

DOUBLE-FACED TRUMP

US President Donald Trump can be easily identified as the most unpredictable leaders in the world. He changes his stances within days and it reflects poorly on the great, and yet dwindling power that his country has become. He not only started a campaign against India for buying Russian oil when the USA had placed sanctions on it but also tried to impose levies as punitive measures on New Delhi. Today, he has agreed to a deal to buy Russian oil and yet has no qualms about it. Interestingly, the day he announced his deal with Vladimir Putin, Russian missiles fell on Ukraine killing 30 people. To rub salt into the wounds of Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he announced him for not ending his wart with Russia and asked for replacing him. Indians know his contradictory statements on Operation Sindoor and he was duly snubbed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for this.

NOBEL FOR PEACE

South African jurist Navi Pillay being awarded the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize has again raised the issue of peace prize being politicised. Though Indians are happy to see someone from their race getting a coveted prize but the fact is that her antecedents are not extraordinary. She is a learned jurist who has chaired a UN commission that accused Israel of genocide. No wonder her prize is being celebrated by Hamas, the terrorist organization responsible for the October 7 massacre. Earlier too, the selection of Nobel Peace Prize was often been someone, who, in the eyes of the Western world – was a revolutionary. The world faces a lot of challenges – terrorism, poverty, climate change, etc. Why not award those who are working to extricate people out of acute poverty or those engaged in mitigating the impact of climate change or fighting terrorism? After all these may not be issues concerning the west, but the rest of the world – global south – surely sees peace warriors differently.

Navi Pillay: A voice for justice in a world at war

Santhosh Mathew

From apartheid-era South Africa to the highest institutions of international justice, Navi Pillay has spent her life defending the vulnerable and challenging impunity. The 2026 Nobel Peace Prize recognises her contribution to human rights and international law, and her enduring belief that peace is impossible without dignity, equality and justice for all.

“Civilians in Israel, civilians in Gaza, children on both sides have a right to live.” These words from Navi Pillay, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, capture the spirit of her life-long struggle for human dignity.

In a world torn apart by wars and violence, her message is simple: every human life matters, and no one should be denied justice because of their identity or nationality.

Navanethem “Navi” Pillay, a South African jurist of Indian origin, has won the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to promote peace and international law.

Her recognition brings global attention to a woman who has spent decades fighting racial discrimination, defending political prisoners and helping strengthen international justice.

Her life shows that the fight for peace begins with the protection of human rights.

Born in Durban, South Africa, on September 23, 1941, Pillay grew up in a modest family. Her father was a bus driver, while her mother looked after their eight children. Her grandfather had migrated from Tamil Nadu to South Africa as an indentured labourer. The family faced financial difficulties, and the racial discrimination of the apartheid era made life harder for people of Indian origin and Black South Africans.

Pillay refused to let these barriers determine her future. She studied law at the University of Natal and, in 1967, opened her own legal practice. At a time when racial



discrimination shaped almost every aspect of life in South Africa, she stood beside those who challenged the system.

She defended anti-apartheid activists and political prisoners and spoke out against the ill-treatment of people in custody.

For Pillay, the law was not simply a profession. It was a way to protect people who had little power to defend themselves. Her work taught her an important lesson: justice must be available to everyone, not just the rich and powerful.

She later pursued higher studies at Harvard Law School, earning a master's degree in law and a doctorate in 1988. In 1995, she became a judge of the South African High Court, marking another milestone in her remarkable career. Her contribution to international justice became especially important during her service at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

She served as its president from 1999 to 2003. The tribunal was established to prosecute those responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which hundreds of thousands of people were killed.

One of the most important legal developments associated with the tribunal was the recognition that rape and sexual violence could form part of genocide.

The landmark Akayesu judgment helped establish this principle. It was a major step towards recognising the suffering of women during wars and ensuring that sexual violence could not be ignored in the pursuit of justice. Pillay went on to serve as a judge at the International Criminal Court from 2003 to 2008.

She then became the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, holding the position from 2008 to 2014. In this role, she raised concerns about human rights violations in conflict zones and called for greater protection for vulnerable communities.

Her message was clear: governments must respect human rights, and those responsible for serious crimes must be held accountable. Peace cannot last when victims are forgotten and perpetrators escape justice. Pillay also supported women's rights through her association with Equality Now, an international organisation working to end discrimination against women and girls.

She contributed to efforts against the death penalty and took part in international initiatives promoting freedom of information and democracy.

Her career reminds us that peace is much more than the absence of war. A ceasefire

may stop the guns for a while, but lasting peace requires justice, dignity and trust. When innocent people suffer and serious crimes go unpunished, the wounds of conflict remain open. Independent courts and international institutions can help victims seek justice and make it harder for powerful individuals to act without fear of accountability.

Pillay's Indian roots make her story particularly meaningful to readers in India. From a family whose history began in Tamil Nadu to the highest levels of international justice, her journey reflects the power of education, determination and public service. She has shown that a person from a modest background can make a difference far beyond national borders.

The 2026 Nobel Peace Prize recognises not only Pillay's achievements but also the importance of defending human rights in an increasingly troubled world. Her life carries a message that is relevant to every nation: peace cannot be built on fear, discrimination or silence.

As wars continue to displace families and claim innocent lives, the world needs voices that remind leaders of their responsibilities.

Navi Pillay has spent much of her life being such a voice. Her journey offers a simple but powerful lesson: lasting peace begins when every human being is treated with dignity and justice is denied to no one.

Her life shows that the fight for peace begins with the protection of human rights. Born in Durban, South Africa, on September 23, 1941, Pillay grew up in a modest family. Her father was a bus driver, while her mother looked after their eight children. Her grandfather had migrated from Tamil Nadu to South Africa as an indentured labourer.

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CHILDREN HAVE SPOKEN. SCHOOLS MUST NOW ANSWER

Nandita Bhatia

In early 2022, the Education Ministry asked 3.79 lakh schoolchildren how they were doing. Eighty-one per cent said studies, examinations and results made them anxious. Satisfaction with school and life fell sharply in Classes 9 to 12, when we ask the most of them.

This World Mental Health Day's theme is “Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change”. India has the first half on record. The second half is where we must now move. The cost is visible. The National Crime Records Bureau recorded 14,488 student suicides in 2024, the highest in a decade. Many were in classrooms in their final weeks, among adults untrained to notice.

The deeper problem is conceptual: we have mistaken mental illness for mental health. Counsellor-only models treat distress as a clinical event. Most of it is not. Most children are not ill, only anxious, ashamed of their bodies, afraid of a result, and never given language for any of it. Refer them all and we medicalise adolescence while still missing those who need care. They need wellbeing taught like any other subject: naming an emotion, asking for



help, recognising a strength in yourself. A trained teacher, a timetabled period, and no child forced to declare themselves struggling.

Institutions are finally moving. The Supreme Court issued binding student mental health guidelines in July 2025. CBSE made counsellors compulsory in January 2026. But that covers about 30,000 mostly private schools out of nearly 15 lakh. In government schools,

fewer than one in ten offers any psychosocial support. The risk is answering a systemic problem with an administrative one.

The evidence is no longer thin. Weekly teacher-led sessions in Bihar's Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, residential schools for girls from Dalit, Adivasi and minority families, improved emotional resilience and wellbeing by roughly a quarter. It works because the teacher already knows the child and no adolescent must

travel, pay or disclose. I think of Nirasha, a girl in Rohtas named for despair because her family had just lost a son. In a session on character strengths, she met the word jigyasa, curiosity, and recognised herself. She changed her name; her school corrected its records and helped update her Aadhaar. No one diagnosed her isolation. They gave her a voice. A real voice, a real change.

For every child to have this, wellbeing must be timetabled and funded, not appended: hours in teacher development, a budget line that survives a change of government. Students must be heard on a schedule, not once every few years, and the hearing must lead somewhere. Jharkhand has written six hours on mental health into its 50-hour teacher programme.

India will soon have its first school mental health policy. It will be judged not by its language but by its presence: whether, three years from now, a fourteen-year-old in a government school in Nalanda has an adult trained to listen and an hour a week for her inner life. We have heard them. This October, the question is whether we can change their experience.

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Digital sovereignty outweighs Musk's convenience

Priyanka Chaturvedi

Elon Musk recently launched an offensive against India's regulatory pace over his company Starlink, a SatCom service not getting the licence to operate despite compliance with Indian authorities. Expressing his frustration over delayed commercial approvals, Musk accused “oligarchs” of keeping a monopolistic chokehold on the Indian market, going as far as calling the delays a “crime against the people”. It was, to be honest, quite amusing to see a trillion dollars' worth oligarch himself have a go at others, and a misplaced attack at that. While his ire was directed at the telecom companies that have partnered with him, his aim was to hit out at the Indian government. The government has rightly and firmly pushed back, saying that its regulatory framework is fair, transparent, and uniformly applied, and also confirmed that all major satellite communication licensees, including Starlink, Bharti Airtel-backed Eutelsat OneWeb, and Reliance Jio Satellite Communications, are currently at

the exact same stage of security evaluation.

So why the tantrum? Does Elon believe that processes can be bypassed to accommodate him if he tries arm-twisting? It isn't how this works! In fact, there has been a long-standing concern about allowing Starlink permits to operate in India. As part of the Standing Committee of IT & Communications, I had repeatedly expressed concerns about the IT Ministry and Telecom Ministry's red-carpet welcome to Starlink. It took the Home Ministry to go through the checks and balances and rigorous procedures when dealing with strategic communication infrastructure, national security, and digital sovereignty. These issues must outrank the convenience of an impatient foreign corporation.

While Starlink presents itself as a simple broadband provider designed to bring high-speed internet to remote villages, beneath it lies a not-so-noble intent, because whatever price band that the SatCom is offering as per publicly available information makes it an expensive proposition. However, the concern is not merely pricing; the

company is a vital asset for the American military and its intelligence apparatus. SpaceX holds highly classified contracts with US intelligence agencies to build robust spy satellite networks. For a nation like India—where an entity is deeply intertwined with a foreign military apparatus to control vital communication nodes without exhaustive vetting—this is a proposition fraught with risks.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Indian intelligence agencies have also raised concerns over Starlink's terminal vulnerabilities. Reports that Starlink terminals were active inside Iran during intense civil unrest—bypassing local telecommunications authority and monitoring—served as a major warning sign for Indian policymakers. If a US-based provider can have its equipment smuggled across borders and activated without state sanction, India faces a legitimate risk of foreign satellite signals spilling into sensitive border zones, where insurgent groups or external bad actors could exploit unmonitored communication lines.

The most compelling argument for

India's caution lies in Starlink's turbulent track record in active conflict zones, most notably Ukraine. In the early days of the Russia-Ukraine war, Musk was hailed for activating Starlink terminals to keep Ukrainian forces connected. However, the limits of relying on a whimsical, single-source foreign billionaire quickly became clear. Musk famously denied Ukraine's military request to extend Starlink coverage near Crimea to thwart a Russian naval attack, citing personal fears of escalating the war.

This arbitrary exercise of a geopolitical “kill switch” proves that SpaceX keeps ultimate control over where, when, and how its network functions, regardless of local sovereign needs. Furthermore, because Starlink's primary satellite repositories, operations, and technical commands are based in the United States, the US government holds immense regulatory and strategic leverage over the company. If India were to face a critical border escalation with a neighbour, it cannot afford to rely on an infrastructure provider that might shut down connectivity based on the commercial

interests of its owner, or under geopolitical pressure from Washington.

India's rules demand that all user traffic must be routed exclusively through Indian gateways, data centres and core networks must sit within the country, and data cannot be decrypted or mirrored abroad. Furthermore, strict geo-fencing must prevent signal leakage across borders, and authorities must have real-time terminal tracking access to combat smuggling. If Starlink genuinely wants to serve the Indian market, it must patiently satisfy these rigorous security checks, rather than taking to social media to cry foul and bully regulators.

Finally, India's long-term digital resilience depends on supporting domestic entities that have true skin in the game. Domestic operations are bound directly by Indian law, answerable to local courts, and invested in the nation's socio-economic stability. Furthermore, tie-ins to local capability, such as the government's mandate to manufacture ground equipment domestically and integrate India's NavIC navigation system, will cultivate a robust private space industry

alongside ISRO and IN-SPACe. India should welcome global competition to expand choices for its citizens, but it must not compromise sovereign control over the networks carrying its national data.

Our domestic space ecosystem is currently undergoing a vibrant evolution, driven by pioneering private launch firms, satellite start-ups, and ISRO. Foreign service providers are welcome to compete in India's vast market, but they must do so by bowing to the laws of the land and the rules of engagement. India is not up for colonisation ever again or for new-age tech colonisers to dictate their terms.

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