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ROUTINE AGENDA ITEMS CLEARED



COP31 President Murat Kurum surrounded by advisors during the closing plenary at the COP31 in Antalya, Turkey, Sunday. REUTERS

COP31 concludes without agreement as countries differ on fossil fuel phase-out

India engaged constructively... we

map on fossil fuel phase-out, but had to eventually step back, as oil-dependent economies like Saudi Arabia managed the support of large influential econ-

agenda, and the countries decided on a number of these. Each of these decisions become the successful outcome of COP31.

Apart from the official agenda, the host country, which also serves as the president of COP, proposes a set of draft agreements, in consultations with other countries, with the objective of accelerating global climate action. After two weeks of negotiations, and give and take, if the countries finally agree to adopt these proposals by consensus, these become the cover text or political agreement, and is given a name by the host country. At COP31, Turkey had proposed to call it the Antalya Pact. The draft text went through multiple rounds of changes, but still failed to get consensus, and was dropped.

The last time a similar thing had happened was in 2009, at COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark. The stakes there were much higher, as countries were attempting to finalise a new climate agreement, which eventually happened a year later in

ment. "The absence of a cover decision does not pause climate action," Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said, while acknowledging that India, too, had reservations on some of the elements of the cover decision that was rejected.

"India engaged constructively and tirelessly with the presidencies (Turkey and Australia) and other parties. While concerns remain over certain elements of the cover decision, we remain committed to dialogue and constructive engagement until the very end to build consensus," he said.

The inclusion of some language on fossil fuel phase-out was not the only contentious issue in the draft political agreement. There were deep divisions on other important issues like a proposed global target to achieve 35 per cent electrification rate by 2035, a new adaptation finance goal, and the emphasis on the use of carbon capture and storage technologies as a mitigation strategy.

But it was the clash over fossil fuels that became the main reason for rejecting the agreement. A transition away from fossil fuels like coal, oil or gas is central

1. COP31 Ends Without Agreement on Fossil Fuel Phase-out

Source: The Hindu, 22 November 2026
GS Paper III: Environment, Climate Change and International Agreements

Context: COP31, held in Antalya, Türkiye, ended without consensus on its main political agreement due to disagreements over phasing out fossil fuels, climate finance and other mitigation measures. However, routine agenda decisions were cleared.

1. Why Did COP31 Fail?

Fossil Fuel Phase-out – The Main Disagreement

- **Meaning:** Gradually reducing and eventually ending the use of coal, oil and natural gas, replacing them with renewable and other low-carbon energy sources.
- **Why Important?** Fossil fuels meet over 80% of global energy needs, while their combustion contributes nearly three-fourths of annual global greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Countries Supporting It:** The European Union and over 80 countries, including several Small Island Developing States (SIDS), demanded a clear roadmap for fossil-fuel phase-out.
- **Opposition:** Saudi Arabia opposed the proposal, while India and China had reservations about including explicit phase-out language in the agreement.
- **Outcome:** The proposed Antalya Pact failed to achieve consensus. Under the UN climate negotiation process, decisions require consensus, allowing even one country to block an agreement.

2. Other Major Disagreements

1. **Climate Adaptation Finance:** Disagreement over a new financial target to help developing countries deal with floods, droughts, rising temperatures and other climate impacts.
2. **Electrification Target:** Countries differed over a proposed global target of achieving a 35% electrification rate by 2035.
3. **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS):** Disagreement over the role of technology in reducing emissions from industries and power plants.
    - **Capture:** Separating carbon dioxide from industrial emissions.
    - **Transport:** Carrying captured carbon dioxide to storage locations.
    - **Storage:** Injecting it into deep underground geological formations for long-term storage.
4. **Debate:**
   Supporters consider CCS useful for reducing emissions from hard-to-decarbonise

industries such as cement and steel. Critics caution that it should not become an excuse to continue fossil-fuel dependence.

3. India's Position

1. **Energy Security:** India emphasises affordable and reliable energy for its growing population and economy.
2. **Climate Equity:** Developing countries should not face identical transition obligations despite differences in historical emissions and development levels.
3. **Climate Finance:** Developed countries must provide adequate financial and technological support to developing economies.
4. **Constructive Engagement:** India engaged with the Turkish and Australian presidencies but retained reservations over the proposed agreement.

4. Major Implications

1. **North–South Divide:** Persistent differences over historical responsibility, climate finance and emission-reduction obligations.
2. **Energy Transition:** Developing countries must balance decarbonisation with economic growth and energy access.
3. **Climate Finance Gap:** Inadequate funding can weaken adaptation and resilience in vulnerable countries.
4. **Global Cooperation:** Consensus-based negotiations make it difficult to achieve ambitious climate commitments.

5. Important International Frameworks

- **UNFCCC, 1992:** Framework for international climate cooperation.
- **Kyoto Protocol, 1997:** Established legally binding emission-reduction targets for developed countries.
- **Paris Agreement, 2015:** Seeks to limit global warming to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to restrict it to 1.5°C.
- **COP15, 2009:** Copenhagen conference also failed to achieve consensus on a comprehensive climate agreement.

6. UPSC Prelims PYQs

UPSC Prelims 2023 – Carbon Capture and Sequestration

Consider the following activities:

1. Spreading finely ground basalt rock on farmlands extensively.
2. Increasing the alkalinity of oceans by adding lime.
3. Capturing carbon dioxide released by industries and pumping it into abandoned subterranean mines in the form of carbonated waters.

How many of the above activities are considered for carbon capture and sequestration?

Answer: All three.

UPSC Prelims 2017 – Potential Sites for Carbon Sequestration

Which of the following can be potential sites for carbon sequestration?

1. Abandoned and uneconomic coal seams.
2. Depleted oil and gas reservoirs.
3. Subterranean deep saline formations.

Answer: 1, 2 and 3.

EXPRESS special

Car, Govt job, free food: Study flags 13% 'inclusion error' in PM Garib Kalyan scheme

Over 51,000 beneficiaries surveyed; Bengal tops with 39.5% error rate

Harikishan Sharma
New Delhi, November 22

AN EVALUATION study commissioned by the Centre has found a 13.2 per cent "inclusion error" among beneficiaries of its free foodgrain scheme, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013.

The study, conducted during the financial year 2025-26, has found that several households that do not meet the prescribed eligibility criteria set by

• Ration overreach?

State	Beneficiaries	Error (%)*
High Inclusion Error		
West Bengal	6 crore	39.5
Tamil Nadu	3.63 crore	38.7
Bihar	8.14 crore	25.5
Odisha	3.21crore	22.9
Punjab	1.36 crore	20.6
Maharashtra	6.54 crore	20.3
Low Inclusion Error		
Madhya Pradesh	5.19 crore	0.5

13% 'inclusion error'

list (39.5 per cent), followed by Tripura (39.2 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (38.7 per cent).

In states with high inclusion errors, the study found that the top contributing factors include households having pucca houses with three or more rooms, air conditioners, motor vehicles and government jobs (*see chart*).

The study does not provide a state-wise break-up of the total sample size of 51,303 beneficiaries, but says that a minimum of 550 beneficiaries per state and Union Territory were selected. It defined "inclusion error" as the "households that do not meet the prescribed eligibility criteria continue to receive subsidised food grains".

The findings are significant as the Centre's food subsidy stood at Rs 2.28 lakh crore, almost half of the total subsidy bill of Rs 4.69 lakh crore, during the financial year 2025-26.

The DFPD functions under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and administers the food security law. The Department did not respond to an emailed questionnaire from *The Indian Express* on the study's findings.

Under the NFSA, the government provides food security to 75 per cent rural and 50 per cent urban households. In absolute terms, the maximum number of people who can be covered by the Act is about 81.35 crore, with the figure at 78.63 crore as of Oc-

Tamil Nadu (38.7%), Tripura (39.2%), and Meghalaya (28.5%), exhibit very high inclusion errors. These findings suggest the need for continued strengthening of eligibility validation, Aadhaar seeding, and periodic reviews of beneficiary databases," the report said.

"States including Bihar (25.5%), Odisha (22.9%), Sikkim (21.9%), Punjab (20.6%), and Maharashtra (20.3%) show moderate-to-high inclusion errors, indicating partial system inefficiencies... States such as Madhya Pradesh (0.5%), Jammu & Kashmir (0.3%), Haryana (1.0%), Delhi (1.0%), and Rajasthan (1.8%) exhibit low inclusion errors, reflecting stronger targeting frameworks, better digitisation, and more effective beneficiary validation systems," it said.

"A clear regional trend emerges in eastern and northeastern states, such as West Bengal, Tripura, and Meghalaya, which exhibit higher inclusion errors, while northern and western states (e.g., Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat) perform relatively better, suggesting differences in governance capacity, data systems, and implementation rigour," it said.

According to Section 9 of the food security law, the overall number of beneficiaries is determined by the Centre but under Section 10, the responsibility for identifying households on the ground and preparing guide-

2. PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana: 13.2% Inclusion Error in Foodgrain Distribution

Source: The Indian Express, 22 November 2026
GS Paper II: Governance, Food Security and Welfare Schemes

Context: A Centre-commissioned evaluation found that 13.2% of households receiving free foodgrains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, do not satisfy State-prescribed eligibility criteria.

1. Major Findings

1. **Sample:** 51,303 beneficiary households across 36 States/UTs during 2025–26.
2. **Overall inclusion error:** 13.2%; rural areas 12.5%, urban areas 15.6%.
3. **Highest state-wise errors:** West Bengal (39.5%), Tripura (39.2%), Tamil Nadu (38.7%), Meghalaya (28.5%) and Bihar (25.5%).
4. **Lowest errors:** Jammu and Kashmir (0.3%), Madhya Pradesh (0.5%), Haryana and Delhi (1% each), Rajasthan (1.8%).
5. **Beneficiary categories:** AAY households recorded 12.2% inclusion error, compared with 13.4% among Priority Household (PHH) beneficiaries.

2. Reasons for Inclusion Errors

1. **Inappropriate asset-based eligibility:** Households owning cars, air conditioners or houses with three or more rooms continue receiving benefits despite State exclusion criteria.
2. **Employment-related exclusion criteria:** Households with government-employed members may remain on beneficiary lists.
3. **Outdated beneficiary databases:** Inadequate periodic verification fails to capture changes in household income, assets and employment.
4. **Variation across States:** Differences in the design, scope and updating of eligibility criteria lead to uneven identification.
5. **Weak validation mechanisms:** Gaps in beneficiary verification allow ineligible households to continue receiving subsidised foodgrains.

3. Governance Implications

1. **Leakage of welfare benefits:** Ineligible households receive benefits intended for vulnerable sections, weakening targeted delivery.
2. **Fiscal efficiency:** Food subsidy expenditure stood at ₹2.28 lakh crore in 2025–26, out of a total food subsidy bill of ₹4.69 lakh crore.
3. **Regional governance gap:** High error rates in eastern and northeastern States indicate uneven beneficiary identification and implementation capacity.

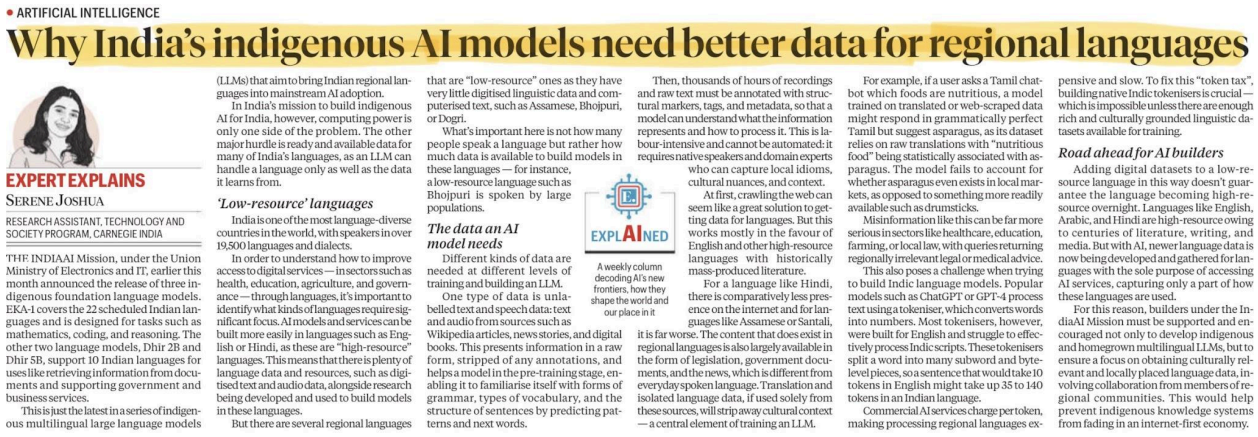
4. **Last-mile delivery:** Inaccurate lists weaken the ability to ensure that eligible and vulnerable households receive food security benefits.
5. **Centre–State coordination:** While the Centre determines overall coverage, States are responsible for identifying eligible households, making effective coordination essential.

4. Way Forward

1. **Periodic eligibility review:** Regularly verify household income, assets, employment and other exclusion criteria.
2. **Database strengthening:** Improve data updating, Aadhaar seeding and inter-departmental data coordination.
3. **Dynamic eligibility criteria:** Update State-level criteria to reflect changing socio-economic conditions.
4. **Social audits:** Involve local institutions and communities in identifying ineligible beneficiaries and eligible households left out.
5. **Safeguards against exclusion:** Ensure that Aadhaar authentication or database errors do not deny foodgrains to genuine beneficiaries.

5. NFSA, 2013: Relevant Provisions

- **Coverage:** Up to 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population.
- **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY):** 35 kg of foodgrains per household per month.
- **Priority Households (PHH):** 5 kg per person per month.
- **Section 9:** Centre determines the overall number of beneficiaries.
- **Section 10:** States identify eligible households and prepare identification guidelines.



• ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Why India's indigenous AI models need better data for regional languages

EXPERT EXPLAINS

SERENE JOSHUA

RESEARCH ASSISTANT, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY PROGRAM, CARNEGIE INDIA

THE INDIAAI Mission, under the Union Ministry of Electronics and IT, earlier this month announced the release of three indigenous foundation language models. EKA-1 covers the 22 scheduled Indian languages and is designed for tasks such as mathematics, coding, and reasoning. The other two language models, Dhir 2B and Dhir 5B, support 10 Indian languages for uses like retrieving information from documents and supporting government and business services.

This is just the latest in a series of indigenous multilingual large language models (LLMs) that aim to bring Indian regional languages into mainstream AI adoption.

In India's mission to build indigenous AI for India, however, computing power is only one side of the problem. The other major hurdle is ready and available data for many of India's languages, as an LLM can handle a language only as well as the data it learns from.

'Low-resource' languages

India is one of the most language-diverse countries in the world, with speakers in over 19,500 languages and dialects.

In order to understand how to improve access to digital services — in sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and governance — through languages, it's important to identify what kinds of languages require significant focus. AI models and services can be built more easily in languages such as English or Hindi, as these are "high-resource" languages. This means that there is plenty of language data and resources, such as digitised text and audio data, alongside research being developed and used to build models in these languages.

But there are several regional languages that are "low-resource" ones as they have very little digitised linguistic data and computerised text, such as Assamese, Bhojpuri, or Dogri.

What's important here is not how many people speak a language but rather how much data is available to build models in these languages — for instance, a low-resource language such as Bhojpuri is spoken by large populations.

The data an AI model needs

Different kinds of data are needed at different levels of training and building an LLM.

One type of data is unlabelled text and speech data: text and audio from sources such as Wikipedia articles, news stories, and digital books. This presents information in a raw form, stripped of any annotations, and helps a model in the pre-training stage, enabling it to familiarise itself with forms of grammar, types of vocabulary, and the structure of sentences by predicting patterns and next words.

EXPLAINED

A weekly column decoding AI's new frontiers, how they shape the world and our place in it

Then, thousands of hours of recordings and raw text must be annotated with structural markers, tags, and metadata, so that a model can understand what the information represents and how to process it. This is labour-intensive and cannot be automated: it requires native speakers and domain experts who can capture local idioms, cultural nuances, and context.

At first, crawling the web can seem like a great solution to getting data for languages. But this works mostly in the favour of English and other high-resource languages with historically mass-produced literature.

For a language like Hindi, there is comparatively less presence on the internet and for languages like Assamese or Santali, it is far worse. The content that does exist in regional languages is also largely available in the form of legislation, government documents, and the news, which is different from everyday spoken language. Translation and isolated language data, if used solely from these sources, will strip away cultural context — a central element of training an LLM.

For example, if a user asks a Tamil chatbot which foods are nutritious, a model trained on translated or web-scraped data might respond in grammatically perfect Tamil but suggest asparagus, as its dataset relies on raw translations with "nutritious food" being statistically associated with asparagus. The model fails to account for whether asparagus even exists in local markets, as opposed to something more readily available such as drumsticks.

Misinformation like this can be far more serious in sectors like healthcare, education, farming, or local law, with queries returning regionally irrelevant legal or medical advice.

This also poses a challenge when trying to build Indic language models. Popular models such as ChatGPT or GPT-4 process text using a tokeniser, which converts words into numbers. Most tokenisers, however, were built for English and struggle to effectively process Indic scripts. These tokenisers split a word into many subword and byte-level pieces, so a sentence that would take 10 tokens in English might take up 35 to 140 tokens in an Indian language.

Commercial AI services charge per token, making processing regional languages expensive and slow. To fix this "token tax", building native Indic tokenisers is crucial — which is impossible unless there are enough rich and culturally grounded linguistic datasets available for training.

Road ahead for AI builders

Adding digital datasets to a low-resource language in this way doesn't guarantee the language becoming high-resource overnight. Languages like English, Arabic, and Hindi are high-resource owing to centuries of literature, writing, and media. But with AI, newer language data is now being developed and gathered for languages with the sole purpose of accessing AI services, capturing only a part of how these languages are used.

For this reason, builders under the IndiaAI Mission must be supported and encouraged not only to develop indigenous and homegrown multilingual LLMs, but to ensure a focus on obtaining culturally relevant and locally placed language data, involving collaboration from members of regional communities. This would help prevent indigenous knowledge systems from fading in an internet-first economy.

3. Why India's Indigenous AI Models Need Better Data for Regional Languages

Source: The Indian Express
GS Paper III: Science & Technology – Artificial Intelligence
GS Paper II: Governance, Inclusion and Digital Divide

Context: India's indigenous Large Language Models (LLMs) face a major challenge due to inadequate digital linguistic data, limited cultural representation and inefficient processing of regional languages.

1. India's Indigenous AI Initiatives

- **IndiaAI Mission:** Supports the development of indigenous foundation models for Indian languages.
- **EKA-1:** Covers 22 scheduled Indian languages; designed for mathematics, coding and reasoning.
- **Dhir 2B and Dhir 5B:** Support 10 Indian languages, including document-based information retrieval and government/business services.

2. Major Challenges

1. **Low-resource languages:** Despite India's linguistic diversity (over 19,500 languages and dialects), languages such as Assamese, Bhojpuri and Dogri have limited digitised text and linguistic resources.
2. **Poor-quality training data:** Raw text and audio need annotations, grammatical markers, tags and metadata to capture linguistic structure and context.
3. **Lack of cultural representation:** Translated and web-scraped content often fails to capture local idioms, meanings and everyday usage.
4. **High data-creation costs:** Thousands of hours of recordings require labour-intensive annotation by native speakers and domain experts.
5. **Tokenisation barrier (Token Tax):** English-oriented tokenisers process Indian scripts inefficiently. A sentence requiring 10 tokens in English may require 35–140 tokens in an Indian language, increasing computational costs.
6. **Algorithmic bias and misinformation:** Models trained on inadequate or unrepresentative datasets can produce culturally irrelevant or inaccurate responses, particularly in healthcare, agriculture, education and law.

3. Governance Implications

1. **Digital divide:** Inadequate regional-language AI restricts access to digital services for non-English-speaking populations.
2. **Unequal AI access:** Higher token-processing costs make regional-language AI services more expensive.
3. **Knowledge preservation:** Poor digital representation risks weakening indigenous languages and local knowledge systems.

4. **Public service delivery:** Linguistic inaccuracies can undermine AI-enabled government services and access to essential information.
5. **Data sovereignty:** Dependence on translated or externally sourced datasets can weaken the representation of India's linguistic and cultural diversity.

4. Way Forward

1. **Build quality datasets:** Develop large, annotated and culturally grounded regional-language text and audio repositories.
2. **Community participation:** Involve native speakers, linguists and domain experts in data collection, annotation and validation.
3. **Develop Indic tokenisers:** Design language-specific processing systems to reduce token costs and improve efficiency.
4. **Strengthen indigenous research:** Support multilingual LLM development through the IndiaAI Mission.
5. **Contextual validation:** Test AI models against local linguistic and cultural realities, especially before deployment in critical sectors.

5. UPSC Prelims PYQ – 2026 (GS Paper I)

Question: Which of the following statements with regard to Large Language Models (LLMs) used in machine learning is/are correct?

1. LLMs assign probabilities to the next possible words and then pick the one with the highest probability.
2. LLMs process data through mathematical optimisation to minimise prediction errors.
3. LLMs produce unbiased outputs.

Options:
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Correct – LLMs predict subsequent tokens using probability distributions.
- Statement 2: Correct – Training uses mathematical optimisation to minimise prediction errors.
- Statement 3: Incorrect – Models can inherit and reproduce biases present in their training data.

FIRST SCO CIVILISATIONAL DIALOGUE FORUM CONCLUDES

SCO forum seeks 'equal voice' for all with 'Indraprastha Communique'

On Indus Waters Treaty, Pakistan minister: 'Let's discuss SCO issues first'

Divya A
New Delhi, November 22

THE INAUGURAL edition of the SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum concluded at New Delhi's Purana Qila on Sunday evening with the "Indraprastha Communique", which outlines areas of consensus among participating countries -- from the protection of cultural heritage, including from illicit trafficking, to "respecting every civilisation as an equal voice".

Speaking to reporters, Union Culture Secretary Vivek Aggarwal said the three-day forum witnessed extensive deliberations among delegations from member countries and dialogue partners on shared civilisational heritage, cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections.

"The 'Indraprastha Communique' will...provide a comprehensive summary of the session, outlining areas where consensus was reached and detailing how this civilisation dialogue can be further advanced," Aggarwal said, adding that forum, mooted by India, will be held biennially under the SCO framework.

Asked about bilateral talks on the sidelines, given the presence of Pakistan Climate Change Minister Musadik Masood Malik at event, Aggarwal said, "There were no formal bilateral talks between the two sides." However, he said members of the Indian side did have interactions with Malik over banquets, and that there were other similar interactions during the forum.

Both India and Pakistan held separate bilateral meetings on the sidelines with visiting ministers and deputy ministers from Iran, Tajikistan and Nepal.

This is the first visit by a Pakistani minister to India after Operation Sindoor in May last year. Asked about his earlier remarks on India's decision to place the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, Malik said, "Let's discuss the SCO issues that I am here for first...when you call me to talk on Indus, I will talk on that subject."

He said, "I believe the issues concerning the region should be resolved. I believe the first focus of region should be on the poor and vulnerable people. In fact, I give you (India) even more credit for bringing together leaders from so many foreign countries. Isn't it better that we all sit together and discuss the people who are affected by all these issues? Let's talk about them, find solutions for them and explore ways forward for them. This is an easy conversation. So, let's have the easy conversation first."

With Pakistan hosting the SCO Summit next year, Malik had expressed hope on Friday that such visits would continue.

Meanwhile, emphasising the role of cultural dialogue in international relations, Aggarwal said, "Cultural exchange serves as a bridge, bringing citizens of various nations closer to one another. Thus, such cultural and civilisational dialogue will, in the times ahead, help foster a sense of unity across the globe by highlighting the essence and distinct qualities of Indian civilisation."

Aggarwal said, "If we share India's soft power and cultural richness along with its core message with the rest of the world, we effectively convey a message of peace."

The forum, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 20, saw the participation of delegates from over 20 SCO member countries, observer countries and dialogue partners, including Iran, China, Russia, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkey.

Four technical sessions were held, covering manuscripts and linguistic heritage, archaeology, cultural expressions and monastic trails, with experts sharing insights and delegations offering feedback. The outcome document's name reflects venue of the event -- Purana Qila, a site associated with the ancient city of Indraprastha, mentioned in the epic Mahabharata. A 14th century inscription mentioning Indraprastha as part of Delhi was also on display during the event.

The Communique underlined joint nomination by countries for UNESCO heritage tag.



Delegates attend the SCO Civilisation Dialogue Forum, which concluded at Purana Qila in New Delhi, Sunday. X/@MINOFCULTUREGOI

In statement, Culture Ministry highlights Pak minister's speech

Divya A
New Delhi, November 22

OVERCOMING THEIR initial hesitation about hosting a Pakistani minister—the first such visit since Operation Sindoor—the Ministry of Culture went the whole hog to signal camaraderie during the two days of the SCO Civilisation Dialogue Forum, highlighting Musadik Masood Malik's speech in their official release, hosting informal interactions over meals, even though no bilateral meeting was held.

On his part, Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination did not make any caustic remarks. He, in fact, thanked the culture ministry for its hospitality and for bringing delegates from the region together.

In his ministerial address Saturday, he emphasised that dialogue among civilisations was "essential". In the culture ministry's official release later in the day, his appreciation for the description of the event as 'Tehzeeb Ki Guftagu', or 'Dialogue of Civilisations', also found place. The statement referred to Malik's conversation with Culture Minister Gajendra Shekhawat on the event's opening day, Friday, where Malik said how "the layers of history and culture had been an integral part of the region's way of life for thousands of years".



Pakistan Minister Musadik Masood Malik on Sunday. PTI

"It was therefore important to recognise that distinct identities have their own significance, while dialogue among diverse identities is equally essential," the ministry quoted Malik as saying. "He (Malik) said participants had gathered precisely for this purpose—to bring together multiple voices and identities and facilitate the free flow of ideas among them," said the statement issued on Saturday.

Referring to archaeological remains from different periods discovered during excavations at Purana Qila, Malik said the fort where the delegates sat was, in itself, a story, according to the ministry.

In his statement in Urdu on Saturday, Malik invoked Ghalib, Taxila, Gandhara and Mohenjodaro to highlight the shared cultural links between South Asia and Central Asia, and invited delegates to visit Harappa and Mohenjodaro sites in Pakistan.

Quoting his address, former BJP Rajya Sabha MP Tarun Vijay posted on his X account, "Must welcome his invite and plan a visit to Mohenjo- Daro. Good move. Surprisingly, however, we did not show them Rakhigarhi, which is twice the size of Mohenjo-Daro."

"I met him there (at the Purana Qila SCO venue) with his wife; we spoke in fluent Punjabi, and found him to be someone one can talk to," said Vijay.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Forum on November 20. Alok Dimri, Additional Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, and National Coordinator for the SCO, said that the organisation now needed to move beyond its security-centric approach.

The ministry's statement made a passing reference to other "dignitaries and representatives" who shared their perspectives, including Azerbaijan's Minister of Culture, Adil Karimli; Nepal's Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Khadak Raj Poudel; and Tajikistan's Minister of Culture, Matlubakhon Amonzoda Sattoriyon.

While the proceedings over the weekend largely remained out of bounds for Indian media, a couple of Pakistani journalists posted videos of their conversations with Malik at Purana Qila.

4. First SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum: Indraprastha Communiqué

Source: The Indian Express, 22 November 2026
GS Paper II: International Relations, Cultural Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation

Context: The first Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Civilisational Dialogue Forum concluded at Purana Qila, New Delhi (20–22 November 2026), with the adoption of the Indraprastha Communiqué to promote cultural cooperation and equal recognition of civilisations.

1. Indraprastha Communiqué: Meaning and Key Provisions

A 12-point outcome document recording areas of convergence and proposing future cooperation among SCO countries. It provides a framework for cultural cooperation and is not a legally binding treaty.

Major commitments:

1. **Civilisational equality:** Respect every civilisation as an equal voice, recognising its identity and contribution.
2. **Shared heritage:** Joint projects and exhibitions on architecture, historical sites, music, cuisine, textiles and traditional knowledge.
3. **UNESCO cooperation:** Explore joint nominations of tangible, intangible and documentary heritage.
4. **Digital preservation:** Digitise, catalogue, preserve and translate manuscripts, literature, scripts and oral traditions; explore a shared digital repository.
5. **Technology and AI:** Use Artificial Intelligence to improve access to cultural heritage while maintaining historical accuracy and cultural context.
6. **Institutional cooperation:** Strengthen collaboration among museums, libraries, archives, universities and research institutions.
7. **People-to-people engagement:** Promote cultural festivals, joint exhibitions and exchanges of artists, scholars and students.
8. **Heritage protection:** Cooperate against illicit trafficking, environmental pressures and natural disasters; explore climate-resilience mechanisms.
9. **Spiritual traditions and youth:** Respect diverse philosophical traditions, pilgrimage sites and centres of learning; encourage youth participation in heritage preservation.

Institutional proposal: Hold the SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum every two years, with the venue decided by member countries at their respective SCO Summits.

2. Historical and Archaeological Sites Highlighted

Site / Civilisation	Location	Historical significance
Purana Qila	Delhi, India	Venue of the forum; associated with ancient Indraprastha of the Mahabharata tradition.
Taxila	Punjab, Pakistan	Ancient centre of learning and a major centre of Gandhara civilisation; associated with Buddhist scholarship.
Gandhara	Present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan	Ancient cultural region renowned for Greco-Buddhist art and Buddhist heritage.
Mohenjo-daro	Sindh, Pakistan	Major Indus Valley Civilisation site, known for planned urban settlement and drainage.
Harappa	Punjab, Pakistan	Important Indus Valley Civilisation site from which the Harappan Civilisation derives its name.

These sites illustrate historical connections across South and Central Asia through trade, Buddhism, education, architecture and the movement of ideas. Pakistan's Minister Musadik Masood Malik referred to Gandhara, Taxila and Mohenjo-daro and invited delegates to visit Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

3. Pakistan's Participation and Bilateral Context

- Pakistan’s Climate Change Minister Musadik Masood Malik attended the forum, marking a ministerial visit to India after Operation Sindoor.
- Highlighted shared cultural heritage and historical links between South Asia and Central Asia.
- No formal India–Pakistan bilateral meeting took place, although informal interactions occurred.
- On the Indus Waters Treaty, Malik suggested discussing SCO issues first.

What does the Constitution say about proroguing Parliament?

Why has Parliament not been prorogued after adjournment sine die? Can the Houses reconvene without it?

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

Parliament adjourned sine die on August 13, at the end of the last sitting of the Monsoon Session. However, they have not been prorogued to date, making it the longest unprorogued period on record.

What are Constitutional provisions?

Article 85 of the Constitution provides for summoning and prorogation of the Houses of Parliament. It states that the President shall, from time to time, based on the advice of the Council of Ministers, summon each House of Parliament. The gap between two sessions should not exceed six months. Hence, while there have to be at least two sessions of Parliament in a year, there are three sessions that are normally held as per our convention.

The Houses are adjourned from time to time during a session by the Speaker and Chairman in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively. Usually on the last scheduled day of a session, the presiding officers adjourn the House sine die. It means the Houses have been adjourned indefinitely without a date being fixed for the next sitting.

The President, based on the advice of the Council of Ministers, prorogues the Houses at the end of each session. The term prorogue refers to the termination of one session, which usually happens within a few days of the Houses being adjourned sine die.

What is the current context?

The monsoon session of Parliament was summoned from July 20 to August 13. However, even after the Houses have been adjourned sine die, they have not been prorogued by the President to date. This 100-day unprorogued period is the longest in Indian constitutional history.

Article 85 does not stipulate any minimum time period of notice for summoning a session of Parliament. Nevertheless, as per convention, there is at least 14 days' notice that is provided before summoning a new session. On the other hand, Rule 15 of the Lok Sabha rules stipulates that the Speaker may call for a sitting of the House at any time after it has been adjourned sine die, provided the House has not been prorogued. Similarly, Rajya Sabha rules provide that the House shall sit on such days as the Chairman may from time to time direct. There is no specific notice period stipulated for convening these sittings by the presiding officers under these rules. However, as per convention, they can be convened at a very short notice of even two days.

Past instances and implications

There was speculation that the cabinet has on purpose kept the monsoon session live without prorogation, in order to convene it at short notice to consider and pass the contentious constitution amendment bill relating to delimitation. However, considering that the regular timeline for holding the winter session is upon us, this argument has been rendered infructuous.

In the past, the houses were not prorogued in 2008 for a period of 87 days. Similarly, it has remained unprorogued for periods ranging from 41 to 76 days on a few occasions between 1963 and 1987. In the seventh Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi (2020-25), the sessions were called every year and divided into parts. The sessions were adjourned within a year without proroguing the house for extended periods. It is to be noted that the members of Parliament or State legislatures would continue to enjoy their Parliamentary privileges even during such unprorogued periods.

In the midst of all these debates, one should not lose sight of the pertinent fact that the average number of annual sitting days of Parliament has reduced from around 135 days in the first Lok Sabha to 55 days at present. This should be increased, and the effective functioning of the houses ensured.

(Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified.' He currently trains at Officers IAS academy. Views expressed are personal)

THE GIST

- Parliament has remained unprorogued for a record 100 days since the Monsoon Session was adjourned sine die on August 13. Parliamentary rules allow the Houses to reconvene at short notice before prorogation
- Speculation that the delay was intended to facilitate a contentious delimitation Bill has weakened with the approaching Winter Session. Parliament's average annual sitting days have fallen from 135 in the first Lok Sabha to 55 today

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5. Parliamentary Prorogation: Constitutional Provisions and the Unusual 100-Day Gap

Source: The Indian Express
GS Paper II: Constitution, Parliament and Parliamentary Procedures

Context: Parliament remained unprorogued for 100 days after the Monsoon Session was adjourned sine die on 13 August 2026, creating an unusual situation in which the existing session could be reconvened.

1. Constitutional Provisions

1. **Article 85(1) – Summoning:** President summons Parliament; the gap between the last sitting of one session and the first sitting of the next cannot exceed six months.
2. **Article 85(2)(a) – Prorogation:** President can formally terminate either House or both Houses.
3. **Article 85(2)(b) – Dissolution:** President can dissolve Lok Sabha; Rajya Sabha is a permanent House.

4. **Article 74:** President exercises these powers on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
5. **Article 118:** Each House regulates its procedure through its own rules.

2. Difference Between Parliamentary Procedures

Procedure	Meaning	Authority
Adjournment	Suspends a sitting.	Speaker/Chairman
Adjournment sine die	Ends a sitting without fixing the next date; session continues.	Speaker/Chairman
Prorogation	Formally terminates the session.	President
Dissolution	Ends the life of Lok Sabha.	President

3. What Is Different in the Present Situation?

- The Monsoon Session ran from **20 July to 13 August 2026** and was adjourned sine die.
- The President did not prorogue Parliament for 100 days, leaving the session technically alive.
- **Lok Sabha Rule 15:** The Speaker can reconvene the House after adjournment sine die, provided it has not been prorogued. Corresponding Rajya Sabha rules empower its Chairman.
- Thus, Parliament can reconvene at short notice without summoning an entirely new session.
- Article 85 does not prescribe a minimum notice period; approximately 14 days' notice is a convention, not a constitutional requirement.

4. Historical Context and Parliamentary Functioning

- **Previous precedents:** Parliament remained unprorogued for 87 days in 2008 and for periods of 41–76 days between 1963 and 1987.

- **Declining sitting days:** Average annual sittings have fallen from approximately 135 days in the First Lok Sabha to around 55 days currently.
- **Parliamentary privileges:** Members continue to enjoy parliamentary privileges during an unprorogued period, even when the Houses are not sitting.
- **Pending Bills:** Prorogation does not cause pending Bills to lapse (Article 107(3)); dissolution of Lok Sabha can cause certain pending Bills to lapse under Article 107(5).

5. UPSC Prelims PYQ – 2024

With reference to the Parliament of India, consider the following statements:

1. Prorogation of a House by the President of India does not require the advice of the Council of Ministers.
2. Prorogation is generally done after adjournment sine die, but the President can prorogue a House even while it is in session.
3. The President dissolves Lok Sabha, ordinarily on the advice of the Council of Ministers, except in exceptional circumstances.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3
(d) 3 only

Answer: (c) 2 and 3

Explanation: Under Article 74, the President acts on ministerial advice. Prorogation can occur even while a House is in session, although it normally follows adjournment sine die.

SHENZHEN PLEDGE: WHAT IT MEANS FOR ENERGY SECURITY

US, Russia & China pledge to shore up global fuel supplies

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, November 22



Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump at a trilateral meeting on sidelines of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Summit in Shenzhen, China. REUTERS

THE "US-RUSSIA-CHINA Heads of State Declaration toward Peace" — issued after US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Chinese President Xi Jinping held an unprecedented trilateral summit in Shenzhen — said that the three countries plan to increase production and supply of refined petroleum products "for the benefit of all nations".

It also said the three leaders "reaffirmed the importance of stable energy flows".

While the statement is short on specifics, it can be seen as a statement of intent from three of the world's most influential energy market players at a time when global fuel supplies are severely strained. Ongoing geopolitical conflicts — US-Iran and Russia-Ukraine — have disrupted oil and fuel supply chains, pushed up fuel prices, and highlighted energy security-related concerns.

While the pledge could provide some psychological relief to fuel markets, particularly regarding diesel, translating the commitment into actual additional supplies will be a major challenge, as per energy experts and analysts. The commitment also raises important questions about sanctions, refining capacity, trade restrictions, and the ability of the three countries to coordinate energy policies.

The timing of pledge is crucial, given the geopolitical conflicts and their impact on fuel shipments of refined petroleum fuels from the Gulf stand significantly below pre-war levels.

At the same time, Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries have reduced Moscow's ability to process crude and export diesel. This has compounded fuel shortage, particularly diesel, in overseas markets. Paris-based International Energy Agency's latest Oil Market Report highlighted that diesel prices in Europe were 77% above pre-war levels. High diesel prices have been a key concern for the Donald Trump administration in US, with retail prices touching record highs. Diesel is seen as one of the most important petroleum fuels as it is not just a transportation fuel, but also powers long-haul trucks, agricultural machinery, construction equipment, and other heavy industrial equipment.

So severe has been the crisis that in a surprise move last month, Trump announced that cluding sanctions, to restrict Moscow's earnings from energy exports. Diesel supplies are tight, inventories low, and importers are scrambling to secure the fuel from geographies not impacted by conflict or chokepoint closures. Diesel is among the most crucial petroleum fuels due to its use across sectors, which also makes it the most politically sensitive fuel amid ongoing crises.

The US, Russia, and China are among the world's largest oil producers and refining powers. Their influence on crude supplies, refining capacity, and international petroleum trade makes their commitment notable. However, there is a major question mark over the actual impact the declaration will have in terms of actual fuel flows and energy market stability.

"I don't see the declaration bringing much extra fuel onto the market in the near term. All three countries have pledged to

6. Shenzhen Pledge: US, Russia and China Commit to Strengthening Global Fuel Supplies

Source: The Indian Express, 22 November 2026
GS Paper II: International Relations and Geopolitics
GS Paper III: Energy Security and Global Economy

Context: The US, Russia and China issued the *US–Russia–China Heads of State Declaration toward Peace* following their trilateral summit in Shenzhen, pledging to increase production and supply of refined petroleum products to strengthen global energy security.

1. Key Highlights of the Shenzhen Pledge

1. **Increased production:** Commitment to expand production and supply of refined petroleum products for the benefit of all nations.
2. **Stable energy flows:** Reaffirmed the importance of uninterrupted global energy supplies.
3. **Strategic cooperation:** The three countries are among the world's major oil producers and refining powers, giving their commitment considerable influence over global petroleum markets.

2. Position of the Three Countries in the Global Oil Market

Country	Position and role
United States	World's largest crude oil producer; major exporter of refined petroleum products, including diesel. Has substantial domestic production and refining capacity.
Russia	Major crude oil and petroleum-product exporter. Western sanctions and Ukrainian attacks on refineries have constrained its refining and diesel-export capacity.
China	World's largest oil-refining power but heavily dependent on imported crude oil. Its refining

	capacity gives it an important role in global petroleum-product supply.

Key distinction: The US and Russia are major crude oil producers, while China combines large-scale refining capacity with significant dependence on imported crude. The pledge therefore involves both crude availability and the capacity to convert it into usable fuels.

3. Background: Global Energy Supply Disruptions

1. **West Asian conflict:** Disruptions to energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, through which approximately one-fifth of global oil supplies passed before the crisis.
2. **Russia–Ukraine conflict:** Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries have reduced Russia's ability to process crude oil and export diesel.
3. **Sanctions:** Restrictions on Russian energy exports have affected international fuel trade.
4. **Diesel shortage:** Disrupted shipments and low inventories have increased prices; European diesel prices were reportedly 77% above pre-war levels.

4. Challenges to Implementing the Pledge

1. **Geopolitical tensions:** Conflicts and sanctions complicate energy coordination.
2. **Refining constraints:** Damage to Russian refineries limits diesel production and exports.
3. **Trade restrictions:** Sanctions and export controls can restrict petroleum-product movement.
4. **Domestic priorities:** Each country must balance international supply commitments with domestic fuel demand.
5. **Supply-chain disruptions:** Strategic chokepoints and transportation constraints affect global fuel availability.

5. Implications for Global Energy Security

- **Supply stability:** Additional refined-fuel production could improve availability and moderate price volatility.
- **Energy dependence:** Import-dependent economies remain vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions.
- **Economic impact:** Diesel shortages affect transportation, agriculture, construction and heavy industries.
- **Energy diplomacy:** Cooperation among major producers and refiners could influence global energy trade and market stability.

Gold, copper, aluminium dive to at least 7-month lows

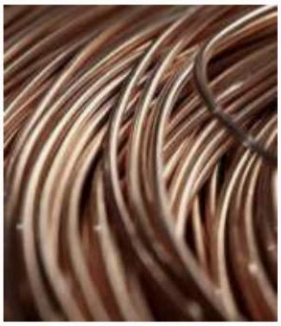
Hawkish commentary from U.S. Federal Reserve and concerns over global economic growth have been among the more prominent concerns leading to prices experienced a downturn recently

Gowri Lakshmi
Saptaparno Ghosh

Prices of prominent metals including gold, copper and aluminium tumbled to at least seven-month lows on hawkish commentary about U.S. Fed seeking to increase rates and weighing concerns over global economic growth in the immediate term.

Benchmark price of the yellow metal at the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) slipped to the lowest since September 2025 to close this week at $3,521.38 per troy ounce.

Benchmark price of copper - that is, on the London Metal Exchange (LME) - plunged to the lowest in about eight months to $12,230.40 per metric tonne. Reference price for aluminium at LME also slipped to an almost one-year low at $2,824.5 per metric tonne.



Copper plunged to lowest in 8 months to $12,230.40/ MT.

Gold nosedives

Gold prices in 2026 have taken a nosedive from where they began the year, with the yellow metal falling over 25% from its peak.

Harshal Barot, principal consultant, Metals Focus Ltd., said,"The biggest driver (in price movements) is that the macro story changed. Since the (Iran-U.S.) war, inflation expectations, energy prices and anticipation of interest rate hikes capped gains for the metal."

Copper, aluminium dip

In September, copper prices rallied to record-highs as purchasers in U.S. rushed to stock up anticipating President Donald Trump would impose steep tariffs on the import of refined copper.

However, since then, there has been hawkish commentary from U.S. Fed and expectations of decline in demand from industries, especially from China and the global technology industry.

As per Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI), the price correction in aluminium and copper is also due to purchasers having already booked profit from the previous price rally and easing supply concerns. However, copper prices would remain firm over the longer-term on limited growth in mine supply, declining ore grades and rising demand. Also, aluminium demand would benefit from scaling infrastructure, EVs and renewable energy.

7. Gold, Copper and Aluminium Prices Fall to Multi-Month Lows

Source: The Indian Express, 22 November 2026
GS Paper III: Economy, International Trade and Mineral Resources

Context: Prices of gold, copper and aluminium declined amid hawkish US Federal Reserve signals, global growth concerns and weakening industrial demand.

1. Major Reasons for Price Decline

1. **Hawkish US Fed:** Higher interest-rate expectations strengthen the dollar and reduce gold's investment appeal.

2. **Global slowdown fears:** Weak growth expectations, particularly in China, reduce industrial demand.
3. **Lower industrial demand:** Concerns over manufacturing and technology-sector consumption affect copper and aluminium.
4. **Profit booking:** Investors sell holdings after a previous price rally.
5. **Easing supply concerns:** Reduced immediate supply worries contribute to price corrections.

2. Price Trends (Reported in the Article)

- **Gold:** $3,521.38 per troy ounce; lowest since September 2025.
- **Copper:** $12,230.40 per metric tonne; eight-month low.
- **Aluminium:** $2,824.50 per metric tonne; nearly one-year low.

3. Global Production and Reserves

US Geological Survey (USGS), Mineral Commodity Summaries 2026; approximate 2025 estimates.

Mineral	Largest producer	Major reserve holder(s)
Gold	China	Australia, Russia
Copper	Chile	Chile, Peru
Bauxite (Aluminium ore)	Guinea	Guinea, Australia
Primary aluminium	China	Aluminium is produced from bauxite; reserves are measured as bauxite reserves.

Important production figures:

- Gold: Global mine production approximately 3,300 tonnes; China leads.
- Copper: Global mine production approximately 23 million tonnes; Chile leads.

- Bauxite: Global production approximately 440 million tonnes; Guinea leads.
- Primary aluminium: China is overwhelmingly the largest producer; India is among the leading producers.

4. India: Economic Relevance

- **Gold:** Jewellery, household savings, investment and import bill.
- **Copper:** Electricity transmission, electric vehicles, electronics and renewable energy.
- **Aluminium:** Infrastructure, railways, automobiles, construction and power sectors.
- **Price impact:** Lower metal prices can reduce industrial input costs, while volatility affects mining investment and commodity trade.

5. Prelims Facts

- **Bauxite → Alumina → Aluminium:** Three stages of aluminium production.
- **Chile:** Leading copper producer and major copper reserve holder.
- **China:** Largest gold producer and primary aluminium producer.
- **Guinea:** Largest bauxite producer.
- **Australia:** Largest gold reserve holder.