

Ranjeev Puri eyes to be Michigan's first Indian-American House Speaker

WASHINGTON, OCT 13 : Indian-origin Michigan lawmaker Ranjeev Puri is eyeing the Speaker of the state house post in the November 3 elections.

The 42-year-old Puri became the first Sikh American elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 2020, a first in the state's history.

Born to Punjabi immigrants, Puri was appointed Democratic Party leader in the Republican-controlled 110-member House of Representatives in 2025.

Michigan has a Democratic Governor in Gretchen Whitmer, but a Republican-controlled House with Matt Hall as the Speaker.

Democrats hope to flip the House in the November 3



elections and pave the way for Puri to become the first-ever Indian-American Speaker.

"Michigan Dems are on the move. We are about to flip the state house and make Ranjeev Puri THE FIRST Indian American State House Speaker in the country," said Haley Stevens, the US Congresswoman from the state, while campaigning for the elections.

Stevens, who is set to retire from the US Congress this year after an unsuccessful bid to win the Democratic nomination for US Senate elections.

Puri has worked on President Barack Obama's cam-

paigns in 2008 and 2012.

He later earned his MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and returned to Michigan, where he worked in the automotive industry.

In his third term as member of the state House, Puri was appointed as the leader of the democratic party in the House in 2025.

In the November 3 elections, Puri is pitted against Allison Kay Fuller of the Republican party.

According to the Indian American Voter Atlas, developed by Republican strategist Anang Mittal, Michigan is home to 1.27 lakh people of Indian-origin, accounting for 1.27 per cent of the state's population. PTI

Trump attacks immigrants from Somalia and Haiti while rallying in Ohio for Republican candidates

OHIO, OCT 13 : US President Donald Trump on Monday tried to boost Senator Jon Husted's re-election campaign by attacking two groups of Black immigrants during a rally in Ohio, where an organisation with Republican ties began promoting a socialist candidate over Democratic nominee Sherrod Brown.



Trump also gave a shoutout to Rep. Max Miller, the Republican congressman who refused to stop running for reelection after facing accusations of domestic abuse, pointing him out in the audience.

"Thank you, Max, for coming," Trump said. "Thank you. Very good."

Trump focused, however, on a favorite issue - immigration. Trump has long targeted Minnesota's large population of Somali immigrants and on Monday he linked that group to Haitians in Springfield, Ohio. During a presidential debate two years ago, Trump falsely accused the latter group of eating pets. Referencing those allegations Monday, Trump said "I was right" and boasted that Haitians were being driven out of the country by his administration's policies.

"If you want to stop Ohio from being plundered, ransacked and destroyed like Minnesota is being destroyed, we're going to stop it," Trump said. "Just like we did with Springfield, we're going to stop it, we're not going to let it happen."

Trump's remarks came on the same day Homeland Security agents searched the Washington home of Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Somali immigrant who represents a Minnesota district.

The president visited Youngstown less than a week after rallying in Dayton. The intense focus on Ohio, a state Trump won by 11 percentage points, shows the challenging environment Republicans are navigating in the midterms amid the Iran war and lingering inflation. In addition to the Senate contest, Republican Vivek Ramaswamy is locked in a close governor's race with Democrat Amy Acton.

The rally was also a reminder of the extent Trump is willing to go to boost his allies - he announced a new submarine component manufacturing center will be located in nearby Cleveland during the rally - and his persistent focus on Black immigrants.

Back in 2018, Trump privately complained about im-

migrants from countries like Haiti - using an expletive to describe them - and wondering why the United States couldn't get more migrants from places like Norway. The statement was condemned as racist and Trump denied making it at the time.

But Trump admitted using the phrase last year, and his second administration has focused on restricting immigration and barring any refugees except white South Africans.

During the rally, he celebrated what he contended was an exodus of Haitians out of Springfield. The Trump administration ended a program that allowed more than 350,000 Haitians to stay in the country legally, which some of the roughly 15,000 Haitians who arrived in Springfield, population 60,000, in recent years.

"They're getting their town back," Trump said about the original residents of Springfield, as he also stood by his debunked statement at the

RTI At 21: 3.85 Lakh Cases Pending, Procedural Hurdles Flagged In Returned Appeals

NEW DELHI, OCT 13: As many as 3.85 lakh appeals and complaints were pending across 28 information commissions as of June 30, 2026, while concerns have been raised over cases being returned without orders, according to a report by a transparency watchdog.

As the Right to Information (RTI) Act completed 21 years on October 12, the report by Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS) found that nine information commissions returned 37,701 cases without passing orders between July 2025 and June 2026.

The figure covers only the nine commissions that provided the data.

The Central Information Commission (CIC) accounted for 14,603 returned cases, followed by the Ma-

harashtra State Information Commission with 14,140, Bihar with 4,417 and Gujarat with 3,276, the report said.

Five commissions did not provide data on the number of appeals and complaints returned.

Anjali Bhardwaj, founder of SNS, told PTI that the central government and some state governments had prescribed formats for filing second appeals, and commissions returned cases that did not conform to those formats.

She claimed some appeals were returned over minor defects such as missing page numbers. "The commission must facilitate people's right to information and not create unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles in accessing information," she said.

The report said the CIC

returned 14,603 cases against 31,179 registered during the period under review. It also cited earlier data showing that nearly 95 per cent of appeals returned by the CIC were not re-filed.

Amrita Johri, who is associated with SNS, said that many RTI applicants from poor and marginalised communities seek information about their basic entitlements and often pursue their cases without legal assistance. She said commissions should take up appeals as long as the basic material is provided and called for the practice of returning appeals and complaints to be discontinued.

The concerns come amid rising pendency at the CIC.

Transparency campaigner Commodore Lokesh Batra (Retd.) told PTI that pending cases at

the CIC had increased by 9,378 between January 1 and October 12, 2026, despite it having its full strength of 11 commissioners, including the chief information commissioner.

"This is a very worrisome situation and the CIC should be worried and take steps to reduce the pendency, like by working late hours," he said, adding the "guardians of transparency" had turned into "guardians of opacity". Fourteen information commissions across the country may take a year or more to dispose of appeals and complaints, according to the report.

The estimated waiting period was 19 years and eight months in Tripura, 19 years and two months in Madhya Pradesh and 18 years in Chhattisgarh, it claimed. (PTI)

BJP Women MPs Meet Prez Murmu, Seek Congress MP's Suspension From LS Over JNU 'Sexual Misconduct'



NEW DELHI, OCT 13: BJP women MPs on Tuesday met President Droupadi Murmu and sought her intervention for the suspension of Congress MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam from the Lok Sabha over allegations of sexual harassment at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, BJP Mahila Morcha president Roop Kumari Choudhary said the delegation also urged Presi-

dent Murmu to ensure the safety of the alleged victims of sexual harassment at JNU.

The delegation was led by BJP MP D Purandeswari and included Choudhary, Delhi MP Bansuri Swaraj and others.

The meeting comes a day after the BJP Mahila Morcha staged protests outside the Congress headquarters in Delhi and several places in Himachal Pradesh, demanding that the party ex-

pel Akoijam, the MP from Inner Manipur.

Union Women and Child Development Minister Annpurna Devi, along with several women MPs and workers of the BJP, participated in Monday's protest in Delhi.

The JNU dismissed Akoijam last week after an inquiry into the sexual harassment allegations against him found him guilty. He was a professor at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems under JNU's School

of Social Sciences.

According to reports, at least 11 female students had filed sexual harassment complaints against the professor in May 2026. The complaints alleged that Akoijam invited students to his campus residence under the pretext of meetings or gatherings and attempted to exploit them sexually.

Some students had also alleged that he used to make obscene and inappropriate remarks in class. (PTI)

Drones hit ships in Black Sea, sinking 1, prompting rescue operations

SOFIA, OCT 13 : Drones struck two ships in the Black Sea off Bulgaria on Tuesday, sinking one and prompting emergency rescue operations, Prime Minister Rumen Radev said.

Rescuers evacuated all 15 crew members from one ship, the Maltese-flagged Chelsea 3, with five receiving treatment for minor injuries, Radev said in a video posted to social media.

The crew, which included seven Ukrainian citizens and eight Azerbaijan citizens, reported the ship's deck and hull were hit by three aerial drones.

One crew member from the sunken vessel was rescued, Radev added, without providing details about the others aboard. The strikes on the two ships occurred 18 and 17 miles (29 and 27.5 km) from the Bulgarian coast.

During an emergency meeting of Bulgaria's Security Council on Tuesday,



Radev called the attacks "absolutely unacceptable" and said Bulgaria was seeking NATO and European Union assistance.

While authorities do not possess clear evidence on who was responsible for the drone attacks, "logic, as I have already stated, indicates that the result is in favour of the Russian Federation," Radev said.

The attacks come exactly a week after sea and aerial drones attacked two other

commercial vessels in Bulgaria's exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea.

A Togo-flagged ship sank, while a Bulgarian ferry evacuated the 18-member crew from a Pulau-flagged vessel.

Ukraine's military did not conduct any operations near the locations of last week's drone strikes, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who pointed the finger at Russia.

A day earlier, a Turkish-

owned cargo ship carrying corn caught fire following a drone attack and later sank in the Black Sea off the coast of Romania. Two people died and 11 crew members were rescued, Romanian authorities said.

Radev did not immediately comment on Tuesday's incident.

Radev said he would summon the Russian ambassador to Bulgaria, Eleonora Mitrofanova, for a conversation Tuesday. (AP)

Colombia's new government: 2016 deal with rebel group has not brought peace - but 132,000 killings

UNITED NATIONS, OCT 13 : Colombia's new government told the United Nations on Monday that over 132,000 people have been killed and armed group membership has increased from 6,000 to almost 30,000 in the decade since the country signed a highly touted peace agreement with its largest rebel group.

Addressing the Security Council for the first time, Foreign Minister Omar Bula said "the ideological and international promotion of the peace agreement as an exemplary event worthy of emulation is not borne out by the figures" - and said lasting peace remains elusive and a challenge for conservative President Abelardo de la Espriella, who was inaugurated in August.

The government's figures could not be independently verified.

The peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, ended more than 50 years of war in which more than 220,000 people died



and nearly 6 million were displaced. In the aftermath, an estimated 14,000 fighters laid down their weapons.

But Bula said that in addition to the 132,930 people "murdered in Colombia" between the July 2016 signing and August 2026, nearly 100,000 cases of extortion and more than 2,750 kidnappings have been recorded throughout the country.

Today, he said, Colombia is facing not only its largest remaining rebel group, the National Liberation Army, but also the Clan del Golfo cartel, dozens of factions of the former FARC rebels and regional and transnational criminal networks.

The groups have also ex-

panded their fights for territorial control, "subjugating communities and controlling strategic corridors through violence, extortion, and illicit economies," Bula said. Drug trafficking, a key driver of the criminal activity, has also reached "unprecedented levels worldwide," and in 2023 coca production in Colombia surged by over 50%.

De la Espriella, a Colombian-American citizen who calls himself "The Tiger" and supports U.S. President Donald Trump, has pledged to tackle the persistent violence in Colombia by breaking with leftist former President Gustavo Petro's policy of negotiating with armed groups, arguing that the

Over 14 crore needy people in UP receive nutritional support

LUCKNOW, OCT 13 : The government is working continuously and with dedication towards the all-round development of Antyodaya and individuals at the last rung of society in Uttar Pradesh and towards this end, its Department of Food and Civil Supplies has transparently distributed foodgrains to more than 14 crore people in the state.

The commitment to eliminating hunger and malnutrition and ensuring a dignified life for every citizen has made the state's Public Distribution System one of the most

reliable models in the country. According to the latest figures from the Department of Food and Civil Supplies, the state regularly and transparently distributes foodgrains to 14,71,04,181 beneficiaries across 3,67,52,818 ration cardholder families.

Guided by the Chief Minister's sensitive vision, the state ensures uninterrupted ration supplies without discrimination based on caste, class, or region, providing both security and self-respect to crores of deprived families.

Among the state's 18 administrative divi-

sions, Lucknow Division has emerged at the top for efficient implementation of food security measures. Across the division's six districts, 1,72,13,915 members of 45,24,479 ration cardholder families receive direct and regular benefits under nutritional security measures. This 100 per cent coverage of over 31 lakh to 34 lakh citizens in vast rural districts such as Sitapur, Lakhimpur Kheri and Hardoi shows that the Yogi government's administrative machinery is working continuously and actively, reaching even remote villages.