

KRC TIMES

STAY-ENRICHED

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 599 | SILCHAR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2025. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com , www.krctimes.com

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PERSPECTIVE

Rajiv Gandhi used INS Virat as a vacation spot for his family. PM Modi used INS Vikrant to honour those who protect every family. That's the difference between entitlement and duty.

~ Amit Malviya, Member, National Executive, BJP

Manipur: 8 die of rabies, teen expires of dog bite in Imphal west

IMPHAL
A class XII standard student who was bitten by a puppy two months back succumbed to the viral disease at Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) Isolation Department Ward in Imphal on Monday, officials said on Tuesday.

With this case, a total of 8 persons including women and children die of rabies (hydrophobia) in Manipur during the past two years, the hospital reports confirmed on Tuesday. Ngangom Bigsun (18), a resident of Kanto Makha Leikai in Imphal West district and son of Ng Baleshore of Kanto Makha Leikai, Imphal West was brought by his mother, Bijenti to the RIMS hospital after showing symptoms of hydrophobia from October 18. Ng Bigsun, who was reading in Class XII at Competitive English School, Imphal, was bitten by a puppy belonging to a neighbour two months ago. The puppy had also died some time back, according to the hospital reports. The puppy was not vaccinated against rabies nor Bigsun did disclose the incident of dog bite to his parents.

As per RIMS isolation ward staff, not a single patient who was hospitalised with Rabies Encephalitis did not leave the hospital alive and all of them died within a week.

Meanwhile, the RIMS authorities have appealed to all the people that they should get an anti rabies vaccine within 24 hours of a dog or cat bite. Dogs who bite should not be killed and they must be tested for rabies and it will make it easier for those who the particular dog has bitten.

WHO SAID WHAT



Exceptional coordination among armed forces brought Pak to its knees
-Narendra Modi
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma made a series of strong remarks while addressing public concerns over the ongoing protests surrounding the death of cultural icon Zubeen Garg. Speaking to the media, Sarma said, "If I resign today, 50% of the protests will end immediately. And if Gaurav Gogoi is made Chief Minister, the remaining 50% will also stop."

The Chief Minister asserted that the current agitation is not about seeking justice for Zubeen Garg. "This movement is not about giving justice to Zubeen," he said.

Reflecting on the late singer's fan base, Sarma observed that there is a clear difference between Zubeen's true admirers and a section that emerged after his demise. "The fans who loved Zubeen during his lifetime



were different. After his passing, a new group has emerged that once criticised him at every step," he stated, urging genuine fans to come out on the streets for the right cause. Sarma further emphasised his moral responsibility as Chief Minister to stand with the people in difficult times. Referring to recent violent incidents in Baksa, he said many local youths have fled from the area. "They must return. The government will not take any action if they voluntarily appear before the police and

record their statements," he assured. The Chief Minister also alleged that a section of the public in Baksa was provoked by exaggerated media reports. "Certain news outlets spread highly exaggerated stories that fueled unnecessary tension," he claimed. Clarifying misinformation related to environmental concerns, Sarma said no trees were cut down. "Every tree is alive and well. I personally guaranteed Zubeen that the trees would be preserved. The reports about tree felling are false and mis-

IMPHAL

leading," he said. Highlighting the government's commitment to continuing Zubeen's legacy, Sarma announced that the unfinished works left behind by the artist would be completed. "In every constituency, music schools and colleges will be established, and a statue of Zubeen Garg will be installed," he declared.

On the legal front, the Chief Minister reaffirmed faith in the judiciary. "Even if the government errs, the judiciary will not. The High Court has already taken up the investigation, and the police report will soon be submitted to the court," he said, urging citizens to trust India's judicial system.

Sarma also informed that the case related to Zubeen Garg's death will be heard in a Fast Track Court. He appealed to the people of Assam to remain patient and place their faith in the ongoing judicial process.

Rio Elected NPF Chief as Party Formalises Merger with NDPP at General Convention

The Naga People's Front (NPF) held its General Convention on October 21, 2025, at the Indira Gandhi Stadium, Kohima, coinciding with the party's 63rd Foundation Day.

The event witnessed the participation of over 5,000 active members, who unanimously adopted a series of key resolutions shaping the party's future political course.

The General Convention officially ratified the merger of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) with the NPF through a show of hands, reaffirming the resolutions passed by the Central Office Bearers (COB) and Central Executive Council (CEC) on October 18, 2025.

In a landmark decision, the Convention elected a new team of Central Office Bearers, CEC members, and frontal leaders for the 2025-

2030 tenure, with Nagaland Chief Minister Dr. Neiphiu Rio unanimously chosen as President of the NPF.

The party extended its full confidence and support to his leadership, both as Chief Minister and as NPF President.

Expressing appreciation for the leadership of NDPP President Chingwang Konyak, the Convention lauded the "historic consensus" achieved under the joint guidance of Konyak and Dr. Rio in uniting the two regional entities into a single political force.

The NPF also resolved to strengthen the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) in Nagaland and reaffirmed its commitment to remain part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA). The party pledged to intensify efforts toward inclusive development and sustained peace in Nagaland and Manipur.

Peaceful dialogue only way forward in Manipur, says DGP Rajiv Singh



IMPHAL

Manipur Director General of Police (DGP) Rajiv Singh on Sunday emphasised that peaceful dialogue remains the only viable path to resolving the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in the state.

Speaking during the 134th Raising Day celebration of the Manipur Police, Singh acknowledged the immense challenges the force has faced since violence broke out in May 2023 but reaffirmed the police's commitment to restoring peace and normalcy.

"These are very challenging times, but we have been tackling them with the best possible strength and cooperation of everyone," Singh said. "There are problems that we are trying to solve at the earliest because we also want peace and normalcy as quickly as possible. Things have improved over the last one and a half years," he added.

Over 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since the ethnic violence erupted, leading to large-scale displacement and destruction of property.

The DGP urged members of both com-

munities to come forward for talks, stressing that reconciliation through dialogue, not force, was the only sustainable solution. "The only solution to this problem is peaceful dialogue between both communities by taking into account all stakeholders," Singh said.

He also reiterated that the Manipur Police is a "civilian-friendly force" and dismissed allegations of bias in handling the situation. "There are sporadic incidents of arson and firing, but the security forces are alert, and everybody is on the job to ensure the situation does not escalate," he added.

Highlighting security operations, Singh revealed that more than 30,000 rounds of ammunition and 3,014 illegal arms had been recovered so far. He said over 1,000 illegally possessed weapons, along with 15,000 rounds of ammunition, have been voluntarily surrendered before security forces.

During the event, the DGP also presented awards to several police officers for their outstanding service. Among them was Kangpokpi Police Station, which received the DGP Trophy for Best Police Station 2025.

The Manipur Police Raising Day parade included contingents of 1 Manipur Rifles, with Governor Anusui Uijei gracing the ceremony. Commonwealth gold medalist weightlifter Saikhom Mirabai Chanu was also honoured during the event.

Manipur has been under President's Rule since Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned earlier this year, with the state assembly placed under suspended animation.

Hill-Valley Unity on Display as Liangmai-Imphal Market Thrives Before Ningol Chakouba

IMPHAL

As Manipur's Meitei community gears up to celebrate one of its most cherished festivals, Ningol Chakouba, the spirit of unity and mutual respect between the hill and valley communities found a new expression through the Liangmai-Imphal Market, a unique initiative that goes far beyond trade. Organized by the Liangmai-Imphal Market Committee, this mega market brings together farmers from the Liangmai community spread across the hill districts of Tamenlong, Kangpokpi, Noney, and Senapati to sell fresh vegetables and fruits grown in their villages directly to Imphal residents. But more importantly, it has become a symbol of brotherhood, interdependence, and cultural harmony between the Liangmai and Meitei people.

The idea of the Liangmai-Imphal Market was conceived not merely as a business venture but as a social bridge between the hills and the valley. Every Tuesday since last month, mobile markets have been moving from one locality to another across Imphal from Tera Bazaar to Thangmeiband, Chanchipur, Keishampat, Kakwa, and now Sega Road Thakhellambam Leikai.

This week's market, organized in connection with the upcoming Ningol Chakouba festival on

October 23, saw a heartwarming gesture: Liangmai brothers and sisters presented Ningol Chakouba gifts to women leaders of the Meitei community, a touching symbol of love, respect, and the eternal bond shared between the two. For vendors like Timothy, a farmer from the remote Tamei region of Tamenlong district, over 150 km away from Imphal, this initiative has opened a door to a world she had never seen.

"I had never visited Imphal before," she shared with emotion. "The lack of proper roads and transport made it impossible to sell our produce outside our village. But now, because of this market, I can bring my vegetables and fruits here once a month."

Her journey begins at midnight, carrying bulk produce through rugged terrains and sleepless nights. Yet, the warm smiles and kind words from Imphal customers make every hardship worthwhile. "It's not just about earning money. This market gives us a chance to meet and connect with the people from the valley. It brings our hearts closer," she added with hope.

According to R. Machundoubu, President of the Liangmai Naga Council, Manipur, the Liangmai community, though numerically smaller than many other indigenous groups, plays a key role in

agricultural production. However, the absence of proper connectivity and marketing facilities has long forced farmers to watch their harvests rot.

"Earlier, due to poor roads and lack of proper market access, large portions of our produce were wasted. But this mobile market has brought a ray of hope," he said. "It not only reduces farmers' losses but also builds emotional and social bridges with the valley communities."

Machundoubu emphasized that the mobile market approach was deliberately chosen. "We don't want to confine it to one place. By moving from one locality to another, we are fostering friendship and unity across the valley."

Chief Advisor of the Market Committee, Khuraijam Athouba, expressed gratitude for the overwhelming response from Imphal residents. "Everywhere we set up whether at Tera Bazaar, Kakwa, or Keishampat people have shown great enthusiasm. Many have even requested us to bring the market to their areas," he said.

"The Liangmai-Imphal Market has become more than a trading platform it's a living symbol of interdependence between the hills and the valley, showing that cooperation can flourish where division once existed," Athouba added.

ADB to Launch Major Initiative to Revitalise Bamboo Sector in Northeast India

GUWAHATI

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is considering to support an ambitious plan that could transform Northeast India's bamboo sector into a modern, climate-resilient growth engine.

Titled the Inclusive and Sustainable Bamboo Value Chain Development Project, the proposal, prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, seeks to strengthen every stage of the bamboo ecosystem across Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura.

The project is currently under review for ADB support.

If approved, it will cover Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura, the six states that together hold over 35% of India's bamboo resources.

Northeast India holds 35.8% of the country's bamboo resources, about 5.34 million hectares, yet its potential remains largely untapped.

Despite being home to some of the fastest-growing bamboo species



in the world, the region lags behind in bamboo-based industrial production and trade.

The proposal envisions a comprehensive bamboo ecosystem that combines traditional knowledge with modern industry needs.

It aims to enhance rural livelihoods, promote women's entrepreneurship, and reduce India's reliance on imported bamboo products.

According to ADB document, the initiative will promote a regionally differentiated bamboo strategy, expanding cultivation areas, establishing nurseries for high-quality planting materials, and improving market infrastructure through State Bamboo Missions.

The project also aims for effective gender mainstreaming, recognizing the crucial role of women in bamboo craft, trade, and entrepreneurship.

Under the plan, the project would establish Integrated Bamboo Parks (IBPs) and Common Facility Centres (CFCs) equipped with renewable energy utilities, water and waste management systems, and product testing labs.

These facilities would serve as industrial hubs for bamboo processing, furniture making, and value-added product development, helping entrepreneurs and artisans access finance and markets.

A strong focus is placed on community-led bambonbnkjkjk resource management.

Local joint forest user groups and village employment councils, many with over 30% women's participation, would operate Community Primary Processing Centres (CPPCs) and manage nurseries and plantations.

Women and youth would also receive training in sustainable bamboo cultivation, harvesting, and enterprise management.

To link producers with the market, the proposal includes digital components such as a Bamboo Production Monitoring System (BPMS) for real-time resource tracking, an Online Bamboo Trading Platform (OBTP) for transparent market access, and a Digital Bamboo Advisory Services Platform (DBASP) to provide technical guidance via mobile and web.

JCC to continue pen-down strike in Nagaland



DIMAPUR

The joint coordination committee (JCC) of the state service associations said the ongoing pen-down strike on the issue of selection of non-State Cadre Service officers into the IAS in Nagaland will continue since its meeting with the cabinet sub-committee on Monday resulted in no logical solution.

The committee informed all departments/service associations that the ongoing strike will continue till further instructions or till its demands are met by the government.

It added all other modalities for the pen-down strike issued earlier will remain enforced.

The committee has been demanding transparency, meritocracy and adherence to due process in the induction of officers into the IAS.

The media cell of the JCC, in a release, said the meeting with the cabinet sub-committee was held in the office chamber of the chief secretary in Kohima to place 'our demands' before the government.

The committee said though the issue was deliberated and debated at lengths, the cabinet sub-committee expressed its inability to accede to the demands.

It was also decided that the cabinet sub-committee would place the matter before the state cabinet for its decision, the release added.



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DIGITAL ARREST SCAMS



The suo motu cognisance taken by the Supreme Court in the case of the “digital arrest” of an elderly Ambala couple has once again exposed a disturbing and fast-expanding criminal enterprise that exploits citizens’ fear of law enforcement agencies. This shocking incident is not an isolated case—it is symptomatic of a dangerous trend that threatens not only individuals but also the very foundations of the rule of law. Over the past years, numerous reports have surfaced across the country about victims being “digitally arrested”—a chilling term that reflects the criminals’ ability to manipulate technology and psychological fear. The modus operandi is alarmingly consistent. The scammers identify financially stable targets, often elderly or retired individuals, and then weave a web of fear so convincing that victims surrender their life savings. Calls are made from spoofed numbers displaying official identities—CBI, ED, Income Tax Department, or even local police stations. Fake judicial or investigative documents bearing forged signatures and seals are shared via email or messaging apps. Some fraudsters even conduct video calls from fake office backdrops to lend authenticity to the deception. In many cases, the narrative is terrifyingly persuasive. Victims are told that their accounts are linked to money laundering or that their relatives are involved in criminal acts like drug trafficking or sexual assault. In one pattern, scammers claim that the victim’s son has been detained in a “rape case” and that urgent “bail” or “settlement” money must be paid to avoid arrest. The use of fear—especially fear of legal action, arrest under PMLA, or summons by ED—has become the criminals’ strongest weapon.

The question that now demands an answer is: how are these criminals operating so freely and fearlessly? For such complex and coordinated scams to thrive, there must exist a sophisticated network-comprising fake call centres, document forgers, money mules, and perhaps even insiders providing access to confidential data. The impersonation of central investigative agencies and even the forging of Supreme Court orders suggest that these operations are not run by amateurs but by highly organised cyber syndicates, possibly operating across states or even internationally. Equally worrying is the apparent lack of deterrence. Despite the rising number of such incidents, there is little clarity on how many of these criminals have been caught and brought to justice. The slow pace of investigation and prosecution emboldens these fraudsters. When victims rarely see justice, and culprits operate with impunity, the deterrent effect of the law weakens dangerously.

What makes these crimes particularly insidious is that they erode public trust in legal and investigative institutions. The Government, therefore, cannot treat this as just another category of cybercrime. It demands a coordinated national response. The Centre, state cybercrime units, and the CBI must work together to create a special task force to stop digital impersonation and arrest scams. There should be a central registry of these kinds of cases, and banks and other financial institutions should be told to quickly freeze accounts that are flagged for suspicious transfers in these situations. Moreover, public awareness campaigns are vital—citizens must be educated that no law enforcement agency demands money over the phone, nor do courts ever communicate orders through WhatsApp or video calls. The role of technology platforms also comes under scrutiny. To stop the abuse of digital identities, telecom companies and social media sites need to improve their systems for verifying callers and tracking them. Equally, investigative agencies must adopt advanced digital forensics and cross-border cooperation to dismantle these networks.

The Supreme Court’s intervention is timely and necessary. But the onus now lies on the Government to act swiftly and decisively. Each passing day without accountability emboldens more fraudsters to exploit the digital ecosystem. The “fear of law” must be restored—not in the minds of the innocent, but in those who are systematically attacking the very symbols of law and justice. The digital arrest phenomenon is more than a cybercrime—it is a national threat to the rule of law, public trust, and judicial integrity. The Government’s response must be as strong and coordinated as the criminals’ deceit is sophisticated.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Relativism, positivism, and nihilism — modern doctrines which mock wisdom and scorn virtue — have at the dawn of the twenty-first century come to dominate.

- Harry V. Jaffa

SHEHBAZ SHARIF SUMMIT OF SYCOPHANCY



ASHOK OGRA

“Flattery will get you everywhere.” This line, attributed to the actress Mae West, came to one’s mind, when watching Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s lavish praise on the US President Donald Trump at the just concluded summit on Gaza at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

In a clever move, President Trump prompted Shehbaz Sharif to speak—perhaps knowing that other leaders would be hesitant to indulge in flattery. True to form, Sharif readily obliged, calling Trump a “man of peace” and even recommending him for the Nobel Peace Prize—second time.

It is possible the Pakistan PM was taking a leaf from NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte’s realization that appealing to Trump’s ego could yield results.

The reputed US newsmagazine TIME aptly captures this approach: Putin, who stopped flattering Trump, lost ground as a result. Both Zelensky and Rutte’s “flattery diplomacy” may seem sycophantic, but it has revitalized NATO unity and revived US backing for Ukraine.

This explains why Trump, once dismissive of NATO and indifferent to Ukraine, has now reversed course—pledging weapons sales to Europe for Ukraine and reaffirming his commitment to NATO.

It is true that other world leaders too have learned that the key to managing Trump in his second term is flattery, patience, and adaptability. At summits, leaders now praise him lavishly, orchestrate shorten meetings, and avoid contentious topics. Having watched his unpredictable style-driven by instinct, ego, and “America First” rhetoric—they focus on reading his moods rather than his policies. Trump’s erratic shifts, social media outbursts, and rapid policy reversals have turned diplomacy into performance, forcing leaders to adjust strategy around his impulses rather than traditional negotiation.

However, Shehbaz Sharif went a step further when he startled the audience comprising heads of states/ governments by lavishing excessive praise on Donald Trump. The Pakistan Prime Minister overlooked a simple fact: the claim that Donald Trump stopped multiple wars and averted nuclear escalation is contestable and not clearly established. Why confuse the achievement of a temporary ceasefire with the attainment of permanent peace?

This conduct of Shehbaz Sharif has also not gone down well in Pakistan particularly among its masses in general, and intelligentsia in particular. Already, recent anger and violence in Muridke near Lahore, among a large section of Islamist-leaning populations, reflects their perception of their leader’s remarks as a betrayal of Palestinian solidarity.

The episode also highlights Pakistan’s enduring dilemma: balancing Western (read: U.S.) diplomatic dependence with managing Islamic-populist expectations, revealing a deep disconnect between diplomats’ messaging abroad and the grassroots mood at home.

In a scathing commentary carried by the largest circulated English newspaper of Pakistan, THE DAWN, Ahmad Sajjas Malik writes that “in a hall meant for sober diplomacy, Shehbaz Sharif remarks seemed theatrically misplaced — “a volley of high praise” that drew “hesitant applause and instant headlines.” Yet, what appeared as a gaffe revealed a deeper truth about Pakistan’s diplomacy: flattery defining its foreign policy.

Flattery in diplomacy—polished, deliberate, and psychologically precise—has long served as one of the most effective instruments for persuasion and statecraft. From monarchs and revolutionaries to presidents and autocrats, leaders have wielded or succumbed to flattery to open doors that brute force could not.

During the 2nd World War, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill perfected mutual flattery as political glue. Churchill hailed Roosevelt as “the greatest man I have ever known,” while Roosevelt, aware of Churchill’s imperial self-image, assured him that he was “carrying the torch of civilization.” Such exchanges softened ideological tensions and sustained cooperation even as their war aims diverged.

The same subtle craft was evident in Richard Nixon’s historic 1972 meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong in what was then known as Peking. Nixon’s opening remark—“You have changed the world”—was no mere compliment but a calculated nod to Mao’s revolutionary ego. Mao replied in kind, and breakthrough followed. Nixon’s words transformed suspicion into dialogue, signalling to China that the United States respected its sovereignty and global stature.

In post-colonial Asia, flattery became a bridge between superpowers and the newly independent world. During Soviet

leader Nikita Khrushchev’s 1955 visit to India, he called Jawaharlal Nehru a “wise statesman” and India “the cradle of ancient civilization.” The compliment sought to align India with the Soviet bloc through admiration rather than coercion. Nehru reciprocated by calling Khrushchev’s visit “a gesture of friendship from a great people,” proving that warmth could achieve what ideology could not.

Modern diplomacy has continued this tradition, often blurring sincerity and spectacle. Donald Trump’s effusive praise of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un—calling him “a very talented man” and later declaring “we fell in love”—was ridiculed at home but functioned tactically. Kim, long isolated, responded to the validation, creating an unprecedented diplomatic opening. The episode showed that even autocrats crave acknowledgement as equals.

Historically too, imperial powers institutionalized flattery to maintain control. When the British consolidated power, they reinvented the culture of flattery—this time, as an instrument of control. They awarded titles such as Rai Bahadur, Khan Bahadur, and Sir, flattering Indian elites into loyalty.

However, the archetype of diplomatic flattery, however, remains Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, Napoleon’s wily foreign minister. Talleyrand could make monarchs feel omnipotent while quietly bending them to his will. His dictum—“Speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts”—captures the essence of flattery as both performance and persuasion.

Thus, as is evident, in every age, flattery succeeds because it satisfies a universal craving: the desire for respect and recognition. In diplomacy, as in life, leaders tend to respond less to logic than to affirmation of their importance. It reminds us that persuasion often begins not with policy, but with the simple act of making another feel seen, valued, and remembered.

However, let me add a caveat: sincere and timely flattery can build bridges faster than treaties, but when excessive or insincere, it collapses into ridicule and mistrust. It is on this perilous edge that the Pakistan Prime Minister faltered, abandoning the dignity his office demands. Shehbaz Sharif’s effusive praise of Trump offers a striking illustration of former U.S. diplomat Adlai Stevenson’s warning: “Flattery may be acceptable in small doses, but when fully ‘inhaled’ it risks losing sincerity, judgment, or dignity.”

What could have been a nuanced diplomatic gesture became a spectacle of servitude, exposing vulnerabilities that undermined both the Pakistan PM’s authority and the nation’s standing.

Yet, as a reward, the IMF this week reached a staff-level agreement with Pakistan for another \$1.2 billion loan to help stabilize its perennial balance-of-payments crisis.

Meanwhile, neither Rutte nor Zelensky nor even Israel’s Benjamin Netanyahu can claim the prize of flatterer-in-chief; surely that honour goes to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. His remarks were received with disbelief by all those present at the historic peace agreement signing table. Diplomats whispered; social media mocked. Yet the only man who mattered in that room—US President Donald Trump—smiled. And in geopolitics, sometimes one man’s applause outweighs a world’s laughter.

(The author works for reputed Apeejay Education Society, New Delhi)

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

ED, Kolkata has arrested Indubhushan Haldar alias Dullal on 13.10.2025, a middleman involved in facilitating issuance of Indian Passports for Bangladeshi Nationals, in the case of Azad Hussain @ Ajad Mallik @ Ahammed Hossain Azad, a Pakistani national. He was produced before the Hon’ble Special Court, Bichar Bhavan, Kolkata, which granted 5 days’ custody to ED for further investigation. This is the 2nd arrest in a case related to Azad Hussain @ Ahammed Hossain Azad, who was revealed to be a Pakistani National residing in India under the assumed identity of Ajad Mallik and involved in facilitating the issuance of fraudulently obtained Indian Passports to foreign nationals in lieu of money. ~ Enforcement Directorate (ED), Government of India.



POTHoles, POLITICS AND PUBLIC’S PATIENCE

HARISH BIJOOR

After every bout of heavy rain, Bengaluru gets battered. Both physically and metaphorically. Many arterial roads get flooded. Traffic jams are the norm. Tarred roads develop potholes with water accumulation. That exposes the shoddy work in building the roads. Heavy rain is the best auditor of good or bad road works. Dirty linen gets washed as well. Every political party gets blamed. Band-aid solutions to patch up potholes temporarily get ripped off, creating newer and bigger potholes.

Traffic flow on the battered roads slows down further, and commute time prolongs excruciatingly. Tempers rise, road rage becomes the norm, and motorists break every breakable rule to rush home. People will drive on footpaths and service roads, and on the wrong side of traffic flow. In the bargain, a bus or two will go off the roads, mishaps will be dubbed pothole accidents, and nothing short of chaos rules the roads. Those stuck in cars will enjoy the luxury of wasted time to log onto their social media handles and vent their ire. Those without this luxury will brave it out on the roads under flyovers and shelters of every kind, further slowing down traffic flow. The younger ones will float their memes, and collectively, Bengaluru becomes one big meme during the season of the big rain.

We are just out of one such big meme season. Once again, every television channel has showcased Bengaluru and its infrastructure problems

in depth. I am guilty of having been on many of them. Bengaluru and its rain and its battered infrastructure make for good news of the bad kind. Social media has been equally full of noise and fervour. The opposition parties have pitched in their bit. And when the opposition makes the noise, everyone, including the noise makers, forgets that they have been equally responsible for the city’s state of affairs. Every political party that has ruled Karnataka over the last 15 years has been responsible for this. No government, of any of the three political colours, can claim to be different, though they do so. The can of responsibility is of course held by the Congress party headed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and the Deputy CMD K Shivakumar, who is the Bengaluru development minister as well. This time round, we need to add yet another dimension to the fracas. The debate has turned out to be about “corporate honchos” versus “those in governance” of Bengaluru. The last few days have seen heated exchanges of a very civil kind (remember, Karnataka is a very civil state where even our fights are dignified, discussed, and debated). Our energetic and passionate DCM Shivakumar has come out saying that people must not criticise and must participate in finding solutions instead. The objection is that any criticism of Bengaluru or its infrastructure is seen as harming investor confidence in the city and state. And right then, coincidentally so, Google announced its mega investment in Visakhapatnam. The environment is, therefore, sensitive and bristling.

Let me take a look at what’s so different this time round as the rains subside and the corporate honcho versus government of Karnataka debate is on the front burner. It all began with a post on X by Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, showcasing a question by an overseas visitor as to why Bengaluru roads are so bad. This stirred the hornet’s nest. There were comments from the government’s side that constant criticism is not good; that criticism of this kind actually dissuades investors; that it’s all about the unwieldy population Bengaluru carries equally as burden and boon. On the other hand, the public refrain indicated we need to urgently improve our infrastructure. They questioned the long pendency of projects like the Ejjipura flyover. The government is busy answering these and more.

Is this noise and bluster fair? Must people be vocal about what’s missing in their city? And is this bad for the city’s image? Must the citizens, therefore, sit back and wait till everything planned falls into place?

The answer is blowing in the winds of both social and heritage media. In a vibrant democracy such as ours, questions will be asked and answers demanded. Anonymous questions and barbs will outnumber the proudly identified ones—the former nasty, the latter civil. These need to be respected and replied to. The vocal ones ask questions for those who do not wish to speak or articulate their inner thoughts. To an extent, questions such as the one from Kiran represent the pulse of the needs and wants of the megacity’s

residents. The citizen, by and large, is asking for accountability. As one of the many social media posts asks, “If I delay on my property tax, I am fined. If I delay my income tax, I will be penalised. Must the government also not be answerable for the works not done?”

Karnataka today is blessed with a savvy chief minister in Siddaramaiah and an action-oriented DCM in Shivakumar. Bengaluru is asking for action from this powerful combination at the helm of governance. This action needs to be quick, decisive, and visible. If there is a pothole reported, it must be rectified within 24 hours. A dumping of debris complaint must be sorted pronto. A garbage dark spot must be cleared instantly. Traffic police must deal with constant complaints of footpath riding and salmon riding on our roads (riding against the traffic flow) with a zero-tolerance attitude. We need to feel governed.

I think the current Bengaluru fracas can be sorted out easily if there is a strong sense of commitment to handle it. With the Greater Bengaluru Authority in place and fully manned, it’s time for Bengaluru to set up a war room in Vidhana Soudha to tackle issues on a war footing. At election time, our political parties put together a war room to manage each constituency; the same approach is needed for Bengaluru’s 382 wards. The people need the assurance that if they raise a problem, it will be attended to. This war-room effort must have the simple goal of sorting out every issue visibly and with care in 100 days flat.

Assam Congress chief writes to Gadkari over Jorhat-Dibrugarh NH-37 delays, corruption

GUWAHATI

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi has written to Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, flagging serious delays, poor quality, and alleged irregularities in the ongoing Jorhat-Dibrugarh National Highway (NH-37) project.

Hawker's Market, no casualties in his letter dated Monday, Gogoi highlighted concerns over multiple stretches of the highway, including Dikhow, Gaurisagar, Sivasagar, Moran, and Dibrugarh, which remain incomplete despite repeated assurances from the Centre that the project would be finished by December 31, 2025.

"Large portions of the highway remain incomplete and poorly maintained, causing severe hardship to daily commuters, transporters, and local residents. Sev-



eral stretches have deteriorated into dangerous conditions, undermining public safety and regional connectivity in upper Assam," the letter read.

The APCC chief also drew attention to the recent arrest of Riten Kumar Singh, Executive Director and Regional Officer of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), Guwahati, by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Also Read - Now, hard work, not connections, gets you govt job: Cabinet Minister Rai

multiple cities indicates that corruption has not only compromised the integrity of NHIDCL's regional operations but has likely contributed directly to the slow pace, poor quality, and mismanagement witnessed along NH-37," he wrote. Gogoi urged the Ministry to conduct a comprehensive review of the highway project, with particular focus on the troubled stretches. He called for strict monitoring to ensure transparency, accountability, and timely completion, while stressing that public confidence must be restored. "The Jorhat-Dibrugarh highway is a lifeline for Upper Assam's economy and daily life. I request your personal intervention to ensure public resources are protected, timelines are honoured, and the project reflects the standards of integrity and efficiency our citizens deserve," Gogoi added in the letter.

Nagaland police honour 186 officers who died in line of duty

KOHIMA

Nagaland's top police officials paid homage to 186 police personnel from across India who lost their lives in the line of duty over the past year.

Addressing the Police Commemoration Day programme at the Nagaland Police headquarters, Director General of Police Rupin Sharma called on security personnel to recommit to serving the nation and making the ultimate sacrifice if required.

"Let us renew our pledge to serve our people, secure and maintain the integrity of our nation, and make the supreme sacrifice when needed," Sharma said.

Among those remembered was Constable Chandan Das of the 9th NAP (IR) from Nagaland. The DGP highlighted the historical significance of the day, tracing it back to the 1959 Aksai Chin ambush where

10 CRPF personnel were killed by Chinese troops at Hot Springs, Ladakh. This event led to October 21 being observed as a day to honour our policemen who have fallen in service to the nation.

Sharma lauded the professionalism and dedication of the Nagaland Police, noting that their efforts in maintaining law and order have strengthened public trust and brought honour to the force. "Today is not just a day of mourning but a celebration of the selfless spirit of our policemen and women who have become immortal through their deeds," he said, urging personnel to uphold courage and the highest standards of service.

The roll of honour was read by AIGP Rangkathung Vikram Ezung, followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the cenotaph by the DGP and other senior officers to pay tribute to the fallen personnel.

Shyamkanu Mahanta wearing same clothes in jail since Oct 12: Sources

GUWAHATI



In a startling revelation, sources close to the family of festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta have claimed that he has been wearing the same clothes since October 12 while being lodged in Baksa Jail. According to the family, Mahanta's wife had brought a set of fresh clothes for him before he was sent to judicial custody. However, the authorities reportedly never handed over the clothes to him or the jail authorities. Speaking to media, senior police officer Rosie Kalita said, "They were transferred to judicial custody in the same clothes. Whether they are being provided with fresh clothes or not now depends entirely on the jail authorities, and I am not aware of it." Mahanta, who has been in custody and shifted to Baksa Jail on October 15, continues to wear the same outfit he had on the day he was sent to judicial custody, according to family sources.

Earlier, Advocate Pradip Konwar, representing the Assam Government in the Zubeen Garg case, told the media that no special privileges or additional facilities have been provided to the accused. "As per the jail manual, they are receiving all standard facilities," Konwar said.

Meanwhile, the Baksa jail authorities have not issued any official clarification on the matter, even as questions are being raised about hygiene, dignity, and adherence to custodial standards.

24-hour bandh paralyses Arunachal's Ziro as youth groups protest Unity Gate construction

ZIRO

Normal life in Ziro came to a standstill on Tuesday, October 21, following a 24-hour bandh jointly called by the United Youth Joint Steering Committee (UYJSC) and the Bamin Michi Youth Association (BMYA).

The shutdown, which began at 5:00 am and will continue until 5:00 am Wednesday, October 22, has disrupted transport services, closed markets and offices, and kept most residents indoors. The bandh was called in protest against the ongoing construction of the Unity Gate. The Bamin Michi Youth Association (BMYA) has accused the Tani Supuñ Dukuñ (TSD) of proceeding with the project without proper consultation with local landowners and of changing the location from the site originally proposed in 2015.

In a statement, the association clarified that its protest is not communal in nature. It said discus-

sions have already been held with the Nyishi Elite Society (NES) and the Joram family to maintain harmony while addressing the issue.

The BMYA has demanded that the Unity Gate be built at the initially approved site and that the authorities engage in proper dialogue with the affected landowners before continuing construction.

Despite the shutdown, essential and emergency services, including healthcare, remain operational. Meanwhile, the Apatani Youth Association (AYA) and the Apatani Students' Union (ASU) have opposed the bandh, urging locals to carry on with their routine activities. Security personnel have been deployed across key areas to prevent unrest. While the situation remains largely peaceful, tension persists in some parts of the town, with bandh supporters seen monitoring roads to ensure compliance.

Now, hard work, not connections, gets you govt job: Cabinet Minister Rai

SILCHAR

Assam's youth are now benefiting from a merit-based recruitment system where talent outweighs influence, said Cabinet Minister Kaushik Rai while felicitating 84 successful candidates of this year's Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE) from Lakhimpur.

"There was a time when securing a government job depended on political connections or personal influence. That era is now behind us. Today, merit speaks louder than anything else," Rai said on Sunday, as he distributed mementoes to candidates who cleared the ADRE Grade III and Grade IV exams.

Reaffirming the state government's commitment to transparency, Rai noted that the recruitment process is now so stringent and fair that "even ministers cannot interfere." "Hard work and



talent are the only keys to success now," he added. Congratulating the newly re-

cruted candidates, the minister urged them to serve with sincerity, integrity and dedication, and

to prioritise public welfare in their roles. Rai further said that the government is planning additional initiatives aimed at youth empowerment, self-reliance and skill development to strengthen employment opportunities across the state. Lakhimpur Co-District Commissioner Dhrubajyoti Pathak and other dignitaries were also present at the event. Earlier on October 10, the government had declared the results for 7,650 Grade III posts under the Assam Direct Recruitment Examinations (ADRE) 2025, marking another milestone in its large-scale employment initiative. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said the state is now on course to achieve its target of providing nearly two lakh government appointments during his tenure. Along with the Grade III results, the government also released the selection list for over 600 additional posts across multiple departments.

Filth, broken wheelchairs, empty promises: The crumbling reality of Karimganj Civil hospital

SRIBHUMI

Karimganj Civil Hospital, once a beacon of hope, now symbolizes frustration due to neglect and dilapidated facilities. Patients face long waits and unreliable electricity, with power cuts compromising care and safety during emergencies. Chronic infrastructural decay, including unhygienic washrooms and non-functional equipment, plagues the hospital.

What was envisioned as a lifeline for thousands, has now turned into a headache for many. The Karimganj Civil Hospital was meant to embody the promise of accessible healthcare for all, a place where hope would meet healing. Today, however, the very walls of this institution seem to echo despair more than recovery.

Inside its worn corridors, the story is grim. The stench of neglect lingers in the air, dimly lit rooms

flicker under the mercy of erratic electricity, and broken wheelchairs line the corners like forgotten relics of a system that once cared. For the countless people who still walk through its gates in search of treatment, the Karimganj Civil Hospital has become a symbol not of relief, but of resignation.

Civil hospitals form the backbone of public healthcare, especially for the economically weaker sections who cannot afford private treatment. Yet, in Karimganj, that backbone seems fractured. Reports reveal that the hospital is battling chronic infrastructural decay, from unhygienic washrooms to non-functional medical equipment. The lack of adequate doctors and staff adds another layer of distress.

Patients often wait long hours, sometimes entire days, for consultations or basic procedures. Families of

the sick huddle in corridors, improvising comfort where none is offered.

One of the most shocking aspects is the hospital's unreliable electricity. In a place where every second can make a difference between life and death, such inconsistency is nothing short of alarming. Power cuts are frequent, and the backup systems are either insufficient or non-functional.

For many residents of Karimganj and its nearby villages, this hospital remains their only accessible medical facility. Yet, it offers little comfort. Patients complain of unclean wards and unhygienic restrooms that are almost impossible to use. Visitors too express horror at the overall sanitation. "Even the bathrooms here tell a story of how little the system cares," remarked one patient's attendant.

The sight of rusted wheelchairs, broken trolleys, and peeling paint further adds to the aura of neglect.

In such conditions, even recovery feels like an uphill battle.

With limited doctors and overburdened nurses, the staff struggle to meet growing demands. Many healthcare workers do their best under trying circumstances, but the infrastructure simply fails them. The absence of adequate resources not only affects patient care but also demoralizes those who serve on the frontlines.

Concerned citizens have now raised a desperate plea to the authorities, to take immediate and effective action.

The state of Karimganj Civil Hospital is not an isolated case, it mirrors a larger crisis in public healthcare infrastructure across parts of Assam. The situation serves as a grim reminder that health, though declared a priority in policy, often remains neglected in practice.

HITO appeals to Amit Shah for immediate intervention in Assam-Meghalaya border dispute

SHILLONG

The Hynniewtrep Integrated Territorial Organisation (HITO) has urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to intervene immediately in the ongoing Assam-Meghalaya border dispute, citing serious human rights violations.

The organisation submitted a memorandum through the Governor of Meghalaya, highlighting repeated encroachments by the Assam government into areas governed by the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council.

HITO accused Assam authorities of causing daily hardships, destroying property, and threatening the livelihoods of residents in border villages.

The group referenced past incidents like the 2009 Langpih massacre and the 2022 Mukroh firing as examples of what it called state-sponsored aggression, further accusing Assam of ignoring regional agreements and historical boundaries.

Recently, HITO claimed that Assam officials, allegedly aided by Karbi tribal members, obstructed Megha-

laya farmers from harvesting their paddy crops.

The organisation condemned this as a blatant act of territorial encroachment that has inflicted economic suffering on border communities.

Despite earlier promises from Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to ease tensions, HITO reported that armed Karbi militant groups continue to intimidate villagers.

The organisation demanded accountability from all officials and personnel responsible for these actions.

HITO also called on the central government to honour commitments made under the Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement of the Khasi States, arguing that the failure to do so has denied the Hynniewtrep people their rights and autonomy for more than 75 years.

Emphasizing the need for urgent action, HITO urged the Centre to restore peace and justice along the disputed border to prevent further violence and protect the constitutional and human rights of the affected communities.

Tripura CM Manik Saha pays tribute to brave police personnel on Commemoration day

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday paid solemn tribute to the brave police personnel who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty.

Attending the Police Commemoration Day observance at the Manoranjan Debbarma Memorial Stadium in AD Nagar today, the Chief Minister expressed deep respect and gratitude to the cops who laid down their lives to uphold law and order and protect the citizens.

The event witnessed the presence of senior police officers and personnel from across the state, who gathered to honor the courage, dedication, and selfless service of their fallen comrades.

Saha lauded the tireless efforts of the Tripura Police in maintaining peace and security in the state and emphasized the government's contin-



ued commitment to the welfare of police personnel and their families.

To honour the ever-lasting memory of these gallant Policemen, who have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, October 21 every year is observed as 'Commemoration Day' by the Police forces all over India.

The significance of October 21 lies in the fact that ten brave Policemen were ambushed and killed by the Chinese Army at Hot Springs in Ladakh

on October 21, 1959 in an unequal confrontation inside Indian territory. To honour the memory of these ten valiant Policemen, the DGSP/IGSP Conference held in 1962 decided to observe October 21 every year as Police Commemoration Day.

Earlier today, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasized the importance of unity between the Army and police in ensuring national security, saying that both forces share the same

spirit in safeguarding the country.

Addressing the Police Commemoration Day programme at the National Police Memorial in national capital, Singh drew from his experience as a former Home Minister and his current role as Defence Minister, highlighting the critical roles both the police and Army play in the country's security.

"I myself have served as Home Minister. I have had the opportunity to observe the operations of the police up close. Furthermore, as Defence Minister, I also have the opportunity to observe the actions of the Army closely. Both Army and police are pillars of the country's security. Whoever the enemy may be, whether it comes from across the border or lurks among us, every individual who stands up for India's security represents the same spirit," Rajnath Singh said during the event.

Police Commemoration Day (October 21) is observed across the country to pay homage to police bravehearts. The main function is organised at National Police Memorial, New Delhi.

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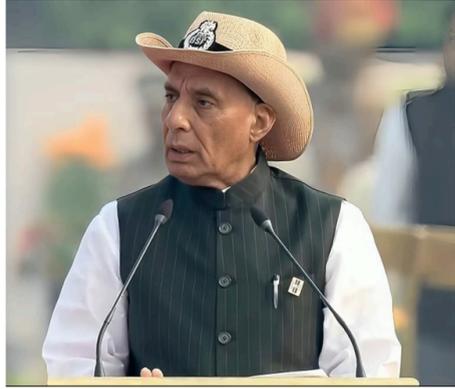
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Naxalism to become history soon: Rajnath Singh



NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the menace of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is soon going to be history in India due to the tireless efforts of police and security forces.

The minister was speaking on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day.

He laid a wreath and took a salute to a ceremonial guard at the National Police Memorial in central Delhi's Chanakyapuri.

"The success of the campaign against Naxalites can be assessed from the fact that the Maoists, who once took up arms against the state, are today surrendering and integrating themselves into the mainstream of development.

"Due to the tireless efforts of the security forces, this problem is now on the verge of becoming history. All our security personnel deserve to be congratulated for this," Singh said in his address to the troops.

The Centre has declared that the Naxal menace will end in India by March 2026.

"For a long time, Naxalism has been a problem for our internal security. There was a time when many districts in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra were affected by Naxalism. Schools in villages were closed, there were no roads and people lived in fear.

"We resolved to not let this problem persist any

longer. The way our police, CRPF, BSF and local administration worked together in an organised manner is commendable," Singh said.

He said the regions that were once "Naxal hubs" are now turning into educational hubs.

The parts of India that were once "infamous" as the "red corridor" have now transformed into growth corridor.

The government has been able to bring about such changes and for this to happen, police and security forces have made a "very significant" contribution, he said.

The minister also spoke about resources and budget for modernisation of police forces being provided by the Modi government.

Underlining the need for optimum utilisation of these "limited" resources, Singh said this can be achieved through coordination and integration among various security agencies.

He said in present times, the police not only has to fight crime but also "against perception".

Police Commemoration Day is observed every year in the memory of 10 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel who were killed on this day in 1959 in an ambush by Chinese troops in Ladakh's Hot Spring area.

Dismissed MEA's denial: Congress slams government after Trump repeats 'Russian oil import' claims



NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday criticised the government over India's oil trade with Russia. The party said US President Donald Trump had mentioned the issue three times in the past five days.

It also added that Trump has "brushed aside" the foreign ministry's claims that Prime Minister Narendra Modi never promised him that he would stop Russian oil imports.

The criticism came after the US President said that India is going to pay "massive tariffs" if it continues to buy oil from Russia. Trump also asserted that PM Modi had assured him that New Delhi is going to halt its oil purchases from Moscow.

"The matter of India's imports of oil from Russia has been raised by President Trump now thrice in the past five days. And no doubt he will keep increasing this tally as he prepares to meet President (Vladimir) Putin in Budapest later in the week," Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam

Ramesh wrote on X.

"President Trump says he has spoken to his good friend Mr Modi and India has promised to stop these imports. The MEA says that it is unaware of such conversations but President Trump has clearly brushed aside the MEA's attempts at denial."

Speaking to reporters onboard Air Force One, Trump said India will continue to pay massive tariffs if it does not cease buying oil from Russia, adding that it (India) does not want to do that.

Trump was replying to a question about India's recent remarks on oil purchases from Russia.

Congress had earlier criticised Modi, calling him "mauni baba" whenever Trump states that he stopped Operation Sindoor or that India will reduce its oil imports from Russia.

The comment came after Trump repeated his claims that India will not be buying oil from Russia, saying that the country has already "de-escalated" and is "pulling back".

This was the second time that Trump

has made such claims.

Ramesh, on Saturday, said Trump has yet again stated that he has been assured by his "good friend" that India will cut back on its imports of oil from Russia.

"But that good friend suddenly becomes a Mauni Baba whenever President Trump says he stopped Operation Sindoor and now when he says that India will reduce its imports of oil from Russia," Ramesh said in another post on X.

India on Thursday said it is "broad-basing and diversifying" its sourcing of energy to meet market conditions, hours after Trump claimed that PM Modi had assured him that New Delhi will stop procuring Russian crude oil.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, responding to questions on Trump's remarks that PM Modi made the assurance to him on Wednesday, said that no conversation between the two leaders took place.

He said that he was not aware of any

such phone conversation, adding India's oil purchases are guided to safeguard the interests of the Indian consumers in a "volatile" energy scenario.

The Ministry iterated that its energy sourcing policy remains consistently focused on safeguarding the interests of Indian consumers amid a volatile global energy landscape.

"As per my information, there was no telephonic conversation between PM Modi and US President Trump yesterday," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said while responding to a media query during his weekly briefing on Thursday.

The last phone conversation between Modi and Trump was on October 9, he added.

The Congress has alleged that PM Modi is "frightened" of Trump and appears to have outsourced key decisions to the US.

The opposition party had also alleged that the foreign policy of the Modi government has "completely collapsed" and said the Centre must take opposition leaders into confidence by either calling an all-party meeting or speaking to them one-on-one.

Washington has been maintaining that India is helping Putin finance the Ukraine war through its purchase of Russian crude oil.

US President Donald Trump's trade adviser, Peter Navarro had earlier accused New Delhi of running a "profiteering scheme".

Since the 2022 Ukraine conflict, India has significantly increased its purchases of discounted Russian crude and has also been refining it for exporting, an arrangement Navarro called a "laundromat for the Kremlin," though India maintains that it has done so under US advice.

The relations between New Delhi and Washington have been reeling under severe stress after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent, including a 25 per cent additional duty for India's purchase of Russian crude oil.

India described the US action as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable".

INTERNATIONAL

US, Australia sign critical-minerals agreement as way to counter China



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed a critical-minerals deal at the White House on Monday as America eyes the continent's rich rare-earth resources when China is imposing tougher rules on exporting its own critical minerals abroad.

The two leaders described the agreement as an \$8.5 billion deal between the allies. Trump said it had been negotiated over several months.

"In about a year from now we'll have so much critical mineral and rare earth that you won't know what to do with them," said Trump, a Republican, boasting about the deal. "They'll be worth \$2." Albanese added that the agreement takes the US-Australia relationship "to the next level."

Earlier this month, Beijing announced that it will require foreign companies to get approval from the Chinese government to export magnets containing even trace amounts of rare-earth materials that originated from China or were produced with Chinese technology.

The Trump administration says this gives China broad power over the global economy by controlling the tech supply chain.

"Australia is really, really going to be helpful in the effort to take the global econ-

omy and make it less risky, less exposed to the kind of rare earth extortion that we're seeing from the Chinese," Kevin Hassett, the director of the White House's National Economic Council, told reporters Monday morning ahead of Trump's meeting with Albanese.

Hassett noted that Australia has one of the best mining economies in the world, while praising its refineries and its abundance of rare earth resources. Among the Australian officials accompanying Albanese are ministers overseeing resources and industry and science, and Australia has dozens of critical minerals sought by the US because they are needed in everything from fighter jets and electric vehicles to laptops and phones.

US President Donald Trump (R) shakes the hand of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese during a meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Monday, October 20, 2025, in Washington.

The agreement could have an immediate impact on rare earth supplies in the United States if American companies can secure some of what Australian mines are already producing, although it will take years — if not decades — to develop enough of a supply of rare earths outside of China to reduce their dominance.

Pmi Althaus, who founded USA Rare Earth back in 2019 and is now working to

develop new mines in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as CEO of Cove Capital, said it will be crucial that the contracts to buy materials from Australian mines include price floors, similar to what the US government promised MP Materials this summer, to protect against China manipulating prices.

"I think taking away that arrow in the quiver of China to manipulate pricing is an absolute crucial first step in Australia and the West being able to develop critical minerals projects to meet our supply chain demands," said Althaus, who has spent nearly a quarter-century in the mining business.

The agreement underscores how the US is using its global allies to counter China, especially as it weaponizes its traditional dominance in rare earth materials. Top Trump officials have used the tactics from Beijing as a rallying cry for the US and its allies to work together to try to minimize China's influence. "China is a command-and-control economy, and we and our allies will neither be commanded nor controlled," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said last week.

"They are a state economy and we are not going to let a group of bureaucrats in Beijing try to manage the global supply chains."

The level of investment outlined in the agreement shows how serious the nations are about addressing the problem.

"The US and Australia will invest over \$3 billion in joint critical minerals projects within six months. That's a somewhat unprecedented speed of capital injection," said Gracelin Baskaran, director of the Critical Minerals Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

But Althaus cautioned that Australia can't supply everything the United States needs, so it is crucial that American continues

to invest in the long-term effort to develop other mining and processing projects both at home and in friendly nations.

He said central Asia might be one of the most promising places to invest because the region has significant rare earth reserves, and the Soviet Union already did some of the initial development work when it controlled that territory.

"That could cut years off the time it will take to build a new mine there. Keep in mind, China has almost a 40-year head start on us," Althaus said.

"We have at least a couple of decades to catch up to China in terms of being able to meet our own supply chain requirements."

Albanese's visit comes just before Trump is planning to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in South Korea later this month.

Another topic of discussion was AUKUS, a security pact with Australia, the US and the United Kingdom that was signed during US President Joe Biden's Democratic administration.

Trump noted Monday that AUKUS was established "a while ago" but that the agreement now is "moving along very rapidly, very well."

Albanese said that "our defense and security partnership with AUKUS is so important for us."

John Phelan, the Navy secretary, said that the US wants to take the original AUKUS framework and improve it for the three signatory countries while clarifying "some of the ambiguity" in it. "So it should be a win-win for everybody," Phelan said. The center-left Albanese was reelected in May and suggested shortly after his win that his party increased its majority by not modelling itself on Trumpism. "Australians have chosen to face global challenges the Australian way, looking after each other while building for the future," Albanese told supporters during his victory speech.

France's former President Sarkozy to begin serving five-year prison sentence

PARIS

Nicolas Sarkozy will become the first former French president in living memory to be imprisoned when he is expected to begin a five-year sentence Tuesday in Paris' La Santé prison.

Convicted of criminal conspiracy in a scheme to finance his 2007 election campaign with funds from Libya, Sarkozy maintains his innocence. Regardless, he will be admitted to serve his time in a prison that has held some of the most high-profile inmates since the 19th century. They include Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, wrongly convicted of treason because he was Jewish, and the Venezuelan militant known as Carlos the Jackal, who carried out several attacks on French soil.

Sarkozy told Le Figaro newspaper that he expects to be held in solitary confinement, where he would be kept away from all other prisoners for security reasons. Another possibility is that he is held in the prison's section for "vulnerable" inmates, colloquially known as the VIP section.

Former La Santé inmates described their experiences and what the former president might expect to face. The prison, which was inaugurated in 1867, has been fully renovated in recent years.

"It's not Nicolas Sarkozy, president of the Republic, that's coming... It's a man" who will live the same way everyone does, Pierre Botton, a former businessman-turned-author who was imprisoned in La Santé's vulnerable section between 2020 and 2022 for misappropriation of funds from a charitable organization, told The Associated Press.

In an unprecedented judgment, the Paris judge ruled that Sarkozy would start to serve prison time without waiting for his appeal to be heard, due to "the seriousness of the disruption to public order caused by the offense."

The former president has denied any wrongdoing and protested the decision that he should be imprisoned pending appeal.

"I'm not afraid of prison. I'll hold my head high, including in front of the doors of La Santé," Sarkozy told La Tribune Dimanche newspaper. "I'll fight



till the end."

La Tribune Dimanche reports Sarkozy has his prison bag ready with clothes and 10 family photos he is allowed to bring.

Sarkozy also told Le Figaro newspaper he would bring three books — the maximum allowed

— including "The Count of Monte Cristo" in two volumes and a biography of Jesus Christ. The hero of "The Count of Monte Cristo," by French author Alexandre Dumas, escapes from an island prison where he spent 14 years before seeking revenge.

One of Sarkozy's sons, Louis, called for a rally Tuesday morning in support of his father in the high-end Paris neighborhood where Sarkozy lives with his wife Carla Bruni-Sarkozy. The supermodel-turned-singer has shared photos of Sarkozy's children and songs in his honor on her social media feeds since his conviction.

Under the ruling, the 70-year-old Sarkozy will only be able to file a request for release to the appeals court once he is behind bars, and judges will then have up to two months to process the request.

The National Financial Prosecutor's office told Sarkozy the specifics of his detention last Monday, but details have not been made public. Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin confirmed that Sarkozy will enter La Santé on Tuesday and that he'll personally visit him to make sure security

conditions are met.

In the so-called VIP section, Sarkozy could have his own room in one of 18 identical 9-square-meter cells (96.8 square feet) in a wing separated from other general prison inmates.

Botton, who says he has known Sarkozy for decades, expressed doubt that the former president will be accorded many special privileges in prison. "Even if you are president of the Republic, even if you are a very rich man, you decide nothing."

Based on his own experience inside La Santé, about which he wrote the book "QB4," Botton described what Sarkozy might expect. After being processed, convicts are handed personal kit by the guards and then led to their cells.

"They will open the cell, and (Sarkozy) will discover where he will go," he said. Botton described the cell he'd lived in La Santé: "A small 70-centimeter (2-foot 4 inches) bed fixed to the floor, a hot plate, a pay refrigerator, a pay TV."

He said that inmates' rooms in the VIP section were equipped with fixed landline phones they can use to make calls, which are recorded by prison authorities, but they cannot receive calls on the same line.

Patrick Balkany, a longtime friend of Sarkozy who spent five months in La Santé for tax evasion in 2019-2020, described the first hours of newly admitted inmates.

"They're going to take his photo, to make him a card because over there we're a number, we're no longer a person with a name," he told RTL radio.

Then, "if he's considered like any other inmate, he undresses and his clothes are searched to make sure he doesn't have any prohibited items on him," Balkany said.

"The hardest part is when you arrive in your cell, it's a shock," he added.

Botton, also, recalled the shock he experienced when his affluent life crumbled when he was sent to prison the first time. "I went for my first time from my 1,200 square meter (around 13,000 square feet) mansion to 9 square meters," he said.

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ed nine compelling 1-minute video stories and a vast collection of high-quality photographs—all shot, edited, and curated by the participants themselves as part of their final group exercises and a booklet full of guides and tips on visual grammar.

This initiative marks a significant step for MSRLM, fostering a new culture of ethical, high-quality visual documentation. By turning its staff into skilled storytellers, the mission is ensuring that the successes and challenges of Manipur's rural communities are seen, heard, and understood with greater clarity and impact than ever before. Surely an endeavour all other departments and organization can emulate.



BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL: In a transformative initiative to amplify the impact of rural development, the Manipur State Rural Livelihood Mission (MSRLM) recently empowered its frontline staff not just with data, but with a powerful new voice—the art of visual storytelling. A unique 2-day workshop, “Empowering Rural Voices,” was conducted in partnership with the Win Foundation, equipping 51 field and block-level staff with foundational skills in mobile photography and videography over 4 days.

Moving beyond traditional report writing, the workshop aimed to bridge the gap between field reality and compelling documentation. Recognizing that staff primarily use smartphones, the curriculum was meticulously designed to be hands-on and jargon-free, demystifying the world of visual language for effective storytelling.

“The efficiency of any organization can be enhanced by integrating media tools into its program,” stated Sunzu Bachaspatimayum, the Manging Trustee of Win Foundation, a Manipur-based trust dedicated to empowering communities through media and advocacy. The workshop was led by a team of national award-winning filmmakers and photographers, including Sunzu Bachaspatimayum, RK Robindro, Saikhom Ratan, and

Khangembam James, who provided expert guidance.

The sessions were a blend of classroom theory and immediate practical application. Staff learned the fundamentals of composition, lighting, and stable shooting, before immediately heading out for field exercises. They profiled local livelihood activities—from ‘street vendors, construction workers, tea stalls, car wash to vibrant marketplaces—transforming everyday scenes into powerful narratives of enterprise and success.

The true success of the workshop was reflected in the enthusiastic feedback from participants.

“The workshop was an eye-opener,” shared one participant from Tegnoupal. “I never knew my phone could explain stories so beautifully.”

Another staff member from Tamenglong noted, “It was practical and engaging. The skills gained will promote our documentation process and help in filing applications for events.” Many highlighted the immediate boost in confidence, with one stating, “The training has improved my confidence in capturing photos and videos for documentation and proper promotional purposes under MSRLM activity.”

The most tangible outcome of this capacity-building exercise was the creation of a rich visual repository for MSRLM. By the end of the workshop, the mission had not just upskilled staff, but had also generat-



Respect is one of the greatest expressions of love.

BABINA Group of Companies's chairman Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh Extends Best Wishes to NEI Rally 2026



Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh
Chairman BABINA Group of Companies, Manipur
& Advisor NEIR 2026



Extends Best Wishes to NEIR 2026

www.northeastintegrationrally.in

IMPHAL

Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh, Chairman of BABINA Group of Companies and Advisor to the Northeast Integration Rally (NEIR) 2026, has extended his best wishes to the event, calling it "a celebration of diversity where everyone will be enriched."

Speaking about the upcoming rally, scheduled from January to February 2026, Dr. Singh said the initiative marks "a new chapter in the story of integration," bringing together people, cultures, and landscapes from across the region.

As one of the key advisors to NEIR 2026, Dr. Singh emphasized the importance of such events in fostering unity and pride among the people of the Northeast.

For more details and registration, visit <https://northeastintegrationrally.in/>.
#northeastintegrationrally2026

Meghalaya MLA A.L. Hek Praises NEIR 2026 as a Celebration of Unity in Diversity



In conversation with Hon'ble MLA, Meghalaya Shri A.L. Hek, Patron NEIR 2026

Register at NEIR 2026- northeastintegrationrally.in

SHILLONG:

Meghalaya MLA and North East India Rally (NEIR) patron A.L. Hek has highlighted the significance of NEIR 2026, calling it a platform that embodies the spirit of unity and shared progress across the region. Speaking on the upcoming rally, Hek lauded Biswadeep Gupta, founder of KRC Foundations, for initiating the event, describing it as a meaningful step toward regional integration and collaboration. "This rally is not just an event; it is a celebration of our diversity and a reflection of the aspirations of the people of the Northeast," he said.

Hek expressed confidence that NEIR 2026 would foster stronger ties among the northeastern states, inspiring joint efforts toward development, cultural pride, and lasting peace.

In addition to his support for the rally, Hek shared updates on his ongoing development projects. He announced plans for the Mabaai Resort in Umtrew, Ri-Bhoi, a wellness center on land acquired in 2011, with construction scheduled for completion by 2026. The resort will feature boating facilities, a lake, cycling tracks, a swim-



Elvachisa Ch Sangma, Filmmaker, Meghalaya

This isn't just a rally.

Extends Best Wishes to NEIR 2026

www.northeastintegrationrally.in

Filmmaker Elvachisa Ch Sangma Extends Best Wishes to NEIR 2026

SHILLONG

Noted filmmaker Elvachisa Ch Sangma from Meghalaya has extended her best wishes to the upcoming Northeast Integration Rally (NEIR) 2026. Praising the initiative, she said the rally is "not just a rally, but a celebration of the region's rich culture and diversity."

Sangma highlighted how such events play a vital role in bringing together people from across the Northeast, fostering understanding and unity

through shared traditions, landscapes, and stories.

The Northeast Integration Rally 2026 aims to promote regional harmony and showcase the beauty and heritage of the Northeast through multiple circuits and destinations.

For registration and early bird discounts, visit [https://](https://northeastintegrationrally.in/)

northeastintegrationrally.in/. Limited slots are available per circuit.





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.
www.krcfoundation.org



11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations.
 Includes: MOCA, and D-governance and reform for rural upland, watershed, water conservation, and preservation programs. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate change will accelerate on Global Change, pollution and over-exploitation. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Barak, Planning & Geology, environmental and health in the River Barak, Climate Change.



JAN'25
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 Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Media Conclave: Workshops, Seminars, and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Workshops: Journalism, Photography, Design & Creative Arts, Sports, Games, Chess, and more.



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10-12 JAN
Science Studio
 Real 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! Don't miss! | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #NoOneLeftBehind | Book Bank | Donate | Buy | Sell

Book Club
 Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books

Painting Carnival
 Water Colour and other New Year Campaign

11 JAN
film festival
 Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Mizoram | Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W | Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet the Maker



Barak Festival
Band Night 10 JAN
Musical Night 11 JAN



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