

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

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International jurist Navi Pillay wins Nobel peace prize

Associated Press
OSLO

Navi Pillay, a South African-born jurist and former UN human rights chief, won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for her efforts to promote international law as it comes under attack.

Her win is sure to be seen as a high-profile rebuke to U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who have both rejected the findings of the UN commission she led on Gaza.

On the 125th anniversary of the prize's inception, the Norwegian Nobel Committee sought "to remind the world that the rule of law, national and international, underpins the system we have set up to



A voice for human rights

Born to parents of Tamil descent under apartheid in South Africa, Navi Pillay rose to become a prominent jurist and advocate of international law and human rights

- Challenged discrimination, segregation, and exclusion in apartheid-era South Africa
- Led the UN's human rights office as High Commissioner and chaired its inquiry into the Occupied Palestinian Territory
- Held judicial posts in South Africa's High Court, the Rwanda
- Currently serves as a judge at the International Court of Justice in the genocide case against Myanmar

ensure peace and resolve conflicts nonviolently. Peace requires justice," committee Chairman Jørgen Watne Frydnes said.

Judges "guard the thin red line between order and chaos," and the world needs jurists "of courage, vision and determination,

qualities that Navi Pillay demonstrates in her work on the bench".

In places such as Israel and in apartheid-era South Africa, she and peers took on some of the world's most painful and sensitive legal issues and most vulnerable populations.

Ms. Pillay, 85, received the news while attending a forum in Nuremberg, Germany, where the trials of Nazi war criminals helped lay the foundations of international law.

She said efforts to weaken international criminal justice "endanger the progress painstakingly made since Nuremberg, and they risk returning us to a world in which power, rather than law, determines whose suffering matters."

Ms. Pillay chaired the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, which was created by the UN-backed Human Rights Council. The commission a year ago concluded Israel was responsible for genocide in Gaza with a specific intent to destroy Palesti-

nians in Gaza.

Gaza was among Ms. Pillay's first comments on Friday after hearing she had won. "What's happening there is genocide," she said.

The commission last year also found that the Israeli President, Prime Minister and former Defence Minister "have incited the commission of genocide." Israel has strenuously denied the accusations.

Ms. Pillay has repeatedly rebuffed critics who accused her of antisemitism or turning a blind eye to the Hamas attacks in Israel. Under her leadership, the commission also issued reports accusing Hamas of war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law during its October 7, 2023, attack.

GS 2: POLITY

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SC rejects A.P. plea to restore 34% BC quota in local bodies

Court says data from a unified family survey are insufficient to justify the enhanced reservation; State argues the 2026 quota exercise was based on a fresh survey and a dedicated panel's findings

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed the Andhra Pradesh government's appeal against a High Court ruling that struck down its decision to restore 34% reservation for Backward Classes (BC) in local bodies. The court upheld the October 1 verdict that the State had failed to produce the empirical data necessary to justify breaching the 50% reservation ceiling.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi contended before a Bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Sheel Nagu that the State's decision

 You show us how this data can be considered. This is a unified family survey. Under what law is this being made? Very reasonable approach by the High Court

SUPREME COURT



was supported by demographic data and other empirical material, but the High Court had erroneously concluded that it fell short of the requirements previously laid down by the top court for breaching the 50% reservation cap.

The Bench observed that figures drawn from a

unified family survey were insufficient to justify the enhanced quota in the absence of a specific empirical assessment of backwardness and representation in local bodies. "You show us how this data can be considered. This is a unified family survey. Under what

TDP to give 34% seats to BCs in local polls: Naidu

Reacting to the SC verdict, A.P. CM N. Chandrababu Naidu said the TDP would continue to ensure representation for BCs by allotting 34% seats in the local body polls.

law is this being made? Very reasonable approach by the High Court," the Bench remarked while dismissing the plea.

The State argued the 2026 quota exercise was based on a fresh survey, local-body data and a dedicated commission's findings.

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Govt. slams J.D. Vance over his 'indentured servants' remark

Ministry reminds Trump administration that U.S. is 'shaped by generations of immigrants', following Vance's comment on IT professionals; economic ties between the two countries may see more strain

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs on Friday slammed as "unwarranted" and "deeply offensive" U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance's comments in which he called foreign workers, including Indian IT professionals, "indentured servants".

Hitting out at the U.S. government for its decision to suspend "labour certifications" from several Indian technology firms based in America, the Ministry said the steps would not "advance the shared ambitions of both countries", indicating further trouble in the already difficult economic relationship between the two countries.

On Thursday, Mr. Vance and U.S. Labour Secretary Keith Sonderling announced the suspension of the Permanent Labour Certification (PERM) programme for eight IT outsourcing giants, including five Indian IT multinationals operating in the U.S., and accused them of visa fraud. The list included In-

Such descriptions are unwarranted and ignore the fact that Indian professionals in the United States are highly educated and skilled contributors to its economy and innovation ecosystem

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS



fosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Cognizant, and HCL from India, often called the Big 5, as well as Capgemini, Microsoft, and Adobe.

"Such descriptions are unwarranted and ignore the fact that Indian professionals in the United States are highly educated and skilled contributors to its economy and innovation ecosystem," the Ministry said in a strongly worded statement that reminded the Trump administration that the U.S. had been "shaped by generations of immigrants."

"Resorting to terminology that carries painful historical and colonial legacy connotations is deeply offensive," the Ministry added, pointing to the use of indentured labour by

American and European colonial settlers in the 19th century, including in the U.S. and nearby islands to work on their farms.

'Pernicious system'

The PERM programme allows companies to certify professionals who are not U.S. citizens for essential skills, qualifying them to be sponsored for a Green Card of Permanent Residency status in the country. The U.S. government said this process benefitted more than 2,30,000 HIB visa approvals and 1,00,000 permanent residencies since 2009, claiming that the eight companies had brought in hundreds of thousands of foreign workers at lower wages through a "pernicious system" that "de-

frauded the American worker". About 70% of all HIB visa holders are Indian.

"You [the Companies] bring in indentured servants from outside the country. You lay off American workers. And if you're a corporation, you make a ton of money by undercutting the wages of American workers, replacing them with people who frankly shouldn't be in the United States of America to begin with," Mr. Vance said.

The PERM programme enables a company to sponsor a foreign employee for permanent residence in the U.S., and it must prove to the Labour Department that it tried and failed to find a comparatively qualified American for the job.

Mr. Vance's announcement came when economic ties between India and the U.S. were under strain over the lack of progress in the Free Trade Agreement talks, despite months of negotiations in Delhi and Washington and calls between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump.

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THE HINDU PAGE: 06

BRICS in a fragmented world order, a test of relevance

The 18th BRICS Summit, held in New Delhi on September 12-13, 2026, was an extravaganza of sorts. The summit's New Delhi Declaration has been widely hailed as a major achievement for reconciling the divergent views of the 11-member grouping. Its unanimous adoption is again a major achievement in a world often works at cross purposes.

Achieving this consensus under India's chairmanship, is an excellent example, at one level, of India's standing within BRICS and its importance in the councils of the world.

The Declaration covered matters such as reform of global governance, trade, finance, energy, climate, technology, health and agriculture. The decisions taken were unanimous, involving aspects such as mutual respect, sovereignty, equality, openness and consensus. It proposed that the BRICS group should work towards local currency trade and inter-operable cross-border payment systems, extend support for the BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy 2030; a Global Value Chain Action Plan for 2026-2030; seek a more representative United Nations (UN) and international financial system with greater regard given to developing countries, and supporting de-escalation in West Asia as also humanitarian access in Gaza.

The message, the approach

The political message conveyed was that global institutions no longer adequately reflected contemporary economic and demographic reality. This underlined the need for a stronger voice for emerging markets and developing economies. This in turn called for a broader effort to promote multi-polarity, reform of the Bretton Woods institutions, underline preference for dialogue, diplomacy and political solutions, and on trade, defend the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the rules-based multilateral trading system, including a two-tier WTO disputes settlement mechanism. It supported the Palestine people's rights to determination as well as a just and lasting settlement based on international law.

The Summit contained a detailed reference to Artificial Intelligence (AI), acknowledging its potential to stimulate economic growth, improve public services and accelerate sustainable development. The Declaration supported international cooperation on AI governance, including wider access to computing resources, research, skill and innovation. Over all, the Declaration appeared to adopt a pragmatic approach to issues concerning energy, health, climate and food security.

In his inaugural address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged BRICS leaders to draw up



M.K. Narayanan

A former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

10 global governance reform proposals, adding that the message from the BRICS Summit should be that 'if our future is shared, then the right to shape the future must also be assured'.

Among the many comments on the New Delhi Declaration, the broad consensus was that it was in keeping with India's policy of strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, and multi-vector engagement. The optics were excellent. The presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin lent gravitas to the proceedings, and the fact that the United Arab Emirates and Iran participated without indulging in mutual recriminations was also significant. All this seemed to suggest that BRICS is beginning to make some progress on matters of substance, rather than merely being a diplomatic spectacle. Among other highlights was the atmosphere of bonhomie that seemed to prevail and, at the very least, appeared to reflect an Indian approach to BRICS, viz., cooperation and consensus and for consultation and discussion on dispute settlement.

What a more sober assessment shows

Notwithstanding all this, it is important to acknowledge that this is the age of 'variable geometry' and not of 'deep seated' alliances. Given the state of the world, this is the grim reality of today. While, this BRICS Summit might seem to have 'bucked' this trend, a more sober and realistic assessment would seem to suggest that this is not the case. It may perhaps be too radical or drastic to cast BRICS as outdated; perhaps BRICS could possibly hope to become something in the nature of Europe's 'coalition of the willing' which has been contrived in the wake of the near demise of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Europe.

The fault may not lie entirely with the leaders of BRICS, for evidently no one could have predicted or anticipated the shifts and changes that have taken place in the international order since the first BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 2009. *Ad hoc* cooperation rather than firm alliances is the order of the day at present, alongside pragmatic coalitions built around shared 'interests', rather than true values and intentions.

This is often justified as pragmatism that is often needed during difficult periods, wherein multilateralism is replaced by plurilateralism in different corners of the globe. To expect that BRICS would remain unaffected given the many iterations taking place across the globe, and amidst the virtual collapse of the international economic and political order, would hence, be too much to hope for.

Each of the demands made by the original BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – meanwhile remain unfulfilled to

this day, including aspects such as reform of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the UN.

Also unfulfilled is the strengthening of cooperation among developing countries, to reduce dependence on western financial systems so as to create a more multipolar world.

Notwithstanding the creation of better opportunities for trade, BRICS has failed to become a well-integrated economic bloc that could stand up to the tyranny of the Bretton Woods Twins, let alone become a highly integrated economic bloc.

The China factor

Apart from its failure to promote multilateralism, or extend strong support to a more democratic and just multipolar world (combined with other weaknesses such as the failure to strengthen global South-South Cooperation), is another reality that cannot be ignored. In the nearly two decades since Yekaterinburg, China's economic preponderance has far eclipsed that of all other BRICS members, and has, in the process, achieved a political heft that is leading to a serious imbalance within the BRICS community.

The spectacle of United States President Donald Trump's kowtowing to Mr. Xi, during Mr. Xi's visit to Washington DC in September 2026, demonstrates that China can no longer be regarded as a member of the Global South, and hardly (any longer) championing many of the demands espoused by the BRICS nations such as the tyranny of the Big Powers. A fledgling economic power in 2009, China's heft threatens to derail the stance that BRICS has consistently held, viz., that of opposing the hegemony of the West.

Tensions remain between China and India, which are the leading members of BRICS. While no serious conflict has taken place since 2020 (Galwan), thanks to diplomatic efforts at all levels, relations remain uneasy notwithstanding the present diplomatic calm. This in turn does affect the future trajectory of BRICS and how far it can succeed in achieving its objective.

Hence, notwithstanding the surface calm evident at the New Delhi Summit, the reality is that the ability of BRICS to act in unison in a world that is in disarray is strictly limited. As far as India is concerned, while it does not have to fear the so-called Thucydides Trap or be concerned about U.S. economist Charles Kindleberger's theories, it must face the reality that membership of BRICS hardly gives it any additional political or economic strength. The increasing imbalance in BRICS – in terms of political and economic strength and influence – perhaps contains the seeds of its irrelevance in the years ahead, notwithstanding the hopes expressed during the New Delhi Declaration.

Despite diplomatic consensus at the New Delhi summit, BRICS faces internal tensions and imbalances