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PERSPECTIVE

"If you want to be great, walk the rope without a boss and without a net."

EC Clears Nominations of BJP's Ashok Singhal, Congress' Batash Orang for Dhekiajuli Seat

NEW DELHI
The Election Commission of India has cleared the nomination of BJP candidate and Assam minister Ashok Singhal from the Dhekiajuli constituency, resolving uncertainty following objections raised during scrutiny.

According to details published on the Commission's official website, all four nomination papers submitted by Singhal have been declared valid, formally allowing him to contest the upcoming Assembly elections.

The clearance comes after Congress candidate Batash Orang raised objections, alleging discrepancies in Singhal's nomination documents. The complaint cited missing identification details, suspected tampering of certain pages, and incomplete information in the filings, briefly casting doubt over the BJP leader's candidature.

Following deliberations and a review by the poll body, the nomination was accepted, indicating that the submitted documents met the required legal and procedural standards.

In a parallel development, the Election Commission also approved Orang's nomination, setting the stage for a direct contest between the BJP and Congress candidates in the Dhekiajuli constituency.

The status of both candidates has now been updated on the Commission's official portal, confirming their eligibility to contest.

WHO SAID WHAT



Even amid the global turmoil, India has consistently prioritized development. ~ Narendra Modi, PM

Crypto Transactions Under Scanner Ahead of Assam Polls; Agencies Tighten Surveillance on Illicit Funding

GUWAHATI

With the Assam Assembly elections approaching, enforcement agencies have stepped up surveillance over the suspected use of digital assets to channel unaccounted funds, amid concerns that cryptocurrency could be exploited to bypass conventional monitoring mechanisms.

Acting on intelligence inputs, agencies including the Assam Police, Income Tax Department, and financial regulators are closely tracking suspicious crypto wallets, cash movement, and transport corridors to prevent illegal election funding.

Officials said cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin pose a unique challenge due to their anonymity and ease of cross-border transfer. Investigators fear these features could be misused to evade cash seizure mechanisms and facilitate covert election expenditure.

"We are monitoring suspicious wallets and have strengthened cyber intelligence inputs.



There are indications of cryptocurrency usage, which are under investigation," a source said.

Modi to Head BJP's Assam Campaign with 4 Rallies in 40-Star Line-Up

GUWAHATI

The Bharatiya Janata Party has rolled out an expansive campaign strategy for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, deploying 40 star campaigners and scheduling a series of rallies and grassroots outreach programmes ahead of polling on April 9.

State BJP president Dilip Saikia said the campaign will be led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is slated to address four rallies, with the possibility of an additional event.

The list of key campaigners also includes Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union minister Nitin Gadkari, BJP's Northeast in-charge Nitin Nabin, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal, among others.

According to Saikia, the campaign calendar is "almost finalised", with senior leaders expected to fan out across the state to participate in rallies and public meetings.

The Home Minister is likely to attend six to eight campaign programmes, while around four events have been planned for Nitin Nabin.



Schedules for other senior leaders, including Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, have also been largely finalised.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is set to spearhead an intensive state-wide push, with rallies

planned in constituencies where BJP has fielded candidates, along with roadshows in around 10 seats.

In addition to large public gatherings, the party is focusing on micro-level outreach through programmes at panchayat, municipal, and ward levels. Campaign activities are also being planned in Bodoland Territorial Council areas and autonomous regions such as Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao.

Meanwhile, BJP candidate Ranaj Pegu said the Prime Minister is scheduled to visit Assam on April 1 to address a major rally at Gogamukh. The event is expected to cover multiple constituencies, including Dhemajri, Jonai, Sisiborgaon, Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur, and Majuli.

Party sources said the BJP will anchor its campaign around its governance record, development agenda, and welfare initiatives, while aiming for maximum outreach within a compressed campaign period.

Special emphasis is also being placed on first-time voters, tea garden communities, and rural constituencies through targeted grassroots mobilisation efforts.

Supreme Court of India Flags Delay in Legal Aid for Manipur Violence Victims, Seeks Urgent Compliance



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of India on March 24 expressed strong concern over delays in extending legal aid to victims of the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur, questioning the slow pace of implementation of its earlier directives.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna observed that despite clear instructions issued in February, there had been limited progress in ensuring timely legal assistance and access to key legal documents, including charge sheets.

The court directed both the state government and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to immediately appoint legal aid counsel familiar with local languages and to ensure that copies of charge sheets are provided to victims and their families without delay.

Emphasising the need for victim-centric justice, the bench said affected individuals should be offered a panel of lawyers to choose from. It also flagged concerns that in several cases, victims had neither been assigned legal representation nor received copies of

charge sheets, raising questions about procedural fairness.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing in the matter, informed the court that many accused persons were not appearing for hearings and that victims' families were struggling to access crucial legal documents. In response, the bench directed trial courts to ensure that charge sheets are effectively utilised in representing victims and to verify whether such documents have been duly furnished.

Attorney General R Venkataramani assured the court that the concerns raised would be addressed and that compliance would be ensured upon being brought to its notice.

The apex court also sought updated status reports from investigative and monitoring bodies, including the Manipur Special Investigation Teams (SITs) and a three-member oversight panel led by former High Court judge Gita Mittal, which has been supervising relief and rehabilitation efforts.

The court recalled its February 26 order directing the CBI and SITs to provide charge sheets to victims and ensure the availability of legal aid mechanisms. It had also mandated free legal assistance, including travel, accommodation, and representation for displaced victims, particularly those relocated outside the state.

The proceedings come amid ongoing judicial scrutiny of the ethnic violence that erupted in Manipur on May 3, 2023, which left over 200 people dead and thousands displaced. Concerns over access to justice and rehabilitation continue to remain central to the court's oversight of the situation.

Yumnam Khemchand Singh Meets Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan



NEW DELHI

Yumnam Khemchand Singh on March 25 called on Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan, according to an official statement.

The President's Office shared a photograph of the meeting on social media, confirming the interaction between the Manipur Chief Minister and the President.

Singh assumed office as the 13th Chief Minister of Manipur on February 4, nearly a year after the resignation of his predecessor N Biren Singh. The resignation had followed prolonged ethnic unrest in the state and the subsequent imposition of President's Rule.

Manipur has been grappling with violence since May 2023, with clashes between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities resulting in over 260 deaths and the displacement of thousands.

In a separate development, Syed Ata Hasnain, along with his spouse Sabiha Hasnain, also met the President. Hasnain was sworn in as the Governor of Bihar on March 14.

Singapore Coroner Rules Zubeen Garg's Death Accidental Drowning, Finds No Foul Play

GUWAHATI

A Singapore state coroner has ruled that the death of Assamese musician Zubeen Garg was caused by accidental drowning, dismissing any suspicion of foul play following a detailed inquiry into the incident.

Delivering the findings on March 25, State Coroner Adam Nakhoda endorsed the conclusions of the Police Coast Guard, stating that the investigation had been "comprehensive and thorough." The court found no evidence of coercion, force, or criminal intent in the events leading to the singer's death.

The coroner concluded that the 52-year-old's demise was the result of "an unfortunate and tragic accidental drowning," rejecting earlier allegations that had suggested possible wrongdoing. It was noted that no individual had pushed, restrained, or otherwise contributed to the incident. The incident occurred on September 19, 2025, in waters off Lazarus Island, a day before Garg was scheduled to perform at an event in Singapore marking 60 years of diplomatic relations between India and Singapore. According to the findings, Garg had joined a leisure yacht trip attended by around 20 people. The vessel was anchored between Lazarus Island and St John's Island, where participants engaged in recreational activities including swimming and kayaking.

The report stated that Garg initially entered the water wearing a life jacket but later removed it and declined repeated requests to use safety equipment before entering the water again. Witness accounts indicated that while swimming back to the yacht, he became unresponsive.

He was rescued and rushed to a hospital, where he was declared dead. An autopsy confirmed drowning as the cause.

Toxicology findings revealed a blood alcohol concentration of 333 mg per 100 ml over four times Singapore's legal driving limit indicating severe intoxication that may have impaired his judgment and physical coordination.

The court also examined Garg's medical history, including hypertension and epilepsy. While the possibility of a seizure prior to the incident was considered, the evidence was found insufficient to establish it as a contributing factor.

Reaffirming the absence of wrongdoing, the coroner noted that Garg had voluntarily participated in the yacht outing and entered the water of his own accord. Fellow passengers were found to have made genuine efforts to assist him, with no indication of negligence or malicious intent.

The inquiry also found nothing suspicious regarding his invitation to perform at the North East India Festival in Singapore, observing that organisers had taken steps to facilitate his visit.

While the Singapore proceedings have concluded with a clear ruling, the court noted that legal action has been initiated in India involving individuals present on the yacht, reflecting concerns raised by Garg's family.

The coroner acknowledged these concerns but reiterated that all available evidence pointed to an accidental drowning, with no external compulsion or criminal involvement established.

No central data on racial bias against people from Northeast, govt says in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI

The central government on Tuesday said that no centralised data is maintained on incidents of "hate speech, racial slurs, harassment and discrimination" against people from the Northeast, while pointing out that policing and public order fall under the domain of state governments. Responding to a question by Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, said states are responsible for prevention, detection, registration and investigation of crimes, and prosecution of offenders. "Police" and "Public Order" are state subjects as per the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The state governments are responsible for prevention, detection, registration and investigation of crime and for prosecuting the criminals through their law enforcement agencies," Rai said.

He said the National Crime Records Bureau compiles and publishes crime data received from states and union territories in its "Crime in India" reports, which are available till 2023. However, "data on incidents of

hate speech, racial slurs, harassment and discrimination against persons from the North-Eastern States is not maintained centrally", the minister said.

He added that existing legal provisions enable action against hate comments, gestures and racial acts, including those targeting people from the Northeast. Rai also outlined steps taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs to address concerns related to safety and discrimination. These include advisories to states and UTs, appointment of nodal officers to handle grievances, and sensitisation of law enforcement agencies.

He said initiatives such as the Special Police Unit for North East Region (SPUNER) in Delhi Police, along with dedicated helplines and email IDs, have been introduced to facilitate complaint registration and support for victims. Rai also said a three-member monitoring committee, set up following a Supreme Court judgment, regularly reviews issues of racial discrimination and grievance redressal concerning people from the Northeast living in different parts of the country.



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GOLDEN HOUR LIFE-LINE



The launch of the PM-Road Accident Victims Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment (PM-RAHAT) Scheme marks a significant intervention in India's road safety and emergency healthcare framework. At its core, the scheme addresses a long-standing and critical gap: the delay in providing immediate medical care to accident victims due to financial uncertainty and systemic inefficiencies. By ensuring cashless treatment up to Rs 1.5 lakh for seven days across more than 140 designated hospitals, the initiative has the potential to transform survival outcomes—particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir, where terrain and accessibility pose additional challenges.

The concept of the "Golden Hour" is central to understanding the scheme's importance. Medical science has consistently underscored that the first hour after a traumatic injury is crucial. It is within this narrow window that timely intervention—control of bleeding, stabilisation of vital parameters, and rapid transfer to a medical facility—can mean the difference between life and death. Unfortunately, in many accident cases, this window is lost not due to lack of willingness to help, but because of hesitation, confusion, and, above all, concern over who will bear the cost of treatment. This is precisely where PM-RAHAT emerges as a game changer. By removing the immediate financial burden from both victims and Good Samaritans, the scheme directly targets one of the biggest deterrents to prompt medical assistance. Passersby are often the first responders in accident scenarios, and while many do step forward to help, the uncertainty surrounding hospital expenses frequently leads to dangerous delays. The assurance of cashless treatment eliminates this hesitation, enabling quicker decision-making and faster evacuation of victims to healthcare facilities.

Equally noteworthy is the provision for incentivising "Rah-Veers"—individuals who assist accident victims. The Rs 25,000 reward, along with a Certificate of Appreciation, is not merely a monetary incentive but a policy signal that recognises and institutionalises civic responsibility. In a country where bystander intervention has often been hindered by legal and financial anxieties, such recognition can gradually reshape public behaviour.

For Jammu and Kashmir, the relevance of PM-RAHAT is even more pronounced. The Union Territory's rugged topography, coupled with long stretches of highways cutting through mountainous terrain, often results in severe accidents where immediate medical access is limited. In such conditions, the distance from the nearest tertiary care hospital can prove fatal. The empanelment of 140 hospitals under the scheme offers a decentralised network of emergency care, reducing dependence on a few overburdened Government institutions and bringing critical services closer to accident sites.

However, while the scheme's framework is robust, its success will depend heavily on implementation and awareness. The next logical step must be an aggressive public outreach campaign. Citizens need to know not only that such a scheme exists but also which hospitals are empanelled. Without this awareness, the very objective of saving time during the Golden Hour could be undermined. Clear signage on highways, integration with police control rooms, and dissemination through digital and traditional media are essential to bridge this gap. Interdepartmental coordination will also play a decisive role. The scheme mandates close cooperation between transport, health, police, and district administrations. In practice, this must translate into seamless communication channels, real-time response systems, and accountability at every level. Emergency helplines, ambulance services, and hospital readiness must function as a synchronised chain rather than isolated units.

Another aspect that warrants attention is data monitoring and evaluation. Given the high incidence of road accidents in Jammu and Kashmir, the scheme offers an opportunity to generate valuable data on response times, treatment outcomes, and mortality reduction. Within months of implementation, trends should begin to emerge, enabling policymakers to refine and expand the programme based on empirical evidence. It's a lifesaver initiative, long overdue.

In essence, PM-RAHAT is more than a healthcare initiative—it is a statement of governance intent. It reflects a shift towards proactive, citizen-centric policymaking that prioritises life-saving interventions over procedural constraints. By addressing both the financial and behavioural barriers to emergency care, the scheme has the potential to significantly reduce accident-related fatalities. For a place like Jammu and Kashmir, where every minute lost can cost a life, this initiative may indeed prove to be the thin line that turns tragedy into survival.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation." -Oscar Wilde

WAR MAY REDO UNION BUDGET EDIBLE OIL, PULSES, DRUGS TO BE DEAR



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Severely singled by the Iran firing missiles across West Asia, India may have to go for drastic changes in the Union Budget by the Monsoon Session as prices soar, gas crisis details households and businesses, FPI outflows near a record and the rupee has a mighty fall. The rupee forex reserves are down by \$ 7.1 billion.

The cost of shipping gone up by 300 to 400 per cent to hit commodity prices. Iran's targeting of Arab Gulf states has sharpened Delhi's concerns. India's equities in the Arab world – diaspora, remittances, energy, trade and institutional ties – are far deeper. India has been vocal about the "damage and destruction" there.

The blasting of Qatar gas facilities impacts India critically. So does US-Israeli attack on Iran's crucial petroleum island Kharg and preparations for US marine assaults. European nations like Germany, Norway and others are withdrawing their support to the war. US President Donald Trump has lambasted UK for not bidding his orders. The retreat of US ships Abraham Lincoln and Gerald Ford has added to the criticality. Iran's missiles are hitting critical US establishments hurting its companies like Exxon and others.

Europe is worried about its energy security as US sanctions already closed access to the Russian oil. Even India has reduced purchases from Russia. The developments are likely to hit India's expenses, needing cut in constructions in the railways, transport, office and other sectors, look for a new energy policy with less dependency on petroleum as also inflation likely to hit the roof impacted by the rising global prices not only of fuel but most essentials.

It is likely to call for a revision of the Rs 5-lakh crore budget allocations as financial and economics dynamics changes despite India safely keeping off the shadow of the war and supporting the US-Israeli initiative. A redraw through a supplementary budget in the monsoon session could be more than a reality. Sectors like energy and defence may gain, while aviation, paints, and oil marketing companies face pressure.

The government might resort to more borrowings as also tighten the belt for development and welfare allocations. The country may have to rethink on its reconstruction activities of the railway stations, various government buildings and may be many transport and other activities like the suburban metro network and the glamorous bullet train.

The present borrowings are of about Rs 17 lakh crore. Interest rates for commercial borrowing are also rising making repayments expensive. The government has, meanwhile, announced a Rs 1000 crore war chest to meet the rising shipping and insurance expenses across the world. The impact still is uncharted.

The present Union Budget is to be formally passed by Parliament in a few days. Despite some relief in gold price fall of 7 percent, the country using it as an alternate currency for foreign trade payment, as the rupee falls to Rs 93.7 to a dollar. The surprise rise of the dollar may upset many calculations.

Imports have been falling during the last two years. The customs duty collections witnessed a notable decline, dropping approximately 7 percent year-on-year between April and November 2025 (FY26) to around Rs1,429 billion, compared to Rs ,541 billion, also a fall, during the same period in 2024.

Customs duty collections in India for 2024-25 remained flat, projected at Rs 2.33 trillion compared to previous years, reflecting a stagnant trend rather than a sharp fall, while their share of GDP declined to 0.7 percent. It could be more acute this year. Overall, revenue collections could be hit as also there could be more demands for relief and incentives.

Edible oils, Pulse, Pharma to soar. It is likely to impact imports of edible oil, fertiliser, pulses, gas, pharma raw materials, health care, helium-based MRI, air-conditioners, cars, trucks and many other products. Even imported electronic goods, chips, electric vehicles, batteries and other items are also to have inflated prices. It can increase electric generation, governance and transportation costs by several notches.

The higher premium for shipping insurance has jolted the traders. The demand for war coverage has heavy cost. Industry can expect some relief with the Rs 1000 crore war chest but actuals may be more.

Every day the meter is ticking. Like a time bomb. Shipping giants are billing Indian exporters up to \$3,000 per container in war surcharges — on cargo that sailed before the war began — as the Strait of Hormuz shuts down. Average premium rates have increased from 0.3 to 3 percent.

India's economic links with West Asia run deep: the region accounts

for 17 percent of India's exports, supplies 55 percent of its crude oil and generates 38 percent of its remittances, according to Jefferies, a brokerage firm. The fallout for India could show up in four places: energy, remittances, its Gulf diaspora and the loss of strategic Iranian port, Chabahar.

Gulf tensions have triggered a shipping crisis, with major carriers imposing war surcharges of up to \$3,000 per container—even on cargo already at sea—causing a 300-400% spike in freight costs. Indian exporters, especially small firms, are hardest hit as flat charges often exceed cargo value. Shipments remain stranded at Gulf ports, with no legal or regulatory relief due to force majeure protections and insurance gaps. Perishables risk spoilage, threatening farm prices, while payment delays could spark RBI compliance issues and working capital stress.

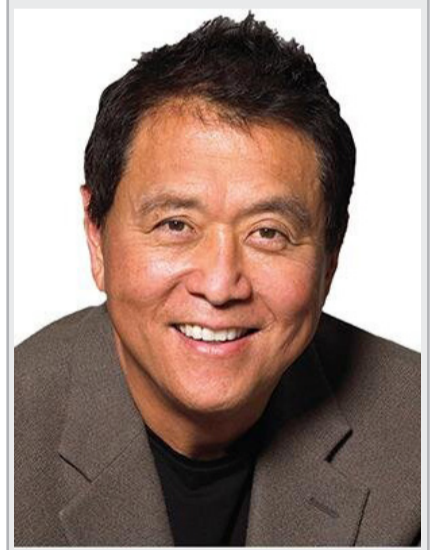
Despite rhetoric on India-Iran ties, relations have long been constrained by Iran's global isolation, pushing India to deepen engagement with key Gulf states—making regional instability a far greater concern for Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reluctance to criticise Israel during his recent visit, just days before the strikes, risks eroding India's perceived neutrality, something Iran is unlikely to overlook, observes former Indian ambassador to Iran, KC Singh.

The coming days may have more trouble and increased financial rigours for India, including further job and production losses. It's a difficult situation and the country has to chart out the new course during such turbulence.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

THE 5-Cs: How to destroy a child's life with money. I have met many parents who destroy their children's lives with money.... The parents give their child or children the 5-Cs 1: CASH: they give their children money never expecting them to earn their money. 2: COLLEGE: They pay for their child's college education. 3: CAR: They purchase their child's car, covering the gas, insurance and repair expenses. 4: CONDO: They buy their child's first home. 5: CASH: They set up a Trust Fund for their child so their child never learns to budget, sacrifice, and invest for the future. The child gets married and live happily ever after.... That is why many family fortunes are gone by the third generation. First Gen builds the fortune. Second Gen enjoys the fortune. Third Gen loses the family fortune. Take care.....

~ Robert Kiyosaki, Author, Entrepreneur, Investor



'Wild Theory' on National Security: Gaurav Gogoi Rebuts Himanta Biswa Sarma's Pakistan Link Claims

GUWAHATI

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on March 25 strongly rejected allegations by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma linking him and his wife to Pakistan, describing the claims as a "wild theory" and accusing the BJP leader of trivialising a serious national security issue.

Addressing reporters, the Jorhat MP drew a distinction between the accusations levelled against him and those made by the Congress against the Chief Minister. "There is a difference between what Sarma is saying and what I am saying against him - his is a 'wild theory' which exists only in his head, and it relates to something very serious as national security," Gogoi said.

He maintained that the Congress's allegations against Sarma re-



late to issues such as "family, wealth, corruption, and the benefit that the government machinery is giving to his wife's company," asserting that these claims are backed by publicly available information and ongoing legal scrutiny.

In contrast, Gogoi termed the allegations against him as "fiction," accusing the Chief Minister of "peddling national security as a wild theory" for political purposes. He stressed that national security should remain above partisan politics and said those holding high office must exercise restraint and responsibility.

The remarks come after Sarma alleged links between Gogoi's family and Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, prompting the constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to examine the claims.

Gogoi described the episode as reflective of the Chief Minister's "insecurities," claiming it showed "how far he can go to splash mud on something so serious." He added that the controversy had, however, strengthened his family, noting that his wife had faced the allegations with resilience.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha further alleged that while the Congress has addressed repeated questions on the issue, the Chief Minister has not responded to concerns regarding the alleged allocation of public funds to his wife's company.

Accusing the state government of fostering a climate of fear, Gogoi claimed dissent was being curtailed. "If you criticise this government, you are put in jail or cut off from schemes. This is not the politics of

democracy," he said.

Looking ahead to the Assembly elections, Gogoi expressed confidence that voters would prioritise "moral courage." He also invoked the legacy of former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, stating that people continue to remember his role in restoring peace and stability in the state.

On the emerging opposition alliance comprising parties including the Indian National Congress, Rajar Dal and Assam Jatiya Parishad, Gogoi said he was satisfied with the outcome despite initial delays in seat-sharing negotiations.

"Never before has the Congress been part of such a rainbow coalition," he said, adding that the alliance has generated significant public interest, with constituent parties complementing each other ideologically.

Mizoram Reports 145 TB Deaths, 2,275 Cases; TB-Free Village Drive Gains Ground

AIZAWL

Mizoram recorded 145 deaths due to Tuberculosis over the past year, alongside 2,275 new cases, highlighting the continuing public health challenge in the state even as efforts to build TB-free villages gather pace.

Official data shows that of the total cases detected, 1,364 patients were male and 911 female. Health authorities also identified 140 cases of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), while 267 patients were diagnosed with TB co-infected with HIV. District-wise, Aizawl accounted for the highest number of cases at 1,569, followed by Lunglei with 155 and Kolashib with 138 cases. Of the total cases reported in 2025, 1,900 were detected in government health facilities, while 375 were diagnosed in private institutions. Fatalities linked to tuberculosis have shown a rising trend over recent years. The state reported 31 deaths in 2020, which increased to 46 in 2021, 87 in 2022, 119 in 2023 and 136 in 2024, before reaching 145 in the latest count. Despite the burden, officials said a "healthy competition" is underway across Mizoram to achieve TB-free status at the village level. In 2025, 150 villages qualified for TB-free declaration. Among them, 74 villages have sustained TB-free status for one year, 58 for two consecutive years, and 18 villages for three years. In Aizawl district alone, 19 villages are eligible for TB-free certification, with four maintaining the status for two consecutive years. The developments coincide with the observance of World TB Day. State Health Minister Lalrinpuii described the emergence of TB-free villages as a significant milestone, attributing progress to coordinated efforts by government agencies, churches and local communities.

Newborn's Mutilated Body Found Near Graveyard in Silchar, Probe Underway



OUR CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR: In a disturbing incident, the mutilated body of a newborn baby was discovered near a graveyard in the Kanakpur-Khalpar area of Silchar on Monday, triggering shock and outrage among local residents.

According to reports, locals spotted the severely decomposed remains at an abandoned spot close to the graveyard. A significant portion of the body was allegedly eaten by stray dogs or

other animals, indicating that it had been lying there for some time.

Police reached the spot soon after being informed and recovered the body. The remains have been sent for post-mortem examination to determine further details, including the cause of death.

Preliminary suspicion among locals suggests that the newborn may have been abandoned at the site two to three days ago, possibly to avoid social stigma. However, police have not confirmed these claims and said an investigation is underway.

The incident has raised serious concerns in the area, with residents demanding strict action and measures to prevent such inhuman acts.

Yumnam Khemchand Singh Urges Inter-Community Unity for Lasting Peace in Manipur

IMPHAL

Yumnam Khemchand Singh has called for unity and mutual coexistence among communities in Manipur, stressing that lasting peace and development in the state depend on collective harmony.

Speaking at a commemorative event marking the Anglo-Manipuri War at Bir Tikendrajit Park, the Chief Minister said that Meiteis, Nagas, Kukis and Meitei Pangals together constitute the identity of Manipur.

He emphasised that the foundation of the state lies in the unity of its diverse communities, noting that different groups have historically coexisted while safeguarding Manipur's territorial and cultural integrity.

Highlighting the role of various communities, Singh said all 36 recognised groups in the state have stood together through different phases of history. He urged citizens to preserve and strength-



en this tradition of togetherness in the present context.

The Chief Minister also paid tribute to martyrs, freedom fighters and unsung heroes, offering

floral respects and observing a two-minute silence during the programme.

The event was organised by the Justice Committee on Anglo

Manipuri War-1891 Martyrs and Freedom Fighters of Kangleipak and was attended by representatives of multiple communities as well as students.

Gaurav Gogoi's Declared Assets Rise to Rs.7.57 Cr, Wife Holds Major Share

GUWAHATI

Gaurav Gogoi, president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, and his wife Elizabeth Clare Gogoi have declared combined assets of ₹7.57 crore in 2026, up from 4.66 crore in 2024, according to his nomination affidavit.

The affidavit shows a significant rise in movable assets, particularly in the name of his spouse. Gogoi's movable assets increased to ₹2.59 lakh from ₹38.30 lakh, while his immovable assets rose marginally to 2.49 crore from 2.25 crore. Elizabeth Clare Gogoi, who does not own immovable property, reported a sharp jump in movable assets to ₹4.36 crore from 2.03 crore.

The Jorhat MP, contesting his first Assembly election, declared 54,700 in cash and ₹30.14 lakh in bank deposits. His wife reported



27,180 in cash and around ₹1.50 crore in bank holdings, including accounts in the United Kingdom.

The affidavit also notes a pending case against Gogoi at Basistha

police station in Guwahati, linked to alleged obstruction and assault of government officials during the Congress's 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' in January 2024.

In terms of investments, Gogoi has ₹11.47 lakh in bonds, shares, and mutual funds, along with 32.68 lakh in postal and insurance instruments. His wife has 47.12 lakh invested in market-linked instruments and 1.04 crore in postal and insurance savings. She also holds Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) savings of 57.25 lakh and a UK pension valued at ₹13.24 lakh.

While Gogoi has not declared any jewellery, his wife owns 331 grams of gold worth 46.12 lakh, silver valued at ₹11.36 lakh, and diamonds worth 3.65 lakh. The couple also owns three vehicles—two cars registered in Gogoi's name worth over ₹17 lakh, and one car owned by

his wife valued at ₹2.71 lakh.

Neither Gogoi nor his spouse owns agricultural land. However, he holds a one-third share in two properties in Guwahati, including a three-storey residential building valued at ₹95 lakh, and an inherited flat in Vasant Kunj, Delhi, estimated at ₹1.54 crore.

The affidavit lists Gogoi's income source as his salary as a Member of Parliament, while his wife is employed as a senior consultant with a policy advisory firm. Their minor children also have savings in fixed deposits and bank accounts.

An engineering graduate with a Master's degree in Public Administration from New York University, Gogoi enters the Assembly election fray with a notable increase in declared assets over the past two years.

Ajmal Declares Rs169 Cr Assets in Poll Affidavit, Wealth Sees Sharp Rise Over Decade



GUWAHATI

Badruddin Ajmal, president of the All India United Democratic Front, has declared total assets worth over 169 crore in his election affidavit filed for the Assam Assembly polls, reflecting a significant rise in wealth over the past decade. Contesting from the Binnakandi seat, Ajmal disclosed movable assets of approximately 52.43 crore and immovable assets valued at around 149.12 crore. His liabilities stand at over 4.45 crore, largely comprising loans from financial institutions.

The affidavit also provides details of assets held by his spouse, Rizwaana Badruddin Ajmal, who has declared movable assets worth about 31.08 lakh and immovable assets valued at approximately 6.82 lakh.

In terms of income, Ajmal reported earnings of about 3.21 crore for the financial year 2024-25, while his spouse declared an income of 49,950 during the same period. A

comparison with previous election affidavits indicates a steep increase in Ajmal's net worth over the years. Around the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, he had declared assets in the range of 44-50 crore. By 2019, this had nearly doubled to between 78-90 crore, and has now crossed 169 crore.

The growth in wealth is largely attributed to a substantial rise in immovable assets, alongside investments in business ventures, shares, bonds, and other financial instruments. His portfolio includes real estate holdings across multiple locations such as Hojai, Guwahati, and parts of Karnataka.

The affidavit also mentions one pending criminal case against Ajmal, related to alleged objectionable remarks, which is currently under investigation.

On the educational front, Ajmal has stated his highest qualification as matriculation from Darul Uloom Deoband.

Sewli Mohilary Declares Rs. 23.5 Cr Assets, 30+ Vehicles and Bank Accounts in Poll Affidavit



GUWAHATI

Sewli Mohilary, candidate of the Bodoland People's Front from the Kokrajhar (ST) constituency, has declared assets worth approximately ₹23.53 crore in her nomina-

tion affidavit for the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, along with liabilities exceeding ₹9.12 crore.

The affidavit reveals a wide-ranging portfolio of assets, including substantial landholdings, financial investments, and an extensive fleet of vehicles linked to business activities. Her movable assets are valued at around ₹30.51 crore, while her spouse, senior BPF leader Hagrama Mohilary, has movable assets worth ₹3.66 crore. Immovable assets held by Sewli Mohilary are estimated at ₹23.53 crore, with her spouse declaring properties valued at ₹5.49 crore.

A significant portion of her wealth is concentrated in land and commercial properties across Kokrajhar, Baksa, and Chirang districts, including buildings and plots in Kokrajhar town and adjoining areas. The affidavit also details a diverse investment portfolio comprising bank deposits, fixed deposits, mutual funds, insurance policies, and postal savings instruments.

Mohilary has declared cash in hand of ₹31.69 lakh, while her spouse holds ₹5.55 lakh. Her investments include over ₹1.11 crore in Kisan Vikas Patra, ₹29.34 lakh in insurance policies, and ₹40 lakh in private lending. She also owns gold jewellery weighing around

220 grams, valued at approximately ₹32.5 lakh.

The disclosure highlights ownership of more than 30 vehicles and heavy machinery, including trucks, tippers, tractors, construction equipment, and a high-end SUV. Additional assets include plant and machinery worth over ₹12.59 crore and a fishery business valued at ₹19.74 lakh.

On the liabilities front, Mohilary has reported loans totalling ₹9.12 crore from banks and financial institutions, including borrowings from UCO Bank, along with vehicle loans and other debts. Her spouse has liabilities amounting to ₹1.13 crore, in addition to some private borrowings.

In terms of income, Mohilary reported earnings exceeding ₹9.33 crore for the financial year 2024-25, while Hagrama Mohilary declared an income of ₹62.89 lakh.

The affidavit states that she has no pending criminal cases or convictions. Academically, she holds a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Pune.

With extensive business interests and significant financial disclosures, Mohilary emerges as a key contender in Kokrajhar, with one of the most detailed and high-value affidavits among candidates in the region.

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‘Cat is out of the bag’: Bengal CM Mamata hits out at EC on BJP seal row



KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that the purported BJP rubber stamp on a communication of the Election Commission proved beyond doubt which party was controlling the poll watchdog from backseat.

A political row erupted on Monday after a March 2019 letter from the EC was found carrying the seal of the BJP's Kerala unit.

"It is now clear from this BJP rubber stamp on EC notification who is running the commission from behind. The cat is out of the bag," Banerjee told reporters at the Kolkata airport before boarding a flight to Bagdogra in north Bengal, where she is scheduled to commence election campaigns.

She held up a newspaper report on the row to back her claims of the poll panel's "lack of neutrality" in conducting the assembly elections. "There's no need to play your games from behind the curtains. Come out in the open and fight us face to face," the CM said, without naming the EC.

Banerjee alleged that the EC's move to transfer the Nandigram BDO — an officer she indirectly claimed was close to Suwendu Adhikari — to Bhabanipur, the seat where the BJP leader would take on Banerjee in the upcoming polls, reeked of a political conspiracy.

"On Monday, the EC reshuf-

fled 73 returning officers of the state. Earlier, they transferred out some 70 top IAS and IPS officers of Bengal, including the chief secretary, home secretary, the DGP and Kolkata CP. And now we know which party is pulling strings from behind," she said.

"This is not a clerical mistake, it was done with a deliberate political intention," Banerjee claimed, refuting the EC's reported response that it was a human error. She claimed that the communication was not meant only for Kerala but was addressed to the chief electoral officers of all states and union territories.

Alleging that the development put a serious question mark on the poll panel's impartiality in conducting the elections, Banerjee urged all parties to unite and fight the "attempt to impose one-party rule in India."

"It doesn't matter if opposition parties belong to the Right or Left ideologies. I request them to come together and fight against the dictatorship, autocracy and protest the one-party rule of the government and its agencies. I urge them to protest in the country's interest and ensure free and fair polls," she said, adding her call was not to elicit support but to "save democracy."

Questioning the EC's midnight hour publication of the first supplementary list late on Monday, Banerjee alleged that even hours later, people do not

know whether they are included in the rolls or deleted from it because hard copies of the list are yet to be put up at district, block or booth offices.

"Two more people died by suicide on Monday, taking the total SIR-induced death toll to nearly 220," she said and claimed that names were added to the rolls as a fallout of her petition in the Supreme Court.

Banerjee questioned the delay in the publication of the rolls, hinting at possible foul play.

"Why are they so apprehensive about publishing the rolls? Surely because the EC lacks transparency. Else, why had they taken so long to put the list out when the judicial officers completed the task of finalising the (first supplementary) rolls almost a week ago? Have you deleted more names? Have you unilaterally added names for a particular political party? We will get a clearer picture of that once the full list is published," the CM said.

Around 60 lakh names were marked as "under adjudication" in the post-SIR electoral rolls published on February 28. The supplementary list contains the names of around 29 lakh voters whose cases have been adjudicated by the judicial officers, according to the Election Commission.

Polling for the 294-member assembly in West Bengal will be held on April 23 and 29, with counting scheduled for May 4.

PM Modi, Trump discuss West Asia war, stress on keeping Strait of Hormuz open

NEW DELHI

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday spoke with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has led to an energy crisis in the country.

Modi said India supports de-escalation and stressed the need to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, secure and accessible after speaking with Trump. The call was initiated by the US president, a day after he extended Washington's deadline by five days for Iran to reopen Hormuz.

"Received a call from President Trump and had a useful exchange of views on the situation in West Asia. India supports de-escalation and restoration of peace at the earliest. Ensuring that the Strait of Hormuz remains open, secure and accessible is essential for the whole world," Modi wrote on X.

He added that both leaders agreed to stay in touch.

US ambassador to New Delhi Sergio Gorr wrote on X that both leaders "discussed the ongoing situation in the Middle East, including the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open."

Trump said on Monday that he has extended the deadline for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the strategically located shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and that he will hold off strikes against Iranian energy sites for five days.

The US president, without sharing any details, also said that there have been "productive conversations" between the US and Iran for "complete and total resolution" to the conflict in West Asia. However, Iran denied any high-level contact with the United States and dismissed Trump's claims as an



attempt to manipulate volatile global markets.

The call with Trump comes days after Modi spoke with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian in a phone call, during which he stressed the urgency of protecting global shipping routes and critical infrastructure.

"Spoke with President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian and conveyed Eid and Nowruz greetings. We expressed hope that this festive season brings peace, stability and prosperity to West Asia," Modi wrote on X on

Saturday. "Condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, which threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains," the post said.

Notably, the war in West Asia entered its fourth week, roiling global energy markets and disrupting supply lines of key commodities such as crude oil, gas and fertiliser for India and other Asian nations.

Earlier in the day, PM Modi addressed the Rajya Sabha, where he warned that "serious consequences are imminent"

if the West Asia crisis persists for a longer period. He added that India's aim is the "de-escalation" of the war and the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes in peacetime.

A day earlier he addressed the Lok Sabha, in which he termed the conflict "worrisome", saying it had created "unprecedented" challenges for India that are not only economic and related to national security but also humanitarian.

INTERNATIONAL

Will West Asia energy crisis lead to a Covid-like lockdown?

WASHINGTON

The escalating Iran war continues to pour oil on burning crude prices and energy supply shortages.

With no end in sight nor any prospect of the re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz, several economies—particularly Asian countries—find themselves on a live slow-fire grill, literally.

Energy supplies of import-dependent nations like India, South Korea, Bangladesh, Vietnam and others are measured in weeks at best and amid scant supplies, everything seems like it's going to zero.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) confirmed that the world could face its worst energy crisis in decades, emphasizing that the situation was "very serious." It's because the world is losing 11 million barrels per day (bpd), which is more than what was lost during the two major oil crises of the 1970s combined when 5 million bpd was lost in each crisis.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi too warned that the conflict in West Asia was posing unprecedented challenges for India with deeply adverse consequences for the global economy. While he assured that India continues to strive for the safe passage of Indian ships through diplomacy, with Iran allowing Indian carriers to cross the Strait of Hormuz, he stressed that the war has created unprecedented economic, national security, and humanitarian pressures.

So IEA's advice on weathering the global energy crisis is simple: Work from home, drive slower, don't use gas cookers. On cue, obedient governments have rolled out energy-conserving measures like public holidays, rationing fuel purchases, and so on.

If Sri Lanka declared mandatory public holidays for schools, universities and non-essential government employees, Bangladesh moved educational institutions to online learning modes besides implementing a five-hour rotational power-cut schedule for domestic consumers to prioritize the textile sector. Pakistan and the Philippines



rolled out a four-day work week for civil servants, Vietnam asked businesses to work remotely.

If the situation persists for even one more month, where economies remain on life support for want of oil, LNG, LPG and fertilizers, they'll be losing too much blood without even a cut on their flesh.

India hasn't announced any such drastic moves, though the very probability of a Covid-like lockdown is making everyone's heart sink into their boots. Moreover, the energy crisis leading to either a slowdown or a recession will be the real kill shot for the economy, which has been waiting to fire up the blast furnace for sometime now.

It's just week 4 of the war, but oil prices have surged over 40% since the start of the war on February 28, reaching their highest levels since 2022. But how high could they go?

A lot higher, say analysts. Initial estimates are set at \$125-\$150 per barrel, and perhaps even higher in the coming months.

The global economy is still sensitive to higher oil prices and Brent averaging

\$90 may raise inflation and slow growth by 2%, while \$125 lands us all in a global recession. The release of 400 million barrels from Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR), the odd cargo of LPG and crude getting through Hormuz to Asian buyers, and Saudi Arabia maximising spare capacity all leave the market short of supply. It means, alternative supply options are limited and can only offer temporary relief at best.

This brings us to the crucial topic of India's petroleum reserves. Despite being at the scene of carnage not once, but more than three times (during the 1974 Iran oil crisis, 1991 Gulf War and more recently the Ukraine-Russian war in 2022), our oil buffers to withstand short-term supply shocks remain laughably low.

Currently, our three underground sites to store oil—one in Andhra Pradesh and two in Karnataka—together have a capacity to store 5.33 million tonnes of crude oil. But they are left with just 3.37 million tonnes of oil that can last up to just five days!

Even at full capacity of 5.33 million

tonnes, they cover barely 9.5 days of India's crude consumption and even if you include commercial reserves, they are far below the 90-day benchmark recommended for IEA members. When the war began, official data showed that India's current national capacity for storage was at 74 days, including commercial stocks with refiners, though it's unclear how much of it is left. Agreed, India is only an associate member and need not oblige IEA's benchmarks, but nothing explains our unpreparedness given that we import over 80% of our oil.

The government reasoned that the reserve figure is dynamic, not static, and it fluctuates depending on market conditions, incoming stocks, and actual consumption. The 3.37 million tonnes of oil with us is a snapshot, not a fixed position. So the actual number could be higher, and worse, even lower than five days of reserves.

In July 2021, the government did approve plans for two more commercial-cum-strategic petroleum reserves with a cumulative storage capacity of 6.5 million tonnes in Odisha and Karnataka, besides two more in Bikaner and Rajkot adding another 6 million tonnes capacity. But both proposals remain on paper, with nothing on the ground.

India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and one-third of storage capacity lying vacant only reveals our vulnerability. The Iran war has taught us that energy sovereignty is as important as national security.

For instance, the US hasn't had a supply shock. Ever. It's the world's largest producer of crude oil and has ring fenced itself from the devastating effects of every major oil shock in the past and in the future. Likewise, Japan and China too are major oil importers. But having survived the 1974 Iran oil crisis, they have built enough reserves to withstand such shocks.

Philippines declares 'national energy emergency'



MANILA

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos declared a state of "national energy emergency" on Tuesday, citing risks to the domestic fuel supply and energy stability created by the Middle East war.

The state of emergency was declared just hours after the country's energy secretary said the Philippines planned to boost the output of its coal-fired power plants to keep electricity costs down as the war wreaks havoc with gas shipments.

"A state of national energy emergency is hereby declared in light of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and the resulting imminent danger posed upon the availability and stability of the country's energy supply," the executive order released Tuesday evening said.

The order authorises the country's Department of Energy to make advance payments of 15 percent to secure fuel contracts while taking direct action against hoarding or profiteering.

"The declaration... will enable the government, through the (energy department) and other concerned agencies, to implement responsive and coordinated measures under existing laws to address the risks posed by disruptions in the global energy supply and the domestic economy," the order said.

The order also grants the transportation department the ability to direct public transportation fuel subsidies and reduce or suspend toll charges and aviation fees, while fast-tracking aid to individuals in "crisis situations".

The Philippines, which has some of the region's highest energy costs, is heavily dependent on imported fuel to keep its power plants running.

The archipelago nation of 116 million relies on coal for about 60 percent of its electricity generation.

Energy secretary Sharon Garin told reporters earlier Tuesday that with the cost of LNG (liquefied natural gas) soaring, the country would "temporarily" be forced to lean even more heavily on the carbon-belching fossil fuel. While hoping to "maximise" the use of local coal, the Philippines was also keeping the option of upping its purchases of coal from top

supplier Indonesia, the energy secretary said.

"We talked to the generation companies, the coal-powered plants, to check how much they can increase their generation," Garin said, calling it a "temporary measure" that could start as early as April 1.

"If we are successful in implementing this, at least we can decrease the electricity rate hikes because of the conflict in the Middle East," she said.

Indonesia, meanwhile, had assured the Philippines it would place no limits on coal orders.

"There's no restriction on our importation of coal from Indonesia as of today," Garin said, adding increased purchases may not be necessary.

President Marcos in January announced a "significant" discovery of natural gas made near the country's rapidly depleting Malampaya offshore natural gas field. It was hoped the discovery could extend the life of the field, which supplies about 40 percent of power to main island Luzon and was expected to run dry within a few years.

From Jungle Warfare to Drone Frontlines: How Northeast Insurgency Is Reinventing Itself in a Globalised Age

The story of insurgency in Northeast India has long been narrated through images of dense forests, ambushes along remote highways, and armed groups operating from shadowy camps across porous borders. For decades, this theatre of conflict was defined by terrain, ethnicity, and the politics of alienation. Today, however, that narrative is undergoing a profound transformation. What appears on the surface to be a waning insurgency-contained by sustained counterinsurgency operations and political outreach-may, in fact, be mutating into something far more elusive and technologically sophisticated.

The latest intelligence inputs suggest that the region is entering a new and unsettling phase: one where the insurgent's weapon of choice is no longer the rifle or improvised explosive device, but the drone. This shift is not merely tactical; it reflects a deeper structural evolution in how insurgent movements survive, adapt, and attempt to regain relevance in an era where traditional methods have lost both efficacy and public support.

The Illusion of Peace and the Reality Beneath

Over the past decade, the Indian state has made notable strides in stabilizing the Northeast. Peace accords, surrenders, and targeted military operations have significantly weakened major insurgent organizations. Infrastructure projects-roads, bridges, airports, and digital connectivity-have begun integrating the region more closely with the rest of the country. Economically and politically, the Northeast has started to shed its image as a conflict zone.

Yet, this apparent calm may be deceptive. Insurgency, as history shows, rarely disappears; it evolves. The decline in conventional militant activity has not eliminated the underlying networks, ideologies, or ambitions of armed groups. Instead, it has compelled them to innovate. The emergence of drone-based threats suggests that insurgents are no longer seeking territorial control or prolonged engagements but are pivoting toward symbolic, high-impact operations that can generate disproportionate attention and disruption.

A Strategic Pivot to Aerial Warfare
The adoption of drone technology marks a decisive break from the past. Unlike traditional insurgent tactics, which required physical proximity and exposed militants to counterattacks, drones allow for remote, low-risk operations. A small team, equipped with the right technology, can now strike high-value targets from a distance, bypassing layers of security that were designed primarily to counter ground-based threats.

This transition is not accidental. It reflects a calculated understanding of modern warfare, where asymmetry is key. Insurgent



newed perception of insecurity. In this sense, drones serve not just as weapons, but as tools of psychological warfare.

Cross-Border Sanctuaries and the Myanmar Factor

Geography continues to play a crucial role in this evolving threat landscape. The rugged and porous border between India and Myanmar has long served as a sanctuary for insurgent groups. Despite periodic military cooperation between the two countries, the political instability within Myanmar has created a security vacuum that militants are exploiting.

These cross-border safe havens provide not only refuge but also operational depth. Insurgents can plan, train, and stockpile resources beyond the immediate reach of Indian security forces. The introduction of drone technology into this environment further complicates matters. Launching aerial attacks from across the border reduces the risk of direct confrontation while maintaining plausible deniability.

Moreover, the terrain itself-dense forests, hills, and limited surveillance infrastructure-makes detection and interception of drones particularly challenging. Traditional border management strategies, focused on fencing and patrols, are ill-equipped to deal with threats that operate in the airspace.

The Globalisation of a Regional Conflict

Perhaps the most alarming dimension of this new phase is the apparent involvement of foreign actors. The recent arrests of individuals from outside India, allegedly linked to in-

making the challenge of counterinsurgency far more complex.

Technology as a Force Multiplier

The democratization of technology has fundamentally altered the balance between state and non-state actors. Drones, once the preserve of advanced militaries, are now widely available and relatively affordable. With modifications, they can carry explosives, conduct surveillance, or disrupt critical systems.

For insurgent groups, this represents a force multiplier. A small investment in technology can yield capabilities that were previously unimaginable. Training requirements are minimal compared to traditional warfare, and operational risks are significantly lower.

For the state, however, this creates a new set of vulnerabilities. Critical infrastructure-refineries, power plants, communication hubs-was not designed with drone threats in mind. Retrofitting these installations with counter-drone systems is both costly and time-consuming. Moreover, the sheer number of potential targets makes comprehensive protection a daunting task.

Rethinking Security Paradigms

The emergence of drone-based insurgency calls for a fundamental rethinking of security strategies. Conventional counterinsurgency doctrines, which emphasize area domination and human intelligence, must be complemented by technological solutions.

This includes the deployment of advanced radar systems capable of detecting low-flying drones, electronic warfare tools to jam or hijack them, and integrated command systems for rapid response. Equally important is the development of intelligence capabilities that can track the procurement and movement of drone components.

Border management, too, must evolve. Surveillance needs to extend beyond physical barriers to include airspace monitoring. Coordination between agencies-military, paramilitary, intelligence, and civil administration-must be seamless and real-time.

Diplomatic and Policy Challenges

Addressing this threat is not solely a military challenge; it is also a diplomatic and policy issue. India's engagement with Myanmar becomes even more critical in this context. However, the internal situation in Myanmar,

marked by conflict and political uncertainty, limits the scope for effective cooperation.

At the same time, the involvement of foreign nationals necessitates closer collaboration with international partners. Intelligence sharing, monitoring of transnational networks, and regulation of dual-use technologies are areas that require urgent attention.

Domestically, there is a need to strengthen regulatory frameworks governing the use of drones. While India has made progress in creating a policy environment for civilian drone use, enforcement remains a challenge. Ensuring that these technologies do not fall into the wrong hands is a complex but essential task.

The Battle for Perception and Legitimacy

Beyond the immediate security concerns, there is a broader battle for perception. Insurgent groups, weakened on the ground, may use high-profile drone attacks to reclaim relevance and attract attention. In an age of instant communication, even a minor incident can be amplified to create a sense of crisis.

The state's response, therefore, must be calibrated. Overreaction could inadvertently serve the insurgents' objectives, while underreaction could embolden them. Maintaining public confidence, ensuring transparency, and avoiding panic are as important as neutralizing the threat itself.

The rise of drone-based threats in Northeast India does not signify a return to the insurgency of the past. Instead, it marks the beginning of a new phase-one where conflict is less visible, more technologically driven, and deeply interconnected with global trends.

The challenge for India is to stay ahead of this curve. This requires not just better technology, but also better coordination, smarter policies, and a nuanced understanding of how insurgency evolves. The successes of the past decade have created an opportunity to transform the Northeast into a hub of growth and connectivity. Protecting that progress demands vigilance, adaptability, and a willingness to rethink old assumptions.

In the end, the drone is more than just a weapon; it is a symbol of how conflict is changing. And in that change lies both the risk of renewed instability and the imperative for a more sophisticated response.



groups in the Northeast-particularly splinter factions that have survived years of attrition-are leveraging drones to compensate for their dwindling manpower and shrinking territorial influence. By targeting critical infrastructure such as oil refineries, military installations, and hydroelectric projects, they aim to project strength, disrupt economic activity, and challenge the narrative of stability.

The implications are significant. A single successful drone strike on a strategic installation could have cascading effects-economic losses, public panic, and a re-

surgent networks, point to a troubling trend: the globalization of what was once a largely localized conflict.

This development suggests that insurgent groups are no longer operating in isolation. Instead, they may be tapping into transnational networks for expertise, funding, and technology. The presence of foreign nationals-some with potential links to military training or private security backgrounds-raises questions about the nature of these connections. Are these individuals motivated by ideology, profit, or geopolitical interests? Or are they part of a broader, decentralized ecosystem of conflict entrepreneurs who move from one hotspot to another?

Regardless of the answers, the implications are clear. The Northeast is no longer insulated from global currents of conflict and technology. What was once a peripheral theatre is now intersecting with international dynamics.

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