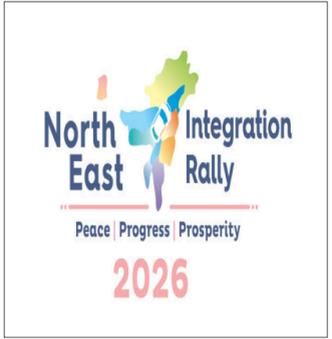




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PERSPECTIVE

Your next chapter will be better than you imagined.

NeNow Impact: AOD negligence exposed in Assam, repairs fast-tracked

DIGBOI

A major water leakage in the residential NS Area, located behind the Women's College Hostel in Assam, sparked anger among local residents on Monday morning.

They blamed the authorities for gross negligence, pointing to the long-standing nature of the issue.

Residents alleged that thousands of litres of water had been wasted over time, calling it a glaring example of mismanagement and waste of public resources, especially at a time when Indian Oil is enforcing strict cost-control measures.

After NorthEast Now highlighted the issue late Monday evening, authorities acted swiftly. The technical team began repair work at 8:30 am on Tuesday. The on-site supervisor assured residents that the problem would be fixed by late afternoon or evening.

While locals appreciated the quick response following the media report, they sharply criticized the prolonged inaction.

They emphasized that the leakage had persisted for too long without proper redressal and urged the Indian Oil AOD Digboi Refinery management to enforce stricter oversight to prevent such wasteful incidents in the future.

Amar Borgohain, General Manager (Human Resource) at AOD Digboi, engaged with the media shortly after the report surfaced and immediately instructed the technical team to address the issue, resulting in today's repair efforts.

WHO SAID WHAT



World Physiotherapy Day is an occasion to appreciate the efforts of all those associated with the practice of physiotherapy. It is commendable how they contribute to the wellbeing of people, especially the elderly, by ensuring mobility, dignity and a better quality of life.

~ Narendra Modi, PM

Pradyot Debbarma ready to face arrest, demands Centre implement Tiprasa accord

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha Chief Pradyot Kishore Debbarma on Tuesday declared that he was prepared to face arrest, accusing the Centre of deliberately delaying the implementation of the Tiprasa accord in Tripura, signed ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing a rally at Jantar Mantra, Debbarma said, "My silence does not mean I am afraid. If they want to unleash the ED or CBI on me, let them do so. I am ready to go to jail."

The rally marked the culmination of party activist David Mursingh's 2,500-km foot march from Tripura to Delhi, which aimed to demand constitutional guarantees for the indigenous Tiprasa community.

Recalling historical precedents, Debbarma said when the movement for the Autonomous District Council was at its peak, late Congress leader Ashok Bhattacharjee had opposed it, but then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi overruled him to establish the council.

"Today, the Union government is



in the same dilemma. It is time for the Home Minister to show the same resolve that Indira Gandhi once did," he said.

Debbarma alleged that political leaders were misleading the Centre by portraying the accord as politi-

cally damaging and urged the Union government to act without further delay.

Pledging to intensify his campaign, he announced plans for a village-to-village outreach, without party flags, using only the national flag. "If required, I will even touch the feet of CPI(M) leader Jitendra Chaudhury to appeal for unity," he said. Taking a swipe at the Left, he accused the CPI(M) of targeting his family during its rule, saying, "My father died, my properties were snatched. And today some people give slogans questioning who owns Tripura. They should remember that tenants cannot become owners forever."

Debbarma also lauded the public support for Mursingh during his march, drawing parallels with his own 2023 election campaign, which he claimed was fully funded by ordinary citizens. Leaders from various North Eastern parties, including NPP's James Sangma, as well as Tipra Motha MLAs and MDCs, joined the rally in solidarity.

Assam, Mizoram gear up for PM Modi's visit with key projects on agenda

GUWAHATI/AIZAWL

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma reviewed preparations for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's likely two-day visit to the state from September 13, assuring that Assam is ready to extend a grand welcome.

Sarma said he held a series of meetings with stakeholders to oversee arrangements ahead of the visit. The Prime Minister is expected to participate in the birth centenary celebrations of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika and release a commemorative 100 coin in honour of the music legend. On September 14, Modi is likely to travel to Mangaldoi in Darrang district to inaugurate the Guwahati Ring Road, a Brahmaputra bridge connecting Kuruwa and Narengi, and lay the foundation stone of the Mangaldoi Medical College Hospital. He is also expected to dedicate a 74,200-crore bio-ethanol plant at Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) in Golaghat district.

Meanwhile, in Mizoram, Home Minister K Sapdanga chaired a

high-level review meeting on preparations for Modi's visit to inaugurate the new Bairabi-Sairang railway line project on September 13.

Sapdanga said the project will mark a milestone for Mizoram by enhancing its connectivity with the rest of the country. Security measures at Lengpui Airport, Sairang railway station, Thunpui helipad and Aizawl's Lammual ground, where the main function will be held, have been tightened. Officials also reviewed traffic management, accommodation, reception protocols, and cultural programmes. Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena and senior officers from state departments and Northeast Frontier Railway attended the meeting.

The 51.38-km-long railway line will link Mizoram's capital Aizawl with Assam's Silchar, integrating the state into India's railway map.

The project features 48 tunnels, 55 major bridges and 87 minor bridges, including Bridge 144, touted to be the tallest pier railway bridge in the country at 104 metres.

Former BJP MLAs, entrepreneur join Congress in significant shift



IMPHAL

Two former BJP legislators and a prominent entrepreneur joined the Indian National Congress on September 8 in New Delhi, marking a significant political shift as the party works to rebuild its base in Manipur.

The induction ceremony took place at Indira Bhawan, with AICC in-charge for Manipur Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka welcoming the new members alongside Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee President K Meghachandra Singh.

The most notable addition is Y Surchandra Singh, a retired IAS officer who represented Kakching constituency for three consecutive terms from 2007 to 2017 before switching to BJP for the 2022 elections. His return to Congress brings decades of administrative experience and established voter connections in the constituency.

L Radhakishore Singh, former MLA from Oinam constituency, also made the switch after representing the seat in 2002 and 2017 before contesting on a BJP ticket in 2022. His political career spans over two decades across different party affiliations.

The third inductee, Uttamkumar Ningthoujam from Thanga constituency, brings a business background as founder and managing director of ELVEEGO Circuits Pvt. Ltd. His international experience spans electronics industries across India, Singapore, Japan, the United States, Europe and Asia Pacific regions.

The formal induction received approval from the All India Congress Committee, signaling the party's strategic focus on strengthening its organisational structure in the northeastern state. The ceremony was conducted at 5:30 pm on Monday.

Foothills Naga Group Raises Alarm on Militant Presence in Manipur

KOHIMA

The Foothills Naga Co-ordination Committee (FNCC) has submitted a strongly worded memorandum to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, opposing the proposed establishment of designated camps for Kuki militant groups in Kangpokpi district of Manipur.

The representation, routed through Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, has urged the Centre to immediately cancel the plan, warning of "serious and unavoidable consequences" if the proposal goes ahead.

According to the FNCC, the proposed Sinai Camp at Sijang under Saikul police station and the Thingsat Camp at Kharang Vaiphei under Kangchup police station fall squarely within Naga ancestral territories. The body said any attempt to alter the status of these areas would constitute a "grave violation" of traditional rights and constitutional protections of the Naga people.

The memorandum expressed outrage that a ground survey had already been conducted in the area "without the knowledge, consent, or consultation of rightful landowners." Terming the action unilateral, unconstitutional, and "deeply insulting," the FNCC al-



leged that the move betrays assurances earlier given by Manipur's Home Department that Naga sentiments would be respected while reviewing the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement.

The FNCC recalled that it had withdrawn earlier agitations in good faith after assurances by Manipur government officials, including Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Home) Ashok Kumar. It accused the government of backtracking on its commitments by now pushing ahead with a plan to provide "safe haven to Kuki militant groups on our land."

Declaring that Naga communities would not permit the setting up of any such camps, the FNCC warned that they would re-

sist "through all available means" and even mobilise volunteers to physically confront attempts at encroachment. "We reiterate, with utmost seriousness, that the Naga people are fully prepared to defend our ancestral territory with determination, unity, and unwavering resolve," the memorandum stated, holding the government responsible for any fallout.

The FNCC urged the Union Home Minister to intervene immediately and cancel all proposals related to the Kuki camps in question. It called on the Centre to uphold the constitutional and customary rights of indigenous Naga landowners and prevent an escalation of conflict in Manipur.

India Film Festival of Alberta Showcases Northeast's Cinematic Legacy

GUWAHATI

A History of India's North-East Cinema: Deconstructing the Stereotypes, a landmark work by film historian and filmmaker Parthajit Baruah, was released at the India Film Festival of Alberta (IFFA) in Canada. The event, held at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, was jointly inaugurated by acclaimed actor Adil Hussain and internationally recognised filmmaker Rima Das on September 6.

Published by Bloomsbury Academic, the book is a comprehensive examination of cinema across the eight states of Northeast India. While it traces the history of films in the region, it also addresses larger cultural and political questions that have shaped both the representation and reception of the North east within India and abroad.

At its core, the book explores the peripheral status



and identity crisis faced by the people of the region in mainland India, often constructed as 'foreigners' or 'outsiders'

because of their distinct physical features. It also examines how Bollywood has historically constructed and misrepre-

sented the Northeast in popular Hindi cinema, reinforcing stereotypes and reducing its cultural diversity to simplistic portrayals.

Adding to its scholarly weight, the book features a rare collection of film posters, newspaper advertisements, photographs, letters and documents many drawn from personal archives bringing alive both the public and private dimensions of film-making in the region.

Speaking at the release, Adil Hussain praised the book's depth, saying, "It covers the history of eight Northeastern states comprehensively," while stressing the importance of placing these narratives within India's broader cultural landscape. Rima Das highlighted the book's potential to reach international readers, noting that it will provide a clearer picture of the region's cinema and culture.

For Baruah, the occasion was deeply personal. "It is an emotional moment for me because my book has been inaugurated abroad, which is beyond my imagination. I am immensely grateful to the executive director of IFFA, Madhan Selvaraj," he said.

The Canadian launch follows an earlier release at the Guwahati Asian Film Festival, inaugurated by Sri Lankan filmmaker Prasanna Vithanage.

Baruah, regarded as one of the foremost scholars of Indian cinema from the Northeast, has earlier authored The Cinema of Adoor Gopalakrishnan (2016) and under taken research projects on Assamese cinema at the National Film Archive of India.

As a filmmaker, he has directed 13 documentaries and one feature film, The Nellie Story (2023), engaging with socio-political issues of Assam and the region.

Ex-CM Ibobi Singh slams Governor for 'partisan' meeting with BJP MLAs



IMPHAL

Former Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh on September 8 lashed out at Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla for what he termed a "shocking display of partisanship" after the latter held a meeting exclusively with BJP legislators at the Raj Bhavan.

The meeting, which took place on Sunday, was attended by BJP MLAs including former CM N. Biren Singh and lasted around 40 minutes. Several senior government officials were also present. However, opposition lawmakers were left out, prompting sharp criticism from the Congress legislature party leader.

"The selective invitation blatantly lowered the sanctity of the Raj Bhavan. It undermines demo-

cratic norms and sidelines the voices of elected representatives of the people," Ibobi Singh said. He argued that all MLAs should have been invited to discussions, particularly if the agenda concerned the state's ongoing crisis.

Questioning the purpose of the meeting, Singh asked whether it was connected to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expected visit to Manipur on September 13. "If the meeting was meant to address the violence, excluding opposition MLAs is an affront to the people of Manipur," he said.

The Prime Minister's proposed visit would be his first to the state since ethnic clashes erupted between Meiteis and Kukis in May 2023. Manipur has been under President's Rule since February, with the Governor overseeing the administration.

Ibobi Singh also took aim at the handling of the Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement with armed Kuki groups, alleging that the BJP-led Centre had turned a blind eye to repeated violations of its ground rules.



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'ISRAEL USES STARVATION AS A WEAPON IN GAZA'

The ruling elite are supporting those attacking the people of Gaza. "As a nation we should not cooperate with the oppressor regime that is allowing mass starvation as a weapon of war."

He is on a mission to ignite the minds of young Indians using the scientific approach of action and reaction, to make them understand the retaliation used by authoritarian regimes.

In a telephone interview with Neeta Kolhatkar, Professor Tripathi said the use of deliberate starvation of Palestinian children as a weapon of war has to be condemned by all human beings and has urged the Indian government to assert itself against it.

Professor Tripathi and his daughter Rakhi, an associate professor, chose August 15 this year to speak out against Israel's use of starvation as a weapon against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

They sat on a fast at the far end of Rajghat in New Delhi, which was not in anyone's way.

They commemorated Independence Day in a Gandhian way, but the Delhi police decided to have none of it and a 15-member team, led by an inspector, arrived to evict the father-daughter and questioned the senior professor, rudely asking them to wind up their 'demonstration'.

When the professor told the inspector the fast was for justice and spoke of the importance of fasting on Independence Day, the policemen ordered them to put away the posters.

Rakhi pointed out to the policemen that her father is a former IIT Delhi professor and 77 years old.

That is when the policemen toned down their aggression, but that interaction was captured by Rakhi on video and went viral. "We told them Gandhi is a symbol of truth and we were not there to fight with anybody. We were there to make people aware and were on a fast to get inspired by the strength that Gandhi had. How could they ask us what we were doing there? People come to Rajghat to get inspired by Gandhi," says Professor Tripathi. Professor Tripathi, why did you and your daughter choose Independence Day to go on a fast?

Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023 and what Hamas did was definitely a sin. But the retaliation by Israel has been far worse, it is a greater crime.

I asked the Government of India to appeal to Israel to stop this war. This is an opportunity for our sectarian elite to know the way (Israel Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu has sought revenge in the name of Hamas.

He is actually seeking revenge by killing Palestinian children and women. The bombardment by Israel has been consistent in which children, women and Israel has now started to use starvation as a weapon in their war and this has to stop immediately. I am a follower of Gandhi and my mission is to educate people and make them aware of communal harmony and non-violence.

I am against what is happening to the Palestinian people and I thought what better way than to sit on a fast on 15th August, which would be my homage to Gandhi.

We chose a spot at the far end of Rajghat, outside the gate, towards the road. We had placed five small banners under the bushes and trees. A police team rushed to the spot and couldn't tolerate we had written Gaza. I genuinely feel we are a part of human civilisation and do they not have any sensitivity? See how the ruling elite across the world are the same in exploiting and repressing. Similarly, the people in the world are the same, their hunger, starvation, pain is the same.

After they behaved in an authoritarian manner, my daughter questioned them, asking how they could humiliate a 77-year-old professor in such a threatening manner. They calmed down and they retreated.

What could have prompted them to order you to end your fast? Is it the fear of Israel? First, a policeman came and asked us to wind up the fast and we refused. We said look at the messages, they are peaceful. He left, but later an inspector came with a team of 15 security personnel. Their problem was the spot we had chosen, which was at Rajghat.

Earlier Rajghat was an autonomous body. However after 2014, PM Modi took it under his control and it now comes under the government, not just Rajghat, even the Gandhi Smriti.

The security has been handed over to the minister of defence. Now you tell me, what is there in Rajghat for anyone to steal? There was no need for all this drama.

We told them Gandhi is a symbol of truth and we were not there to fight with anybody. We were there to make people aware and were on a fast to get inspired by the strength that Gandhi had. How could they ask us what we were doing there? People come to Rajghat to get inspired by Gandhi.

He was a man of truth and non-violence and that is what we were doing. I will tell you what we had written on the banners, how does this provoke action against us?

Initially we had printed 4,000 leaflets but they fell short and we printed another 1,500. My aim was to spread awareness; there were no plans to sit on a fast. Then closer to the date, I felt what is the principle of independence? We need to be inclusive and sensitive to those people who are subjected to extreme violence and exploitation.

This also includes the war that has been going on in Gaza. There has been a war in Ukraine too, but they are getting support from NATO. This is a one-sided attack by Israel. Since this issue has been on my mind since 1982, I thought of sitting on a hunger fast for the Palestinians. Then my daughter suggested we should undertake a signature campaign with our petition which we will be sending to the United Nations. We discussed in our group and the events were planned. I wrote 1,500 pamphlets. My daughter put it out on various social media platforms. I reached out to 23,000 people by physically distributing pamphlets. My daughter through her messages reached out to a lot many people across the world. The Hamas attack has to be condemned but the retaliation undertaken by Israel is not against Hamas. They are killing innocents because Hamas is only two percent of the 98 percent population that is being wiped out.

They are killing children and women who are defenceless. Israel has the protection, weaponry and these people have no such.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Those who seek to achieve things should show no mercy.

- Kautilya

India-US ties: Flying through turbulence, but quiet engine of diplomacy offers hope



JAYANTH JACOB

Despite renewed tensions over its energy ties with Russia, India is working with the United States, often behind the scenes, to stabilise their relationship and navigate a tricky diplomatic patch.

Far from signalling rupture, both governments are actively negotiating the headwinds with a shared recognition that their strategic partnership is too important to stall.

While political statements certainly muddy the waters, the engine of diplomacy is running quietly but hopefully.

Senior officials from both sides have been engaged in a range of structured and informal talks aimed at reinforcing areas of convergence - from defence and technology to the Indo-Pacific - while carefully managing sensitive issues such as Russia.

"The tone may shift from time to time, but the direction is steady," said a source about the ongoing discussions, adding, "This is not a breakthrough, but a testing time." India's continued engagement with Russia, particularly through energy imports, remains a point of concern in Washington and in many European capitals, too. But Indian diplomats are actively working to explain the country's strategic compulsions while reinforcing its commitment to the global rules-based order, including through expanded participation in peace dialogues around Ukraine.

At the same time, India is making sure that the broader regional security agenda - especially through the Quad (India, US, Japan and Australia) remains unaffected. "In all ongoing conversations with Quad partners, India has made it clear that our cooperation in the Indo-Pacific must remain insulated from short-term friction," said another source. But getting an assurance on Donald Trump travelling to India remains a task in slow progress. The political backdrop in Washington adds complexity.

"I'll always be friends with Modi. He's a

great Prime Minister. But I just don't like what he's doing right now," Trump said at a recent press interaction, referring to India's continued purchases of Russian oil. "India and the United States have a very special relationship. There's nothing to worry about. We just have moments on occasion."

Prime Minister Modi responded in a measured tone: "Deeply appreciate and fully reciprocate President Trump's sentiments and positive assessment of our ties. India and the U.S. have a very positive and forward-looking Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership," he posted on X. The key diplomatic challenge now is not about the survival of the Indo-US relationship - it will endure - but about crafting a workable compromise that addresses Washington's concerns without compromising India's strategic autonomy.

At the same time, both sides are delicately navigating legacy issues, including how to sidestep the politically sensitive narrative around Trump's 'declared' role in facilitating the India-Pakistan ceasefire, which New Delhi has consistently downplayed. The task ahead is not just about finding policy alignment, but also about managing perceptions in a way that preserves mutual respect and strategic trust.

Trump officials have been increasingly vocal about the need for a tougher line. Kevin Hassett, a key economic adviser, said the US is "ready to respond economically" to countries continuing energy trade with Russia. Peter Navarro, a key Trump aide, said: "India can't ride both horses. You're either with the West or you're not."

But Indian policymakers are holding the line. "We do not see our relationship with Russia and the US as a zero-sum game," said an official. "We believe foreign policy is not about defiance - it's about diversification and long-term stability."

Indian officials are also exploring what diplomatic or economic gestures could help ease tensions. These may include exped-

ing high-value defence deals, expanding technology partnerships, or increasing political alignment on Indo-Pacific priorities. But any step forward will be carefully calibrated.

India's outreach is not limited to formal diplomacy. Jason Miller, a close Trump ally and now India's registered lobbyist in Washington, met with the former president this week. While the content of the meeting was not disclosed, the optics were carefully managed.

"Fantastic week in Washington with so many friends being in town, topped off of course by having the opportunity to stop in and see our President in action! Keep up the great work," Miller posted on X, sharing a photo with Trump.

Miller, whose lobbying firm signed a \$1.8 million annual contract with India in April, is seen as a key player in helping India manage political narratives in an increasingly polarized D.C.

Despite friction, the two sides have moved forward on key deliverables. The recent India-U.S. "2+2" inter-session dialogue reaffirmed alignment on core strategic goals. A joint statement from the U.S. State Department noted: "Officials advanced bilateral initiatives, discussed regional security developments, and reaffirmed their commitment to promoting a safer, stronger, and more prosperous Indo-Pacific region through the Quad."

One of the most concrete signs of forward momentum is the upcoming defence agreement for 113 F414 jet engines from General Electric, to be used in India's LCA Mk1A fighter jets. The defence deal could signal a maturing industrial partnership, a strategic pillar that both nations continue to prioritize even during diplomatic friction.

The private sector is watching developments closely. "Some of the companies are taking the hit, hoping the issues will be sorted," another source. "Finding an alternative to the US market is not easy. The same goes for US firms invested in

India's growth story."

Others see opportunity even in uncertainty. "We've seen bumps before. But the fundamentals are intact," said an executive at a major U.S. aerospace firm. "If anything, the strategic environment makes the India-U.S. partnership even more necessary."

Emerging from the current moment is a complex negotiation driven by realism, not rupture.

An official familiar with Indo-Pacific policy said, "This isn't about whether we remain partners. It's about how we keep the partnership healthy when pressure mounts."

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The Great Nicobar Island Project.

China, Pakistan, and Sonia Gandhi are against it. Indian Armed Forces, National Green Tribunal, and Narendra Modi are for it.

~ Anand Ranganathan, Author



BUILDING SELF-RELIANT INDIA THROUGH CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION

DR BUSHAN KUMAR

India's imports from the U.S. crossed 40 billion dollars in 2024-25, with key items including mineral fuels and oils, pearls and precious stones, machinery, electronics, medical instruments, agricultural goods like almonds and apples, and even aircraft components. While the U.S. moves to protect its domestic markets by imposing 50% tariffs on Indian products, India must look inward, not with retaliation, but with economic resilience. One of the most powerful tools at our disposal is not found in policy documents or trade negotiations but in the everyday choices of Indian consumers. Enter the idea of conscious consumption.

Rather than rejecting globalization, conscious consumption is about redefining what and why we buy. It urges individuals to purchase based on need, sustainability, and national interest, rather than prestige or imported labels. In the face of Trump-era protectionism, India's best counter-strategy may not be more exports but less dependence on non-essential imports from the U.S.

One of the biggest imports is mineral fuels and oils, worth nearly \$13 billion. These are essential because India cannot yet produce enough energy to meet its growing needs. However, instead of cutting these imports completely, we can reduce dependence by using energy wisely. This includes installing solar panels, using energy-efficient appliances, and avoiding wastage. Even small efforts at the household level can help lower national oil imports over time.

The next major category is pearls, precious stones, and jewellery, valued at over \$5 billion. Although India is a global leader in diamond cutting and jewellery-making, we still import high-value stones mainly to satisfy elite demand. This is a clear example of the demonstration effect, where items are purchased to show status rather than need. Choosing locally sourced gems, traditional Indian designs, or recycled jewellery can reduce such imports and support small artisans and rural craftsmen. India imports large amounts of electronics and machinery from the U.S. - worth around \$8 billion. While some of these are necessary for industries, a big share includes consumer gadgets like smartphones and laptops. Here too, the demonstration effect plays a role. Instead of always going for high-end American brands, people can opt for Indian-made devices or refurbished electronics. This helps build local manufacturing and supports initiatives like Make in India. India also imports over \$1 billion worth of almonds, walnuts, and apples. Yet India grows excellent alternatives. Choosing walnuts and apples from J&K or Himachal not only supports local farmers but also reduces food miles and foreign dependency.

It is not about eating less, but about eating wisely. Medical instruments and aircraft parts, worth more than two billion dollars and one and a half billion dollars respectively, are areas where imports may be necessary for now due to technological gaps. However, even here conscious national-level consumption matters. India has

begun promoting indigenous production of APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredients) and medical devices through the Production-Linked Incentive scheme. Choosing Indian-made equipment wherever possible strengthens this ecosystem and gradually reduces dependence.

The question, then, is not whether India should stop importing from the U.S. altogether. Trade between nations is natural and mutually beneficial. The issue is whether India should continue to import goods that are driven largely by status, aspiration, and branding, when equally good domestic alternatives exist. Conscious consumption directly addresses this by changing demand patterns at the individual level. Economists often argue that supply chains follow demand. If Indian consumers continue to demonstrate demand for expensive American nuts, luxury electronics, and imported jewellery, traders will keep importing them, and foreign exchange reserves will continue to flow outward. But if consumers, start making conscious choices in favor of Indian products without reducing their overall quality of life - importers will adjust. This is not only an economic adjustment; it is also a cultural shift. It redefines aspiration from "foreign equals superior" to "local equals pride, sustainability, and responsibility." The potential benefits of this shift are wide-ranging. Economically, reducing unnecessary imports eases pressure on India's trade deficit and foreign exchange reserves. Socially, it boosts domestic industries, from farmers to artisans to MSMEs.

Environmentally, local sourcing reduces carbon emissions associated with long-distance shipping. Psychologically, it fosters a culture of mindful consumption that moves beyond materialistic showmanship toward meaningful satisfaction.

Suppose a middle-class family in Jammu buys American almonds every month worth Rs 1,000. If instead they purchase Kashmiri walnuts or Himachali apricots, their nutrition remains intact, but the impact multiplies: the farmer in Kashmir gains income, transport distances are reduced, local ecosystems are supported, and a small reduction occurs in India's import bill. Multiply this across millions of households, and the impact becomes substantial. Similarly, every time a young professional opts for a durable Indian-made phone instead of chasing the latest American model, he or she not only saves money but also strengthens India's electronics sector. These small conscious acts, when aggregated, become national economic strategies. Of course, challenges exist. American products often come with powerful branding, aspirational value, and perceptions of higher quality. Overcoming these requires consumer awareness campaigns, quality improvements in domestic products, and policies that make local goods affordable and competitive. Conscious consumption is not anti-globalization. It does not call for boycotts or isolationism. Instead, it is about balance. India can and should import essential goods from America - advanced technology, critical medicines, defense equipment - but it should not import items merely to satisfy vanity.

Assam's Healthcare Faces Trust Crisis as Fake Doctors Nabbed in Two Districts

SILCHAR

Assam's healthcare sector has been rocked by a series of fake doctor scams.

Over the past few weeks, police have arrested several impostors, including quack dentists and individuals posing as specialists with forged medical credentials, in Cachar and Kokrajhar districts.

The latest crackdown began in Silchar, where police arrested two individuals allegedly practicing dentistry without valid qualifications.

The arrests came after Dr. Pradeep Kumar Das of the Indian Dental Association, Assam State Branch, lodged a complaint on September 2 about the rampant rise of unqualified dental practitioners in the region.

Acting swiftly, Cachar police

raided two clinics, Hazari Dental Clinic and Mazumdar Dental Clinic, located in Tarapur India Club and Masjid Complex areas, on Sunday.

During the operation, police apprehended Kamrul Islam Hazari (50) of Madhuband and Tinku Mazumdar (53) of Malugram, both found attending patients without valid medical credentials.

Cachar SSP Numal Mahatta said, "Based on a complaint, we launched a special operation and caught the two red-handed. One of them had been running a clinic for nearly 10 years. Strict action will be taken against them."

Police also seized a doctor's pad carrying Hazari's name and falsified educational details.

With these arrests, the number of impostors caught by the Cachar police has risen to four in recent



weeks. Earlier, on September 2, 23-year-old Mir Hussain Ahmed Barbhuiya from Katigorah was apprehended for impersonating a gynaecologist at Silchar Medical

College and Hospital (SMCH). Barbhuiya, who had been masquerading as a doctor since August 29, 2025, aroused suspicion among the staff in the Department of Gynaecology.

SMCH principal Dr. Bhaskar Gupta said, "On strong suspicion, we informed the police, following which he was apprehended." Police later revealed that Barbhuiya had purchased a stethoscope online and was attending to patients in the OPD.

Adding to the string of arrests, Cachar police had earlier nabbed 43-year-old Pulak Malakar of Badarpur for posing as a gynaecologist and obstetrician with a forged MBBS certificate and falsified documents.

Malakar was arrested following credible intelligence on September 1, and verification confirmed his

documents were fake. Police stated that the arrest has exposed a broader network of fraudulent practices in the medical sector.

Cachar SSP Mahatta had confirmed that investigations are being widened to trace possible associates and networks connected to the accused. He cautioned the public to remain vigilant and verify medical practitioners' credentials before seeking treatment.

In another case, police in Kokrajhar arrested Anisur Rahman, who had secured employment with the National Mobile Medical Unit (NMMU) under the National Health Mission using a forged MBBS degree.

Originally a homoeopathy graduate from Jorhat, Rahman allegedly altered his certificate to present himself as an MBBS doctor.

The fraud was exposed following a complaint on September 6, after which Rahman was arrested from Balajan Hospital's NMMU unit. He later admitted to fabricating his documents to obtain the government job.

A case has been registered at Kokrajhar police station (No. 216/25), and further investigations are underway to determine if more people are involved.

The series of arrests has heightened concerns about the proliferation of fake doctors in Assam, particularly in the Barak Valley.

Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, earlier during a visit to Silchar, had expressed alarm over the "Munna Bhai MBBS" phenomenon and urged citizens to promptly report any suspected impersonators in healthcare institutions.

Bordumsa Tense as Arrival of 'Miya' People Triggers Political, Social Debate

ITANAGAR

Even as debates over the 'Miya' issue continue across Assam, tensions flared in Bordumsa of Arunachal Pradesh after a group of suspected 'Miya' people reportedly arrived in a night super bus.

According to local organisations, the bus (registration number AS 01 FC 6427) carrying around 50 individuals was intercepted at the entry point and turned back. The group has since been kept near the Burhidhing Reserve Forest at Brahmanjan.

Locals suspect that these individuals are displaced persons from eviction drives conducted in different parts of Assam. Some reports claim they had been brought to work in brick kilns in Arunachal, though none of them could identify their exact destination or employer.

The individuals are believed to hail from the Morigaon and Nagaon districts of Assam. Their sudden arrival has triggered unease among indigenous residents of Bordumsa and Pengeri areas, who have called on the administration to verify the group's documents immediately. According to information, the movement of the group was allegedly led by one Babar from Morigaon and a person named Nagar from Arunachal Pradesh.

The incident has once again reignited concerns over settlement patterns and demographic changes in sensitive border areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

Tripura spends over Rs 834 crore on social pensions, unveils roadmap for 2047

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on September 8 announced that the state government has spent Rs 834.45 crore on social welfare pensions benefiting 3.90 lakh people in the 2024-25 financial year. Each beneficiary is receiving Rs 2,000 per month, double the amount earlier provided.

Speaking at a public programme, Saha said the state's focus remains on the welfare of all sections of society. "We have spent Rs 834.45 crore to provide different social welfare pensions to 3.90 lakh people in 2024-25, at the rate of Rs 2,000 per person," he said.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the government has set aside Rs 7,000 crore for capital expenditure in the current fiscal, stressing the need to push infrastructure development. "If we don't spend to develop infra-

structure, the state will not grow at the expected rate," Saha noted.

Outlining long-term plans, Saha said Tripura is working on a "developed Tripura by 2047" roadmap in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a developed India. "Tripura is the fifth state in the country and the first in the Northeast to have such a roadmap," he said.

The state government has also announced new measures for children, women, and weaker sections. As part of this, 11,130 mobile phones will be distributed to ICDS and Anganwadi workers to strengthen nutrition tracking through the 'poshan' app. At the same event, the Chief Minister inaugurated 19 development projects, including new Anganwadi centres, underscoring his government's push toward social welfare and infrastructure growth.

NSF backs Dimapur ILP reforms, rejects fee waiver and demands return to 'inner line pass'

DIMAPUR

The Inner Line Regulation Commission (ILRC) of the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) has welcomed the recent notification issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Dimapur revising Inner Line Pass (ILP) guidelines across Dimapur, Chümoukedima, and Niuland districts, while cautioning against fee waivers and urging restoration of the original legal terminology.

In a statement, the ILRC commended the district administration for introducing clearer categorisation of applicants, transparent fee structures, and stronger enforcement mechanisms in the ILP system. "Such

administrative diligence enhances transparency, strengthens accountability, and better protects the rights of indigenous citizens," the commission observed.

However, the ILRC underscored what it described as "critical issues" requiring urgent attention. Reiterating that the essence of the ILP system lies in stringent documentation of all non-indigenous individuals entering or residing in Nagaland, it firmly stated that no waiver of ILP fees—whether for short-term or long-term visitors—should be permitted. "Even short-term visitors must obtain and carry a valid ILP document, without exception," the body asserted.

Drawing comparisons with practices in other ILP-regulated states such as Mizoram, the NSF commission noted that while short-term passes of up to seven days may be issued without a guarantor, they still require payment of fees and issuance of the official document. It urged Nagaland to adopt a similarly uniform approach to preserve enforcement reliability.

The ILRC also stressed the need to align with the original intent of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) of 1873, which first introduced the concept of the "Inner Line Pass." It urged government offices and district administrations to use the historically ac-

curate term "Inner Line Pass" instead of "Inner Line Permit."

Reaffirming its commitment to working constructively with the state government and district authorities, the commission said the Inner Line system, backed by Article 371(A) of the Constitution, must be uniformly enforced to safeguard the land, identity, and heritage of the Naga people while adapting to contemporary challenges.

The NSF's ILRC concluded by pledging continued vigilance and collaboration to ensure that the regulatory mechanism remains robust and relevant in protecting the rights of indigenous communities.

SC seeks Centre's reply on PIL accusing Arunachal CM of granting contracts to kin

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on September 8 directed the Union government to file its reply within three weeks on a public interest litigation (PIL) that accuses Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu of awarding government contracts to his close relatives.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta noted that while the state government had already filed its affidavit in line with the apex court's March 18 order, the Centre had failed to do so. The bench rejected technical objections raised by the Centre's counsel and said, "This court had given you a direction. File the affidavit. Don't tell us all these technicalities."

The PIL, filed by NGOs Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary



Arunachal Senaa through advocate Prashant Bhushan, alleged that "the state of Arunachal Pradesh is being run by the chief minister like his private limited company," claiming all major contracts were awarded to firms linked to his family.



Bhushan referred to the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report and pressed that the Centre's affidavit should respond not only to the petition but also to the state's affidavit and the CAG's findings. The plea has named Khandu,

his late father Dorjee Khandu's second wife Rinchin Drema, and nephew Tsering Tashi among the respondents. It specifically alleged that Drema's firm, Brand Eagles, received a large number of government contracts in violation of conflict-of-interest norms.

While Arunachal Pradesh's counsel dismissed the allegations as "sponsored litigation" and claimed the petitioners were "digging out skeletons from the cupboard when none exists," the court observed that the matter required detailed examination.

The bench granted the Union of India three weeks to file its affidavit, noting that the CAG has already submitted its report, and allowed the petitioners to respond to the state's affidavit. The case will be heard after three weeks.

Mizoram: BJP stages protest in Chakma Council area over power bill hike, poor roads

AIZAWL

The Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) area unit of the BJP on Monday staged a massive protest rally at the CADC headquarters in Mizoram's Chawngte town to voice public grievances over the alleged sudden hike in power bills and the deteriorating condition of roads within Chawngte town and from Lungrang South to Chawngte, the town's only lifeline, a party leader said.

Hundreds of BJP workers and local residents enthusiastically participated in the rally, expressing their anger against the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government, led by Chief Minister Lalduhoma, for its alleged anti-people policies, said Chakma district BJP unit president Durjya Dhan Chakma. Addressing the rally, Durjya Dhan Chakma strongly criticized the state government, stating that the so-called Mipui Sawrkar (People's Government) had turned out to be the exact opposite of what it promised.

"Instead of serving the people, the ZPM government is looting them by imposing abnormally high electricity bills ranging from Rs 526 to Rs 47,404.

Moreover, under this government, the price of ration has been arbitrarily raised from Rs 15 to Rs 30, further imposing a heavy economic burden on the poor," Chak-

ma said.

He added that the prices of essential commodities in Kama-lanagar and Chawngte town have skyrocketed due to the worsening road conditions.

He further alleged that the government's negligence has caused untold suffering to the people and demanded immediate corrective action.

State BJP president Molin Kumar Chakma, who also addressed the gathering, launched a scathing attack on the ZPM leadership at both the state and district levels.

"The ZPM leaders and MDCs have failed miserably. Instead of addressing the hardships faced by the people, they are busy transferring SSA teachers from one district to another and posting pictures of themselves in restaurants or smoking expensive cigarettes on social media. This shows their insensitivity and arrogance," Molin alleged.

He urged the Governor to dissolve the CADC, which is currently under Governor's Rule, and hold fresh council elections so that the people can elect visionary and responsible leaders who genuinely care about public welfare.

The protesters also submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister, urging his immediate intervention to address the alleged power bill hikes and the poor condition of roads.

Regulatory non-compliance jewelry sector of Karbi Anglong

SUSHANTA ROY

DIPHU: The jewelry business in Karbi Anglong, Assam, once seen as a beacon of cultural and economic opportunity, is now grappling with severe challenges posed by rampant gold smuggling, widespread non-compliance with hallmarking regulations, and the looming threat of heavy penalties.

As the region under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) struggles to balance tradition with modernity, local jewelers and authorities warn that these issues could stifle growth and erode consumer trust in an industry vital to the local economy.

Karbi Anglong has become a notorious hotspot for gold smuggling, with multiple high-profile seizures in the last few years highlighting the scale of illegal activities that directly impact the legitimate jewelry sector.

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lem's persistence, Karbi Anglong Police recently auctioned 8.133 kg of seized gold in February 2025, generating Rs. 6.63 crore for the state exchequer from a single case dating back to 2021.

This haul, linked to Dillai Police Station Case No. 61/21, underscores how smuggled gold floods the market, undercutting prices for ethical jewelers and exposing businesses to legal risks if they inadvertently source tainted materials.

Earlier incidents paint an even grimmer picture. In September 2022, a joint operation by Assam Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) intercepted a passenger bus in Karbi Anglong, seizing 2.323 kg of gold and arresting three individuals.

Just a year prior, in December 2021, police recovered 49 gold bars weighing 8 kg valued at over Rs. 4 crore from a vehicle at Dilai Tiniali, leading to the arrest of two suspects.

These operations, while successful in enforcement, reveal a disturbing pattern: smugglers are exploiting the district's porous borders and remote terrain to

transport illicit gold, often hidden in vehicles or disguised as legitimate cargo.

Authorities emphasize that businesses must maintain impeccable documentation to avoid entanglement in smuggling probes, but the fear of raids and seizures is palpable. Non-compliance could result in severe penalties, including fines up to five times the value of the contraband or imprisonment.

Compounding the smuggling woes is the dismal adherence to mandatory gold hallmarking rules, introduced nationwide on June 16, 2021, to ensure purity and protect consumers. In Assam, only 34% of jewelry shops were registered with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) as of 2021, with a shocking zero registrations in West Karbi Anglong, a figure those experts say has improved marginally but remains alarmingly low. This non-compliance leaves consumers vulnerable to adulterated gold, eroding faith in local jewelers and inviting stricter government crackdowns.

Jewelers with annual turnovers up to ₹40 lakh are exempt from mandatory hallmarking but

are urged to register voluntarily. However, many small-scale operators in Karbi Anglong cite high costs and bureaucratic hurdles as barriers.

The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, governing this Sixth Schedule autonomous district, mandates additional permissions and local taxes for businesses, yet enforcement remains lax.

Combined with requirements like GST registration for turnovers over ₹40 lakh, trade licenses from district authorities, and adherence to the Assam Shops and Establishments Act, the regulatory burden is overwhelming for many. PAN and TAN compliances add to the paperwork, deterring new entrants and stunting growth. Intensified awareness drives by BIS and KAAC, joint task forces with neighboring districts to curb smuggling, and incentives for voluntary compliance.

The Taxation department of KAAC is the competent authority along with line departments to curb the nexus between gold smugglers and jewelry shops who are flouting mandatory regulatory compliances.

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ED questions BJP worker who filed petition in HC questioning Rahul Gandhi's citizenship



NEW DELHI

A Karnataka BJP worker, who had petitioned the Allahabad High Court claiming that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is a British citizen, deposed before the Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday where his statement was recorded, official sources said.

S Vignesh Shishir told reporters before entering the office of the federal probe agency in central Delhi that he has been summoned under section 37 of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) with regard to the said investigation.

Shishir was asked to submit certain documents and "evidence" he had claimed

to have been possessing.

He has been asked certain questions and his statement has been recorded under the FEMA, agency sources said.

Under FEMA, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) probes complaints related to foreign exchange law violations by individuals and companies.

"I have some concrete evidence, information, documents, records and videos..." Shishir told reporters. The Congress party declined to comment on the issue.

In a PIL filed before the Allahabad High Court, Shishir had claimed that he has documents and some emails of the British government which prove Gandhi,

the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, is a British citizen, and due to that he is ineligible to contest elections in India.

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on August 30 had ordered round-the-clock security for Shishir to be provided by the Union government.

A bench of Justices Sangeeta Chandra and B R Singh passed the order on a writ petition filed in this regard by the BJP worker.

In its interim order, the bench said, "We are prima facie satisfied that the matter required consideration as the petitioner has been pursuing his cases against a very powerful individual and is facing constant threats and has to appear before the investigating officer at police station Kotwali, Raebareilly district, in pursuance of notice issued to him."

Shishir had submitted to the HC that on his complaint, moved in June 2024, a probe was underway by the CBI and he claimed that he had appeared before the agency in Delhi on multiple occasions, furnishing evidence of Gandhi's alleged British citizenship.

The matter has been posted for October 9 by the high court. During a hearing in this case sometime back, the central government had informed the court that the government of India had written to the UK government seeking details about Gandhi's alleged British citizenship.

VP polls underway: PM Modi casts first vote in straight NDA-Oppn face-off



NEW DELHI

Voting began for the vice presidential poll on Tuesday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi the first to cast his vote.

The poll is witnessing a direct contest between ruling NDA nominee C P Radhakrishnan and joint opposition candidate B Sudershan Reddy, with the BJP-led alliance having a clear edge in the poll necessitated due to the sudden resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Among the early voters were Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Arjun Ram Meghwal and Kiren Rijju. Rajya Sabha deputy chairperson Harivansh, BJP MP Kangana Ranaut and SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav were among others who came to cast their vote.

Members of both Houses of Parliament will cast their votes in the Parliament House between 10 am and 5 pm on Tuesday. Counting votes will begin at 6 pm, and the results will be announced late

evening.

Members of Parliament are not bound by party whips to vote in the vice presidential election, which takes place under a secret ballot system.

The electoral college for the vice presidential election comprises a total of 788 members - 245 from the Rajya Sabha and 543 from the Lok Sabha. The 12 nominated members of the Rajya Sabha are also eligible to vote in the election.

The present strength of the

Electoral College is 781 as six seats are vacant in the Rajya Sabha and one in the Lok Sabha. This puts the majority mark at 391. The NDA has 425 MPs, while the opposition camp has the backing of 324.

Meanwhile, three parties have decided to abstain from the poll. The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) of Odisha, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) of Punjab, and the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) of Telangana have chosen to stay away and will not align with any group.

INTERNATIONAL

PM Oli calls all-party meet as Gen Z push for his exit, action against corruption

KATHMANDU

Student-led anti-government protests in Nepal entered a second day on Tuesday, defying restrictions on public gatherings as demonstrators demanded Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's resignation and vandalised homes of several political leaders.

Meanwhile, twenty one MPs of the Rashtriya Swatantra Party of Nepal resigned on Tuesday amid the violent protests.

The protesters, under the banner of Gen Z, shouted slogans such as "KP Chor, Desh Chhod" (KP thief, leave the country) and "Take Action Against Corrupt Leaders" in multiple parts of the capital.

The agitators torched the residence of Prime Minister Oli at Balkot in Bhaktapur. Oli is currently at the Prime Minister's residence at Balwatar.

Protesters also torched the residence of former home minister Ramesh Lekhak at Naikap in Kathmandu, just a day after he resigned from his post following the police's use of force on youths protesting the government ban on social media sites left 19 people dead and over 300 others injured on Monday. Demonstrators are demanding Oli's resignation, saying the Home Minister's exit is not sufficient.

Meanwhile, PM Oli on Tuesday called an all-party meeting to discuss the country's fast-deteriorating political situation. He issued a statement announcing the meeting for 6 pm, though the venue was not specified.

He said dialogue was the way to resolve the crisis. "Violence is not the way. We need to find a peaceful way out through dialogue," Oli said.

Meanwhile, major online news portals have strongly criticised Monday's police crackdown in Kathmandu, describing it as one of the deadliest days in Nepal's recent history.

Popular news portal Ukerana.com described September 8 as "a black day," when the most number of demonstrators were killed in a single day in the history of Nepal. The media outlet demanded Oli's resignation.

Another news portal, Ratopati, accused the government of indiscriminately opening fire on protesting youths



and students, describing the "cowardly action" as "highly deplorable."

The portal noted that the agitation, spearheaded by young Nepalis, was not politically motivated but fuelled by frustration over corruption, nepotism, unemployment and growing social disorder.

On Tuesday protests escalated despite curfew orders in Kathmandu and other parts of the country. Demonstrations were reported from Kalanki, Kalimati, Tahachal, and Baneshwor in Kathmandu, as well as Chyasal, Chapagau, and Thecho areas of Lalitpur district.

Protesters, mostly students, chanted slogans such as "Don't kill students", defying the restrictions on public gatherings.

In Kalanki, demonstrators burnt tyres to block roads from the early hours of the morning, according to eyewitness accounts. According to media reports, four people were injured as police opened fire at the demonstrators. The agitating youths also pelted stones at the residence of Communication Minister Prithvi Subba Gurung in Sunakothi at Lalitpur district, eye witnesses said.

Gurung had ordered a ban on the social media sites.

The protesters vandalised the residence of former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' at Khumaltar in Lalitpur. They also vandalised former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba's house at Budhanilkantha in Kathmandu.

The Gen Z group, which has been

campaigning against corruption for some time, has used social media platforms like Reddit and Instagram to expose the extravagant lifestyles of the children of ministers and other influential figures.

They have posted videos and images, questioning the sources of wealth that fund such opulence, purportedly derived from corrupt practices.

The ban of social media sites, it said, was an attempt to suppress freedom of speech. The Nepalese government had ordered the ban of 26 social media sites, including Facebook and X, over their failure to register with the government. However, in a late-night development on Monday, the government announced the restoration of access to social media platforms, in an apparent bid to ease public anger.

The protesters main demands include the resignation of Prime Minister Oli, the formation of a national government, and strict action against corrupt politicians. Numerous posts on social media have called for Oli's resignation and the establishment of a new government.

Among their other demands are guaranteed freedom of expression, and the introduction of a retirement age for those holding political office, according to Gen Z activists.

Meanwhile, Nepali Congress general secretary Gagan Thapa has called for the immediate resignation of PM Oli. "PM Oli should immediately resign, taking responsibility for the situation,"

he wrote on social media.

Senior Nepali Congress leaders Bimalendra Nidhi and Arjun Narsingh Kesi have suggested that the party withdraw all its ministers from the Oli-led government, form a government, and initiate dialogue with the agitating Gen Z group.

Nidhi said as the largest party in Parliament, Nepali Congress must safeguard democracy and the Constitution during these critical times.

"Nepali Congress should withdraw support to the Oli-led government and initiate the process of forming a national government," he said.

Kesi also said that Nepali Congress should withdraw from the government and initiate the process of forming an all-party government. He also demanded the creation of a powerful anti-corruption body to investigate the assets of those in power and take decisive action, alongside initiating dialogue with the Gen Z group.

Meanwhile, two Nepali Congress ministers resigned from the government.

Agriculture Minister Ramnath Adhikari and Health and Population Minister Pradip Poudel stepped down, citing the government's harsh response to student protests on Monday.

However, some ministers remain in the Oli government.

Nineteen youths, including a 12-year-old student, were killed and more than 300 were injured on Monday as police resorted to firing, baton charges, and tear gas to disperse demonstrators opposing widespread corruption and the social media ban. Meanwhile, the 4th Kathmandu-Kalinga Literary Festival was postponed in view of the prevailing situation in the Nepalese capital, its organisers announced on Tuesday. The event was scheduled to take place on September 13 and 14 in Kathmandu, the organisers said. Over 60 Indian and 200 Nepali writers, including Banu Mushtaq, Deepa Bhashti and Basudev Tripathi, were supposed to join the festival, they said.

Kalinga Literary Festival director Rashmi Ranjan Parida said the event will now be held on February 14 and 15, 2026.

Pakistan, China agree to form consortium to finance USD 7 billion railway project under CPEC



ISLAMABAD

Pakistan and China have agreed to form a consortium of bilateral and multilateral partners to finance a USD 7 billion railway project, along with a four-year action plan (2025-29) for the second phase of the CPEC initiative.

Pakistan and China recently launched the second phase of the controversial China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

Speaking at a news conference, Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China, the two sides had agreed to constitute a consortium of financiers, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure

Investment Bank (AIIB), China and Pakistan, for the 1,700-km Karachi-Peshawar railway line. The Dawn newspaper reported on Tuesday.

He said China had assured financing not only for the rail project but also for the Karakoram Highway.

Negotiations with multiple financiers would be concluded within a month, Iqbal said. The minister said Pakistan and China have agreed to develop and implement a four-year action plan to build, between 2025 and 2029, a "China-Pakistan community with a shared future" with stronger political trust, closer trade ties, deeper security cooperation and stronger people-to-people links.

The plan includes

aligning the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with Pakistan's 5Es Framework, implementing both large-scale landmark projects and "small and beautiful" livelihood projects, while ensuring both high-quality development and robust security. The Dawn reported. India opposes the CPEC, which will link Xinjiang in China and the Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan, as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The CPEC is the flagship project of China's ambitious multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The BRI is seen as an attempt by Beijing to further its influence abroad with infrastructure projects funded by Chinese investments all over the world.

ASSAM'S SILENT BATTLE: Protecting Society While Confronting Radicalisation

Assam, with its emerald valleys, ancient rivers, and centuries-old cultural syncretism, has always stood at the confluence of civilizations. It is one of India's most culturally vibrant and strategically sensitive frontiers — a land where multiple languages, ethnicities, and faiths coexist in a delicate yet enduring equilibrium. But beneath this harmony, a silent, high-stakes battle is unfolding. Security agencies, community leaders, and policymakers are grappling with a threat that is both invisible and insidious: the creeping influence of radical Islamist networks seeking to exploit Assam's vulnerabilities, erode social cohesion, and destabilise not just the state, but the entire Northeast corridor of India.

The story of this battle is not simply about terrorism or policing. It is about the test of a society — how a diverse, democratic state can confront forces that thrive on division without itself becoming divided. It is about maintaining trust between communities while being uncompromising with those who seek to weaponise faith for political violence. It is, at its core, about defending the soul of Assam without tearing its social fabric.

A Geography of Opportunity — for Trade, Migration, and Infiltration

To understand why Assam is so vulnerable to radicalisation, one must begin with geography. The state shares a 263-km-long international border with Bangladesh — much of it riverine, porous, and difficult to monitor in its entirety. For decades, this border has facilitated not just legal trade and cultural exchange, but also illegal migration, smuggling, and infiltration. In regions where livelihoods are precarious and state presence thin, cross-border networks — some criminal, others ideological — find space to operate.

This reality has historically intersected with demographic change. Waves of migration, both during and after Partition, altered the population balance of several districts, sowing anxieties that periodically erupted in politics and protest. For decades, the dominant security concern in Assam revolved around ethno-nationalist insurgencies — movements like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) or the Naga insurgency spilling over from neighbouring states. These were armed rebellions rooted in questions of autonomy, identity, and resource control — not religious ideology.

But over the past decade, a different kind of threat has surfaced. Intelligence agencies have traced the footprints of radical Islamist groups — some with origins in Bangladesh, others with global jihadist affiliations — attempting to plant ideological seeds in vulnerable pockets of Assam. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a banned terrorist organisation, has been at the centre of multiple investigations. Modules linked to JMB have been dismantled in districts like Barpeta, Dhubri, Goalpara, and Chirang. Investigations have unearthed madrasas misused as indoctrination hubs, safe houses offering shelter to fugitives, and recruitment pipelines targeting unemployed or alienated youth.

What makes this challenge so dangerous is its quiet, subterranean nature. Unlike visible insurgencies, radicalisation often grows silently — in conversations, in clandestine meetings, in encrypted chatrooms — until it manifests as violence or as an ideological ecosystem resistant to democratic values.

Faith Is Not the Enemy — Imported Ideologies Are

It would be both unjust and counter-productive to frame this challenge as a clash between religions. The overwhelming majority of Muslims in Assam are deeply woven into the state's civilisational fabric. From the riverine culture of the Brahmaputra valley to the folk traditions of Bihu, from the poetry of Srimanta Sankaradeva to the syncretic shrines that dot its landscape, Assamese Muslims — whether indigenous or long-settled migrants — have historically lived in cultural symbiosis with their Hindu, Christian, and tribal neighbours.

The problem is not Islam. It is radical Islamism — often imported from beyond India's borders — which thrives on distortion, grievance-manufacturing, and the deliberate severing of



cultural roots. These ideologies exploit vulnerabilities: poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and feelings of political marginalisation. They feed on narratives of victimhood, painting local grievances in the colours of global jihad, turning young men away from their inherited traditions and towards an alien, violent project.

This is a phenomenon not unique to Assam. Across South Asia and the world, radical networks use similar strategies: infiltrating educational institutions, providing selective social services to build dependency, and gradually reshaping religious discourse to delegitimise pluralism. The danger lies in their patience. They do not need mass recruitment; a few indoctrinated individuals willing to act violently can destabilise entire regions, polarise societies, and provoke overreactions that serve the radicals' ultimate goal — to fracture trust between communities.

Policing the Invisible: The Security Response

Assam's law enforcement and intelligence apparatus have taken significant steps to confront this threat. Over the past few years, multiple sleeper cells have been busted before they could execute attacks. Operatives linked to JMB and other outfits have been arrested in coordinated operations involving state police, the National Investigation Agency (NIA), and central intelligence services.

One notable area of focus has been madrasa reform. Authorities have identified and shut down madrasas operating without proper authorisation, particularly those receiving suspicious foreign funding or hosting unvetted clerics. This is a delicate task — as religious education is a legitimate and constitutionally protected activity — but the state has sought to distinguish between lawful institutions and those exploited for radical indoctrination. In some cases, community cooperation has been crucial, with local Muslim leaders themselves alerting police to suspicious individuals or activities.

Border vigilance has also intensified. Surveillance infrastructure is being strengthened, human intelligence networks expanded, and cross-border intelligence sharing with Bangladesh has become more institutionalised. Given that Bangladesh itself has cracked down on JMB and other extremist networks, this bilateral cooperation is vital. Radical outfits often exploit jurisdictional gaps, using one side of the border as a sanctuary while operating in another. A seamless intelligence pipeline is essential to cut off these escape routes.

Yet, security measures alone cannot extinguish the ideological fire. Arrests and closures may disrupt operational networks, but unless the underlying social conditions that make recruitment

possible are addressed, new operatives can eventually take their place.

The Second Front: Education, Inclusion, and Cultural Confidence

The real battle, therefore, is socio-cultural. Counter-radicalisation is not just a matter of surveillance — it is a matter of social engineering, of strengthening the immune system of a diverse society so that extremist narratives find no fertile ground.

This involves several overlapping strategies:

- 1. Educational Empowerment:** Poorly regulated religious education creates a vacuum that radical preachers can exploit. Introducing modern curricula, promoting critical thinking, and providing scholarships for higher education — especially in vulnerable districts — can help integrate youth into the mainstream economy and cultural life.
- 2. Economic Development:** Unemployment and poverty are not automatic triggers of radicalisation, but they increase susceptibility. Industrial corridors, skill development programmes, and rural employment initiatives can provide alternatives to those otherwise targeted by radical recruiters.
- 3. Community Leadership:** Religious and community leaders play a crucial role in shaping social attitudes. Empowering moderate clerics, supporting interfaith dialogues, and celebrating shared cultural heritage can act as powerful antidotes to extremist rhetoric.
- 4. Digital Countermeasures:** In today's world, radicalisation is often online-first. Social media, encrypted messaging apps, and foreign propaganda networks target isolated individuals. Digital literacy campaigns, online counter-narratives, and rapid response mechanisms to detect extremist content are now as important as physical border fencing.
- 5. Narrative Sovereignty:** The Assamese identity must be framed not in opposition to any faith or group, but in inclusive confidence. History demonstrates that Assam has repeatedly absorbed migrants, influences, and even conflicts — yet its cultural essence has endured. This confidence is Assam's shield. It must remind every resident — whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, tribal, or otherwise — that they belong, and that imported ideologies aiming to sever that belonging are the real outsiders.

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Business establishments, educational institutions, individual service providers etc. can enlist themselves or advertise their products or services at the most reasonable cost in InfoCom Diary. Send your details to InfoComSolutions@krctimes.com Submit Here: <https://bit.ly/InfoComDiaryForm>

STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP

Students can apply for a three-months internship with KRC Foundation. During the internship the student can get an opportunity to work on a live project. On successful completion the student is awarded a certificate. Apply to 5E for Success: 5eforsuccess@gmail.com For Details Visit: <https://bit.ly/krctimesinternship> or www.krctimes.com/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship

NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

Participate in NE India Writing Star Contest and get your writings published. Eligibility: From Class VI onwards. Each participant receives a digital participation certificate. Send articles at: info@krctimes.com For Details Visit: <https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest> www.krctimes.com/campaigns-csr/ne-india-writing-star-contest

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BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM



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



11 JAN
Adventure Sports
 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.



11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations. Includes KOCs and D groups and can register for free. Registration: 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM, and program will be started. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



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



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Awards, Workshops, and the Film, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome your news anchors, journalists, media & corporate PR, photographers, print, bloggers, bloggers.



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Awards, Workshops, and the Film, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome your news anchors, journalists, media & corporate PR, photographers, print, bloggers, bloggers.

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Barak Festival 2025



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competitive and certification. River Barak, Climate Change.



11 JAN
5E For Success Conclave
 The 4th 5E For Success Conclave is going to be held on the theme: 'From School to Campus to Corporate'. Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors. Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & Colleges. Extension: School, Musical Speaking (College). In an online event, various students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.



11 JAN
Barak Festival: Peace Progress & Prosperity
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations. Includes KOCs and D groups and can register for free. Registration: 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM, and program will be started. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.

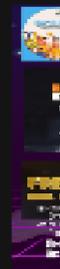
10-12 JAN
Science Studio
 Get a glimpse of Science to its new heights. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents. Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.

DEC-24-JAN'25
Photography
 Online Photography Contest: River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture. Real-Time Photography Contest of 'Barak Festival 2025'.

10-12 JAN
E-Sports
 Full-Blown Demos | CASH PRIZES | Trophy.

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Barak Festival 2025



10-12 JAN
E-Sports
 Full-Blown Demos | CASH PRIZES | Trophy.



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #NoLike Campaign Book Bank at Silchar | online | offline.



10-12 JAN
Book Club
 Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books.



10-12 JAN
Painting Carnival
 Water Color based and Draw-Paint Campaign.

10 JAN
Band Night
 Musical Night | 10 JAN

5E SUCCESS

STUDENT INTERNSHIP

Discover valuable experience and learn more about the Industry.

openings

- Outreach Executive
- Event Management
- Programme Coordinator



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