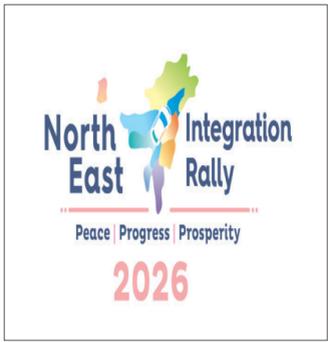




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PERSPECTIVE

The Universe is always listening. Speak abundance.

No Ban on Women Working Night Shifts, Says Nagaland

KOHIMA

The Labour Commissioner of Nagaland, Er. S.L. Wati Aier, has clarified that there is no law currently in force in the state that prohibits women from working during night hours.

Issuing a statement on Friday, the commissioner said that despite the wording of Section 20 of the Nagaland Shops & Establishments Act, 1986, women may be engaged in employment beyond 7 pm and/or before 6 am, provided certain safeguards are strictly followed.

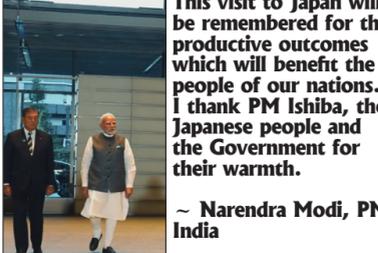
These include:
Voluntary consent – Employment at night will only be allowed with the written consent of the woman employee.

Safety measures – Employers must provide adequate transport, lighting and security arrangements to ensure safety during travel and at the workplace.

Compliance with labour laws – All provisions relating to working hours, overtime, rest intervals and weekly holidays under the Act and other labour laws must be fully observed.

The Labour Commissioner further stated that the clarification takes effect immediately and has been issued with the approval of the competent authority.

WHO SAID WHAT



This visit to Japan will be remembered for the productive outcomes which will benefit the people of our nations. I thank PM Ishiba, the Japanese people and the Government for their warmth.
~ Narendra Modi, PM, India

COCOMI review meet tears into PUCL report for biasness, distortions



IMPHAL

A public review meeting on the controversial Independent People's Tribunal Report, conducted by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), was organised by the Coordinating Committee

on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), in Imphal on August 30. The session was presided over by COCOMI convenor Khuraijam Athouba and moderated by retired economist Prof. Ch. Priyoranjan. Eminent speakers included Dr. Homen Thangjam (IGNTU),

Dr. Malem Ningthouja (DMU), Dr. Noni Arambam (DMU), Impact TV editor Yumnam Rupachandra, and The Frontier Manipur executive editor Sadokpam Dhiren Ambrose. The meeting carried out a chapter-wise review of the PUCL

report and alleged several distortions and biases. Among the key concerns raised were:

Branding of the Meetei community as "anti-India": The report "generalizes and vilifies" the entire Meetei population, portraying their democratic movements and civil society groups as secessionist and anti-national, which is baseless but also deeply offensive.

Misrepresentation of judicial orders: The report wrongly claims that the Manipur High Court directed the state to recommend ST status for the Meeteis, despite clarification from the former Chief Justice that no such authority rests with the court.

One-sided portrayal of violence: Highlighting incidents of arms looting in the valley, but ignoring large-scale looting of weapons from police posts in the hills and the well-documented role of armed Kuki groups.

Suppressing critical facts: Downplaying the involvement of heavily armed Kuki militants, cross-border infiltration, and the use of drones and sophisticated weaponry, while disproportionately blaming Meitei civil society.

Biased narrative construction: The Tribunal recycles discredited and withdrawn reports, including the Editors' Guild report, and aligns its findings with separatist propaganda.

The meeting concluded that the Tribunal Report was politically motivated and damaging to Manipur's image.

Key recommendations of the meeting:

Formation of a COCOMI-led Working Group to prepare a fact-based counter report to counter PUCL's distorted narrative.

Accountability measures against individuals and organisations deliberately branding the Meeteis as "Anti-India" and manipulated facts for political ends.

Lodging of FIRs under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against PUCL members for one-sided and inflammatory reporting under the guise of Human Rights.

Speakers emphasised the need for accurate and balanced documentation to safeguard the dignity of the Manipuri people and ensure peace in the state.

Centre fully supports Assam eviction drives: Himanta Biswa Sarma



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday asserted that the Centre "completely supports" the state government's ongoing eviction drive, pointing to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's speech in the state the previous day as evidence. Speaking at a press conference, Sarma said Shah had clearly stated that Assam and the entire country would be freed of illegal infiltrators, while the BJP-led state government's efforts

to remove encroachments were being opposed by the Congress. "The Centre completely supports the Assam government's eviction drive and will extend all possible help to ensure its logical conclusion," he said.

The Chief Minister reiterated that evictions would continue as the government is committed to freeing encroached land. Since assuming office in May 2021, Sarma claimed that over 160 sq km of land has been cleared of encroachment. He added that all unauthorised occupation of forest land, Village Grazing Reserves (VGR), Professional Grazing Reserves (PGR), Satras, Namghars, and other public areas would be removed in a phased manner. Sarma acknowledged that most people displaced due to the drive belong to the Bengali-speaking Muslim community, who argue that their ancestors had settled in these areas after losing land in the riverine 'Char' regions due to Brahmaputra erosion.

On the issue of infiltration, Sarma said Assam is taking action on two fronts: against both recent immigrants and those who entered post-1971. "Foreigners who have come post-1971 and are residing in the state are being pushed back under the Immigrant Expulsion Act, which empowers us to do so," he said. Regarding fresh entrants, he added, "We are pushing them back as soon as they attempt to enter the state from neighbouring Bangladesh. The process of pushback is on and will continue."

NDA targets 100 Assam Assembly seats; Himanta

GUWAHATI

Setting the stage for next year's Assam Assembly elections, several NDA leaders, including Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, and AGP chief Atul Bora, on August 29 announced a target of winning 100 of the 126 assembly seats in the state.

The rally, attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, focused on development, anti-infiltration measures, and criticism of the Congress.

Addressing panchayat representatives, Sarma called for the protection of Assam's "jati, mati, bhet" (community, land, foundation) and vowed to reclaim land encroached upon by outsiders. He alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, along with Islamic scholar Madani, had recently threatened him, warning that Assam is ready to defend itself as it did during the historic Battle of Saraighat.

Sonowal criticised Congress for a tenure marked by "neglect, terrorism and disturbances," asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government brought peace and development to the Northeast. Bora echoed concerns about past expansion of fundamentalist forces but said law and order



has improved under the NDA, with peace accords signed with insurgents.

During his two-day visit, Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the BJP's preparations for the 2026 assembly elections, targeting Congress over its alleged protection of infiltrators. He criticised Rahul Gandhi's "Ghuspetiya Bachao Yatra" in Bihar, calling it a bid to protect infiltrators and urged the Congress leader to apologise to Prime Minister

Modi and the nation. Shah also highlighted Assam's anti-encroachment drives, stating that 1,29,548 acres of land had been freed from infiltrators and that Vaishnavite monasteries' sanctity had been restored. Speaking at the birth centenary of Assam's first non-Congress Chief Minister Golap Borbor, he recalled Borbor's efforts to cleanse voter lists, detecting 36,780 illegal names, which he described as the origin of the Assam Agitation.

Shah reaffirmed the BJP's commitment to making Assam and the entire country free of illegal foreigners, noting that the high-power demography mission announced by Modi is a step to study the demographic pattern and identify infiltrators. Assam Assembly, with 126 seats, is expected to go to polls in March-April next year. Currently, the BJP holds 64 seats, while its allies AGP and UPPL have nine and seven MLAs respectively. The opposition comprises Congress (26), AIUFD (15), BPF (3), CPI(M) (1), and one Independent legislator.

Shah departed for Delhi later in the day, with CM Sarma and cabinet colleagues seeing him off. The Chief Minister took to X to express gratitude, calling Shah's guidance over the past 24 hours "energising and motivational."

British Museum to Return 16th-Century Vrindavani Vastra to Assam on Loan in 2027



GUWAHATI

The British Museum in London

has agreed to loan the historic silk textile 'Vrindavani Vastra', created by 16th-century Vaishnav saint

"We have been trying to bring this textile back for a long time, and now the British Museum has agreed to loan it, provided a suitable museum is set up,"

Srimanta Sankardeva, to Assam for public display in 2027, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Saturday.

The museum has stipulated that the textile will be displayed for 18 months in a state-of-the-art facility in Assam meeting international environmental and security standards.

"We have been trying to bring this textile back for a long time, and now the British Museum has agreed to loan it, provided a suitable museum is set up," Sarma said.

As part of its corporate social responsibility initiative, the JSW Group has volunteered to establish the museum, which will be gifted to Assam.

Land for the facility has already been allotted, and the CM confirmed that he has written to the Centre seeking a "Sovereign Guarantee" to assure the British Museum that the textile will be returned undamaged after the loan period.

The Vrindavani Vastra, measuring over nine metres and composed of several silk panels originally numbering fifteen, was created under Sankardeva's guidance at the request of Koch king Nara Narayan. It depicts scenes from the life of Lord Krishna and includes portions of a poem authored by Sankardeva.

Acquired by the British Museum from Tibet in 1904, the textile is celebrated for its rich Assamese weaving traditions and the integration of multiple artistic styles. Its return to Assam will offer locals and visitors a rare opportunity to witness a priceless piece of cultural heritage in its place of origin.

Manipur: 158 tanker trucks dispatched from Jiribam to replenish fuel stocks



IMPHAL

Manipur Governor on August 30 reviewed the depleting stock position of petroleum fuels and LPG in the state, which has been severely affected by frequent landslides along NH-2 and NH-37, the two lifelines of the state.

In a meeting held on August 29 with all stakeholders, it was decided that the State CAF&PD Department, in coordination with State Police and Indian Oil Corporation Limited, would arrange a special convoy to re-

plenish the supply of petrol, diesel, aviation turbine fuel (ATF), and LPG. The convoy, which left Jiribam in the early hours of Saturday, consists of 158 tanker trucks carrying petrol and diesel, five trucks carrying ATF, and 29 trucks transporting LPG. The vehicles are expected to reach Imphal within two to three days. The state government has assured that all necessary steps are being taken to ensure adequate fuel availability for both domestic and commercial requirements.



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DONALD TRUMP'S TARIFF THREATS

Donald Trump's reiterated threat of significant tariff impositions on Indian exports in 2025 has established a pivotal economic and strategic issue in the contemporary history of India-US ties. Trump's administration has introduced a punitive tariff regime, reaching as high as 50%, aimed at India's crucial export sectors, citing market access restrictions, ongoing relations with Russia, and an expanding US-India trade deficit. Consequently, India is positioned at the forefront of a volatile and evolving global trade landscape.

This escalation is not simply an economic conflict but a deliberate effort by Washington to redefine India's overarching strategic alignments. Economic coercion is as much about geopolitics as it is about trade, as evidenced by the timing, which comes just after New Delhi flatly rejected American mediation claims in the May 2025 India-Pakistan ceasefire, which was bilaterally brokered through direct military channels. The explicit exclusion of US-aligned electronics industry, including iPhones built in India, from these tariffs exemplifies the selectivity and complexities of Trump's economic strategy.

A pillar of India's foreign policy has been its strategic autonomy, which it learned from ancient writings like Arthashastra and Mahabharat. This autonomy has allowed the country to traverse challenging international environments while defending its interests. The phrase itself suggests that a country is capable of making its own strategic choices free from excessive outside interference, especially from superpowers. India's strategic independence has been put to the test recently by a number of global developments.

History has consistently demonstrated that efforts to coerce India by economic measures or diplomatic intimidation frequently produce outcomes contrary to their desired objectives. India's 1971 action in East Pakistan occurred despite American naval deployments, demonstrating that external pressure merely fortified India's commitment to strategic autonomy and self-reliance. The present moment reflects this history, necessitating a response from India grounded in unity, clarity of intent, and a revitalization of its international diplomatic alliances.

India's initial response has been multifaceted, encompassing both defensive economic strategies and proactive diplomatic initiatives. New Delhi underscores the resilience of the US-India strategic partnership, maintaining wide avenues of engagement and utilizing the substantial rise in bilateral trade as a safeguard against potential disruptions. Notwithstanding emphatic statements from Washington, neither party has departed from the negotiation table. India has demonstrated a readiness to progressively augment purchases of specific American commodities—natural gas, advanced communications technology, and gold—intended to reduce the trade deficit without acquiescing to all of Trump's demands.

However, India's response goes beyond tactical discussion and accommodation. India is adjusting its trade and investment policies to lessen its reliance on any one market, particularly one as volatile as the Trump-led US, after realizing that the tariff threats are a part of a bigger tremor rattling the world order. Delhi's efforts to form new trade alliances have accelerated significantly. Analysts have called on India to lead the Indian Ocean Rim Association by putting forward a proposal for an India-led Free Trade Agreement (FTA), while also indicating a desire to get closer to mega regional trading blocs like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

These actions fulfil two objectives. Initially, they establish new export markets for India's expanding manufacturing and technology industries, alleviating the risks associated with prohibitive American tariffs. Secondly, they serve as clear indicators of India's dedication to strategic autonomy—a notion that has been fundamental to Indian foreign policy. The objective is not merely to "resist" American influence, but to reinvent India as a catalyst for a multipolar international order, capable of engaging constructively with all major countries without succumbing to binary divisions. India is promoting alternative trade and banking systems within BRICS to reduce Western economic influence, while also serving as a proponent of Global South diplomacy, presenting a development paradigm beyond hegemony. Moreover, leveraging its vast diaspora, India is transforming cross-border political capital into strategic benefits, enhancing its credibility in international forums.

Internally, India is using a strategy that focuses on making its industry more resilient and making its technology more self-sufficient. This is being done by expanding production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes and increasing investment in dual-use technology and infrastructure.

India's determination on exposing and denouncing what it perceives as attempts at information manipulation, such as the claim that the US mediated the most recent truce between India and Pakistan, is equally significant. Narrative management is just as much a component of statecraft in the age of hybrid warfare as military deployment or tariff-setting.

In Indian circles, optimism endures in spite of this. Experts point out that significant US interests are not fundamentally threatened by India's export portfolio, which includes everything from pharmaceuticals to car parts and jewels. This might make direct, long-term American trade action more difficult to maintain. Furthermore, analysts contend that rather than being a prelude to a trade war, such tariff threats are frequently a ploy to get India to the negotiating table. In order to do this, India is carefully adjusting its reaction, relying on its solid foundations, growing its international alliances, and making only small compromises to protect its long-term interests at home.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Be brave. Take risks. Nothing can substitute experience."

- Paulo Coelho

Industrial Revolutions to Atmanirbhar Bharat: A Critical Reflection

PROF. D. MUKHERJEE

Industrial revolutions mark pivotal moments in human history, bringing not only technological breakthroughs but also profound social, economic, and political transformations. The 19th-century Industrial Revolution in Britain and Europe shifted societies from agrarian economies to mechanized industrial centres, unleashing unprecedented productivity and wealth, reshaping urban landscapes, and redefining global trade. Yet, alongside these gains came severe social disruptions, labour exploitation, and environmental degradation. These contradictions prompted intellectual and ideological critiques, most notably by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who exposed the human costs of industrialization and called for structural reforms to address inequality and worker alienation.

Over a century later, Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic reforms transformed China into the world's industrial hub, illustrating the value of gradual economic liberalization, technological adoption, and global integration. India today faces a comparable challenge under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission, seeking to build a self-reliant and globally competitive industrial base. However, weaknesses in skills, technology adoption, firm dynamics, supply chains, and research and development constrain progress, demanding a strategic and holistic approach. Britain's industrial transformation was fuelled by innovations such as the steam engine, mechanized textile production, and the spinning jenny, supported by railways, canals, and improved communication. These changes made goods more affordable, expanded literacy and education, and turned urban centres into economic and cultural hubs. Industrial capitalism also influenced political modernization, shaping labour laws, social welfare, and education policies that continue to inform contemporary industrial development.

However, these gains came at a significant human cost. Labourers, including women and children, endured long hours in unsafe and poorly paid work environments. Urbanization often outpaced infrastructure, resulting in overcrowding, poor sanitation, and disease. Industrialization also accelerated environmental degradation, with coal smoke and factory waste polluting air and water. Colonial exploitation further amplified these inequalities, as European powers extracted raw materials and imposed trade structures favouring metropolitan centres. The Industrial Revolution, therefore, was both a boon and a bane, generating progress while exposing profound social and ethical contradictions.

The harsh realities of early industrial society provided the context for Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' critical analysis of capitalism. In *Das Kapital*, Marx argued that the wealth of industrialists was derived from the systematic exploitation of labour, producing "surplus value" at the expense of workers' dignity and well-being. Engels, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, documented the physical and social suffering endured by factory workers, highlighting urban poverty, child labour, and widespread insecurity. Marx and Engels' critique went beyond economic analysis; it identified an intellectual and moral bankruptcy in the industrial capitalist system. Workers were alienated from both the product and process of labour, and society increasingly valued profit over human welfare. Their proposed remedy—a classless society in which workers controlled the means of production—remains a reference point for labour rights, social justice, and industrial ethics. Though

never fully realized, their insights informed labour legislation, social welfare reforms, and the broader discourse on equitable industrial development, which continues to resonate in modern industrial societies.

The dilemmas highlighted by Marx remain relevant today. Modern industrialization, driven by automation, artificial intelligence, and globalized supply chains, has greatly increased efficiency but also produced social dislocations. Job displacement, precarious employment, and weakened labour protections echo the alienation and exploitation of the 19th century. Environmental degradation, once largely local, now poses global threats through climate change. Industrial societies must therefore balance productivity with social equity and ecological sustainability. Nations that successfully integrate technological advancement, workforce skilling, environmental stewardship, and labour rights demonstrate that industrialization can be both efficient and humane.

China's experience under Deng Xiaoping illustrates the transformative potential of pragmatic industrial reform. After decades of stagnation under Mao, Deng gradually opened the economy to markets and global trade while maintaining strategic state control. Agricultural de-collectivization, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and incentives for foreign investment spurred industrial growth. The Beijing Economic Forum of 1987-88 showcased China's methodical approach, bringing together policymakers, intellectuals, and industry leaders to design policies that maximized productivity and socio-economic upliftment. Deng's gradualist, experimental strategy enabled China to avoid economic shocks while building the world's largest manufacturing base. Today, China's industrial dominance highlights the value of combining policy innovation, skill development, technological adoption, and global integration—a model offering lessons for India's industrial ambitions.

India aspires to follow a similar trajectory under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission, seeking industrial self-reliance and global competitiveness. Yet, structural weaknesses have slowed progress. The National Manufacturing Policy of 2011 aimed to increase the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP from 16% to 25% by 2022, but by 2025 it remains at 17%, highlighting persistent challenges. A central constraint is the skill deficit: only about four percent of India's workforce has received formal vocational training, compared to over 70% in Germany and South Korea. This limits the capacity to adopt advanced manufacturing techniques, operate modern machinery, and participate in high-value industrial activities. Technological adoption is equally limited. India's robot density is less than 10% of China's, reflecting low investment in automation and digital manufacturing. Consequently, productivity remains constrained, and India risks remaining a labour-intensive assembly hub rather than a creator of high-value products.

The industrial landscape is fragmented. Most firms are small "dwarf" establishments, employing fewer than 100 workers, which rarely upgrade or expand. Larger firms, capable of anchoring supply chains, are too few to create resilient networks. The MSME sector, often described as India's industrial backbone, is financially and technologically fragile, lacking CNC machines, ISO-certified labs, and internationally recognized quality standards. This structural weakness inhibits India's participation in high-value global supply chains. Infrastructure and logistics present additional hurdles. Logistics costs account for 14% of GDP—nearly double the levels in

Germany and South Korea. While initiatives like the Gati Shakti Mission aim to reduce these costs, implementation remains uneven. Moreover, inconsistent power supply and dependence on imported machinery further constrain industrial efficiency.

Finally, India's research and development (R&D) culture is underdeveloped. Total R&D expenditure is only 0.7% of GDP, with industry contributing just 36%, far below the >70% industrial share seen in Germany, Japan, and South Korea. Without robust R&D, Indian firms struggle to innovate, develop new processes, and compete in global markets, reinforcing dependence on imported technology. These combined weaknesses leave India on the periphery of global value chains, often confined to low-value manufacturing. Without strategic interventions, the country risks missing the industrial and geopolitical objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Addressing India's industrial challenges requires a holistic and integrated strategy. Expanding vocational training is the first priority. Programs should aim to cover at least a quarter of the workforce within a decade, aligned with Industry 4.0 needs, including robotics, AI, and precision engineering. Automation and technology adoption are equally critical. MSMEs, which employ a large share of the workforce, need incentives to integrate robotics, CNC machines, and digital manufacturing tools, thereby enhancing productivity and global competitiveness. Strengthening supply chains is essential. Developing a robust middle layer of tier-2 and tier-3 suppliers, supported through credit access, technology transfer, and cluster-based industrial policies, will stabilize production networks and improve integration into global value chains. Reducing logistics costs through full operationalization of the Gati Shakti mission is also crucial: achieving single-digit logistics costs, comparable to Germany or South Korea, will significantly boost efficiency. Investment in research and development (R&D) must rise to at least 2% of GDP, with industry contributing over half, fostering innovation and moving India from imitation to original technological capability. Cultivating a culture of quality through widespread adoption of Kaizen and Six Sigma will improve processes, reduce defects, and enable Indian manufacturing to meet global standards. Collectively, these measures form a roadmap to transform India's industrial base and realize the objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Bridging the industry-academia divide is essential for India's industrial transformation. Universities and research institutions must align with industry needs, ensuring that research outputs are actionable, commercially viable, and capable of driving innovation. A workforce equipped with relevant skills, supported by dynamic innovation ecosystems, is crucial for sustaining long-term industrial growth. By integrating measures such as skills development, automation, supply chain resilience, logistics efficiency, quality management, and R&D investment, India can move from a peripheral assembly hub to a global originator in manufacturing, fulfilling the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and enhancing its industrial and geopolitical standing.

Historical lessons from the Industrial Revolution in Britain and Marx and Engels' critique to Deng Xiaoping's reforms highlight that industrialization is both a technological and moral endeavour. Economic growth, productivity, and global competitiveness depend not only on capital and technology but also on human resources, quality standards, and resilient infrastructure. India's challenge is to address structural

weaknesses in skills, technology adoption, supply chains, and R&D while pursuing industrial modernization. Achieving these goals will enable industrial self-reliance, meaningful participation in global value chains, and enhanced global influence. The journey toward Atmanirbhar Bharat requires sustained, integrated action—a second Industrial Revolution powered by skill, innovation, and quality, capable of transforming India into a 21st-century hub of manufacturing and knowledge.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

American Christian evangelist, Daniel Stephen Courtney's actions finally caught up with him. He has been reportedly arrested in Nepal for links with Kuki Militants in Manipur. This street preacher was seen distributing military equipment and drones to the Kuki militants in Churachandpur District while providing them training etc during the height of the conflict in 2023. His case is the evidence that religious preachers have increasingly influenced the Manipur conflict by aligning with ethnic groups and exacerbating tensions between communities in the state. This has been already stated by Shri @NBirenSingh on various occasions. In another incident, he was seen inciting the Kuki community against the Government of India and Meitei-Hindus, referring to them as an "enemy." Regardless, Manipur will persevere and it has stood the test of time despite various attempts to break its integrity by external forces. ~ Sanajaoba, Research Scholar, Department for South-East Asian Studies, Manipur University



GST 2.0: TIME TO TAKE THE NEXT BIG LEAP IN TAX REFORM

AJIT RANADE

On Independence Day, the Prime Minister announced reforms to the goods and services tax regime that amount to a historic redesign. The GST regime, rolled out seven years ago, is considered a landmark reform. It is a destination-based consumption tax that aims to unify the country into a common economic market, with one system of indirect taxes. It eliminates interstate frictions. It is fully electronic and has in-built incentives to file taxes and claim credit on taxes paid in the value chain and, hence, is supposed to reduce leakages. It was also expected to be buoyant due to increased compliance.

But some shortfalls have become evident over seven years. The need for GST 2.0 was felt mainly because of the multiplicity of tax slabs, frequent changes in classifications leading to disputes, the lack of coverage of significant parts of GDP, and the huge compliance burden it has placed, especially on small businesses. It fails to fully reimburse exporters for all the domestic taxes paid, making exports uncompetitive. The new scheme will hopefully address all these shortcomings.

Another apprehension of the state governments is about shortfall in revenue. The GST reform was achieved as a grand bargain between the Union and state governments. The former gave up its right to impose excise and service taxes, and all states surrendered their right to impose state-level sales tax, value-added tax, and other sundry taxes such as octroi. The states were

persuaded to surrender their tax autonomy by a legally binding promise to make up the revenue shortfalls. This is the GST compensation clause in the original Act of 2017, which expired in 2022. Now, the states are afraid that they will face a steep fall in their tax shares. GST 2.0 will, hopefully, also address this.

The fact is that most spending obligations are with the state and local governments, whereas two-thirds of the revenue is garnered by the Union, which is then devolved according to a formula. The time has come to re-examine whether the share of GST be split 60:40 in favour of the states, rather than the 50:50 in the current design. Different states have differing spending priorities depending on their developmental stages and reality. The proposed reform must ensure that states receive a larger, predictable share of GST receipts to meet their development needs.

It is expected that in GST 2.0, the multiplicity of rates—from 5, 12, 18, 28 and 40 percent, with some other, additional rates—will be collapsed only into two rates: one for merit goods like food and medicine, and a standard rate for all other items. This simplification will reduce the disputes of classification and the resultant litigation. There will be a much smaller set of "sin goods" for which a penal rate will apply.

Most items in the 12 percent and 28 percent slabs are expected to move to 5 percent and 18 percent, respectively, greatly reducing consumer confusion, litigation, and compliance costs. Some

analysts' research shows that nearly 75 percent of GST receipts will be routed through the 18 percent slab, and the effective average rate may drop by 1 percentage point, freeing purchasing power and stimulating growth.

However, this redesign may temporarily reduce GST revenues by roughly 0.5 percent of GDP (about ₹1.8 trillion per year). This loss has to be shared between the Union and state governments. It is to be treated as a fiscal boost at a time when American tariffs are pounding the Indian economy. Due to the lower effective GST rates and the possible decrease in prices by 7-10 percent, especially for high-value items, demand may go up. This coupled with improved tax compliance and winding down of the compensation cess—previously used for debt repayments of state governments—will help offset fiscal losses and can boost GDP growth in the next year. Some of the lost revenue will be recovered from compensation cess on tobacco, coal, and automotive sector, which will continue within the new GST framework.

A major weakness in the current GST system is the exclusion of some key sectors—petroleum, electricity, alcohol, and real estate. The planned reforms seek to expand GST net to these sectors, making tax receipts more stable and reducing distortions from fragmented supply chains. International best practices show that a broad tax base allows for lower rates overall, benefiting consumers and fostering compliance.

With its present multiple slabs and complex rules, GST 1.0 has led to an explosion in litigation and compliance challenges, clogging courts and raising business costs. Routine classification disputes and procedural errors often end up in judicial proceedings, creating enormous backlogs and financial strain. To resolve disputes efficiently, the government announced the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) in 2024, and its procedures were formalised in April 2025. The tribunal is set to manage appeals, provide rapid digital case management, and ease court over-load. Yet, as of August 2025, many states have not nominated essential members and full-scale functionality is still awaited. As part of the new reform, it is recommended that GSTAT be housed independently, outside the finance ministry, to ensure unbiased adjudication, akin to the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal model.

Finally, it must be recognised that an indirect tax like GST hurts the poor more than the rich, since the tax paid does not depend on the income of the payer. This makes it unfair and regressive. Hence, the lower slab is on goods mostly consumed by the poor. This way of making GST fair is a crude proxy to a direct income tax system. But ultimately, the overall balance of collections must tilt more towards direct taxes like income, wealth and corporate taxes, which can be designed to be equitable, fair and efficient. The GST burden, which is relatively disproportionate on the poor and small businesses, must be minimised.

Arrest Syeda Hameed for 'anti-Assam' statements: AJP files complaints in 16 districts

GUWAHATI

The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), on August 29, filed complaints for the registration of FIRs against Delhi-based activist and former Planning Commission member Syeda Hameed in 16 districts of Assam. The party demanded her arrest for making alleged "anti-Assam and communal" remarks.

The party accused Hameed of attempting to create communal discord and insult Assamese identity by her remarks allegedly scripted by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's "propaganda machinery".

On August 24, while in Guwahati, Hameed had remarked, "What is the problem if Bangladeshis live in Assam?"

The following day in Delhi, she reportedly went further, saying that Assam had become a "dangerous place" and that the Assamese community had played the role of a "Frankenstein", the party claimed.



The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) had earlier alleged that Hameed maintains close ties with a senior journalist employed in a media organisation

owned by the chief minister's family, and that her statements were "part of a calculated script to disturb communal harmony in the state".

The AJP's district committees filed the complaints, alleging Hameed's remarks were an insult to Assamese people and a potential trigger for social division.

In their complaints, the AJP leaders accused Hameed of "hurting the sentiments of the people of Assam, attempting to destroy communal harmony, and trying to provoke conflict between communities". They urged the police to register cases against her under Sections 195 (offences against public tranquility), 353 (statements made with an intent of public mischief), 356 (defamation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with other applicable provisions.

"The government must act immediately to arrest Syeda Hameed for her divisive remarks. Otherwise, it will be clear that she is speaking on behalf of the chief minister," AJP general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan said.

Delhi Meetei group calls human rights body's book on Manipur conflict 'one-sided'

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Meetei Coordinating Committee (DMCC) on August 29 criticised a recent book published by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), claiming it offered a one-sided account of the Manipur conflict while overlooking the experiences of the Meetei community.

Speaking at a press conference, senior journalist and DMCC convener Seram Rojesh said the committee had submitted multiple documents and testimonies highlighting incidents faced by Meeteis, but none were included in the book. He also noted that references to important cultural and sacred sites connected to the community were missing.

Rojesh added that when student groups had earlier raised concerns about issues such as drug trafficking and cross-border tensions, their efforts were "dismissed in the book under a negative light."

Women's rights activist Elizabeth, who also spoke at the event, pointed out that instances of sexual violence were mentioned only briefly, despite detailed testimonies shared by victims. "Such incidents deserved more attention, especially as people nationally and globally are reading this book," she said.

She further highlighted that communities in Manipur had historically lived peacefully together, but unrest had strained relationships. "There were cases where people could not get help from neighbours during the violence," she noted.

Committee members said they plan to engage with intellectuals and civil society groups to present what they described as "the other side of the narrative." They emphasised that their goal was not to discredit any organisation but to ensure all perspectives are fairly represented in documenting the conflict.

Assam: 33 new infiltrators pushed back to Bangladesh

GUWAHATI

In the ongoing crackdown against illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh, a total of 33 new Bangladeshi infiltrators have been pushed back across border.

Taking to X, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wrote, "Now playing on illegal infiltrators playlist Assam Police take me home, to the place I belong."

33 new infiltrators have been PUSHED BACK to where they belong — Bangladesh.

BEWARE: Our stringent efforts continue and will further intensify in the coming days."

Earlier, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the deportation of 36 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators from Sribhumi and South Salmara districts on August 25, declaring that such immigrants "change our demography and infringe upon the rights of the indigenous."

"Alert eyes, swift action. 36 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators have been pushed back to Bangladesh from Sribhumi and South Salmara. These illegal infiltrators change our demography and infringe upon the rights of the indigenous and will be pushed back to where they belong," Sarma tweeted on August 25.

The announcement comes amid a growing controversy sparked by remarks from activist and former Planning Commission member Syeda Saiyidain Hameed during her recent visit to Assam. Hameed questioned the state's stance on Bangladeshi residents, stating, "What is wrong if they are Bangladeshi? Bangladeshis are also humans. Earth is so large; Bangladeshis can live here."

Previous Tripura govt did not believe in Pujas: CM Saha

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, on August 29, criticised the previous Left Front government for "not believing in pujas" and neglecting the state's heritage, further adding that the Maharajas' contributions to the state's development had been deliberately overlooked for decades.

He made the remarks while inaugurating the newly renovated Parasundari Kali Temple in Agartala, a historic shrine built during the royal era. Saha said the temple had fallen into disrepair due to lack of upkeep, but his government restored it in line with public demand.

"But the previous government did not take any initiative to renovate or maintain it. However, our government has renovated this temple in accordance with the demands of the local people. The previous government did not believe in pujas. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office,

there has been a public awakening. The level of faith in God has increased significantly. The civilization of India remains intact because of Sanatan Dharma," he said. Recalling the vision of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, Saha noted that Agartala and other parts of Tripura were once beautified with attention to infrastructure, from markets to schools and colleges. He urged citizens to visit Tripura's tourist destinations, stressing that India's own historic sites must be promoted over foreign travel. "Along with Agartala, efforts were made to beautify Tripura as a whole — be it markets, schools, or colleges. Although the previous government denied the contributions of the Maharajas, we must remember history. The Prime Minister has emphasized the importance of ensuring that our country's money does not go abroad, as India has many beautiful tourist places," CM Saha said.

Class 11 student at Sribhumi school detained after country-made pistol found in pocket

STRIBHUMI

A Class 11 student of Frontier Senior Secondary School in Sribhumi was taken into police custody after a country-made pistol was discovered in his pocket during school hours, on Saturday.

The matter came to light when a teacher noticed the boy repeatedly putting his hand inside his pocket, raising suspicion. Believing that he might be carrying a mobile phone — strictly prohibited on campus — the teacher checked his pocket and found a firearm.

"I saw the student putting something inside his pocket. Since mobiles are not allowed in our school, I suspected he may have



brought one. When I checked, I was shocked to find a pistol. I immediately seized it and informed the principal," said the class teacher.

Later, principal Swan Debnath promptly informed both the police and the student's parents. A team from Sadar Police Station soon arrived,

seized the weapon, and escorted the student along with his father for questioning.

According to the principal, the student claimed that a masked man had forced the weapon upon him while he was on his way to school, threatening to kill him and his father if he refused to keep it.

"The student said that a miscreant on a bike, his face covered, handed him the pistol and threatened to kill him and his father. Terrified, he kept the weapon with him before coming to class," the principal told the press.

Police have launched a detailed investigation to verify the student's statement and trace the miscreant involved.

Workshop addresses unsafe abortion crisis claiming lives of Manipur women

IMPHAL

Manipur health officials revealed alarming statistics showing unsafe abortion as the third leading cause of maternal deaths in India during a specialised workshop held on August 29.

The day-long session on enhancing safe abortion rights and respectful care for marginalised women was jointly organised by the Maternal Health Division of State Health Society, National Health Mission Manipur, and the Institute of Social Research Development (ISRD).

Dr Meena Seram, advisor for Maternal Health, highlighted the severity of the crisis during her keynote address, citing that eight per cent of married women in India die



due to unsafe abortion procedures.

The statistics paint a troubling picture of healthcare access, with 53 per cent of abortions performed at private hospitals, 23 per cent conducted at home, and 48 per cent carried out by non-registered medical practitioners.

To combat this public health emergency, the state government has established 112 Comprehensive Abortion Care Centres across various healthcare facilities, ranging from medical colleges to primary health centres. Four Model Comprehensive Abortion Care Centres have recently opened at Thoubal District Hospital, Bishnupur District Hospital, Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences, and CHC Wangoi.

These centres operate through a partnership with ISRD, formalised

via a memorandum of understanding signed on May 31, 2023, without requiring ministry funding. The collaboration provides capacity building for health professionals and ASHA workers, along with necessary equipment.

The initiative has already trained 100 ASHA workers on safe abortion practices as part of efforts to improve community awareness and access to proper healthcare services.

The workshop drew participation from senior health officials, including Director of Health Services Dr Chambo Golmei, Director of Family Welfare Services Dr N Hemantakumar Singh, and Joint Secretary of Health and Family Welfare Dr Bantee Singh Konthoujam.

Mizoram citizens' forum objects to IAF land deal near state's lone Lengpui Airport

AIZAWL

A citizens' body under the banner of the Lengpui Airport Forum (LAP) has voiced concern over the sale of land adjacent to Mizoram's lone airport to the Indian Air Force (IAF), warning that such a move could obstruct future expansion and modernisation of the State-owned facility. Addressing reporters here on Friday, LAP leaders criticised the State Government for, what they described as, indifference towards the long-standing demand to hand over the Lengpui airport to the Airports Authority of India (AAI). They alleged that despite the Union Government showing strong interest in an AAI takeover, the State administration has failed to act on the matter. According to documents obtained under the Right to Information Act, 2005, land measuring 50,09,400 square feet belonging to eight individuals was acquired by the Government and subsequently sold to the IAF at a cost of Rs 198.78 crore. The rate applied was Rs 185 per square foot under provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013,

LAP convener Lalthumliana said.

Retired IAF officer Wing Commander Joe Lalhmingliana argued that the land is likely intended for construction of blast pens to shelter military aircraft during conflict. "Such structures inside a civilian airport compromise the safety of passenger operations, as they pose risks during both takeoff and landing," he said. Handing over the airport to the IAF would prioritise military needs over civilian aviation safety, effectively blocking future upgrades to the facility, he added.

The issue has already triggered strong opposition from political parties, major civil society groups, and student organisations, who have rallied against the proposal to hand over the State's only airport to the Defence establishment. Delegations had earlier raised the matter with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who reportedly assured Chief Minister Lalduhoma that discussions involving the State Government and the Civil Aviation Ministry would be held within six months. However, no such deliberations have taken place so far, the LAP leaders pointed out.

Assam Rifles seizes heroin worth Rs 1.22 cr in Cachar

SILCHAR

Assam Rifles recovered 15 soap cases of heroin worth approximately Rs 1.22 crore in a joint operation with Cachar Police. The consignment was being transported through Jirighat by a drug peddler in Cachar District, Assam, late in the evening on Friday, said Assam Rifles.

Assam Rifles launched the operation based on intelligence of the trafficking of drugs in the region. During the operation, one individual, a resident of Binnakandi Ghat, Lakhimpur, Assam, was also apprehended.

Assam Rifles has been at the forefront of anti-drug operations in the region, conducting regular operations to disrupt and dismantle narcotics networks. This seizure is a significant milestone in the effort to combat drug trafficking, said Assam Rifles.

Meanwhile, based on specific intelligence regarding the trafficking of narcotics, the Assam Rifles has launched



a joint operation with personnel from the Special Narcotics Police Station, Aizawl, in the general area of Zema-bawk South, Aizawl district.

In the early hours of Friday, the party, on confirming the suspected vehicle, immediately established a check post and intercepted the vehicle, which led to the recovery of 7 kg of Methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 21 Crores and the apprehension of two individuals, said Assam Rifles.

The recovered contraband items

and apprehended individuals, along with the vehicle seized, have been handed over to the Special Narcotics Police Station, Aizawl.

Meanwhile, in a severe blow to the criminal networks operating in the border regions of Manipur, Assam Rifles, in close coordination with the Police and Paramilitary Forces, apprehended a suspected individual involved in extortion and illegal arms trafficking linked to VVEZ (Village Volunteers Eastern Zone) on August 26.

According to the Assam Rifles, the operation was carried out during a meticulously planned joint Cordon and Search Operation in the General Area of Haolenphai, the border town of Moreh in Tengenoual District.

Acting on credible information, a team of the Assam Rifles launched the operation in the early hours of August 26. The troops conducted a thorough house-to-house search in the suspected locality, demonstrating precision, restraint, and tactical acumen throughout the mission.

The operation culminated in the apprehension of the individual from the identified location. Upon searching, the individual was found to be in possession of a mobile phone suspected of containing incriminating digital evidence related to extortion and weapon smuggling activities.

The recovery of this device is expected to aid further investigations into the nexus of criminal elements operating in the region. Following standard protocol, the apprehended individual, along with the recovered mobile phone, was handed over to the Pallel Police Station (Kakching) on August 27, 2025, for detailed interrogation and legal proceedings, according to Assam Rifles.

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Defence Minister says warships will be built in India; showcases Modi govt's push for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'



NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday announced that India's warships will be manufactured domestically, reinforcing the Modi government's push towards an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)' to enhance the nation's military strength and global standing amid ongoing economic and geopolitical challenges.

Highlighting the scale of indigenous effort, Defence Minister Singh, speaking at the NDTV Defence Summit 2025, noted that nearly 75 per cent of the new warships were designed locally, a development he said would significantly bolster India's strategic autonomy.

The statement comes days after the commissioning of two indigenously-built Nilgiri-class stealth frigates, INS Himgiri and INS Udaygiri.

These advanced warships feature significant upgrades in weapon and sensor systems and are equipped to undertake a wide spectrum of maritime operations.

Defence Minister Singh's

remarks also follow the conclusion of 'Operation Sindoor', India's military response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed by Pakistan-backed terrorists. The attack was carried out by terrorists linked to 'The Resistance Front' - an offshoot of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba. India retaliated with precision strikes on terror camps located in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir.

A notable aspect of 'Operation Sindoor' was the deployment of indigenously-developed air defence system modules, which successfully shielded both civilian and military infrastructure from a barrage of Pakistani missiles and drones.

Defence Minister Singh said the entire world had witnessed India's growing Defence capabilities.

"The way our forces, with indigenous equipment, carried out precise strikes on their targets shows no mission can succeed without a vision, long-term preparation, and coordination," he said. He stressed that

the operation was not just a short-term conflict but a reflection of long-term strategy. "Operation Sindoor may seem like just a few days' war, and a story of India's victory and Pakistan's defeat, but behind it lay years of strategic preparation and a long role of Defence preparedness," Defence Minister Singh said.

The Defence Minister also highlighted the economic benefits of advancing indigenous Defence production, citing the rapid growth in arms exports.

"In 2014, our Defence export was less than Rs 700 crore. Today, it has increased to nearly Rs 24,000 crore, reaching a record level. This shows that India is no longer just a buyer; it is becoming an exporter," he said.

Emphasising that the focus on domestic Defence manufacturing would not only safeguard the country but also strengthen its global stature, Singh remarked, "This very approach will keep us secure in the times to come and also secure us a leading position among the world's emerging powers."

After successful Japan visit, PM Modi emplanes for China to attend SCO Summit

TOKYO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday embarked on his China visit to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Tianjin, which begins on Sunday, following a successful two-day visit to Japan.

The SCO summit is being held in China from August 31-September 1. This will be PM Modi's first visit to China in the last seven years and the first since the Galwan Valley faceoff between the soldiers of the two countries at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in June 2020.

Earlier, before heading out for his two-nation visit, PM Modi, in his departure statement, had said, "I will travel to China to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in Tianjin, at the invitation of President Xi Jinping. India is an active and constructive member of the SCO. During our Presidency, we have introduced new ideas and initiated collaboration in the fields of innovation, health and cultural exchanges."

He said that India "remains committed to working with the SCO members to address shared challenges and deepen regional cooperation."

"I also look forward to meeting President Xi Jinping, President Putin and other leaders on the sidelines of the Summit," PM Modi stated.

Both leaders had held a meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Russia's Kazan in 2024. The breakthrough in bilateral talks was made possible after India and China reached an agreement on patrolling along the nearly 3,500-km LAC to end the four-year-long border confrontation.



The SCO is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation established in Shanghai on June 15, 2001. The SCO member states are: China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Belarus.

The SCO has two observer states - Afghanistan and Mongolia and 14 dialogue partners, including Turkey, Kuwait, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, and Nepal. Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Bahrain, the Maldives, Myanmar and the United Arab Emirates.

Meanwhile, in Japan, PM Modi held a series of high-level meetings

with the Southeast Asian nation's leadership and also attended the 15th India-Japan Annual Summit.

He met the governors of Japan's 16 prefectures, highlighting the potential of collaboration between Japanese prefectures and Indian states by leveraging new initiatives and forging partnerships. He also called for them to participate in "India's growth story."

Earlier in the day, PM Modi arrived in Sendai in Japan's Miyagi Prefecture, where he travelled aboard the iconic Shinkansen (bullet train) alongside Japanese PM Shigeru Ishiba.

In Sendai, the two leaders visit-

ed Tokyo Electron Miyagi Ltd (TEL Miyagi), a leading Japanese company in the semiconductor sector.

"I visited Prime Minister Ishiba and Tokyo Electron's factory. I inspected the training room and the Production Innovation Lab, and also exchanged opinions with the company's executives," PM Modi shared in a post on X.

"Semiconductors are important field in India-Japan cooperation. In recent years, India has made significant progress in this field, and many young people are now getting involved. I hope to continue this momentum in the future as well," he added.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump administration plans to remove nearly 700 unaccompanied migrant children, says senator



WASHINGTON

The Trump administration is planning to remove nearly 700 Guatemalan children who had come to the US without their parents, according to a letter sent Friday by Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, and the Central American country said it was ready to take them in.

The removals would violate the Office of Refugee Resettlement's "child welfare mandate and this country's long-established obligation to these children," Wyden told Angie Salazar, acting director of the office within the Department of Health and Human Services that is responsible for migrant children who arrive in the US alone.

"This move threatens to separate children from their families, lawyers, and support systems, to thrust them

back into the very conditions they are seeking refuge from, and to disappear vulnerable children beyond the reach of American law and oversight," the Democratic senator wrote, asking for the deportation plans to be terminated.

It is another step in the Trump administration's sweeping immigration enforcement efforts, which include plans to surge officers to Chicago for an immigration crackdown, ramping up deportations and ending protections for people who have had permission to live and work in the United States.

Guatemalan Foreign Affairs Minister Carlos Martinez said Friday that the government has told the US it is willing to receive hundreds of Guatemalan minors who arrived unaccompanied to the United States

and are being held in US facilities.

Wyden wrote. "In many cases, these children and their families have had to make the unthinkable choice to face danger and separation in search of safety."

The idea of repatriating such a large number of children to their home country also raised concerns with activists who work with children navigating the immigration process.

"We are outraged by the Trump administration's renewed assault on the rights of immigrant children," said Lindsay Toczykowski, president and CEO of Immigrant Defenders Law Center. "We are not fooled by their attempt to mask these efforts as mere 'repatriations.' This is yet another calculated attempt to sever what little due process remains in the immigration system." Due to their age and the trauma unaccompanied immigrant children have often experienced getting to the US, their treatment is one of the most sensitive issues in immigration.

Advocacy groups already have sued to ask courts to halt new Trump administration vetting procedures for unaccompanied children, saying the changes are keeping families separated longer and are inhumane.

Migrant children traveling without their parents or guardians are handed over to the Office of Refugee Resettlement when they are encountered by officials along the US-Mexico border. Once in the US, they often live in government-supervised shelters or with foster care families until they can be released to a sponsor - usually a family member - living in the country.

They can request asylum, juvenile immigration status or visas for victims of sexual exploitation.

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EU top diplomat 'not optimistic' on sanctioning Israel over Gaza war



COPENHAGEN

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said Saturday she was "not optimistic" the bloc would take action against Israel over the war in Gaza due to splits between member states.

Foreign ministers meeting in Denmark will discuss a proposal to suspend EU funding to Israeli start-ups as initial punishment for the situation in Gaza.

But the bloc has so far failed to garner the majority needed to take that step - let alone move ahead with more forceful measures against Israel.

"I'm not very optimistic, and today we are definitely not going to adopt decisions," Kallas told journalists at the start of the Denmark meeting.

"It sends a signal that we are divided."

A makeshift tent camp for displaced Palestinians stretches across Gaza City. Israeli protesters call for hostage deal, end to war in Gaza ahead of cabinet meeting.

Splits within the European Union between countries backing Israel and those favouring the Palestinians have seen the 27-nation bloc often left hamstrung in the face of the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

A string of EU countries are pushing for more far-reaching punishment for Israel, but have been frustrated.

Denmark's foreign minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency, insisted the bloc "must change words into action".

He said Copenhagen

backed suspending trade cooperation with Israel, sanctioning far-right Israeli ministers, and banning imports from illegal settlements.

Israel is facing pressure at home and abroad to end its offensive in Gaza, where the vast majority of the population has been displaced at least once and the United Nations has declared a famine.

The war in Gaza began after Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 63,025 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza that the UN considers reliable.

Bangladesh politicians HUDDLE WITH Pakistani minister at Pakistan mission



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

There are happy Pakistanis and a clutch of happy Bangladeshis these days. While one can easily surmise how cheered Pakistanis have been by the visit of their foreign minister Ishaq Dar to Bangladesh, one knows too the excitement generated among those in Bangladesh who have never quite forgotten their love for the country they were part of till December 1971.

Include among them the political right-wing in Dhaka, which has never been comfortable with the reality of Bangladesh's War of Liberation fifty-four years ago.

For these Pakistan-friendly people and political parties, Ishaq Dar's visit to Dhaka was a joyous occasion. Bangladesh's people have noted the sheer happiness with which the leaders of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the Jamaat-e-Islami and the newly constituted king's party, styling itself as the National Citizen Party trooped down to the Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka to call on the visiting Pakistani minister.

Where protocol demanded that the visitor meet these politicians at their offices, what happened was the other way round.

It did not occur to these Bangladeshi individuals that meeting a Pakistani minister at the Pakistani diplomatic mission was essentially meeting him on Pakistani territory as defined by the rules of diplomacy.

One is not quite sure what these men discussed with Ishaq Dar, but one can easily understand the meetings all had to do with promoting 'friendship' between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

As for Dar's meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart, the meeting was lacklustre despite the later statement by Bangladesh's foreign ministry that Dar was presented with demands for an apology over the actions of the Pakistan army in occupied Bangladesh in 1971 and for a settlement of issues related to pre-1971 Pakistan's assets and liabilities.

Whether the Bangladesh demands carried any weight remains a question, given Dar's misplaced efforts to convince Bangladesh's people that Pakistan had, through the tripartite agreement of 1974 and Pervez Musharraf's later expression of regret, voiced its apology twice over the 1971 genocide.

Ishaq Dar was not speaking the truth. No Pakistani government, since the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign state, has ever tendered a formal apology to Dhaka.

Dar was impertinent enough to state, in response to questions by the media, that Bangladeshis should broaden their hearts on the issue since the Islamic religion enjoins upon all Muslims the responsibility

of treating one another with a largeness of heart. His words led to severe condemnations of his behaviour among Bangladesh's people, proof of which



was to be had on social media. For Dar's hosts, the unconstitutional regime currently holding power on the strength of systematic mob rule, the Pakistani minister's words were a slap across the face.

One would have thought the Bangladesh authorities would come forth with a sharp response. That response never came.

Neither was there any indication that the Bangladesh foreign ministry had registered its protest with Dar over the recent incendiary statements made by no less than Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif about Pakistan's current state of ties with Bangladesh being a move to avenge 1971.

In the end, the Dar visit amounted to little in terms of substance. With growing numbers of Bangladesh's people getting increasingly critical of the Yunus regime over its grave lapses in the past thirteen months, it is obvious that citizens are in little mood to have Pakistan exercise any influence in Bangladesh's politics.

The destruction of history the Yunus regime has resorted to, indeed the revisionist moves it has initiated to deny the momentous struggle for freedom in 1971, have been leading to conditions where Bengalis are hitting back in a stout defence of the national political heritage.

While Awami League supporters have been getting vocal in these past few months, there is additional good cheer in observing people in general coming together in a defence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the history of Bangladesh as it was forged in 1971.

Not much, though, is being heard from the elements who have consistently and brazenly claimed that what happened in August 2024 was a revolution. It was anything but. Where the issue of

be free, fair and inclusive, the Yunus regime is in a tight corner given rising public sentiments on the necessity of the Awami League, whose activities have controversially been proscribed by the current regime, to be permitted to participate in the vote.

One does not require much wisdom to understand that any election without the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party will only exacerbate conditions in the country.

Add to this reality the thought, one based on good logic, that elections under the Yunus regime will not be fair.

And, of course, the regime knows only too well that a credible and inclusive election could well put Mujibur Rahman's party back in power.

A final point: the BNP has served a show-cause notice on the outspoken Fazlur Rahman, an advisor to the party chairperson lately been vocal in his condemnation of the anarchy and mob rule in the country.

Rahman, a freedom fighter, has refused to be silenced. At the other end, Rumeen Farhana, a lawyer and important public face of the BNP, has been critical of Yunus' followers. As she notes, her party figures are upset with her stance.

The crisis goes on. For the Yunus regime, the future does not look good. Neither is there anything that could remotely be considered encouraging for those engaged in politics, or anti-politics really

elections is concerned, there are reasons to think that a good deal more will happen in the country before elections for a new Parliament can be organised.

With demands growing for elections to

in these times.

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Barak Festival

Band Night | 10 JAN

Musical Night | 11 JAN

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film festival

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Barak Festival 2025

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