PSIR & GS 1,2,3 & 4

Daily Brief

Issue 180 · 10 November 2026

Five readings from the day's newspapers, journals and think tanks, read in full and marked up: context, facts, the author's argument and the UPSC questions.



Amit Pratap Singh
PSIR Optional · ForumIAS

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The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
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ECI's belated U-turn doesn't undo the injustice of mass exclusions

Even in the revised form, the SIR continues to shift the onus of being on the voters' list on the voter

2

Bar and Bench

Litigation Columns

Gunpowder, diyas and the Supreme Court's damp match

An unscriptural commercial practice, having failed every regulatory test and produced zero compliance data, was granted 48 hours of legal shelter under the hope of an athletic endorsement.

3

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
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In Israel, the votes are in. Yet, the war goes on

An agreement requires someone to concede first, and conceding first has just become politically more expensive for everyone, even as the pressure on Washington to settle has grown

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A Recipe for Disaster in Taiwan

Why the Risk of a Crisis Is Growing

REBECCA LISSNER AND MIRA RAPP-HOOPER

November 9, 2026

5

THE DIPLOMAT
READ THE DIPLOMAT. KNOW THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Xi Jinping's Paradox of Political Control



← the sources we sweep every morning

1 **ECI's belated U-turn on mass exclusions** *The Indian Express*

2 **Gunpowder, diyas and a damp match** *Bar & Bench*

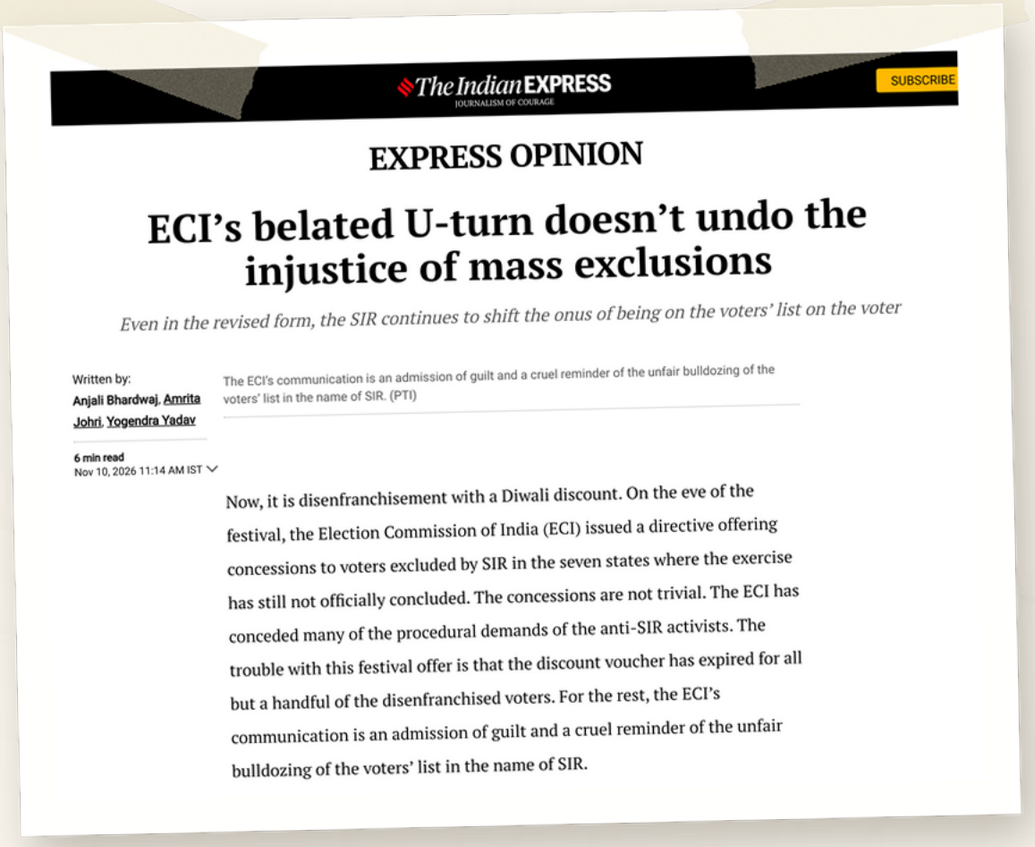
3 **The votes are in. Yet, the war goes on** *The Indian Express* ▶ video today

4 **A Recipe for Disaster in Taiwan** *Foreign Affairs*

5 **Xi Jinping's Paradox of Political Control** *The Diplomat*

Article (1) of 5

ECI's belated U-turn on mass exclusions


The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
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EXPRESS OPINION

ECI's belated U-turn doesn't undo the injustice of mass exclusions

Even in the revised form, the SIR continues to shift the onus of being on the voters' list on the voter

Written by: Anjali Bhardwaj, Amrita Johri, Yogendra Yadav

6 min read
Nov 10, 2026 11:14 AM IST

The ECI's communication is an admission of guilt and a cruel reminder of the unfair bulldozing of the voters' list in the name of SIR. (PTI)

Now, it is disenfranchisement with a Diwali discount. On the eve of the festival, the Election Commission of India (ECI) issued a directive offering concessions to voters excluded by SIR in the seven states where the exercise has still not officially concluded. The concessions are not trivial. The ECI has conceded many of the procedural demands of the anti-SIR activists. The trouble with this festival offer is that the discount voucher has expired for all but a handful of the disenfranchised voters. For the rest, the ECI's communication is an admission of guilt and a cruel reminder of the unfair bulldozing of the voters' list in the name of SIR.

The Indian Express · *Anjali Bhardwaj, Amrita Johri and Yogendra Yadav*
10 November 2026

PSIR Paper I, Part B
Statutory Institutions/Commissions: Election Commission
GS Paper II

Context

The Election Commission of India (ECI) keeps the electoral rolls, the list of people entitled to vote. For about sixteen months it has run a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of these rolls, and crores of names were left off the draft rolls as absent, shifted, dead or duplicate.

On 6 November 2026 the ECI wrote to seven States easing the route back for excluded voters. The authors, who are themselves petitioners against the SIR in Delhi, argue that the relief comes too late for most voters and leaves the exercise's design unchanged.

Facts

1. **SIR exclusions:** about 13.3 crore names were left off the draft rolls across India as "Absent, Shifted, Dead, Duplicate"; 4.52 crore of them in seven States (reported 10 Nov 2026).
2. **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, Rule 21(1):** lets the Electoral Registration Officer correct names omitted through "inadvertence or error".

Article (1) of 5

ECI's belated U-turn on mass exclusions

Analytical crux

The ECI's climbdown did not happen on its own; an unwilling ECI had to be pushed by the Supreme Court. But it does not redeem SIR. Even in this revised form, the SIR continues to shift the onus of being on the voters' list on to the voter; its overturning of the presumption of citizenship continues, and it continues to operationalise lineage-based voting rights. The SIR retains its disenfranchising impulse.

Worth quoting

> *"Despite these sweeping reversals, the SIR continues to retain its structural features that run against the democratic principle of universal adult franchise."*
>
> — Anjali Bhardwaj, Amrita Johri and Yogendra Yadav

Asked in UPSC

GS Paper II, 2026: Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters?

PSIR Paper I, 2021: "The success of electoral democracy can partly be attributed to the status and role of the Election Commission of India." Explain.

— APS

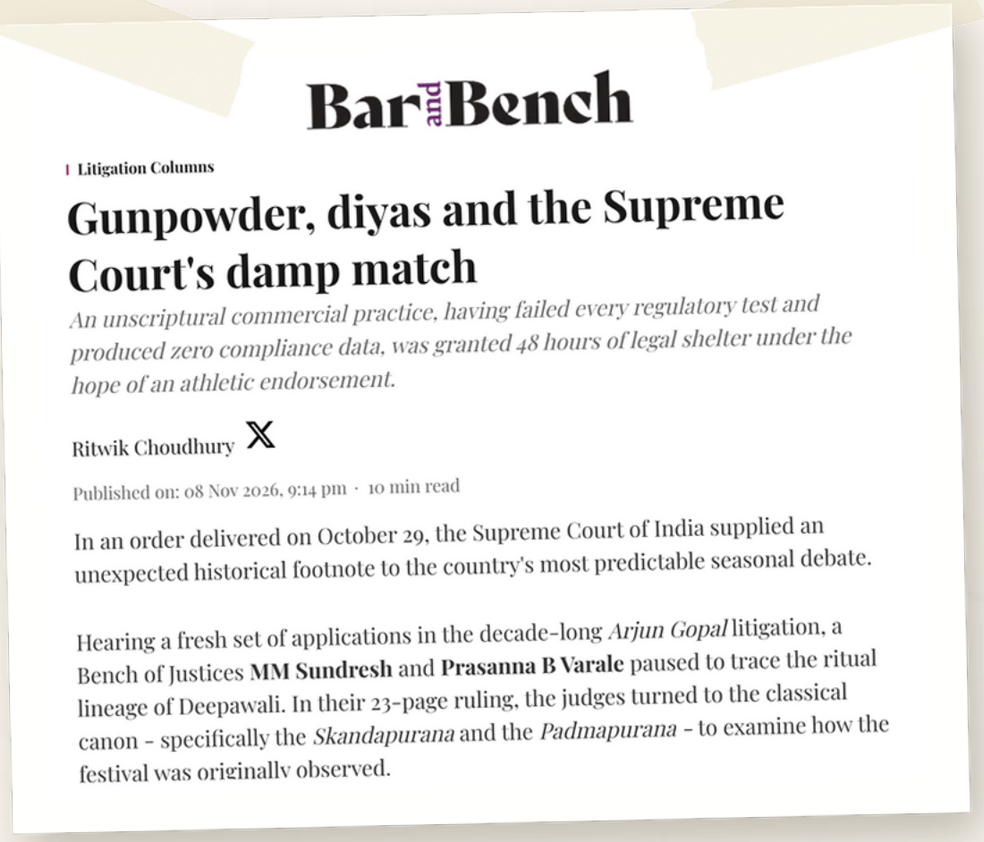
Article (2) of 5

Gunpowder, diyas and a damp match

Bar & Bench · *Ritwik Choudhury*

8 November 2026

PSIR Paper I, Part B
Principal Organs of the Union Government; Salient Features of the Indian Constitution
GS Papers II and III



Bar and Bench

Litigation Columns

Gunpowder, diyas and the Supreme Court's damp match

An unscriptural commercial practice, having failed every regulatory test and produced zero compliance data, was granted 48 hours of legal shelter under the hope of an athletic endorsement.

Ritwik Choudhury

Published on: 08 Nov 2026, 9:14 pm · 10 min read

In an order delivered on October 29, the Supreme Court of India supplied an unexpected historical footnote to the country's most predictable seasonal debate.

Hearing a fresh set of applications in the decade-long *Arjun Gopal* litigation, a Bench of Justices **MM Sundresh** and **Prasanna B Varale** paused to trace the ritual lineage of Deepawali. In their 23-page ruling, the judges turned to the classical canon - specifically the *Skandapurana* and the *Padmapurana* - to examine how the festival was originally observed.

Context

In 2015 three infants, through their fathers, asked the Supreme Court to protect their right to life under Article 21 from firecracker pollution in Delhi. The case is known as Arjun Gopal. Delhi has banned all firecrackers year-round since late 2024.

On 29 October 2026 a two-judge bench relaxed the ban for 7 and 8 November, allowing approved "green" crackers at fixed hours, as the Court had done in 2025. The author argues that the Court found no scriptural basis for crackers, yet still stepped back from enforcing the Constitution.

Fact

1. **Arjun Gopal (Supreme Court, October 2018):** barred conventional and joined crackers and barium salts; allowed only CSIR-NEERI-certified "green crackers".

Article (2) of 5

Gunpowder, diyas and a damp match

Analytical crux

Article 25 explicitly conditions the freedom of religious practice on public health and the fundamental rights guaranteed by Part III. But, when the moment arrives to balance those competing claims, the Court consistently steps back, hesitant to confront a manufactured sentiment that treats environmental regulation as cultural persecution. Having relaxed the rules in 2025 to gather empirical evidence that was never delivered, the Court relaxed the rules in 2026 for the same reason.

Worth quoting

> *"Ancient texts were interested in illuminating the heavens, not detonating them."*
>
> — Ritwik Choudhury

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper I, 2017: Judiciary has acquired the role of both, a legislature and an executive in recent years. Examine with suitable examples.

PSIR Paper I, 2026: "The lack of political will in preventing environmental degradation is one of the major challenges that India is experiencing." Comment.

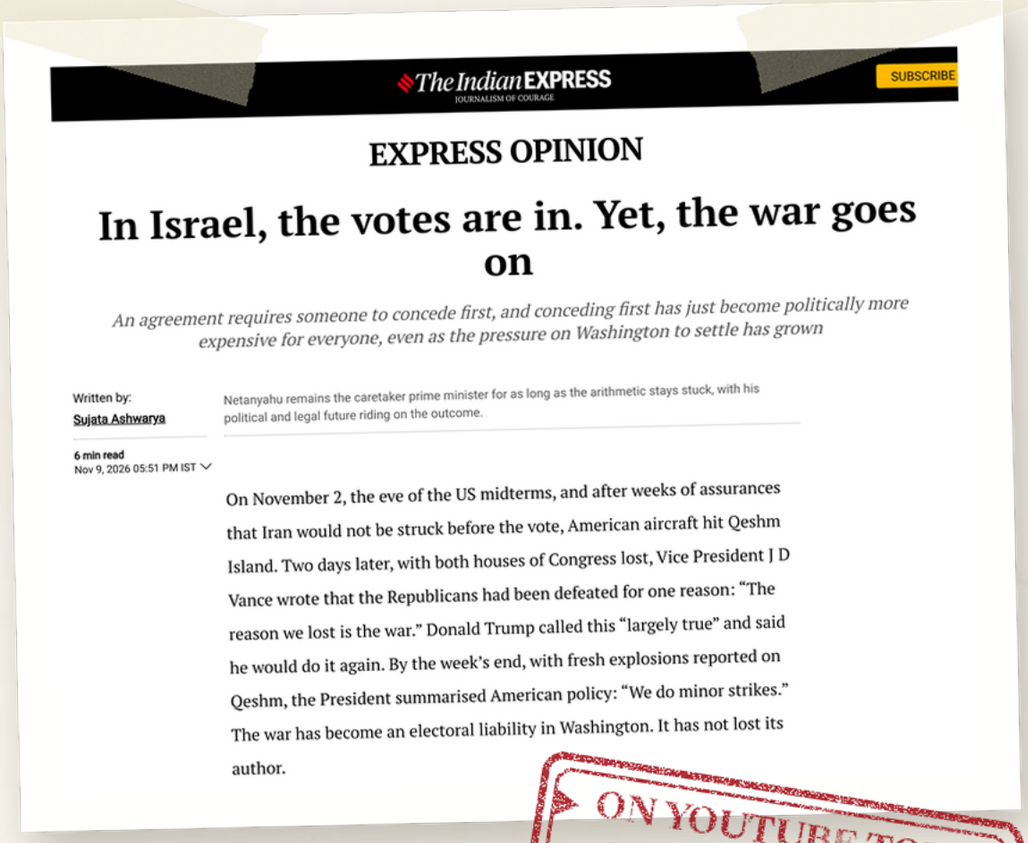
— APS

Article (3) of 5

The votes are in. Yet, the war goes on

The Indian Express · *Sujata Ashwarya*
9 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part B
Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy; India and the Global Centres of Power
GS Papers II and III


The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
SUBSCRIBE

EXPRESS OPINION

In Israel, the votes are in. Yet, the war goes on

An agreement requires someone to concede first, and conceding first has just become politically more expensive for everyone, even as the pressure on Washington to settle has grown

Written by: Sujata Ashwarya

Netanyahu remains the caretaker prime minister for as long as the arithmetic stays stuck, with his political and legal future riding on the outcome.

6 min read
Nov 9, 2026 05:51 PM IST

On November 2, the eve of the US midterms, and after weeks of assurances that Iran would not be struck before the vote, American aircraft hit Qeshm Island. Two days later, with both houses of Congress lost, Vice President J D Vance wrote that the Republicans had been defeated for one reason: "The reason we lost is the war." Donald Trump called this "largely true" and said he would do it again. By the week's end, with fresh explosions reported on Qeshm, the President summarised American policy: "We do minor strikes." The war has become an electoral liability in Washington. It has not lost its

author.

ON YOUTUBE TODAY
POLITICS & GEOPOLITICS
CLASSROOM

Context

The United States and Israel have been at war with Iran since early 2026, and shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a route vital to India's energy imports, has been disrupted. In the US midterm elections of early November, the Democrats won both houses of Congress, and Vice-President J.D. Vance blamed the war for the defeat.

In Israel's 27 October election, Benjamin Netanyahu's bloc lost its majority, and Gadi Eisenkot now holds the mandate to form a government. Ashwarya argues that neither vote has brought peace closer, and sets out what India should press for.

Facts

1. **Iran war, the Indian toll:** 23 Indian nationals, 15 of them seafarers, have died (Sujata Ashwarya, The Indian Express, 9 Nov 2026).
2. **Israel election, 27 Oct 2026:** Netanyahu's bloc 53 seats, opposition 48, Arab-led parties a record 19; 67 of the 120 members recommended Gadi Eisenkot.

Article (3) of 5

The votes are in. Yet, the war goes on

Analytical crux

Here is the trap the elections have set: each side reads the other as weaker and finds another reason to wait. An agreement requires someone to concede first, and conceding first has become more expensive for everyone. Any workable first step will have to be simultaneous and verifiable. India cannot stand apart from this war; hedging cannot protect India from escalation, or from a Hormuz open to Tehran's friends and closed to everyone else.

Worth quoting

> *"Tehran will not sign a ceasefire that Tel Aviv can unsign."*
>
> — Sujata Ashwarya

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2026: India has recognised that West Asia is not a single contest, but a tangle of rivalries, bargains and anxieties. Comment.

GS Paper II, 2025: "Energy security constitutes the dominant kingpin of India's foreign policy, and is linked with India's overarching influence in Middle Eastern countries." How would you integrate energy security with India's foreign policy trajectories in the coming years?

— APS

Article (4) of 5

A Recipe for Disaster in Taiwan

Foreign Affairs · *Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper*
9 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part A
Key concepts in International Relations
GS Paper II



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

A Recipe for Disaster in Taiwan

Why the Risk of a Crisis Is Growing

REBECCA LISSNER AND MIRA RAPP-HOOPER

November 9, 2026

Just a few years ago, U.S. President Joe Biden caused a stir when he confirmed publicly that his administration would defend Taiwan if the island were attacked by China—a divergence from the traditional U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity, in which Washington does not commit to taking any particular action. In May, U.S. President Donald Trump made waves for taking a different position. In a television interview, he described Taiwan as "a very good negotiating chip" in dealings with Beijing and mused that the island was close to China but far from the United States, implying that U.S. interests in Taiwan were negligible. In doing so, Trump seemed to confirm something many Asia watchers had feared: that this U.S. president would be willing to loosen

Context

Since 1979 the United States has recognised the government in Beijing, while a US law of the same year commits it to arming Taiwan. Washington has long left unstated whether it would fight for the island.

In May 2026 President Trump called Taiwan "a very good negotiating chip", and China secured a pause on a planned $14 billion US arms sale. Trump and Xi Jinping are expected to meet when APEC leaders gather in Shenzhen this month. The authors, both senior officials under President Biden, argue that wavering US support raises the risk of a crisis.

Facts

1. **Taiwan Relations Act, 1979:** requires the US to provide Taiwan with defensive arms, despite the relationship's unofficial status.
2. **Chips:** as much as 97 per cent of the world's high-end logic chips are produced or packaged in Taiwan (as cited by Lissner and Rapp-Hooper, 2026).

Article (4) of 5

A Recipe for Disaster in Taiwan

Analytical crux

The United States' interests in Taiwan are growing, not diminishing, but Washington's support for Taiwan appears to be wobbling. Should Chinese leaders assess that the commitment is wavering, they might conclude that they have an opportunity to pressure Taiwan without inviting an American response. Yet because the United States has a greater interest in Taiwan today than at any point in history, Beijing's bet could turn out to be wrong.

Worth quoting

> *"Unlike other Cold War–era policies, the importance of preventing Chinese aggression against Taiwan has become more —not less—vital with the passage of time."*
>
> — Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2026: Does power transition theory reflect the dynamics of US-China relations?

— APS

Article (5) of 5

Xi Jinping's Paradox of Political Control


THE | DIPLOMAT
READ THE DIPLOMAT, KNOW THE ASIA-PACIFIC

CHINA POWER | POLITICS | EAST ASIA

Xi Jinping's Paradox of Political Control

There is an unresolved tension between Xi's growing ability to punish dissent and continued problems of political unreliability.

By Michael Clarke
November 09, 2026

The Diplomat · *Michael Clarke*
9 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part A
State in comparative perspective; also Paper I, Part A: Concept of power
GS Paper II

Context

China is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Its Central Committee meets in plenary sessions, called plenums, to set the Party's direction. The Fifth Plenum, held on 26–29 October 2026, issued a decision on "comprehensive and strict party governance". Under Xi Jinping, purges have reached even the most senior officers of the People's Liberation Army.

Clarke examines what the plenum shows about Xi's system of political control, and why stronger punishment has not solved its underlying problems.

Fact

1. **CCP Fifth Plenum (26–29 Oct 2026):** named "Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building" an authoritative component of Xi Jinping Thought.

Article (5) of 5

Xi Jinping's Paradox of Political Control

Analytical crux

This is a classic principal-agent dilemma. Leaders must delegate authority to subordinates whose actions and motivations they cannot fully observe. While greater supervision may discourage misconduct, it may not eliminate information asymmetries or guarantee political reliability; such scrutiny has encouraged bureaucratic caution, excessive conformity, and the concealment of politically inconvenient information. The contradiction is therefore not between control and an absence of control. It is between different requirements of effective rule.

Worth quoting

> *"Crucially, the capacity to identify and punish misconduct after the fact is not equivalent to ensuring reliable compliance beforehand."*
>
> — Michael Clarke

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper I, 2025: Do you think that legitimacy acquired by consent or manufactured by indoctrination is an essential element in maintenance of political rule? Justify your answer with relevant examples.

— APS

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