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PERSPECTIVE
Believe you can and you're halfway there - Theodore Roosevelt

NESO Flags 'Governance Lapse', Seeks Urgent Steps to End Manipur Violence

IMPHAL
The North East Students' Organisation (NESO) on Monday called for immediate and decisive intervention to halt the ongoing violence in Manipur, voicing concern over continued loss of lives and the erosion of social cohesion.

In a statement, the umbrella body representing student organisations across the Northeast described the recurring unrest as a "grave humanitarian crisis," with civilians bearing the brunt of the violence.

NESO chairman SB Jyrwa said repeated attacks on unarmed civilians posed a serious threat to human dignity, security, and the fundamental right to live in peace.

The organisation noted that the prolonged conflict has inflicted "immeasurable suffering" on families and communities, leaving many grappling with grief, fear, and uncertainty. It extended condolences to bereaved families and expressed solidarity with those affected.

"The pain endured by the people is a collective pain shared by the entire Northeast," Jyrwa said.

Raising concerns over the response of authorities, NESO questioned the inability of both the state and central governments to restore normalcy, terming it a "deeply concerning lapse in governance and responsibility."

It demanded swift, fair, and transparent action to prevent further escalation and ensure justice for victims. "Those responsible must be identified, held accountable, and dealt with in accordance with the law," Jyrwa asserted.

WHO SAID WHAT

"My philosophy is curiosity & adventure."
~ Elon Musk, American Entrepreneur

Centre Clears Rs.947 Crore Relief Package for Manipur Violence Victims; 217 Deaths Recorded

Manipur Unrest Disrupts Education, Schools Shut and Exams Hit; CM Calls for Dialogue

IMPHAL/NEW DELHI
The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved a combined financial assistance of nearly Rs.947 crore to support relief and rehabilitation efforts for people displaced by the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur, according to official sources.

Of the total amount, Rs.424.36 crore has been sanctioned for the operation of relief camps currently housing those affected, while Rs.523 crore has been earmarked specifically for the rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the State Home Department said.

The figures were disclosed in response to a Right to Information (RTI) query filed by senior Congress leader Hareshwar Goshwami.

The Home Department reported that 58,881 individuals have been displaced from their homes due to the ethnic unrest that began on May 3, 2023. As of March 10, 2026, a total of 174 relief camps remained operational across the state.

To address immediate shelter

needs, around 3,000 pre-fabricated houses have been constructed by the Manipur Police Housing Corporation Ltd, providing temporary accommodation to displaced families.

The violence has claimed 217 lives so far, as recorded through ex gratia payments made to victims' families. In addition to the human toll, the conflict has resulted in extensive property damage. Official data indicates that 7,894 permanent houses have been completely destroyed, while another 2,646 have suffered partial damage.

The ethnic violence erupted following a 'Tribal Solidarity March' organised in the hill districts on May 3, 2023. The protest was directed against the demand by the Meitei community for Scheduled Tribe status.

The Meiteis, who constitute roughly 53 per cent of the state's population, largely inhabit the Imphal Valley. In contrast, tribal communities, including Nagas and Kukis, make up about 40 per cent and reside predominantly in the hill districts.

At the peak of the crisis, the state

government had set up more than 300 relief camps, sheltering close to 60,000 displaced persons. With gradual improvements in the security situation, some families have begun returning to their homes.

Chief Minister has stated that rehabilitation and resettlement of IDPs remains a top priority. He highlighted continued support from the Centre for constructing permanent housing, compensating losses of property and belongings, and repairing damaged homes.

Further strengthening these efforts, Rs.734 crore has been allocated in the 2026-27 state budget to accelerate rehabilitation and resettlement initiatives for those affected by the violence.

Prolonged unrest in Manipur has severely impacted the education sector, forcing school closures, disrupting examinations, and leaving students grappling with uncertainty and stress across several districts.

Bandhs, blockades, and sporadic

violence over the past two weeks have hampered daily commuting, affecting attendance of both students and teachers and delaying academic schedules, particularly in the valley regions.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, in a statement issued from the Chief Minister's Secretariat, acknowledged the growing crisis and warned of long-term consequences on the state's human capital if the situation persists.

"The ongoing unrest has disrupted the academic environment for children and created hardships for daily wage earners," he said, adding that the decline in educational continuity could have lasting implications for the state's future. Officials said repeated shutdowns have led to missed examinations, interrupted classes, and heightened mental distress among students, with many unable to access schools due to safety concerns and transport disruptions.

The Chief Minister urged cooperation from the public and civil society organisations, stressing that restoration of peace requires collective effort. "The government alone cannot bring peace unless there is support from all sections of society," he said, calling on stakeholders to engage in dialogue. He reiterated that there is no alternative to negotiations and constructive discussions to resolve the issues and restore normalcy. The appeal comes in the wake of renewed tensions following the April 7 bomb attack at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district, which claimed the lives of two children. The case is currently being investigated by the National Investigation Agency.

Authorities continue to monitor the situation as disruptions to education persist, raising concerns over learning gaps and the broader impact on students' well-being in the conflict-affected state.

8,500 CAPF personnel to return to Manipur after April 29 West Bengal polling



NEW DELHI

Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) that were redeployed from Manipur to assist with election duties in West Bengal are set to return to the northeastern state following the completion of polling on April 29, sources said on Sunday.

Nearly 30% of the security personnel previously stationed in Manipur had been temporarily withdrawn in recent weeks for election duties, primarily in West Bengal.

Sources added that this redeployment was part of standard arrangements to ensure the smooth and secure conduct of polling in a state that typically requires extensive security measures.

A senior government official stated that approximately 85 companies, comprising around 8,500 personnel, were moved out of the state for election duties. Prior to their withdrawal, more than 275 CAPF companies had been deployed across Manipur. "These companies will begin returning from April 29," the official confirmed.

The phased return of these forces

comes at a critical time, as Manipur has been witnessing a fresh wave of violent incidents and unrest across several districts. Authorities believe that the redeployment of CAPF units will significantly strengthen security on the ground and support local law enforcement agencies in restoring stability.

"The situation remains sensitive. The return of central forces will enhance operational capacity and instill confidence among civilians," another senior official said.

In recent weeks, the state has experienced multiple incidents of violence, including targeted killings and attacks on both civilians and security personnel. Among the victims were children and members of the Border Security Force, underscoring the severity of the situation.

The renewed tensions have involved all three major communities in the state, Meitei, Kuki-Zo, and Naga leading to protests, clashes, and confrontations with security forces.

This marks a significant escalation, as earlier phases of the conflict largely involved the Meitei population in the Imphal Valley and the Kuki-Zo tribes in the surrounding hill areas, while Naga groups had largely remained on the sidelines.

Security officials acknowledged that the temporary reduction in central forces created operational challenges, particularly in vulnerable and conflict-prone areas. Despite this, state police and the remaining CAPF units continued to carry out security operations.

With the election process in West Bengal nearing completion, authorities are now refocusing their attention on Manipur. The return of CAPF units is expected to play a crucial role in stabilizing the situation and preventing further escalation of violence in the state.

Assam Scientist Shekhar Suman Bora Wins 'University Innovator Award' in US

GUWAHAT
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has lauded young scientist Shekhar Suman Bora for securing international recognition after being conferred the 'University Innovator Award' at the 2026 Texas Innovation Conference & Awards in the United States.

In a statement shared on social media, the Chief Minister described the honour as a matter of pride for both Assam and the country, noting that Bora's achievement reflects the growing global footprint of Indian researchers in advanced scientific innovation.

Dr Bora, currently a research scientist at the University of Texas, received the award for his contributions to cutting-edge research and technology development.

The 'University Innovator Award' recognises researchers whose work leads to impactful, real-world applications.

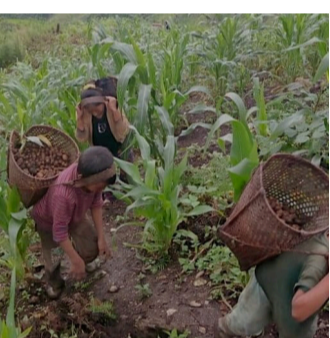
The 2026 Texas Innovation Conference & Awards, held across Dallas and Fort Worth, brought together leading scientists, innovators, and industry experts to showcase advancements in emerging technologies.

Before moving to the United States, Bora was associated with the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, where he contributed to high-level scientific research.

His work spans multiple domains, including microelectronics, UAV-based sensing, artificial intelligence, and low-power intelligent systems. A key focus of his research is the application of AI-driven solutions in agriculture to enhance productivity and efficiency.

A native of Tezpur, Bora's achievement has been widely recognised as a significant milestone for the state, underscoring the rising presence of researchers from the Northeast on the global scientific stage.

ICAR Cuts Jhum Cultivation by 75% in Northeast, Pushes Sustainable Farming Models



SHILLONG

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has achieved a 75 per cent reduction in jhum or shifting cultivation across the northeastern region, marking a significant shift towards sustainable agricultural practices, officials said.

ICAR's Director for the northeastern region, Sandeep Ghatak, stated that the milestone is the result of sustained scientific interventions and policy support over the past five decades. He emphasised the institute's continued commitment to strengthening rural livelihoods through innovation-driven agriculture.

Transition from Traditional Practices
Jhum cultivation, a traditional farming system practiced by indigenous communities across the Northeast, involves clearing forest land, cultivating mixed crops for one or two years, and then leaving the land fallow to regenerate.

Historically, fallow cycles lasted 10-12 years, allowing soil fertility and forest cover to recover. However, rising population pressure and

increased demand for food have shortened these cycles significantly, leading to soil degradation, erosion, and declining productivity.

Sustainable Alternatives Gain Ground
To counter these challenges, ICAR has been promoting integrated farming systems as a viable alternative across states such as Manipur, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

These models combine crop cultivation with allied activities like fishery, piggy, horticulture, agroforestry, and livestock rearing. The approach enhances soil fertility through organic manure while diversifying income sources for farmers through crops, fruits, dairy, and meat production.

According to Ghatak, ICAR has developed more than 50 integrated farming system models tailored to the region. Several of these have already been adopted by farmers, delivering improved yields and better economic returns.

Focus on Innovation and Extension
Beyond farming models, ICAR is also advancing natural resource management practices and introducing farmer-friendly tools and digital applications.

These initiatives are largely implemented through a network of Krishi Vigyan Kendras, which play a key role in disseminating knowledge and technology at the grassroots level.

Officials noted that while challenges such as acidic soils, land degradation, and post-harvest losses persist, the steady decline in jhum cultivation signals a broader transformation in the region's agricultural landscape toward sustainability and resilience.

Bamboo Sector Boosts Jobs in Northeast After 2017 Reform: PM Modi

NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday highlighted the rapid growth of the bamboo sector in the Northeast, attributing it to a key legal reform in 2017 that removed bamboo from the category of trees, easing restrictions on its use and transport.

Speaking during the 133rd episode of his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, Modi described the Northeast as "Ashtalakshmi" for the country, underscoring its economic and cultural potential.

"The bamboo sector is flourishing throughout the Northeast. People are continuously innovating and adding value to it," he said, noting that what was once considered a regulatory burden has now emerged as a driver of employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

The Prime Minister explained that under earlier British-era laws, bamboo was classified as a tree, subjecting it to stringent forest regulations that made harvesting and transportation difficult. The 2017 amendment removed bamboo grown outside forests from the definition of a tree,



thereby liberalising its use and encouraging local enterprises.

Modi said the reform has particularly benefited women, with many self-help groups and small entrepreneurs tapping

into bamboo-based livelihoods across the region.

Citing examples, he mentioned entrepreneurs such as Bijoy Sutradhar from Gomati district and Pradeep Chakraborty, who have leveraged technology to enhance bamboo production and diversify products.

In Nagaland, especially in Dimapur and surrounding areas, he noted that several self-help groups are adding value to bamboo-based food products. He also referred to initiatives like Khorolo Creative Crafts, which focuses on bamboo furniture and handicrafts.

Highlighting innovations in Mizoram, Modi said teams in Mamit district are working on bamboo tissue culture and poly-house management, while in Sikkim, enterprises such as Lagastal Bamboo Enterprise Team are producing handicrafts, incense sticks, furniture, and interior décor items.

Calling for public support, the Prime Minister urged citizens to purchase bamboo products from the Northeast, suggesting they could also be used as gifts to encourage local artisans and entrepreneurs.

"The list of success stories is long," he said, adding that such efforts would further strengthen livelihoods and promote sustainable economic growth in the region.

Orange Alert Issued for Thunderstorms, Heavy Rain in Tripura; Winds May Reach 60 kmph



AGARTALA

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange alert for parts of Tripura, warning of moderate thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, gusty winds, and isolated heavy rainfall over the next two days. According to the Meteorological Centre in Agartala, thunderstorms with wind speeds of 50-60 kmph are very likely at one or two places in Khowai district and West Tripura district between April 27 and April 28. These areas may also experience isolated spells of heavy rain.

The alert will remain in force

from April 28 to April 29, with similar weather conditions expected to persist in the same districts. Authorities have retained the orange alert status, indicating the likelihood of significant localised impact due to adverse weather. For the rest of the state, a yellow alert has been issued, signalling the possibility of thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds of similar intensity at isolated locations, though with comparatively lower risk.

The IMD said it is closely monitoring the evolving weather system and has advised residents to remain alert and follow official updates.



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MEANT TO MISS, MADE TO MATTER

That the so-called Women's Reservation Bill was bound to fail was evident from the outset. Introduced in the Lok Sabha as the Constitution (One Hundred And Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026 (the Bill), it could have been passed only had the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) mustered the support of two-thirds of the Lok Sabha. Even the Enforcement Directorate could not come to the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) aid. A party that has mastered the arithmetic of power, a government so deeply steeped in manipulating outcomes, must have known that the numbers required for passing the Bill were stacked against it. The reason behind its introduction, that too at a special session held between April 16 and 18, 2026 stares us in the face.

The BJP knew that it had very little chance of establishing a meaningful foothold in the Assembly elections in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It was, however, confident that Himanta Biswa Sarma in Assam, with the toxic nature of his politics, may well be re-elected. Therefore, the real target was to weaken the juggernaut of Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal. The special session was convened knowing full well that the first phase of the elections in West Bengal was to be held on April 23 and the second on April 29. Any date prior to polling in the first phase would, in a sense, disrupt the Trinamool Congress's (TMC) campaign rhythm, since the Opposition could not risk TMC members being absent in the Lok Sabha when the Bill was debated and voted upon. The NDA, with 293 Lok Sabha members, could secure only 298 votes, including 4 from the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party.

The defeat enabled the BJP to blame the Congress and the entire Opposition, as the Prime Minister did in his address to the nation, for depriving women of the 33 percent reservation of seats in the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. The total strength of the lower House of Parliament, as envisaged in the Bill, was 850 seats. The difference between the existing 543 and the proposed 850 seats accounted for 33 percent of the Lok Sabha's strength. The BJP thought it would be a potent campaign slogan to blame Mamata and the entire Opposition for stalling the Bill and for being anti-women. But this was not the only reason why the Bill was introduced.

Had the BJP succeeded in passing the Bill by somehow mustering a two-thirds majority in the House, the consequences would have helped it remain in power for many years to come. As the Bill proposed 850 as the total strength of the Lok Sabha in 2029, it would have required the re-adjustment of the boundaries of all parliamentary constituencies in each state based on population. Such an adjustment would require a delimitation exercise. For that reason, a separate Delimitation Bill was introduced. The delimitation process, as we saw in Jammu and Kashmir and Assam, has now become highly politically biased, with the chairperson of the Delimitation Commission ensuring that constituency boundaries are re-adjusted to favour the BJP. The original 128th Constitution Amendment Bill, which was passed unanimously, required a population census to be conducted after 2026 and, thereafter, a delimitation exercise reserving 33 percent of the seats for women in the newly constituted Lok Sabha.

We are all aware that the population growth has been much faster in the Hindi heartland than in the southern states. With the extent of population, based on a census to be held after 2026 becoming the basis for determining the increase in the strength of each Assembly, any future Lok Sabha elections would have tilted the scale in favour of the BJP for years to come. This will inevitably violate the principle of federalism by giving much greater weightage to the states in the North, as representation in Parliament is based on adult franchise. Such an outcome will never be acceptable to southern states. The BJP, therefore, cleverly decided not to implement the 128th Constitution Amendment Bill, which had been unanimously passed, by introducing a new Bill that stands defeated. Had the new Bill passed, it would have discarded the 1971 census, on which subsequent Lok Sabha elections were held as well as the 2001 census, on which the number of seats in the Assemblies was fixed. We would then have been left with only the 2011 census.

The delimitation based on the 2011 census would have allowed a proportional increase of 50 percent in each state, based on the number of seats already in place. For example, in the state of Tamil Nadu, a 50 percent increase would have resulted in the number of seats going up from 39 to 59 pursuant to a delimitation exercise, while in Uttar Pradesh, they would have increased from 80 to 120. The gap in the number of seats between Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh would have increased from 41 to 61. The same pattern of increase in seats in the Hindi heartland would have negatively impacted the southern states.

The reason for this hurried exercise by the BJP was to secure a stranglehold over election outcomes, because its success rate in the Hindi heartland is much higher than in key southern states. This permanent political advantage to the BJP would have been the bane of the Opposition, placing it at a lasting disadvantage.

The result of this defeat is that, in terms of the 106th Constitution Amendment Act, 2023, a census is required to be held after 2026. However, my hunch is that the BJP would still attempt a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 census before the 2029 Lok Sabha elections to manipulate yet another outcome. This will give rise to another constitutional issue.

In the meantime, the BJP is sitting pretty with over 2,400 companies of the Central Armed Police Force in West Bengal. The entire machinery of the Union government in collaboration with the Election Commission is working against the state.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You never get over it, but you get to where it doesn't bother you so much.

- Jeffrey Eugenides

“WAR OF ATTRITION, RISE OF CHINA: A CONFLICT REDEFINING GLOBAL POWER”



COL ASHWANI KUMAR, MID, VSM (RETD).

'History teaches us that great powers rarely fall on the battlefield - they erode in the long shadow of prolonged wars.'

The ongoing Iran - US - Israel conflict is no longer merely a regional confrontation, it is evolving into a defining moment in global geopolitics. What began as a calculated military strike has transformed into a war of endurance one that is quietly redrawing the map of power, influence, and strategic control across the world.

At first glance, the conflict appears to revolve around three actors, Iran, the United States, and Israel. Yet, beneath the surface, a far more consequential shift is underway. While missiles strike and alliances are tested in the Middle East, other global powers most notably China and Russia are observing, adapting, and positioning themselves for long-term advantage.

This is no longer just a war. It is a test of endurance, strategy, and global relevance.

A War Without Quick Victory. Modern warfare has moved beyond decisive battles and swift conclusions. The Iran conflict exemplifies this transformation. Iran, fully aware of its conventional limitations, is not seeking outright victory against a militarily superior United States. Instead, its objective is far more pragmatic to survive, to resist, and to impose sustained costs on its adversaries.

Through a mix of missile strikes, drone warfare, cyber capabilities, and proxy networks, Iran has effectively expanded the battlefield without engaging in direct large scale confrontation. This strategy allows it to stretch the conflict over time, increasing both economic and political pressure on its opponents.

However, endurance comes at a price. Iran's economy, already strained by sanctions, faces further stress from war related disruptions. Infrastructure damage, declining revenues, and internal pressures may gradually limit its ability to sustain high-intensity operations.

The likely trajectory, therefore, is not collapse but controlled persistence, a prolonged, low-intensity conflict that continues for years without decisive resolution.

The United States: Power Under Pressure.

The United States remains the world's foremost military power. Its technological superiority, global reach, and alliance network provide unmatched operational capability. Yet, the real challenge before Washington is not one of strength, but of strategy.

Every extended engagement car-

ries costs financial, political, and psychological. The experience of past conflicts has shown that even overwhelming military superiority does not guarantee strategic success. The absence of a clearly defined end-state risks turning tactical victories into long-term liabilities.

If this war continues without a decisive outcome, the United States may face a familiar dilemma, winning battles while struggling to conclude the war. Such a scenario does not diminish its power outright, but it gradually erodes its global image as a decisive and unchallenged superpower.

China: The Silent Gainer. While the world's attention remains fixed on the Middle East, China is emerging as the most significant indirect beneficiary of this conflict.

Beijing's approach is deliberate and restrained. By avoiding direct involvement, it escapes the immediate costs of war while leveraging its consequences. As the United States diverts resources and attention toward the Middle East, China gains strategic space in the Indo-Pacific region.

Moreover, global uncertainty enhances China's economic relevance. Disruptions in energy supplies and trade routes increase dependence on stable manufacturing and supply chains, areas where China holds considerable influence.

China's rise in this context is not dramatic or confrontational. It is gradual, calculated, and structural. This war may not make China the sole superpower overnight, but it significantly strengthens its position in an emerging multipolar world.

Russia: The Strategic Opportunist.

Russia's role in this conflict is subtle but important. Unlike China, which focuses on long-term economic and geopolitical positioning, Russia operates with a sharper strategic edge.

For Moscow, the conflict presents multiple opportunities:

Diversion of Western attention away from Eastern Europe

Rising global energy prices, strengthening its economic position

Reinforcement of strategic partnerships, particularly with countries opposed to Western dominance

Russia has consistently demonstrated its ability to operate effectively in environments of instability. By maintaining a careful balance supporting anti-Western narratives while avoiding direct escalation, it ensures that the conflict indirectly serves its interests.

In essence, Russia thrives in geopolitical turbulence, and this war provides exactly that.

How Long Can Iran Sustain the

War? The sustainability of Iran's war effort depends on the level of intensity, Short to Medium Term (1-3 Years):

Iran can maintain active engagement through asymmetric tactics, missile capabilities, and proxy networks. These methods are cost effective and difficult to neutralise completely.

Long Term (Beyond 3 Years): Economic constraints, internal pressures, and military attrition may begin to limit Iran's operational capacity. High-intensity conflict at this stage becomes increasingly unsustainable.

Enduring Conflict Scenario: Even under pressure, Iran can continue a low-level, disruptive conflict for an extended period, ensuring that instability persists and costs remain high for its adversaries.

Thus, while Iran may not win in a conventional sense, it can prevent a decisive defeat turning the war into a prolonged strategic stalemate.

India: A Balancing Power in the Making.

India's role in this conflict is uniquely positioned and potentially significant. Unlike the major powers directly or indirectly involved, India maintains relationships across multiple sides engaging with the United States, Israel, and Iran simultaneously.

India's priorities are clear: Energy security, given its dependence on Middle Eastern oil

Protection of trade routes, particularly in the Gulf region

Strategic stability, to avoid regional escalation

Rather than taking a confrontational stance, India is likely to adopt a balanced and pragmatic approach:

Advocating for de-escalation

Engaging diplomatically with all sides

Exploring opportunities for mediation

In the longer term, India's ability to maintain neutrality while safeguarding its interests could enhance its reputation as a responsible and stabilising global power.

While it may not play a direct military role, India's diplomatic and economic influence could prove increasingly important if the conflict prolongs.

The Real Outcome: A Shift in Global Power.

This war is unlikely to produce a clear victor in traditional military terms. Instead, it is accelerating a broader transformation:

Iran endures, but weakens

The United States remains dominant, but stretched

Israel secures tactical successes,

yet remains vulnerable
China rises steadily, without direct confrontation

Russia leverages instability to its advantage

India emerges as a potential balancing force

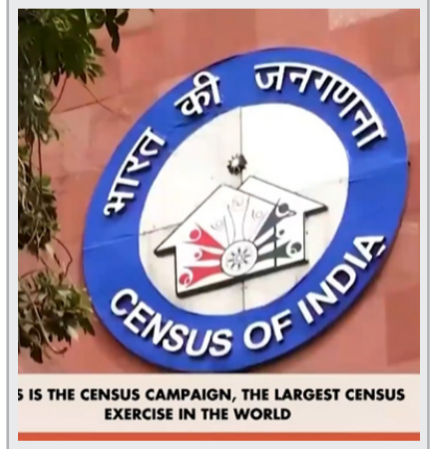
Conclusion: Power Beyond the Battlefield

The Iran - US - Israel conflict underscores a fundamental truth of modern geopolitics: power is no lon-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The largest-ever census exercise in the world is underway and this time, it has been made digital.

Do participate in this exercise, which is an important national responsibility.
~ Narendra Modi, PM
#MannKiBaat



ger defined solely by military dominance. It is defined by resilience, adaptability, and the ability to shape outcomes without direct engagement.

In this evolving landscape, the greatest gains may not belong to those who fight the war but to those who understand it, outlast it, and position themselves beyond it.

If the conflict continues along its current trajectory, it will not just reshape the Middle East. It will accelerate the transition toward a multipolar world, where influence is distributed, contested, and constantly renegotiated. And in that emerging order, the rise of China—supported by the strategic manoeuvring of Russia and the balancing role of India may well define the next chapter of global history.

Author's Note.

The author is a Military Historian and Defence Expert, with extensive experience in analysing modern warfare, strategic affairs, and geopolitical conflicts. His work draws upon years of study, field exposure, and archival research on military doctrines, global power shifts, and conflict dynamics. The views expressed are personal and based on independent assessment of evolving international developments.

Col Ashwani Kumar, MiD, VSM (Retd)

Manipur Govt Replies to COCOMI Memorandum, Urges Calm as Tensions Persist

IMPHAL

The Government of Manipur on Saturday issued a detailed response to a seven-point memorandum submitted by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity, even as it appealed to all communities to maintain peace and support ongoing efforts to restore normalcy in the conflict-hit state.

The memorandum followed a series of large-scale demonstrations held across Manipur under the banner of COCOMI, during which protesters attempted to march towards the Chief Minister's residence to press for answers on issues linked to the protracted ethnic unrest and the recent Tronglaobi bomb attack.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand met delegations of COCOMI

representatives from different parts of the state beginning around 1 pm and formally accepted the memorandum, officials said. Later in the evening, addressing a press conference at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam outlined the government's position on each of the issues raised by the civil society group.

Konhoujam said the government had been aware of COCOMI's plans to organise a peaceful rally, as well as its decision to boycott the Khongiom Day observance on April 23. He added that the government had extended an invitation for dialogue in view of prevailing public sentiment, but the offer was declined by the organisation.

Responding to COCOMI's demand to end what it described as a "proxy war" in the state, the minister termed the



matter "sensitive and delicate," noting that the Government of India has prioritised safeguarding indigenous communities.

On concerns relating to narco-terrorism, Konhoujam pointed to a broader national plan to eliminate terrorism from the Northeast by 2029, stating that similar strategies had yielded results in

curbing Naxalism elsewhere. He asserted that all forms of terrorism, including those affecting Manipur, would be systematically dismantled.

Addressing the Tronglaobi bomb blast and a separate ambush near TM Kasom in Ukhrul district, the minister confirmed that both cases had been handed over to the National Investigation Agency. He said an NIA team revisited the Tronglaobi blast site on Saturday and that the Chief Minister had urged the agency to expedite the investigation and ensure justice. On the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs), Konhoujam said the government was working towards early rehabilitation but acknowledged logistical and security challenges. He cited the redeployment of Central Armed Police Forces for election duties in other states and

renewed tensions following the Tronglaobi incident as key constraints.

He added that confidence-building measures were ongoing, including visits to relief camps and engagement with affected communities. While some displaced persons remain reluctant to return due to security concerns, others have expressed willingness to go back, he said, adding that the situation is under continuous review.

Regarding the demand to scrap the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with certain armed groups, the minister said the state government had consistently raised the issue, including in the Assembly. However, he clarified that any final decision would require concurrence from the Centre, as it is a party to the agreement.

On the implementation of the Na-

tional Register of Citizens (NRC), Konhoujam said both the state and central governments had already initiated steps to curb illegal infiltration and deport undocumented migrants. COCOMI's memorandum sought action on seven key issues, including an end to alleged proxy conflict, measures against narco-terrorism, justice for recent attacks, a judicial probe into alleged firing by security forces that reportedly killed three protesters, expedited rehabilitation of displaced persons, abrogation of the SoO pact, and stricter mechanisms to address illegal immigration.

Reiterating its appeal for restraint, the government called on all sections of society to uphold peace and allow democratic processes and dialogue to continue as efforts intensify to stabilise the situation in Manipur.

RPF Seizes Ganja Worth Rs 29 Lakh Across NFR Zone, Three Trafficking Suspects Held

GUWAHATI

The Railway Protection Force under the Northeast Frontier Railway has seized nearly 60 kg of ganja valued at over Rs 29 lakh during a series of coordinated operations conducted between April 20 and 22 across multiple stations in the region, officials said on Sunday.

Three individuals allegedly involved in trafficking were apprehended during the operations and later handed over to the Government Railway Police for further legal proceedings.

According to officials, the first set of seizures took place on April 20 at New Jalpaiguri railway station, where RPF personnel recovered two unclaimed consignments during routine inspections. Approximately 18 kg of ganja worth Rs 9 lakh and 13.8 kg valued at around Rs 6.9 lakh were seized and subsequently transferred to the GRP.

In a separate operation on April 21, RPF teams at Agartala railway station, acting in coordination with GRP personnel, apprehended two suspects and recovered around 21.48 kg of ganja estimated to be worth Rs 10.74 lakh.

A day later, on April 22, another joint operation at the same station led to the arrest of a third individual. Officials said approximately 6 kg of ganja valued at Rs 3 lakh was seized during the operation.

Authorities stated that surveillance and intelligence-led enforcement measures have been intensified across the NFR zone to curb the use of railway infrastructure for narcotics trafficking. They added that such operations would continue as part of broader efforts to ensure passenger safety and maintain the integrity of railway premises in the Northeast.

Probe Ordered After Two Undertrial Inmates Found Dead in Nagaon Jails

NAGAON

Two undertrial prisoners lodged in separate correctional facilities in Nagaon district were found dead in their beds on Saturday morning, prompting the district administration to order a formal inquiry into the incidents.

The deaths occurred at Nagaon Central Jail and Nagaon Special Jail, which are located within the same but operate under separate administrations.

According to officials, an inmate identified as Jitumoni Konwar, a resident of Raha, was found dead during a routine early morning inspection at Nagaon Central Jail. Jail staff discovered the body during their daily check.

In a similar incident at Nagaon Special Jail, another undertrial prisoner, Rupsingh Dera, was also found dead in his bed. Officials said Dera was facing trial in a murder case at the

time of his death.

Sources indicated that both incidents came to light during routine inspections by jail authorities, raising immediate concern within prison administration. The exact cause of death in either case has not yet been determined.

Authorities have not issued any official statement regarding possible illness, medical conditions, or indications of foul play in connection with the deaths.

Taking serious note of the matter, Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma has ordered a detailed inquiry. The investigation has been assigned to Gopal Sharma, who will examine the circumstances surrounding both deaths and submit a report.

Officials said further clarity is expected after the completion of the inquiry and receipt of post-mortem examination reports.

Pawan Khera Moves Supreme Court After Gauhati High Court Denies Anticipatory Bail in Assam Case

GUWAHATI

Congress leader Pawan Khera has approached the Supreme Court of India challenging the rejection of his anticipatory bail plea by the Gauhati High Court in a defamation and forgery case registered by the Assam Police.

The appeal comes against an April 24 order of the High Court, which declined to grant pre-arrest protection to Khera in connection with a First Information Report (FIR) filed by Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, wife of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The complaint was lodged after Khera, during a press conference, alleged that Sharma possessed multiple foreign passports and held undisclosed assets abroad-claims that triggered legal action.

Following the FIR, Khera had moved the Gauhati High Court seeking anticipatory bail, but the plea was rejected by a single-judge bench of Justice Parthiviyoti Sai-



kia. The court had reserved its verdict on April 21 after hearing detailed arguments from both sides. The detailed order is yet to be made public.

Before the High Court, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Khera, argued that the case was politically motivated and pointed to alleged remarks made by the Chief Minister against his client. He contended that the proceedings reflected

political vendetta, particularly in the run-up to elections.

Senior counsel K N Choudhary supported the submissions, describing the allegations as "scandalous" and asserting that their framing indicated deliberate malice. The defence maintained that, at best, the matter amounted to criminal defamation, which should be pursued through a private complaint rather than invoking more serious charges.

Opposing the bail plea, Assam Advocate General Devajit Lon Saikia argued that the case went beyond defamation and involved grave allegations, including fabrication of documents and title deeds. He submitted that offences related to cheating and forgery had been invoked, warranting a thorough investigation.

With the matter now before the Supreme Court, Khera has sought protection from arrest as legal proceedings continue in the case.

"The appeal comes against an April 24 order of the High Court, which declined to grant pre-arrest protection to Khera in connection with a First Information Report (FIR) filed by Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, wife of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma."

Tripura BJP Urges Governor to Order Probe into TTAADC Over Alleged Corruption, Irregular Appointments



AGARTALA

The Bharatiya Janata Party in Tripura on Sunday sought a formal inquiry into the functioning of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, alleging large-scale corruption, financial irregularities hiring practices under the Tipra Motha Party-led administration.

A BJP delegation led by former MP Rehati Tripura, along with party general secretary Bipin Debarma, MLA Pramod Reang, and former district council members Bhumika Nanda Reang and Bimal Kanti Chakma, met Governor Indrasena Reddy Nallu and submitted a memorandum seeking his intervention.

In the memorandum, the BJP accused the council administration, headquartered in Khumlung, of "rampant corruption," alleging misappropriation of public funds and misuse of development project money during its tenure.

The party further alleged that during the electioneering period, the council carried out recruitment for several Group-C and Group-D

posts in a "hasty and secretive manner" without following due procedure or ensuring transparency.

According to the BJP, such appointments violated established norms and principles of natural justice, raising concerns over possible monetary exchanges in return for jobs. The party also claimed that the council had failed to comply with mandatory financial audit requirements over the years, leading to a breakdown in fiscal discipline.

Citing observations by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, the BJP alleged that the state government had previously been alerted to take corrective measures regarding the council's financial practices.

The delegation urged the Governor to initiate a thorough inquiry into the allegations, ascertain the facts, and take necessary remedial steps in the interest of residents living in TTAADC areas.

There was no immediate response from the Tipra Motha Party or the district council administration regarding the allegations.

Manipur Mulls NRC Seminar to Address Confusion Over Census Sequence

IMPHAL

The Government of Manipur is considering organising a seminar on updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) amid growing public debate over whether the exercise should precede the upcoming Census, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters, Singh acknowledged widespread "confusion" among residents regarding the sequencing of the two processes. "As per the government's understanding, the Census should come before the NRC," he said, while noting that several groups in the state have been advocating the reverse-calling for the NRC to be conducted first.

To address the issue, the state government plans to convene a seminar involving experts from Assam, where the NRC was last



updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court of India. Officials from Manipur and members of the academic and intellectual community are also expected to participate.

The Chief Minister said the government has already engaged a legal expert from Assam with expe-

rience in NRC-related matters, and the proposed seminar will aim to clarify the legal, technical, and procedural aspects of conducting such an exercise.

Referring to Assam's experience, Singh noted that the NRC there was implemented following directions

from the Supreme Court, and said similar insights would help guide discussions in Manipur. He added that the deliberations are expected to culminate in a "white paper" outlining the feasibility, methodology, and steps required for undertaking an NRC update in the state.

The move comes against the backdrop of sustained pressure from civil society groups, including the Just Fair Delimitation campaign, which has been demanding that the NRC be implemented before the Census. However, officials indicated that preparatory work for the Census has already commenced in Manipur.

The government reiterated that the seminar would serve as a platform for informed dialogue, as it seeks to balance public sentiment with legal and administrative considerations surrounding both exercises.

Nagaland Meets Just 44.5% of Animal Food Demand, Imports Cross Rs 263 Crore

DIMAPUR

Nagaland is currently able to meet only about 44.5% of its requirement for animal-based food products, forcing the state to rely heavily on imports worth over Rs 263.56 crore, a senior official said.

Speaking at a state-level programme marking World Veterinary Day in Kohima on April 24, Land Revenue and Tourism Secretary Chusi said the shortfall highlights both a major challenge and a significant opportunity to strengthen the veterinary sector and boost the rural economy.

He noted that per capita availability of key animal-based food items remains well below recommended levels. Milk availability stands at around 67 grams per person per day, compared to the suggested 150 grams. Annual egg availability ranges between 34 and 40 per capita, far below the rec-



ommended 110. Pork consumption, meanwhile, continues to exceed local production levels.

Chusi called for a more proactive

and expanded role for veterinary professionals, emphasising the sector's potential to improve livelihoods and drive economic growth in rural areas.

Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department Secretary Angelina Tajen highlighted the critical role veterinarians play in ensuring food safety and preventing disease outbreaks, including avian influenza and African Swine Fever.

She also warned of the risks posed by zoonotic diseases such as rabies and Nipah virus, stressing the close link between animal and human health.

"Veterinary services such as vaccination, disease surveillance, deworming, artificial insemination, and farmer training are essential not only for public health but also for enhancing rural incomes," she said.

Echoing similar concerns, K N Zubemo Humtsoe, president of the Nagaland Veterinarians Association, underlined the broader responsibilities of veterinarians in animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and public health.

He stressed the need to strengthen infrastructure, improve access to modern technologies, and provide continuous training, particularly for professionals working in remote and underserved areas of the state.

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NIA registers case over recovery of 79 crude bombs in Bengal

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over the investigation into a case involving the recovery of 79 crude bombs and other incriminating materials in West Bengal, where the second and final phase of the Assembly polls is scheduled for April 29, officials said.

According to an official statement, the agency has re-registered FIR No. 62/2026 dated April 25, 2026, of Uttar Kashi Police Station under Bhangar Division in Kolkata as RC-25/2026/NIA/DLI dated April 26, 2026, and has formally begun its probe.

"In pursuance of the MHA order, the NIA has registered FIR No. 62/2026 dated 25.04.2026 of PS Uttar Kashi, Bhangar Division, Kolkata, as RC-25/2026/NIA/DLI dated 26.04.2026 and taken up the investigation. The case pertains to the recovery of 79 crude bombs and other incriminating materials by Kolkata Police, which were being stored at a spot, thereby endangering human life and property," the statement said. Notably, the first phase of the two-phase polling in West Bengal

was held on April 23.

The case relates to the recovery of a large number of crude bombs by the Kolkata Police, which were allegedly being stored at a particular location, posing a serious threat to human life and property.

Officials said the materials were seized during a police operation in the Bhangar area following inputs about suspicious storage of explosive substances.

The NIA, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has now taken over the case.

According to sources, the agency will examine the circumstances under which the crude bombs were stored and will look into all aspects of the case, including the possible intent behind stockpiling such materials.

Sources indicated that the focus of the investigation will be on identifying those responsible for storing the explosives and ascertaining whether there was any larger conspiracy linked to the recovery.

Meanwhile, the NIA on Sunday arrested a prime accused in a separate West Bengal bomb explosion case in which one person was killed, and three others were seriously injured earlier this year, officials said.

Ahidul Islam Molla of Bijoyganj Bazar in South 24 Parganas district was arrested following a detailed examination of his role in the explosion, which took place in March at Dakshin Bamunia village.

Another accused had been arrested earlier in the case by the state police, an NIA statement said.

The NIA said its investigation revealed that Ahidul Islam was a co-conspirator in the crime, involving the preparation of bombs and the destruction of evidence.

"The bombs had exploded while being prepared as part of the conspiracy, killing one of the accused involved in the crime," the agency said, adding that efforts were on to identify other co-accused.

Amit Shah promises UCC, end of 'goonda raj' if BJP voted to power in West Bengal



KOLKATA

Stepping up campaign heat on the TMC government, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday that if the BJP is voted to power in West Bengal, it would implement Uniform Civil Code (UCC), and end "goonda raj" and "syndicate raj" in the state.

Addressing rallies at Tehatta and Ranaghat in Nadia, Shah alleged that successive Congress governments and TMC under Mamata Banerjee had adopted a soft approach towards terrorism. "During the rule of the Congress and Mamata Banerjee governments, terrorists were being fed biryani. After Narendra Modi became prime minister, India answered terror attacks with surgical strikes and air strikes," Shah said.

Shah accused Banerjee of allow-

ing infiltration and alleged that illegal migrants had been accommodated in the state for political reasons. "These infiltrators are a threat to national security. After May 5, we will identify them one by one and take action," he said.

Shah said criminals had created fear in several parts of the state through bomb attacks and political intimidation, and alleged that the ruling dispensation had failed to act against them. Referring to incidents in Sandeshkhali, RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, a law college in south Kolkata and a medical college in Durgapur, Shah said such episodes reflected a deteriorating law and order situation in the state.

"Banerjee is protesting against me for saying I will set right the goons by hanging them upside down. What should be done then?"

Should we embrace them?" Shah said. "There will be an end to 'goonda raj' and 'syndicate raj' in Bengal if the BJP forms the government. Do not be afraid to come out and vote. The EC has made adequate security arrangements, and nobody will be able to prevent you from casting your vote," he said.

The home minister also took a swipe at Banerjee for saying that women should not be coming out of homes after 7 pm. "You vote BJP to power, and I promise you that after May 5, even a small child will

be able to come out of her house at 2 in the night without any fear," he said. Shah said if BJP is voted to power in Bengal, it would set up a special squad to curb cattle smuggling.

"End of syndicate raj" "Banerjee is protesting against me for saying I will set right the goons by hanging them upside down. What should be done then? Should we embrace them?" Shah said. "There will be an end to 'goonda raj' and 'syndicate raj' in Bengal if the BJP forms the government,"



INTERNATIONAL

'Friendly Federal Assassin': White House shooting suspect sent manifesto to family 10 minutes before firing

Who is Cole Tomas Allen? Suspected Trump shooter at White House correspondents' dinner

WASHINGTON

The gunman identified as Cole Allen, accused of trying to storm the ballroom at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner with guns and knives sent a disturbing anti-administration manifesto to his family members moments before the incident, the New York post reported.

In the message, Allen referred to himself as the "Friendly Federal Assassin" and outlined a plan targeting senior government officials. "Administration officials (not including [FBI Director Kash] Patel); they are targets, prioritized from highest-ranking to lowest," Allen wrote in the document, which was reportedly sent about 10 minutes before the shooting to his family.

Allen's writing included explicit and violent intent directed at the administration. "I am no longer willing to permit a pedophile, rapist, and traitor to coat my hands with his crimes," he wrote, referring to the president.

He also described his tactical choices, stating, "In order to minimize casualties, I will also be using buckshot rather than slugs (less penetration through walls)," before acknowledging the possibility of broader violence.

"I would still go through most everyone here to get to the targets if it were absolutely necessary (on the basis that most people chose to attend a speech by a pedophile, rapist, and traitor, and are thus complicit) but I really hope it doesn't come to that."



The manifesto included multiple references to Allen's Christian faith, presented as rebuttals to anticipated criticism.

He also cited controversial political issues, including US actions against Venezuelan drug operations and immigration enforcement policies.

"Turning the other cheek is for when you yourself are oppressed. I'm not the person raped in a detention camp. I'm not the fisherman executed without trial," Allen wrote.

"I'm not a schoolkid blown up, or a child starved, or a teenage girl abused by the many criminals in this administration. Turning the other cheek when someone else is oppressed is not Christian behavior; it is complicity in the oppressor's crimes."

Authorities said the document was provided to law enforcement by a relative prior to the incident.

The suspect was expected to face criminal charges on Monday from the Justice Department, whose acting

leader, Todd Blanche, said the suspect traveled by train from California and checked in as a guest days earlier at the Washington hotel where the Saturday night gala dinner was held with its typically tight security.

Social media posts that appear to match the suspect show he is a highly educated tutor and amateur video game developer.

A 31-year-old engineer and computer scientist from California has been identified by multiple media outlets as the suspect whose photograph was shared by United States President Donald Trump, in connection with a shooting at the Washington Hilton on Saturday night (UTC).

The man who is reportedly identified as Cole Tomas Allen, a resident of Torrance, was apprehended by the United States Secret Service after allegedly charging a high-security checkpoint during the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner, where the President and hundreds of high-ranking officials had gathered.

The incident sparked a scene of "chaotic" violence just outside the hotel ballroom. According to AFP, tactical teams with guns drawn swarmed the venue as guests, including cabinet members and journalists, dived under tables for cover. President Trump and Vice President JD Vance were immediately rushed off the stage by Secret Service agents. In the immediate aftermath, Trump briefly posted "LET THE SHOW GO ON" on Truth Social, though the event was eventually canceled for security reasons.

At a subsequent press conference, Trump confirmed that one Secret Service agent was shot at close range but was saved from serious injury by a bulletproof vest.

US officials have not yet publicly confirmed the suspect's identity.

A LinkedIn profile with the name "Cole Allen" showed a picture of a man which appeared to match the photo shared by Trump, according to AFP.

Donald Trump on posted this image

of a person who caused a disturbance at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner.

Heavily-armed shooter opens fire during White House Correspondents' dinner; Trump evacuated unharmed

A detailed review of public databases by the news website WIRED revealed that Allen maintains a minimal online presence despite an extensive academic and technical background. His LinkedIn profile indicates he graduated from Caltech in 2017 with a bachelor's in mechanical engineering and earned a master's in computer science from California State University Dominguez Hills in 2025. WIRED also noted that an apparent photo of Allen on Caltech's website identifies him as a member of a robotics design lab.

Professionally, Allen has worked as a part-time teacher at C2 Education, a private tutoring firm, where he was recognized as the "December Teacher of the Month" in 2024. Since 2018, he has also identified as an indie game developer, having released a chemistry-themed "atomic fighting game" called "Bohrdom" on the Steam platform. AFP reported that FBI agents were seen searching a residence in Torrance, California, late Saturday night following the suspect's arrest.

Metropolitan Police Department Interim Chief Jeffrey Carroll informed reporters that Allen was carrying a shotgun, a handgun, and multiple knives when he "charged" the checkpoint. While the motive remains under investigation, Carroll noted that the suspect appears to be a "lone actor." According to AFP, Allen is expected to be arraigned in court on Monday on firearm and assault charges.

This shooting marks the latest security breach involving the President, who survived an assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania, in 2024. Asked at Saturday's press conference why he continues to be targeted, Trump speculated that "the people that make the biggest impact" are the ones who are pursued by such attackers.

Four vying to be the next UN chief try to set themselves apart as race heats up



UNITED NATIONS

Four candidates vying to lead the United Nations have spent hours being grilled about their views on issues from restoring global peace to ending escalating poverty — in what the U.N. General Assembly president called one of the toughest job interviews in the world.

There was no clear victor after Chile's Michelle Bachelet, Argentina's Rafael Grossi, Costa Rica's Rebeca Grynspan and Senegal's Macky Sall fielded questions from U.N. ambassadors this past week.

Plus, other candidates could wait until after the initial auditions to jump into the race to succeed U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres on Jan. 1.

"This role matters," said General Assembly President Annalena Baerbock, who presided over the question-and-answer sessions. "The secretary-general is not only the head of the U.N. and the world's top diplomat — she or he also represents all 8 billion of us, defending the U.N. Charter and leading on peace, development, human rights."

All four said they would focus on those three pillars of the U.N., especially its founding role following World War II of ensuring international peace and security and preventing conflicts — which it has not been able to do in Iran, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and other global hot spots because of wide divisions. They also pledged to spur reforms to the more than 80-year-old institution.

Bachelet, 74, a two-time president of Chile and former U.N. human rights chief, told the ambassadors that the U.N. must try to avoid crises and that she

has the right leadership skills.

"I stand before you to reclaim the urgent need for dialogue," she said, stressing that the U.N. must anticipate, prevent and unite. The next secretary-general also needs to be "physically present in the field" to help tackle problems, she said. Grossi, 65, a former Argentine diplomat who has been director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency since 2019, said that with the world so polarized, "there are enormous, huge doubts about our institution" in solving global problems.

Unless the U.N. has effective leadership and support from all countries, it won't regain a key place at the table, he said, "so we have to concentrate on that." He also said the next U.N. chief must visit global hot spots.

Grynspan, 65, a former Costa Rican vice president who has been secretary-general of the U.N. trade and development agency since 2021, said she knows how to stand up for principles while under pressure. As secretary-general, she said she would "continue to be the moral voice and the impartial voice that the secretary-general has to be." The U.N. has become "a risk-conservative organization," she warned. "We need to take more risks — and I am ready to fail and try again."

Sall, 64, who was president of Senegal for 12 years, said the U.N. needs to "regain its place at the global table."

If chosen, he said he would be "a bridge-builder" and that his first priority would be "to contribute to restoring trust, to calm tensions, reduce fragmentation and breathe renewed

hope into our collective action."

Bachelet, a medical doctor, responded to a letter from 28 Republican U.S. lawmakers calling her a "pro-abortion zealot" and asking Secretary of State Marco Rubio to veto her, saying the issue is controversial and that she respects every country's right to decide. She called herself a strong believer in women's rights to decide on their own lives and how many children to have. As secretary-general, she said she would do whatever is necessary to advance agreements by U.N. member nations, including on promoting gender equality.

By tradition, the job of secretary-general rotates by region, and this year it is Latin America's turn. Sall, the only candidate from outside the region, said the U.N. Charter doesn't bar any candidates.

He noted that after a leader from the global north — Guterres is Portuguese — the next U.N. chief should be from the global south. Sall was also the only candidate to spark demonstrations outside U.N. headquarters — both for and against his quest to be secretary-general. Sall has been accused of corruption, which he denies. The four candidates "tried to walk a political tightrope," said Daniel Forti, the International Crisis Group's head of U.N. affairs.

"It is not immediately obvious whether any candidate did enough to propel themselves ahead of the others, or to ward off potential challengers who might emerge later," he said.

The selection will be left to the 15-nation U.N. Security Council, especially its five veto-wielding members — the United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom and France — that remain tight-lipped. The 193-member General Assembly must give final approval.

Minh-Thu Pham, an adviser to former U.N. chief Kofi Annan and CEO of the Starling Institute think tank, said there is a widespread desire for a secretary-general who is willing to take risks and be more active in promoting peace.

Pause, breathe, step back: time to make room for peace in Manipur

Northeast India is already close to heaven in nature-what it needs is human harmony to match its natural beauty. However, its biggest curse in present times is the loss of humanity by engaging in widespread acts of brutality.



PRAMOD BORO
Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)

Manipur is living a tragedy that has become unacceptably familiar. A conflict that began in May 2023 between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has now stretched into a third year, leaving behind a landscape of deaths, grief, segregation and fatigue, with no signs of abatement. Official figures cited in multiple reports have placed deaths above 250 and displacement around 60,000 people. But numbers do not fully capture what has happened to the moral geography of a state: neighbours have become enemies, roads have turned into frontlines, and ordinary life has been reorganised around fear.

The most chilling feature of Manipur's crisis today is the violence that has now become widespread, and the normalisation of hate. A de facto partition has hardened across community and ethnicity, with security forces maintaining buffer zones to prevent clashes, while daily mobility and social interaction remain severely constrained. When a society starts living in compartments, peace stops being a shared public good and becomes a private wish, making it fragile and easily extinguished. That is why this is way beyond a state's "law and order" problem. It is a crisis of trust and legitimacy as well as the failure of social cohesion and the humane principle of coexistence.

The April 7 blast in Bishnupur, reportedly by a projectile attack that killed two children and injured their mother, was a brutal reminder of how civilians remain exposed in a conflict that claims to be "contained." The protests and clashes that followed pointed to the fact that the state's inability to protect life led to anger



Thinking burns calories.

on the streets and weaponisation of rumours. In the last week of April 2026, reports also pointed to fresh clashes involving Naga and Kuki groups in Ukhrul, signalling a drift from a bipolar confrontation into a potentially multi-front crisis. This expansion should alarm every concerned citizen of Manipur and beyond. Conflicts rarely stay neatly bounded; they metastasise socially, territorially, psychologically.

And then there is the vacuum of governance. Manipur's political stability has been repeatedly questioned, leading to the resignation of the Chief Minister in February 2025, followed by President's Rule shortly thereafter. In such an environment, administrative continuity weakens, civil services operate under pressure, and political leadership becomes episodic rather than deliberative. But conflict does not pause for bureaucratic transitions. Children still need schools, mothers still need health services, families still need livelihoods, and communities still need credible forums to resolve disputes. When governance becomes performative-reacting to each flare-up rather than building a sustained peace architecture-the conflict learns that it can outlast the state.

This is where our country must look into the mirror. We have, as a nation, demonstrated that political courage and policy imagination can shift long-standing conflicts if the government chooses to invest its authority in solutions rather than optics. Yet Manipur has been allowed to fester, turning a vulnerable frontier into a theatre of recurring injury. The memory of draconian histories, especially the long shadow of AFSPA and the deep alienation it produced, still shapes how people interpret the presence of force in everyday life. Militarisation may prevent immediate escalation, but it cannot restore trust. Trust returns only when people believe that rules are fair and institutions operate impartially to accommodate all groups and communities.

A greater discomfort lies in the sense that Manipur's political architecture was never designed to hold its layered aspirations with

care. The State Reorganisation Act of 1956 folded the state into an administrative imagination that often treated ethnicity as an afterthought, leaving older questions of belonging, land, and representation to accumulate beneath the surface. Over time, this has produced a weary pattern where multiple faultlines persist. The bureaucracy rotates so frequently that institutional memory rarely matures into sustained peace-craft, and politics, trapped in short cycles of survival and spectacle, struggles to invest in the patient labour that reconciliation requires. In such a setting, peace becomes everyone's stated desire but no one's durable programme. That is why the contrast many citizens draw with the Government of India's determined, high-attention handling of Kashmir feels so stark. Whatever one's view of that approach, it signalled political will and relentless follow-through-qualities that Manipur, tragically, has not yet experienced with the same urgency.

Manipur's conflict has roots in disputed claims over Scheduled Tribe status, land, political representation and the fear of demographic and cultural displacement. But a society does not bleed for three years only because of a policy dispute. It bleeds because there is no credible bridge between grievances and resolution, and no shared platform sturdy enough to hold the weight of competing anxieties. The most painful truth is this: in trying to manage violence alone, we have forgotten to build peace.

So, what must change?

First, the Government of India must stop treating Manipur as an episodic emergency and start treating it as a national peace priority. This requires a standing, empowered peace mechanism-not a one-time delegation. A credible peace architecture needs continuity that promotes sustained dialogue, verifiable commitments, and a clear timeline for trust-building steps that all stakeholders can see and measure.

Second, dialogue must be redesigned to embed the principles of peacebuilding. "Calling everyone to the table" is necessary, but insufficient. The table must be structured so that no group feels ambushed or

symbolically defeated before conversations even begin. Political negotiations, community reconciliation, women's and youth peace forums, and faith-based and civil society platforms must run in parallel tracks. A single track will not suffice for a conflict that has entered the bloodstream of everyday life.

Third, the state must invest in what might be called "peace services." Relief and rehabilitation are not merely administrative tasks-they are political signals. If camps are neglected, compensation is uneven, mobility remains restricted, or hate speech circulates unchecked, then each day becomes a quiet vote against coexistence. Humanitarian governance must be impartial, transparent and rapid-not for optics, but to prevent new grievances from emerging.

Fourth, we must build "everyday peace" from below. This is the most difficult but essential step. Peace does not arrive like a government notification. It grows through small, conscious acts-pausing before spreading inflammatory messages, resisting collective blame, protecting a neighbour's dignity, and teaching children that identities are not enemies. From the Bodoland experience, it is clear that violence leaves no winners-only different forms of loss.

For Manipur's civil society organisations, already burdened with extraordinary responsibilities, the challenge is immense: to keep dialogue alive, demand accountability without partisanship, and acknowledge that pain exists on all sides. For citizens across India, Manipur must not be reduced to a distant issue or a passing headline. It is a test of our constitutional values-whether a diverse society can uphold dignity and coexistence without allowing differences to devolve into permanent hostility.

If the current trajectory continues, Manipur risks slipping into a long-term reality of separation, where barricades, buffer zones, and suspicion define everyday life. Yet, a different future remains possible-if sustained political leadership builds a credible peace architecture and restores trust.

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