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# KRC TIMES

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### PERSPECTIVE

The gap between "someday" and "today" is called discipline. ~ Russel Brunson, Author

## Meghalaya cabinet reshuffle likely soon; several ministers may be dropped

SHILLONG

A long-awaited reshuffle in the Conrad Sangma-led cabinet is likely to take place soon, with several ministers expected to be dropped on grounds of poor performance and political adjustments. The exercise, though overdue, may be slightly delayed following the death of former Chief Minister DD Lapang on September 12 and the subsequent three-day state mourning. Sources said some ministers have landed the government in controversy through careless remarks and other issues, forcing the administration into repeated damage-control measures. One such incident involved Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Kyrmen Shylla, who suggested that the disappearance of 4,000 metric tonnes of coal could have been due to rain washing it away into Bangladesh. The statement went viral nationwide and was even raised in the Lok Sabha. Following judicial directions, an inquiry has since been ordered.

Similarly, Education Minister Rakkam Sangma, when asked about a roofless primary school in the State, remarked casually that poor infrastructure was not uncommon in Meghalaya. The government scrambled to respond, releasing pictures of several schools that had been repaired. Health Minister Ampareen Lyngdoh, meanwhile, was acquitted earlier this month by the High Court in the infamous "white ink" Education Department scam.

### WHO SAID WHAT

Today, on Engineers' Day, I pay homage to Sir M. Visvesvaraya, whose brilliance left an indelible mark on India's engineering landscape. I extend warm greetings to all engineers who, through their creativity and determination, continue to drive innovation and tackle tough challenges across sectors. Our engineers will continue playing a crucial role in the collective efforts to build a Viksit Bharat. ~ Narendra Modi, PM

## Justice M Sundar sworn in as tenth Chief Justice of Manipur High Court



IMPHAL

The tenth Chief Justice of the High Court of Manipur, Justice M Sundar, was sworn in on Monday.

The oath of office was administered by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at a ceremony held

at the Darbar Hall of Raj Bhavan, Imphal, at 10 am.

Justice Sundar, formerly of the Madras High Court, was appointed Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court by the President of India on September 13, following the superannuation of incumbent Justice

Kempaiah Somashekar.

Fifty-nine-year-old Justice Sundar was recommended for the post by the Supreme Court Collegium and succeeds Justice Kempaiah Somashekar, who was sworn in as Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court on May 22 this year and recently retired.

Born on July 19, 1966, in Chennai, Justice Sundar graduated in law from Madras Law College, where he was part of the first-year integrated law course.

He enrolled as an advocate in 1989 and later served at the Madras High Court before his elevation to Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Speaker Th Satyabrata of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, Lok Sabha MP Leishemba Sanajaoba, former Chief Minister Radhabinod Koijam, state MLAs, former ministers, Judges of the Manipur High Court including Justice Anantheem Bimol Singh and Justice Aribam Guneshwar Sharma, Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel, Security Advisor Kuldeep Singh, Director General of Police Rajiv Singh, civil, police, and military officers, judicial officials, and representatives of Bar Associations.

## Fresh violence erupts in Churachandpur, residences of Kuki-Zo leaders torched by miscreants



IMPHAL

Tensions flared in Churachandpur district of Manipur, late on September 14, after the residences of several Kuki-Zo leaders were targeted by unidentified miscreants. Among those attacked was the residence of Calvin, External Secretary of the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), which was set ablaze.

The incident unfolded barely few hours after widespread protests rocked the district over the arrest of two individuals accused of vandal-

ism and damaging government property on September 12, ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Manipur.

Reports confirmed that the residence of another Kuki-Zo Suspension of Operations (SoO) leader was also torched during the night's violence.

The home of Ginza Vualzong, Spokesperson of the Kuki-Zo Coordination Committee (KZC) and the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), was also targeted by miscreants. However, intervention by local community leaders and youths managed to prevent the house from being set on fire. Soon after, army personnel arrived at the spot to secure the residence and provide protection.

Authorities are on high alert in Churachandpur as security forces continue to monitor the situation to prevent further escalation.

## PM to Visit Tripura on Sept 22 to Inaugurate Rs.51-Crore Redeveloped Tripureswari Temple



AGARTALA

PM Narendra Modi will visit Tripura on September 22 and unveil the redeveloped Tripureswari temple, Chief Minister Manik Saha said on Sunday.

Addressing the Neermahal Jal Utsav in Sepahijala district, Saha said he had invited the PM to unveil the redeveloped Tripureswari temple, and he accepted the invitation.

"PM Modi is coming to unveil the

redeveloped Tripureswari temple on September 22, and offer puja there," he said.

The redevelopment works at the temple, a Shakti Pith, were carried out under the Centre's PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive) scheme at a cost of Rs 51 crore.

Maintaining that his government was focusing on promoting spiritual tourism in the State, Saha said replicas of all 51 Shakti Piths are being built in Gomati district's Bandower at a cost of Rs 97 crore.

"We can't visit all the 51 Shakti Piths as they are spread across many countries, including Bangladesh and Nepal. Once the replicas are built at Bandower, people can easily have a glimpse of the 51 Shakti Piths in one place," he said.

Saha urged the people to promote the lake palace of Neermahal through social media.

"I had been to Udaipur and experienced the beauty of the lake palace there, which is comparable to our Neermahal. But many people don't know about Neermahal. I appeal to you to promote Neermahal on social media," he told the gathering.

Built by Maharaja Bir Bikram in 1930, Neermahal was declared a Ramsar site in 2007.

## SIT probing 38 people, not just Gaurav Gogoi's wife: Himanta Biswa Sarma



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on September 15 sharpened his attack on Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, asserting that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) is scrutinizing a total of 38 individuals in the case, not just Gogoi's wife.

He assured that once the SIT report is finalised, it will be made public in full detail.

"People should understand how seriously the SIT is taking this matter. Not only Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi's wife, but a total of 38 people were scrutinised. Hence, when the report comes, everyone will get to

know who all the SIT has examined. I will take Gogoi's consideration and will upload all the details on the website," Sarma told a massive rally at Gurufela in Gossaigaon.

The Chief Minister was campaigning in support of BJP candidate Gosai Basumatary from the No. 5 Saraibil constituency of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). Thousands of supporters thronged the venue, underscoring the party's growing organisational strength in the region.

Praising BJP's current position in the BTC, Sarma said the party was "very strong" and enjoyed the confidence of the people. Taking a swipe at former BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary, who had recently claimed that Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly, Biswajit Daimary, could one day become the President of the United States, Sarma quipped, "If destiny permits, he may become Vice President."

With the rally drawing a large turnout, the BJP sought to reinforce its momentum ahead of the upcoming BTC elections, while Sarma's remarks on the SIT report added a sharp political edge to the campaign.

## Centre and Arunachal Ink MoU for Special Development Package in Siang Region

ITANAGAR

The Centre and Arunachal Pradesh government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for implementation of a special development package for Siang Region, on Monday.

The initiative is being undertaken as a pre-investment activity of the proposed Upper Siang Multipurpose Project (SUMP), an official communication said.

Under the package, multiple intervention areas have been identified, including livelihood activities, creation of new infrastructure facilities, and upgradation of existing assets in Siang and Upper Siang districts.

Focus sectors also include animal husbandry, piggyery, fisheries, poultry farming, horticulture, handloom, bamboo, eco-tourism, and bee keeping.

Officials emphasised that the scheme will uplift the qual-



ity of life while strengthening the socio-economic fabric of the region. As part of the comprehensive plan, the package will also facilitate marketing and branding of local products. Distinct identities will be created for textiles, bamboo-based goods, and other indigenous

crafts, enabling artisans to reach wider markets.

The MoU was signed in the presence of the Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, state coordination, planning and investment commissioner Ankur Garg; secretary to the Water Resources, River Development



and Ganga Rejuvenation Department under the Union Jal Shakti ministry V L Kantha Rao; Union Power Secretary Pankaj Agarwal, and S K Sinha, Commissioner (B&B) of the Ministry, respectively. Further, infrastructure support such as common facility centres, craft-based resource centres, marketing and sourcing hubs, urban haats, emporia, and raw material depots will be established across the region.

Senior officials highlighted that the initiative reflects the Centre's commitment to foster inclusive growth and sustainable development in Arunachal

Pradesh.

They added that the package represents a significant investment in the future of Siang and Upper Siang districts, aiming to empower local communities, create sustainable livelihoods, and lay the foundation for comprehensive regional development. The initiative is expected to provide long-term socio-economic benefits while preparing the ground for the strategic Upper Siang Multipurpose Project, the communication said. The SUMP, envisaged as a mega hydroelectric and water storage project. Once implemented, it is expected to contribute to clean energy generation, flood moderation, and water security in the Brahmaputra basin.

Officials said the interventions under the present scheme will ensure that communities in Siang and Upper Siang are better equipped to take advantage of opportunities arising from the project.



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## JUSTICE DENIED: THE FORGOTTEN VICTIMS

In a democratic republic governed by law, the criminal justice system is meant to be a solemn forum for truth-seeking, justice, and social healing. Yet in India, this noble purpose has been tragically compromised. The system that ought to deliver justice has instead evolved into a procedural maze where the accused enjoys ironclad safeguards, while the victim-of-ten the most aggrieved party-is ignored, sidelined, and forgotten.

This lopsided justice is further aggravated by the State's calculated apathy toward its own law officers-public prosecutors-who are systematically disempowered, humiliated, and stripped of institutional dignity. Meanwhile, the judiciary is elevated to near-divine status, creating an imbalance that not only erodes justice but threatens the very legitimacy of the system itself.

### A System Built Around the Accused

India's criminal jurisprudence justifiably ensures that no person is punished without due process. The accused is protected by an array of rights: presumption of innocence, right to counsel, protection against self-incrimination, double jeopardy, unlawful detention, and arbitrary arrest. These protections are crucial in a country with a long history of custodial abuse and police excesses.

But in practice, these protections have become sacrosanct to the point of absurdity. Every minor lapse in procedure, however unrelated to the substantive guilt of the accused, is used to undermine trials and secure acquittals. The process becomes less about justice and more about exploiting legal loopholes, technicalities, and investigational errors-often unavoidable due to institutional weaknesses.

This leads to a grotesque inversion: the accused becomes the centre of sympathy and legal innovation, while the victim is seen as a nuisance to be endured.

### The Silencing of the Victim

India's criminal law does not treat the victim as a true participant in the justice process. While the accused has legal representation, constitutional protection, and state resources on their side, the victim often navigates the system alone-unheard during bail hearings, uninformed of trial developments, and unprotected against intimidation or harassment.

Rape survivors are subjected to invasive cross-examinations. Families of murder victims are forced to beg for police updates. Witnesses to heinous crimes often recant under pressure. The system offers no sustained counselling, no procedural dignity, and no assurance of closure.

In the corridors of courts, the victim's grief is overshadowed by legalese. And when acquittals are declared, the judicial commentary often indicts the State's failure-not to seek justice-but to produce paperwork.

### Judges and the 'Pride' of Acquittals

It is not uncommon for trial courts and appellate benches to take pride in acquittals, often portraying them as victories of judicial independence. Indeed, judgments are replete with scathing criticism of the police and prosecution-frequently justified-but rarely tempered by empathy for the victim's shattered life.

Acquittals are sometimes glorified as demonstrations of due process, without adequate reflection on whether truth was served. The judiciary has gradually become a forum more focused on finding fault with procedures than on identifying guilt or vindicating the wronged. The law is a tool-but justice is the goal. And that goal is increasingly being abandoned.

If victims are the system's forgotten stakeholders, prosecutors are its abandoned foot soldiers. Though they represent the State and are central to criminal trials, public prosecutors in India are treated not as officers of the court on par with judges or defense counsel, but as subordinates-relegated to mere supporting staff.

Despite being legal professionals tasked with securing justice, prosecutors are deprived of basic facilities-often denied independent office space, chambers, or even a chair in the courtroom. Their access to case files is limited, and their input in trial management is often dismissed or ignored by presiding judges.

In glaring contrast, judges are surrounded by an aura of near-divinity: dedicated courtrooms, plush chambers, armed security, state-sponsored housing, domestic help, cars with beacons, and an institutional reverence that borders on worship. The prosecutor, meanwhile, must seek the judge's indulgence for the most basic administrative or professional needs. This power asymmetry is no accident-it is systematically created and perpetuated by the State. By exalting the judiciary and ignoring prosecutors, the State not only creates institutional imbalance but weakens its own capacity to uphold justice.

The conviction rate in serious crimes-particularly sexual offences and violent crimes-remains abysmally low in India. Much of this failure is attributed to "hostile witnesses" and "poor investigations", but that only scratches the surface. The deeper malaise lies in: Overburdened prosecutors without institutional respect or resources;

A judiciary more focused on procedural purity than substantive justice;

A complete absence of victim support, protection, or empowerment.

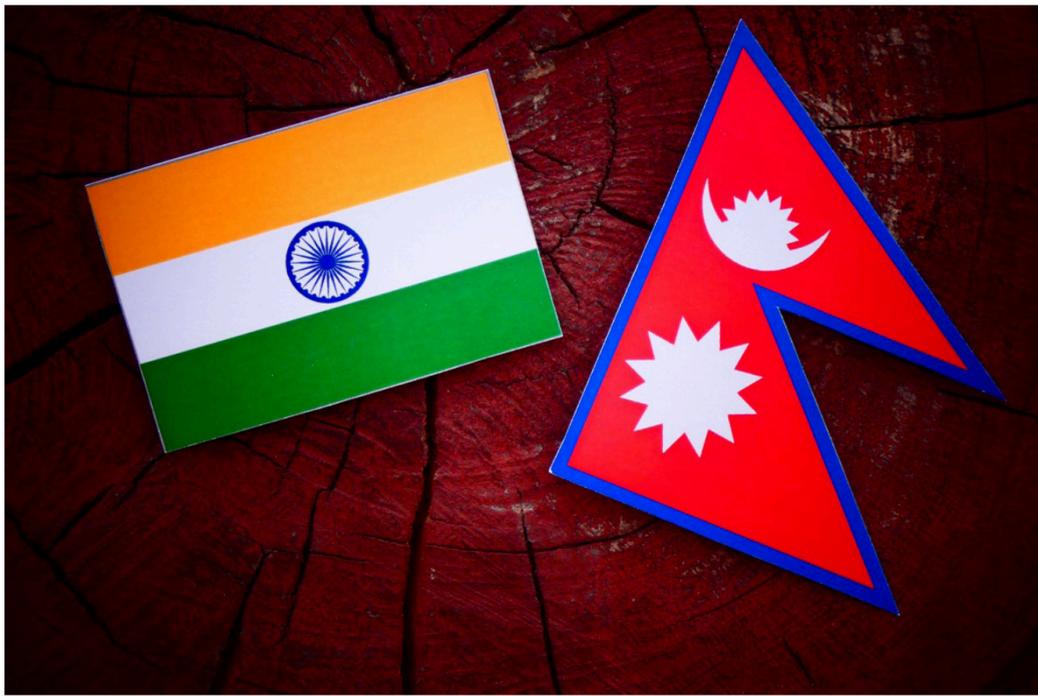
This is not a failing of individuals-it is a systemic design flaw that ensures failure.

New Criminal Laws: A Step Forward, But Not Enough-The recently enacted criminal laws in India-Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam-are welcome steps towards modernizing a colonial legal framework. They attempt to streamline procedures, redefine offences, and promote technology in investigation and trial. But legal reform alone is not sufficient. Without structural overhaul of prosecutorial systems, meaningful victim participation, judicial accountability, and institutional parity, even the best-drafted statutes risk becoming dead letters. Procedural innovation must be matched with systemic introspection.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Don't compare yourself with anyone in this world. If you do so, you are insulting yourself" - Bill Gates

# NEW DELHI HAS BOTH OPPORTUNITY AND VULNERABILITY IN NEPAL DEVELOPMENTS



K RAVEENDRAN

The commotion in Nepal has brought into sharp focus a generational shift in the country's politics, one that has made the term Gen Z part of the mainstream political vocabulary rather than just a casual reference to youth culture in India and elsewhere in the subcontinent. The unexpected rise of Sushila Karki, who has emerged as a symbol of both promise and risk, marks a generational rupture with the established order that has traditionally shaped Nepal's political trajectory.

For India, the choice of someone like Karki—who has expressed a favourable disposition towards New Delhi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi—is reassuring in the short term, but it does not eliminate the structural uncertainties that have long characterised Nepalese politics. The enthusiasm of the youth has given a fresh dimension to politics in Kathmandu, but the lack of historical depth and the inexperience of this generation raise important questions about stability in the long run.

The Gen Z generation, both in Nepal and across the region, comes equipped with certain undeniable strengths. They are digitally savvy, globally connected, and brimming with ideas about political reform, economic modernisation, and social inclusivity. Their ability to mobilise public opinion rapidly, leveraging social media and digital networks, has already transformed the political culture of Nepal. This youth-led wave is not merely about idealism; it has a clear sense of urgency in addressing unemployment, corruption, and governance inefficiencies that have plagued Nepal for decades.

Yet, as much as this generational momentum excites the masses, it lacks the accumulated experience, historical grounding, and nuanced understanding of geopolitical balances that come only with long years of political practice. Without this maturity, there is always the danger that leadership may falter when tested by the intricate challenges of governance in a country as politically volatile and strategically positioned as Nepal.

For India, however, the rise of Sushila Karki offers immediate comfort. New Delhi has often been confronted with leaders in Kathmandu who vacillate between India and China, leveraging their position to extract short-term gains from both sides.

In contrast, Karki's outlook suggests a more stable alignment with Indian interests, at least in the initial phases of her leadership. Modi's government would understandably welcome a cooperative regime in Kathmandu that understands the depth of India's stakes in Nepal. Yet, Indian policymakers are well aware that goodwill in the present does not necessarily translate into stability in the future, especially given the fragility of Nepal's political institutions and the volatility of coalition politics.

The structural importance of Nepal to India cannot be overstated. Beyond cultural ties and the open border that allows free movement of people, there are deep economic interdependencies. Indian investments have been pivotal in driving Nepal's industrial and service sectors, creating jobs and contributing to state revenues. More than 150 Indian companies currently operate in Nepal across diverse sectors ranging from consumer goods to tourism and infrastructure, demonstrating the breadth of India's economic footprint.

The energy sector, however, remains the crown jewel of Indian involvement. With its abundant hydropower potential, Nepal represents not only a source of clean energy but also a critical component of India's long-term energy security strategy. Transmission line projects and hydropower plants funded and operated with Indian capital are strategic assets that tie the two economies together in a mutually beneficial arrangement.

The numbers speak for themselves. According to the Nepal Rastra Bank, India's foreign direct investment in Nepal reached USD 755.12 million as of July 2023, amounting to roughly 35 percent of Nepal's total foreign investment. This dominant share underscores India's centrality in

Nepal's economic future. Such investments are not just about capital inflows; they represent deep political linkages. Indian firms bring with them infrastructure, jobs, technology transfer, and training, embedding themselves within Nepal's economic architecture.

For New Delhi, this creates both opportunity and vulnerability. Opportunity lies in consolidating influence and fostering growth in a close neighbour. Vulnerability arises when political instability in Kathmandu threatens to derail projects, delay implementation, or invite competing influences, particularly from China, which has been expanding its footprint through the Belt and Road Initiative.

Against this backdrop, the generational transition represented by Karki's rise becomes even more significant. A leader inclined toward India could ensure continuity of projects, facilitate smooth investment approvals, and maintain a policy climate conducive to bilateral cooperation. But the question remains whether such a leader, backed by a restless youth base, can sustain a consistent and pragmatic approach amidst the inevitable pressures of governance. Gen Z may be less burdened by the baggage of past ideological battles, yet this very detachment from history can translate into a lack of caution in managing external relations. Nepal's political history is littered with examples of leaders who started with goodwill but faltered due to domestic factionalism, populist pressures, or inability to manage external expectations.

New Delhi, therefore, must balance its immediate satisfaction with longer-term strategic prudence. While it is encouraging to have a leader in Kathmandu who is positively disposed towards Modi and India, New Delhi cannot afford complacency. It must engage not just with Karki's leadership but also with the broader ecosystem of Nepal's politics, including opposition groups, civil society, and business stakeholders.

Building enduring institutional linkages, rather than relying solely on person-

alities, is key to insulating India's stakes from the swings of Nepal's turbulent political landscape. India's approach must also remain sensitive to the aspirations of Nepal's youth, who increasingly see themselves as global citizens and may be skeptical of overt external influence. Support for capacity building, skill development, and technology collaboration could help cement India's image as a partner in Nepal's generational transition rather than a meddling neighbour.

## DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**On this International Day of Democracy, let us reaffirm our commitment to the principles of equality, justice, and freedom.**

**Together, we will strengthen democratic values and ensure that the voices of every citizen continue to shape the future of Manipur and our great nation.**

~ N. Biren Singh, Former CM, Manipur



## Modi mantra: Nurturing cadres, strengthening organisation

B. L. SANTOSH

It takes the towering devotion of its cadres to make an organisation truly bloom in all its glory. This has been the guiding mantra of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's life and his organisational vision. Modi has always considered cadres as the heart of the organisation. Nurturing them, training them, and empowering them has remained among his foremost tasks. He believes that the organisation is not just a framework, its real strength lies in the ability, discipline, and dedication of its cadres.

Narendra Modi became a 'pracharak' (full-time worker) of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the early 1970s. After the Emergency in 1977, when he emerged as an able organiser in the role of vibhag pracharak, his working style was rooted in cadre-building. The early 1980s was a period when RSS had very limited spread in Gujarat.

Even setting up a single 'shakha' (branch) in a taluka was considered a big achievement in those days. But the young Modi had a different vision: "Every village should have a shakha," he would say. He would assign responsibility for setting up of each branch to a cadre and periodically take progress reports—who the chief instructor was, what activities were conducted, who remained

absent and why—every detail was monitored carefully.

In 1985, when the RSS completed 60 years, a massive camp was organised in Karmavati (Ahmedabad). Nearly 5,000 cadres attended the camp. In its run-up, Modi went from village to village, meeting youth and motivating them to purchase uniforms. As a result, hundreds of new young people not only reached the camp but also became permanently associated with the organisation. This infused fresh energy into the Gujarat unit and marked the beginning of large-scale cadre-building.

Modi taught cadres to work systematically and in an organised manner. For example, participants of the RSS training camp held at P.D. Malaviya College in Rajkot in the early 1980s still recall how he had them conduct a survey among locals to assess the organisation's image and present the results using statistical methods. This was not only an innovative learning exercise but also a message that modern techniques and systematic thinking were essential to strengthening the organisation.

He inspired cadres with practical examples of behaviour and etiquette. Small habits—such as being organised, knocking on doors before entering, and warmly enquiring after the well-being of family members—turned them into responsible and respected

workers. His training moulded cadres not just as members of the organisation but as model representatives in society. Modi also extended personal moral support to cadres and their families during tough times and unfortunate incidents—something many workers still remember with gratitude.

When he became the organisation secretary of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Gujarat in 1987, he carried forward the same practice of cadre-building in the political sphere. Through the BJP's 'Organisation Festival' during the 1980s, thousands of new cadres were drawn into the party.

Discipline and accountability formed the foundation of Modi's working style. He taught cadres that these values, along with dedication, are the cornerstones of a strong organisation. He himself never came late to meetings, not even by a minute, and if anyone else arrived late, he would make them stay outside and still participate.

Modi also gave new direction to both social balance and electoral strategy within the organisation. While selecting office-bearers, he ensured social inclusivity. In the 1987 Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation elections, with his 'Win the Booth' strategy, cadres became active at the grassroots and worked with a focused approach.

Additionally, through his personal conduct, Modi instilled confidence and capaci-

ty in cadres. He would reassure first-time entrants into the party and explain the significance of booth-level organisation, membership details, and collective effort. As a result, within just a few months, lakhs of new members were enrolled and strong cadres were raised. As BJP's organisation secretary, he also initiated

'Tiffin Meetings', through which cadres and their families were emotionally connected with the organisation.

In cadre-building, Modi did not restrict himself to structure and strategy alone. He taught cadres to become sensitive and far-sighted leaders. He urged senior cadres to cooperate with juniors and to take responsibility. Balanced responses to criticism and restraint in the face of praise—these were integral parts of Modi's cadre-building strategy.

Modi's perspective has always been clear: the true strength of the organisation lies in its cadres. Cadres filled with discipline, dedication, and a spirit of service, keep national interest above all else in any circumstance. This is why today the organisation is not just a political power but a vibrant cultural consciousness. His journey of cadre-building conveys a lasting message to future generations: if the roots are nurtured, the branches will naturally blossom and the tree will stand strong for ages.

## Manipur Floods Displace 1,000+ Families as Iril and Wangjing Rivers Overflow in Imphal

IMPHAL

Two major rivers breached embankments in different parts of Manipur's Imphal valley on Sunday night, flooding large tracts of agricultural land and residential areas, officials said on Monday.

The Iril River overflowed at Kshetri-gao, inundating farmland, residential areas and roads in Imphal East district.

The Wangjing River was also flowing above the danger level, submerging Sangaiyupham and Wangjing areas in Thoubal district, officials added.

According to the Water Resources Department, water levels of major rivers including Imphal, Iril, Nambul, Nambol and Thoubal were flowing above warning level at 6 pm on Sunday.

Kangpokpi, where the Imphal river originates, recorded 44 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours, while Saikul, part of the Iril river catchment, received 27 mm.

Torrential rain over the past 24 hours triggered flash floods and water-logging across Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal districts, affecting more than



1,000 families.

Several houses, government buildings and agricultural fields in Santi Khongbal, Seijang, Sabungkhok Khunou, Nongada, and areas near Lamlai Police Station in Imphal East district were submerged by overflowing Iril river tributaries.

Low-lying parts of Kakwa and Sagolband in Imphal West, and the Wangjing area in Thoubal, were also inundated following continuous rain since Saturday. Flood-hit families have been evacuated to safer areas.

There were reports of mudslides at TM

Kasom in Ukhrul district and landslides at Awangkhlul in Noney and Yangkhullen in Senapati district.

A relief camp for internally displaced persons at the district sports complex in Wangjing, Thoubal, was also inundated.

Traffic along the busy Imphal-Ukhrul highway was severely disrupted since early morning. Although no casualties were reported, floodwaters also submerged road stretches from Singjamei Okram Leikai to Kakwa and parts of Sagolband.

Meanwhile, the Manipur Fire Services rescue team evacuated more than 100 stranded residents at Yairipok Khoirom Mayai Leikai in Imphal East and shifted them to temporary relief centres.

The residential compound of Congress state president Keisham Meghachandra at Wangkhem in Thoubal district was also flooded, official said.

The state is still recovering from the devastating floods in June this year, which affected 1,65,943 people, damaged 35,429 houses and 76 infrastructures across 708 localities, and claimed four lives, official reports said.

## India, Thailand conclude joint military exercise in Meghalaya

SHILLONG

The Indian Army and the Royal Thai Army wrapped up their two-week joint military exercise Maitree-XIV with a closing ceremony at the Foreign Training Node in Umroi Cantonment, Meghalaya, on September 14.

The exercise, conducted under a United Nations mandate, focused on enhancing interoperability between the two forces and familiarising troops with each other's operational procedures and combat drills.

The final phase featured a 48-hour validation exercise, where soldiers carried out complex operations including the creation of a temporary operating base, intelligence and surveillance tasks, village isolation drills, helicopter missions, raids, and hostage rescue. Both sides also demonstrated the use of new-generation equipment during the drills.

The ceremony concluded with felicitation of outstanding soldiers and cultural exchanges that highlighted the heritage of both nations. Friendly matches of volleyball, basketball,



and tug of war added to the camaraderie built during the exercise.

Military officials noted that the joint training not only strengthened operational cooperation but also reinforced defense ties between India and Thailand.

## Missing four-year-old girl found dead in Shillong, police suspect foul play

SHILLONG

The body of a four-year-old girl who went missing on Sunday, September 14 was found near her home in Nongrah Nonglum, Shillong, on Monday, September 15 morning.

The child, identified as Insaphira Lyngdoh Mawnai, was discovered inside an under-construction house in the neighborhood. Shockingly, her body was found submerged in a waterlogged pit, with a rock placed on top of it, raising strong suspicions of murder.

Confirming the case, East Khasi Hills Superintendent of Police Vivek Syiem said that forensic experts have been called in to assist, and a post-mortem examination will be conducted to establish the exact cause of death.

According to reports, the girl had gone missing early Sunday morning in the courtyard of her home, as her family members were still asleep. Her sudden disappearance sparked a frantic search by locals and authorities, which tragically ended in the grim discovery.

Police have launched a thorough investigation, treating the case with utmost seriousness. Residents of the area remain in shock as authorities work to determine the circumstances leading to the child's death.

## Landslide Hits Sribhumi District, Damages Home After Heavy Rain and Earthquake Tremors



SRIBHUMI

A major landslide struck the Mogam area of Bogligul in Sribhumi district of Assam following incessant rainfall compounded by recent earthquake tremors, leaving a local household severely damaged.

The incident occurred when soil from a nearby hillside collapsed onto the residence of Kajali Rani Der, causing one of the house's walls to cave in. Luckily, all family members escaped unharmed de-

spite the scale of the disaster.

Emergency response teams, including the Badarpur Fire Service and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), rushed to the site soon after the incident. Rescue operations were carried out promptly to ensure safety and prevent further damage.

The incident has heightened concerns among residents of the hilly region, where heavy rains continue to trigger the risk of landslides and structural damages.

## Tripura CM Manik Saha calls for mass movement against addiction, HIV

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday appealed to everyone to create a mass movement and awareness through discussion on issues like drug addiction, HIV and AIDS, assuring that the government will cooperate in this regard.

Saha said this while addressing the 44th Foundation Day and Blood Donation Camp organised by Nikhil Tripura Mahanam Sevak Sangha at Sree Sree Mahanam Angan, Banamalipur, Agartala.

He said that through blood donation, we spread a message and also encourage others to come forward and donate blood voluntarily.

"There is no alternative to blood. From this body, not only blood but also many organs, including the kidney and liver, can be transplanted. It is necessary to create public movement



and awareness through discussion and review on issues like addiction, HIV, AIDS, etc. The government will cooperate in this regard. We must discuss these matters to unite everyone against drugs. We must work for strengthening the nation," he said.

Saha said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working for the betterment of the people, especially the poor. "We now have Lakhpati Di-

keeping these two aspects at the forefront. If anyone wants to achieve something in life, they must move forward with a clear direction. People must work with ideals, and through that, one can truly find themselves," he added.

Saha also stated that the country has been progressing in all aspects, starting from the economy and infrastructure, among others.

"Earlier, we were in 11th position and now we are in 4th position in terms of economy. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government has been working with the vision of making India a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Every household must witness development and an increase in per capita income," he added.

During the event, Mayor and MLA Dipak Majumder, Corporator Ratna Datta, and others were present.

## "Salt on the wounds": Gaurav Gogoi criticises PM Modi's Manipur visit

GUWAHATI

Congress MP and Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Manipur on September 13, claiming the trip was aimed more at image-building than addressing the state's challenges.

"PM Modi's visit to Manipur is very unfortunate. He just goes there to improve his image rather than solve people's problems. The way he only focuses on his image, he rubs salt on the wounds of people instead of applying ointment," Gogoi told reporters on September 14. The remarks came a day after the Prime Minister visited the state for the first time since the ethnic violence that erupted in 2023. Speaking at a public meeting



in Churachandpur, Modi urged all groups in Manipur to shun violence and work towards peace.

"I appeal to all the groups to move on the path of peace to fulfil their dreams and secure their

children's future. Today, I promise that I stand by your side. The Indian government stands with the people of Manipur," Modi said.

Later, at Imphal airport, he described Manipur as a "land of hope" that had endured a painful period of unrest but was now witnessing positive change. "Ummeed aur vishwas ki nayi subah Manipur mein dastak de rahi hai," the Prime Minister said, stressing that peace accords with ethnic groups have bolstered stability in the state. While Modi projected optimism about reconciliation and development, Gogoi argued that the visit lacked substance and failed to address the immediate concerns of displaced families and communities still reeling from the violence.

## Federation of Haomee condemns attack on Manipuri medical student in Guwahati



IMPHAL:

The Federation of Haomee (FoH) has strongly condemned the brutal assault on Joseph Serto, a Kom medical student from Moirang Mantak Village, Manipur, who was attacked in Khanapara, Guwahati, on September 12.

According to the federation, Serto was targeted for his identity and is now battling for his life. The organisation, which represents indigenous communities of Manipur, described the attack as a "direct threat to national unity and justice."

In a statement issued on Monday, FoH demanded urgent inter-

vention from the Government of Manipur, in coordination with the Assam State Government and the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. The federation pressed for immediate transfer of Serto to the best available hospital with full medical expenses covered, filing of FIRs against those responsible, and strict legal action.

The group also urged both states to guarantee security for Manipuri indigenous students studying outside Manipur and to initiate inter-state dialogue to prevent similar incidents in the future.

FoH called on the Assam Police to swiftly apprehend and punish the perpetrators, while stressing that governments must provide public assurance on the safety of indigenous students and families.

"The attack on a promising medical student cannot be ignored. We demand accountability at every level," said Y. Shyam Khuman, General Secretary of the federation.

The organisation reaffirmed its solidarity with Serto and all Manipuri students studying outside the state, stating it would closely monitor developments in the case.

## MoS Pabitra Margherita meets Indian diaspora in Hong Kong

GUWAHATI

Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita on Sunday interacted with the Indian community in Hong Kong and Macau, praising their role in strengthening people-to-people ties and deepening India's relations with the Special Administrative Regions (SARs).

Sharing details in a post on X, Margherita wrote, "Pleased to interact with the vibrant Indian community in Hong Kong and Macau. Their valuable contributions continue to strengthen people-to-people ties and further deepen the bilateral relations between India and Hong Kong and Macau SARs."

The Consulate General of India in Hong Kong said that MoS Margherita engaged in meaningful interactions with members of the Indian diaspora at an event organised by the Consulate General of India, Hong Kong and Macau SARs.

"Hon'ble MoS lauded the community for their invaluable contributions



in strengthening people-to-people ties between India and Hong Kong. He also reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment to creating greater oppor-

tunities and support for the Indian community abroad," the Consulate said in a post on X.

MoS Margherita will visit Papua

New Guinea on 16 September to represent Prime Minister Narendra Modi at events marking Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary of independence.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), during the visit, MoS Margherita is expected to hold bilateral meetings with the political leadership of Papua New Guinea. He will also interact with the Indian diaspora and the business community in the country.

Following the historic 3rd Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2023 in Port Moresby, the visit of MoS Margherita to Papua New Guinea would provide an opportunity to continue the engagement with the leadership in the Pacific Island Countries (PICs), the MEA said in a statement on Saturday.

His visit comes shortly after the Indian Navy band participated in the military tattoo as part of Papua New Guinea's 50th Independence Day celebrations. The Indian Navy's indigenous ASW Corvette INS Kadmat arrived at Port Moresby earlier in September to join the celebrations, reaffirming the growing friendship and maritime partnership between India and Papua New Guinea, according to an official statement from the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

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## Four foreigners among 79 Nepali prison escapees so far held at India-Nepal border



NEW DELHI

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has so far apprehended 79 inmates, including four foreigners, while they were attempting to cross into India through various checkpoints along the India-Nepal border after fleeing different jails in Nepal amid the ongoing unrest in the Himalayan nation.

Of these inmates, two are Nigerians, one is Brazilian, and one is Bangladeshi. These four foreign nationals are in the age group between 29 and 40 years, officials, privy to the development, told, adding, "all four foreign nationals were held in Bihar."

All the prisoners were caught from different checkpoints along the India-Nepal border connecting India's Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal states, said the officials.

The Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) on September 11 also arrested a woman inmate identified as Anjila Khatoun, who was arrested from the West Bengal area. She is the first woman inmate nabbed by the

SSB personnel so far.

As per the officials, these prisoners were held when they failed to show any valid identity card to the SSB personnel deployed on the border between the two friendly countries.

The officials said the numbers may rise as strict vigilance is continued at all border entry points. "The detainees have been handed over to police for further investigation and legal action."

According to officials, these arrests were made as part of SSB's heightened vigilance after reports emerged of mass prison breaks in Nepal, where several inmates escaped during recent unrest.

The crisis began after violent protests erupted in several Nepali towns, leading to incidents of arson, vandalism, and attacks on correctional facilities. Taking advantage of the turmoil, thousands of prisoners managed to flee from jails.

In response, India's border guarding force, SSB, stepped up surveillance, conducting stringent identity checks and monitoring vulnerable stretches of

the open border. The paramilitary force has deployed additional personnel to ensure that no fugitive prisoner is able to slip into Indian territory.

Officials stated that while some escapees tried to disguise themselves as civilians crossing over for work or trade, the lack of valid identification exposed them. "The precautionary measures are meant to ensure that no escaped inmate can misuse the open border system between the two countries," an official deployed on the border said.

The SSB, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs, is responsible for securing the 1,751-km-long Indo-Nepal border spread across Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Sikkim. The force has been conducting strict identity checks, increased patrolling, and intensified intelligence gathering to trace the jail escapees.

Thousands of prisoners reportedly were set free from jails in all 77 districts of Nepal during the violent anti-government protests, which forced Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to resign on Tuesday, leading to a serious law and order situation across districts, prompting the Nepal Army to impose restriction orders followed by curfew.

The SSB is vigilant due to unrest following the 'Gen-Z' led protests across Nepal.

The India-Nepal border allows visa-free movement for citizens of both nations. With the situation in Nepal still tense, Indian security agencies remain on high alert.

Section 3(r) need 5 years as practising Islam stands failed until rules are formed, it would lead to arbitrary exercise of powers.

Section 2(c) proviso- waqf property shall not be treated as waqf property.

The court also stayed the provision that gave a Collector the power to decide if a property declared as Waqf belonged to the government, stressing that letting the Collector rule on citizens' rights would violate the separation of powers.

"Section 23- Ex-officio officer must be from Muslim community as far as possible," it said.

The bench of the apex court - which had reserved the order on May 22 - pronounced the decision on Monday.

A batch of petitions challenging the Constitutional validity of the Act was filed before the apex court, contending that it was discriminatory towards the Muslim community and violates their fundamental rights.

President Droupadi Murmu on April 5 gave her assent to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was earlier passed by Parliament after heated debates in both Houses - Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

During the hearing in May, the Union of India (UOI), through its senior law officer Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta, had submitted to the apex court that the waqf management had misused monuments, giving rooms for shops and making unauthorised alterations.

The submission of Mehta was vehemently opposed by senior lawyer Kapil Sibal, appearing for some petitioners. He had argued that there are other laws which deal with such issues.

"You cannot take my right over the waqf property because of these issues," Sibal had stated.

The Centre, while strongly defending the Amendment Act, submitted that there was no ground for staying a "validly enacted statute" by the competent legislature.

"The very fact that the court has to hear the batch of pleas for interim stay for three days, shows there is nothing ex-facie unconstitutional with the law. Mere legal arguments are insufficient to stay the statute. There is no ground for staying a validly enacted statute by the competent legislature," Mehta argued before the top court.

He had submitted that creating a waqf is different from donating to a waqf, which is why there is a five years practice requirement for Muslims so that waqf is not used for defrauding someone.

"Suppose I am a Hindu and I want to donate to a waqf, it can be done. How can a non-Muslim be allowed to create a waqf. He can always donate to a waqf," said Mehta.

Delving into the batch of pleas that these were filed without any proper materials to support, Mehta had argued that three days of hearings had revealed no ex-facie evidence of unconstitutionality. He said that mere legal propositions or hypothetical arguments do not justify halting the operation of a law duly enacted by Parliament.

On the other hand, Sibal - opposing these submissions of Mehta - had asked if waqfs used for religious purposes can be stripped of the status, merely for being unregistered. "Can the government for its own fault of not conducting surveys now claim waqf properties as government land by a legislative fiat," Sibal had questioned.

Senior lawyer Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the state of Rajasthan, supported the 2025 Act. He said that "waqf by user" is not a core practice of Islam, as it did not involve any formal dedication. It was merely a way of holding land as waqf through adverse possession.

Senior advocate Ranjeet Kumar, appearing for the Haryana government and a tribal organisation supporting the 2025 Amendments, said in Rajasthan, a waqf claim was made over a 500-acre land given for mining purposes.

Mehta had said that the dedication of land as waqf is permanent and irreversible. Therefore, land belonging to members of Scheduled Tribes (STs) cannot be dedicated as waqf.

"The state restricts the alienation of tribal land to protect tribal communities. Otherwise, anyone could become a mutawalli (Manager of Waqf property) and misuse the waqf to their detriment," the Centre's law officer had contended.

Mehta further had argued that Muslim tribals are being victimised. "There may be differing points of view," he says, "but that cannot be a ground to stay the operation of a duly enacted law."

The apex court was hearing five petitions - out of more than 100 - after noting that it was impossible to hear all the pleas in the matter, as more or less, the prayers were strikingly similar.

The Centre on April 25 had defended the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025, as

## Plea challenging Waqf Amendment Act, 2025: SC refuses to stay operation, but stays certain provisions of it

### NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, on Monday, refused to stay the entire Waqf Amendment Act, 2025 amid ongoing petitions challenging the law. The court however stalled certain provisions of the Act, including the condition that a person should be a practitioner of Islam for at least five years for dedicating property to waqf.

It also observed that while the SC is not issuing directions, it would be appropriate for the Centre to limit non-Muslim nominations to no more than three in the 11-member Central Waqf Council.

The bench directed that the Central Waqf Council should not have more than 4 non-muslim members and not more than 3 in State Waqf Boards.

The court, while refusing to stay the amendment permitting the appointment of a non-Muslim as CEO, clarified that as far as possible, the Chief Executive Officer of the Waqf Board should be a Muslim.

The apex court, in its order, said that laws enacted by Parliament must be presumed valid and that a stay should be granted only in the rarest of rare cases. However, it added that the determination of waqf by user by a government official would be subject to the orders of jurisdictional High Courts.

"We have considered the prima facie challenge to each of the sections. We have found that no case was made out to stay the entire provisions of the statute. However, some sections need some protection," said the top court in its order.

The bench passed the order staying sections 3(r), 2(c) proviso, 3(c) and 23 on the following grounds:

Section 3(r) need 5 years as practising Islam stands failed until rules are formed, it would lead to arbitrary exercise of powers.

Section 2(c) proviso- waqf property shall not be treated as waqf property.

The court also stayed the provision that gave a Collector the power to decide if a property declared as Waqf belonged to the government, stressing that letting the Collector rule on citizens' rights would violate the separation of powers.

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be from Muslim community as far as possible," it said.

The bench of the apex court - which had reserved the order on May 22 - pronounced the decision on Monday.

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The apex court was hearing five petitions - out of more than 100 - after noting that it was impossible to hear all the pleas in the matter, as more or less, the prayers were strikingly similar.

The Centre on April 25 had defended the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025, as

a valid, lawful exercise of legislative power. While filing a detailed reply in the Supreme Court, the Union had requested it to dismiss the batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of it.

"It is a settled position in law that the constitutional courts would not stay a statutory provision, either directly or indirectly, and will decide the matter finally," said the Centre, in its reply filed before the top court.

The UOI filed the reply after complying with the top court's order asking it to file the same before it.

The Centre said that shockingly after 2013, there was an addition of over 20 lakh hectares (precisely 20,92,072.536) in Waqf land. "Right before even Mughal era, pre-independence era and post-independence era, the total of waqfs created was 18,29,163.896 acres of land in India," said the Centre, through its affidavit filed in the top court.

"For the last 100 years, waqf by user is recognised only upon registration and not by word of mouth. Hence, the amendment was in sync with consistent practice. There will be maximum of two non-Muslims among 22 members in the Waqf Council and Akuf Boards, a measure that is representative of inclusiveness and not intrusive of the administration of waqfs," the Centre said.

The affidavit added that the identification of government land deliberately or wrongly mentioned as waqf properties is to set the revenue records right and that such land cannot be treated as land belonging to any religious community.

The Centre, in its 1,332-page counter affidavit, submitted that there cannot be a "blanket stay" on the law as there was a "presumption of its constitutionality".

The Centre had submitted that the law was not violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

"The amendments are only for the regulation of the secular aspect regarding the management of the properties and hence, there was no violation of the religious freedoms guaranteed under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution," it had said.

## INTERNATIONAL

## Trump condemns brutal beheading of Indian man by illegal immigrant, says time for being 'soft' is over



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has vowed that his administration will not be "soft" on illegal immigrant criminals following the gruesome killing of 50-year-old Indian national Chandra Nagamallai, who was beheaded in front of his wife and son at a motel in Dallas, Texas.

"I am aware of the terrible reports regarding the murder of Chandra Nagamallai, a well-respected person in Dallas, Texas, who was brutally beheaded, in front of his wife and son, by an



Tom Homan

ILLEGAL ALIEN from Cuba who should have never been in our Country. This individual was previously arrested for terrible crimes, including child sex abuse, grand theft auto, and false imprisonment, but was released back into our Homeland under incompetent Joe Biden because Cuba did not want such an evil person in their Country. Rest assured, the time for being soft on these Illegal Immigrant Criminals is OVER under my watch! Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Border Czar

Tom Homan, and many others in my Administration, are doing an incredible job in MAKING AMERICA SAFE AGAIN. This criminal, who we have in custody, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law. He will be charged with murder in the first degree!"

Trump added that the accused would face the harshest legal consequences and that his administration, led by Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, Attorney General Pam Bondi, and Border Czar Tom Homan, was committed to "making America safe again."

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) confirmed that the accused, 37-year-old Yordanis Cobos-Martinez, a Cuban national, had been released under the previous Biden administration after Cuba refused to take him back because of his criminal history. Public records show that Cobos-Martinez had prior arrests for child sex abuse, grand theft auto, and false imprisonment, and had been involved in criminal activity in Houston, Florida, and California.

The attack took place on September 10 at the Downtown Suites motel in Dallas, where both Nagamallai and Cobos-Martinez were employed. According to the Dallas Police arrest affidavit, Nagamallai told Cobos-Martinez and a female colleague not to use a broken wash-

ing machine. Cobos-Martinez allegedly became angry when Nagamallai asked the colleague to translate his request instead of speaking directly to him.

"Video shows the suspect then exited the motel room and produced a machete from his person and started cutting and stabbing the complainant multiple times," the affidavit states. Disturbing footage circulating on social media shows Nagamallai screaming and running through the motel's parking lot before being chased down and repeatedly struck with the weapon.

Witnesses said Nagamallai ran toward the motel office where his wife and son were present, but despite their efforts to stop the assault, Cobos-Martinez struck the victim until he was decapitated. The affidavit further notes that Cobos-Martinez kicked the severed head into the parking lot before placing it in a garbage bin. He was arrested shortly after, covered in blood and still holding the machete, and later admitted to committing the murder during questioning.

Trump described Nagamallai as a "well-respected person in Dallas" and emphasized that the accused would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. He said: "This criminal, who we have in custody, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law. He will be charged with murder in the first degree!"

US leader Donald Trump has rebuked Israel over Tuesday's strike, and Rubio acknowledged to reporters before departing Washington that the president was "not happy" about it, but he insisted the attack would not "change the nature of our relationship with the Israelis".

Nevertheless, the strike has put renewed strain on efforts to secure a ceasefire in Gaza, and Rubio allowed that the United States and Israel were "going to have to talk about" its impact.

Netanyahu has defended the operation - which targeted Hamas officials gathering to discuss a new US ceasefire proposal - saying killing the group's leaders would remove the "main obstacle" to ending the Gaza war.

On Sunday, Rubio offered prayers at Jerusalem's sacred Western Wall alongside Netanyahu and US ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, an AFP correspondent reported.

## Netanyahu says US alliance 'has never been stronger' as Rubio visits

### JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that a visit to Israel by top US diplomat Marco Rubio underscored the strength of ties between the allies, days after an unprecedented Israeli strike targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar drew broad criticism.

The attack on the US ally and key mediator in Gaza truce talks has prompted Arab and Muslim leaders to gather for a show of solidarity in Doha, where Qatar's prime minister urged the world to reject "double standards" and hold Israel to account.

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On Sunday, Rubio offered prayers at Jerusalem's sacred Western Wall alongside Netanyahu and US ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, an AFP correspondent reported.

Netanyahu said afterwards that the visit showed the Israeli-American alliance was "as strong, as durable as the stones in the Western Wall that we just touched".

Under Rubio and President Donald Trump, "the alliance has never been stronger", he added.

Rubio's main meetings with officials, including Netanyahu, will take place on Monday before he departs on Tuesday.

His visit coincides with Monday's emergency summit of Arab and Muslim leaders in Qatar, whose Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani addressed a preparatory meeting on Sunday.

"The time has come for the international community to stop using double standards and to punish Israel for all the crimes it has committed," he said, adding Israel's "war of extermination" in Gaza would not succeed.

"What is encouraging Israel to continue... is the silence, the inability of the international community to hold it accountable."

Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu (C-R) briefs US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (C-L) and his wife Jeanette Dousdebbs Rubio (C) during their visit to the Western Wall Tunnels, underneath the Jewish holy site, in the old city of Jerusalem on September 14, 2025. In spite of mounting international criticism, Israel has in recent days ramped up efforts to seize control of Gaza City, the territory's largest urban centre, telling residents to evacuate and blowing up numerous high-rise buildings it said were being used by Hamas. As of late August, the UN estimated that around one million people were living in the city and its surrounding areas, where it has declared a famine it blamed on Israeli aid restrictions.

AFP images showed a column of vehicles and people on foot fleeing Gaza City southwards through a desolate landscape of destroyed buildings.

"We are living in constant terror amid relentless shelling and powerful explosions," said Sara Abu Ramadan, 20, a resi-

dent of Gaza City. "Why such massive firepower in these rockets? What's their goal? We are dying here, with nowhere to seek refuge... and the world just watches."

Gaza's civil defence agency said at least 38 people had been killed since dawn Sunday in Israeli strikes around the territory.

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties in accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify the details provided by the civil defence agency or the Israeli military.

On Friday, the UN General Assembly voted to back a revival of the two-state solution, in defiance of Israeli opposition.

Nevertheless, Israel retains the backing of its most powerful ally and biggest arms supplier, the United States.

Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu (C-R) briefs US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (C-L) and his wife Jeanette Dousdebbs Rubio (C) during their visit to the Western Wall Tunnels, underneath the Jewish holy site, in the old city of Jerusalem on September 14, 2025.

At home, opponents of the Netanyahu government have sought to pressure ministers to end the war in return for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza. On Saturday, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, the main campaign group for the captives, accused the Israeli premier of being the "one obstacle" to freeing the hostages by sabotaging efforts to strike a deal.

Of the 251 people taken hostage by Palestinian militants in October 2023, 47 remain in Gaza, including 25 the Israeli military says are dead.

Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, said Rubio was unlikely to push Israel toward a ceasefire.

Under Rubio and President Donald Trump, "the alliance has never been stronger", he added.

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## The Kharia People's Language and Culture on the Brink of Extinction in Bangladesh

### “THE LAST VOICES OF KHARIA: A VANISHING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE”



**SANGRAM DATTA:**

In the tea estates and hilly areas of the Sylhet Division in north-eastern Bangladesh, a small yet historic community is now facing an existential crisis.

During the British colonial period, they came from various states of India to work as labourers in tea gardens in what is now Bangladesh, eventually settling permanently in the tea estates of Moulvibazar, Habiganj, and Sylhet districts.

The Kharia people — whose roots lie in eastern India and whose language, Kharia, is one of South Asia's oldest — are slowly losing both their language and distinct culture. Over generations, the Kharia identity has blended into the national mainstream, erasing much of their heritage.

History of the Kharia Language:

The Kharia people, or Kharias, are an Austro-Asiatic indigenous ethnic group of east-central India. They primarily speak the Kharia language, which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family.

The Kharia are divided into three main sub-groups: the Hill Kharia, the Dhelki Kharia, and the Dudh Kharia — of which the Dudh Kharia group is the most educated.

When and Where Did the Kharia Language Originate?

According to linguist Paul Sidwell, Munda languages arrived on the coast of Odisha from Southeast Asia around 4,000 to 3,500 years ago. Austro-Asiatic speakers migrated from Southeast Asia to India and intermingled extensively with the local populations.

In brief, the language likely originated around 2000-1500 BCE. It developed among the Munda peoples living in the primitive forested regions of present-day Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and parts of West Bengal in India. Over time, speakers of the language spread across eastern India. Some later migrated to Bangladesh during the British colonial period — particularly to the tea estates of Sylhet Division.

Where is the Kharia language spoken?

The Kharia language is primarily spoken in the Indian state of Jharkhand. In addition, Kharia-speaking people also live in some parts of the states of West Bengal and Odisha.

How Many People Spoke the Kharia Language?

In Bangladesh, among the approximately 5,700 members of the Kharia community scattered across 41 settlements in the Sylhet tea estate region, the number of Kharia speakers has dropped sharply. Today, only two elderly women (in Barmachhara Tea Estate of Sreemangal upazila) can speak the language fluently.

In India, the number of Kharia speakers was once much higher. According to the 2011 Census in India, more than 420,000 people spoke the Kharia language across

India and neighbouring areas — including members of all three sub-groups: Dudh Kharia, Dhelki Kharia, and Hill Kharia.

How Many Kharia Speakers Are Left Now?

In Bangladesh, there are now only two speakers of the Kharia language. Two elderly sisters, Christina Kerketta (75) and Veronica Kerketta (80) of Barmachhara Tea Garden. After their departure, there will be no living Kharia speakers in Bangladesh, and the language will vanish entirely from the country.

Why Is the Kharia Language Disappearing?

Several major factors are behind the decline of the Kharia language:

Language Shift Pressure:

The younger generation of Kharias mostly use Sadrī, Bengali, Hindi, or local dialects. As a result, the use of their mother tongue has almost ceased.

Absence in Education and Administration:

There is no educational system, textbooks, or government recognition in Kharia. Children study in Bengali, reducing interest in their mother tongue.

Lack of a Written Form:

In Bangladesh, Kharia doesn't have a standard alphabet or written form, which is a major barrier to preservation.

Loss of Cultural Ties:

The cultural roots of the Kharia people lie in the Indian states of Jharkhand and Odisha. The Bangladeshi Kharias are descendants of migrant tea labourers, and their cultural practices have become disconnected from their homeland.

Lack of Government Recognition and Promotion:

In Bangladesh, the Kharia are not officially recognised as an indigenous community, so they don't receive government aid or language preservation initiatives.

Poverty and Livelihood Pressures:

Many Kharias are poor and prioritise earning a living over language preservation, leaving little time or interest for teaching or practising it.

Does Kharia Have an Alphabet in Bangladesh?

In Bangladesh, Kharia doesn't have a recognised script of its own and is essentially an oral language. There is no tradition of preserving it in written form, which is one of the biggest reasons for its decline. Without written records, preserving a language becomes extremely difficult.

Where Does Kharia Have a Script?

The Kharia language doesn't have a native script in Bangladesh. In the Indian states of Jharkhand, Kharia is sometimes written in Devanagari, Odia, or Latin scripts. In Kharia-majority areas, people also speak Sadrī, Mundari, Kurukh, Hindi, and Odia alongside Kharia.

Why Is the Present Generation Not Interested in Learning Kharia?

Social and Educational Pressures:

In tea gardens, where Kharias mostly live, Bengali and Hindi are dominant, and the medium of education is Bengali. Kharia children must speak Bengali or Sadrī in school, society, and work to survive socially and economically. Decreased Practical Value of the Language:

Kharia is not useful for jobs or higher education, so parents encourage children to focus on Bengali and English instead.

Cultural Disconnect:

Reduced interaction between older and younger generations has ended the use of Kharia in folk songs, festivals, and storytelling.

Concealment of Identity:

Many young Kharias hide their ethnic and linguistic identity to avoid social discrimination.

Lack of Preservation Initiatives:

There are no government or NGO-led programs to teach or preserve Kharia, so the language is disappearing even within families.

Social Divisions:

The Kharia are divided into three sub-groups:

Dudh Kharia, Dhelki Kharia, and Hill Kharia. The first two speak the Austro-Asiatic Kharia language, while the Hill Kharia speak an Indo-Aryan language known as Kharia Thar, for which no linguistic development work has been done.

The Dudh and Dhelki Kharia are considered one cohesive tribal group. They migrated to the Chotanagpur Plateau after being attacked by an Ahir chief.

Location:

In Bangladesh's Sylhet Division, around 5,700 Kharia people live in 41 settlements, mainly in the tea gardens and surrounding areas of Sreemangal, Kamalganj, Chunarughat, and Madhabpur upazilas.

In India, the Hill Kharia are mainly found in the Jashipur and Karanjia Blocks of the Mayurbhanj district. A few villages are also found in the Morada block in Odisha.

In Jharkhand, they are concentrated in East Singhbhum, Gumla, and Simdega districts. Though widely found in this district, Musabani, Dumaria and Chakulia Blocks are the blocks where they live in large numbers. And in West Bengal, they are in West Midnapur, Bankura and Purulia districts. The majority are in Purulia.

The Hill Kharia are also called Pahari Kharia, Savara/Sabar, Kheria, Erenga, or Pahar. Outsiders call them “Kharia,” but they identify themselves as “Sabar.” They are called “Pahari Kharia” because they live in forests and depend on forest resources.

Clans:

The Hill Kharia have many clans, such as Golgo, Bhuniya, Sandi, Gidi, Deuri, Pichriya, Nago, Tolong, Suya, Dhar, Tesa, Kotal, Kharmoi, Dizar, Laha, Saddr, Sikri, Rai, Ddungdung, Bilung, Kiro, Kerketta, Soren, Kullu, Ba, Tete, Dolai, Sal, Alcosi, and Khelari. The ‘Golgo’ clan is considered the most influential, as it is always mentioned first in every village.

Population:

According to Bangladesh's 2022 census, the Kharia population is around 3,099. However, unofficial estimates put it closer to 6,000.

According to India's 2011 Census, the Kharia population is: Jharkhand – 234,366; Odisha – 144,179; West Bengal – 38,280; Assam – 1,224; Chhattisgarh – 1,057; Bihar – 590; Tripura – 304; Andaman and Nicobar Islands – 55; Maharashtra – 40; with negligible or unrecorded populations in other states/territories. The total in India exceeds 420,000, with most Kharias living in Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal.



sacred symbol of life and prosperity. The festival includes songs, dances, and traditional rituals honouring the Earth and Forest deities. They also celebrate the Baha festival.

Dance:

The Kharia are considered excellent dancers. Young men and women dance together; sometimes, boys and girls form separate groups and sing in a way that resembles a musical conversation. Common dance styles include Hario, Kinwar, Halka, Kudhing, and Jadhura.

Notable Kharia individuals in India include writer Rose Kerketta, freedom fighter Telanga Kharia, and hockey players Jyoti Sunita Kullu and Salima Tete.

Conclusion:

The Kharia language is not

just a means of communication — it is a living document of thousands of years of history, struggle, and culture. Yet in Bangladesh, it is on the verge of extinction. The last two elderly women carry its final breath in their memories, and with their deaths, it will vanish into the darkness of history.

The death of a language means more than the loss of words — it means the disappearance of an entire world, a people's memories, beliefs, songs, laughter, tears, and identity.

It is therefore urgent for the government, researchers, cultural organisations, and international language preservation bodies to act together. The younger generation must be given back their mother tongue so that the Kharia identity is not confined to the pages of books but lives on in people's speech, music, dance, and songs.

Preserving a language means preserving the soul of a nation — and that responsibility belongs to all of us.

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