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PERSPECTIVE

13 years of tireless service. ASHA worker Meidimili (51) walked 8 hours across hills to reach Atzangkhuvo and Atzangkhuvo villages for the Intensified Pulse Polio Immunization (IPPI) Programme — delivering essential health services and medicines to ensure no one is left behind. A salute to her dedication and spirit of service!
~ Raj Bhavan, Manipur

Rahul Gandhi to visit Guwahati to pay tribute to Zubeen Garg

NEW DELHI



Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, will visit Guwahati on October 17 to pay respects to renowned singer Zubeen Garg, a Congress party spokesperson confirmed on

Wednesday. Garg, 52, passed away on September 19 while swimming in Singapore. The Assam government has set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the circumstances surrounding his death.

"Gandhi will arrive in Guwahati to honour Assam's beloved artist and the voice of the people, Zubeen Garg," said Bedabrata Bora, Chairperson of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee's Media Cell.

During his visit, Gandhi is expected to go to Sonapur, where Garg's last rites were performed, and later visit the singer's home to express condolences to his family.

WHO SAID WHAT



Heartiest congratulations to our indomitable Manipur Women's Football Team on winning the 30th Senior Women's National Football Championship 2025, the Rajmata Jijabai Trophy. With an unbeaten run and a historic clean sheet, the team's strong performance and unity stood out, with Linda Kom Serto's goal adding to one of their most memorable victories. Your grit and excellence continue to uphold Manipur's proud sporting legacy. Keep shining.

~ N. Biren Singh, For CM, Manipur

Garima Saikia Garg appeals for peace amid public unrest over Zubeen Garg's death

GUWAHATI

Garima Saikia Garg, widow of Zubeen Garg, urged for peace and unity in a Facebook post following unrest related to her husband's death investigation. Tensions escalated outside Baksa District Jail after the transfer of five accused individuals, leading to a large public gathering demanding justice. Protests turned violent with stone-pelting and arson, resulting in damage to vehicles and confrontations with police, including a police vehicle set on fire.

Garima Saikia Garg, wife of late singer Zubeen Garg, took to Facebook on Thursday, October 16 morning to express her deep grief while urging the public to maintain peace in the wake of violent clashes that erupted outside Baksa District Jail on Wednesday.

In her heartfelt post, Garima wrote, "I have not only lost my husband. Every Assamese household has lost a son, a brother, a friend, or a loved one. People all over the world who loved him have also felt this loss. Everyone's hearts and minds are heavy with grief, pain, and many questions."



Appealing for calm and unity, she further urged, "At such a time, it is very important for all of us to try to understand each other's feelings. We should leave aside pretenses and formalities, and simply support one another with kind and straightforward words. May there be peace and unity, and may there be no news of further harm or disturbances, God willing." Her emotional appeal came hours after tensions flared in Baksa district



following the transfer of five accused — Shyamkanu Mahanta, Siddharth Sharma, Sandeepan Garg, and two personal security officers, Nandeshwar Bora and Paresh Balshya — to the Baksa District Jail. The five are under judicial custody in connection with the mysterious death of singer Zubeen Garg. The situation turned violent as hundreds of protesters gathered outside the jail premises demanding justice for

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BAKSA UNREST: POLICE CLAIM THIRD-PARTY INVOLVEMENT
Situation in violence-hit Baksa 'under control': Assam Police

GUWAHATI

A day after police resorted to lathi-charge and fired tear gas shells to disperse a mob that attacked a convoy carrying the five arrested accused in connection with singer Zubeen Garg's death, the situation in Assam's Baksa district has been brought "under control," police officials said on Thursday.

The unrest erupted near the Baksa District Jail when the accused were being brought to the facility. Protesters set vehicles ablaze and hurled stones at the convoy, demanding justice for the late singer. Security has been tightened in and around the district jail to prevent any further escalation of violence. "The situation is now under control, and we are taking all necessary measures to ensure peace in the area," a senior officer confirmed. Over ten people have been detained so far for their alleged involvement in the attack on the convoy. They are being interrogated, and further arrests are likely. Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) have been imposed in Mushalpur town and adjoining areas to prevent any public gatherings or unrest. Police personnel have been directed to maintain strict vigil until the situation stabilises.

Assam Director General of Police



Gyanendra Pratap Singh, who reached Baksa on Wednesday, appealed to the public not to take the law into their own hands. "We all want justice for Zubeen Garg, but there is a due process for ensuring justice. India is a democratic country governed by constitutional provisions, and the law must be adhered to," Singh said. He assured that investigations are progressing in the right direction and that those found guilty would be punished as per the law. "The accused have been remanded to judicial custody, and it is the court that has sent them to jail," Singh added.

The DGP urged people to have faith in the ongoing probe and continue supporting Assam's development. He noted that the police are working in coordi-

nation with forensic and investigative agencies to ensure a fair and transparent inquiry. The incident left several people injured, including police personnel, protesters, and journalists. Multiple vehicles, including those belonging to the police and local media, were damaged during the unrest.

The police have since restored order in the area, assuring that strict action will be taken against anyone involved in inciting or participating in the violence.

Meanwhile, tributes continue to pour in for Zubeen Garg, as people across Assam mourn the untimely death of the beloved singer and demand justice in accordance with the law.

Singapore Police to meet Assam SIT team on October 21, confirms Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on October 16 said that the Singapore Police authorities will hold a meeting with the Assam Police team investigating singer Zubeen Garg's death on October 21.

Taking to X, the Chief Minister wrote, "Another step forward towards justice for our beloved Zubeen. The Singapore Police authorities will meet the Assam Police team led by Sri Munna Gupta, ADGP and Head of SIT, on 21st October. Our collective resolve remains — Justice for Zubeen will prevail."

The announcement marks a significant development in the ongoing probe into Zubeen Garg's mysterious death in Singapore, which has sparked widespread public emotion and protests across Assam.

Earlier, the state government had formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by ADGP (CID)



Munna Gupta to coordinate with Singapore authorities and ensure a transparent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the singer's death.

The upcoming meeting is expected to facilitate the exchange of crucial evidence and case details between the two investigating agencies, furthering the pursuit of justice for the late singer.

Indo-Myanmar Border Village Chiefs Oppose Fencing, Warn of Serious Repercussions



IMPHAL

Fourteen village chiefs from Chandel district oppose the Indo-Myanmar border fencing, citing concerns over land and identity. The chiefs warn authorities against continuing construction, highlighting potential tensions if local sentiments are ignored. The statement calls for halting construction until the demand for a Kuki-Zo Separate Administration is addressed.

Fourteen village chiefs from the Indo-Myanmar border areas in Manipur's Chandel district have jointly declared their opposition to the ongoing border fencing project, asserting that no construction activities will be allowed within their respective jurisdictions.

The chiefs issued a collective statement citing widespread anxiety among villagers over the demarcation works currently being carried out along the Indo-Myanmar frontier. They warned that the fencing could have serious

implications for the land, identity, and community interests of border residents.

"After thorough deliberation, we have unanimously resolved to oppose and prohibit any continuation of the fencing project within our jurisdictions," the statement read. The leaders further cautioned that if the Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) or any concerned authority continued the construction despite their objections, they "will not be held responsible for any consequences that may follow."

The chiefs have also urged the government and relevant agencies to halt all border construction activities until the demand for a Separate Administration for the Kuki-Zo people is addressed, a long-standing political issue that continues to fuel tensions and negotiations in the region.

This coordinated stand by border village chiefs underscores deep-seated local opposition to the controversial fencing initiative, which many fear could alter traditional village boundaries and divide families and communities living along the international border.

The Indo-Myanmar border region in Chandel, home to several Kuki-Zo settlements, has witnessed mounting unease over the demarcation drive, with residents arguing that it threatens their ancestral lands and trans-border cultural ties.

Fuel Crisis Looms in Mizoram as 1,000 Trucks Stuck on Aizawl-Silchar Route



SILCHAR

The toll of trucks has increased from 717 to 1000 since Wednesday due to the ongoing repair works on the Kawnpui-Mualkhang stretch of the Aizawl-Silchar highway. The delay in movement of these trucks has compounded the already critical shortage of LPG supplies in Mizoram. According to the Kolasib Police, as of 8 am on Wednesday, 991 trucks were stuck in the muddy slush on the road. These include 621 trucks heading towards Assam and 370 goods-laden trucks bound for the Mizoram capital. While 457 trucks were released

from Kawnpui during the period, others are still stranded. The repairs, undertaken on the national highway, have disrupted the crucial artery between Mizoram and Assam. The Mualkhang-Kawnpui section of the highway, which is strategic for the movement of goods and essential supplies, has been in a poor shape since long. The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) and the Mizoram Public Works Department are currently carrying out the repair works.

Mizoram Truck Drivers' Association (MTDA) president H Laldingliana stated that some

trucks have been stuck in the area for up to three days. He urged the State Government to pressurise the NHIDCL and the contractors concerned to expedite the road restoration works.

Meanwhile, the LPG crunch that began early this year, continues to plague the State. The Mizoram Indane Distributors' Association has cited the poor state of the NH-306, especially the Sairang-Kawnpui stretch, as the primary cause for the delayed supply of LPG. Trucks carrying cooking gas cylinders now take up to five days to reach Aizawl, further exacerbating the already strained supply chain. Despite the readiness of LPG bottling plants to meet the local demand, the shortage of delivery trucks has led to a severe crisis. Repeated appeals to the authorities concerned have yielded little result, and residents are concerned that the situation will worsen with the approach of the Christmas and New Year festivities later this year. Without immediate intervention, the State may face a still greater disruption to the supply of cooking gas. The MTA has warned of a strike from October 19 if the State Government fails to ensure timely repair of the roads and resolution of the allied issues. With both truckers and consumers bearing the brunt of the disruption, Mizoram faces a serious challenge in managing transportation and essential services.

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PUTTING WOMENOMICS 2.0 TO WORK

In the world's fastest-growing major economy, half the population still sits out of the workforce. That paradox defines India's growth story today. Women have powered the country's demographic dividend in classrooms and boardrooms, yet remain conspicuously absent from its labour markets. This is not merely a moral or social question, but an economic one.

Women's under-participation represents India's single largest untapped growth lever. Unlocking it will require a shift from token empowerment to what we might call Womenomics 2.0—a structural rethinking of how the economy values, enables and measures women's work.

For nearly two decades, India's female labour force participation rate has defied the logic of prosperity. As incomes rose and education levels improved, women's workforce participation fell—from about 31 percent in 2005 to 23 percent in 2019—recovering only modestly to 37 percent after the pandemic. The latest periodic labour force survey, released in September 2025, suggests a rebound but much of it stems from low-paying, informal, and agricultural work. The quality of women's employment, therefore, remains deeply precarious.

Behind these numbers lie a web of constraints. Safety concerns, social norms, lack of childcare infrastructure, and rigid workplace structures all conspire to keep women out. The pandemic intensified these barriers, pushing many women into unpaid roles or out of the formal labour force entirely. The deeper truth is that India's economic architecture was never designed with women's time, mobility, or care burdens in mind.

Women's unpaid labour is perhaps the economy's most invisible subsidy. According to an Oxfam estimate, women contribute roughly 7 percent of the GDP if monetised. Yet, these hours that sustain families and free up men for work, remain excluded from national accounts. The result is an undercounted economy—one that mistakes women's unpaid productivity for economic inactivity.

Womenomics 2.0 demands that we begin by counting what counts. Time-use surveys, gender-disaggregated data on entrepreneurship, and inclusion of unpaid care work in policy frameworks can shift the focus from 'employment' to 'economic participation'.

Several countries have shown the way. Mexico has developed an account of unpaid household work that includes "services for own final use made with unpaid work" such as housework and caregiving. In 2024, Mexico estimated such work at 26.3 percent of GDP. South Korea, too, has integrated unpaid care valuation into its household production accounts using time-use data. India should follow suit.

The biggest barrier to women's work is not will, but infrastructure. McKinsey estimates that India could add \$700 billion to its GDP in 2025 if women participated equally in the labour force. Yet, childcare centres remain sparse, last-mile transport unsafe, and formal-sector flexibility minimal. Rural women face an added burden of mobility and social norms; urban women, the 'double shift' of paid work and unpaid domestic labour.

Policies must evolve from welfare to enablement. Expanding the anganwadi network into full-fledged community childcare hubs, mandating workplace crèches, and incentivising flexible work arrangements through tax breaks or environmental, social and governance-linked ratings could make a tangible difference. Equally, targeted public transport investments can enhance both participation and perceptions of safety. While formal employment has lagged, women's entrepreneurship has quietly surged. The rise of digital platforms, e-commerce, and self-help groups has created microenterprise opportunities for millions. Mudra Yojana has seen over 70 percent of loans go to women, though average ticket sizes remain small. A Womenomics 2.0 lens would shift focus from microcredit to growth capital—connecting women-led firms to formal finance, supply chains and digital infrastructure.

What's missing is not intent, but intermediation. Financial literacy, collateral-free lending models, and mentorship networks can transform small ventures into scalable businesses. The success of women-led cooperatives and social enterprises—from dairy in Gujarat to textiles in Tamil Nadu—shows what's possible when ecosystems are designed inclusively. Womenomics 2.0 is also about rebalancing economic power. Even when women work, they remain concentrated in low-paying, informal jobs with little security or decision-making authority. Leadership gaps persist—women hold barely 17 percent of senior management roles in India's corporate sector, and only a handful sit on boards by merit rather than mandate. Real inclusion requires women in positions of policy influence—in trade unions, chambers of commerce and government committees. Gender-responsive budgeting, corporate diversity audits, and transparent pay-gap reporting can institutionalise accountability. Economic parity cannot rest on social goodwill alone; it needs regulatory teeth.

The conversation on growth in India has long been about rates. The real question, however, is who grows. A gendered growth model is not just fairer; it is smarter. Societies that enable women to participate fully see higher household savings, better child nutrition, and greater social resilience.

It is time to move from Women's Empowerment 1.0—symbolic and welfare-driven—to Womenomics 2.0: structural, measurable and transformative. The next frontier of growth is not in its factories or fintech startups, but in its homes, communities, and workplaces—where millions of women still wait for the economy to make space for them.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If they give you ruled paper, write the other way.
- Juan Ramón Jiménez

Pakistan's Afghani past: A serious trouble



ADITYA VASHISHT

The recent fight between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been stopped by a 48-hour ceasefire agreed to by both the nations. In the recent conflict, the Afghan Taliban forces responded swiftly to Pakistan's attacks and have achieved success, as being stated by incoming news reports. The roots of the latest conflict run deep in the past. As such, it appears as the consequences of the flaws which Pakistan's Afghan policy possessed and which have now come to haunt it.

The Durand line, which was demarcated by then British foreign secretary Mortimer Durand, to define Afghan and British Indian political zones, ran right through the land inhabited by the Pashtun people. Thus, a community which lived as a contiguous whole was divided on political and territorial basis. Such a division had been unacceptable to Afghanistan, which has a substantial Pashtun majority to which its ruling elites belonged. As such, one of Kabul's major goals was to secure a proper political settlement of the problem surrounding the Durand line which would respect Pashtun autonomy and recognize its deep bonds with Afghanistan.

Pashtuns in Pakistan included many activists who demanded autonomy and called for the formation of 'Greater Pashtunistan' in league with Kabul. A prominent example is that of the famous Pashtun Gandhian, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who devoted his life after Pakistan's creation to secure Pashtun rights for which he was jailed.

For Pakistan, the Afghan supported Pashtun nationalist movement was a great nuisance. It considered it as a grave security threat, since it would find itself sandwiched between an unreliable and aggressive Afghanistan and its arch-enemy, India. Pashtun nationalism was also an affront to its territorial integrity, since an erasure of the Durand line would bring Afghan boundaries close to the Indus river and the Punjab rather than the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa region.

Though these threats were real, Pakistan had also another security objective. Given its hostility with India, Pakistan's civilian and military leaders always feared an imminent attack by India to destroy it. Given its

vertically elongated geography, Pakistan possesses little space horizontally to retreat and respond. This 'strategic space' could only be provided by Afghanistan. As such Pakistan's ruling elite sought to secure a friendly government in Afghanistan which could provide it that space. This would require intervention in Afghanistan's internal affairs, which was undoubtedly risky.

The chaos and disturbance brought upon by the communist rule in Afghanistan as well as the subsequent invasion by the Soviet Union gave Pakistan the appropriate opportunity to expand its footprint in Afghanistan. It wholeheartedly backed the Mujaheddin rebels who fought against the Afghan communists and the Soviets. What better could have transpired for Pakistan than the fact that it got the USA's unconditional support in this endeavour. Another success was scored when Saudi Arabia also backed Pakistan.

Pakistan and its famous intelligence agency, the ISI, nurtured and funded Mujaheddin rebels in the hope that their success would secure to it a friendly government in Afghanistan dependent on Islamabad and Rawalpindi. These rebels had their bases in Pakistan where they benefited from the networks of Afghan refugee camps, Pakistani madrassas, US arms supply and narco-trafficking and goods smuggling.

One of these groups which Pakistan supported in the near future took birth on Pakistani soil. This group, formed of madrassa students, took the name of Taliban (which means students). Their extremism is well known by all of us but their success was achieved by establishing law and order and eliminating the corrupt regime of many Mujaheddin warlords which had come to dominate the Afghan political scene. As the Taliban achieved success on the battlefield, Pakistani military and civilian officials came round to back them, as such pinning their hopes of acquiring strategic space on the Taliban.

Pakistan's support for Taliban was undoubtedly notorious, as all countries within Afghanistan's vicinity, be it Iran, Central Asia and Russia, accused it of destabilizing the region by empowering a radical group for its own selfish gains. Even Washington could not hold back its

disapproval for Pakistan's stance. But in the face of all backlash, be it from the USA or the UN, Pakistan remained stubborn and refused to change its policy. It continued to back the Taliban regime.

As it is well known, the 9/11 attacks changed the whole situation. As a determined USA, removed the Taliban regime in its war against terror, Pakistan had to dampen its support for Taliban. But that was only a temporary pause as it was not going to abandon its security objectives for US interests. It continued to provide covert support to the Talibanis, who had not been entirely eliminated. As such it played an infamous double game, supporting both the US and the Taliban. The aim was to secure legitimacy for the Taliban so that Islamabad could secure its security objectives. Taliban victory in 2021 brought forth hopes for the Pakistani state.

The latest conflict obviously proves that Taliban is anything but a puppet of the Pakistani state. Clashes between both the nations are certainly not new. They occurred before during the 1950s and 60s. Pakistan's attempt to find a political remedy to this problem obviously, as the recent fighting shows, hasn't achieved much success.

Pakistan's policy certainly had its own flaws. It was based on assumptions with weak foundations. Firstly, it failed to draw well a crucial lesson that while Afghanistan can be captured, it is very difficult to control it. The British (1839-1842), the Russians (then USSR, 1979-1989) and the Americans (2001-2021) learned this to their own peril. The Russians suffered from the breakup of their powerful state because of their attempts to stabilize Afghanistan. If such powerful states, with enormous resources at their disposal, could not succeed in making the Afghans dance on their own tunes, what chance does Pakistan, a debt-ridden state surviving on loans and grants have?

Another point is that Pakistani planners considered that religious extremism would blur societal bonds and relationships. Religious zeal would triumph over and thereby, suppress Pashtun nationalism. But instead the opposite happened. Instead, mixed with religious extremism, the Taliban-backed Pashtun nationalism became a dangerous force which

now poses a critical threat to Pakistan's national security. It has made the Pashtun inhabited Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa region a hotbed of violence, creating instability. Recent Pakistani military operations in this region, ongoing for many years, are a testament to it.

The latest clashes also have a contemporary geopolitical angle to it, which includes US President Trump's demand for the Bagram air base, the US-Pakistan axis, Taliban foreign minister's recent visit to India and the US-Israel axis against Iran. However, it is essential to recognize the past events which have now come to trouble Pakistan. It would be interesting to see how Islamabad and Rawalpindi cope from it, which would undoubtedly have implications for the whole region.

The writer is doing Masters in Western History

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

When Zubeen was alive, the entire ecosystem tried to defame and pull him down. Today, after his death, the same people worship him as a god. These are not real admirers—they are fake fans whose only motive is to use his name to attack and oppose BJP. True love and respect are shown when a person is alive, not when it becomes convenient after death.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM Assam



“SERVICE, SECURITY, COOPERATION... OR SUICIDE? A CRISIS FOR THE HARYANA POLICE.”

DR. SATYAVAN SAURABH

Haryana is currently going through a period where the credibility, morale, and sensitivity of the police department appear to be in crisis. First, the suicide of IPS officer Puran Kumar shook the entire state, and now the suicide of ASI Sandeep Lathar has further deepened this tragedy. Both incidents not only expose the unease within the police department, but also illustrate how the foundations of society are shaken when the law enforcers themselves begin to give up on their lives.

In the video released before his suicide, ASI Sandeep Lathar questioned the attitude of his officers and the system. The death of IPS Puran Kumar also left many questions unanswered. Now, these two suicides have sparked a trend that has left a deep stain on the image of the Haryana Police. The public is forced to wonder how so much discontent, distrust, and fear have developed within a department that is supposed to be a symbol of security and justice.

The Haryana Police has long been considered one of the most disciplined and combative police forces in the country. However, in the last few years, circumstances have led to a breakdown in morale within the force. Political pressure, caste conflict, and internal conflict among officers. In the case of IPS Puran Kumar's suicide, many questioned whether he was the victim of a conspiracy. And now, with the death of Sandeep Lathar, this question has become even more serious.

The entire episode unfolds like a web series, with each

character grappling with their own pain and a new mystery unfolding at every turn. But this isn't a fictional tale, but a real tragedy—one of families whose members were upholders of the law, whose souls now cry out for justice.

When those responsible for maintaining law and order themselves suffer from depression, despair, and helplessness, it should be a wake-up call for any state. In Haryana, police personnel have openly acknowledged their working conditions in recent years. Long duty hours, lack of holidays, pressure from higher-ups, and negative perceptions from society—all these factors have a profound impact on a police officer's mental health.

It's worrying that extreme measures like suicide are becoming increasingly common within the police force. First Chandigarh, now Rohtak—every new moment brings the news of another uniformed man taking his own life. It's imperative to question why such an environment is developing within the police department, where morale is so low that life itself seems like a burden.

Some argue that casteism and politics play a role in these incidents. In a state like Haryana, where caste equations are deeply intertwined with politics and administration, this possibility cannot be completely ruled out. Discrimination or pressure from an official, whether caste-based or political, can be mentally debilitating. This is the fire that is slowly engulfing the entire system. The social fabric of Haryana, the green state, will remain safe only when the administration rises above casteism and takes honest and impartial action. The biggest question now is

who is the martyr—IPS Puran Kumar or ASI Sandeep Lathar? Both lost their battles against the system at their own pace. If a police officer loses hope of justice from his superiors, who can he turn to? When the motto of 'service, security, and cooperation' rings hollow, it's not just an institutional failure but also the end of human compassion. This entire incident places a crucial responsibility on Chief Minister Nayab Saini and DGP OP Singh. A high-level investigation is necessary, but even more crucial is the establishment of a system that protects the mental health of police officers. Counseling sessions should be held at the district level so that personnel can share their stress, pressure, and personal problems. If a police officer is found to be mentally unstable, they should be provided with immediate psychological support and not be issued a service revolver until they are fully capable. This suggestion should not be seen as a punishment, but as a protective shield. Police work is not an easy job. Daily encounters with criminals, societal expectations, and the complexities of orders from above—maintaining humanity amidst all this is difficult. If mental stability is not prioritized, the series of suicides may continue.

The Haryana government must also understand that the police are not just a law enforcement agency, but a mirror of society. When cracks appear within them, society's image also suffers. Strengthening a culture of mutual cooperation, respect, and dialogue within the police is crucial. Lack of communication between officers and subordinates is the biggest cause of low morale.

The state Home Ministry should establish an independent 'Police Mental Health Cell' solely to monitor the emotional and mental well-being of police officers. Furthermore, accountability should be established within the department to ensure that no officer exerts undue pressure or behaves abusively towards their subordinates.

Today, the Haryana Police stands at a crossroads where it must defend both its existence and its ideals. It's time for introspection—where did it go wrong, at what point did it shift from 'service and protection' to 'suspicion and suspicious deaths.' Political interference, caste-based backlash, media trials, and social media pressure have already eroded the dignity of the khaki uniform. Now, there's a need to restore the confidence that once characterized the Haryana Police. Those in power must understand that police are not mere machines that obey orders, but sentient human beings. Unless they receive respect, justice, and security, the rule of law will not be secure. In the end, Rahat Sahab's words accurately describe this entire incident—'The lamps are being tossed about, the wind is being taunted. Neither will we lose, nor will we win, but the coin is being tossed.'

For the Haryana Police, this is a time for introspection—on one hand, there's the reality of the system, and on the other, there's the waning courage of those in uniform. If this reality isn't acknowledged and avenues for reform are not opened, this will become a tradition of 'service, protection, and cooperation,' but rather of 'conflict, doubt, and suicide.'

Lathicharge by police escalates Zubeen Garg protest into Baksa violence; Opposition slams govt

GUWAHATI

The Assam government and its police force are facing severe criticism for their alleged failure to anticipate and manage the massive public outrage at Nikashi in Baksa district, which erupted into violence when five people accused in the death of singer Zubeen Garg were brought to the district jail on Wednesday.

The focus of the public's ire has been the district's police response, with many social media users and political leaders slamming Baksa Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) (Crime) Gitartha Dev Sharma for allegedly resorting to an unprovoked lathicharge.

This action, critics argue, was an "irresponsible act" and "arrogance" that immediately escalated the tense situation, prompting the massive crowd to resort to stone-pelting and setting vehicles ablaze.

The violence occurred at Nikashi, outside the newly built Baksa District

Jail, as a convoy transported the five accused from Guwahati after their police custody ended.

The government had reportedly decided to send them to the new Baksa jail, which has no other prisoners, after the court expressed concern for their safety.

However, once news of their transfer spread, thousands of people—still tormented by "sorrow, anger, and pain" over the loss of Zubeen Garg 27 days prior—gathered in front of the jail.

"Very surprisingly," one section of the report notes, the Baksa district police-administration failed to understand the situation, initially deploying only a nominal police presence.

As the crowd swelled to over 1000 people, the accused were brought to the scene. Protestors blocked the path of the vehicles, but instead of de-escalation, ASP Gitartha Dev Sharma is accused of being the first to fire batons at the crowd, triggering the massive retaliation.

The chaotic situation heated up instantly, leaving many police personnel



and journalists injured. At least three police vehicles were set on fire, and several others damaged.

Police eventually firing and tear gas to bring the situation under control. The injured reportedly included a 20-year-old local youth, Deepak, who was allegedly hit by a police bullet, and several journalists.

Following the violence, the Baksa

district administration imposed prohibitory orders, and the Home Department snapped mobile internet services in the entire district, citing fear of "inflammatory messages, rumours, etc."

Political Leaders Demand Answers from Govt

Political leaders were quick to condemn both the violence and the government's handling of the situation,

squarely pointing to a major intelligence failure.

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi called the incident "very unfortunate" and an obvious "lack of understanding of the possible situation by the police intelligence department."

He urged for patience and restraint while demanding that the safety of journalists injured in the incident be taken seriously.

AJAP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi described the situation as "extremely unfortunate," stating, "It is because of the failure of the Home Dept... The inability to feel the anger of the people and the longing of the aching hearts is a shame for the government and the Chief Minister."

He questioned who would take responsibility for the unrest and demanded an answer from the Chief Minister.

MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan said the Baksa incident was the "latest consequence" of the government creating complications in the investigation of Zu-

been Garg's death.

He demanded the resignation of the Chief Minister, accusing him of being a "failure in every way today." Bhuyan also laid the blame for the violence on the ASP, stating that Gitartha Dev Sharma's aggressive actions were responsible for the escalation.

The five accused whose transfer sparked the unrest include Northeast India Festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta and Garg's manager Siddhartha Sharma (the two prime accused), Assam Police Service Officer Sandipan Garg, and the singer's two Personal Security Officers, Nandeswar Bora and Paresh Baishya.

All five were sent to judicial custody by the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court. As the situation remains tense, the fundamental question being raised is why the police and intelligence wing of police failed to anticipate the public's intense anger and deployed inadequate security, allowing the situation to spiral out of control.

Internally displaced persons in Manipur's Churachandpur receive sports kits, essential supplies



IMPHAL

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) at various relief camps in Manipur's Churachandpur district received sports equipment and essential food supplies, as the district administration stepped up efforts to support daily life in temporary shelters.

Deputy Commissioner Shri Dharun Kumar S distributed volleyballs, footballs, and carom sets to residents during a programme at Sadbhavana Mandap, Tuibong. More than 20 relief camps received these items, intended to encourage recreation, physical activity, and community interaction among families living in displacement.

The initiative was organized by Samagra Shiksha, Manipur, in collaboration with the Zonal Education Office (ZEO), Churachandpur. ZEO officials and camp representatives were present during the distribution.

In a separate drive yesterday, the administration provided essential food items to IDPs, including 856 bags of rice, 175 bags of dal, 108 boxes of cooking oil, 68 bags of dried peas, and 43 bags of onions. Officials highlighted that such measures are part of ongoing efforts to support both the physical and emotional well-being of displaced families across the district.

No-confidence motion filed against Kohima Municipal Council leadership



KOHIMA

A no-confidence motion has been formally moved against Kohima Municipal Council (KMC) Chairperson Neikhozo Suokhrrie and Deputy Chairperson Khrielieli Chusi by several council members, signaling growing dissent within the council just months after the historic municipal elections in Nagaland.

According to an official notification issued by Kohima Deputy Commissioner B. Henok Buchem

on Wednesday, a written notice expressing the intention to move the motion was submitted on October 9, in line with Section 15 of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023.

The motion, duly endorsed by one-half of the total number of elected members, excluding ex-officio and nominated members, was jointly moved by two KMC members targeting both the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

In response, the Deputy Commissioner has convened a special meeting of all elected members on October 22 to deliberate and decide on the motion of no confidence.

This development comes barely four months after the Urban Local Body (ULB) elections were held in June 2024, marking the first municipal elections in the state in over two decades, following years of delays and legal challenges.

Assam-Meghalaya border row: Curfew clamped in West Jaintia Hills after deadly clash

SHILLONG

The West Jaintia Hills district administration has clamped total curfew in the disturbed areas along the border with Assam in apprehension of deterioration of the law-and-order situation.

The district administration had clamped night curfew in these areas on October 9 after a violent clash among villagers of both States left one person dead at Lapangap bordering Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The night curfew was imposed from 6 pm to 10 am and had been in effect till Wednesday.

"In view of the ongoing situation in Assam-Meghalaya border areas, there is apprehension of serious deterioration of law and order in the disputed area in Lapangap village, West Jaintia Hills district," Abhinav Kumar Singh, West Jaintia Hills Deputy Commissioner, said. He promulgated total curfew under Section 163 of the BNSS in the



entire Assam-Meghalaya border areas within West Jaintia Hills district.

Movement of people along the entire Assam-Meghalaya border areas within the district has been restricted, along with unauthorised procession, unlawful assembly of five or more persons, carrying or displaying of objects made or adapted to be used as weapons or any instru-

ment which could reasonably be used to injure, intimidate or create public disorder.

The violence at Lapangap had erupted over the issue of harvesting of crops. After the death of one person, tension on both sides has escalated. The harvesting of crops has been stopped, but villagers on the Meghalaya side want to resume their agricultural work. Meanwhile, a

group of NGOs from the Jaintia Hills on Tuesday submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, calling for his intervention in resolving the crisis in the area and allowing the harvesting of crops. They urged the State Government to deploy adequate security forces with arms and other equipment so that the harvesting of crops could continue. They also questioned the imposition of night curfew in the area, which has restricted movement of local residents at night. "The people's livelihood for the entire year depends on this single harvest, and any disruption or destruction caused due to the failure of proper protection would amount to a direct loss of their sustenance and we strongly urge the State Government to bear full responsibility and ensure that affected families are adequately compensated for their loss of crops and livelihood," the NGOs said.

Naga People's Front joins PDA government, paving way for NDPP merger

KOHIMA

In a significant political development, the Naga People's Front (NPF) officially joined the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) government led by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, marking a long-anticipated realignment between the NPF and the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP).

NPF Secretary General Achumbemo Kikon told PTI that the party's two MLAs had previously been extending outside support to the PDA, a coalition formed by the NDPP and the BJP ahead of the 2023 assembly elections. "The president of the NPF hereby promulgates this ordinance to the effect that the NPF shall officially join the People's Democratic Alliance Government under the leadership of Dr Neiphiu



Rio," Kikon said in a statement.

The move comes amid heightened political activity ahead of the proposed merger of the NDPP and NPF into a single entity. Chief Minister Rio, accompanied by Parliamentary Affairs and Power Minister KG Kenye, paid a courtesy visit to veteran regional leader Dr Shurhozelie Liezietsu, former NPF president and ex-chief minister. Rio described the visit as a ges-

ture of respect and reconciliation, expressing gratitude for Liezietsu's guidance.

Rio, who revived the NPF after resigning as home minister from the SC Jamir-led Congress government in 2002, served as chief minister from 2003. He later parted ways with the NPF in 2017 during Liezietsu's tenure to form the NDPP, which went on to end the NPF's three consecutive terms in power by winning

the 2018 state elections in alliance with the BJP.

The NDPP, which holds 32 seats in the 60-member House, plans to formalise the merger with the NPF—whose two MLAs are now part of the PDA—through upcoming conventions in Kohima. The NDPP convention is scheduled for October 18, followed by the NPF convention on October 21, coinciding with the party's 63rd foundation day. The NPF convention will also serve as the official merger, uniting the two parties under a single banner.

Kikon emphasized that the merger is about more than political arithmetic. "What is important is that regional parties come together to show solidarity, advance the common aspiration of the Naga people, and strengthen the state's regional political landscape," he said.

Meghalaya clears year-long salary backlog for Garo Hills council employees



SHILLONG

The Meghalaya government has released Rs 79.5 crore to clear a 12-month salary backlog for employees of the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC), Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma announced. The funds have been transferred to an escrow account to ensure payment reaches the affected workers.

Of the total allocation, Rs 11 crore represents outstanding dues owed to the GHADC, while Rs 68.5 crore has been provided as an advance against future royalty payments.

The state cabinet also green-

lit the Meghalaya State Education Commission Report 2025 during its meeting. Following extensive deliberations on the commission's recommendations, the cabinet has instructed the Education Department to conduct a thorough review and develop an implementation roadmap with specific action points. A final decision on adopting the recommendations will be taken once the department completes its assessment.

In other decisions, the cabinet approved organisational structures and staffing norms for technical, financial and social services across municipalities in the state, as mandated by the central government. The Meghalaya Municipal (Technical, Financial and Social Service) Rules, 2025 were also given the go-ahead.

The cabinet sanctioned the Meghalaya Building (3rd Amendment) Bye-Laws, 2025, which seeks to modernize land management practices. The amendment is designed to simplify the building permission process and allow increased construction space, potentially enhancing property values across the state.

Additionally, amendments to the Meghalaya Health Service (Academic) Rules, 2025 received cabinet approval.

Tripura proposes over Rs 500 crore tourism projects to boost North-East travel

AGARTALA

Tripura is planning a major push in tourism with seven high-profile projects worth over Rs 500 crore, the state government announced during a meeting with Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in Rajasthan on October 15.

Addressing the National Tourism Ministers' Conference, Tripura Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury criticised the previous Left Front government for neglecting tourism development in the state.

"Tripura is located in the corner of the North East, surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides. Unfortunately, there were no significant efforts by the earlier government to promote tourism. The real work for developing this sector began only after our government came to power in 2018, with a vision to showcase Tripura as a promising tourist destination," he said.

Chowdhury credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Manik Saha for supporting the state's tourism growth, noting that Tripura is now emerging as a key destination in the North East. "Recently, as per a report published by



the Ministry of Tourism, Tripura ranked second in foreign tourist footfall among all North Eastern states. This is a major boost for us, and we seek the Union Minister's guidance and support for holistic tourism development," he added.

With nearly two-thirds of Tripura covered in forests, the state is emphasizing eco-tourism as part of its destination development strategy.

Tourism Secretary U.K. Chakma highlighted major destinations including

Ujjayanta Palace, Neermahal, Unakoti, Tripura Sundari Temple, Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary, Chabimura, Dumbor Lake, and Jampui Hills. He also noted that Tripura has the second-largest airport in the North East, providing direct connectivity to Delhi, Kolkata, and other major cities.

- The proposed projects include:
1. A combined adventure, eco-tourism, and water park at Sachindranagar Colony, Jirania, inspired by Kolkata's Nicco Park
 2. An adventure park at Mohanpur
 3. A grand replica of the 51 Shakti Peethas at Bandowar, Udaipur (Gomati district)
 4. Infrastructure upgrades at Chabimura and Unakoti
 5. Waterfront development in Amarapur
 6. Launch of Paryatan Sahayak Prakalp, an entrepreneurship scheme to empower local tourism stakeholders

Together, these initiatives are expected to cost around Rs 500 crore.

Chakma highlighted the state's recent growth in tourism, reporting a 64.08 per cent increase in domestic arrivals to 6.01 lakh and a 36.16 per cent rise in foreign tourists to 91,000 between 2023 and 2024. "These figures reflect the growing confidence of travelers in Tripura as a safe, scenic, and sustainable destination," he said.

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Bihar elections: Congress begins allotting party symbols, BJP completes list of its 101 candidates



PATNA

With barely two days left for filing nomination papers for the first phase of the Bihar assembly elections, political activities have intensified in the state. Congress, a major ally of the Opposition INDIA bloc, has started allotting party symbols to its candidates even as a seat-sharing deal is yet to be formally announced.

Congress released its list of 17 candidates, posting the announcement on its official X handle even as seat-sharing arrangements within INDIA bloc remained unresolved. The party has fielded Anand Shanker Singh from Aurangabad, Pratima Das from Rajapakar, Shiv Prakash Garib Das from Bachhawara and Kaushalendra Kumar (Chhote Mukhiya) from Nalanda.

Similarly, Om Prakash Garg will contest election from Gopalganj, Jitendra Singh from Amarpur, Amita Bhushan from

Begusarai, Lalan Kumar from Sultanganj, Rajesh Kumar from Kutumba, Shashi Sekhar from Warsaliganj, Trishuldhari Singh from Barbigaha, Vijendra Choudhary from Muzaffarpur.

In addition, Shashi Bhushan Rai has been fielded from Govindganj, Anil Kumar from Bikram, and B K Ravi from Rosera assembly seats. Sources said that more names would be cleared after consultation with leaders of the INDIA bloc.

The Congress Central Election Committee (CCEC) had approved candidates for 43 seats. The sub-committee, headed by Ajay Mekan, is said to have cleared the names of eight more candidates on Wednesday. The total number of voters stands at 7.42 crore in this state assembly election.

In the ruling NDA camp, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has released names of all 101 candidates. The third list of 18 candidates were

released late on Wednesday. According to the list, Bina Devi will contest from Kochadhaman, Sangita Kumari from Mohania, Sanjay Pandey from Narkatiaganj, Satish Kumar Yadav from Raghapur and Bharat Bind from Bhabua.

Murari Paswan will join the fray from Pirpainti and Ashok Kumar Singh from Ramgarh. Earlier the party has released second list of 12 candidates, including folk singer Maithili Thakur from Alinagar and former IPS officer Anand Mishra from Buxar. With this, the BJP has announced candidates for all 101 seats.

NDA's ally-Janata Dal (United) has released its first list of 57 candidates. Senior leaders like Umesh Kushwaha and Vijendra Prasad Yadav have already filed their nominations from the Mahnar and Supaul seats. Vijay Kumar Chaudhary is expected to file his nomination papers from Sarairanjan on Thursday. Under the seat-sharing pact within NDA, BJP and JD(U) will contest 101 seats each, LJP(RV) 29, HAM and RLM six seats each.

Bihar assembly elections will be held in two phases on November 6 and 11. The counting of votes will take place on November 14. The total number of voters stands at 7.42 crore, down from 7.89 crore in June this year.

Women power is biggest strength, inspiration: PM



NEW DELHI

In the run-up to the high-stakes Bihar Assembly elections, PM Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged BJP workers to encourage people in their areas to vote in groups to protect the state from falling into what he described as the "misrule" of the RJD-Congress alliance.

Speaking during a virtual interaction with party workers under the

BJP initiative "Mera Booth Sabse Majboot", the PM described the party's grassroots workers as its greatest strength. Praising the democratic power of the people, Modi said, "Now, the people will not let Bihar return to jungle raj."

He also urged BJP workers to take Gen-next people to exhibitions across Bihar to make them aware about the atrocities committed during the earlier 'jungle raj'. "The younger gener-

ation has not witnessed what happened during the jungle raj nor the time when Naxalism thrived in the state," Modi said. Hailing nari-shakti, the PM said, "Women power is my biggest strength, shield and inspiration and our commitment to their empowerment would continue".

Appealing to women voters, he said, "All sisters and mothers in Bihar should go to vote in groups, singing songs, beating thalis to cele-

brate the festival of democracy." He advised BJP workers to engage with people booth-wise and visit every household at least 10 times before the election dates. Highlighting the development work done by the NDA government in comparison to the previous governments, Modi said that while the UPA government allocated Rs 2 lakh crore to Bihar between 2004 and 2014, the NDA government has allocated Rs 9 lakh crore from 2014 to 2025.

"This reflected the NDA's commitment to Bihar's progress," he added. During the interaction, when a woman party worker referred to him as "Sir", Modi encouraged her to call him "bhaiya" (brother). Expressing confidence in a favourable outcome for the NDA, Modi said Bihar would celebrate another Diwali on November 14—results day—and credited women with playing a key role in ensuring the victory.

The PM asked BJP booth workers to organise programmes for all "sisters" on Bhai Dooj (Oct 23). He also called for recognition of 'lakhpati didis' and 'drone didis'. Urging workers to campaign with enthusiasm, he introduced a new slogan, "Ekjut NDA, Ekjut Bihar - Isse banegi sushashan ki sarkar" (United NDA, United Bihar—This will make a good governance government).

"The party registers victory when every booth is strong," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while urging booth workers to guarantee government schemes on his behalf to voters. He further told them to share videos about the schemes with all families in their localities.

INTERNATIONAL

'Gen Z' protesters lead global wave of generational discontent

KATMANDU

From the Andes to the Himalayas, a new wave of protests is unfolding across the world, driven by generational discontent against governments and anger among young people.

This week, Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina was forced out of power and out of the country after a military mutiny, the culmination of weeks of demonstrations led by young protesters referring to themselves as "Gen Z Madagascar."

The rage against the political establishment in the Indian Ocean island country mirrors other recent protests across the world, in countries like Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru and Morocco.

These protests have been sparked by specific grievances but are driven by long-simmering issues like widening inequality, economic uncertainty, corruption, and nepotism of leaders.

But they have one thing in common: Mostly leaderless, they are made up primarily of young people who brand themselves as "Gen Z," defined as those born roughly between 1996 and 2010—the first generation to grow up entirely in the internet age.

"What connects these youth-led protests is a shared sense that traditional political systems aren't responsive to their generation's concerns, whether that's corruption, climate change, or economic inequality. Protest then becomes the logical outlet when institutional channels feel blocked," said Sam Nadel, director of Social Change Lab, a UK-based nonprofit that researches protests and social movements.

Protesters call for President Andry Rajoelina to step down in Antananarivo, Madagascar, Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2025.

Though their specific demands differ, most of these protests have been sparked by government overreach or neglect. Some have also confronted harsh treatment by security forces and brutal repression.

In Morocco, a leaderless collective called Gen Z 212—named after Morocco's



dialing code—has taken to the streets to demand better public services and increased spending on health and education.

In Peru, protests over a pension law exploded into broader demands, including action to tackle rising insecurity and widespread corruption in the government.

In Indonesia, deadly protests have erupted over lawmakers' perks and the cost of living, forcing the president to replace key economic and security ministers.

The most widely recognized movement to be dubbed as a "Gen Z" protest was a deadly uprising in Nepal that culminated with the resignation of the prime minister in September. Protesters drew inspiration from successful anti-government movements elsewhere in South Asia—Sri Lanka in 2022 and Bangladesh in 2024—which led to the ouster of incumbent regimes.

In Madagascar in turn, protesters say they were particularly inspired by the movements in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The protests began against regular water and electricity cuts but quickly morphed into wider discontent, as demonstrators called for the president and other ministers to step down. On Wednesday, Madagascar's military coup leader said he is "taking the position of president."

People take part in a youth-led protest against corruption and calling for education and healthcare reforms, in Rabat, Morocco, Thursday, Oct. 9, 2025.

Across multiple countries, a singular pop culture symbol has emerged: a black flag showing a grinning skull and crossbones wearing a straw hat. The flag comes from a cult Japanese manga and anime series called "One Piece," which follows a crew of pirates as they take on corrupt governments.

In Nepal, protesters hung the same flag on the gates of the Singha Durbar, the seat of the Nepalese government, and on ministries, many of which were torched in protests. It was also hoisted by crowds in Indonesia, the Philippines, Morocco and Madagascar.

Last week in the Peruvian capital, Lima, 27-year-old electrician David Tafur stood with the same flag in San Martin Square, now the stage for weekly protests.

"We're fighting the same battle—against corrupt officials who, in our case, are also killers," he said, recalling that President Dina Boluarte's government held on to power since December 2022 despite more than 500 protests and the deaths of 50 civilians.

"In my case, it's outrage over abuse of power, corruption, the deaths," Tafur said, referring to the sharp rise in murders and extortion plaguing the South American country since 2017, amid new laws that have weakened efforts to fight crime.

Boluarte had been under investigation for months over various allegations including bribery and involvement in a deadly crackdown on protesters in 2022. She was replaced last week by interim

President José Jéri.

"The president is an ally of Congress and has to go," he said.

Protesters call for President Andry Rajoelina to step down in Antananarivo, Madagascar, Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2025.

Many significant protests in the past, like Occupy Wall Street in 2011, the Arab Spring between 2010 and 2012, and the 2014 Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, have been led by younger people.

While they also used the internet and social media for mass mobilization, the "Gen Z" protesters are taking it to another level.

"Digital platforms are powerful tools for information sharing and building connections, but the most effective movements often combine digital mobilization with traditional in-person organizing, as we've seen in these recent protests," said Nadel from Social Change Lab.

Days before the deadly protests began in Nepal, the government announced a ban on most social media platforms for not complying with a registration deadline. Many young Nepalese viewed it as an attempt to silence them and began accessing social media sites through virtual private networks to evade detection.

Over the next few days, they used TikTok, Instagram and X to spotlight the lavish lifestyles of politicians' children, highlighting disparities between Nepal's rich and poor, and announce planned rallies and venues. Later, some of them also used the gaming chat platform Discord to suggest who to nominate as an interim leader for the country. "Whatever movement happens, whether against corruption or injustice, it spreads through digital media. The same happened in Nepal. The changes that took place after the Gen Z protests in Nepal spread globally through digital platforms, influencing other countries as well," said protester Yujan Rajbhandari.

He said the protests in Nepal awakened not only the youth but also other generations. "We realized that we are global citizens and the digital space connects us all and plays a powerful role across the world," Rajbhandari said.

'Our oil beneficial for Indian economy': Russian Ambassador reacts to Trump's claim



MOSCOW

Russian Ambassador to India Denis Alipov on Thursday stressed the importance of Russia's oil supplies to India, describing them as "very beneficial" and aligned with India's national interests.

Addressing questions here about India's continued purchase of Russian energy amid repeated pressure from US President Donald Trump, Alipov emphasised that the Indian government's decisions are driven by its own priorities.

"The Indian government is acting, having

in mind the national interests of this country in the first place, and our cooperation is very much in tune with those interests," Alipov said.

Responding to comments linking India's energy choices with its ties to the United States, the ambassador stressed that India-Russia relations are bilateral and "not directed against anyone."

He pointed out the consistent uptick in the business ties between the two countries in recent years and said that the overall relationship is expanding steadily.

Regarding the

upcoming visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India in December, Alipov said that preparations are at an "advanced stage," with a comprehensive agenda covering multiple agreements. "We are looking forward to a productive visit," he added. His comments came in the wake of US President Donald Trump's statement on Wednesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had told him India would stop buying oil from Russia—a move Trump called a "big step" in efforts to economically isolate Moscow.

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SHILLONG

The stage is set for the Pre-Launch Ceremony of the North East Integration Rally (NEIR) 2026, scheduled to take place on October 17 (Friday) at Mebaai Resort, Umtrew, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya. The event marks a significant step toward the upcoming rally that aims to strengthen cultural bonds and regional connectivity across the Northeast.



Don't depend too much on anyone in this world because even your own shadow leaves you when you are in darkness.

The ceremony will be graced by Timothy D Shira, Tourism Minister of Meghalaya, who will attend as the Chief Guest. The organisers have also extended special thanks to A.L. Hek, MLA of Meghalaya and Patron of NEIR 2026, for his consistent guidance and support in shaping the initiative. Several MLAs and dignitaries from Meghalaya are expected to attend, along with members of the NEIR organising committee from Guwahati, Imphal, and other parts of the region. The gathering is expected to serve as a convergence of lead-

ers, planners, and cultural representatives committed to strengthening inter-state ties and celebrating the shared identity of Northeast India.

As part of the lead-up to the event, the Organising Committee of NEIR 2026 recently met Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, in New Delhi. During the meeting, the delegation briefed him on the rally's objectives and its roadmap for 2026, which envisions a major cultural and integration movement spanning multiple Northeastern states. The committee also formally invited the Union Minister to inaugurate the main rally in Kolkata, underlining the symbolic and practical significance of his participation in promoting connectivity and infrastructure-led growth in the region.

The delegation that met Gadkari comprised Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee of KRC Foundation; A.L. Hek, MLA and Chairman of the Meghalaya State Government Programme Implementation and Monitoring Committee; Prof. (Dr.) Sukamal Deb, from Anant National University, Ahmedabad, and former Deputy CEO of KVIC, Ministry of MSME; and Dev Datta,

Founder of Dev Datta Design and Creative Head of NEIR 2016.

Speaking after the meeting, members of the organising team expressed optimism that Nitin Gadkari's encouragement would give the rally national visibility and momentum. They emphasised that NEIR 2026 is not just a symbolic event but a movement to celebrate the culture, unity, and aspirations of the people of the Northeast.

Through its journey, NEIR 2026 aims to highlight the region's diversity, heritage, and potential while fostering collaboration among its eight states. The rally will also serve as a platform to promote tourism, cultural exchange, and regional development initiatives in partnership with government bodies, academic institutions, and local communities.

The pre-launch ceremony in Meghalaya is expected to set the tone for what promises to be one of the most significant regional events leading up to 2026 — an effort to bring together voices, cultures, and communities under one shared vision of integration and progress for the Northeast.

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JAN'25
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10 JAN
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 Media Conclave: Media Experts, Webinars, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
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11 JAN
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