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PERSPECTIVE

People usually forget to thank you when you do good to them, but they never forget to blame you if you did wrong to them.

Manipur marks National Press Day with call to defend media credibility

A renewed warning over the rapid spread of misinformation dominated Manipur's National Press Day observance on November 16, as senior officials and journalists stressed the urgent need to protect public trust in news.

The Directorate of Information and Public Relations hosted the state-level programme in Imphal, placing this year's theme — safeguarding press credibility — at the centre of discussions. Speakers highlighted growing pressures on reporters, shrinking space for objective journalism and the disruptive influence of fast-evolving AI tools.

The state's information secretary said misinformation had reached a point where the core function of the press — delivering verified facts — was at risk. He questioned whether media workers in Manipur currently operate in an environment that truly allows independent reporting, noting that pressure groups and competing demands often complicate the delivery of accurate information.

He also pointed to major shifts in news consumption, with audiences increasingly turning to social media over traditional outlets. In such an environment, he said, journalists must work harder to produce credible reporting that stands apart from unverified online content.

WHO SAID WHAT

Sikkim A role model for cleanliness and discipline. And one day, I hope we won't have to compare our locations to other places in the world when expressing our appreciation!
#SundayWanderer Credits: Satyajit Dahiya (desi solo traveller)

~ Anand Mahindra, Chairman, Mahindra Group

NEW DELHI

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi expressed on Monday that the security situation in Manipur, which has been going through violence for over two years, is improving with "rays of hope, and enthusiasm" coming back to the state and people putting their trust in the government and each other again.

According to the COAS, President Droupadi Murmu "might visit Manipur in the coming days" due to the improving security situation following the imposition of President's rule. Earlier in September, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also visited Manipur, interacting with displaced people and visiting other northeastern states.

"The days of hope and enthusiasm are coming back. In September too our Prime Minister visited the state, and called it a 'ratna' of India. With these talks happening, there is a hope coming back to the people. If everything goes well, the President might visit Manipur in the coming days," COAS General Dwivedi said while addressing the curtain raiser event of the Chanakya Defence Dialogues in New Delhi.



The Chanakya Defence Dialogues is a flagship international seminar organised by the Indian Army with the aim of bringing together policymakers, strategic thinkers, academia, defence personnel, veterans, scientists, and subject matter experts from India

and abroad to examine India's strategic directions and developmental priorities.

Talking about the violence which broke out in May 2023, he said that the situation has improved a lot since imposition of president's rule in February 2025.

"When it comes to Manipur, the incidents which happened on May 2023 is known to everyone. I also felt really pained by that because I have also worked in Manipur so that is why I was also sad to see such a beautiful state is in such a bad state. But since February 2025 when President's rule was imposed, till then we can see that there is more trust among the people and on the government," he said.

As proof of normalcy slowly returning to the state, the COAS highlighted how large gatherings are being organised, including the annual Shirui Lily festival and the Durand cup which saw huge crowds come in. Similarly, the security forces have been able to clamp down on violent elements, with police forces managing to ramp up arrests and seizures of looted weapons.

According to the COAS, in 2023, officials arrested only 28 people during the start of the violence in 2023, but currently they have arrested 88 people, showing the increasing effectiveness of investigative agencies. Similarly, in 2023 around 200 tonnes of weapons and ammo was seized every month, currently the force recover around 400 tonnes per month. "Today if we see many changes have come, like the Shirui Lily festival which was celebrated in the state, everyone participated in that. Then the Durand Cup, there the crowd was such that it was difficult to control. Even the DGP was busy with crowd control instead of watching the match.

On arrests and seizures of looted weapons, he added, "regarding violence, it has been quite different than before, the police were also troubled, and people were worried too. Before we could arrest only 28 people before, nowadays the arrests are 88. With the looting of weapons which happened, in 2023-24, we used to recover around 200 tonnes of weapons every month, in today's date

it has come up to 400 tonnes."

Violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023, over two years ago. Following which, in February 2025, President Droupadi Murmu imposed President's rule in Manipur after receiving a report from the state governor days after N Biren Singh's resignation from the Chief Minister post amid violence and political instability.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the state, while on a multi-state visit across northeast on September 13. While in Imphal, he inaugurated multiple development projects worth Rs 1,200 crore. He also emphasised the need to build a strong bridge between the people of hills and valleys in Manipur during his visit to Imphal, stressing that any kind of violence in Manipur is unfortunate and a great injustice to ancestors and future generations, urging unity for peace and development. The COAS interacted with locals, urging them to shun violence and work towards restoring peace in the state. He stated that a new dawn of "hope and confidence" is emerging in the northeastern state.

Assam bans inter-district movement of pigs as ASF cases surge across state



GUWAHATI

The Assam government has imposed an immediate ban on the inter-district movement of live pigs amid an "alarming" spike in African Swine Fever (ASF) cases, officials said on November 17.

The Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department has also prohibited the sale of pork in seven districts—Dhemaji, Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Darrang, Jorhat and Dibrugarh—which have recorded the highest concentration of infections.

According to the department's order, ASF, which has a 100 per cent mortality rate, has severely devastated the state's piggery industry. The disease has been spreading rapidly since January, with 297 epicentres

identified across nearly all districts. Of these, 84 epicentres were reported in October alone, reflecting the fast-growing threat.

The government's order stated that ASF cases have been rising "with no bounds," prompting the administration to enforce strict containment measures. Invoking provisions of the Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, the state has restricted the movement of live pigs until further notice to curb the spread of the infection.

Officials said the ban would remain in force as long as necessary to prevent further escalation of the highly lethal disease, which continues to pose a serious challenge to Assam's livestock sector.

COCOMI submits memorandum to PM, challenges Kuki groups' claims on Manipur's hill areas

IMPHAL

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has submitted a detailed memorandum to the Prime Minister, countering recent claims made by the United People's Front (UPF) and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) regarding historical jurisdiction and ancestral land rights over Manipur's hill areas.

The memorandum was prepared following the UPF-KNO meeting with Home Ministry officials in New Delhi on November 6 and 7, during which the groups reportedly stated that the hill areas of Manipur were never under the authority of the Maharaja of Manipur. COCOMI described this assertion as "misleading" and said it was necessary to present historical records, colonial-era documents, and judicial rulings that, according to the organisation, reflect a different picture.

COCOMI argued that historical evidence—including references from the Manipur State Darbar Rules of 1907—showed that both the valley and the hill areas were administered under the Manipur State. It cited post-Independence legal continuity, pointing to 1963 and 1979 court judgments that recognised the State's authority over forests and other lands in the hills.

The memorandum also challenged the Kuki groups' claim to ancestral land, describing the



community's presence in Manipur as largely a "colonial-era settlement" facilitated by British officials between the mid-19th century and early 20th century. It referred to records of British Political Agent William McCulloch, who documented the settlement of Kuki villages as part of the colonial administration's frontier strategy.

COCOMI further stated that the term "Kuki" itself emerged during the colonial period and functioned as an administrative classification rather than an indigenous identity, arguing that this weakened the basis for claims of indigeneity. The organisation

emphasised that customary rights over land and forests exercised by tribal communities were historically usufructuary in nature—meant for livelihood—and did not amount to proprietary ownership under the legal framework of the time.

Concluding the memorandum, COCOMI urged the Government of India and the Ministry of Home Affairs to dismiss what it termed "ahistorical claims," stating that acceptance of such demands would undermine the territorial integrity of Manipur.

The memorandum was signed by COCOMI convenor Khurajam Athouba.

IITF 2025: Meghalaya Pavilion Showcases State's Craft, Culture, and Trade Ambitions

SHILLONG

Meghalaya placed its entrepreneurial ambitions at the centre of attention as the State Pavilion opened at the India International Trade Fair 2025, with Assembly Speaker Thomas A Sangma emphasising the government's push to build stronger national market linkages.

The inauguration signalled a broader strategy aimed at securing space for Meghalaya's products and entrepreneurs in major trade ecosystems. Sangma said the State's participation reflects a clear plan to expand market access, promote local talent and strengthen Meghalaya's identity across national platforms. He urged exhibitors to engage actively with buyers and use the fair to forge durable business partnerships.

A 42-member delegation of entrepreneurs is showcasing goods across 12 stalls, representing start-ups under the PRIME programme and units promoted by the Directorate of Food Processing. Their displays include handloom, handicrafts, woodwork, pottery, beverages, spices and a wide assortment of processed foods ranging from teas and juices to pickles and indigenous snacks.



The participation is coordinated by Meghalayan Age Ltd with support from the Planning, Food Processing, PRIME and

Tourism departments. Tourism remains a major draw at the pavilion, where visitors are met with

imagery of Meghalaya's waterfalls, root bridges, caves, rivers and hill landscapes. Audio-visual features run throughout the day, highlighting tourism potential, agricultural stories, GI-tagged products and food-processing achievements. Traditional wood, bamboo and textile crafts add to the appeal.

Early visitor response has been encouraging, with steady footfall and numerous trade enquiries reported. Sangma said the interest reflects growing national curiosity about Meghalaya's products and underscores the value of such large-scale events in opening new markets.

State officials view participation in IITF and similar platforms as vital for connecting entrepreneurs with buyers, distributors and service providers, while offering exposure to packaging, certification, logistics and technology trends. The government expects these interventions to strengthen brand visibility, sharpen business competitiveness and enhance confidence among local entrepreneurs.

The event was attended by Commissioner and Secretary Andrew Simons, Additional Resident Commissioner Sabrella B Marak and other officials.



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MODI IN BHUTAN A GOODWILL VISIT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on a two-day visit to the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. This was a short visit with long-term objectives. Bhutan is strategically critical for India as a buffer against China. Remember, the military face-off in Doklam, Bhutan. Also, both countries are bound for centuries with cultural, spiritual and developmental ties.

On 11 November, the first day of his visit, Modi was the Guest of Honour on the occasion of the 70th birth anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo at the Chamlingphang Stadium. While reciprocating Modi's good-will gesture, the King of Bhutan, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk expressed his country's gratitude for the presence of the Holy Piprahwa Relics of Lord Buddha from India which is currently in Thimphu for public veneration during the Festival.

Modi inaugurated an important Buddhist spiritual symbol. Bhutan's Prime Minister elusively acknowledged this, "an accomplished spiritual master Narendra Modi inaugurated and blessed the sacred Kalachakra Empowerment which began today as part of ongoing Global Prayer Festival". Kalachakra has enormous significance for Buddhists across the world.

However, the key highlight of the visit was the inauguration of 1020MW Punatsangchu-II Hydro Electric project. Modi called this project a 'Symbol of Friendship, and exemplary co-operation' between Bhutan and India. Both countries agreed to resume work on the Punatsangchu-I and complete it soon. They welcomed the electricity export from Punatsangchu to India. Bhutan gratefully acknowledged India's contribution of INR 40b for the energy projects.

Having done the ceremonial parts, Modi, as usual, got down to business. He promised continued support for Bhutan's economic growth and sustainability. He especially, declared support for Bhutan's 13th five-year plan with economic stimulus programme that marked India's commitment to helping Bhutan secure key development priorities and promote sustainable growth across sectors. He also expressed support for King Wangchuk's noble vision for the Gelephu Mindfulness City.

Modi confirmed that such projects align with India's Act-East Policy. Modi announced that immigration check post at Hathisar in Assam will be set up to facilitate easy movement of investors and visitors to this promising project at Gelephu. The King appreciated India's liberal assistance in building Gyalung academics. Bhutan acknowledged the consecration of the Royal Bhutan Temple in Rajgir, Bihar and India's decision to allocate land in Varanasi for Bhutanese temple and guest house.

Among other things, the contribution of India's teachers and healthcare professionals was appreciated in strengthening STEM Education and Medical Services in Bhutan. According to the Indian delegation, accompanying Modi, the phase-II of UPI will allow Bhutanese travelers to make payments in India by using local mobile apps by scanning the QR codes. Three MoUs were signed during the visit: First was on cooperation in renewable energy, second cooperation in health and medicine and third, institutional linkages between the Pema Secretariat, Bhutan and National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), India. MoUs for two railway links, one, from Gelephu to Kokrajhar and second, from Samtse, Bhutan to Banarhart, West Bengal signed in September this year were reviewed. Also, cooperation in Fertilizer, STEM, Fintech and Space was also reviewed.

India-Bhutan relations have been marked by historical depth and enduring friendship. It started with the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuk ascending the throne at the age of 16 in 1972. Following his father's policy of close ties with India, he planned his country's economy on the Indian model of Planning Commission. He constituted the Planning Commission for framing Five-Year Plans. With Indian support, he designed the First Five-Year Plan after taking over the reins of the country. He aligned Bhutan's currency (Ngultrum) with Indian Rupee in 1974 to facilitate bilateral trade and financial integration.

On diplomatic sector, he aligned his foreign policy with India's; for all external initiatives he kept India informed. Bhutan joined UN in 1971 and SAARC in 1985 as a Founding Member. Bhutan conducted border dialogues with China in consultant with Indian leadership. This process was followed on the basis of India-Bhutan Treaty (1949) which provided that Bhutan would be 'guided by India' in mutual cooperation and sovereign equality. However, this treaty was replaced by India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty (2007). On security, India supported Bhutan in eliminating insurgent camps from Bhutanese soil in a special project called Operation All Clear (2003).

On economic relations, hydropower cooperation has been the backbone of Bhutanese economy. With India's support consisting of a grant-loan model (60:40), these projects became the bedrock of Bhutan's export revenue and India's clean energy import. In this visit under discussion, Prime Minister deepened the hydropower cooperation. Modi announced 4,000 crore INR on concessional credit line for energy projects. He reaffirmed another 10,000 crore INR assistance for Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan for development across multiple sectors that include infrastructure, agriculture, finance, and healthcare.

The cultural ties have been a significant component of India-Bhutan bilateral relations. Bhutan has rich Buddhist heritage. The famous development economist E.F. Schumacher wrote his legendary essay called 'Buddhist Economy' after visiting Bhutan. This concept is currently used as 'compassionate economy' by scholars across the world. Another rich legacy of the Fourth King is the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) which is recognized globally as a commendable philosophy. It redefines development focused on human well-being, not just GDP.

Bhutan visit by Indian Prime Minister holds a critical security dimension. Bhutan buffers India and China. While Bhutan has intimate ties with India, it has territorial disputes with China. In 2017, Doklam's standoff highlighted the strategic importance of Bhutan as India militarily intervened to prevent China from building a road in a disputed area between China and Bhutan. Bhutan allowed Indian troops to enter its territory to resist Chinese incursions in Doklam. Beijing building the road in Doklam threatened India's 'Chicken Neck' which connects the entire North-Eastern States to the rest of India. The Chicken Neck which is also called Siliguri Corridor, a small stretch of land around the city of Siliguri in West Bengal about 20-22 kms at the narrowest section. Bhutan lies at the Northern end of the Corridor and has disputed borders with China. Chinese military was trying to come close to the 'chicken neck' through Doklam. This corridor also connects as a transfer point with Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sikkim (now in India). According to the Indian Army, the Siliguri Corridor is the army's strongest defensive line.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Everyone smiles in the same language."

- George Carlin

CAN INDIA BALANCE POPULATION EXPLOSION WITH GROWTH?



DR VARINDER SHARMA

In the 1970s, American researcher Dr. John B. Calhoun conducted a striking experiment known as "Universe 25", where mice were given everything they needed - food, water, shelter, and safety. Yet, as their population exploded, their society collapsed. Overcrowding led to aggression, isolation, and eventually extinction. This chilling study remains a powerful reminder that unchecked population growth and social disconnection can destroy even the most perfect environment.

India, now the world's most populous country, is at a critical juncture. The demographic dividend - the economic boom from a large, young workforce is a potential boon, but the ever-increasing numbers continue to strain resources and infrastructure, raising a fundamental question: Can we sustain the quality of life amidst the quantity of people? A stampede at a temple in southern India's Andhra Pradesh state that killed at least nine people and injured others a few days ago is an example of how we are handling crowds.

The sheer scale of India's population growth is staggering. In the 1941 Census, just before independence, the population of undivided India was around 318 million. The 1951 Census recorded the population of the Republic of India at approximately 361 million. Today, India's population has ballooned to over 1.4 billion, representing a massive increase that puts immense pressure on every facet of national life.

This population explosion has led to visible everyday struggles. From overcrowded urban clusters to even neighbourhood localities, the signs are clear: no parking space, chaotic crowds where queues are ignored, and a healthcare system where hospitals are frequently without beds for all patients. These micro-level incidents mirror a national macro-level crisis, exemplified by tragic events like stampedes in temples or public transit areas, where crowds become tragically unmanageable. The basic tenets of a comfortable, orderly life-space, resources, and civic amenities deteriorate with every unchecked addition to the population.

The topic of population control is politically sensitive, largely due to the shadows of the past. During the Emergency (1975-1977), a controversial mass sterilization campaign was spearheaded by Sanjay Gandhi under the leadership of his mother, the then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This aggressive policy, which often involved coercive tactics and forced procedures, led to a significant public backlash and contributed heavily to the electoral defeat of the Gandhi government in 1977. Since then, successive governments have been cautious, emphasizing that family planning must be entirely voluntary.

Despite the past, India has seen successful, voluntary family planning initiatives. The famous slogan "Hum Do Hamare Do"

(We two, ours two) was part of a national campaign created in the late 1960s to promote the small family norm. The image of a couple with two children, often represented by the inverted red triangle, became a cultural marker for family planning across the country. Today when we are almost 140 crore and there is no road ahead to control the population at least we can encourage people to go in for a maximum of three children though many are nowadays opting to have two and even one child norm.

In recent years, the conversation about legislative measures has resurfaced. The Indian government has not formally introduced a bill to put a universal sealing on birth control, but private member bills and proposals advocating for a two-child norm through incentives and penalties have been tabled in Parliament. These proposals generally aim to incentivize smaller families (e.g., in jobs, education, and subsidies) and disincentivize larger ones (e.g., disqualification from certain government posts).

An entirely different, but often linked, policy discussion involves the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). The UCC, as enshrined in Article 44 of the Constitution's Directive Principles, aims to replace the personal laws (based on religious scriptures) governing matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption with a single, common set of laws for all citizens, regardless of their religion.

While the UCC's primary goals are to promote national integration and gender equality, its proponents argue that it could also indirectly aid population control. By standardizing laws across all communities, the UCC could help reinforce a small-family norm across the social spectrum, aligning legal incentives with public health goals. The UCC would standardize marriage laws across all communities, enforce a uniform minimum age of marriage for all communities and enhance women's social and economic autonomy by granting women equal rights in property inheritance, divorce, and maintenance across all religions.

This empowerment is strongly correlated globally with better family planning and a preference for smaller families. These two streams of policy direct incentivization/penalization and indirect socio-legal reform form the heart of India's current strategy to manage its immense population. The impact of population policy on a nation's trajectory is undeniable, and the case of China is often cited.

Starting in 1979, China implemented the rigorous One-Child Policy to curb its surging population. While highly controversial due to its draconian enforcement, the policy is credited by some economists with contributing to China's rapid economic progress by initially creating a demographic dividend - a larger working-age population relative to dependents.

However, the policy has resulted in severe long-term consequences, including a skewed gender ratio and a rapidly aging population, forcing the country to reverse

the policy. China's experience shows that while population control can spur development, the methods must be humane and sustainable to avoid a future demographic crisis.

If the population growth rate continues to outpace the growth in resources and infrastructure, the consequences of the "population explosion" will be severe. This will create resource scarcity which will increase competition for basic necessities like water, food, and energy, leading to shortages and conflict. Environmental degradation which will be the result of higher demands for land, resulting in deforestation and intensified pollution of air and water bodies. A reduced per capita income and increased unemployment, as the number of job seekers vastly outnumber opportunities, fuelling poverty will create economic constraints.

Finally, overburdened healthcare and education systems, which we are seeing now will make quality services accessible only to a privileged few and lead to deteriorating public services. Controlling population is no longer just a matter of birth rates; it is about resource management, sustainable development, and ensuring dignity for every citizen. The future of India depends on a balanced, voluntary, and progressive approach that empowers families to choose a smaller family for a brighter future.

We need to incentivize population control and also penalise the defaulters which is the best example of carrot and stick policy. This is how India can balance between its resources and population and finally help people get quality life in a developed nation. First and foremost we need to announce subsidies for housing/land, give rebates on utility charges, increase pension contributions for civil servants and go in for soft loans for those who voluntarily comply with population control norms. And those who do not comply with norms must be disqualified from contesting local body elections and there should be a bar in applying for government jobs.

Similarly, those who comply with the norms must be given preference in education opportunities and healthcare for children and contrarily there should be a bar from accessing certain social welfare schemes and subsidies for the violators. The core idea is to shift from the coercive methods of the emergency era to a system of disincentivization.

Critics might argue that such penalties can be discriminatory and primarily affect the poor and marginalized communities who often lack access to education and family planning services, forcing them into difficult choices. Furthermore, some demographers warn that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is already declining naturally and that such drastic measures could lead to a future demographic problem, similar to China's aging population crisis, which is predicted to create a shortage of young workers but a beginning has to be made.

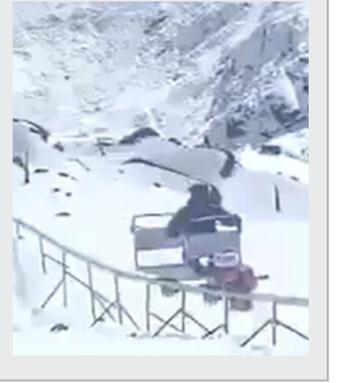
India's population explosion has be-

come a ticking time bomb, threatening the very fabric of our society and the balance between people and resources. Unless we act now through strict population control measures, better family planning, rural development, and awareness about responsible parenthood, the dream of a prosperous and sustainable India will remain out of reach.

This is possible under the regime of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is also working on the subject but needs country's support to take some tough yet popular decisions. It is time for policymakers and citizens alike to wake up to this harsh reality and take decisive steps to ensure that growth is not measured merely by numbers, but by the dignity, health, and well-being of every Indian.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Swadeshi innovation at 16,000 ft In Arunachal's Kameng sector, the Indian Army's Gajraj/4 Corps has engineered an indigenous high-altitude monorail system that carries 300+ kg per trip, ensuring vital supplies and even casualty evacuation when helicopters can't reach. A testament to Bharat's homegrown ingenuity strengthening our logistics and readiness in the harsh high Himalayas. Jai Hind! ~ Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region, Govt. of India.



Labour Codes: Building a Future-Ready Workforce

MS. JYOTI VIJ

India stands at the cusp of a historic transformation in its economic and labour landscape. The consolidation of over 29 central labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes is not just a legislative exercise—it is a step towards building a labour ecosystem that is modern, inclusive, and responsive to the realities of a rapidly changing economy. Labour reform has long been a pressing demand by the industry. With global supply chains integrating, technology disrupting industries, and new forms of employment emerging, India needs a framework that could both support business competitiveness and protect the rights and dignity of workers. The four Labour Codes—on Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions—seek to do precisely that by providing a unified and simplified system that reduces ambiguity and ensures greater equity.

Benefits for Employers
For enterprises, particularly in a competitive global environment, the Labour Codes offer much-needed simplification. Multiple compliances and overlapping definitions have been replaced with a clear and unified system. Digital filing, uniform wage definitions, and streamlined licensing processes reduce the compliance burden and bring transparency.

The reforms are especially significant for India's MSMEs and start-ups. By reducing compliance complexity and enabling single-window

clearances, the Codes empower smaller businesses to scale up quickly and participate more effectively in domestic and global markets. Importantly, provisions for fixed-term employment and modern dispute resolution provide businesses with the flexibility to grow and adapt without being hindered by procedural delays.

Equally significant is the decriminalisation of minor offences, which substitutes imprisonment with monetary fines for specific procedural infractions. This represents a progressive initiative to a more trust-based compliance environment, diminishes unnecessary litigation, and promotes a culture of self-regulation and collaboration between employers and regulators.

Benefits for Workers
For workers, the Codes reinforce the principle of fairness. The Code on Wages ensures universal minimum wages and timely payment of salaries, eliminating the possibility of arbitrary or delayed payments. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code strengthens workplace safety, mandates welfare facilities, and introduces periodic health check-ups. Social security benefits—including provident fund, gratuity, maternity leave, and insurance—are extended to a wider base of workers, bringing financial security to millions who were previously excluded. Interstate migrant workers, often invisible in regulatory frameworks, now find recognition and protection within the Codes. These provisions strengthen the social contract between employers

and employees, upholding the dignity of work.

Benefits for Gig and Platform Workers
Perhaps the most forward-looking provision is the formal recognition of gig and platform workers and aggregators. With nearly 8 million Indians engaged in the gig economy—a number expected to grow significantly in the coming decade—the Labour Codes provide a foundation for inclusive growth. The Code on Social Security provides protection through schemes that cover health, maternity, insurance, and old-age benefits. This is a landmark step that bridges the gap between traditional and new forms of work, ensuring that as technology reshapes the future of jobs, workers in emerging sectors are not left behind.

Benefits for Women Employees
The Codes are also a step forward in advancing gender equity in the workplace. They reaffirm the principle of equal pay for equal work, strengthen maternity benefits, and make provisions for crèche facilities. By easing restrictions on women's working hours—with necessary safeguards for safety and dignity—the Codes create opportunities for women to participate in sectors and shifts that were traditionally inaccessible. Providing the opportunity to work in high-paying job roles like mine work, operating heavy machinery, etc., also protects women from discrimination. At a time when India's female labour force participation is below global averages, such reforms are crucial to enabling women to contribute more fully to economic growth.

Benefits for Other Stakeholders

Beyond employers and employees, the Labour Codes also bring benefits to MSMEs and start-ups by simplifying compliance and enabling growth, while giving government agencies a modern framework for transparent implementation. For investors, a predictable and business-friendly labour regime enhances confidence in India's growth story. Trade unions gain clarity in recognition and negotiation processes, strengthening the framework for social dialogue. Ultimately, society as a whole benefits when work becomes safer, fairer, and more inclusive.

A Shared Journey Ahead
The Labour Codes are not the end of the journey but the beginning of a new chapter. Their success will depend on smooth implementation, coordination across states, and active participation by all stakeholders.

India is entering a critical decade where it must harness its demographic dividend and prepare for a future of work shaped by technology, globalisation, and sustainability imperatives. The Labour Codes provide the legal foundation for this transition—offering enterprises flexibility, workers' security, and social equity. If implemented in letter and spirit, the Labour Codes can strengthen India's position as a global economic powerhouse while ensuring that growth is inclusive, sustainable, and future-ready.

The author is the Director General, FICCI

Kuki-Zo MLAs, UPF-KNO reject report on joining popular govt

IMPHAL

A news report published by The Local newspaper on November 16, titled "Kuki-Zo MLAs decide to join formation of popular Ministry," has drawn strong objections from the United Peoples' Front (UPF), the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), and several Kuki-Zo MLAs, who have termed the headline misleading and factually incorrect.

The criticism comes a day after Manipur observed National Press Day, where concerns were raised about the spread of misinformation in the state. At the event, the Director of Information and Public Relations urged media organisations to prioritise verification over speed, cautioning that inaccurate reporting can heighten public tensions.

Responding to the newspaper report, both the UPF-KNO and the Kuki-Zo MLAs stated that no decision had been taken regarding joining any future "popular Ministry."



They clarified that no resolution was adopted on the matter and noted that several MLAs referenced in the report were not even present at the meeting mentioned.

In their statement, the UPF-KNO described the report as a misrepresentation, while the MLAs said it had caused unnecessary confusion by presenting assumptions as conclusions.

According to the clarifications, the primary focus of the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) conference held on November 15 was the community's ongoing political demand for a Union Territory with Legislature, or a Separate Administration.

Discussions on participation in any future government were described as preliminary in nature, with many representatives expressing reservations unless the Government of India provides a clear

position on the political aspirations of the Kuki-Zo people. No agreement or commitment emerged from the discussion.

A local newspaper claim that an understanding had been reached regarding the MLAs' participation in a future Ministry was described by the groups as unfounded and inconsistent with the proceedings of the meeting.

Kuki-Zo leaders have cautioned that inaccurate reporting risks fuelling misunderstandings at a time when political negotiations remain sensitive. They appealed to the media to uphold journalistic principles of verification and accuracy.

Reaffirming their position, the Kuki-Zo MLAs, along with UPF-KNO and other community bodies, stated that their priority remains the demand for a Union Territory with Legislature or Separate Administration. They clarified that any suggestion that they have agreed to join a popular Ministry is incorrect and does not reflect the discussions held.

'Vulgar and shameful': Gaurav Gogoi condemns Assam minister's 'gobi farming' post



GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has sharply criticised Assam Cabinet minister Ashok Singhal for sharing a cauliflower-farming image after the Bihar election results, saying the post represents "a shocking new low in political discourse".

Singhal had posted a photograph of cauliflower fields with the caption, "Bihar approves gobi farming". Gogoi said the phrase is "widely associated with the Logain massacre of 1989", during

which over a hundred Muslims were killed in Bhagalpur and "their bodies concealed under cauliflower plantations".

Gogoi wrote that using such imagery in a political context was "both vulgar and shameful". He argued that invoking a tragedy of this scale "shows how far some are willing to descend in public life".

He further alleged that this mindset is encouraged by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, whom he accused of harbouring "a hatred for Indian minorities". Gogoi contrasted this with Assam's cultural heritage, saying the state is the land of "Mahapurush Sankardev, Lachit Borphukan and Azaan Pir".

Looking ahead to next year's Assembly election, he added that "the people of Assam will end the rule of hate and greed".

Security forces arrest three insurgent cadres, major cache of arms recovered in state

IMPHAL

In a series of coordinated operations across Manipur, security forces on Sunday, November 16, arrested three active cadres belonging to different insurgent groups, along with the recovery of a substantial cache of arms and ammunition.

In the first operation, security forces detained Khurajam Shyam Singh alias Mangal (37) from his residence at Lairesanjik Mamang Leikai, Imphal West. Authorities said he was actively involved in extortion in the valley region and in the illegal settlement and mediation of cases related to crimes against women. One mobile phone was seized from his possession.

In a separate operation, personnel arrested Nongmaithem Bidyasagar Singh alias Kapchaoba (24) from Khumbong Awang Leikai under Patsoi Police Station, Imphal West. He allegedly extorted and threatened truck drivers along the Jiribam-Imphal route, often snatching their keys and documents. A mobile phone and an Aadhaar card were recovered from him.

In the most significant arrest of the day, a joint team of Manipur Police, CRPF, and Assam Rifles apprehended a self-styled Major of the RPF/PLA, Kojiam Ibochouba alias Inao/Sumo/Somo/Pansareng (45), from a rented house in Sagolband Nepra Menjor Leikai under Imphal Police Station.

He is a wanted insurgent in connection with the 2017 ambush on the 4 Assam Rifles unit at Sajik Tampak.

Assam CM set to sign MoU with British Museum to bring back Vrindavani Vastra under loaning arrangement

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that the state is poised for a historic milestone as it prepares to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the British Museum to bring the sacred Vrindavani Vastra back to Assam under a loaning arrangement. Calling the 18th-century textile a "timeless masterpiece" woven with devotion by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev, the Chief Minister said the artefact embodies the soul of Assam's Vaishnavite culture through its divine and intricate craftsmanship. "Our Government has begun the process to bring this historic treasure back to Assam, where it truly belongs," Sarma stated.

In a post on X, he wrote, "Tomorrow is a big day for Assam and Bharat. We are signing an MoU with the British Museum so that the sacred Vrindavani Vastra can

be brought back home under a loaning arrangement. Vikas and Virasat continue to be pillars of our governance agenda." Sharing details of his ongoing visit to the United Kingdom, the Chief Minister said he spent his first day in London exploring the city's waterfront. He added that Assam is currently working to transform the Guwahati riverfront by adopting global best practices. Sarma also interacted with members of the Indian diaspora, praising their contribution and dedication abroad. The initiative marks a significant step forward in the state's long-standing efforts to bring home the Vrindavani Vastra, a revered creation of 15th-century saint and reformer Srimanta Sankardev. The Chief Minister had earlier announced notable progress in this mission in August, reaffirming the government's commitment to preserving Assam's cultural heritage.

Meghalaya CM launches Japanese language training programme to boost overseas jobs

SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday inaugurated a six-month Japanese Language Training Programme aimed at preparing local youth for overseas employment opportunities, particularly in Japan.

The programme, organised by the Meghalaya State Skill Development Society under the Labour and Skill Development Department, was launched at the Mount View Building in Barik.

Labour Minister Methodius Dkhar and ASEAN Group Co. Ltd Chairman and CEO Nishikawa Toshiaki were present at the event, along with Japanese tutors and officials from MSSDS. Speaking at the launch, Sangma said the state has chosen to build a focused and long-term partnership with Japan across multiple sectors.

He noted cultural and culinary similarities between



Japan and the Northeast, and pointed out that Japan has been a consistent partner in India's development efforts. Sangma highlighted the

state's growing engagement with Japan in the healthcare sector.

Only two nurses from Meghalaya were sent to Japan

two years ago, he said, and the number has now risen to 37, with more expected to join soon.

These nurses currently hold N4-level language certification and the government hopes to help them achieve N3 proficiency to secure higher salaries.

According to the chief minister, nurses working in Japan are sending home an average of Rs. 1 lakh each month, generating around Rs. 5 crore annually in foreign exchange for the state. He added that while earlier batches trained in Bengaluru for six months, students enrolled in the new programme will receive training in Shillong itself. Welcoming the Japanese tutors, Sangma assured that the state government would extend full support to ensure their comfortable stay in Meghalaya.

He urged the 86 registered trainees to make full use of the opportunity to upgrade their skills and enhance their prospects for employment abroad.

Meghalaya: KHADC reinstates probe into alleged land allotment to MLAs in Protected Forest

SHILLONG

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) has reconstituted a three-member inquiry committee to investigate allegations that Hima Mylliem allocated land to several MLAs and organisations in Law Syiem, an area designated as a Law Adong (protected forest) in 2014. The Shillong Times reported.

According to official sources, the committee initially formed in July had lapsed after the resignation of former Chief Executive Member (CEM) Shemborlang Rynjah, which led to the dissolution of the previous Executive Committee (EC).

The committee has now been reconstituted with the same members.

The reconstituted panel is chaired by John Dkhar, Joint Secretary of the Elaka Department, with Andy Syiem, Deputy Secretary of the Land



Department, and Sharai Lamare, Under Secretary of the Political Department, serving as members.

Sources said the committee has already begun collecting documents and information, and the probe is expected to take some time before a final report is submitted to the EC.

The inquiry will examine claims that certain MLAs, groups, and organisations were granted land within the protected forest.

It will also review the earlier EC's

decision to cancel an agreement and restore the custodianship of Law Mawpat to Hima Mylliem.

Powell Sohkhlet, Executive Member in charge of Elaka, had previously commended former CEM Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit and the late Syiem of Hima Mylliem, Latho Manik Syiem, for their role in managing Law Syiem and securing its declaration as a protected forest in 2014.

Reports indicate that former CEM Hispreaching Son Shylla revoked the

Law Adong declaration in 2019 following a directive from the Meghalaya High Court.

This came after a group of Myntris challenged the original agreement, with the court ultimately ruling in favour of Hima Mylliem.

The committee will also review findings from a recent on-site inspection conducted by the current EC under former CEM Shemborlang Rynjah.

During the inspection, the EC observed significant damage to the forest area, with parts of the land being used as graveyards by several churches.

While several boundary pillars were identified, ownership records and the procedures followed for the land allotments remain unclear.

The inquiry will determine whether the land was allotted freely or purchased from Hima Mylliem.

Court records show 11 Chakma individuals arrested under NDPS Act in Mizoram over 2 years

AIZAWL

A review of publicly available records on the websites of Mizoram's District and Sessions Courts shows that at least 11 individuals from the Chakma community were arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act between 2024 and 2025.

According to the court listings, those charged under the NDPS Act include Barun Chakma, Daniel Chakma, Dippu Chakma, Lotika Chakma, Nungngang Chakma, Sonatan Chakma, Diban Tongsangya and Sanjit Chakma, who were produced before the Aizawl District and Sessions Court.

Two additional arrests — Sanna Chakma and Punyasur Chakma, detained on June 19, 2025, with narcotics valued at over Rs. 10.43 crore, and Shanti Jeeban Chakma and Brighu Dhan Chakma, held on August 21, 2025, with drugs valued at Rs. 1.2 crore — are not yet reflected in the online case status, though both incidents were reported in local media.

The arrests mark a shift from previous years, as no Chakma individuals had been booked under the NDPS Act in Mizoram before 2024, according to the same court data.

Some activists and commentators have linked the recent arrests to alleged cross-border networks involving groups operating in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Local police sources, speaking informally, said investigations into several cases are ongoing and often span multiple jurisdictions.

However, officials have not publicly confirmed any organisational involvement, and no group has been named in official case documents.

Law enforcement agencies in Mizoram and neighbouring states continue to conduct joint operations targeting narcotics trafficking routes that crisscross the India-Bangladesh border region.

Authorities have reiterated that individuals arrested serve only as accused until cases are adjudicated in court.

Tripura CM urges ethical journalism, skill development workshops



Quest!

People tend to sneeze three times because one loosens up an irritant, the second gets it to the front of the nose, and the third gets it out.

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday said that maintaining political, social, and cultural harmony is one of

the foremost responsibilities of journalists, as they serve as the mirror of society.

Speaking at the inauguration of the National Press Day celebration organised by the ICA Department at the Sukanta Academy Auditorium, Saha said that accurate news dissemination is an art, and although journalism is a profession, it is best pursued with a sense of duty toward society.

This year's theme for National Press Day is "Safeguarding Press Credibility Amidst Rising Misinformation."

In his speech, the Chief Minister highlighted the crucial role of newspapers and journalists in upholding democracy. He said that freedom of speech and expression is the lifeblood of the media, but journalists must remain alert and responsible while reporting any news.

"With the growing prevalence of misinformation on social media, all stakeholders must work together to overcome this challenge. Journalists of Tripura are in no way inferior in quality when compared to journalists from other states," Saha said.

The Chief Minister urged

senior journalists to conduct monthly workshops to help young journalists enhance their skills and strengthen ethical journalism practices.

Referring to the murders of two journalists in the state in previous years, the Chief Minister assured that the government is continuously working to ensure justice for them.

Saha also reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring journalists' safety and dignity, noting that the ICA Department has already formed various committees for journalists' welfare and will implement their recommendations in phases.

Executive Editor of Tripura Times Newspaper, Manas Pal; Editor of Dainik Fariad, Shanit Debroy; Agartala Press Club President, Pranab Sarkar; ICA Secretary, Dr. P. K. Chakraborty; and ICA Director, Bimbisar Bhat-tacharjee, were present.

During the event, the organisers felicitated two senior journalists of the state, Pranamay Saha of Amarapur and Anupam Bhat-tacharjee of Kailashahar, with shawls, mementos, and financial honorariums.

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Akhilesh Yadav backs Rahul Gandhi on 'Vote Chori'



BENGALURU

Samajwadi party leader and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday backed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's allegations of vote theft.

During an interaction with reporters here, he said it was not just 'Vote chori' but 'dacoity'.

"It's not chori. Chori is a small theft. It's a dacoity. Openly done," Yadav said.

Gandhi had alleged that there was deliberate vote theft in the country and cited an instance of Aaland in Kalaburagi constituency where attempts were made to delete genuine votes of minorities and backward communities.

The Samajwadi Party leader was in Bengaluru to take part in 'Vision India: Startup Summit'.

On the Bihar Assembly election results, Yadav said

he has not done booth-level analysis yet, but he has seen the results.

"RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav is a popular face, and the Mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) was with a positive vision. Our vision is positive, while the opposite side's vision is division," the former CM said. About Uttar Pradesh, he alleged, "the 'double-engine government' resorted to communal politics."

Double-engine is referred to the BJP's rule in the Centre as well as in Uttar Pradesh.

On former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav's family feud involving Rohini Acharya, who shared a bitter experience in a post on 'X', Yadav said, "If any talks in our family, it becomes a public discussion but when the same happens in the BJP family, there is no discussion."

The SP leader said whatever happens in Lalu Prasad Yadav's family is their internal

matter, which takes place in every home.

At the Vision India summit, Yadav said there is an "emergency in the country".

"India is known for its diversity, but now just one ideology is being thrust upon people. They (BJP) have compelled us to discuss these issues at home. This government is creating trouble for 'Hindustania' (Indianism)."

The SP leader said the objective of Vision India: Startup Summit themed 'Plan, Development and Ascent' is to retain 'Unity in Diversity' in India, bring unity in the country, understand Indianism and preserve it.

"Our effort is to become progressive, positive, pragmatic and inclusive and take everyone along. We have to counter negativity through positivity by Vision India. We have to eradicate differences which is being sown in this country," the former CM said.

45 Umrah pilgrims from Telangana killed in bus-tanker collision in Saudi

DUBAI

A bus carrying Umrah pilgrims caught fire in Saudi Arabia after colliding with a tanker lorry, killing 45 people, including 20 women and 11 children. Immigration officials in Hyderabad confirmed that most of the victims were from the city.

The bus, carrying 46 passengers, reportedly had one survivor.

The accident reportedly occurred around 1:30 am IST at Mufrahath, between Badr and Madinah, on a wide road prone to high-speed traffic. Most passengers were asleep at the time, worsening the impact of the tragedy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident, extending his condolences to the bereaved families. "Deeply saddened by the accident in Madinah involving Indian nationals. My thoughts are with the families who have lost their loved ones. I pray for the swift recovery of all those injured. Our Embassy in Riyadh and Consulate in Jeddah are providing all possible assistance. Our officials are also in close contact with Saudi Arabian authorities," he said in a post on X.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar expressed deep shock, saying the Embassy in Riyadh and the Consulate in Jeddah were providing full support to Indian nationals and their families. "Sincere condolences to the bereaved families. Pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," he added.

Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said he was "shocked and deeply saddened" by the tragic accident. "My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families," Rijiju said in a post on X.

Hyderabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar confirmed that 45 people died in the accident, with only one survivor currently hospitalised.

Addressing reporters here, Sajjanar said a total of 54 people travelled to Jeddah from Hyderabad on November 9. They were scheduled to return on



November 23.

Of the 54, four people travelled separately by car to Madina on Sunday, while another four stayed back in Mecca.

He added that they were supposed to return to Hyderabad on 23rd of November. AIMIM MLA Majid Hussain said, "We have received information that over 40 people died in the accident, and we are coordinating with the families." A 24x7 control room has also been set up at the Consulate General of India, Jeddah, to assist the families of the victims and provide information. The toll-free number is 8002440003, 0122614093, 0126614276, 0556122301 (WhatsApp)

The Embassy in Riyadh and the Consulate in Jeddah are coordinating with the Saudi Haj and Umrah Ministry, local authorities, and the relevant Umrah operators. A team of consulate staff and Indian community volunteers is on the ground at hospitals

and accident sites to assist victims and their families, the Consulate said in a press release.

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has expressed profound shock over the horrific accident. He has directed the Chief Secretary and DGP to obtain full details. He has also instructed officials from the Ministry of External Affairs and the Saudi Embassy to be contacted to undertake immediate relief measures.

Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao has spoken with Coordination Secretary Gaurav Uppal in Delhi and issued directives. A control room has been set up at the Secretariat to monitor the situation and provide information to families.

Control Room Numbers:
+91 79979 59754
+91 99129 19545

Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi said that he was in touch with Abu

Mathen George, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Riyadh, who is gathering information about the incident. Owaisi also urged the central government to ensure the repatriation of the victims' bodies to India and to provide proper medical care for the injured. Transporting worshippers around Saudi Arabia's holy sites has frequently proven dangerous, particularly during the hajj, when roads can be chaotic with buses creating interminable traffic jams. Millions also visit Saudi Arabia for the umrah pilgrimage, which happens outside of the hajj period. In March 2023, a bus ferrying pilgrims to the holy city of Mecca burst into flames after a collision on a bridge, killing 20 people and injuring more than two dozen others.

And in October 2019, some 35 foreigners were killed and four others injured when a bus collided with another heavy vehicle near Medina.

INTERNATIONAL

Bangladesh tribunal convicts Sheikh Hasina of crimes against humanity, calls for 'maximum punishment'



DHAKA

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT-BD) on Monday found deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina guilty of alleged crimes against humanity committed during last year's student-led agitation that led to the fall of her Awami League government.

The three-member tribunal also pronounced its judgement against Hasina's two aides, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and former police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, over the same charges. Mamun was produced before the tribunal.

The tribunal, while pronouncing the verdict, observed that the accused deserved the "maximum punishment" for crimes against humanity

after prosecutors sought the death penalty.

The chief judge of the (ICT-BD) observed that Hasina had ordered the use of helicopters, drones and lethal weapons against protesters, a directive revealed in her conversation with the mayor of South Dhaka Municipal Corporation. Forensic examination deemed the CD and recording genuine.

The tribunal also observed that Hasina had ordered the killing of protesting students, noting that records of her conversation with the Dhaka University VC were available.

The judge remarked that Hasina had undermined the student movement, noting that she had referred to Dhaka University students as "Razakar" and that her remarks further enraged protesters.

He said that on the night following 14 July 2024, Hasina spoke to university vice-chancellor and said, "I have hanged Razakars, they [protesters] will also be hanged. None of them will be spared," adding, "I am ordering their arrest and action."

The judge further stated that Hasina, the former home minister and the ex-police chief had acted jointly to kill and suppress the protesters.

The tribunal also found that Hasina made hate speeches and, in a phone call with an aide named Shakeel, asked him to kill 226 people linked to cases filed against her.

Prior to the verdict, the interim government had beefed up security in the nation's capital and elsewhere on Monday. Paramilitary border guards and police were deployed in Dhaka and many other parts of the country as Hasina's Awami League party called for a nationwide shutdown Monday to protest against the verdict, calling the tribunal a "kangaroo court."

Hasina and Khan face charges of crimes against humanity for the killing of hundreds of people during a student-led uprising in July and August of 2024. The United Nations in a February report said up to 1,400 may have been killed in the violence, while the country's health adviser under the interim government said more than 800 people were killed and about 14,000 were injured. Both of them are being tried in absentia.

The tribunal last week fixed Monday for delivering the verdict as reports of explosions of crude bombs and arson led to the disruption of classes and transportation across the country after the "lockdown" called for by Hasina's party.

As the tribunal was set to convene Monday morning, the former ruling party called for the shutdown again, with Hasina in an audio mes-

sage urging her supporters not to be "nervous" about the verdict. Hasina has survived at least 19 assassination attempts during her decades-long political career since 1981.

The verdict comes amid local media reports that new explosions of crude bombs in Dhaka, including one in front of the house of an adviser, equivalent to a Cabinet minister, on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Dhaka's police chief Sheikh Mohammad Sazzat Ali issued a "shoot-on-sight" order if anyone attempts to torch vehicles or hurl crude bombs. The directive came as nearly 50 arson attacks, mostly targeting vehicles, and dozens of explosions of crude bombs have been reported nationwide over the past week. Two people were killed in the arson attacks, local media reported.

Authorities at the Supreme Court, in a letter to army headquarters on Sunday, requested the deployment of soldiers around the tribunal premises ahead of the verdict. The prosecution said the tribunal's deliberation of the verdict could be broadcast live on the state-run Bangladesh Television and other TV stations channels.

Hasina was ousted on Aug. 5 last year and fled to India. Bangladeshi Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus took over as the head of an interim government three days after her fall. Yunus vowed to punish Hasina and banned the activities of her Awami League party. Both Hasina and her party have called the special tribunal a "kangaroo court" and denounced the appointment of a lawyer by the state to represent her.

Yunus said his interim government would hold the next elections in February, and that Hasina's party would not get a chance to contest the race. Bangladesh's politics under Yunus has remained at a crossroads with limited signs of stability.

'A red line': Spat over Taiwan is threatening China-Japan ties



BEIJING

Less than a month into her term, Japan's conservative leader has stirred tensions with China by suggesting a Chinese move against Taiwan could prompt a Japanese military response.

China objects to the involvement of other countries in Taiwan, notably the United States, which is the main supplier of weapons to the self-governing island. Beijing claims it as its own and says it must come under its control. It says it's a domestic issue and "aredline" that others should not cross.

Speaking to a parliamentary committee, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said on Nov. 7 that a Chinese naval blockade or other action against Taiwan could be grounds for a Japanese military response. Her comments were stronger than those of her predecessors.

Previous prime ministers have expressed concern about China's threat to Taiwan but haven't publicly said how Japan would respond.

Takaichi later refused to retract her remarks but told the same parliamentary committee three days later that she would avoid talking about specific scenarios in the future.

Japan's new leader is a long-time supporter of Taiwan. She views China as a growing threat and has ordered an acceleration of plans to boost Japan's military spending. Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Friday that Japan's position on Taiwan

has not changed.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, shakes hands with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi ahead of their meeting in Gyeongju, South Korea, Oct. 31, 2025.

Takaichi's comments caused an uproar in China, with the foreign and defense ministries, the Taiwan Affairs Office and state media all weighing in.

Her remarks came as a surprise because tensions over Taiwan were not particularly high, said Wang Huiyao, the president of the Center for China and Globalization, a think tank in Beijing. "We can't just let the prime minister speak so openly at parliament," he said.

One of the first to speak out was China's consul general in Osaka, who said in a now-deleted social media post that China has no choice but to cut off an intruding "dirty neck." Motegi called the post "extremely inappropriate."

China's Foreign Ministry called in Japan's ambassador on Thursday to warn against any interference in Taiwan. The next day, Japan's Foreign Ministry summoned China's ambassador in Tokyo to complain about the social media post.

On Friday night, China took aim at Japan's tourism economy. It issued a notification advising against travel to Japan. About 7.5 million Chinese tourists visited in the first nine months of this year, the largest number from any country and about one-fourth of the total.

China's Education Ministry followed up with a warning to students on Sunday about recent crimes against Chinese in Japan, though it didn't advise them not to go.

Also on Sunday, China's coast guard announced that it was patrolling the waters around a group of uninhabited islands that both countries claim.

A bigger concern for Japan would be if China were to restrict the export of rare earth magnets, vital components in auto manufacturing and other industries. There was no immediate indication China was considering it.

Japanese officials are trying to calm the waters. Motegi said he planned to ask China to make "an appropriate response" to prevent a major impact on relations.

Japan's position is complicated by its post-World War II constitution, which bans its use of force except for defending its territory — the military is called the Self-Defense Force.

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe succeeded in expanding the military's mandate by winning parliamentary approval in 2015 of a law that allows Japan to come to the aid of an ally — most likely the US — in a conflict that is determined to be an existential threat to Japan. Takaichi, who rose in politics as a protégé of Abe, said that a Chinese move against Taiwan could qualify as a threat, setting off the ensuing firestorm. Another possible threat would be a conflict with North Korea that draws in the US, analysts say. Japan has previously not specified what would constitute an existential threat under the provision, which is called collective self-defense. Now, Tokyo doesn't want to withdraw Takaichi's remark, because it could narrow its options in a Taiwan crisis.

Backpedaling could also hurt the new prime minister's high public support ratings and her image as a hawk on China.

Contours of a Changing Homeland: Assam's Search for Stability Amid Shifting Demographics

Assam stands at a crossroads shaped by decades of complex demographic movement, cultural anxieties, and political contestation. This northeastern state-lush with rivers, forests, and layered memories-has long carried the weight of migration-linked apprehensions that stretch far back into colonial history. What appears today as a silent churn of identity is, in truth, the culmination of generations of unresolved questions about belonging, territory, and cultural survival.

Across Assam's public sphere, the debate is no longer confined to academia or political rallies; it has seeped into homes, marketplaces, community halls, and the quiet conversations that shape social anxieties. The question which rises repeatedly-sometimes softly, sometimes as a cry-is deceptively simple: Who belongs to Assam? And who does Assam belong to? The answer, however, remains profoundly complex.

A Century of Transformation: How Assam's Demographic Story Began

To understand Assam's present, one must look back to a past shaped by colonial engineering. When the British expanded tea plantations and administrative networks, they facilitated-and sometimes encouraged-migration from various regions. Labourers from central India, peasants from present-day Bangladesh, and traders from northern India dramatically altered the socio-economic landscape.

Post-Partition political upheavals intensified the movement. The newly created international border with East Pakistan introduced a porous frontier, making Assam vulnerable to sustained cross-border migration. Wars in 1965 and 1971, the birth of Bangladesh, river erosion, and agricultural opportunities all contributed to demographic inflows.

Thus, Assam's anxieties are neither sudden nor fabricated-they are born of lived realities that span generations.

Reading the Numbers: What Census Trends Reveal

Scholars often debate the interpretation of census data, yet certain patterns are unmistakable.

From 1961 to 2011, several lower Assam districts-including Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, and South Salmara-consistently registered population spikes higher than the state's average growth. Dhubri's 24% rise in 2001 and 22% in 2011, contrasted with Assam's overall 17% growth, remains one of the most frequently cited figures in policy circles.

Upper Assam districts, by comparison, saw far more modest increases, reinforcing long-standing perceptions of uneven demographic pressure.

Linguistic shifts further deepen the contours of concern. Assamese is still the largest linguistic group, yet the percentage of Assamese speakers has remained stagnant for four decades-48.8% in 1971 and 48% in 2011. Meanwhile, tribal languages in several pockets show signs of decline, often linked to land pressure, internal displacement, and demographic restructuring.

For a state where language is not merely a mode of communication but a marker of identity, such subtle shifts carry profound emotional significance.

Exploring the Debate: Two Competing Interpretations of Change

Assam's discourse on migration sits on two contested viewpoints.

1. The Cautionary Lens: Do Not Over-Interpret the Data

A range of scholars and civil society groups caution against leaning solely on census data to explain demographic anxieties. They argue:

"Fertility rates vary significantly across communities.

"Economic migration to riverine and agriculturally rich zones is natural.

"Internal mobility within the state contributes to localised spikes.

"River erosion, particularly along the Brahmaputra, forces large populations to move frequently, complicating population estimates.

Economists further note that migrant agricultural labour has played a crucial role in cultivating floodplains, restoring silted fields, and boosting food productivity, particularly in char areas.

From this standpoint, sensationalising demographic information risks stigmatising vulnerable communities, fuelling prejudice, and undermining the social cohesion Assam desperately needs.

2. The Ground-Reality Perspective: Lived Experiences Cannot Be Ignored

Yet, to dismiss the fears of indigenous communities is to overlook a different layer of truth.

For many tribal and ethnic groups-Bodos, Misings, Tiwas, Rabhas, Deoris-the concern is not abstract. It is tied to shrinking lands, pressures on traditional livelihoods, reconfiguration of local governance structures, and the visible alteration of electoral constituencies.

Land patterns in char areas, population changes in strategic border belts, and the transformation of once-homogenous villages contribute to a sense of cultural vulnerability.

These anxieties are not rooted in xenophobia but in everyday observation-what they see in their neighbourhoods, fields, markets, and census rolls.

When Judiciary Speaks: A Rare Warning

The judiciary, too, has taken note. The Gauhati High Court, in multiple observations over the last decade, flagged concerns about irregular migration. Its much-discussed remark in 2024, describing the process as a "silent and invidious demographic

invasion," was grounded in state records and field reports. It was not political rhetoric; it was a judicial acknowledgment of persistent structural vulnerabilities.

Such remarks reinforced fears in indigenous communities and shaped the discourse around border management and citizenship verification.

The Indigenous Question: Identity in a Fragile Ecosystem

In Assam, identity is not a matter of political convenience; it is a lived, intergenerational experience.

Bodo villages losing cultivation lands to erosion or encroachment

Mising settlements grappling with pressures on riverine farming

Tiwa and Rabha communities navigating shrinking autonomous spaces

Tribal youth worrying about declining use of ancestral languages

For these groups, cultural survival feels increasingly linked to territorial stability. Their institutions-Morungs, satras, village councils-are symbols of community continuity. When demographic pressures threaten land tenure or local governance, the fear of losing identity becomes deeply personal.

Humanity's Parallel Story: The Other Side of Belonging

And yet, Assam's story is not solely one of anxiety.

There is another narrative: of families who have lived in Assam for generations, who speak Assamese fluently, whose children attend local schools, who know no other homeland. For them, the idea of being viewed as foreigners or outsiders is both painful and unjust.

Many such families have built lives in the chars, in tea gardens, in riverbanks, or in small urban pockets. Their economic contributions-farming, fishing, labour, trade-are woven into Assam's growth.

To reduce them entirely to demographic categories risks eroding the inclusive spirit that gave Assam its rich, diverse identity.

Balancing these two emotional universes-indigenous fears and humanitarian considerations-remains one of Assam's hardest governance challenges.

Government Intervention: Policies That Seek to Restore Balance

In recent years, policy measures reflect an attempt to respond to long-standing demographic anxieties while trying to uphold constitutional fairness.

1. Strengthening Border Management

Efforts include:

"fencing vulnerable stretches of the Indo-Bangladesh border,

"deploying specialised riverine patrols,

"using drones and technological surveillance in char areas,

"enhancing inter-agency coordination in infiltration-prone zones.

For a state where rivers routinely swallow villages and redraw borders, these measures are not merely administrative-they are existential safeguards.

2. Land Governance Reforms

Reforms include:

"digitisation of land records to curb manipulation and fraudulent transfers,

"targeted eviction drives against organised encroachments,

"satellite-based monitoring of sensitive belts,

"formalisation of indigenous land rights.

While these steps attract criticism-especially regarding due process-they represent systemic responses to deeply rooted demands from local communities.

3. Development-Based Population Stabilisation

Instead of coercive methods, recent policies focus on:

"improving women's education,

"expanding maternal health programmes,

"enhancing socio-economic indicators in backward districts.

These development-centric interventions aim to address structural contributors to demographic imbalance while preserving human dignity.

The Citizenship Conundrum: Assam's Most Contentious Debate

No issue has shaped Assam's political memory as intensely as citizenship verification. The NRC Update



The National Register of Citizens (NRC), though plagued by administrative challenges, was rooted in the Assam Accord's historic promise to identify genuine citizens. The demand was simple: transparency and stability in citizenship documentation.

Yet, the process proved messy-millions found themselves in limbo, verification inconsistencies created confusion, and opposition voices questioned fairness.

The Government's New Moves

The state's push for:

"re-verification in sensitive districts,

"correction of documented errors,

"clear appellate mechanisms,

"transparent procedures for inclusion and exclusion

reflects an attempt to restore credibility to an exercise that was meant to bring closure but instead renewed anxieties.

Opponents fear selective targeting; supporters argue that the process is essential for Assam's demographic security. Both viewpoints underline the need for fairness, transparency, and due process.

The Ethical Imperative: Identity Must Not Become Hostility

For Assam to move toward stability, identity

preservation cannot translate into blanket exclusion. Similarly, humanitarian compassion cannot ignore indigenous vulnerabilities.

A balanced approach must:

"protect ancestral land rights,

"respect linguistic and cultural diversity,

"ensure transparent citizenship mechanisms,

"strengthen border management,

"uphold human dignity for all legal residents.

Equity-not alienation-should underline policy decisions. Sensitivity-not hostility-must guide political engagement.

Assam's social cohesion, already fragile from years of mistrust, cannot withstand further polarisation.

Toward a Shared Future: Crafting a New Social Contract

Assam's future depends on weaving together the narratives of all its people-indigenous tribal groups, Assamese-speaking communities, migrant workers, and long-settled families who consider the state their only home.

The path forward calls for:

"evidence-based policy, not rhetoric

"empathetic governance, not knee-jerk populism

"community dialogue, not parallel monologues

"legal clarity, not administrative ambiguity

If Assam can forge such a path, identity and inclusion need not be adversaries.

The challenge is monumental, but so is Assam's history of resilience. The state has survived colonisation, Partition, insurgency, ethnic conflict, and waves of migration. Its people have repeatedly rebuilt trust, redefined their boundaries, and reimagined their collective belonging.

Will Assam Remain Uneasy, or Step Forward with Confidence?

Assam's demographic question will not vanish overnight. Yet it need not forever define the state's destiny. With thoughtful policy, respect for ground realities, and genuine commitment to justice, Assam can reorient its narrative-not as a land caught in perpetual demographic fear, but as a state capable of accommodating both identity preservation and inclusive citizenship.

The real test lies not merely in guarding its past, but in imagining a future where all communities-indigenous and long-settled-feel secure, valued, and heard.

Assam now stands at a moment where its choices will shape generations. Whether it remains trapped in its unease or rises toward a confident tomorrow will depend on how it resolves the delicate question of identity, belonging, and coexistence.

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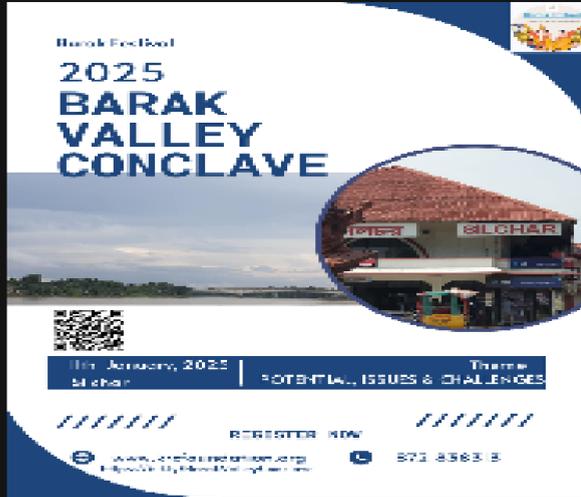
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11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders.
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10 Jan
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Barak Festival

Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion



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 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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10-12 JAN
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 Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & Colleges, Extension, Seminars, Public Speaking (College).
 In the online event, various students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.



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Musical Night | 11 JAN



10-12 JAN
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Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.



10-12 JAN
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 Full Blasted Demos | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



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'



11 JAN
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 Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Mizoram
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Barak Festival

Book Bank | 10-12 JAN
Book Club | 10-12 JAN
Painting Carnival | 10-12 JAN



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #NoLikeCampaign Book Bank at Silchar, Assam | Online



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



10-12 JAN
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