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PERSPECTIVE

Spoke with President of Iran @drpezeshkian . We discussed in detail about the current situation. Expressed deep concern at the recent escalations. Reiterated our call for immediate de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward and for early restoration of regional peace, security and stability.

- Narendra Modi, PM India

3F Oil Palm, Assam govt launch mega oil palm drive in Dima Hasao

DIMA HASAO

In a significant boost to the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), Hyderabad-based 3F Oil Palm in collaboration with the Assam Government, has launched a mega oil palm plantation drive in Digandu Village 5, Dima Hasao district. The initiative marks the beginning of the annual plantation season, with the first site covering 20 hectares dedicated to sustainable agricultural practices. The move aims to enhance domestic edible oil production and reduce dependency on imports.

“Our mission is to empower farmers through sustainable agriculture, ensuring long-term income stability and access to markets,” said Srinivasarao Kilari, Vice President of 3F Oil Palm.

Officials said the project is expected to benefit local farmers by providing them with new livelihood opportunities while contributing to Assam’s agricultural growth under the NMEO-OP framework.

WHO SAID WHAT



“We have completed our very successful attack on the three Nuclear sites in Iran, including Fordow, Natanz, and Esfahan. All planes are now outside of Iran air space. A full payload of BOMBS was dropped on the primary site, Fordow. All planes are safely on their way home. Congratulations to our great American Warriors. There is not another military in the World that could have done this. NOW IS THE TIME FOR PEACE! Thank you for your attention to this matter.”

-President Donald J. Trump

Manipur crisis must end before forming popular govt: Union Home Minister Amit Shah



NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has once again called for settling the differences between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo communities, stating that forming a regular government in Manipur at this critical period would be challenging until these differences are resolved.

The situation in Manipur is not yet ripe for the re-establishment of

an elected government, Amit Shah told a national newspaper in an interview.

The Manipur situation is related to ethnic tensions; it is not terrorism or an anti-national issue.

Shah’s statement follows efforts by elected representatives, excluding the Kuki-Zo MLAs, who are trying their best for the formation of a new government to end President’s Rule in the state.

Shah expressed his hope that infiltration into Manipur from instability-ridden Myanmar and the Manipur High Court order on Meitei demands for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status triggered a spark. He believes the situation could be stabilised after three years, as in all the previous cases of ethnic violence in the state.

The state has been under President’s Rule since February 13, following the resignation of former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on February 9.

Shah expressed his hope that infiltration into Manipur from instability-ridden Myanmar and the Manipur High Court order on Meitei demands for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status triggered a spark.

He believes the situation could be stabilised after three years, as in all the previous cases of ethnic violence in the state.

He further stated that the central government is discussing the Manipur situation at a political level and is hopeful of success soon.

“Do not travel to Manipur..prior approval for these NE states”: US’ travel advisory for India

WASHINGTON

US places India under Level 2 travel advisory with increased caution. Manipur travel strongly discouraged due to ongoing violence. Ethnic conflicts cause displacement and attacks on government targets.

The United States has issued an updated travel advisory for India, placing the country under Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution, with specific warnings focused on the Northeast region following a periodic review of safety and entry/exit conditions. The advisory urges American citizens to avoid travel to Manipur, citing the ongoing threat of violence and crime in the state. “Do not travel to Manipur due to the threat of violence and crime,” the advisory reads. It points to the ethnic-based conflict that has triggered widespread violence and community displacement, and notes that attacks on Indian government targets continue to occur regularly. As a result, the US government employees require prior approval before traveling to Manipur.

For the broader Northeastern region, the advisory recommends travelers to reconsider travel due to

the risk of terrorism and sporadic violence. It highlights that ethnic insurgent groups occasionally engage in violent activities, including the bombing of public transportation systems, markets, and rail infrastructure. “Northeastern states - Reconsider travel to this area due to terrorism and violence.”

While the advisory acknowledges no recent reports of violence in Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Sikkim, or Tripura, it maintains restrictions for U.S. government personnel.

Officials must obtain prior approval before visiting Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, or any location outside the capital cities of Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Tripura. The advisory serves as a cautionary note to travelers and diplomats, reinforcing the complex and dynamic security environment across certain parts of India’s Northeast. While the overall Level 2 advisory applies to India, a stricter Level 4: Do Not Travel warning remains in effect for Jammu and Kashmir (excluding Ladakh) and certain areas along the India-Pakistan border due to heightened security risks.

Assam begins preparations for 2027 census; population expected to rise sharply

GUWAHATI

Authorities in Assam have begun laying the groundwork for the nationwide census scheduled to start in March 2027. Officials project a significant increase in the state’s population by the time the enumeration begins.

India last conducted a census in 2011, and the 2021 operation was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Assam Tribune reported.

The central government has now set March 2027 as the official start of the next census and expects to complete the process in about two years.

During the 2011 census, Assam recorded a population of around 3.12 crore. By 2015, approximately 3.29 crore individuals had applied for inclusion in the National Register of Citizens (NRC), although the authorities rejected about 10 lakh applications due to insufficient citizenship documentation.

According to projections from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Assam’s population stood at an estimated 3.62 crore in 2024.

With ongoing growth trends, officials anticipate that number will



rise considerably by the time enumeration begins.

State officials confirmed that preparations are well underway. Senior census officers and state directors will meet in New Delhi on July 4 and 5 to finalize procedures for the large-scale operation.

Although officials have not yet determined the final manpower numbers for Assam, they expect the process will require a substantial workforce for door-to-door data collection. As a first step, authorities plan to define enumeration blocks based on population density and terrain. In urban areas, a single enumerator can cover more households, while rural or difficult terrain may require more person-

nel per block. Officials also plan to train the census staff once the block mapping is complete. Only after completing training and planning will they begin the actual data collection. The introduction of a digital app for enumerators is expected to speed up the census process this time.

The app will allow officials to upload data immediately from the field. In areas with poor mobile connectivity, staff will record information manually and upload it once they reach a network-enabled location. For the first time, the upcoming census will also include a caste enumeration. Previously, the census collected information on religion but excluded caste data.

Kamle district’s Longku Komal crowned Miss Universe Arunachal 2025

ITANAGAR

Longku Komal from Kamle district emerged victorious at the Miss Universe Arunachal Pradesh 2025 pageant, claiming the prestigious title at a ceremony held at Kalawango Hall in Tawang.

The 21-year-old contestant will now represent the northeastern state at the Miss Universe India 2025 competition, marking a significant milestone for Arunachal Pradesh’s participation in national beauty pageants.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu attended as the chief guest, while Youth Affairs Minister Kento Jini served as the guest of honour. MLA Lekang Likha Soni was also present at the event.

Komal’s victory came after intense competition among contestants from across the state. Her performance throughout the evening demonstrated both poise and confidence, ultimately convincing the judges of her potential to represent Arunachal Pradesh on the national stage.

The winner received a cash prize of Rs 2.5 lakh, while the first runner-up was awarded Rs 1.2 lakh and the second runner-up received Rs 1 lakh. The pageant serves as a stepping

stone for young women from the state to gain exposure and compete at higher levels. Previous winners have gone on to participate in national competitions, bringing recognition to Arunachal Pradesh’s rich cultural heritage.



Komal’s selection comes at a time when northeastern states are gaining increased visibility in national beauty contests. Her preparation for the Miss Universe India competition will focus on representing her state’s unique traditions and contemporary aspirations.

The event organizers noted strong participation from across Arunachal Pradesh’s districts, reflecting growing interest among young women to participate in such platforms. The pageant included traditional rounds showcasing regional culture alongside contemporary segments testing contestants’ communication skills and social awareness.

With her victory, Komal joins the ranks of state representatives who will compete for the Miss Universe India crown, potentially advancing to represent the country at the international Miss Universe competition.

Jason Derulo, The Script to headline Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival 2025

SHILLONG

Festival set for November 14-15 across iconic Shillong venues. Over 220 million records sold by headliners Jason Derulo and The Script. Creative economy generated Rs 133.42 crore economic impact last year.

Commemorating World Music Day, the Government of Meghalaya, on June 21, unveiled the Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival 2025, announcing global music icons Jason Derulo and The Script as headliners for its November 14-15 edition.

The mega festival also marks a major leap in the state’s ambitious push for a sustainable “Concert Economy” that is transforming Meghalaya’s cultural and economic identity.

Set across iconic venues like Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium and Ward’s Lake, the festival promises a citywide celebration filled with concerts, pop-ups, and immersive experiences. With over 220 million records sold collectively, Jason Derulo and The Script are poised to deliver one of India’s biggest music nights.



Speaking on the occasion, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said, “Every concert is a celebration of who we are. We are not just hosting performances; we are building an economy of talent and identity that speaks to the world. We have seen how the concert economy is an aspect that has been worked on in Meghalaya, and how it was implemented here long before it was done in any other part of the country.

We have now simply given it better structure and expanded it into much bigger programmes. We hope that, in the coming years, it will become even bigger,” Sangma also hinted at more global names being added to the lineup soon.

Backed by a Rs 23.5 crore investment for FY25, the state’s creative economy has already generated Rs 133.42 crore in economic impact. Festival-linked events in the past year attracted over 76,000 visitors, pushed up hospitality revenues to Rs 33.78 crore, and created over 5,500 daily jobs benefiting youth, women, artists, and rural entrepreneurs.

Initiatives like the Meghalaya Grassroot Music Project (MGMP) have sup-

ported over 13,000 performances, registered 7,750+ artists, and fostered global-local cultural fusion — including moments like Ed Sheeran’s football match with local youth.

The launch of MGMP Season 3 saw a new logo reveal, recap video, award ceremony, and a Tourism Festival Booklet honouring Meghalaya’s cultural vibrancy. The evening ended with a performance by singer-songwriter Anuv Jain, who described Shillong as “one of the best places I’ve ever performed in.”

As plans for a trillion-rupee creative economy take shape, Meghalaya is focusing on zero-waste policies, infrastructure upgrades, and real-time concert impact tracking — laying down a roadmap for India’s future in cultural-led economic development.

Others who attended the event were Cyril V.D. Diengdoh, IAS, Director, Tourism Department; Vijay Kumar D., IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Department of Tourism; members of the Meghalaya Grassroots Music Project (MGMP); MGMP artists, among others.



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AIR INDIA: DESCENT INTO DESPAIR



Once upon a time, the Maharajah wearing a turban, smiled engagingly, and served you warm towels. Today, he serves you cockroaches in your omelette and plummets you 10,000 feet to death. Welcome to Air India, 2.0. When the Tatas took over the airline in 2022, it was hailed as a corporate coronation: the return of the prodigal to its original home, to be lovingly nursed back to world-class splendour. Instead, it's a Titanic with wings. Let's not mince words: passengers have died. Before, too. When AI 171 fell out of the sky in Ahmedabad, the world was told it was a tragedy. No, it was a reckoning. It lasted 30 seconds in the air. It cost over 270 lives. Days later, a Delhi-bound AI Dreamliner returned to Hong Kong, its airport of origin, after the pilot suspected a technical issue.

He said, "We don't want to continue further."—a clear indication that the traumatised pilot would rather go back to base than trust his machine. Another flight from San Francisco to Mumbai was stuck in Kolkata because of a technical snag. Yet another was forced back to Delhi post-takeoff due to technical failure—marking yet another unscheduled diversion. On Tuesday, Air India cancelled seven international flights, including six operated by Boeing 787-8 Dreamliners, as part of precautionary checks on its Dreamliner fleet, following heightened safety scrutiny by aviation authorities in the aftermath of the Ahmedabad crash.

What's it like to fly Air India? Imagine your toddler peeling back an omelette mid-meal in Business Class to find a dead cockroach; the kid got food poisoning. Air India's response—it acknowledged the incident and said it was investigating the matter with its catering service provider. Previously a flight to London was grounded after a passenger saw a rat on the plane and rat traps had to be laid. Another Air India flight was delayed for 12 hours after a mouse was spotted in the cabin just as the plane was about to take off. Meanwhile, passengers post viral videos of filthy trays, ripped furnishings, dirty seats and broken in-flight entertainment system—that too in a First Class seat that cost \$6,300.

Welcome to the premium experience. While Gulf carriers unveil silent cabins, inflight spas, and whisper-quiet jets, Air India offers torn safety cards and lukewarm tea. It's a special kind of irony that while it dreams of launching 3D-printed handbags and perfumes, its flying culture stinks. Radical reform is required: fleet audits, safety transparency, actual accountability. The DGCA has flagged Air India multiple times for violations—crew duty time violations, mechanical delays, and safety protocol breaches. A senior pilot-turned-whistleblower, revealed that emergency oxygen systems on 777s were tampered with—management threatened him after raising these issues internally. Most strange is that Singapore Airlines, which has 25.5 per cent stake seems to have thrown Air India under the (air)bus.

Its accountability must be questioned and those responsible for passenger safety punished, even as Air India shoulders most of the blame.

There was a time when flying Air India meant something. The Maharajah smiled beatifically from boarding passes. The crew wore saris as heritage symbols. Mango juice came in actual glasses. And even if the flight was a tad late, it felt vaguely aristocratic to be part of the nostalgia. What we're witnessing now is the slow, grinding disintegration of India's national airline: one mid-air emergency, one torn seat, one cockroach-laced omelette at a time. The \$400-million fleet upgrade plan is barely moving on the tarmac. The Tatas know passengers have little choice after numerous airlines shut shop: today it is just Indigo and Air India.

It's time for real accountability

- Ground all Dreamliners until third-party audits confirm safety.
- Release full maintenance logs, incident reports, and fleet age profiles.
- Conduct pest and hygiene inspections via independent caterers.
- Reinforce crew rest protocols and establish a safe whistleblower system.
- Mandate transparent progress updates publicly.

Or the next cockroach in the omelette? It could be yours.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If anyone on the verge of action should judge himself according to the outcome, he would never begin.

- Søren Kierkegaard

HOW INDIA CALLED

PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR BLUFF



BRIG PANKAJ CHIB

It was on night intervening 6-7 May that Operation Sindoor commenced and came to sudden halt within 90 hours. It caught many by surprise, specially in India, where it was felt that India had an upper hand after it had made many of PAF airfields non operational. In this many of us lost the bigger picture as to how India called Pakistan's nuclear bluff and debunked its practice of "cultivated" irrationality.

A deeper look into the details on events between 07-10 May which are surfacing now, indicates that India not only called Pakistan's nuclear bluff but also buried Pakistan's policy of "cultivated" irrationality once for all. After, Pakistan conducted its nuclear tests in 1998, it has mastered an art of "cultivated" irrationality on nuclear issues wherein it, after every terror incident in India, displayed unpredictable and volatile behavior to prevent Indian punitive response in conventional domain. This cultivated irrationality, which begins immediately after every Pak-sponsored terrorist incident in India, plans to even continue during the conventional phase. This behavior aims to seek international intervention at every stage so as to avoid war and should war takes place, prevent punishment by India. It is believed that Musharaf, being an artillery officer converted to SSG commando, was the author of cultivated irrationality.

Pakistan's nuclear doctrine, policy and strategy are not available in open domain but it is not difficult to determine contours of these which were formulated and last refined by Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai during Exercise Azm-e-Nau (2009-2013). The nuclear policy, doctrine and strategy formulated by Kidwai still remains central to Pakistan's strategic calculus even today.

Lt Gen Kidwai, an artillery officer, was a POW of 1971 Indo-Pak War and was Director General Strategic Plans Divisions (SPD, nerve centre of Pakistan's Nuclear Command Authority). He served almost for 13 years ie from 2000 (inception of SPD) to 2013. He, as DG SPD advocated a nuclear policy based on nuclear sabre rattling (of reminding world that India and Pak are

two nuclear nations who cannot afford to go for war) immediately on any terror incident in India and threat of First Use of nuclear weapons mixed with Musharaff's "cultivated" irrationality.

The nuclear part of Exercise Azm-e-Nau was very interesting with Kidwai as Director of wargame, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Strategic Forces North (SFN) as Commander Army Strategic Forces Command (ASFC) and GOC Strategic Forces South (SFS) heading and representing Indian wargame syndicate as "Foxland" syndicate. During this wargame, while GOC SFN played strategy of "Graduated Response with First use Option" and GOC SFS wargamed the strategy of "One Rung Escalation". The most interesting part of this wargame was the summing up session where GOC SFS opined that if Indians change their politico-military aim to bring Pakistan's nuclear programme under international safeguards, and accomplish this aim, India will get the Kashmir Issue resolved, automatically. Incidentally our Raksha Mantri also stated something similar after Operation Sindoor, Jammu and Kashmir tourism

Post Exercise Azm-e-Nau, Pakistan military leadership has been advocating a nuclear strategy which is to influence conduct of Indo-Pak War (both in terms of scope and scale) including through intra war deterrence. So in a way Pakistan military leadership has been telling the world that nuclear strategy will facilitate its tri-services military strategy. As part of Pakistan's nuclear strategy, they have also been advocating that Pakistan respond strategically should India targets any of its strategic assets (located in places like Kirana Hills, Nillore, Khushab, Kahuta etc).

Pakistan in its National Defence University (NDU) précis on Military Methodology teaches about formulation of hypotheses which are nothing but Pakistan's visualization of adversary's likely courses of actions. Accordingly, during Exercise Azm-e-Nau, Kidwai made various Nuclear Hypotheses which were primarily the assessment of courses of

action (in nuclear domain) open to India in any future conflict. In one of the hypotheses Kidwai felt that India, after having caused significant damage to Pakistan's military and economic infrastructure—something which calls for Pakistan to go nuclear—will foreclose Pakistan's nuclear option by its superior information warfare. It is like calling Pakistan's nuclear bluff.

When we take a look at Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) inputs on Operation Sindoor events, the events of night intervening 9-10 May and those in early hours of 10 May were probably the ones which were the most important events wherein India not only debunked Pakistan's nuclear bluff but also threw its cultivated irrationality into waste bin. It was very evident from the fact that Pakistan DGMO called Indian DGMO, repeatedly for an urgent ceasefire.

It seems that all began with a Pakistani missile being intercepted over Sirsa just past midnight, which as per media reports was probably headed towards NCR. Anyone who has intimate knowledge of Pak missiles inventory (available with its 2 and 21 Artillery Divisions and Army Strategic Forces Command/ASFC) can clearly make out that the said missile was one held with Army Strategic Forces Command (ASFC) but with conventional war head and not those held with its Artillery Divisions. The straight line drawn West of Line Delhi-Sirsa incidentally passes through a location which is Forward Deployment Area (FDA) of a Missile Regiment Artillery (MRA) of the SMG located at Sargodha. It was a perfect example of Pakistan's cultivated irrationality wherein it wanted to indicate to West its intentions to go strategic in case India doesnot halt its further operations.

India's response to Pakistan's midnight misadventure was swift, measured and punitive when it rendered number of PAF airfields non operational between 0200 h to 0300 h. This was followed by morning strikes on Sargodha and its adjoining areas which incidentally, apart from having PAF Base Mushaf, Central Ammunition Depot and 3 Air Defence Division, also houses "Administrative Camp" named Azadi Camp and a "Technical Site" numbered

6 of one of the Strategic Missile Groups (SMG) of ASFC. It was this destruction of airfields and incidental threat to its strategic assets that forced Maj Gen Kashif Abdullah, Pak DGMO to call Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai, Indian DGMO, pleading for sudden ceasefire.

It is not the first time that Pak resorted to nuclear sabre rattling and displayed its cultivated irrationality after any terror incident. Right from Operation Vijay (Pakistan named its operation as Operation KohPaima meaning Measuring the Mountain)—first Pakistan Army's misadventure after it went nuclear, overtly—Pakistan, after initiating every terror incident in India, has used this tactics to prevent India response in conventional domain. However, it is for the first time that India not only called its nuclear bluff but also debunked its cultivated irrationality which he has been employing in the past to fool the West.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

All of us who were in government before or are in government now must bear responsibility for the sobering thoughts of Nobel Laureate Venkataraman Ramakrishnan He said: "1. I do not see India as a general magnet for international science" "2. "Neither the funding, the infrastructure, nor the general environment in India is attractive for top-level international scientists to leave the U.S. to work in India" "3. In am always amazed by how they (scientists) manage to do such good work in such difficult conditions, and yet be so cheerful" "4. Young Indians (scientists) are so bright and enthusiastic, but they are being let down by the country as a whole"

- P. Chidambaram, MP(RS), Former Union Minister

INDIA'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

DR. GYAN PATHAK

India's demography is changing faster as per the UNFPA's 2025 State of World Population (SOWP) report which has estimated it reached 146.39 crore by April 2025 compared to the India's own technical group of experts projection of 141 crore. Faster than expected growth rate is but only one part of the challenges ahead. The report has actually revealed a host of real crisis that India will have to face in the years to come.

The most striking change is the declined fertility rate (TFR) to 1.9 falling below the replacement level of 2.1. Nevertheless, population would grow to 170 crore in about 40 years from now before starting to decline. SOWP 2025 says non-realisation of the fertility goals as the real crisis, not underpopulation or overpopulation. The most accurate picture on population would be known by March 2027, when India has scheduled to complete its Census, though with a delay of about 6 years.

This means that India will have increasingly more stomach to feed and will require more resources for its healthcare, education, and the means of livelihood. Though the World Bank has said in its June 2025 update that India has

been able to considerably reduce the extreme poverty level from 27.1 per cent in 2011-12 to 5.3 per cent, the challenges remains, will be even more difficult to overcome. It should be noted that the World Bank's poverty line is still at Rs250 per day (\$3). Moreover, the consumption level included all the government's welfare schemes including the free foodgrain to about 80 crore people of the country, who are still not able to purchase foodgrain since they don't have enough means of livelihood.

Social welfare schemes make poverty just more tolerable, but it was counted as poverty alleviation. Actual position is that poverty reduces only when the poor person starts earning enough for their survival. His poverty remains as it is if he depends on others for survival, and has not his own income. The challenges on the ground remains, and with increasing population, these would be multiplied. India would have to prepare for this—delivery of food, healthcare, education, and the means of livelihood.

SOWP 2025 say as that in the 1970s, women in India on average had nearly five children. Now, they have close to two. Though this milestone reflects progress in health and education, but masks regional diversity in fertility rates.

Fertility has fallen below the replacement level (2.1) in 31 States/UTs, but remains high in Bihar(3.0), Meghalaya (2.9) and Uttar Pradesh (2.7). Urban-rural gaps persist, and seven states have yet to reach replacement TFR in rural areas.

The gaps have other dimensions too. Many want children but cannot have them when they want; while others want to avoid pregnancy but cannot. And both issues may affect many people in the course of their lifetime. As for adolescent fertility rate, it remains high at 14.1 per 1000 women aged 15-19, which endangers both maternal and child health and affects education and employment outcomes.

The dimension of the challenges in reproductive health is more obvious in other data too, such as 36 per cent reported unintended pregnancy and 30 per cent unable to fulfill the desire for a child. A significant proportion about 23 per cent faced both issues.

The barriers to having children gives indications of other challenges that people are facing, which the country will have to address. Infertility or difficulty conceiving were reported by 13 per cent. Financial implications was reported the biggest barrier by 38 per cent is an indication that that India would need to face the financial

challenges.

Economic insecurity is a major constraint, and nearly 4 in 10 people said financial implications as a key reason they are unable to have the families they want. Housing issues (22%), job insecurity (21%), and lack of affordable child-care (18%) further limit reproductive choices. Health-related barriers like poor general health or chronic illnesses (15%), infertility(13%), and inadequate access to pregnancy-related care are further challenges. WHO estimates infertility affects 3.9% to 16.8% of the Indian population.

The finding of SOWP 2025 specifically mentions a persistent dual burden. In states like Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh, unintended and closely spaced births are common due to poor contraceptive and health services and gender norms. In Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Delhi, many couples delay or skip childbirth due to costs and work-life conflict, especially among educated middle-class women.

Globally, governments are adopting pro-natalist policies using various incentives through—bonuses, tax breaks, national campaigns—but SOWP 2025 cautions that these measures are often ineffective. They may entrench patriarchal norms and restrict reproductive rights.

Manipur Congress President Meghachandra slams BJP for governance failures

IMPHAL

Manipur faces ethnic violence displacing over 70,000 people. Floods damage infrastructure affecting 165,000 residents. Economic activity stalled causing severe financial crisis.

Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee President Keisham Meghachandra Singh lambasted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its failure to address the mounting crises in Manipur, accusing the party of plunging the state into an unprecedented crisis marked by violence, economic collapse, and natural disasters. Speaking at One Day Health Check Up Camp in Imphal on Saturday, Meghachandra charged that the BJP's failure to restore peace, rebuild trust, and ensure effective economic planning has left the people of Manipur grappling with severe hardships, from widespread displacement to a deepening financial crisis.

The Congress leader painted a grim picture of the state's condition, pointing to the ethnic violence that has gripped Manipur since May 2023, displacing over 70,000 people and causing extensive



property damage. The unrest, primarily between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, has disrupted normal life, paralyzing key economic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and small-scale industries. Meghachandra accused the BJP-led state government of bias and inaction, alleging that it has failed to address the root causes of the conflict or provide adequate support

to those affected. The imposition of President's Rule on February 13, 2025, following the resignation of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, has done little to restore stability, he claimed, describing it as a belated and ineffective measure.

The ongoing violence has also triggered a severe financial crisis, with tax collection plummeting due to the collapse of economic activity. At the same time, the state government has been forced to increase spending on relief camps, security forces, and rehabilitation efforts, widening the fiscal deficit. Meghachandra accused the BJP-led central government of exacerbating the crisis by delaying or withholding critical financial assistance, including disaster relief funds. He claimed that several central schemes and allocations have been stalled, with the Centre citing concerns over law and order or alleged misuse of funds. This withholding of support, he argued, has left Manipur struggling to meet its basic needs, punishing the state's people for the BJP's failures.

Compounding the state's woes, recent floods have caused widespread devastation, damaging roads, bridges, crops, and homes, and affecting over 165,000 people. Meghachandra attributed the disaster to gross negligence by the state's Water Resources Department, specifically highlighting three major failures: poor maintenance of the Dolaithabi Dam, the untimely opening of the Ithai Barrage, and a massive scam in the Flood Management and Border Areas Programme. He alleged that an organized loot of Rs 460 crores meant for flood management projects has left Manipur's infrastructure vulnerable, demanding a transparent investigation into the misappropriation of funds. The floods, he said, are a stark example of the BJP's mismanagement, turning natural challenges into man-made disasters.

The Congress leader also pointed to the absence of private investment in Manipur, attributing it to the state's instability and the BJP's inability to restore investor confidence. With no new industries or large-scale infrastructure projects taking off, unemployment and poverty have surged, further deepening the economic crisis. Meghachandra criticized the BJP for

prioritizing electoral strategies and vote-bank politics over the state's welfare, questioning why the party has not intervened decisively to resolve Manipur's issues. He accused the central government of distancing itself from the state government's failures, even after the imposition of President's Rule, which he described as a political maneuver to deflect blame rather than address the crisis.

Meghachandra raised concerns about the BJP's handling of Manipur's geopolitical challenges, particularly along the state's 398 km porous border with Myanmar. The Free Movement Regime and alleged demographic shifts, he said, have fueled tensions and complicated the ongoing conflict, with the BJP failing to address these sensitive issues effectively.

Calling for urgent action, Meghachandra urged the central government to release delayed funds, initiate transparent investigations into alleged scams, and prioritize rehabilitation for displaced families living in miserable conditions in relief camps. He also highlights the urgency of restoring peace and rebuilding the state.

Tripura airport panel recommends 10-km bird-free zone for safer flights

AGARTALA

Tripura's Maharaja Bir Bikram (MBB) Airport's Airfield Environment Management Committee (AEMC) has strongly recommended the establishment of a 10-kilometre bird-free zone around the airport to prevent bird strikes and ensure safe flight operations.

The recommendation comes in the wake of heightened aviation safety concerns following the tragic crash of a private airline aircraft in Ahmedabad on June 12, which claimed 274 lives shortly after takeoff.

Airport Director K. C. Meena confirmed the development following a key meeting chaired by West Tripura District Magistrate Vishal Kumar. "The objective of the meeting was to review and improve environmental practices in and around the airport to ensure safe and sustainable flight operations," Meena told. The AEMC meeting focused on several critical safety issues, including bird hazard management, solid waste disposal, and improved coordination among civic and governmental agencies.

"We strongly suggest that a 10-kilometre radius around the airport be designated as a bird-free zone. This step will strengthen the safety and environmental sustainability of MBB Airport," Meena said, highlighting the growing risk posed by avian activity near airfields.

He added that continuous monitoring and coordinated action among stakeholders are essential to mitigating environmental risks to aviation.

Meghalaya CM launches grassroots music project, unveils Rs 69 cr cultural push

SHILLONG

World Music Day marks launch of Season 3 CMGMP by Meghalaya CM. Funding increased from Rs 35 crore to Rs 69 crore supporting artist-program now includes fixed venues and music theory training. On the occasion of World Music Day, June 21, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma launched Season 3 of the Meghalaya Grassroots Music Project, now rebranded as the 'Chief Minister's Grassroots Music Production (CMGMP)' — marking a transformative new chapter in the state's music and cultural journey. What began as a Rs 35 crore initiative supporting 2,500 artists has now grown into a Rs 69 crore programme, empowering over 5,400 artists and enabling more than 38,000 live performances across Meghalaya, CM Sangma stated. With its elevation

to a permanent, structured platform, CMGMP will now feature fixed performance venues, comprehensive training in music theory, and expanded support for music production. Calling the initiative "deeply personal," CM Sangma reflected on his own struggles as a young musician. "I want every young artist in our state to feel seen, heard, and empowered to chase their dreams, with access to the right tools, training, and a stage," he said. More than just a name change, CMGMP is envisioned as a cultural movement that nurtures talent from the grassroots, celebrates Meghalaya's rich musical heritage, and builds a sustainable ecosystem for local artists. The Chief Minister encouraged aspiring musicians across the state to continue creating and performing, affirming that "Meghalaya is with you."

Kohima cops crack Rs 1.5 crore burglary spree; arrest prime accused behind KMC heist

KOHIMA

Kekietuo confessed to 11 burglaries across Kohima city. Total estimated loss from crimes is Rs 1.5 crore. SIT used surveillance and intelligence to trace the accused.

Nagaland's Kohima police has arrested a local resident, Kekietuo, for his involvement in a series of high-profile burglaries, including the recent theft of nearly Rs 1 crore from the Kohima Municipal Council (KMC) Office on June 3.

The accused has confessed to 11 burglaries across the city since August 2023, with the total estimated loss amounting to Rs 1.5 crore.

Addressing the media on June 21, Additional SP and PRO K. Soriso Quinker informed that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted to investigate the KMC case. The team relied on forensic tools, surveillance footage, and intelligence gathering to trace the accused,

whose suspicious spending patterns post-heist provided key leads.

The burglaries spanned locations including Baptist College, Kohima College, Oriental College, the North Treasury, Nexa showroom, Toyota dealership, and several government and private offices. Investigations revealed a clear pattern, and Kekietuo's confession helped police link the cases.

Efforts are underway to recover the stolen funds, especially the large sum from the KMC. Authorities believe there may be additional unreported incidents connected to the accused. Kohima SP Teisovise Metha commended the investigation team, calling the breakthrough a testament to their diligence and technical expertise.

In a separate case, Kohima Police also solved the theft of 675 grams of heroin from the Malkhana (evidence room) of the Prosecution Inspector's Court. The stolen narcotics were part of an ongoing

case. The main suspect, Kevichutuo Cüze (28), was arrested on June 13 and remanded to judicial custody.

Police thanked the public for their support and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining law and order in the capital. Following the achievement, the Kohima Village Youth Organisation (KVYO) congratulated the Officer-in-Charge, North Police Station, Kohima, and all ranks and files under his command for successfully cracking the recent robbery case in Kohima and apprehending the individual (Kekietuo Solo) who has long been a menace to the citizens of Kohima.

"The organisation deeply appreciates the patience, resilience, and professional expertise demonstrated by the police team in resolving this case. KVYO also acknowledges and expresses gratitude to the Superintendent of Police, Kohima, and his dedicated staff for their tireless efforts and commitment in bringing the culprit to justice," the press release read.

Shutdown lifted after Rs 10L compensation in Manipur's Churachandpur: Reports

IMPHAL

Authorities lifted the total shutdown in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts after paying Rs 10 lakh in compensation for the death of a tribal woman during an operation in Manipur's Churachandpur district, according to reports on Sunday.

Security forces have taken strict security measures for the restoration of peace in the state.

The police reported on Sunday that the shutdown, which they imposed earlier in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts, passed off without any untoward incidents, and they have restored normalcy in the districts.

The police confirmed that they have ensured the movement of 231 vehicles carrying essential items along NH-37 linking Imphal to Silchar via Jiribam amid strict



security measures in all vulnerable locations to ensure free and safe movement.

The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) and the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) have called off the total shutdown they imposed across Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts following an agreement with the government on Saturday. The protests began after

the central security forces killed Hoikholing Haokip, wife of the Langchingmanbi village chief, on June 19 in an operation they conducted in Churachandpur district. A total shutdown then followed.

The Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur, on Saturday, representing the State authority, and leaders of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), acting on

behalf of the victim's family, executed a Deed of Agreement at the Kuki Impi Churachandpur (KIC) complex.

As per the agreement, the Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) battalion deployed under the 57 Mountain Division has allegedly admitted guilt and acknowledged responsibility for the act that led to the death of Hoikholing Haokip. Reports indicate that the Unit agreed to settle the matter under local tribal customary law and also agreed to perform rites and rituals known as 'Hemkham' — mandated under the tribal customary law.

Accordingly, the Unit produced several Hemkham materials and a compensation of Rs 10 lakh. With the agreement signed and compensation delivered, they have officially lifted the total shutdown, the reports added.

Akhil Gogoi alleges shielding of 'scam-tainted' APSC officers; Himanta vows SC appeal

GUWAHATI

A day after the Gauhati High Court ordered the reinstatement of 52 civil service officials dismissed over the infamous APSC cash-for-job scam, political temperatures in Assam soared, with Rajbor Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi accusing the BJP government of shielding the guilty, while Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma termed the verdict "painful" and vowed to challenge it in the Supreme Court.

The High Court's division bench ruled that 52 officers, who were terminated for alleged irregularities in the 2013-14 Combined Competitive Examination conducted by the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC), must be reinstated — provided they had completed their probation period.

The court cited procedural lapses, including the absence of show-cause notices and departmental enquiries, as grounds for invalidating the terminations. The judgment gives the government 50 days to reinstate the officers, while also granting a 30-day window to initiate fresh departmental proceedings if needed. Akhil Gogoi: "This is inherited corruption." Reacting sharply, MLA Akhil Gogoi launched a scathing attack on the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government, calling the verdict a consequence of deliberate mishandling by the administration. "This is not just procedural failure — this is inherited corruption," Gogoi said, alleging that key aides of the Chief Minister were among those who benefited from the manipulated recruitment.

Gogoi accused the government of violating principles of natural justice intentionally. "Was the Advocate General not aware that a show-cause notice is mandatory? If the government wasn't advised properly, why hasn't he been removed?" he questioned. He claimed that the government's reluctance to dissolve the 2013-14 batch — even after the Biplob Sharma Committee found that nearly 90% of the appointments were fraudulent — was evidence of political protection. "The reason is clear: those close to the top were involved. A guilty

government cannot conduct a fair investigation," he asserted, demanding CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's resignation.

CM Sarma: "We will appeal to Supreme Court"

Responding to the controversy while speaking at a Yoga Day event in Baksa, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the verdict was deeply disappointing and vowed to challenge it in the Supreme Court. "The judgement by the division bench on the APSC matter is painful and has led to disappointment for us," Sarma told reporters. "It has come at a time when the Assam government has been taking strong steps to ensure merit-based recruitment." Although the Chief Minister noted he had not yet gone through the full judgment, he described the reported conclusions as "unfortunate" and "contrary to the spirit of clean governance." "We will definitely appeal before the Supreme Court. Until the last moment, we will ensure that no one who got their job through corrupt means is reinstated," Sarma said, reinforcing his government's stand on zero tolerance for corruption. The cash-for-jobs scam, which came to light in 2016, led to the arrest of over 70 people, including former APSC chairman Rakesh Kumar Paul and 57 officers recruited during the tainted 2013-14 batch. Initial actions, including suspensions and dismissals, were carried out during the tenure of former Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

As the state prepares to escalate the case to the Supreme Court, the spotlight remains on both the legal complexities and the political stakes. While the High Court emphasized procedural justice, opposition voices argue that the lapses were intentional, aimed at shielding insiders. The government, meanwhile, insists it remains committed to cleansing the system. With 52 officers now poised for possible reinstatement and the state readying for a legal battle in the apex court, the APSC scam — one of Assam's biggest recruitment scandals — has once again become a flashpoint in the debate over governance, accountability, and political integrity.

Empowering tribal communities: DAJGUA campaign sees resounding success in Silchar

SILCHAR

A vibrant wave of inclusive governance and community upliftment swept through Gandhi Bhawan, Silchar, on Saturday with the successful observance of the Dharti Aaba Janajatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA). The special campaign, held under the aegis of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, witnessed the convergence of key government officials, local bodies, and tribal citizens in a collaborative effort to ensure saturation of individual entitlements for the tribal populace.

The event was marked by the esteemed presence of Shri Sushil Bading, Under-Secretary (IFD), Ministry of Tribal Affairs, New Delhi, who played a pivotal role in reinforcing the Government of India's commitment to the socio-economic upliftment of tribal communities. Shri Unhale Asish Vidyadhar, IAS, In-charge Commissioner, Silchar Municipal



Corporation, added further significance to the gathering with his gracious presence and address. The campaign was further bolstered by the participation of Shri Norsing Bey, ACS, District Development Commissioner, Cachar; Shri P.K. Borah, Chief Executive Officer, Cachar Zilla Parishad; the Lead District Manager, PNB, Silchar; District Agricultural Officer, Cachar; and other heads of departments, who extended institutional support to ensure the smooth implementation of the initiative. A highlight of



the campaign was a thought-provoking street drama staged at Gandhi Bagh Park, Silchar, which conveyed powerful messages on the importance of accessing government welfare schemes.

The street play proved to be a creative and impactful medium to engage and inform the public, especially the tribal attendees. The campaign focused intensively on addressing gaps in the coverage of key welfare services such as Aadhaar enrolment and correction, issuance of Ayushman Bharat health cards, PM-KISAN registration, and opening



of Jan Dhan Yojana accounts. This strategic gap-filling approach aimed at achieving 100% saturation of individual entitlements among tribal beneficiaries.

The overwhelming participation of tribal citizens and the provision of on-the-spot support services resulted in a highly effective and impactful campaign. The DAJGUA initiative in Silchar not only symbolized administrative outreach but also reaffirmed the government's inclusive vision of leaving no citizen behind in the journey towards holistic rural development.

Quest!

"Work without attachment. Let go of results — that is true freedom!" — Bhagavad Gita

PM has mastered 'art of slogans', but offers no solutions, says Rahul Gandhi



NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has mastered the "art of slogans" but offers no solutions and claimed that India's manufacturing was at a record low despite the 'Make in India' initiative.

"Make in India promised a factory boom. So why is manufacturing at record lows, youth unemployment at record highs, and why have imports from China more than doubled? The PM has mastered the art of slogans, not solutions. Since 2014, manufacturing has fallen to 14 per cent of our economy," he said in a post on X.

Gandhi said Modi has "no new ideas" and has "surrendered". "Even the much-hyped PLI scheme is now being quietly rolled back," he alleged.

He said India needs a fundamental shift, one that

empowers lakhs of producers through honest reforms and financial support.

"We must stop being a market for others. If we don't build here, we'll keep buying from those who do. The clock is ticking," said the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha.

The Congress leader met mobile repair technicians at Nehru Place in the capital and attached a video of the conversation to the post.

"I met Shivam and Saif, both bright, skilled and full of promise - yet denied the opportunity."

Noting that there is a difference between 'Made in India' and 'Assembled in India', he said:

"The truth is stark: we assemble, we import, but we don't build. China profits. China is the world's electronic market. There is no other electronic market anywhere. Assemble as many iPhones as you want, all you are doing is giving

money to the big oligopolies of India. Start making iPhones, it's a completely different ball game," he said.

The former Congress chief said to manufacture parts, whether it is a motherboard or "small pieces", you need a certain level of machining, a certain level of understanding of tolerances of working with small components.

"And, at the centre of it, and people don't like it when I say it, is the idea of caste. We need to make this transparent. We need to show exactly how Indian society distributes power," he said. R S Sachdeva, former chairperson of the Punjab chapter of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that if the same situation continues when the new crop arrives amidst an already saturated market, prices will crash further.

Not just loss of voice, but surrender of values: Sonia on India's silence on Gaza, Iran

NEW DELHI

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Saturday strongly criticised India's silence on Israel's devastation in Gaza and Iran as "not just a loss of its voice, but also a surrender of values".

In an article - "It is still too late for India's voice to be heard", she accused the Narendra Modi government of abandoning India's long-standing and principled commitment to a peaceful two-nation solution envisioning an independent Palestine along with Israel.

Gandhi, in the article, was also critical of US President Donald Trump for following a "destructive path" in West Asia, after having spoken against America's endless wars.

"New Delhi's silence on the devastation in Gaza and now on the unprovoked escalation against Iran reflects a disturbing departure from our moral and diplomatic traditions. This represents not just a loss of voice but also a surrender of values," the Congress leader said in her article in 'The Hindu'.

"It is still too late. India must speak clearly, act responsibly, and use every diplomatic channel available to defuse tensions and promote a return to dialogue in West Asia," Gandhi asserted.

She also said that in the face of this humanitarian catastrophe, "the Narendra Modi government has all but abandoned India's long-standing and principled commitment to a peaceful two-state solution, one that envisions a sovereign, independent Palestine living side-by-side with Israel in mutual security and dignity."

Sonia Gandhi noted that on June 13, 2025, the world has, once again, "witnessed the dangerous consequences of unilateral militarism when Israel launched a deeply troubling and unlawful strike against Iran and its sovereignty".

She said the Indian National Congress has condemned these bomb-



ings and targeted assassinations on Iranian soil, which represents a dangerous escalation with grave regional and global consequences.

"As with so many of Israel's recent actions, including its brutal and disproportionate campaign in Gaza, this operation was executed with utter disregard for civilian lives and regional stability. These actions will only deepen instability and sow the seeds of further conflict," she noted.

Gandhi also alleged that the current Israeli leadership under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "has a long and unfortunate record of undermining peace and nurturing extremism". She alleged that given the record, "it is not surprising that Netanyahu would choose escalation over engagement".

Referring to the US President, she said, Trump's statement of June 17 dismissing its own intelligence chief's assessment and claiming that Iran

was "very close" to acquiring nuclear weapons is "deeply disappointing".

"The world expects and needs leadership that is grounded in facts and driven by diplomacy, and not by force or falsehoods," she said.

Gandhi said Iran has been a long-standing friend to India and is bound to us by deep civilisational ties.

"It has a history of steadfast support, including in Jammu and Kashmir at crucial junctures. In 1994, Iran helped block a resolution critical of India at the UN Commission on Human Rights on the Kashmir issue," she noted.

"Indeed, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been much more cooperative with India than its predecessor, the Imperial State of Iran, that had tilted towards Pakistan in the 1960s and 1970s," she added. Referring to the India-Israel strategic relations in recent decades, she said, "This unique position gives our country the moral responsibility and the diplomatic leverage to act as

a bridge for de-escalation and peace."

"This is not simply an abstract principle. Lakhs of Indian citizens are living and working across West Asia, which makes peace in the region an issue of vital national interest.

"Israel's recent actions against Iran have taken place in an atmosphere of impunity, enabled by near-unconditional support from powerful western nations," Gandhi said.

She said while the Indian National Congress unequivocally condemned the "absolutely horrific and totally unacceptable attacks" by Hamas on October 7, 2023, "we cannot remain silent in the face of Israel's catastrophic and disproportionate response.

"More than 55,000 Palestinians have lost their lives. Entire families, neighbourhoods, and even hospitals have been obliterated. Gaza stands on the brink of famine, and its civilian population continues to suffer unspeakable hardship," she added.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S attacked 3 Iranian nuclear sites: Trump

WASHINGTON

There were "no signs of contamination" at the nuclear sites at Esfahan, Fordo and Natanz after U.S. airstrikes, the Iranian state media reported, quoting a statement from the country's National Nuclear Safety System Center.

"There is no danger to the residents living around the aforementioned sites," the statement said.

U.S. President Donald Trump said earlier on Saturday that the United States has completed attacks on three nuclear sites in Iran, including "Fordo, Natanz and Esfahan."

"All planes are now outside of Iran's airspace. A full payload of BOMBS was dropped on the primary site, Fordo," he said on the social platform Truth Social.

Tehran wrote on "end this war," Trump wrote on Truth Social after the strikes.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged attacks on the country's nuclear facilities. Iran had evacuated these three nuclear sites "a while ago," said Hassan Abedini, deputy political director of Iran's state broadcaster, adding that Iran "didn't suffer a major blow because the materials had already been taken out."

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization confirmed the U.S. attacks, but said its work will not be stopped.

"The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran assures the great Iranian nation that despite the evil conspiracies of its enemies, with the efforts of thousands of its revolutionary and motivated scientists and experts, it will not allow the development of this national industry, which is the result of the blood of nuclear martyrs, to



be stopped," the agency said in a statement issued after Trump announced the U.S. attacks.

In its strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, the United States used the GBU-57A/B Massive Ordnance Penetrator bomb, known as the "bunker buster," local media quoted two sources familiar with the operation. B-2 bombers are the only aircraft capable of carrying the bombs, said the report.

Trump and his team were in touch with top congressional Republicans before the strikes, but did not brief top Democrats on his plans until after the bombs had been dropped, the report added. The

attacks marked a historic escalation in the Middle East. It may provoke retaliation from Tehran against U.S. troops and military installations across the region, said the report.

A senior official from Yemen's Houthi group said in a social media post early Sunday that it would hold Trump responsible for the attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.

"Trump must bear the consequences," Houthi political bureau member Hizam al-Assad posted on X.

Prior to the U.S. attacks, the Houthi group said in a statement that it would target U.S. ships if Washington attacks Iran.

"If America is involved in the attack and aggression against Iran... the armed forces (Houthi forces) will target its ships and battleships in the Red Sea," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in the statement, aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV. For his part, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated Trump on Sunday after the U.S. attacks, calling it a "bold decision to target Iran's nuclear facilities."

Trump had created a "pivot of history," he added. The U.S. air raids on Iran came on the ninth day after Israel launched attacks on Iran on June 13.

A deadly race for food: Palestinians in Gaza risk harrowing journey day after day

KHAN YOUNIS

Each day, Palestinians in Gaza run a deadly gauntlet in hopes of getting food. Israeli troops open barrages of gunfire toward crowds crossing military zones to get to the aid, they say, and knife-wielding thieves wait to ambush those who succeed. Palestinians say lawlessness is growing as they are forced into a competition to feed their families.

A lucky few manage to secure some packets of lentils, a jar of Nutella or a bag of flour. Many return empty-handed and must attempt the ordeal again the next day.

"This isn't aid. It's humiliation. It's death," said Jamil Atili, his face shining with sweat as he made his way back last week from a food center run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an Israeli-backed private contractor. He had suffered a knife cut across his cheek amid the scramble for food and said a contractor guard pepper-sprayed him in the face. Still, he emerged with nothing for his 13 family members.

"I have nothing to feed my children," he said, nearly crying. "My heart is broken."

Israel began allowing food into Gaza this past month after cutting it off completely for 10 weeks, though United Nations officials say it is not enough to stave off starvation. Most of the supplies go to GHF, which operates four food distribution points inside Israeli military zones. A trickle of aid goes to the U.N. and humanitarian groups.

Both systems are mired in chaos. Daily gunfire by Israeli troops toward crowds on the roads heading to the GHF centers has killed several hundred people and wounded hundreds more in past weeks, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

At the same time, in past weeks, hungry crowds overwhelm most of the U.N.'s truck convoys and strip away the sup-

plies. Israeli troops have opened fire to disperse crowds waiting for trucks near military zones, witnesses say — and on Tuesday, more than 50 people were killed, according to the ministry. The Israeli military says it is investigating.

"I don't see how it can get any worse, because it is already apocalyptic. But somehow it does get worse," said Olga Cherevko, spokesperson for the U.N. humanitarian affairs office.

Israel says it has only fired warning shots at suspects who approached its forces along the roads to the GHF food centers.

Palestinian witnesses say the troops fire to prevent crowds from moving past a certain point before the centers open or because people leave the road designated by the military. They describe heavy barrages from tanks, snipers, drones and even guns mounted on cranes.

Asked how its soldiers control movement, the military told The Associated Press its "operational conduct... is accompanied by systematic learning processes." It said it was looking into safety measures like fences and road signs. GHF says no shootings have taken place in or near its hubs. A spokesperson, speaking on condition of anonymity under GHF rules, said incidents take place before sites open involving aid-seekers who move "during prohibited times... or trying to take a shortcut." They said GHF is trying to improve safety, in part by changing opening times to daylight hours. Israel intends for GHF to replace the U.N.-led aid network in Gaza, contending that Hamas diverts large amounts of aid from it. The U.N. denies the claim.

Thousands of people must walk miles to reach the GHF centers, three of which are in the far south outside the city of Rafah. Palestinians said the danger begins when the crowds enter the Israeli military zone encom-

passing Rafah.

Mohammed Saqer, a father of three who risked the trip multiple times, said that when he went last week, tanks were firing over the heads of the crowds as drone announcements told everyone to move back.

It's "like it was 'Squid Game,'" Saqer said, referring to the dystopian thriller TV series in which contestants risk their lives to win a prize. Just raising your head might mean death, he said.

He and others crawled forward, then left the main road. A shot rang out nearby and they ducked, he said. They found a young man on the ground, shot in the back. The others assumed he was dead, but Saqer felt his chest — it was still warm, and he found a pulse. They carried him to a point where a car could pick him up.

Everyone broke into a crazed run, he said. He saw several people wounded on the ground. One man, bleeding from his abdomen, reached out his hand, pleading for help. No one stopped.

"Everyone is just running to get to the aid, to get there first," Saqer said. Omar al-Hobi described the same scene the four times he went last week. Twice, he returned empty-handed; once, he managed to grab a pack of lentils. On the fourth day, he was determined to secure flour for his three children and pregnant wife.

He said he and others inched their way forward under tank fire. He saw several people shot in the legs. One man fell bleeding to the ground, apparently dead, he said.

Horrified, al-Hobi froze, unable to move, "but I remembered I have to feed my children." He took cover in a greenhouse, then heard the announcement that the center was open and began to run. At the center, food boxes are stacked on the ground in an area surrounded by fences and earthen berms. Thousands rush in to grab what they can in a frantic melee.

Livelihood, Peace and Prosperity – a Case of Manipur, North East Region

(REPRODUCED FROM THE SOUVENIR PUBLISHED ON THE OCCASION OF SANATAN SAMMELAN 2025, MANIPUR, WITH THE THEME: PEACE, PROGRESS, PROSPERITY)

DR SUKAMAL DEB

Can peace be built? Yes, it can, but we must rapidly turn around our understanding of governance to allow for economic development and meaningful participation, as well as creating opportunities for peaceful co-existence. Peace can be built through work, income and livelihood.

Conflict goes hand in hand with poverty-conflicts lower incomes.

A poverty-afflicted state or region will face an unprecedented fall in income stability, employment and a rise in discontentment. Discontentment accumulates among the people, the common masses, as they receive the heat more intensely. Yet, it is difficult to ventilate because of their innate limitations. The by-products of conflicts are many. Food production declines, debt increases, and businesses drop, worsening the overall life.

Entrepreneurship is an essential piece of the puzzle to create conditions that will bring stability to communities. For the North East region, it remains a fact that micro and small enterprises are powerful vehicles to support our economic growth. They are also key drivers of job creation. And that I am not claiming from my lofty reading of books, but my grassroots level engagements with the artisans and small entrepreneurs in the eight states of this region. Entrepreneurship is a tool in reducing the discontent and despair associated with economic marginalisation, thus positioning them as compelling potential peace brokers. There is a special role for entrepreneurship to play in making peace work.

There are several stories that enliven my confidence and hope that entrepreneurs and their micro-enterprises are evolving a story of socio-economic transformations. I worked with them and have been an admirer of the immense possibilities if these people are constantly motivated, mentored and supported. I take the opportunity to tell the readers about a few of them.

Ms Shamjetshabam Kamala Devi (51), a girl from an ordinary family facing financial hardship in Thongjao village, the village known as the Land of Pottery, Manipur, earned her M.Tech in Applied Geology from Dibrugarh University, Assam, in 2004. She is the only educated girl of her time from that village. She dedicates herself to preserving and promoting black pottery, becoming a leader of climate resilience through craft. She tried her hand at pottery craft from the age of 12, turning the clay constantly, shaping it into a pot with her creative faculty, making a brilliant piece of Black Thongjao Pottery. The Terra-cotta Pottery of Thongjao uses a mixture of red and black clay. In 2005, she established her village enterprise, creating employment for other women. She received several awards, and her products have reached the global market (Netherlands). This craft contributes to the Circular Economy that tackles global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, waste and pollution, circulates products and materials and regenerates nature. Amid the ongoing conflicts in Manipur, women artisans eye e-commerce to market their crafts (The Economic Times, 15 October 2024). Keeping in mind my long association with her, we invited her to the Anant National University, the First DesignX University in India, Ahmedabad and organised the Thongjao Black Pottery Workshop with her from 16th to 31st January 2025. Students of the university came to know about the glory of Manipur. Kamala also had an activity session with the Students from Jammu & Kashmir who were here on a Winter Camp. We mark it as an example of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion of this great country, Bharat. To me, this bears a special significance, as I believe this is an endeavour towards 'National Integration through crafts'.

My experience of mentoring a couple of start-ups in Manipur in 2023 to 2024, as an assignment of IIM Calcutta Innovation Park, is encouraging. H Dayanidhi Singh, M.Sc. (Food Technology), founded his Start-up, OPC Pvt Ltd, Imphal. His idea and vision are to innovate, design and make machines to solve the staggering problems faced by agriculturists and food processors from an engineering perspective. He successfully prototyped a few that are a boon to agriculture and food processing enterprises. Konsam Lingkan Kumar, B.Sc, Founder of Heptan Technologies, which is a technology-based startup, mainly focused on the research and development of affordable and innovative appliances, in the areas of food processing and agricultural-related tools and equipment. He developed a low-cost machine that is suitable for small enterprises. He works on developing tools for farm mechanisation and automation. He developed a prototype remote-controlled automatic temperature and humidity controller for use in mushroom cultivation and other precision farming. Moirangthem Nepalion is a B. Tech (Civil). His Start-up, Reverate, innovated a water pump, named it HEP Wa Co Pump, which literally stands for Hydro Energy powered and Water conservative Pump. The pump works without electricity or any type of fuel. The inconvenience of fetching water from a lower level to a higher level by using an electric motor pump or a petrol engine pump, and its cost, motivated the design of this pump. The pump works anywhere if there is a proper height difference between the water source and the pump. His innovation helps farmers in Manipur.

Sanabam Bocha Singh, a celebrated entrepreneur from Imphal, believes that for the advancement of our society as a whole, we all need to work with much dedication in the particular fields of work we are fortunate enough to work in. He set up a craft cluster called the Ningomthong Reed Cluster in Imphal East in 2015 using water reed or Kauna as raw materials. There are



The man who does more than he is paid for will soon be paid for more than he does.

316 artisans working in the cluster. Kauna is used for producing a wide variety of products, ranging from furniture to mats and bags. The products are eco-friendly and highly valued, durable and have



Kamala Devi, hands-on with the students of the Anant National University, Ahmedabad, at the workshop, January 2025

great aesthetic appeal. Kauna Craft plays a crucial role in uplifting the indigenous communities in Manipur. Around 80 percent of the households in Thoubal are connected to this craft. Cococesta is a sustainable Kauna brand of Sarju Tayenjam, a woman entrepreneur. The craft traditions of Kauna are an important part of the culture for the people of Manipur and are popular globally. The women in Manipur are engaged

prevail, making the northeast a champion, teaching respect and tolerance for diverse cultures, may be a cure to our troubles. We have a bigger role to play in making North East India a single unit of cohesion and prosperity.

The remarkable initiative of the Barak-Manipur Friendship Association, brainstorming to bring a lasting solution to the state of Manipur and to showcase

on humanity because it deprives us of our fundamental human rights and dignity, perpetuates social inequalities, afflicts us with multi-dimensional scarcities, limits access to education and healthcare, and hinders economic growth, leading to a vicious transgenerational cycle. Let us recognise our shared responsibility to eradicate the curse of poverty. As Gandhiji said, poverty is the worst form of violence.



Sanabam Bocha Singh, Founder, Reed Craft Cluster, with the author in Imphal, Dec 2021

in Loin loom weaving. They weave Laichamphi, a blanket. This is a rare product, perhaps not found in any other state in its form and pattern.

There are several languishing crafts in the North East Region; we need to work to document and revive them, for example, the Lungwin/Lukhum or textile fabrics in Manipur by Anal tribes. The British Council Report on Crafts, 2023, records that an overwhelming number of craft workers in India, 200 million, women 56.13%, face varying degrees of risk from climate change, directly or indirectly. Many of them are from the North East Region. The Report endorses that our traditional artisans have climate-resilient ideas. We have indigenous wisdom and practices, which we need to brand. We have 1000 years of circular economy running in Indian villages. Our women are so connected to nature, and every artisan is a climate activist. It is important to look back at Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) and the communities. This shared wisdom unites us, sacking conflicts.

There are a few community organisations in Manipur, with whom I have had the opportunity to work. During the spell of 2018-22, as the Dy. CEO, KVIC, NEZ, Ministry of MSME, Government of India, I tried to promote Khadi (a hand-spun, hand-woven, sustainable textile) and rural industries in the region. My experience of working in Manipur enthused me with hope, seeing the immense potential, I could visualise the enormous task that was to be carried out. The role played by women artisans and women entrepreneurs is a strong case for the entire NER. To me, we can pave the path of progress by nurturing their traits.

One of the special features of the North East Region is our diversity in cultures, traditions. These are our valuable assets, which need to be fostered close to our hearts. These differences should not lead us to conflict, we should not construct our ethnic identity by distinguishing ourselves from others. All these years, as a social scientist, I realised that poverty generates social deprivation, fuelling anger and crime. The quality of governance plays a crucial role. Our large population size and geographical conditions, the rugged terrain of the northeast, and belated initiative to develop the region are common issues for all of us.

Ending the conflict is a must for us. Respect and tolerance for diverse cultures, empathy, will perhaps be a cure. In a world rife with ethnic clashes, the antidote lies not in separation but in the powerful remedy of respect and tolerance for diverse cultures. Let us join the movement towards harmony as we unravel the transformative potential of embracing our differences, weaving a tapestry of unity that promises to heal the wounds of our prevalent ethnic discord. In an era marked by increasing globalisation and interconnectedness, the imperative of fostering respect and tolerance for diverse cultures has emerged as a critical cure to the pervasive ethnic clashes that plague societies worldwide.

It is not uncommon that the coexistence of diverse cultures is often blemished by misunderstanding, prejudice, and conflict. We need to embrace the profound significance of cultivating respect and tolerance. By delving into the root causes of ethnic clashes and advocating for the celebration of differences, this exploration seeks to elucidate the transformative power of fostering mutual understanding, empathy, and acceptance across cultural boundaries. As we navigate the contemporary world, the pursuit of respect and tolerance becomes not only a moral imperative but a pragmatic necessity for building resilient and harmonious societies. Let our collective commitment



A physically challenged artisan of Manipur participates in the KVIC Exhibition, visited by A.K. Panda, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of MSME, Government of India, accompanied by the author.



Pottery items produced by students of Anant National University, Ahmedabad, trained by Kamal Devi, Manipur, in January 2025

the rich traditional fabric which coexists amongst multiple ethnic communities, deserves all our appreciation. We all want to be an ambassador in moving the region towards peace, progress and development. Religion emphasises forgiveness, compassion, reconciliation and understanding. When religion works to unify us, shares an experience of healing, fosters enduring peace, its canopy enlarges to Sanatan, leading us to spirituality, and teaches humanity and non-duality. Peace implies preventing a resumption of mass violence, looting and killing - but it also means finding constructive conflict resolution mechanisms and preventing spoilers from derailing reconstruction through the use of violence. Democracy and human development in any region exhibit an intertwined relationship, often referred to as elective affinities. Not only co-exist but also enhance each other over time. As democracy strengthens, it facilitates better human development outcomes, such as more equitable access to resources and opportunities. Simultaneously, as societies achieve higher levels of human development, they often demand more democratic governance.

Thus, these two processes evolve together in a mutually reinforcing manner. For many reasons, entrepreneurship has an increasingly key role in this process. Peace, participation and prosperity are mutually reinforcing.

Our common enemy is poverty. It's a curse

About the author: Dr Sukamal Deb is a crusader of inclusive development. For more than three decades, he worked in the Government, contributing to developing the North-East Region of India. Among others, he has a Doctorate in Rural Development, specialisations in Age of Sustainable Development (Columbia University, NY), Climate Action (Fellowship) and Social Sector Leadership (Non-profit, Global Social Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Scaling Social Impact, Fund Raising, Financial Modelling, Organisational Capacity). His team's work received appreciation, and we created several national and international records in rural development. He was conferred the title of Social Development Hero 2024 by SUNFO, an organisation of the UN and the Parliament of Sri Lanka, Colombo and the Leader of the Decade in Community Leadership by WICCI, New Delhi, in 2022. He leads an Academic Centre at Anant National University, Ahmedabad, India, researching languishing crafts and Indigenous Knowledge systems and practices (IKSP). He has been connected with several universities and has several research publications. He reviewed several manuscripts and scholarly works of the globally acclaimed publishers. The Government of NCT, Delhi, India, nominated him for the three-member Academician's Committee at DSEU, New Delhi. His LinkedIn profile Link is <https://in.linkedin.com/in/dr-sukamal-deb-phd-14352a5b>

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JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM



10 JAN
NE Cultural Fest

Any Form of Art and Cultural showcase can be showcased here. The Top performances will be invited to perform in the Main Event. Schools, Colleges, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.

11 JAN
Adventure Sports

Tracking & Campus, Obstacle Navigations, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.





12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave

State of the river will be discussed on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, treatment and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competition and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.

JAN'25
Online Global Fest

All can participate online and send a video clip on Poems, Songs and Dance Performances, Bengali, English, Hindi & Manipuri. Last Date: 31st December 2024.



11 JAN
Media Conclave

Media Conclave from North Eastern, West Bengal, and the Hindi, Talks and Conferences are part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Media Conclave will be a platform for students, journalists, media & corporate HR, entrepreneurs, givers, speakers, founders.

Barak Festival
Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion



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10-12 JAN
Science Studio

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DEC'24-JAN'25
Photography

Online Photography Contest: River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture. Real-Time Photography Contest of 'Barak Festival 2025'.

10-12 JAN
E-Sports

Full-Blown Competitive | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



Barak Festival
Band Night | 10 JAN
Musical Night | 11 JAN



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11 JAN
film festival

Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Manipur. Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, Wb. Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet.

10-12 JAN
Book Bank

Anti-Book Campaign | Book Bank | e-books | e-audio | e-video

Book Club
Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books

Painting Carnival
Water Colour painting and Draw Race Campaign



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