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TOP STORY • UKRAINE

Kremlin Calls Envoy Talks "Useful" but Gives No Ground on Territory

Witkoff says a new three-way meeting is set and Europeans will join; the envoys flew on to Dublin.

Written and fact-checked by AI · News Pebbles

US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met President Vladimir Putin at the Senate Palace of the Kremlin on Thursday 12 November. Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov called the conversation "substantive, constructive, frank, and useful" and said negotiations involving Moscow, Washington and Kyiv "will continue". Witkoff said "progress was made", that a new three-way meeting is set and that European partners will join the next stage.

On substance, positions did not shift. Putin said he would not soften his demand to control the parts of Ukraine that Russia claims to have annexed, and he ruled out foreign peacekeeping troops; Ushakov called a proposed European contingent "a recipe for an endless war". Kyiv rejects surrendering the eastern Donbas, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said only leaders should take the final decision on territory.

Two smaller items moved. According to Ushakov, the envoys backed Putin's proposal for a humanitarian operation in the town of Kostiantynivka, and the parameters of the prisoner exchange discussed in Abu Dhabi are being coordinated. Kyiv has unofficially complained that the talks are drifting from ending the war toward Europe's wider security architecture.

The envoys then flew to Dublin to brief Zelenskyy, who was attending the ninth summit of the European Political Community with leaders from more than 45 countries; no account of the briefing was available at press time. Around 40 countries there declared that matters affecting European security should be decided with European governments. No European representative has been named. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said, "It's not about individuals; what matters is that Putin is prepared to hold talks."



The envoys travelled from Russia to Ireland in one day; the war they are mediating is in Ukraine.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The calendar is now the story: EU leaders meet informally in Dublin on 13 November, the Kremlin expects Putin and Trump to meet at the APEC summit in Shenzhen, and the European Council sits on 26-27 November.

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WORLD • SOUTHEAST ASIA

Indonesia's Vice President Gibran Resigns After Two Top Courts Reject His School Documents

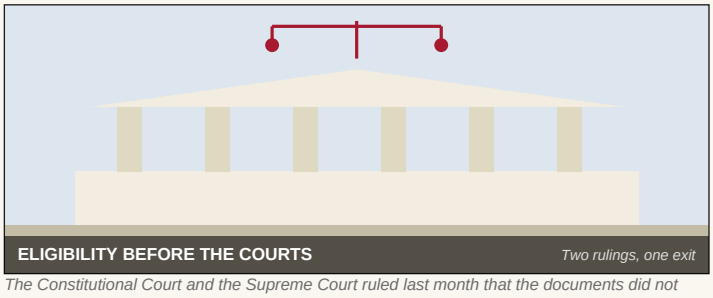
A petition by 120 lawmakers had opened the road to impeachment a day earlier; a successor must be elected within 60 days.

Indonesia's Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka, 39, resigned on Thursday 12 November, two years into a five-year term. He submitted his resignation to President Prabowo Subianto and to the leadership of the People's Consultative Assembly, the country's highest legislative body, at the parliament building in Jakarta. The Associated Press reported that he is the first vice president to resign before the end of a term since the fall of Suharto and the start of democratic reforms in 1998.

The immediate cause was a dispute over his schooling. Election law requires presidential and vice-presidential candidates to have completed senior high school or an equivalent. Gibran finished secondary school overseas and so had to show that his qualifications matched an Indonesian diploma; critics accuse him of never having received one. Last month the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court ruled that the documents he submitted did not meet election requirements.

Parliament then moved. On Wednesday 11 November, 120 lawmakers from eight parties petitioned the leaders of the House of Representatives, opening a process that could have ended in impeachment: a special committee examines whether the constitution was violated and, if it finds sufficient basis, the House must ask the Constitutional Court to rule. Gibran had offered to resign on Tuesday. Prabowo said he accepted the resignation with a "heavy heart".

The controversy is older than the diploma. Gibran is the eldest son of former President Joko Widodo, Prabowo's predecessor. As a candidate he was below the minimum age of 40, and an October 2023 Constitutional Court ruling created an exception for people who had served as regional leaders; critics called that ruling a conflict of interest. Widodo, speaking from his hometown of Solo, said political posts are temporary and that the family would keep supporting the government.



The Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court ruled last month that the documents did not meet election requirements.

CONNECT THE DOTS

Civics: the vacancy triggers no election. The People's Consultative Assembly must elect a successor within 60 days from two candidates nominated by the president. The office has few constitutional powers; its holder mainly represents the president and takes over if he cannot serve.

INDIA • CLIMATE POLICY

India Slips Five Places to 28th in Climate Change Performance Index; Top Three Ranks Stay Vacant

The index, released at COP31, faults the gap between India's renewable capacity and its transmission network.

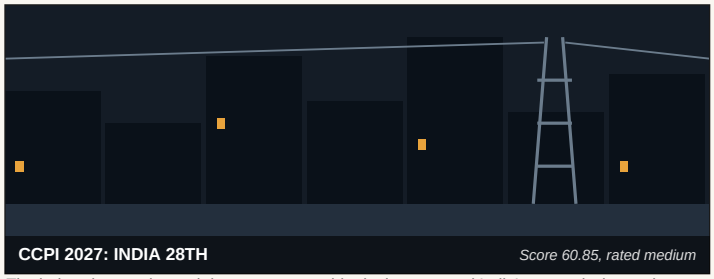
India has slipped five places to 28th in the 2027 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), with a score of 60.85 and an overall rating of "medium". It was 23rd in the previous edition. The index was released on Wednesday at COP31, the United Nations climate summit in Antalya, Turkey.

The CCPI is compiled annually by two non-governmental organisations, Germanwatch and the NewClimate Institute, with Climate Action Network International, and tracks countries' greenhouse gas emissions and climate policies. It scores four categories. Greenhouse gas emissions carry 40% of the weight; renewable energy, energy use and climate policy carry 20% each.

The report traces India's rating to a mismatch between the renewable energy it has deployed and its transmission and distribution network. Non-fossil sources reached 50% of India's installed electricity capacity in 2025, but the report stresses that installed capacity is not the same as energy actually used. Better grid security, fewer transmission failures and lower distribution losses, it says, would let India use more of its renewable power and burn less fossil fuel.

The first three places were left empty. "No country is doing enough to prevent dangerous climate change," the index says. Denmark is the highest-ranked country, in fourth place with 84.05 points; it has cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25% over the last five years and is on track for a 70% cut from 1990 levels by 2030. Its emissions score is only "medium", but renewables make up a very high share of its energy use. Others rated "very high" include Lithuania, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Morocco, Chile and the Netherlands. The report credits the UK's place to its Climate Change Act, which sets a net-zero target for 2050, its support for clean energy and its plans to phase out fossil fuel-based electricity generation.

The countries running this year's summit fare badly. Turkey, the host, is rated "very low": the report says it is still exploring new oil and gas fields and lacks a legally binding decarbonisation pathway. Australia, which chairs the COP31 negotiations, is 54th and also "very low"; the report cites its Future Gas Strategy, which supports gas supply beyond 2050. The United States and Iran are the lowest-ranked: both have very high emissions and are among the world's largest fossil fuel producers. The report attributes the US position to President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, which Iran has not ratified.



The index cites a mismatch between renewable deployment and India's transmission and distribution network.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The ranking turns on delivery, not targets: India reached 50% non-fossil capacity, yet the index judges how much clean power is actually used. Transmission and distribution are where it locates the gap.

POLITICS & CIVICS • US SENATE

How 65 Votes Became a Result: Democrat Scott Colom Takes Mississippi's Senate Seat After a Count Lasting Days

Colom won 49.2% to Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith's 48.7%; Democrats will hold at least 55 Senate seats.

Democrat Scott Colom has won the US Senate seat for Mississippi, defeating the Republican incumbent, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith. The election was held on 3 November, but the Associated Press (AP) called the race only on Wednesday 11 November. By AP's figures Colom took 49.2% of the vote to Hyde-Smith's 48.7%.

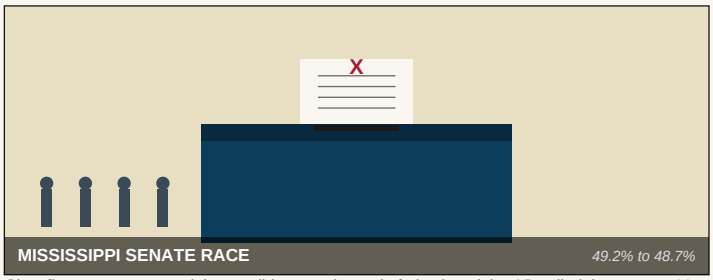
The delay shows how close contests are settled. At the end of election night the candidates were separated by just 65 votes. Local election officials then spent several days processing absentee and provisional ballots, the latter also called affidavit ballots, and Colom's lead grew as the count went on. Hyde-Smith conceded in a video posted on X on Wednesday evening, saying she respects "the decision of Mississippi voters"; Colom's campaign confirmed that she also telephoned him.

The result is striking because of where it happened. Donald Trump carried Mississippi by 23 points in the 2024 presidential election. Colom will be the state's first Black US senator since Reconstruction, the period after the American Civil War. Mississippi has the largest share of Black voters of any state, and AP reported strong turnout in the Mississippi Delta and in majority-Black counties, with nearly the whole state shifting toward the Democrats compared with 2024.

Colom, 43, is a district attorney, a local prosecutor. In 2022 President Biden nominated him to be a federal judge in Mississippi, and Hyde-Smith blocked the nomination under Senate custom. He campaigned on the cost of living and healthcare and said the Iran war and tariffs had hurt Mississippi farmers, while avoiding personal attacks on Trump or his voters. An NBC exit poll found that a majority of Mississippi voters disapproved of the president's job performance.

Hyde-Smith, 67, was appointed to the Senate in 2018 and was seeking a second full term. She was the first woman elected to represent Mississippi in Congress.

Nationally, Mississippi is the eighth Senate seat the Democrats have taken from the Republicans in these midterm elections, after North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Ohio, Iowa, Kansas and Maine. From January they will hold at least 55 seats to the Republicans' 44. One race is undecided: in Alaska, Democrat Mary Peltola led Republican Senator Dan Sullivan by 48.9% to 47.3% with 84% of the vote counted.



Sixty-five votes separated the candidates at the end of election night; AP called the race on 11 November.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Midterm elections fall halfway through a president's term. The Senate confirms judges and senior officials and must pass every law, so a larger opposition majority there constrains the president for the rest of his term.

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ECONOMY • INDIA INFLATION

Retail Inflation at 6.09% Breaches RBI's Upper Limit for the First Time in Two Years; December Rate Rise Expected

Food inflation reached 8.94% in October, with onion prices up 116% on the year; rural inflation ran at 6.63%.

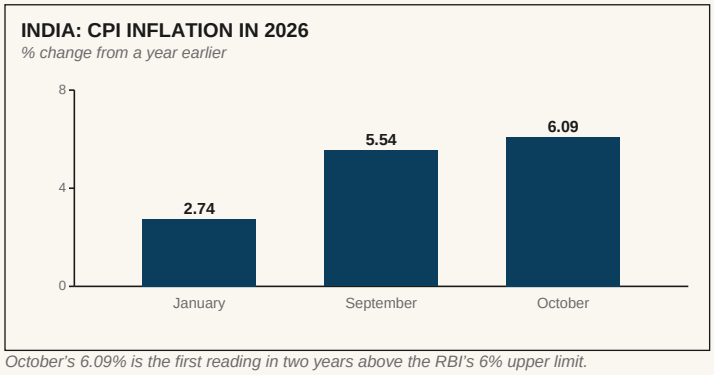
India's retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rose to 6.09% in October from 5.54% in September, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) reported on Thursday 12 November. It is the highest reading of 2026, up from 2.74% in January, and the first in two years above 6%, the upper limit of the Reserve Bank of India's tolerance band.

Food drove the rise. Food inflation climbed to 8.94% from 7.74% in September. Onion prices were 116.22% higher than a year earlier, garlic 60.74%, ginger 48.32% and lemon 47.30%, while potato fell 14.24% and cauliflower 10.57%. The pressure was broad: inflation rose in 11 of the CPI's 12 divisions. It was also uneven, at 6.63% in rural areas against 5.41% in urban ones; rural inflation has exceeded urban since February.

Two technical points qualify the headline. Month on month, prices rose 0.51%, slower than September's 0.69%. But prices were flat in October 2025, and that low base pushed the annual rate up, the so-called base effect. Nor is one month above 6% a formal failure of the inflation target: that requires average inflation to stay outside the 2% to 6% band for three consecutive quarters.

The policy response is nonetheless expected to be swift. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.5% on 7 October, by a unanimous vote, and its statement then warned of "continued pressures from the supply side", citing the deficient monsoon, El Nino and energy and commodity prices. The MPC next meets on 2-4 December. Aditi Nayar, chief economist of the ratings agency ICRA, said a further 25 basis point rise is "almost certain".

The outlook depends on the farm. Nayar expects CPI inflation to stay above 6% for the next couple of months, citing milk, sugar and onion prices, and warned that a deficient monsoon and low reservoir levels threaten the rabi (winter) crop. In October the RBI had projected inflation of 5.2% for the financial year 2026-27.



October's 6.09% is the first reading in two years above the RBI's 6% upper limit.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Food and beverages make up 36.75% of the CPI basket, so food-led inflation hits household budgets directly, most of all in rural India; a higher repo rate, meanwhile, raises the cost of loans.

THINK LIKE AN ANALYST

If monthly price rises are slowing, why is the annual rate still climbing? Can a higher repo rate bring down the price of onions, and if not, what is it meant to achieve?

SCIENCE & TECH • CARBON CYCLE

Thirty Years of Oxygen Data Show the Ocean Absorbing More Carbon While the Land Sink Has Stalled

A study in Science finds the ocean sink growing faster than models simulate; land uptake peaked around 2009.

Of the carbon dioxide released by burning fossil fuels, only part stays in the air. The rest is absorbed by the ocean and by the land, natural reservoirs known as carbon sinks. A study published in the journal Science on 12 November reports that the two sinks have behaved very differently since 1990.

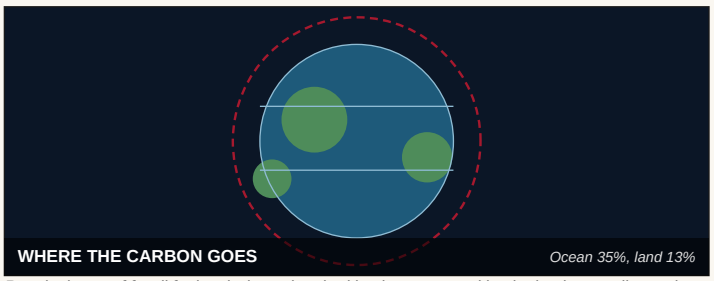
The international team was led by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego, with co-authors from the University of Exeter. It used more than 30 years of measurements of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to distinguish how much carbon the land and the ocean each absorb.

The ocean took up about 2.8 billion tonnes of carbon a year on average between 1990 and 2019, roughly 35% of fossil fuel emissions over that period. That sink has strengthened by about 0.63 billion tonnes of carbon per decade, substantially more than current model simulations represent.

The land absorbed about 1 billion tonnes of carbon a year, roughly 13% of fossil fuel emissions. Its net uptake has shown no notable long-term increase for more than 30 years; it peaked around 2009 and has generally declined since. That is the uncomfortable finding. Many land models predict that uptake should be rising, because higher levels of carbon dioxide and nitrogen stimulate plant growth. The stagnation is the more notable because emissions from land use, such as deforestation, have reportedly been declining.

The method depends on measurements of unusual delicacy. Professor Andrew Watson of Exeter said that measuring atmospheric oxygen at the parts-per-million precision the work requires is "incredibly difficult". Science published a commentary alongside the paper under the title "Oxygen tells the tale of Earth's carbon sinks".

Neither trend is guaranteed to continue. Warmer water holds less carbon dioxide, and warmer surface water mixes less efficiently into the deep ocean, so climate change may reduce the ocean's future uptake. What the ocean does absorb has a cost: dissolved carbon dioxide lowers the pH of seawater, a process called ocean acidification. The study's funders include the US National Science Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the authors argue that long-term measurement programmes need stable funding.



Rough shares of fossil fuel emissions absorbed by the ocean and by the land, according to the study.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Projections of future warming assume the sinks keep absorbing a share of emissions. If the land's uptake has stalled, more carbon dioxide remains in the air than land models expect.

ONE-LINE BRIEFS

• COP31: Russia, Saudi Arabia and the Like-Minded Developing Countries, a group that includes India and China, questioned Australia's process for a cover decision on day four; Solomon Islands pledged $400,000 to the Green Climate Fund, the first pledge to its third replenishment.

• Nvidia: Co-founder Jensen Huang, 63, resigned as chief executive on 12 November amid FBI, congressional and company investigations; chief financial officer Colette Kress became interim chief executive, and the shares fell roughly 10% in early trading.

• Planetary science: University of New Mexico researchers reported in Nature Geoscience that hydrogen converted almost 80% of the iron oxide in heated rock samples to metallic iron, releasing water vapour, a possible source of the early Earth's water.

• Railways: The locomotive and five coaches of the Kolkata-Sairang Express derailed at Digaru station in Assam at about 6:54 am on 11 November; several passengers had minor injuries and no deaths were reported.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Words that unlock today's news

Repo rate
The rate at which a central bank lends short-term funds to commercial banks. Today: the RBI's repo rate is 5.5% after a rise on 7 October.

Carbon sink
A natural system that absorbs more carbon than it releases. Today: the ocean sink has strengthened while the land sink has stalled.

Provisional ballot
A vote set aside until officials confirm the voter's eligibility. Today: processing such ballots delayed the Mississippi result for days.

Base effect
The influence of last year's price level on this year's inflation rate. Today: flat prices in October 2025 lifted India's annual figure.

DID YOU KNOW?

Methane is almost 90 times more potent than carbon dioxide. About 40% of methane emissions come from agriculture, over 20% from landfill waste and a third from oil and gas, Climate Home News reported from COP31; the 2021 Global Methane Pledge aims to cut emissions 30% by 2030. At the summit, France's environment minister Monique Barbut said oil and gas companies should cut methane intensity to "almost zero" by 2030, and Barbados's Prime Minister Mia Mottley called for a legally binding global methane treaty.

EXPLAINER

How India's inflation target works

India's monetary policy follows a flexible inflation target. The RBI is charged with keeping CPI inflation at 4%, with a tolerance band of two percentage points on either side: a floor of 2% and a ceiling of 6%.

The main instrument is the repo rate, set by the Monetary Policy Committee. Raising it makes credit dearer, which cools demand and, with a lag, prices. It works poorly against supply shocks such as a poor harvest.

One month outside the band, as in October, is not a breach. The target is treated as missed only if average inflation stays above 6% or below 2% for three consecutive quarters.

The inflation figure itself comes from MoSPI, whose field staff collect prices on a weekly roster from 1,407 urban markets, including online ones, and 1,465 villages across all states. The committee that acts on it has six members; the RBI Governor chairs it and holds a casting vote in a tie.

QUIZ

Eight questions on this issue

1. US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on 12 November. In which building did the meeting take place?

(a) The Senate Palace of the Kremlin (b) The parliament building (c) The Presidential Palace

2. Volodymyr Zelenskyy was in Dublin for a gathering of leaders from more than 45 countries. Which summit was he attending?

(a) The APEC summit (b) The ninth European Political Community summit (c) The European Council

3. Indonesia's vice-presidential vacancy does not trigger an election. Within how many days must the People's Consultative Assembly elect a successor from the president's two nominees?

(a) 30 days (b) 90 days (c) 60 days

4. India slipped five places in the 2027 Climate Change Performance Index, released at COP31 in Antalya. What is its new rank?

(a) 23rd (b) 28th (c) 54th

5. The CCPI scores four categories: greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, energy use and climate policy. What weight do greenhouse gas emissions carry?

(a) 40% (b) 20% (c) 50%

6. Mississippi's Senate race was not called until 11 November. How many votes separated Scott Colom and Cindy Hyde-Smith at the end of election night?

(a) 650 (b) 6,500 (c) 65

7. India's retail inflation crossed the RBI's 6% upper limit for the first time in two years. What was the CPI inflation rate in October 2026?

(a) 5.54% (b) 6.09% (c) 8.94%

8. A study in Science found that the land carbon sink has shown no notable long-term increase for more than 30 years. Around which year did its uptake peak?

(a) 2009 (b) 1990 (c) 2019

Answers: 1-a, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-a, 6-c, 7-b, 8-a

TOMORROW'S WATCHLIST

• Dublin, 13 November: EU leaders meet informally after the envoys' briefing to Zelenskyy. No formal decision is expected, but watch for an understanding on who will represent Europe, and for a date and venue for the next three-way round that Witkoff says is set. The EU is also preparing a 22nd package of sanctions on Russia before the European Council of 26-27 November.

• Antalya, 13-14 November: Australia, which chairs the COP31 negotiations, is expected to publish a summary of the cover decision discussions on Friday and take written submissions until Saturday, when a first draft is likely. France wants the text to carry a strong mention of methane; Russia, Saudi Arabia and others doubt a cover decision is needed at all.

• India, 2-4 December: the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee meets with October inflation above its 6% upper limit; ICRA's Aditi Nayar calls a 25 basis point rise in the repo rate, now 5.5%, "almost certain". Also watch Alaska, the one US Senate race still undecided.

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