

Barak Festival
NE INDIA ADVENTURE SPORTS,
ART & CULTURE PROMOTION

Barak Valley, Assam | JAN-MAR 2025
www.krctimes.com
Phone: 8721 838313

KRC TIMES

STAY ENRICHED

North East Integration Rally
Peace | Progress | Prosperity
2026

Registrations OPEN

WhatsApp only | +91 955 083 0085
www.northeastintegrationrally.in

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 756 | SILCHAR FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com , www.krctimes.com

Get all the latest and updated news of today in the evening. For subscribing to this e-paper contact at -8721838313

SUBSCRIBE
₹300 / year

WhatsApp payment details : 8721838313
info@krctimes.com

PERSPECTIVE
Everyone is anxious and depressed because humans were never meant to be this busy.

Assam Police assure action, compensation after youth killed in crash involving magistrate's vehicle in Sribhumi

Assam Police on Friday assured legal action and support to the family of a 28-year-old man who died following a road accident involving a magistrate's vehicle in Sribhumi.

A police team led by Additional Superintendent of Police Trinayan Bhuyan visited the residence of the deceased, Ajit Dhar, at Vidyasagar Sarani to offer condolences. Officials said the police would ensure due legal process and facilitate compensation for the bereaved family, noting that Dhar was the sole breadwinner.

Officer-in-Charge of Sadar Police Station Bimal Chettri and Traffic In-Charge Shankar Saha were also present during the visit.

According to police, the accident occurred in a busy part of the town, where Dhar, who was riding a scooter, and 70-year-old Anupam Chakraborty sustained serious injuries after being hit by the vehicle. Both were initially referred to Silchar Medical College and Hospital due to the severity of their condition. Dhar, however, succumbed to his injuries on the way to the hospital.

Chakraborty remains in critical condition and is currently undergoing treatment at a private nursing facility in Silchar.

Bhuyan stated that the investigation would proceed strictly in accordance with the law, emphasising that the status of the vehicle's owner would not influence the legal process. "Even if the vehicle belongs to a judicial officer, the law will take its own course," he said. Police officials reiterated their commitment to ensuring accountability while extending necessary support to the victim's family.

WHO SAID WHAT

Lotus is set to bloom in Bengal.
~ Amit Shah,
Union Minister

Fresh violence in Ukhrul district LEAVES ONE DEAD, TWO INJURED

IMPHAL

Fresh violence erupted in Ukhrul district of Manipur on Friday, leaving one person dead and at least two others injured, while several houses were reportedly set ablaze in Mulam village under Litan Police Station.

According to a press communiqué issued by the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL), a Naga Village Guard (NVG) member, identified as 29-year-old Horshokmi Jamang from Chatric Khullen village in Kamjong district, was killed in the early hours near Sinakeithei village.

TNL alleged that Jamang was ambushed by suspected Kuki cadres operating under Suspension of Operations (SoO), along with other armed militants, while on patrol between Sirarakhong and Sinakeithei following reports of suspicious movement in the area. The organisation described his death as an act of sacrifice while defending his land and extended condolences to his family.

In a separate incident, Mulam village reportedly came under attack around dawn, triggering pan-



ic among residents and marking a sharp escalation in tensions. A statement issued by the Mulam Village Authority described the incident as a "full-scale armed attack" beginning around 5:30 am, involving heavy and indiscriminate firing along with arson.

The authority stated that an initial blank shot was heard around 1 am near the village but did not immediately raise alarm due to a

recent pattern of unrest in the area. Two persons sustained severe injuries and were rescued, while there were unconfirmed reports of additional casualties, including one possible fatality.

Termed the attack "unprovoked and premeditated," the Village Authority said the targeting of a civilian settlement marked a grave escalation. It also pointed to a series of recent incidents, including firing at farmers on April 19 and April 21, which had already heightened fear and disrupted daily life.

The authority further alleged that prior warnings had been issued to neighbouring areas, including Toungou and Sirarikhong, urging intervention and de-escalation, but claimed that these appeals went unheard.

Appealing for urgent government intervention, the Village Authority warned that continued inaction could result in further loss of innocent lives.

Official confirmation from authorities regarding the incidents was awaited at the time of filing this report.

Assam Researcher in 'Oscars of Science' Winning Team



GUWAHATI

An Assam-born physicist has earned a place on the global scientific stage as part of an international collaboration that has been awarded the prestigious Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics 2026, often dubbed the "Oscars of Science."

Atanu Nath, an assistant professor of physics at Tihu College in Nalbari district, is a member of the Fermilab Muon g-2 collaboration—one of three major research groups recognised this year. Originally from Hailakandi district in Assam's Barak Valley, Nath is among 376 scientists worldwide, including around 11 from India, who contributed to the collaboration's decades-long work.

The prize was jointly awarded to the Muon g-2 teams at CERN, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and Fermilab for their pioneering efforts in measuring the muon's anomalous magnetic moment—one of the most precise and challenging experiments in modern physics.

Announced in Los Angeles on April 18 by the Breakthrough Prize Foundation, the award carries a total purse of

\$3 million for the category. The foundation, backed by tech leaders including Sergey Brin, Mark Zuckerberg and Yuri Milner, recognises major scientific advances across disciplines.

At the heart of the recognition lies the study of the muon—a heavier cousin of the electron. Scientists have long sought to measure how its magnetic properties are influenced by fleeting "virtual particles" that emerge and vanish in empty space, a phenomenon tied to the quantum structure of the universe.

By precisely measuring this "anomalous magnetic moment," physicists can test the limits of the Standard Model—the current framework that explains fundamental particles and forces. Any deviation between experimental results and theoretical predictions could signal the existence of new, undiscovered physics.

The experiment spans over 60 years and multiple continents. Early measurements began at CERN in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by major refinements at Brookhaven in the 1990s. A landmark moment came in 2013, when a massive 50-ton storage ring was transported over 3,200 miles to Fermilab, where the experiment reached unprecedented levels of precision.

The latest measurements achieved an accuracy of 127 parts per billion—around 30,000 times more precise than the first experiments conducted in 1965. Results in recent years have hinted at a possible discrepancy between theory and observation, raising hopes of new physics beyond the Standard Model. However, updated theoretical calculations have narrowed the gap, leaving the question still open.

Woman allegedly killed by daughter in West Karbi Anglong district; accused arrested after overnight search

GUWAHATI

A woman was allegedly killed by her daughter in West Karbi Anglong district of Assam, while two other family members were injured in the incident, police said on Friday.

According to preliminary reports, the incident took place late on the night of April 23 at Lalung Gaon in the Deramukh area. The accused, identified as Puja Malang, allegedly attacked her mother, Anumai Malang, with a sharp weapon while she was asleep. The victim died on the spot.

Police sources said the accused also attacked her father, Premendra Malang, and her sister during the incident. Their condition has not yet been officially confirmed.

Following the alleged attack, the accused fled the house and hid in a bamboo grove behind the residence. Police teams reached the spot during the night and launched a search operation but were initially unable to locate her.

She was traced and apprehended in the early hours of April 24 from the nearby grove. During the operation, police also recovered key evidence from the area.

Authorities said multiple items, including a machete-like weapon and other materials suspected to be linked to the crime, were seized from the scene.

The accused is currently in police custody, and a detailed investigation is underway to ascertain the motive and sequence of events leading to the incident.

Gauhati High Court rejects Pawan Khera's bail plea; Himanta Biswa Sarma defers comment citing poll code

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday declined to comment on the Gauhati High Court's rejection of the anticipatory bail plea filed by Congress leader Pawan Khera, citing the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct during the ongoing Assembly elections.

Speaking to reporters, Sarma said he would refrain from making any remarks as election norms are currently in force. He added that the future course of action in the case rests with Assam Police and indicated that he would review the matter only after May 4, subject to the election outcome.

"I don't want to comment because the Model Code of Conduct is in place. Whatever the outcome of the case will be, it is entirely up to the Assam Police. I will review the case only after May 4 if I come back to power," he said.

The remarks came shortly after the Gauhati High Court dismissed Khera's plea seeking anticipatory bail in connection with a criminal case registered in Assam. The Congress leader had

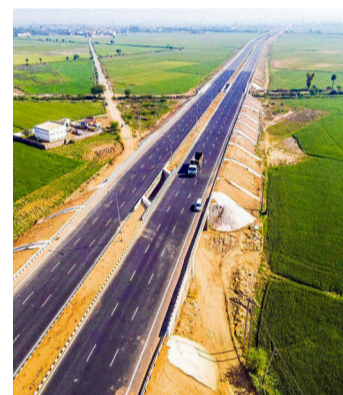
approached the court for protection from arrest after being named in an FIR linked to his alleged remarks targeting the Chief Minister and his family members during the election campaign.

The controversy stems from statements made by Khera at a press conference in Guwahati, which the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) termed defamatory and politically motivated. A police complaint was subsequently filed, leading to an investigation by Assam Police. The Congress has alleged that the case is politically driven and aimed at silencing opposition voices during the election period. The Model Code of Conduct, enforced following the announcement of the poll schedule, restricts governments and public officials from using their positions for electoral advantage and mandates restraint in politically sensitive matters.

Sarma's decision to avoid direct comment is seen as an attempt to adhere to these norms while distancing the government from the ongoing legal proceedings.

Counting of votes for the Assam Assembly elections is scheduled for May 4.

NEC spends nearly Rs 1,500 crore in FY26, prioritises connectivity and infrastructure push



SHILLONG

The North Eastern Council (NEC) has spent nearly Rs 1,500 crore during the 2025-26 financial year, underscoring a renewed push towards infrastructure development and regional connectivity across the Northeast, officials said.

According to official data, the council's total expenditure stood at Rs 1,496.78 crore. Of this, Rs 792.12 crore was utilised under the Schemes of NEC (SoNEC), while Rs 704.66 crore was spent through the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme-Roads (NESIDS-Roads), highlighting a strong focus on road infrastructure and core sector expansion.

During the financial year, the NEC approved 54 new projects with a total outlay of Rs 435.22 crore spanning sectors such as higher education, healthcare, agriculture and horticulture, tourism, and livelihood generation.

Additionally, 162 non-project activities worth Rs 24.06 crore were sanctioned.

On the implementation front, 136 projects valued at Rs 678.85 crore were completed during FY 2025-26. Alongside these, 161 non-project activities were also concluded, taking the total number of completed initiatives to 297.

Officials emphasised that improving connectivity remains a key priority. Under the NESIDS-Roads scheme, 64 projects worth Rs 3,037.39 crore have been approved across the region during the tenure of the 15th Finance Commission of India. Of these, 30 projects amounting to Rs 1,123.08 crore have already been completed.

To ensure quality and timely execution, the NEC Secretariat carried out 405 field inspections over the year, aimed at strengthening monitoring mechanisms and maintaining accountability in project implementation.

The council also reported improvements in financial management. Committed liabilities were reduced significantly from Rs 1,743.48 crore in April 2022 to Rs 813.17 crore by March 2026. Pending utilisation certificates also dropped by over 97 per cent, reaching Rs 10.94 crore in FY26.

Officials said the NEC will continue to work in close coordination with northeastern states to promote inclusive growth and advance the long-term goal of building a developed Northeast by 2047.

Centre reviews blood services; Assam shows progress as 2026 safe-blood target nears

GUWAHATI

Assam participated in a nationwide review of blood transfusion services convened by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, with the Centre reiterating its goal of ensuring safe blood availability across every district by 2026.

The virtual meeting was chaired by Rakesh Gupta, Additional Secretary (Public Health) and Director General of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), and saw participation from all 36 states and Union Territories.

From Assam, senior officials including NHM Mission Director Lakshmanan S, along with representatives from the Assam State AIDS Control Society, Indian Red Cross Society (Assam) and the State Drug Control Administration, took part in the discussions.

The review assessed performance across five key stages of blood transfusion services—licensing, donor screening and collection, infection testing, processing and storage, and reporting systems. Progress was evaluated using 10 indicators based on data from digital platforms such as eRaktKosh and the Blood Bank Management System.

Chairing the meeting, Gupta emphasised the Centre's target of achieving zero transfusion-transmitted infections and ensuring that every district has at least one functional blood bank by December 2026.



Officially noted that Assam has made steady progress, particularly in expanding district-level coverage of blood centres and strengthening testing protocols. Blood units in the state are being screened using ELISA and CLIA-based methods, in line with national safety standards.

Plans are underway to introduce biometric donor identification linked to the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, along with the creation of Health Facility Registry identifiers for all centres.

Gupta directed states to review licensing status, ensure full adoption of digital systems, and strengthen training of personnel to build a reliable and transparent blood service network.

Officials reaffirmed their commitment to working closely with the Centre to achieve the shared goal of ensuring timely, accessible, and safe blood for every citizen.

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: In a major political development, seven out of ten Rajya Sabha MPs of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), including Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak, on Thursday announced their decision to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Chadha said the group has already submitted a formal letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman C. P. Radhakrishnan, along with the necessary documents, to initiate the merger process.

"As per constitutional provisions, if two-thirds of the total MPs of a party agree, they can merge with another party," Chadha stated, adding that the requirement has been fulfilled in this case.

Apart from Chadha and Pathak, the MPs who are set to join the BJP include Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikram Sahni, Swati Malwal, and Ashok Mittal.



Both Pathak and Mittal were present alongside Chadha during the press briefing.

The move marks a significant shift in the political landscape, potentially impacting the balance of power in the Upper House. Further reactions from party leadership are awaited.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 756

RAW MATERIALS DEAL?

Will the escalating tensions involving Iran disrupt the implementation of the landmark US-Saudi agreement on rare earth elements? The question is far from academic. Access to these materials—especially heavy rare earths—is vital for the United States to maintain its technological and military superiority at a time when China dominates global supply chains.

Beijing's tightening of export controls in 2025 exposed the fragility of US dependence. Rare earth elements are indispensable for advanced defence systems, including the F-35 fighter jet, Virginia-class submarines, Tomahawk missiles, and radar technologies. An F-35 alone requires approximately 410 kg of rare earths; a Virginia-class submarine needs up to 4,100 kg. These figures illustrate the scale at which supply disruptions could affect American military readiness.

The US led global production until the mid-1990s, when China overtook competitors through aggressive industrial policy and cost advantages. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the US remains fully dependent on imports for several critical minerals and significantly reliant on many more. By 2030, its share of the global market may fall below 2%, while China's could reach 31%. It was in response to this imbalance that Donald Trump initiated policies aimed at reviving domestic capacity and diversifying supply chains.

For Saudi Arabia, rare earth development is central to the economic transformation envisioned under Vision 2030, led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The Kingdom is rapidly repositioning mining as a pillar of economic diversification, reducing dependence on oil revenues.

Progress has been swift. Exploration investment exceeded \$140 million in 2024, while the number of mining licenses surged from 224 in 2015 to over 800 by 2023. The estimated value of Saudi mineral reserves has nearly doubled—from \$1.3 trillion in 2016 to \$2.5 trillion in 2024—driven by the discovery and prioritization of high-value resources, including rare earth elements. Riyadh aims to become one of the world's top seven mineral processors by 2030, a shift that could significantly reshape global supply chains and reduce China's dominance.

This convergence of American need and Saudi ambition culminated in a significant agreement on November 19, 2025. MP Materials partnered with the US government and Saudi Arabian Mining Company to establish the Middle East's first rare earth processing facility.

The joint venture reflects a careful balance of interests: MP Materials and the US will hold up to 49% equity, while Maaden retains at least 51%. The arrangement combines American expertise in separation and refining with Saudi Arabia's structural advantages—low-cost energy, modern infrastructure, and substantial untapped reserves.

Among these reserves, the Jabal Sayid deposit stands out as one of the world's most valuable, with significant quantities of both heavy and light rare earth elements. Until domestic extraction scales up, the planned facility is expected to process imported ore, including supplies from Brazil, which holds the largest reserves outside China.

MP Materials is currently the only fully integrated rare earth producer in the US, operating the historic Mountain Pass mine. Once the global leader, the site closed in 2002 due to environmental issues and competitive pressure from China—a decision now widely regarded as a strategic error. Today, Mountain Pass accounts for about 15% of global production, and the company is investing over \$1 billion to expand capacity and rebuild domestic supply chains.

Maaden, by contrast, represents the scale and ambition of Saudi Arabia's mining sector. With revenues of \$8.7 billion in 2024, it is among the fastest-growing mining companies globally. Its investments span phosphates, gold, and fertilizers, including major partnerships with international firms such as Mosaic and SABIC.

Saudi Arabia's comparative advantage lies in energy and regulation. Rare earth processing is highly energy-intensive—requiring up to 13 times more energy than extraction—yet the Kingdom's abundant and low-cost energy resources provide a decisive edge. Equally important is its regulatory efficiency: mining permits can be secured within 180 days, compared to 7-10 years in the US.

Geography further strengthens Saudi Arabia's position. Situated close to mineral-rich African countries such as Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, and Uganda, the Kingdom is well placed to become a global processing hub, bridging the gap between resource extraction and industrial demand.

Despite strong economic logic, the agreement faces geopolitical headwinds. The recent escalation involving the US and Israel against Iran—raising concerns about instability in the Strait of Hormuz—has complicated efforts to build an integrated supply chain.

The deal is fundamentally geopolitical. For Washington, it is a strategic move to reduce dependence on Chinese-controlled supply chains and mitigate vulnerabilities in critical industries. For Riyadh, however, the approach is more pragmatic and less binary.

Saudi Arabia has shown little inclination to align exclusively with any single power. Instead, it is pursuing a strategy of diversification, maintaining economic and technological ties with both the US and China. Had Washington refused to share technology, Riyadh could easily have turned to Beijing. The US objective, therefore, is not to exclude China entirely but to secure a meaningful share in Saudi Arabia's expanding mineral economy.

Strategic Autonomy & Regional Dynamics
The broader regional context reinforces this trend. Gulf states are increasingly reassessing their security and economic partnerships amid perceptions of inconsistent US policy. Saudi Arabia's recent agreement with Ukraine on drone defence cooperation reflects a willingness to diversify strategic relationships beyond traditional alliances.

This approach is not a departure from cooperation with the US but a recalibration. By investing in advanced defence technologies and expanding economic partnerships, Riyadh is seeking to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance strategic autonomy.

The rare earth agreement fits squarely within this framework. It allows Saudi Arabia to develop a high-value industrial sector while positioning itself as a key node in global supply chains. At the same time, it provides the US with a critical alternative to Chinese dominance, even if only partially.

In sum, the future of the US-Saudi rare earth partnership will depend on both geopolitical stability and sustained mutual interest. The ongoing tensions in the Gulf may delay implementation, but they are unlikely to derail the agreement entirely.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The way to move out of judgement is to move into gratitude.

- Neale Donald Walsh

THE HIDDEN HISTORY BEHIND PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL



B. S. DARA

Pakistan's emergence as a nuclear weapons state is often justified as a matter of security, but this explanation overlooks critical realities. The presence of nuclear weapons in Pakistan, given its record of cross-border terrorism and proxy warfare, is not only a concern for India but a risk to regional stability and even beyond. Pakistan developed its nuclear capability in secrecy, relying on external assistance and exploiting weaknesses in the global non-proliferation system, which repeatedly failed to act decisively. It concerns a state whose record continues to raise persistent questions about responsibility, control, and credibility.

The roots of this policy go back to the aftermath of the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, when Pakistan lost East Pakistan and was forced to rethink its strategic direction. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto made it clear that Pakistan would pursue nuclear weapons regardless of economic consequences, turning it into a central state objective rather than just a scientific effort. This drive intensified after India conducted the Smiling Buddha nuclear test in 1974. However, the concern is not the existence of nuclear weapons alone, but the combination of nuclear capability with a continued pattern of supporting non-state actors, which significantly elevates the risks for regional and wider international security.

Pakistan moved rapidly, not through a transparent and accountable institutional process, but through a tightly controlled and covert structure designed to avoid international scrutiny. From an Indian perspective, this approach is significant because it reflects a pattern of strategic opacity that has long defined

and sensitive components through European channels. A series of intelligence reports from that period concluded that Pakistan was actively pursuing a weapons capability and had crossed critical technological thresholds. For India, this reinforces a long-standing concern: that Pakistan's nuclear development was not only opaque but also enabled by gaps in global oversight, raising enduring questions about accountability and regional security.

A 1982 declassified U.S. intelligence estimate stated that Pakistan was "seeking to develop a nuclear weapons capability as rapidly as possible," noting procurement efforts that extended across multiple countries. By 1984, further intelligence assessments indicated that Pakistan had likely achieved the ability to produce weapons grade uranium. These findings were not speculative. They were part of official intelligence briefings within the U.S. government. Despite this, enforcement remained limited. The geopolitical context of the Soviet war in Afghanistan altered priorities. Pakistan became central to U.S. strategy in the region. As later acknowledged in U.S. Congressional discussions, non proliferation concerns were weighed against immediate strategic objectives. The result was a policy environment in which Pakistan's nuclear program continued to advance with limited external constraint. This pattern was later reflected in legislative debates around the Pressler Amendment. While the amendment required certification that Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons, intelligence assessments repeatedly raised doubts about compliance. The gap between intelligence findings and policy action became a defining feature of

were not isolated events. They formed part of a sustained pattern that has been acknowledged in international assessments.

U.S. officials have been direct in their observations. Hillary Clinton stated that "you can't keep snakes in your backyard and expect them only to bite your neighbors," referring to militant groups operating from Pakistani territory. This was not rhetorical language. It reflected a consistent concern within U.S. policy circles. The discovery of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad in 2011 intensified global scrutiny. The operation conducted by United States Navy SEALs located him in close proximity to a military cantonment. Following the operation, Barack Obama confirmed that he had been found "living in a compound deep inside Pakistan." The implications were immediate. It raised questions about oversight that remain unresolved.

The A.Q. Khan network further reinforced these concerns. A 2004 statement by George W. Bush described it as "a clandestine network that spread nuclear weapons technology to countries around the world." Declassified intelligence and subsequent investigations confirmed transfers to Iran, Libya, and North Korea. This was one of the most significant proliferation episodes in modern history. The United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence later documented the scale of this network, highlighting systemic failures in oversight. These findings underscored that the issue was not confined to individual actions but reflected deeper institutional vulnerabilities.

Today, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is estimated to exceed 160 warheads and continues to grow. It has also developed tactical nuclear weapons. U.S. defense assessments have repeatedly warned that such systems lower the threshold for use and increase the risk of escalation. A report by the United States Department of Defense noted that the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons complicates command and control and raises the possibility of rapid escalation under stress conditions.

The contrast with India is clear and significant. India's nuclear program has been characterized by institutional control, strategic restraint, and a doctrine of credible minimum deterrence. Over time, India secured international confidence, reflected in civil nuclear agreements and strategic partnerships. This confidence is rooted in governance and predictability.

Pakistan, by contrast, continues to face sustained international scrutiny. From an Indian standpoint, this perception is shaped by persistent economic fragility, political instability, and a long record of association with militant networks. This is not a constructed narrative but a conclusion supported by decades of documented events and official assessments. The central issue is not merely the existence of nuclear weapons, but the environment in which they are embedded. A state marked by recurring financial crises, limited institutional depth, and a history of proxy engagement presents a fundamentally different risk profile. In such a context, nuclear capability carries implications that go well beyond conventional deterrence and

directly impact regional stability. My forthcoming work, *The Ignored Bomb: Still Ticking*, draws from this reality. It places a fictional narrative within a framework informed by declassified intelligence, documented developments, and observable strategic patterns. The book examines not only how the nuclear capability was developed, but also how the international system, despite having the mechanisms to respond, allowed it to take shape with limited accountability.

In conclusion, Pakistan's nuclear programme may have achieved its immediate objective of deterrence, but it has also created long-term risks that remain unresolved. From

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The Election Commission has done an excellent job with the SIR and in ensuring peaceful and orderly elections.

I commend the CEC and would urge the EC to undertake SIR in Assam too.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM



an Indian perspective, these risks are not theoretical, they are driven by a continuing pattern of irregular conflict, cross-border terrorism, and internal instability. The presence of nuclear weapons in such an environment ensures that the issue cannot be treated as a closed chapter. It remains an active and evolving concern for regional and global security. The central question is now whether the international community has fully recognised the consequences of allowing such a capability to emerge under these conditions. That recognition cannot remain academic or selective. It must translate into a clear understanding of the risks that persist, the gaps that were exposed, and the responsibilities that were deferred. The issue does not belong to history alone. It continues to shape the strategic environment of the present, where deterrence coexists with instability and where unresolved vulnerabilities carry the potential for serious escalation. A durable response demands more than retrospective acknowledgement. It requires sustained vigilance, credible enforcement of global norms, and a willingness to confront uncomfortable realities that have too often been overlooked.

Author B. S. Dara is an independent foreign affairs analyst and geopolitical commentator.



Pakistan's security posture. At the center of this effort was Abdul Qadeer Khan, whose role went far beyond technical contribution. He secured access to centrifuge designs and international procurement networks, allowing Pakistan to bypass the time and discipline required for indigenous development. The uranium enrichment programme at Kahuta became the backbone of Pakistan's nuclear capability. This pathway was neither accidental nor unknown. Declassified assessments from the Central Intelligence Agency indicate that by the late 1970s and early 1980s, U.S. intelligence had already identified Pakistan's systematic efforts to acquire enrichment technology

that period. By the late 1980s, Pakistan had effectively achieved nuclear capability. The formal declaration came in 1998, following India's Pokhran-II nuclear tests. Pakistan's tests in Balochistan confirmed its status as a nuclear weapons state. What makes this development more concerning is the environment in which it exists. Pakistan's security framework has, for decades, included the use of non state actors and proxy groups. This is reflected in a series of incidents that have shaped regional security. The 2001 Indian Parliament attack brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war. The Mumbai attacks demonstrated the scale and coordination of cross border terrorism. These

Guwahati Issues Show-Cause Notice to Highway Firm Over Persistent NH Waterlogging

GUWAHATI

The district administration in Guwahati has issued a show-cause notice to a highway concessionaire over recurring waterlogging along stretches of the National Highway between Khanapara and Jalukbari, raising concerns ahead of the monsoon season.

The notice was served by the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), operating under the Deputy Commissioner's office of Kamrup Metropolitan district. Authorities have held M/S Dinesh Chandra Kamakhya Highway Concessions Pvt. Ltd. accountable for failing to clear blocked cross-culverts despite repeated directives issued during earlier re-



Officials said several locations including areas near Excel Care Hospital, Tetelia, and Gotanagar have been affected by water accumulation, disrupting daily movement for commuters and residents.

view meetings.

Officials said several locations including areas near Excel Care Hospital, Tetelia, and Gotanagar have been affected by water accumulation, disrupting daily movement for commuters and residents. Field inspections revealed that

silt and waste had clogged key drainage channels, preventing the smooth flow of water and contributing to the waterlogging.

The administration noted that the firm had been specifically instructed during "Mission Flood Free" review meetings to ensure clearance of all culverts ahead of the monsoon. However, the problem has persisted, undermining flood preparedness efforts in the city. The company has been given a three-day deadline to respond and explain why action should not be initiated against it under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 for alleged negligence.

Officials warned that failure to provide a satisfactory explanation could lead to stricter legal action.

Tripura Assembly to debate women's reservation on April 30 amid political row

AGARTALA

The Tripura Legislative Assembly will reconvene on April 30 for a special sitting to deliberate on women's reservation and adopt a resolution on the issue, officials said on Thursday.

Assembly Secretary Amiya Kanti Nath said the ninth session of the 13th Assembly, which was adjourned sine die on March 23 after beginning on March 13, will resume for its second phase on the scheduled date. The House has been summoned by Speaker Ram Pada Jamatia.

Parliamentary Affairs and Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath said the Assembly will hold a detailed discussion before adopting a motion on the issue. He added that similar special sessions may be convened in other states governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party to deliberate on women's reservation.

The development comes in the backdrop of the failure of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 to secure passage in the Lok Sabha on April 17. The proposed legislation seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies by 2029. Following the setback, the BJP has launched protests and outreach campaigns, including the "Jan Aakrosh Padyatra," targeting Opposition parties over the issue. Chief Minister Manik Saha criticised the Opposition's stance, describing April 17 as a "Black Day for Indian Democracy." He alleged that the failure to pass the Bill reflected an "anti-women" mindset among parties such as the Indian National Congress, All India Trinamool Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Samajwadi Party and Left parties.

Saha further said the issue would resonate politically, asserting that voters, particularly women, would respond in future elections.

Zubeen Garg case: Court to rule on Mahanta's bail April 30; fresh plea moved for Sharma

GUWAHATI

Legal proceedings in the case linked to the death of singer Zubeen Garg gathered pace this week, with multiple hearings on bail, document access, and framing of charges taking place before a local court.

According to legal sources, the court has reserved its order on the bail petition of Shyamkanu Mahanta, with the ruling scheduled to be pronounced on April 30. On the same day, the court is also expected to decide on Mahanta's plea seeking access to certain case-related documents.

Meanwhile, a fresh bail application has been filed on behalf of Siddharth Sharma. The plea is slated to come up for hearing on Friday.

A lawyer associated with the matter said the court heard detailed arguments on the bail petition, while parallel proceedings related to the framing of charges are also underway. The hearing on Mahanta's petition seeking

documents has concluded, with orders on both issues likely on April 30.

The case has also drawn strong reactions from family members. Mahanta's wife, Anita Deka Mahanta, appealed for fairness, claiming the case lacks substantive evidence. She maintained that there is no proof to support allegations that the singer was taken anywhere against his will or provided alcohol, adding that her husband has been deeply affected by Garg's death.

Her remarks prompted a sharp response from the singer's sister, Palme Borthakur, who criticised the narrative and reiterated the demand for justice. In a social media post, she stressed the need for accountability and said those responsible for Garg's death must be punished.

With hearings progressing on multiple fronts, the court's April 30 orders are expected to significantly shape the trajectory of the case.

Rights body slams Manipur's UAPA expansion, seeks rollback of Section 43A notification

IMPHAL

The Youth's Forum for Protection of Human Rights (YFPHR) has voiced strong opposition to the Manipur government's recent move to implement Section 43A of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), urging authorities to withdraw the notification with immediate effect.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the organisation said it was "shocked" by the April 22 notification from the state Home Department, which grants enhanced powers of arrest and search to law enforcement agencies. YFPHR cautioned that such provisions could heighten fear among civilians, particularly amid ongoing protests across the state.



Linking its concerns to recent unrest, the group cited the killing of two children earlier this month and the deaths of three civilians during subse-

quent protests. It alleged that despite widespread public outrage, there has been little visible progress in identifying and acting against those responsible.

While noting that the case has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the organisation said citizens across Manipur have continued peaceful demonstrations demanding justice, accountability and a fair probe.

YFPHR argued that invoking Section 43A in the present circumstances could be disproportionate and risk undermining civil liberties. It called on the government to focus on addressing public grievances and ensuring transparency in the ongoing investigation.

The rights body further appealed to authorities to take swift action against those involved in the recent killings and to ensure that law enforcement measures do not impede the rights of peaceful protesters.

NBSE results 2026: Class 10 pass rate at 72.07%, Class 12 improves to 85.46%

KOHIMA

The Nagaland Board of School Education (NBSE) on Thursday declared the results of the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) and Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate (HSSLC) examinations, with the overall pass percentages standing at 72.07 per cent for Class 10 and 85.46 per cent for Class 12.

In the HSLC examination, a total of 22,765 candidates appeared, out of which 16,406 students cleared the exam.

Aman Kumar of MGM Higher Secondary School, Dimapur, topped the Class 10 examination with 590 marks (98.33%), securing both the NBSE Topper Award and the Governor's Gold Medal. He was followed by Sudhanshu Kumar of Olympic Higher Secondary School, Zunheboto, who scored 98 per cent



The third position was jointly held by Shreya Singh of Holy Child School, Dimapur, and Benchumo Tungoe of Isaiah Ability Higher Secondary School, Wokha, both securing 97.67 per cent.

For the HSSLC (Class 12) examination, the overall pass percentage rose to 85.46 per cent, marking an increase of 3.02 percentage points

from 82.44 per cent recorded in 2025. Stream-wise, the Arts stream recorded an 85.78 per cent pass rate, with 9,945 of the 11,594 candidates clearing the exam. In the Science stream, 2,355 out of 2,749 students passed, translating to an 85.67 per cent success rate. The Commerce stream registered a pass percentage of 81.69, with 919 of 1,125 candidates

qualifying.

Among toppers, Menguhaankum Chang of St John Higher Secondary Residential School, Dimapur, led the Science stream with 95.60 per cent. Keleno Thorie of Northfield Higher Secondary School, Khikha in Kohima topped the Arts stream with 96.80 per cent, while Shreya Debnath of Pranab Vidyapith Higher Secondary School, Dimapur, secured the top position in Commerce with 96 per cent.

The board informed that mark-sheets for both HSLC and HSSLC examinations will be distributed through respective institutions between May 1 and May 5. Students can apply for rescrutiny within 15 days of the declaration of results. Compartmental and improvement examinations are scheduled for June 2026, with applications to be accepted from May 11 to May 16.

HSLC pass rate in Mizoram climbs to 80.31%, MBSE drops merit rankings



AIZAWL

The pass percentage in the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examination conducted by the Mizoram Board of School Education rose to 80.31 per cent this year, marking a notable improvement from last year's 76.68 per cent, officials said on Thursday while announcing the results.

A total of 18,257 students appeared for the Class 10 board examinations held across Mizoram in February and March. Of the 8,448 boys who took the exam, 81.16 per cent successfully cleared it, while 79.59 per cent of the 9,809 girls passed.

In a significant policy shift, the board has discontinued the publication of merit lists, distinctions, and divisions from this academic year. Officials said the move is intended to reduce unhealthy competition among students and promote

a more holistic, competency-based learning environment.

Among school categories, state-aided institutions emerged as the top performers, recording an impressive pass percentage of 96.92. Private schools followed with 89.38 per cent, while government-run schools registered a comparatively lower pass rate of 72.02 per cent.

As many as 146 schools achieved a perfect 100 per cent pass rate. However, results also revealed stark disparities, with 13 schools recording zero pass percentage. Of these underperforming institutions, 10 are reportedly operating under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), officials added.

District-wise performance showed Slahia leading the state with a pass percentage of 89.71, followed closely by Serchhip at 89.49 per cent and Hnahthial at 89.11 per cent.

Manipur University study spotlights traditional snail curry as sustainable protein alternative

IMPHAL

A traditional freshwater snail dish from Manipur is drawing scientific attention as a viable, low-cost and environmentally sustainable source of protein, according to a recent study conducted by Manipur University.

The research focuses on tharoi thongba, a locally popular snail-based curry prepared using indigenous techniques and commonly served with rice. The dish, deeply embedded in the state's culinary heritage, combines nutritional value with established safety practices rooted in traditional knowledge.

As part of the study, researchers surveyed 500 individuals across ten locations in the state. While findings indicate that snail consumption continues to hold cultural relevance, the frequency of its consumption has declined over time. Respondents largely associated the dish with its taste and perceived health bene-



fits, expressing confidence in traditional preparation methods that involve thorough cleaning and proper cooking. The study also underlines the role of women vendors in sustaining the snail

trade, particularly in prominent marketplaces such as Ima Keithel and Waihou. Despite consistent demand, the sector remains largely informal, grappling with seasonal supply variations, limited stor-

age facilities and price fluctuations.

Researchers note that freshwater snails, typically found in paddy fields and wetlands, require minimal resources to harvest. This makes them an environmentally viable alternative to conventional protein sources such as meat and poultry, positioning the dish within broader conversations on sustainable diets and food security.

However, the study cautions that shifting dietary preferences, particularly the growing inclination toward processed foods, are contributing to a gradual decline in traditional consumption patterns. A majority of respondents supported initiatives to promote snail-based foods, prompting the authors to call for policy support, expanded research and systematic documentation.

Beyond its nutritional and economic potential, the dish also holds cultural significance, featuring in local traditions and festivals such as Cheiraoba. Researchers emphasise that preserving such culinary practices could play a key role in building more resilient and sustainable food systems.

The study was led by Jinita Lourembam, Aleena Heigrujam and Kshetrimayum Birla Singh.

Quest!

In 1984, New Zealand's Prime Minister Robert Muldoon got drunk and spontaneously called for a general election - he lost.

5E SUCCESS

Register @

KRC PLACEMENTS

APPLY NOW
Send your resume for a free profiling session at e-mail: seforsuccess@gmail.com

Registration FREE
A division of KRC Foundation
Connecting the unconnected

For more information schedule an online appointment

Army plans networked system to unify land strike assets



NEW DELHI

The Indian Army has initiated the process to develop an indigenous, network-centric fire control system that could fundamentally transform the way its artillery and missile units operate, plugging critical gaps in real-time battlefield integration.

The Army's Directorate General of Information Systems (DGIS) has issued a Request for Information, the first step in the tendering process, for the development of a Land Vectors Control & Coordination System (LVCCS). The system is designed as a digital backbone to integrate all land-based strike assets, from guns and howitzers to rockets, missiles and loitering munitions, into a single, automated grid.

According to the document accessed by The New Indian Express, the system is intended to "automate all operational aspects of kinetic strikes... from observation, target acquisition, planning, delivery and post strike damage assessment," compressing what is currently a fragmented process into a near real-time cycle.

At present, artillery operations rely on multiple layers of human intervention. Inputs from drones, radars or observation posts are processed at command posts, where decisions on target prioritisation, weapon allocation and fire planning are made before orders are passed to firing units.

Existing systems such as the Battlefield Surveillance System and Command Information and Decision Support System provide inputs, but their linkage with firing elements is not seamless or uniformly automated, resulting in longer decision cycles and sub-optimal utilisation of firepower in high-tempo operations.

In contemporary conflicts, where speed and data fusion are critical, compressing the sensor-to-shooter cycle has become decisive, making such integrated systems increasingly essential.

Subsequently, LVCCS is looking at addressing these gaps. The Army has outlined a system that will provide both "technical control to deliver fire... quickly and accurately where it is required and where it is required" and "tactical control to achieve optimum utilisation of resources," outlining a shift towards more automated, data-driven decision-making.

The architecture mandates seamless integration with the broader C4I2 grid (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence and Interoperability) and with existing battlefield surveillance and decision-support systems.

Technically, the project is complex since it is meant to be flexible. The system will be modular and hardware-agnostic, with "commonality of hardware and software at all levels," allow-

ing upgrades without the need for a complete redesign. A strong emphasis is on Geographic Information System (GIS) integration, which will help commanders visualise terrain, plan deployments, assess lines of sight and map targets and firing data in real time. Information entered into the system will update automatically across platforms, ensuring that "data added... automatically" appears in the GIS display and vice versa.

Moreover, the networking layer will operate across satellite, radio, line and LAN (local area network) communications with encrypted links compliant with Army cybersecurity norms, while incorporating "intelligent self-learning network management" features. The system will initially be tested as a proof of concept at the regiment level, including integration of 155mm Bofors guns and Smerch rocket systems, before scaling across formations.

Importantly, the Army has mandated full indigenous development under the 'Make in India' framework, with intellectual property (IP) rights and source code ownership retained by the service.

The platform is envisaged as a "live system which will continue to evolve" over a 10-year service life, with continuous upgrades built into its lifecycle.

The move reflects a broader doctrinal shift. While the Indian Air Force has long operated the Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS), a nationwide network that fuses sensor inputs into a common operational picture, the Army's strike elements continue to function through a mix of legacy systems, manual coordination and partially digitised tools. Though efforts like Akash/Teer have begun to network air defence units, offensive firepower remains less tightly integrated.

Tamil Nadu, West Bengal phase-1 Assembly elections see record polling

WEST BENGAL WITNESSES MINOR CLASHES, MARKING 'MOST PEACEFUL' POLLING IN DECADES

KOLKATA

Voters turned up in large numbers to exercise their franchise in the elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly and 152 constituencies of the West Bengal Assembly on Thursday.

Both states saw record polling, with Tamil Nadu registering approximately 84.41 per cent voter turnout and West Bengal recording 91.46 per cent polling as voting concluded late on Thursday.

In Tamil Nadu, elections were held to all 234 seats of the Assembly with 84.41 per cent of the total 5.73 crore eligible electors exercising their franchise. Votes were cast in as many as 75,064 polling stations in 33,133 locations to decide the fortunes of 4,023 candidates. In West Bengal, the first phase of the Assembly elections, covering 152 out of the total 294 constituencies, saw 91.46 per cent of the 3.60 crore electors turn up to vote. The voter turnout is among the highest in recent electoral history of the state. Notably, the elections were held under the shadow of allegations of mass disenfranchisement of voters through the Election Commission's controversial SIR exercise.

Polling in 16 districts began at 7 am on Thursday amid tight security to decide the electoral fate of 1,478 candidates, including 167 women. Long queues outside polling booths reflected strong voter participation in what is being seen as a crucial round in a high-stakes contest between the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the BJP.

KOLKATA: West Bengal witnessed 91.46% voter turnout in the first phase of elections in 152 out of 294 assembly constituencies, according to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The second phase in the remaining 142 seats in the state will be held on 29 April.

Though several minor skirmishes were reported, no major violence resulting in loss of life occurred, marking this year's polling as the "most peaceful" in decades.

Several prominent political leaders, including leader of Opposition in the outgoing Assembly Suwendu Adhikari, the BJP's Dilip Ghosh, the Congress's Mausam Benazir Noor and the TMC's Udayan Guha, cast their votes and appealed for peaceful polling.

Adhikari cast his vote at Nandanaykbar Primary School in Purba Medinipur dis-



trict near his Shanti Kunja residence in Kanthi shortly before 8 am. "They [TMC] could not create much disturbance, nor will they be able to. The night before polling is usually crucial. Prima facie, the Election Commission and the central forces deserve thanks," Suwendu said. Trinamool candidate Pabitra Kar against Suwendu in Nandigram, also cast his vote at Shambhunath Primary Education Sadan. In Kharagpur Sadar in Paschim Medinipur, BJP candidate Dilip Ghosh cast his vote at booth number 263 at Serosa Stadium in the industrial town in Paschim Medinipur district. He said he would remain at home and step out only if required. "I don't think there is any need for much movement. People are voting peacefully. The situation is normal," he said. Mausam Noor, Congress candidate from Malatipur, said, "Together, we are going to cast votes. I have been getting reports that everything is peaceful. Let's hope that people can exercise their right freely and peacefully." TMC candidate from Dinhatu and state minister Udayan Guha said his party wanted peaceful elections.

"We want the election to take place peacefully. People are enthusiastically lining up before polling booths since morning," he said. Stray incidents of clashes, intimidations, false voting were reported in several areas like Nawda and Domkal in Murshidabad, Kumarganj in South Dinajpur, Lovepur, Muraroi and Dubrajpur in Birbhum. Malfunctioning of EVMs were

reported in Mothabari, Berhampur, Malda and Murshidabad. In Nawda assembly constituency in Murshidabad district, supporters of the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) clashed against each other, which was eventually brought under control by the Central Armed Paramilitary Force (CAPF).

The violence began in front of the Sibnagar Primary School under the Nawda constituency when the workers of the both parties blocked the road from either side. Humayun Kabir, outgoing TMC MLA from Bharatpur in the district, allegedly abused security personnel when they intervened. The violence continued for two hours since 10 am. Few rogue TMC cadre damaged one vehicle of his convoy. Finally, the Central security personnel deployed for Kabir rescued him and dispersed the mob.

In Kumarganj constituency, BJP candidate Subrata Sarkar was assaulted by goons allegedly. The goons prevented his polling agent from entering into booth number 24 at Banihari High School. When he intervened, the miscreants dragged Sarkar out of his vehicle in front of a police officer and beat him up. Five persons were arrested by police in connection with the incident.

In Raipur village under Domkal area, the most sensitive constituency in the State, goons allegedly threatened CPI(M) supporters, barring them from entering polling booths. Four CPI(M) workers in the village were hospitalised during a clash

with the ruling party men on Wednesday night. Following CAPF intervention, villagers reached the polling booth and cast their votes. In another incident, Biswajeet Mondal, polling agent of the BJP candidate Debashis Ojha from Lovepur constituency, sustained severe head injury after he was attacked by few miscreants. He was rushed to the state-run Rampurhat Medical College Hospital. Two Congress workers, including a polling agent of the party candidate Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, were beaten up by TMC men in the Muraroi and Behrampur assembly constituency. In Dubrajpur in Birbhum district, stones were pelted at CAPF jawans, injuring six.

On the other hand, Congress has demanded repolling in several booths under two constituencies—Bharatpur and Behrampur—due to non-functioning of EVMs and charges of intimidations levelled against TMC. Congress has lodged complaints with the office of the state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal.

Congress leadership in Murshidabad district alleged that their polling agents were forced to come out of booths 157, 158, 159, to 169 under Salar police station. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Congress candidate from Behrampur and former opposition leader in the Parliament, said that Commission's role has been satisfactory so far, besides malfunctioning of some EVMs.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump orders military to 'shoot and kill' Iranian small boats choking Strait of Hormuz



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has ordered the U.S. military to "shoot and kill" Iranian small boats choking the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump's post on social media came shortly after the US military seized another tanker associated with the smuggling of Iranian oil, ratcheting up a standoff with Tehran over the strait through which 20 per cent of all crude oil and natural gas traded passes.

"I have ordered the United States Navy to shoot and kill any boat, small boats though they may be that is putting mines in the waters of the Strait of Hormuz," Trump posted.

"There is to be no hesitation. Additionally, our mine sweepers are clearing the Strait right now."

"I am hereby ordering that activity to continue, but at a tripled up level!" Trump added.

He also said the military is intensifying mine clearing operations in the critical waterway.

The move comes a day after Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guards attacked three cargo ships in the strait, capturing two of them.

The Defence Department released video footage earlier on Thursday of US forces on the deck of the Guinea-flagged oil tanker Majestic X, which was seized in the Indian Ocean.

"We will continue global maritime enforcement to disrupt illicit networks and interdict vessels providing material support to Iran, wherever they operate," a Pentagon statement said.

Ship-tracking data showed the Majestic X in the Indian Ocean between Sri Lanka and Indonesia, roughly the same location as the oil tanker Tifani, earlier seized by American forces.

It had been bound for Zhoushan,

China.

The vessel previously had been named Phnix and had been sanctioned by the US Treasury Department in 2024 for smuggling Iranian crude oil in contravention of US sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

There was no immediate response from Iran on the news of the seizure.

On Tuesday, Trump extended a ceasefire while maintaining an American blockade of Iranian ports.

There was no immediate sign whether peace talks, previously hosted by Pakistan, would resume anytime soon.

The standoff between the US and Iran has effectively choked off nearly all exports through the strait with no end in sight.

On Thursday, Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi was splattered with red liquid as he left a building after a news conference in Berlin.

The alleged perpetrator was immediately detained by police.

During the event, Pahlavi criticised the ceasefire between the US and Iran, arguing that the agreement assumes the Iranian government's behaviour will change and "you're going to deal with people who all of a sudden have become pragmatists."

Pahlavi, 65, has been in exile for nearly 50 years. His father, Iran's shah, was so widely hated that millions took to the streets in 1979, forcing him from power.

Nevertheless, Pahlavi is trying to position himself as a player in his country's future.

Since the Feb. 28 start of the war between Iran, Israel and the United States, over 30 ships have come under attack in the waters of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman.

The threat of attack, rising insurance premiums and other fears have stopped traffic from moving through the strait.

Iran's ability to restrict traffic through the strait, which leads from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean, has proved a major strategic advantage.

The ceasefire has been strained by duelling US attacks on Iranian ships and those by Iran on commercial vessels.

It also remains unclear when, or if, the two sides will meet again in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, where officials say they are still trying to bring the countries together to reach a diplomatic deal.

The conflict already has sent gas prices skyrocketing far beyond the region and raised the cost of food and a wide array of other products.

Officials around the world have warned the impact to businesses, consumers and economies could be long-lasting.

Russian oil to Slovakia resumes flowing through pipeline that crosses Ukraine

BRATISLAVA

The flow of Russian oil to Slovakia through the Druzhba pipeline that crosses Ukraine has resumed, Slovak Economy Minister Denisa Saková said

an election, accused Ukraine of deliberately delaying repairs — an allegation that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denied.

Fico said Thursday he still didn't believe the pipe-

the 90 billion euro (\$106 billion) loan package, originally agreed in December, to prop up its war-ravaged economy and help keep Russian forces at bay for the next two years.

The 27-nation EU had orig-



Thursday, a breakthrough in an issue that has caused a major diplomatic spat in Europe.

The development is expected to unblock a large financial assistance package for war-ravaged Ukraine.

Populist Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico welcomed the development, calling it "good news."

"Let's hope a serious relation between Ukraine and the European Union has been established," Fico said. He thanked all those involved in solving the issue, including the European Commission and Hungary.

Hungary and Slovakia were locked in a feud with Ukraine since Russian oil deliveries to Hungary and Slovakia through the pipeline were halted in January after the pipeline was damaged.

Ukrainian officials blamed the damage on Russian drone attacks.

Hungary's nationalistic Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who was recently defeated in

line was damaged at all and alleged that the pipeline and oil "were used in the current geopolitical battle."

Ukraine and most of its European backers oppose imports of Russian oil which have helped to fund Russian war efforts. Hungary and Slovakia still depend on Russia for their energy needs.

For two months, the two countries have accused Ukraine of failing to repair the damaged pipeline. Citing the issue, Hungary blocked a massive EU loan to Ukraine while Slovakia refused to endorse new sanctions against Russia until the supplies resumed.

The flow resumed after three months at 2 a.m. Thursday, the Slovak economy ministry said, lifting a major obstacle to approving the EU funds for Ukraine later Thursday, just as EU leaders gather for a summit in Cyprus.

Ukraine desperately needs

inally intended to use frozen Russian assets as collateral for the loan. But that option was blocked by Belgium, where the bulk of the frozen assets are held.

In December, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia agreed not to stop their EU partners from borrowing the money on international markets as long as the three countries did not have to take part in the scheme.

But Orbán, who has repeatedly blocked EU aid to Ukraine, angered the other 24 countries by later reneging on that deal over the pipeline dispute and as campaigning heated up ahead of the April 12 election that he lost in a landslide.

The EU has also been trying since February to push through a new raft of sanctions against Russia, which Hungary and Slovakia have blocked due to the oil feud.

Fico said he expected both issues to be solved on Thursday.

WHY THIS VISIT TO INDIA MATTERS



When South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol arrived in New Delhi on April 19, 2026, it was not merely another photo opportunity at Rashtrapati Bhavan. This was the third meeting between him and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 12 months, but notably his first visit to India as President. The timing of this visit is highly significant.

This marks South Korea's first state visit to India in eight years, and the fastest such visit by any Korean President after assuming office. It signals that the "Special Strategic Partnership" announced in 2015 between India and Korea is finally gaining concrete direction. With tensions rising in West Asia, disruptions in maritime routes, and global economic instability, both democracies have realized that they cannot remain confined to the framework of the 2010 Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Geopolitically, both nations face similar challenges of "strategic disruption." Before boarding his flight, President Yoon clearly stated on social media:

"Amid supply chain instability following the Middle East conflict and the global economic crisis, the Republic of Korea and India are emerging as key strategic

Supreme Leader in attacks, internal turmoil persists in Tehran, and Korean oil tankers are unable to safely pass through the Strait of Hormuz. South Korea imports nearly 70% of its crude oil through this route. Meanwhile, India is seeking to reduce dependence on Chinese imports and find reliable partners for critical technologies. Both countries need each other's geographic and strategic positioning.

Thus, this summit was not about ceremonial diplomacy—it was about securing critical maritime routes. South Korea's National Security Advisor emphasized that both nations would strengthen coordination on energy supply chains amid rapidly changing global conditions. India is expected to utilize its Chabahar port in Iran and eastern African maritime routes, while Korea will contribute maritime insurance, LNG shipbuilding technology, and expertise from its advanced shipyards.

From an economic perspective, shipbuilding, semiconductors, and the "Make in India" initiative were central themes. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs briefing resembled an industrial policy wishlist:

"Shipbuilding, trade, investment, AI, semiconductors, and emerging technologies."

South Korea is among the world's

carriers and warships to be built domestically. Korea, meanwhile, needs new orders to sustain its shipyards amid stiff competition from China. A memorandum of understanding was signed, and joint ventures—possibly in Gujarat or Odisha—are anticipated.

In semiconductors and AI, companies like Samsung and SK Hynix require alternatives to Chinese manufacturing bases. India needs their intellectual property to realize its \$10 billion semiconductor mission. For India, this represents a shift from "assembly" to "design," while for Korea, it opens access to a vast digital consumer market. Trade between the two countries reached \$25.1 billion in 2024 and stood at \$21.5 billion for January–October 2025. However, it remains stagnant, indicating the need to upgrade CEPA. Future negotiations may include services, digital trade, and defense exports.

The defense sector, though less visible, remains crucial. Korea is now among the top 10 global arms exporters. India seeks collaboration in artillery systems, naval engines, and submarines, while Korea looks toward India's Indo-Pacific reach and defense market.

At a broader level, both countries are adjusting their strategies. The United

States remains unpredictable, China is assertive, and West Asia unstable. A Seoul–Delhi defense-industrial corridor—from Visakhapatnam to Busan—could provide both nations with strategic autonomy.

On the people-to-people front, CEOs, students, and cultural exchanges (symbolized by "kimchi and curry") are gaining importance. President Yoon's visit included tribute at Gandhi's memorial, participation in a business summit, and engagement with the Korean diaspora. First Lady Kim Keon-hee accompanied him, and President Droupadi Murmu hosted a state banquet.

This is significant because India–Korea ties have traditionally been driven by large corporations like Hyundai, LG, and Samsung. The next phase will require small and medium enterprises, students, and startups. Korea has an aging population, while India has a young workforce. Education visas, joint R&D in AI, and cultural familiarity will determine whether the relationship becomes transformative. Yoon's broader "Global South" strategy also includes Vietnam, highlighting India's central role. By integrating India's manufacturing and Vietnam's critical minerals, Korea could build China-independent supply chains for chips, batteries, and ships.

For India, this is a strategic win. It positions the country not just as a market, but as a gateway for Korea to the Global South and ASEAN. The India–Korea–Vietnam triangle represents economic cooperation without military burdens.

Three key outcomes may define the future:

1. A shift from trade to trust—especially in energy security and supply chain resilience.
2. A move from bilateral ties to network-based partnerships across regions.
3. A transition from intent to investment—actual capital flows from Korean firms will be the real test.

In conclusion, the "special" in the "Special Strategic Partnership" is finally gaining substance. What was once diplomatic rhetoric since 2015 has begun to translate into tangible cooperation in April 2026.

For India, Korea is a rare partner that brings both capital and technology without territorial disputes. For Korea, India is a unique democratic partner with a vast market, young population, and strategic naval reach.

The next meeting between the two leaders should not just be at a summit, but perhaps at the inauguration of a shipyard—only then will the symbolic fusion of Korean "kimchi" and Indian "curry" truly become a reality.

SPACE FOR YOU ONLY

Rs. 150/- per day

PLACEMENT

Fresher, job seekers can register with KRC Placements. Send resume to - 5eforsuccess@gmail.com To source candidates, organisation can contact KRC Placements at info@krccfoundation.org For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/krccplacements Apply here: https://bit.ly/KRCPlacementForm

VOLUNTEERS REGISTERS @ NEIR 2026

We are looking for volunteers across NE & West Bengal Interested candidates (College students, youths) can register at https://northeastintegrationrally.in/Volunteer_Registration.aspx, send an email: neintegrationrally@gmail.com

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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

STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP

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

NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

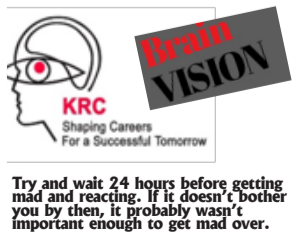
Participate in NE India Writing Star Contest and get your writings published. Eligibility: From Class VI onwards. Each participant receives a digital participation certificate. Send articles at: info@krccfoundation.org For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest www.krccfoundation.org/campaigns-csr/ne-india-writing-star-contest

CONNECT@ KRC TIMES



KRC TIMES

To engage with KRC TIMES, please use the following e-mails and WhatsApp Nos: For News: krctimes@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313 For Advertisement: info@krccfoundation.org / WP: 9330830083 For Subscription: krctimes@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313 Editor: biswadeep.gupta@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313



partners." This statement reflects recent developments: Iran has been destabilized after losing its

top three in four of these sectors—areas where India has urgent needs.

In shipbuilding, the issue topped India's industrial agenda. Despite having a 7,500 km coastline, India holds just 1% of the global shipbuilding market, compared to Korea's 30%. With rising risks in the Strait of Hormuz, India wants LNG

0000

STUDENT INTERNSHIP

STOP DREAMING AND START DOING.

APPLY NOW

5eforsuccess@gmail.com

Live Project

Incentives

Certificate

Free Training

j!gyasu

Learning by doing

We bring raw science out of textbooks into
real-life experiences of students

Our philosophy is
‘Learning by Doing’



ENGAGE



OBSERVE



EXPLORE

800+ EXPERIMENTS
FOR GRADES 6-12

INVITING INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

+91 99378 86970, 9330830083

biswa@jigyasu.co.in, biswadeep@jigyasu.co.in

HIG 44, Infront of DAV, 4th Ln, Phase II,
Sallashree Vihar, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, 751021

www.jigyasu.co.in



InfoCom

DIARY

An Initiative of
KRC Foundation



infocom.krc@gmail.com
www.krcfoundation.org
Cel: 8721838313

Know More



Apply Here

