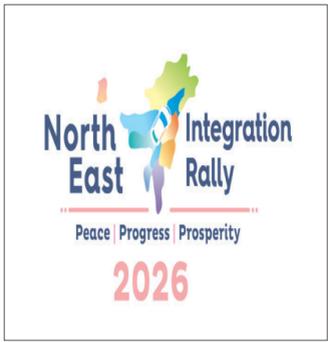




KRC TIMES

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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 569 | SILCHAR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 07, 2025. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

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PERSPECTIVE

The faster you move, the more paths appear. Momentum is the currency of new opportunities.
- Russell Brunson, Author & Coach

10-Day Women Empowerment Campaign Begins in Cachar

SILCHAR

The Cachar district administration has launched a ten-day awareness drive to strengthen women's empowerment and ensure government schemes reach every part of Assam's district.

The drive has been jointly organised by the Department of Women and Child Development and the district administration. The campaign is being led by District Commissioner Mridul Yadav.

The programme opened with a review meeting at the district commissioner's (DC) office under the banner of Sankalp, Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW).

A key focus of the meeting was Mission Shakti, the Government of India's flagship scheme promoting women's safety, dignity, and empowerment.

Officials from multiple departments, social welfare officers, coordinators, and institutional representatives took part, reflecting a push for stronger inter-departmental cooperation.

Deepa Das, Assistant Commissioner and in-charge District Social Welfare Officer, welcomed participants and stressed that women must be seen not only as beneficiaries of welfare schemes but also as active contributors to Cachar's growth.

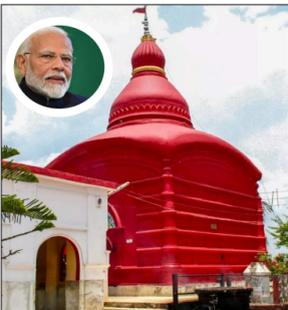
Bonani Bhattacharjee, District Mission Coordinator of Sankalp HEW, presented the ten-day action plan, which includes training sessions, awareness programmes, and access to institutional support. Over the next ten days, the campaign will reach every block of the district through workshops, outreach sessions, and awareness drives.

WHO SAID WHAT



I just spoke with Prime Minister @NarendraModi. I presented him the outcome of the work we carried out with President Zelensky and our partners of the Coalition of the Willing last Thursday in Paris. India and France share the same determination to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Building on our friendship and our strategic partnership, we will continue moving forward together to trace this path toward peace. - Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic of France

PM Modi to inaugurate renovated Mata Tripura Sundari Temple on Sept 22



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Tripura on September 22 to inaugurate the newly completed beautification and reconstruction works of the historic Mata Tripura Sundari Temple in Gomati district.

The centuries-old Shakti Peeth, regarded as one of the holiest sites in Eastern India, has undergone a major facelift under the PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive) scheme. The project, initiated after the BJP government assumed power

in the state, is now nearing completion.

The Central government sanctioned approximately Rs 38 crore for the renovation under the PRASAD scheme, while the State Government contributed an additional Rs 7

crore. Officials said the project is expected to significantly boost spiritual tourism and reinforce Tripura's position as an emerging tourist destination.

On Saturday, top officials—including Chief Secretary

Kiran Gite, Principal Secretary Abhishek Singh, DGP Anurag, IG (Law & Order) Man-chak Ipper, Tourism Secretary U.K. Chakma, and other senior officers—visited the temple to review preparations ahead of the Prime Minister's arrival.

Renegotiated SoO pact step towards peace: Arambai Tenggol

IMPHAL Meitei organisation Arambai Tenggol said the renegotiated Suspension of Operations pact between the Centre and two Kuki-Zo groups is crucial for achieving peace in Manipur and expressed unwavering support to any government initiative aimed at restoring order and tranquillity in the State.

Two prominent Kuki-Zo groups had on Thursday signed the Suspension of Operations agreement with the Government on renegotiated terms and conditions under which they agreed on maintaining territorial integrity of Manipur, relocating designated camps away from vulnerable areas, and working for a solution to bring lasting peace and stability to the State.

The signing of the Suspension of Operations agreement with the Kuki National Organisation and the United People's Front is also set to have a positive impact on peace efforts in Manipur, officials said.

In a statement, Arambai Tenggol said, "We stand steadfast in our dedication to fostering peace and normalcy across Manipur. Our organisation has been actively cooperating and coordinating with the efforts of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the State Administration to chart a positive path forward."

"Such a rushed trip is an insult": Congress slams PM Modi's likely Manipur visit

NEW DELHI

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expected visit to Manipur on September 13, the Congress has criticised the trip, calling it a "non-visit" and an "insult" to residents who have awaited his arrival for over two years. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh questioned the purpose of the visit, pointing out that the Prime Minister is expected to spend just three hours in the state.

"The proposed visit of the Prime Minister to Manipur on Sept 13 is being hailed by his cheerleaders. But it appears that he will be spending just about 3 hours—yes just 3 hours—in the state. What does he hope to accomplish by such a rushed trip?" Ramesh said on X.

He added, "This is actually an insult to the people of the state who have waited for him for 29 long and agonising months," and described the short trip as a demonstration of "callousness and insensitivity towards the people of Manipur."

The visit, if confirmed, would mark Modi's first trip to the state

since ethnic violence erupted between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in May 2023. The conflict has left over 260 people dead and displaced thousands.

The Centre imposed President's rule in Manipur after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned. The state assembly, whose term runs until 2027, remains under suspended animation.

Last week, Congress had described the Prime Minister's potential visit as "too little too late," highlighting the prolonged absence of central attention in the aftermath of the violence.

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PM Must Meet All Manipur MLAs, Find Way Out of Strife: Congress



IMPHAL

Congress MLA Thokchom Lokeshwar urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to visit Manipur on September 13, to meet all legislators of the state and work towards a solution to the ongoing ethnic strife.

Lokeshwar, who represents the Khundrakpam constituency, said the prime minister must not restrict his visit to Imphal and Churachandpur but should also travel to violence-affected areas in Imphal East, Imphal West and Kangpokpi districts. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi must ensure a solution to the crisis in the state during his visit. He must meet all the 59 MLAs and chalk out a plan. He must bring a solution to the ethnic strife," he said.

The MLA also stressed that no harm should come to Meiteis passing through the Kangpokpi stretch of National Highway 2 and that Kuki-Zo people must similarly be allowed to access Meitei-majority areas. "The authorities must arrest those who openly declared that no Meiteis would be allowed to go through the national highway," Lokeshwar asserted.

His remarks follow declarations by several Kuki groups, including the Village Volunteers Coordinating Committee, that Meiteis would not be permitted to enter Kuki-controlled zones. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands displaced in the ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo communities since May 2023.

The Centre had imposed President's rule in Manipur following the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh. The state assembly, with a tenure until 2027, currently remains under suspended animation.

Crucial Meeting in Manipur as PM Modi Visit Speculation Grows



GUWAHATI

Amid speculation about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's potential visit to Manipur in mid-September, Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla convened a high-level meeting on Sunday at Raj Bhavan in Imphal. The gathering brought together key state officials and senior BJP leaders, including former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, officials confirmed.

The meeting comes at a critical time for the state, which has been grappling with ethnic tensions since May 2023. Although authorities have not released an official agenda, a BJP leader revealed that discussions covered a range of issues, including security and logistical preparations for the Prime Minister's possible visit.

Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel, Security Advisor Kuldip Singh, and Director General of Police Rajiv Singh were among those present. State BJP president A. Sharda Devi also attended the meeting.

While there has been no formal announcement, sources indicate that the Prime Minister is expected to visit Mizoram on September 13 to inaugurate the Bairabi-Sairang railway project. A subsequent visit to Imphal is under consideration, though details remain unconfirmed. Since May 3, 2023, clashes between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities have left over 260 people dead and displaced thousands, fueling ongoing tensions in the region.



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A subsequent visit to Imphal is under consideration, though details remain unconfirmed.

North East Integration Rally 2026 in January, Connects All Eight States

SILCHAR

The North East Integration Rally (NEIR) 2026, described as one of India's most distinctive cultural journeys, will be held for the first time in January 2026.

The event is being organised by the KRC Foundation, an organisation that has worked for over two decades in the fields of education, employment, entrepreneurship, and cultural exchange.

The rally will start in Kolkata and conclude in Guwahati, covering routes that pass through all eight states of the Northeast. Unlike speed-focused competitive rallies, NEIR is designed around the philosophy of "explore,

engage, and empower." Participants will travel by cars and motorcycles through villages, forests, tea gardens, heritage sites, and major towns, taking part in cultural nights, green drives, and community projects along the way. Organisers said the rally aims to promote integration, celebrate indigenous culture, encourage sustainable tourism, and involve youth in hands-on projects. It also plans to highlight the region through photography, films, and digital media. NEIR is open to youth groups, NGOs, adventure clubs, cultural organisations, professionals, influencers, and storytellers from India and abroad. Registration is mandatory, and participants are expected to maintain discipline, respect, and responsibility throughout the journey. According to the KRC Foundation, the rally's impact will go beyond the road—helping artisans, raising awareness, building friendships, and inspiring young ambassadors of change. This rally is about 'Discipline and Not about Speed'. The Rally is not a Competition but a

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'Campaign to Explore NE India' through a structured platform. For registration and more details, one can check the updates on the website (https://northeastintegrationrally.in/) and social media handles.

This rally is about 'Discipline and Not about Speed'. The Rally is not a Competition but a 'Campaign to Explore NE India' through a structured platform.



Total lunar eclipse to grace Assam, Northeast skies on September 7-8



GUWAHATI

Stargazers in Assam and the Northeast will be treated to a spectacular celestial event, as a total lunar eclipse will be visible tonight and in the early hours of September 8 from Assam, the Northeast, and the rest of India. The eclipse will also be seen from large parts of Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

A lunar eclipse takes place when the Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon, aligning all three in a straight line. During totality, the Moon will appear coppery red as sunlight filtered through the Earth's atmosphere scatters blue wavelengths and lets the red tones pass through. Unlike solar eclipses, lunar eclipses are completely safe

to view with the naked eye. Babul Ch Bora, consulting scientific officer at the Planetarium said that for the people of Assam and the Northeast, it is a chance to observe the Moon's transformation without any special equipment. According to the India Meteorological Department's Positional Astronomical Centre, the partial phase of the eclipse will begin at 9.57 pm on September 7. The total eclipse will start at 11.00 pm and continue until 12.23 am on September 8, giving a totality period of 1 hour and 23 minutes. The full eclipse, including the partial phases, will end at 1.27 am, with an overall duration of 3 hours and 30 minutes and a magnitude of 1.368. The last lunar eclipse visible from India was a partial eclipse on October 28, 2023. The next, also a total lunar eclipse, will occur on March 3, 2026.

Observers are advised to choose open areas away from city lights for the clearest view. Even as no public sighting event has been planned for the midnight eclipse, the Gauhati Planetarium officials will be present at the planetarium during the period.



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TRUMP'S TARIFF

President Trump has imposed his new tariff order on nearly two dozen countries of the world. Big countries like China, India, Brazil et al are among Trump's list.

What criterion Trump followed in fixing the new scale of tariffs is somewhat unclear. Take the case of India. He imposed 25% tax on Indian imports. Only a few days later, he changed his order and made it 50% arguing that India continued to purchase crude oil from Russia and was funding Russia's war against Ukraine. Hence India deserved to be punished.

Similarly, 50% tariff has been imposed on the imports from Brazil for the reason of Brazil activating BRICS. About China, Trump says that there is huge trade deficit.

India is the only country which defied Trump's dictat that India should not buy oil from Russia. India argued that not only India but Europe also was buying gas from Russia. India's Minister of External Affairs said in a press conference that the US was importing uranium from Russia. The dichotomy in Trump's foreign policy was palpable.

Indian side argued that it was with the consent of Biden administration that India purchased oil from Russia because Biden had opined that India, purchasing the Russian oil could stabilize oil prices world over and Europe in particular.

Trump brushed under carpet this reality of India's oil purchases from Russia. Many European countries, including Ukraine, have been purchasing oil from India.

When India revealed these realities, Trump brought a new allegation against India. He accused India of laundering Russian money meaning helping Russian Roubles to be converted into US Dollars. And when India asked for the proof, Trump did not respond.

Past two weeks have clearly shown that Trump has taken an open anti-India stance. Commentators wonder why this U-turn? There are personal as well as circumstantial reasons for Trump's flip-flop towards India. It is now known that Trump had offered Modi his mediation in India's dispute with Pakistan which Modi rejected outright saying that Pakistan should vacate illegal occupation of the part of J&K State. Trump took it an insult to be rejected as a mediator.

Modi rubbed more salt into Trump's wound. He stated in the parliament that India never asked any country for mediation.

The question is why Trump went on repeating no fewer than 34 times since May 10 that he had mediated between India and Pakistan and that he had averted an impending nuclear flare up in the world and had thus saved lives of millions of people on the earth.

The reality of Trump's mavericks became known when the Pakistani army chief, whom Trump had invited over private lunch, declared on the American soil that he was proposing the name of Donald Trump for noble peace prize. Trump felt obliged, caring a fig for the honour and dignity of the elected leadership of Pakistan.

Not only that the Pakistani General went to make two more statements while he was still on the soil of the US. In one statement he said that if Pakistan was attacked, Pakistan, in retaliation, would destroy half of the world. In another statement, he said that if need arose Pakistan would bombard India's Jamnagar oil refinery.

These two statements give a clear clue of what was being talked about by Trump and his sub-continental proxy. It proved that American hegemony was looking for and strengthening its proxies at least in the Asian continent.

The world was watching with deep interest how the United States of America was suppressing the rising voices for rights, dignity and freedom and was bent upon imposing the rule of dictating terms to other nations in other continents.

As early as March this year, President Xi of China had felt that America under Trump was about to adopt a path of imposing American hegemony on other nations of the world. He wrote a confidential letter to the President of India, proposing among other things that India and China should work together to save the world from the revival of imperialist attitude of the US. Xi's analysis was carefully considered by the Indian leadership and at Kazan where the previous summit of SCO, the two leaders (President Xi and PM Modi) held talks and decided to bring about a drastic change in the world order. The exchange visits of VIPs of both sides started after that.

Heads of the governments of 9 countries participated in the SCO 2025 summit in Tianjin in China. Russia and India were among the crucial members who held meetings on the side-lines of the summit.

Details of the discussion held in its sessions are still poring in. But there are confirmed news that the issue of US' unilateral imposition of tariffs, terrorism, border conflicts, security and many other subjects have been discussed.

President Xi of China hosted a dinner to President Putin and Prime Minister Modi. Political analysts are talking loudly of the emerging alignment among the three big powers of Asian continent. They are reported to have viewed the existing world order and the need of changing it so that smaller nations in Asian, African and Latin American countries can be assured of their security and dignity as important component of world community.

Evidently, the idea of multipolar world is what these like-minded leaders are seriously interested in. At the same time, there is increasing interest among the countries in BRICS concept against which President Trump has been spitting venom.

Though India had till now adopted the policy of not supporting rejection of US dollar as the prime currency for world trade but taking a realistic view of the case, there are indications that India may at the end of the day change its stance.

It has also to be noted that saner elements in the American society do understand that the Trump regime has been hijacked by the deep state and Trump little understand the impact of his wayward foreign policy.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

He who knows does not speak, He who speaks does not know. ~ Lao Tzu

GST 2.0: A landmark overhaul



DIPAK MONDAL

India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime is undergoing its most significant transformation since its inception in 2017. Dubbed GST 2.0, this comprehensive set of reforms, announced after the 56th GST Council meeting on September 3, aims to simplify the tax structure, ease compliance, boost consumption, and fuel economic growth ahead of the festival season. The changes come into effect from September 22.

The genesis: A promise from Red Fort

The journey to GST 2.0 began with a promise. In his Independence Day address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced from the ramparts of the Red Fort his government's intent to usher in next-generation GST reforms by Diwali. Terming it as a gift to the nation, the PM pledged reforms that would reduce the tax burden on the common man and provide a direct boost to economic activity. This set the stage for the GST Council's decisive meeting on September 3, where months of deliberation by a Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation were finally put to work.

In an interview to a media house, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the seeds of the major overhaul were sowed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a conversation eight months ago, when he asked her to do something with the GST rules (for ease of doing business) and later with the rates.

Three-pillar approach

The reforms were based on three core pillars—structural changes, rate rationalisation and ease of living and doing business. The structural changes include addressing long-standing issues like the inverted duty structure (where inputs are taxed higher than finished products) and resolving classification disputes. Rate rationalisation involves moving from a complex multi-slab system to a simplified two-rate structure for the vast majority of goods and services; and ease of living and doing business involves implementing process reforms to make compliance simpler, faster, and more predictable for businesses, especially MSMEs and exporters.

Slab simplification and rate changes

The most dramatic shift is the consolidation of tax slabs. The old structure of 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28% (plus cess on certain items) has been largely replaced by a two-tier system—5% Merit Rate (for essential and common-use items); 18% Standard Rate (for most other goods and services) and a new 40% 'Special Rate' that replaces the old 28% plus cess slab for a handful of "sin" and luxury goods.

The consolidation of slabs was accompanied by a major exercise to bring down the GST rates on goods and services. As many as 391 items saw changes in rates with 357 items seeing a lowering of GST rates charged currently.

Key goods moving to the 5% slab

A wide range of daily-use items have become cheaper, effectively putting more money in the hands of consumers. This

includes food items (namkeen, sauces, pasta, instant noodles, chocolates, butter, ghee); personal care goods (toilet soaps, shampoos, hair oil, toothpaste, toothbrushes); household goods (kitchenware, tableware, bicycles); agri inputs (tractor components, irrigation equipment, harvesting machinery); health products (diagnostic kits, reagents, spectacles, and vision-correcting goggles) and renewable energy equipment (solar panels and other devices).

Key goods moving to the 18% slab (from 28%)

In a major relief to the automotive sector and aspirational consumer durables—automobiles (small cars, motorcycles up to 350cc, buses, trucks, ambulances, and all auto parts); consumer durables (TVs of all sizes, air conditioners, dishwashers, monitors) and batteries (all batteries, including lithium-ion)—all of them are now uniformly taxed at 18%.

Items attracting new 40% rate

This rate subsumes the old tax and compensation cess. It applies to sin goods (pan masala, cigarettes, chewing tobacco (though these will transition later); aerated beverages & caffeinated drinks; high-end luxury items like large cars and SUVs, aircraft for personal use, yachts; and actionable claims like lottery tickets, betting, gambling, casinos, and admission to high-value events like IPL matches.

Though larger cars and SUVs are now put under the 40% slab (against 28% earlier), yet they are going to attract lower taxes. Reason: currently mid-size and big cars attract 28% GST and compensation cess ranging from 17-22% with the overall tax incidence ranging from 45-50%. The new GST rate on mid-size and big cars will be 40% with no compensation cess. Auto makers have already started announcing rate reductions with popular SUVs like Harrier, Safari, Scorpio to cost lower by up to ₹1.5 lakh. Luxury cars like BMWs and Mercedes could see prices coming down by lakhs of rupees.

Health gets special attention

Rates on health-related items have seen sharp cuts. As many as 33 life-saving drugs and medicines have been reduced to zero, while several others have been brought down from 12% or 5% to zero. Three critical medicines for cancer, rare diseases, and chronic illnesses have also moved to zero. Diagnostic kits, reagents, and glucose monitoring systems have been reduced to 5%. Spectacles and vision-correcting goggles have been cut from 28% to 5%. Individual health and life insurance have been exempted from GST. Earlier, premiums paid towards these policies were taxed at 18%.

Ease of doing business

Beyond rates, GST 2.0 introduces significant process reforms to reduce the compliance burden. The reform includes a simplified registration automated system for small and low-risk applicants promising registration within three working days. A risk-based system will be put in place to provisionally release 90% of refund claims for exporters and those under inverted duty structure, with only high-risk

cases facing scrutiny.

Amendments will be made in the law to allow post-sale discounts through credit notes, removing the need for pre-supply agreements and ending a major source of disputes.

Unanswered questions and challenges

Though the sweeping changes were approved by the GST Council unopposed, states did voice their concern on revenue loss to the states due to sharp lowering of rates. The net revenue implication of the rate cuts is estimated at ₹47,700 crore. While the Centre has termed it a "fiscal implication" rather than a loss, states are concerned about their share.

Kerala finance minister in a letter to the Union finance minister says that "the current rationalisation framework considers revenue neutrality at national level, but consumption patterns differ across states with consumption in states like Kerala skewed towards items with higher rates, and therefore, may stand to lose more than others.

Though analysts and economists predict a consumption boost may partially offset the potential revenue loss, the mechanism to address this permanent revenue shortfall for states has not been detailed, and this could potentially become a point of contention in future Council meetings.

The cess on tobacco products (cigarettes, beedi, pan masala, etc.) will continue until the loans taken to compensate states are fully repaid. While officials hint at a November-December timeline for this, no firm date has been set, creating uncertainty for these industries.

The fate of the anti-profiteering agency

The government has been silent on whether the National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) will be revived even though there have been hints of reviving the same for a short-period to ensure rate cut benefits are passed on to consumers.

NAA was initially set up to ensure businesses passed on the benefits of GST rate cuts to consumers. With such widespread reductions, there is a strong demand from consumer groups to reactivate the NAA to prevent businesses from unjustly enriching themselves. The government's stance on this is unclear. "The earlier framework under the National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) was criticised for its protracted investigations, lack of clarity in methodology, and the perception of being more punitive than corrective. However, the principle behind such a mechanism—ensuring that tax reductions and input tax credits actually benefit end consumers—remains sound and relevant," said Rajat Mohan, Senior Partner, AMRG & Associates.

Cases of non-compliance were frequent. Several consumer goods majors—including Hindustan Unilever, Jubilant Foodworks, Patanjali, Reckitt Benckiser, and Procter & Gamble—faced action. The latest case was closed in August 2025, when Subway franchisee Urban Essence was found guilty of profiteering

₹5.47 lakh by withholding tax-cut benefits.

Logistical challenge for businesses

Implementing these changes from September 22, is a massive operational challenge. Businesses will need to reassess retail pricing, distributor contracts, and inventory, while ensuring smooth communication with consumers. Analysts warn that the transition could create input tax credit (ITC) complications, particularly under the inverted duty structure, leaving industries like restaurants and food delivery uncertain about refunds.

Operational readiness—handling stock, pricing, and distributor agreements—will be critical. While lower raw material costs and logistics savings are expected to benefit manufacturers, companies must also rethink promotional strategies, especially as goods move into lower tax brackets, enabling more customer-focused schemes. Digital channels and e-commerce platforms will need updates to settlement models and HSN classifications.

By simplifying the structure and lowering taxes on a vast array of goods and services, the GST reform aims to boost consumption, curb inflation, and support key sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare. However, the success of this reform will depend on effective implementation and the government's ability to address the concerns of its key stakeholders, including the states.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Other than the national anthem, I don't find much to be proud of about my country. When I lived in Paris, I used to tell my French friends: your national anthem La Marseillaise speaks only of blood and killing, but our national anthem speaks of love. I would sing the song in Bengali and then translate it for them. They too were moved by the lyrics. I have listened to the words and tunes of many national anthems, but none can come close to Amar Shonar Bangla. Today, alas, my poor country is in the grip of the jihadists. Jihadists like blood and killing. Their hearts overflow with hatred. They cannot understand the value of love. That is why they dislike a national anthem that expresses love for the country. Their vile communal mindset despises the song, since its lyricist and composer was a non-Muslim. Ah, my sorrowful country! To take away a country's national anthem is like ripping out its heart. I don't know when my country will be free from the grip of the jihadists.

~ Taslima Nasreen, Author, Bangladesh



GST REFORMS: GENEROUS, SIMPLIFIED, AND TIMED WELL

TUSHAR GUPTA

The Narendra Modi Government is in a hurry, and for all the good reasons. An income tax cut for all those earning up to Rs. 12 Lakh per annum and rejigging the GST slabs in the same calendar year are signs of intent and commitment.

The Modi Government wants people to consume more, for people to be able to afford more, for MSMEs to be able to sell more, and for small entrepreneurs to be able to manufacture more. The 7.8 per cent growth rate in the first quarter of the ongoing financial year has furthered the government's reform spirit. A government too eager to get the job done is a stellar sign for the fastest-growing economy in the world.

The GST reforms are generous, simplified, and timed well for various reasons. Firstly, the states are willing to squander short-term gains for long-term benefits. While some analysts are fixated on the revenue loss theory, factoring in the fiscal health of the state governments, the truth is that the simplified reforms are only going to increase consumption, thus expanding the tax base. The timing is of the essence here. To have the rates in effect from September 22, 2025, ahead of the busiest quarter of the year, which has the bumper Diwali sales, shows urgency.

The first gainer is the automobile sector. The reduced slabs benefit the automobile sector

by enhancing affordability and stimulating demand. For small cars and two-wheelers, the shift from 28 per cent GST plus cess (up to 29%) to a flat 18 per cent rate without cess lowers ex-showroom prices by 8-10 per cent, making entry-level vehicles more accessible to budget-conscious buyers and potentially reversing recent sales slumps in the sub-4m segment.

Mid-size SUVs and sedans see effective taxes drop from 50 per cent to 40 per cent, reducing on-road costs by 6-7 per cent and boosting festive season purchases. This reform simplifies compliance, cuts operational costs for manufacturers, and encourages investments in production and innovation, such as electric vehicles, remaining at 5 per cent GST. The automobile industry is expecting a sales surge of 10-15 per cent in the ongoing financial year. However, it's more about the households that are now closer to their first car purchase.

The Modi Government's GST reforms have exempted cancer drugs and rare disease medicines from GST, reducing the rate to zero on 33 specified life-saving drugs to enhance affordability and access. This complements earlier customs duty cuts. The 2023 Budget exempted import duties on rare disease drugs, while the 2024 Budget waived duties on three key cancer medications like Trastuzumab Deruxtecan.

The 2025 Budget further expanded exemptions to 36 additional life-saving drugs, alle-

viating financial burdens for patients amid high treatment costs. These measures aim to boost healthcare equity, reduce out-of-pocket expenses, and support the pharmaceutical sector's growth.

The biggest move will be seen in the fast-moving consumer goods. One of the recent surveys on monthly per capita expenditure stated how people in India's villages were spending more on non-food items, including processed foods and lifestyle products. The rejig aims to further enhance the demand for these goods.

The new slabs slash rates from 12-18 per cent to 5 per cent on essentials like soaps, shampoos, detergents, packaged snacks (e.g., sev, namkeen), and groceries, directly benefiting consumers by lowering grocery bills and enabling larger pack sizes or promotions from companies like HUL and Parle.

Other consumer goods, including appliances such as air conditioners, TVs, and washing machines, see similar cuts, making them 10-15 per cent cheaper and more accessible. These reductions free up disposable income, stimulating demand. The GST reforms also address another longstanding demand: cutting down the GST on insurance premiums. The reforms slashed the GST rate on individual life and health insurance premiums from 18 per cent to zero, effective September 22, 2025, providing significant relief to all income groups.

This exemption applies to term life, endow-

ment, ULIP, and individual health policies, exempting them entirely while group policies remain taxable. By eliminating the tax component, premiums drop by up to 18 per cent, making coverage more affordable for middle-class families and low-income groups, where insurance penetration stands at just 4 per cent for life and under 1 per cent for health. This enhances coverage by encouraging higher uptake, reducing out-of-pocket expenses during medical emergencies, and promoting financial security.

Already, industry commentators are predicting a 10-15 per cent surge in policy sales, fostering a healthier insurance ecosystem and supporting the government's goal of universal health coverage. The government has done its duty. It's time now for the insurance companies to pass on the benefits to the consumers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address from the Red Fort on August 15 earlier this year, spoke about ushering in a complete overhaul of the GST framework. Less than three weeks later, his government has delivered. The ongoing year has been one of the productive spells for the government, given the critical moves on the legislative and policy front.

The excitement and anticipation within the industry will only grow now. The markets have already responded positively. Now, everyone will be looking forward to the second half of September when the Diwali shopping begins.

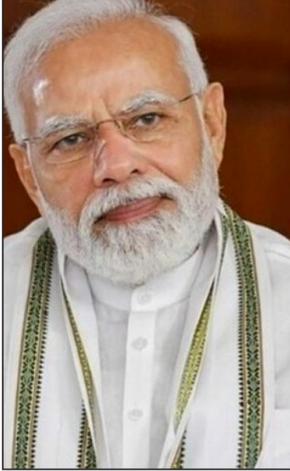
Assam BJP to observe “Seva Pakhwada” honouring PM Modi’s birthday

GUWAHATI

The Assam State BJP will observe and organise various programmes under “Seva Pakhwada” from September 17 to October 2 in connection with the birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

These activities will include cleanliness drives, tree plantation, blood donation camps, health camps, sports competitions, and painting contests.

In a statement issued by the Assam State BJP’s Spokesperson, Brojen Mahanta said that, to ensure the successful implementation of these programmes, a day-long workshop was organised on September 6 at the BJP State Headquarters, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan in Guwahati, under the presidency of State President Dilip Saikia.



“The workshop was graced by the presence of the Party’s senior leader and National Joint Treasurer Naresh Bansal, as the National In-Charge, along with Manoj Baruah, Vice President of BJP Assam Pradesh, Ratna Singh, Deputy Leader, and Juri Sharma Bordoloi, Deputy Leader and Convener of “Seva Pakhwada”. As the chief speaker of the workshop, Naresh Bansal elaborately explained the strategies for the successful implementation of the programmes to be undertaken by the Party and the Government,” the state unit said in the statement.

District-level workshops will be conducted between 6th and 10th September, while Mandal-level workshops will be organised between 11th and 13th September.

The programmes to be

observed from September 17 to October 2 are as - September 17 (First Phase): Blood donation camps across 1000 districts of the country, September 18 to October 2 (Second Phase) - Blood donation camps at every Mandal, September 18 to October 2 - Massive cleanliness drives at schools, hospitals, railway stations, bus stands, Namghars, temples, parks, riversides, and historical places.

The Painting Competition on Viksit Bharat will be organised by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, to engage maximum participation from students and thereby link the youth with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “Viksit Bharat 2047.” The themes shall include “Viksit Bharat,” “Atmanirbhar Bharat,” and “Digital India.”

Assam State BJP said in the statement that, “From September 17 to 24th September, free health camps will be organised at all Government, Community Health Centres (CHC), and Primary Health Centres (PHC).”

“On this occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi shall virtually address the nation from CHCs. September 17 to October 2 - Exhibitions depicting the life of Prime Minister Narendra Modi shall be displayed.

19th to September 20 - Intellectuals’ Meet, documentary screenings, and book distribution programmes. September 21 - Nammo Marathon race. September 25 - Floral tribute to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, district-level seminars on his life, and plantation of one tree at every booth in the name of the mother,” reads the statement.

“Alongside, State and District-level campaigns on “Atmanirbhar Bharat” and “Vocal for Local” shall be carried out. September 21 to December 25 - Sansad Khel Pratiyogita (Parliamentary Sports Competitions), which will include 5 Olympic sports- Athletics, Football, Volleyball, Hockey, Boxing--and three indigenous games--Wrestling, Badminton, Basketball, and Kho-Kho.

To encourage the youth of society to participate actively in these sports, all workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party shall undertake proactive efforts,” the Assam State BJP said in the statement.

Assam State BJP Spokesperson Brojen Mahanta appealed to all party workers to take an active part in ensuring the grand success of “Seva Pakhwada.”

Brahmaputra Board drafts plans for 15 NE river sub-basins amid flood-erosion woes

GUWAHATI

The Brahmaputra Board is preparing updated master plans for 15 river sub-basins across the northeast using advanced technology to address the region’s recurring floods and erosion, officials confirmed.

The move follows one of the worst monsoon spells in recent memory. In June, heavy rains and landslides left lakhs of people affected across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tripura and Manipur. Silchar in Assam recorded 415.8 mm of rainfall in a single day, while Mizoram reported more than 600 landslides.

A senior official said, “The Board has been actively engaged in preparing Master Plans, developing Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for multipurpose projects, monitoring Flood Management and Border Areas Programme (FMBAP) schemes, and executing anti-erosion, flood control and drainage development works.”

The current plans cover rivers such as Dikhow and Jhanji (Nagaland and Assam), Dikrong (Arunachal Pradesh and Assam), Kolodnye and Tuichang (Mizoram), and 10 rivers in Meghalaya, including Kynshi, Umngot and Simsang. Consultations with state governments are underway, and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) have been issued to incorporate stakeholder inputs.

A special committee comprising representatives from basin states, the Central Water Commission, North East Space Application Centre, Survey of India, Geological Survey of India and leading academic institutions is overseeing the process.

Future master plans are also being drawn up for major rivers such as the Teesta, San-kosh-Raidak, Ganol, Jinjiram, Kopili, Kollong, Dhansiri (North), Feni, Muhuri and Gunti. Draft RFPs for these have already been prepared.

District officer, data operator held in Rs 30 cr luxury vehicle racket



ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh police have arrested District Transport Officer (DTO) Yajum Lombi and data entry operator Charu Akey for their alleged involvement in a Rs 30.5-crore luxury vehicle smuggling racket that was busted in July.

Lombi, posted at Yupia in Papum Pare district, was arrested from her Itanagar residence on Friday for allegedly approving forged documents that enabled the registration of stolen vehicles.

Earlier in August, police apprehended Charu Akey, a data

entry operator from Palin in Kra Dadi district, who is accused of creating fake entries in the transport database. He is currently in judicial custody.

The racket, involving at least 73 stolen luxury vehicles from Delhi-NCR and other parts of north India, came to light after a suo motu FIR was registered. On July 2, Capital police launched a statewide crackdown, seizing 27 Hyundai Cretas, nine Toyota Fortuners, five Kia Seltos, along with several high-end SUVs from Audi, Ford, Mahindra and Maruti.

Investigators said all seized vehicles have been blacklisted and traced to FIRs registered in Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and other states, calling it the largest single-station recovery of stolen vehicles in India.

Police suspect that brokers altered engine and chassis numbers before generating fake registration papers. International financial links and digital money trails connected to the syndicate are also under probe.

Family demands death penalty as Meghalaya police charge Sonam in Raja Raghuvanshi’s murder

SHILLONG

A day after the Meghalaya police filed a detailed chargesheet in the sensational murder of Indore-based businessman Raja Raghuvanshi, his family has demanded the death penalty for his wife Sonam and four others allegedly involved in the case.

The police submitted a 790-page chargesheet against eight individuals, including Sonam, in connection with the murder of Raghuvanshi during the couple’s honeymoon to Sohra in May this year. Along with Sonam, the document names her alleged lover Raj Kushwaha, his three friends—Vishal Singh Chauhan, Akash Singh Rajput, Anand Kurmi—and three others. The accused have been charged under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for criminal conspiracy to murder and destruction of evidence.

Speaking to media in Indore,



Raja’s elder brother Vipin Raghuvanshi said, “My family has only one demand, that is—along with Sonam and Kushwaha, all five accused be sentenced to death.” He added that although the family had not yet gone through the entire chargesheet, they were satisfied with the police investigation and believed the evidence against the accused to be strong.

The case took several dra-

matic turns following Sonam’s arrest. Her elder brother, Govind, had visited the victim’s home on June 11, claiming that his family had severed ties with Sonam and that he would fight to secure justice for Raja. However, Vipin alleged that Govind misled the family to protect his business interests, revealing that he had hired a lawyer to defend Sonam. Vipin’s family has also retained a lawyer to pursue the case.

According to police, Raja and Sonam travelled to Shillong on May 21 before heading to Sohra. The couple went missing on May 26, prompting an extensive search involving the Sohra police, Special Operations Team (SOT), NDRF, SDRF, local trekking groups, and villagers. Raja’s body was eventually recovered on June 2 from a deep gorge at Arliang Riak Kunongrim, Umblai, near Wei Sawdong falls.

Investigators found that Sonam had been in a relation-

ship with Raj Kushwaha. The duo, along with three hired assailants, allegedly conspired to kill Raja under the pretext of a honeymoon. The murder was carried out by Rajput, Chauhan, and Kurmi in Sonam’s presence, the police said. Within a week, five of the accused, including Sonam, were traced to Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Sonam, Kushwaha, Rajput, Chauhan, and Kurmi have been charged under sections 103(1) (murder), 238(a) (disappearance of evidence), and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the BNS. Subsequently, three more accused—Lokendra Tomar, Balla Ahirwar, and Shilom James—were arrested from Gwalior, Shadora, and Dewas for their alleged role in destroying evidence.

The case continues to grip public attention, with authorities vowing a thorough trial and Raja Raghuvanshi’s family determined to see justice served.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests inspects proposed eco-tourism site at Chandel’s Prayer Mount

IMPHAL

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Additional Chief Secretary (Textiles, Commerce & Industry) of Manipur, Anurag Bajpai, conducted a field inspection of a proposed eco-tourism site at Prayer Mount in Ralhlam Hill, Lambung Village, Chandel, on September 6. This visit was accompanied by Conservator of Forests (Eastern Circle), Debala Laiphrakpam, and Divisional Forest Officer, Chandel, Dr. N. Munal Meitei. The inspection aimed to explore eco-tourism opportunities in the region.

Upon arrival, the team was warmly welcomed by Lambung’s Village Chief, Lh. Noah, along with village authorities and community groups. Bajpai expressed optimism about the site’s potential as a major eco-tourism destination in



Manipur’s southern tribal district. He acknowledged the area’s scenic beauty and strategic location, which could enhance local employment and economic opportunities. Bajpai highlighted the project’s scope for generating employment and economic opportunities for the local community, stressing the government’s

facilitator role in its development.

Bajpai emphasized the need for sustainable practices, urging villagers to protect the region’s wildlife and avi-fauna to sustain tourist interest and advised a gradual shift from jhum cultivation to bamboo plantation in barren areas to meet growing industrial demand. The Lambung Village Authority assured full cooperation in bringing the proposed project to fruition, envisioning it as a unique tourist attraction in the state.

Following the eco-tourism site visit, Bajpai inspected the newly constructed Industrial Estate in Chandel. Accompanied by MANIDCO Managing Director Shri Roman and other officials, Bajpai reviewed the construction progress. He noted the urgency of completing pending works and directed MANIDCO to complete finishing work within 10

days to ensure timely handover to the Department of Textiles, Commerce & Industry. Bajpai also directed the inclusion of essential infrastructure like a drainage system and Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP), which were not covered in the original DPR.

Concluding his visit, Bajpai held a meeting with Chandel Forest Division staff, including Range Officers and Forest Guards. He praised their vigilance in patrolling and preventing illegal transport of forest produce, directing them to intensify preparedness for the upcoming dry season, which is prone to forest fires and illegal poppy cultivation. Bajpai underscored the importance of collaboration with Police, NAB, and other relevant agencies to eradicate illicit cultivation and strengthen forest fire prevention efforts through village-level committees.

Opposition term Forest Conservation Amendment Act a ‘serious threat’ to Mizoram

AIZAWL

Opposition parties and several organisations in Mizoram have strongly opposed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act (FCAA), 2023, terming it a “serious threat” to the state and demanding immediate repeal of the resolution that endorsed its extension.

During the recent monsoon session, the Mizoram Assembly adopted a fresh resolution to extend the FCAA, 2023, to the state with effect from this year. The resolution was moved by Environment, Forests and Climate Change Minister Lalthansanga on August 27 and subsequently adopted by the House. The main opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), the Congress, the Zo Re-Unification Organisation (ZORO), and the Joint Civil Society Mizoram (JCSM) have sharply criticised the government for backing the Act. They argue that it undermines the rights of indigenous communities and grants excessive power to the Centre over land and forest resources in the state. MNF forest cell secretary Lallianmawia Jongte said on Friday that the party had recently petitioned Assembly Speaker Lalbiakzama, urging him to convene a special session to rescind the resolution. He further appealed that the resolution passed on August 27 should not be forwarded to the Lok Sabha Secretariat as it goes “against the interest of the Mizo

people.” “The MNF has consistently opposed the FCAA, 2023, because it gives excessive power to the Centre over land, which is not safe for the Mizo people,” Jongte said, recalling that when the party was in power, the Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution on August 22, 2023, opposing the law after consulting political parties, churches, and civil society organisations. ZORO and CJM echoed the concern, warning of agitations if the government failed to withdraw the resolution. ZORO vice president Ramdinliana Renthlei argued that the law would have severe implications for indigenous communities as it allows the central government to take up strategic linear projects of national importance within 100 kilometres of international borders without seeking forest clearance.

Renthlei stressed that the adoption of FCAA, 2023, would violate Article 371G of the Constitution, which protects the rights of the Mizo people by ensuring that no Act of Parliament relating to land ownership and transfer applies to Mizoram unless endorsed by the Assembly. He also claimed the law contravenes Article 244, which safeguards the authority of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), Union Territories, and states under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules.

NE organises campaign to promote apprenticeship in North East India

GUWAHATI

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has announced that the state government is working to set up a Women’s University to empower the women of the state, the Tripura CMO said.

He also announced that the present government has been trying to reduce the gap in Dearness Allowance (DA) between Central and state government employees.

According to a press release, CM Saha said this while addressing the 64th Teachers’ Day 2025 programme at Rabindra Satbarshiki Bhawan on Friday.

“You may go into other professions for the sake of money, but teachers have chosen teaching profession out of passion and responsibility. Taking charge of the future generation, you have joined this noble profession. Teachers are like the roots of a tree, while students are the branches, fruits, and flowers that receive nourishment from them. Because of teachers, the country and the nation progress, as the foundation is very important. Teachers build this foundation through sacrifice,”

Quest!

Simply rubbing the inside of a banana peel against your skin will brighten up and tone your skin, help reduce acne, and enhance your glow.



he said.

He also said that before entering the classroom, teachers always try to give something new to students.

“In the teaching profession, mental, physical, and emotional energy is necessary. Teachers are inventors who instill knowledge and values in students. Teachers make students’ lives shine. They are the backbone of a nation, and people de-

pend on them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has introduced the National Education Policy, which has been implemented in Tripura as well. New initiatives have also been introduced. Our government is working to bring in new reforms and recruit the best teachers through a transparent process,” the Chief Minister said.

As per the release, Manik Saha, who is also the Education Minister of the state,

said that the present government has opened three new government colleges. Under the Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana, female students have been provided with scooters to encourage them in pursuing higher education.

“We must work for the progress of girls. For that, we have waived fees for girl students in government colleges. Our state government is also working to set up a Women’s University to empower girls. Many universities have expressed their desire to open campuses in Tripura, as peace now prevails here. We are trying to develop the state into an education hub. MBBS seats have also been increased along with the establishment of Dental and Nursing colleges,” he said. He informed that earlier people had to join protest rallies for DA and DR.

“However, we have given 29 per cent, and now the total DA and DR stand at 32 per cent. In the coming days, we are trying to reduce the DA and DR gap with the Central government,” he added.

On this occasion, CM Saha handed over the Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Samman to Dr. Atul Debbarna, Eminent Educationist, the Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukharjee Samman to Samir Chakraborty, Eminent Social Worker, and the Maharani Tulsi Bai Samman to Pranati Debbarna, Headmistress of DC Para Hemanta Smriti Vidyalaya.

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Theaterisation inevitable, says Army Chief Dwivedi amid debate on military restructuring



NEW DELHI

Army Chief General Uday Shankar Dwivedi has asserted that theaterisation of the Indian Armed Forces will definitely happen even if it takes time.

"Since battle is fought by multiple agencies, theaterisation is the answer to deal with them," he said on Friday while interacting with media after launching a book, 'Operation Sindoor: The Untold Story of India's Deep Strikes Inside Pakistan', at Manekshaw Centre.

The process of theaterisation was initiated as the present system of the 17 independent commands — seven of the Army, seven of the Air Force and three of the Navy — spread out geographically was considered unsuitable for modern war. For an integrated approach, the government decided to go for the biggest post-Inde-

pendence military restructuring.

The Army Chief's remarks come nearly two weeks after Air Chief Marshal AP Singh argued against creating an entirely new structure at this stage. "There is no need for another layer of command. We can begin with joint planning mechanisms and see how they function," Singh said.

Asked about his stand on theaterisation, the Army Chief said, "Theaterisation will come, today or tomorrow. We just have to see how long it will take. We have to go through certain steps to bring in theaterisation, which includes jointness, integration. A lot of things need to be discussed over for that."

General Dwivedi said military restructuring is necessary. "When we fight a battle, an Army doesn't fight alone. We have Border

Security Force and Indo-Tibetan Border Police. Then there are the tri-services, defence cyber agencies, defence space agencies, and now we are talking about cognitive warfare agencies.

Besides, there are agencies such as the ISRO, Civil Defence, Civil Aviation, Railways, NCC, state and Central administrations... If one has to deal with so many agencies, theaterisation is the answer. Because unity of command is more important. You need one commander to achieve coordination in execution. Theaterisation is absolutely necessary," he asserted.

The Air Chief had stressed the importance of crafting an India-specific model rather than emulating foreign systems. "We can't simply copy countries like China or the US. We must assess our own requirements. We shouldn't feel pressured to act hastily," he said.

Biggest post-Independence military restructuring

The process of theaterisation was initiated as the present system of the 17 independent commands spread out geographically was considered unsuitable for modern war. For an integrated approach, the government decided to go for the biggest post-Independence military restructuring.

India's future growth depends on building a 'startup-linked economy': Minister



NEW DELHI

India's future growth will increasingly depend on building a 'startup-linked economy' anchored in strong industry partnerships, according to Union Minister Jitendra Singh.

According to Minister Singh, the government has created an enabling ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship, but sustaining startups requires

early and substantial engagement with industry.

He was speaking at the launch of 'Campus Tank' organised by Chandigarh University. "This was mainly for industry linkage. The launch of Chandigarh University Campus Tank will give a push to StartUp Startup-linked economy through industry linkage. We have prioritised the industry. This is startup funding," he noted.

He further added that we need to keep industry ahead to sustain.

"So, we pushed for industry-linked startup and a startup-linked economy. Startup-linked economy is also a good expression, he stressed, adding that while ideas and research emerge from campuses, their long-term success depends on structured partnerships with industry that bring in financial

backing, market exposure, and scale," the minister added.

The minister explained that India's startup story so far has been driven by energy and innovation, but the next phase must focus on building sustainable ventures that can endure in competitive markets.

He cited examples from sectors such as biotechnology, agriculture, and space, where government support and industry collaboration have already delivered measurable results. Industry participation, he said, not only strengthens start-ups but also ensures that investments are productive and generate livelihoods.

He emphasised that India's startup ecosystem is no longer limited to metros or technology hubs, with smaller towns and diverse sectors increasingly contributing to new ventures. This, he added, is a sign of an aspirational India ready to harness innovation for growth.

Minister Singh also pointed out India's rising global standing in innovation, noting that the country has moved up from rank 81 to 39 in the Global Innovation Index in less than a decade.

He highlighted that nearly 60% of India's registered startups are women-led, reflecting a shift where women are not just participants but leaders of major projects.

Citing examples, he said women scientists are steering national missions such as Aditya L1 and Chandrayaan-3, underscoring the inclusive character of India's scientific and start-up ecosystem. The Minister further underlined that India's progress is also visible in patent filings, where the majority of recent patents are being filed by resident Indian innovators, reversing earlier trends.

INTERNATIONAL

After largely ignoring suffering in Gaza, Israeli media start to report on Palestinian hardships

TEL AVIV:

The war in the Gaza Strip is starting to look different these days on the Israeli news. For most of the past two years, television stations in Israel have paid little attention to suffering in Gaza, giving viewers a steady stream of stories about Israeli heroism, the agony of hostages' families and the deaths of soldiers in combat. But that is changing. In recent months, some Israeli stations have begun to share graphic images of malnourished children and a few deeply reported stories about the difficulties of daily life for Palestinians.

This subtle shift comes as Israel faces unprecedented global outrage over the ongoing war, and it reflects deep divisions over whether the military offensive should be halted, though the growing protests and the media coverage have had little effect on Israel's policies.

"It's not just truly caring about the situation in Gaza, but also from an Israeli perspective, are we acting correctly in a way that serves the aims of this war?" said Eran Amsalem, a communications professor at Israel's Hebrew University.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has largely ignored a mass movement calling for an end to the war that is focused on returning the hostages. After the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas and two years of regional fighting, appeals on behalf of Palestinians have even less traction.

The first images from the war were of Hamas-led militants storming the border and marauding through Israeli army bases and farming communities. Footage out of Gaza showed people celebrating as hostages were paraded through the streets, bloodied and beaten.

Around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed, and 251 taken hostage.



Forty-eight remain in Gaza, around 20 of them believed to be alive, after most of the rest were returned in ceasefires or other deals.

It was the worst attack ever carried out on Israel's homefront and still dominates local news. In the early months, Israelis rallied around the flag after what some referred to as their 9/11, while international media quickly shifted focus to the invasion of Gaza.

"During most of the war, the Israeli media really reported very little on the suffering in Gaza or the hunger or destruction," said Raviv Drucker, a prominent Israeli news anchor. "If they did report it, it's only from the Israeli perspective," he explained, in terms of how effective it was in destroying Hamas.

Israel has barred international journalists from Gaza since the start of the war, outside of visits organized by the military. The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists says it's the deadliest conflict for reporters the group has ever documented, with at least 189 Palestinian journalists killed by Israeli fire.

"It's a strange war, because it's the 21st century, and everyone has a phone to broadcast," Drucker said.

"But there's no one on the ground, so you can't say, 'There's someone on the ground that I trust'"

Some newscasters who have highlighted the humanitarian catastrophe have faced backlash.

Yonit Levi, a prominent news anchor known for her cool demeanor, made an uncharacteristic comment during a report in July about international media coverage of the famine.

"Maybe it's time to understand that this is not a failure of public diplomacy, but a moral failure, and to start from there," she said. Levi, who declined to speak to The Associated Press, was called a "Hamas spokesperson" by an analyst on the pro-Netanyahu Channel 14, and a right-wing activist accused her of "spitting in the face of Israeli soldiers."

Commentators from right-wing outlets, including Channel 14, regularly cheer the killing of Palestinians and the demolition of their homes, saying there are no innocent civilians in Gaza and that the military should act with even greater force.

The offensive has killed over 64,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combat-

ants. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. Its figures are seen as reliable by UN agencies and many independent experts. Israel disputes the figures but has not provided its own.

Zvi Yehezkel, an Arab affairs correspondent for Israel's i24TV, welcomed the killing of five journalists in an Israeli strike on a hospital last week, accusing them — without evidence — of working with Hamas to disseminate fake news harmful to Israel. "Better late than never," he said.

The Israeli military has said none of the journalists, including Mariam Dagma, who worked for the AP and other publications, were suspected militants, and it denies targeting them.

Still, the coverage has slightly shifted in recent weeks, with some longer stories about Palestinians appearing in major outlets.

Israeli journalists have given more airtime to the starvation crisis fueled in part by Israel's 2 1/2 month ban on all humanitarian aid — including food and medicine — earlier this year.

Mainstream TV news programs now feature a few interviews with Palestinians in Gaza, though digitally altered to preserve the safety of those who speak to Israeli media despite pressure from Hamas. But those stories are still far outweighed by a focus on domestic issues.

Nir Hasson and his colleagues at Israel's left-leaning Haaretz newspaper have reported extensively on the Palestinians both before and during the war, in articles that are frequently critical of Israel's conduct. But it's an outlier in the current media landscape.

"After Oct. 7, there's no doubt that something was broken, and it became completely illegitimate to deal with the pain of the other side," Hasson said.

US trade adviser Peter Navarro lashes out at Elon Musk after India-Russia oil post flagged on X



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump's senior trade adviser, Peter Navarro, sparked controversy on Sunday after a post in which he accused India of profiteering from Russian oil imports was flagged and fact-checked by X.

In the post, Navarro alleged, "India buys Russia oil solely to profiteer. It didn't buy any before Russia invaded Ukraine. Indian govt spin machine moving high tilt. Stop killing Ukrainians. Stop taking American jobs." He also reiterated claims from previous posts: "FACTS: India highest tariffs costs U.S. jobs. India buys Russian oil purely to profit/Revenues feed Russia war machine. Ukrainians/Russians die. U.S. taxpayers shell out more. India can't handle truth/spins @washpo Leftist American fake news."

X users, through community notes, highlighted that India's purchases of Russian oil were legal and aimed at energy security rather than

mere profit.

One noted stated, "India's Russian oil purchases are for energy security, not just for profit, and don't violate sanctions. While India has some tariffs, the US has a trade surplus with it in services. The US also continues to import certain commodities from Russia which is hypocritical."

Another note emphasized that "Navarro's claims are hypocritical. India's legal, sovereign purchases of Russian oil for energy security do not violate international law."

Furious at being fact-checked, Navarro targeted Elon Musk, writing, "Wow. @elonmusk is letting propaganda into people's posts. That crap note below is just that. Crap."

The incident comes amid heightened US-India trade tensions following Trump's imposition of additional tariffs on Indian imports. The punitive measures, which took effect on August 27, raised the total US duties on Indian goods to 50 percent, with Navarro repeat-

edly citing India's Russian oil trade as justification.

Navarro's attacks on India have been consistent and often inflammatory. In previous posts, he referred to India as the "Maharaja of tariffs" and a "laundromat for the Kremlin", and described the Russia-Ukraine conflict as "Modi's war".

He also made a casteist remark, claiming, "Brahmins are profiteering at the expense of Indian people," which the Indian government promptly rejected. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We have seen some inaccurate statements made by him. We reject them."

Despite Navarro's continued criticism, US President Trump has sought to maintain cordial ties with India, calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi "a friend" and emphasising that India-US relations remain "special". Navarro, however, shows no signs of moderating his rhetoric, and his posts on X continue to stir diplomatic sensitivities.

MSFDS Extends Film Archiving to Digital and Video Films

CALLS ON FILMMAKERS TO PRESERVE THEIR WORKS



BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL: The Manipur State Film Development Society (MSFDS), which owns and manages the SN Chand Cine Archive & Museum (SNCCAM), has expanded its activities from celluloid preservation to the archiving of video and digital films. To safeguard Manipuri cinema's recent works. With the setting up of an online server to securely store digital films, MSFDS has appealed to all producers and directors of Manipuri cinema to come forward and deposit their works, both video and digital, with SNCCAM for preservation. "Every film is a part of our collective memory. We urge all film-

four years, it has emerged as a leader in film archiving with several milestones to its credit. Among its most celebrated projects is the restoration of Ishanou by Aribam Syam Sharma, which earned an Official Selection in the Cannes Classics Section at the 78th Cannes International Film Festival in 2023, elevating it to world-class status. Work is also underway on restoring Imagi Ningthem (1982) at L'Imagine Ritrovata in Bologna, Italy. This film first brought global recognition to Manipuri cinema by winning India's first Grand Prix at the Festival of Nantes. The first feature film by a Manipuri Director - Brojendragee Luhongba was also successfully preserved in 4K and released to the public.



Meanwhile, 132 fragile reels of Manipuri cinema (10 feature films and 5 Documentaries) are being digitised at the National Film Archives of India under the National Film Heritage Mission of the Hon'ble Prime Minister. MSFDS is also negotiating the acquisition of 27 Manipuri film negatives lying with the West Bengal Film Development Corporation. To enrich its collection, SNCCAM is acquiring 13 antique but functional film equipment pieces from

Hyderabad's Kala Film Editing Centre. However, the archive continues to function without permanent staff and is currently managed by volunteers on daily wages—a challenge the Society hopes to resolve soon. By embracing both celluloid and digital formats, MSFDS is determined to protect Manipuri cinema's legacy. The Society urges filmmakers to collaborate in this mission by entrusting their works to SNCCAM so they may endure for generations to come.



makers to safeguard their legacy by archiving their works," MSFDS Secretary Sunzu Bachaspatimayum said. Named after SN Chand, the state's first film director, SNCCAM was established in 2021 during the Golden Jubilee of Manipuri Cinema remains the only state-run film archive and museum in India, equipped with a Film Vault, Conservatory Lab, Exhibition Gallery, and Hall. Within



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JANUARY 10-12, 2025

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JAN'25

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Barak Festival 2025

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Media Conclave

Media Conclave (Writing, Editing, Photography, Videography, etc.) will be part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: "One for All, All for One".



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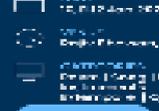
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Water Colour painting and Siva-Ram Campaign

DEC'24-JAN'25

Photography

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

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film festival

Award-Giving (Best movie) | Film from Manipur | Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W's | Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet



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