient", though talks continue through mediators.
- Israel: A general election is set for 27 October, while Prime Minister Netanyahu's corruption trial continues. He denies wrongdoing.
- France: 10-year borrowing costs hit up to 5%, the highest since July 2002, with debt at 119% of GDP in the second quarter.
- United Kingdom: Chancellor John Healey presents the Budget on 28 October, his first as chancellor.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Words that unlock today's news

Ceasefire

An agreement to stop fighting, for a time or for good. Today: Mr Trump announced an energy ceasefire that Russia and Ukraine have not confirmed.

Midterms

US elections held halfway through a president's four-year term. Today: voters choose the House, 35 Senate seats and governors on 3 November.

Embargo

An official ban on trade with a country. Today: the Houthis imposed a maritime embargo on Saudi Arabia in July.

Special Intensive Revision

The Election Commission's drive to re-check voter lists. Today: protesters say it removed about 130 million names and favours the BJP; the Commission denies this.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jantar Mantar in Delhi, the traditional site for protests, was not built for politics. It is an astronomical observatory, built in the early 1700s by Maharaja Jai Singh II with giant stone instruments for measuring time and the positions of stars.

EXPLAINER

How the US Congress is elected

Congress has two chambers. The House of Representatives has 435 members, each elected for two years, so the whole House is up at every national election. The Senate has 100 members, two from each state, elected for six years. Their terms are staggered, so roughly a third of the Senate is up every two years; this year 35 seats are contested.

Because the House is renewed so often, it responds quickly to the public mood, while the Senate is designed to change more slowly. Laws need both chambers to agree. That is why the midterms matter even though the president is not on the ballot: they decide who controls the chambers that pass laws and approve spending.

India's Parliament works on the same two-chamber principle. The Lok Sabha has 543 elected members with a five-year term unless dissolved earlier. The Rajya Sabha has 245 members who serve six-year terms, and one-third of them retire every two years. India does not hold "midterms" in the American sense, because its government depends on holding a majority in the Lok Sabha rather than on a fixed presidential term.

The comparison is useful in exams: both systems split lawmaking across two chambers, but the US president is elected separately from Congress, while India's prime minister must command the confidence of the lower house.

QUIZ

Eight questions on this issue

- The Red Sea separates the Arabian Peninsula from:
 - (a) Europe (b) Africa (c) Australia (d) South America
- The Houthis control much of which country?
 - (a) Oman (b) Iraq (c) Yemen (d) Jordan
- Who is India's Chief Election Commissioner?
 - (a) Gyanesh Kumar (b) Sanjay Malhotra (c) Abhijeet Dipke (d) Mallikarjun Kharge
- The US midterm elections are on:
 - (a) 27 October (b) 3 November (c) 10 November (d) 1 December
- How many seats are in the US House of Representatives?
 - (a) 100 (b) 270 (c) 435 (d) 538
- Which refinery-related promise did Ukraine make?
 - (a) Stop striking Russian refineries if Russia stops attacking its energy system (b) Close its refineries (c) Sell oil to Russia (d) Join OPEC
- The new nuclear clock uses the nucleus of:
 - (a) uranium-235 (b) thorium-229 (c) carbon-14 (d) cesium-133
- In the Reuters/Ipsos poll, the top issue for voters was:
 - (a) immigration (b) climate (c) cost of living (d) crime

Answers. 1 (b); Africa lies on the western shore of the Red Sea. 2 (c): Yemen. 3 (a): Gyanesh Kumar. 4 (b): 3 November 2026. 5 (c): 435 seats. 6 (a): Mr Zelenskyy's stated condition. 7 (b): thorium-229. 8 (c): 52% named the cost of living.

TOMORROW'S WATCHLIST

- Whether Moscow and Kyiv confirm the energy ceasefire and what it covers.
- Whether the US joins Saudi strikes on the Houthis, and the effect on crude prices.
- Whether the Election Commission responds to the protesters' demands, or more rallies follow.

You are not just reading the news — you are learning to think about it. See you tomorrow.