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PERSPECTIVE

It's so peaceful when you have no interest in other people's business.

BSF Constable Killed in Ukhrul Crossfire as Village Clashes Escalate

IMPHAL
A constable of the Border Security Force (BSF) was killed after being caught in crossfire between two armed village groups in Manipur's Ukhrul district on April 10, officials said.

The incident occurred in the Litan area during the evening hours when gunfire broke out between suspected Kukli-Zo members from Mongkot Chepu and Tangkhul Naga individuals from Shikibung. The exchange of fire reportedly took place near Mongkot Chepu village at around 4:45 pm.

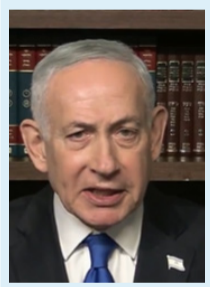
The deceased has been identified as Mithun Mandal, a constable of the BSF's 170 Battalion, who was on duty at the time of the incident. Officials said he was deployed as part of a road security operation when he was struck by a stray bullet.

Mandal sustained a critical shoulder injury and was rushed to a hospital in Imphal for treatment. However, he succumbed to his injuries later in the evening. Medical authorities indicated that the bullet caused severe internal damage.

Police have registered a case in connection with the incident, and an investigation is underway to identify those responsible for the firing. Security forces have since intensified their presence in the area to prevent further escalation. Condemning the killing, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh described the incident as deeply unfortunate, stating that the constable lost his life in the line of duty after being hit by a bullet fired from an unidentified direction.

He said Mandal, a native of Bhagian Tola village in West Bengal, succumbed to his injuries around 6 pm despite medical efforts, and acknowledged his dedication and service to the nation.

WHO SAID WHAT



"Israel will not remain silent in the face of those who attack us. Spain has defamed our heroes, the soldiers of the IDF, the soldiers of the most moral army in the world. ~ Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel

Manipur CM announces Rs 10 lakh ex gratia for family of murdered minor

Tronglaobi blast probe active; search operations underway in Bishnupur, :Home Minister

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh visited a relief camp in Imphal East district on Saturday, April 11, where he met the family of a seven-year-old internally displaced girl who was raped and murdered. The Chief Minister interacted with the family members and other displaced persons staying at the camp. He conveyed his condolences and assured that the government would extend all possible support to ensure justice for the victim.

An ex gratia assistance of Rs 10 lakh has also been announced for the family.

Through a Facebook post after the visit, he said the welfare of internally displaced persons remains a priority for the government. After hearing their grievances directly, he instructed officials to take immediate



steps to address their concerns and focus on reducing hardship, as well as speeding up rehabilitation and resettlement measures.

According to him, the administration is committed to restoring dignity, stability, and normalcy in the lives of affected families.

The victim, a girl from Moreh, went missing on April 4 and was later found dead the following day beneath the Singjamei Bridge in

Imphal West. The incident has deepened concerns over the safety of displaced people living in relief camps.

Imphal East District Commissioner L. Nivedita stated that authorities are taking all necessary steps to ensure justice for the victim's family. She confirmed that the accused has already been taken into custody.

At the camp interaction, displaced residents raised demands for an early return to their native villages and also sought deployment of an IRB battalion in Moreh to strengthen security. He assured that steps would be taken to support their return and called for renewed trust among communities to restore peace and stability. The probe into the fatal bomb blast in Tronglaobi village of Manipur's Bishnupur district is still in progress, while security forces continue search operations in the

area, State Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam said on Saturday, April 11. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the 176th death anniversary event of Maharaja Nara Singh at Kangla Fort, the minister said that officials are following multiple leads, but he did not disclose further information as the inquiry is still active. When asked about the incident, Konthoujam said that security deployment has been stepped up in the affected region after the explosion, and efforts are ongoing to identify and apprehend those involved.

On demands to replace central paramilitary forces with state police in border and sensitive locations, the Home Minister said the government is working on a gradual plan for redeployment. He added that some central forces may be shifted to hill areas, while state forces would take over certain positions, though

immediate replacement is not possible due to limited manpower.

The blast took place in the early hours of April 7 at a home in Tronglaobi, where two children lost their lives while they were asleep, and their mother sustained injuries. The incident, especially due to the presence of a nearby CRPF camp, has led to strong public anger.

In the aftermath, protests broke out in the area, with locals condemning the attack and demanding the withdrawal of central forces from the locality.

Many locals have demanded an increased presence of state police forces, expressing worries about safety in the area and issues related to accountability.

Security operations are still underway in the area, while the investigation is continuing without any conclusion so far.

Assam to introduce grading system for HSLC from next year; toppers, compartment exams scrapped



GUWAHATI

In a major overhaul of the secondary education assessment system, the Assam State School Education Board has announced that High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examinations will shift to a grading-based evaluation from the next academic year, doing away with the practice of declaring toppers and conducting compartmental exams.

Announcing the reform, ASSEB chairman Ramesh Chandra Jain said the move is aimed at reducing academic pressure and aligning the state's education system with the broader goals of the National Education Policy 2020.

"From next year onwards, there will be no provision for announcing

top rank holders in the HSLC examination. The results will be declared based on grades," Jain said.

Under the revised framework, students' performance will be assessed through a grading system rather than marks-based ranking, in a bid to encourage conceptual understanding and holistic learning while discouraging unhealthy competition.

In another significant change, the board has decided to discontinue compartmental examinations. Students who fail to clear the HSLC exam will no longer be able to reappear within the same academic year and will instead have to follow the updated assessment structure as prescribed under the new guidelines.

Officials said the reforms are part of efforts to introduce competency-based evaluation and create a more student-friendly system, in line with NEP 2020's emphasis on reducing exam-related stress and broadening assessment parameters.

The new system will not apply to the HSLC Examination 2026, the results of which have already been declared under the existing marks-based format. The changes will come into force from the next academic session, allowing schools and students time to adapt.

Jain added that detailed guidelines outlining the grading structure and evaluation methodology will be issued in due course.

The decision marks a significant shift in Assam's education landscape, moving away from rank-based competition towards a more inclusive and balanced approach to student assessment.

Tipra Motha Eyes Landslide in TTAADC Polls, Pradyot Kishore Debbarma Claims 24 of 28 Seats

AGARTALA

Ahead of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections, Pradyot Kishore Debbarma, founder and supremo of Tipra Motha, on Friday asserted that his party is poised to secure a decisive mandate, projecting victory in 24 of the 28 seats in the council.

Addressing a party gathering at Gandacherra, Debbarma said internal assessments, grassroots feedback, and the party's organisational network indicate a comfortable majority for Tipra Motha in the upcoming polls.

He urged voters to consolidate their support behind the party's electoral symbol, stating that a strong mandate would be critical for ensuring effective governance within the autonomous council framework.

Touching upon electoral dynamics, Debbarma cautioned against the fragmentation of votes among regional forces, specifically referring to the Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT). While acknowledging its earlier role in regional politics, he argued that divided votes could inadvertently benefit the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), thereby influencing the final outcome in the 28-member council.

In a video message released shortly before the close of campaigning, the Tipra Motha chief made a final appeal to voters, highlighting what he described as unfulfilled assurances concerning the rights and welfare of indigenous communities over the past two years.

Re-poll Underway in Karimganj North After Election Commission of India Annuls April 9 Voting



GUWAHATI

Fresh voting is underway in the Karimganj North Assembly constituency after the Election Commission of India (ECI) declared the April 9 poll void, citing irregularities in the polling process.

The decision, communicated through an official order issued on April 10, followed a review of ground reports and "all material circumstances" surrounding the earlier voting exercise.

Officials on the ground confirmed that the re-poll is progressing smoothly. "Voting is going on peacefully. We hope the process will continue without disruption under close supervision," said Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi, District Commissioner of Sribhumi district.

While the precise cause behind the annulment remains under investigation, Dwivedi acknowledged that the earlier process had been "vitiated," necessitating a fresh poll. "The issue is under investigation, but there was viti-

ation of the poll process. Hence, the Commission decided that a re-poll was necessary," he added.

Voters returning to the booths on Saturday expressed cautious optimism. Debolina Deb Saha, a local voter, recalled that the April 9 polling had initially appeared normal. "Everything seemed fine when we arrived that day. Later, we heard there might have been an issue with the EVM. This time as well, the process is going well," she said.

The ECI invoked provisions under Section 58(2)(A) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to cancel the earlier poll. The re-poll is being conducted at a polling station located at Baby Land English High School under the 123-Karimganj North Assembly constituency in Karimganj.

Authorities said necessary instructions have been issued to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Assam to ensure wide publicity of the re-poll in the affected area. Political parties and contesting candidates have also been formally informed to facilitate the smooth conduct of the exercise.

The Commission has further directed strict adherence to guidelines laid out in Chapter 13 of the Handbook for Returning Officers, 2023, underscoring the need to maintain transparency and credibility in the electoral process.

Officials remain on high alert as voting continues, with arrangements in place to ensure that the re-poll proceeds in a free, fair, and orderly manner.

Winter Adventure Tawang Gains Momentum as CM Pema Khandu Pushes Winter Sports Vision



ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday said the Winter Adventure Tawang initiative marks a significant step towards building a robust winter sports ecosystem in the state, while simultaneously unlocking the vast adventure tourism potential of Tawang in the eastern Himalayas.

The Chief Minister made the remarks after visiting the ongoing training programme at Panga Teng Tso Lake, where he interacted with trainees participating in skiing and snowboarding sessions.

Describing the initiative as a "step toward building a winter sports ecosystem," Khandu highlighted that 46 trainees are currently undergoing specialised training under the SkiMo India Federation.

"With 46 trainees receiving expert training in skiing and snowboarding, the programme is not only nurturing local talent but also strengthening Tawang's potential as a premier adventure tourism destination," he said.

Officials said the programme is designed to provide intensive, structured training in skiing and snowboarding, alongside essential safety protocols and high-altitude endurance preparation-key components required for winter sports in mountainous terrain.

Khandu termed the initiative an encouraging beginning for youth engagement in adventure sports, adding that it represents a promising convergence of youth development, sports infrastructure, and sustainable tourism in the frontier state. During his visit, the Chief Minister observed live training sessions at the high-altitude lake and interacted with participants drawn from across Arunachal Pradesh and other parts of the country.

"Young participants are being trained and prepared for the demands of high-altitude winter adventure," he noted, underscoring the broader national appeal of the programme.

The visit also saw Khandu taking a ride on a Polaris Voyager

snow vehicle, reflecting the rugged terrain and challenging climatic conditions of the region. "In the heart of the Tawang Himalayas, every challenge is an opportunity to sharpen our resolve," he remarked.

Highlighting the region's unique climate, the Chief Minister added, "Snow in April-here in Tawang, winter lingers, and so does the spirit of adventure."

The Winter Adventure Tawang training programme, being conducted in the strategically located border district, aims to promote organised winter sports while positioning the region as an emerging hub for adventure tourism in India.

Nestled amid the high-altitude landscape, Panga Teng Tso Lake offers a natural setting conducive to winter sports activities. Officials believe such initiatives will open new avenues for youth engagement, skill development, and employment, while enhancing Arunachal Pradesh's profile on the country's adventure tourism map.



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SOUTH ASIA'S ENERGY CRISIS

The energy crisis gripping South Asia in 2026 is not simply the fallout of a distant geopolitical confrontation; it is the clearest evidence yet of a systemic fragility that policymakers have long acknowledged but persistently under-addressed. The disruption of the Strait of Hormuz—through which roughly 20 per cent of global oil and a significant share of liquefied natural gas flows—has once again demonstrated how deeply the region's economic stability is tethered to external supply chains. What makes this moment particularly consequential is not just the scale of the shock—Asian LNG prices spiking by over 140 per cent, crude briefly breaching \$119 per barrel—but the speed with which it has translated into domestic distress: fuel queues, fertiliser shortages, power outages, and rising inflation that is already eroding fragile post-pandemic recoveries.

The numbers tell a stark story. South Asia imports close to 80-85 per cent of its crude oil requirements, with India alone accounting for nearly 5 million barrels per day of imports, about half of which transit through Hormuz-linked routes. Pakistan and Bangladesh, meanwhile, rely on Gulf suppliers for up to 70-100 per cent of their LNG needs, embedding a structural exposure that leaves little room for manoeuvre when supply chains tighten. In Bangladesh, natural gas fuels over 70 per cent of power generation; in Pakistan, the figure hovers around 35-40 per cent, but with rising LNG dependence over the past decade. This concentration risk has turned a geopolitical choke point into an economic fault line.

The macroeconomic consequences are already materialising. Multilateral institutions have warned that a prolonged disruption could shave off over 1 percentage point from GDP growth across developing Asia while pushing inflation up by 2-3 percentage points. In South Asia—where food and energy account for a disproportionate share of household expenditure—the pass-through is immediate and regressive. Transport costs have surged, agricultural input prices have risen due to fertiliser disruptions, and electricity tariffs are under upward pressure as utilities grapple with higher fuel costs. The result is a classic stagflationary squeeze, with growth slowing even as living costs climb.

Yet the crisis is uneven in its impact, revealing the contours of resilience and vulnerability across the region. India, with roughly 70-75 per cent of its electricity generated from coal—most of it domestically sourced—has managed to avoid widespread blackouts. Its coal production, now approaching 1 billion tonnes annually, and stockpiles sufficient for nearly three months of consumption, have provided a crucial buffer. But this resilience comes at a cost: a temporary but significant retreat from climate commitments, as coal plants operate at full tilt and even substitute for household gas in some cases.

Pakistan and Bangladesh, by contrast, are bearing the brunt of the shock. In Pakistan, fuel prices have surged by as much as 40-50 per cent in certain regions, triggering widespread rationing and industrial slowdowns. Bangladesh has faced rolling blackouts as LNG shortages constrain power generation, with its export-oriented garment sector—responsible for over 80 per cent of export earnings—under acute stress. Sri Lanka, still emerging from its 2022 economic collapse, is once again confronting fuel shortages that threaten to destabilise its fragile recovery. The policy response, so far, has been reactive and short-term. Governments have leaned heavily on demand suppression—shortened work weeks, remote schooling, fuel rationing—while scrambling to secure alternative supplies and ramp up coal generation. India has cut fuel taxes to cushion consumers, while others have raised prices to curb demand. Regional cooperation has flickered into view, with India supplying emergency fuel to neighbours, but remains far from institutionalised.

What is missing, and what this crisis underscores with renewed urgency, is a structural rethinking of energy security—one that moves beyond the binary of imported fossil fuels versus intermittent renewables. In this context, bioenergy—particularly biogas—offers a compelling, yet underutilised, pathway.

The potential is substantial. India alone generates an estimated 500-550 million tonnes of agricultural residue and organic waste annually, alongside vast quantities of cattle dung—over 300 million tonnes per year. According to government estimates, this feedstock could support the production of over 60 million cubic metres of biogas per day, translating into roughly 25-30 GW of equivalent energy capacity. Yet, as of 2025, installed biogas capacity—across both household and industrial-scale plants—remains a fraction of this potential, with compressed biogas (CBG) production under the SATAT (Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation) initiative still in its early stages.

Across South Asia, the story is similar. Bangladesh, with its dense agricultural base and livestock sector, has the technical potential to generate over 7-10 billion cubic metres of biogas annually, enough to significantly offset LNG imports for cooking and small-scale industry. Pakistan's livestock population—one of the largest in the world—offers comparable opportunities, with estimates suggesting biogas could meet up to 20-25 per cent of rural energy demand if scaled effectively. Nepal and Bhutan, already leveraging hydropower, could integrate biogas into decentralized energy systems, reducing reliance on imported LPG. The advantages of biogas are not merely theoretical. Unlike solar or wind, it provides dispatchable, round-the-clock energy; unlike imported LNG, it is domestically sourced and insulated from global price shocks. It also addresses multiple policy objectives simultaneously: waste management, rural income generation, and emissions reduction. Compressed biogas can be used as a transport fuel, substituting for CNG, while digestate—the byproduct of biogas production—serves as an organic fertiliser, reducing dependence on imported chemical inputs.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism. - Norman Vincent Peale

CALLS FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENT GETS STRONGER



ASAD MIRZA

It seems that President Trump's Tuesday morning Truth Social post, which threatened "a whole civilisation will die tonight" and raised the spectre of nuclear war, has jolted the American lawmakers, and it has begun a chorus of calls either for Trump's impeachment or for his removal via the invocation of the 25th Amendment.

The House Democratic leadership has called for lawmakers to return to Washington immediately to hold a vote to end the Iran war. The statement, signed by Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York and other top House Democratic lawmakers, said President Trump is "completely unhinged" and that a vote is necessary to stop the president before he "plunges the country into World War III", reported the Wall Street Journal.

The House is currently out of session until Monday. A bipartisan War Powers Resolution opposing the war in Iran previously failed by a 212-219 vote in the House in March, as lawmakers largely voted along party lines.

The reticence expressed by Democrats about removing President Donald Trump from office—even after he ousted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and attacked Iran without seeking congressional approval—quickly fell away after his latest threat to Iran.

"This is a threat of genocide and merits removal from office. The President's mental faculties are collapsing and cannot be trusted," Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., posted to X on Tuesday. "To every individual in the President's chain of command: You have a duty to refuse illegal orders. That includes carrying out this threat."

The chance of Trump being removed from office is low, and his Cabinet members—who would have to play an active role in invoking the 25th Amendment—routinely publicly praise him.

According to CNBC, talk of removal began even before the Tuesday Truth Social post, after Trump started the clock on Iran with an Easter Sunday post threatening to attack Iranian bridges and power plants if the country did not soon make a deal.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, said in a statement late Tuesday that Trump should be removed from office one way or another. "If the Cabinet is not willing to invoke the 25th Amendment and restore sanity, Republicans must reconvene Congress to end this war," Pelosi said.

Even his close supporters like Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson broke with Trump on his threats to bomb Iran's civilian infrastructure, saying in a podcast Monday, "I hope and pray" he is "using this as bluster."

"I do not want to see us start blowing up civilian infrastructure... We are not at war with the Iranian people. We are trying to liberate them," Johnson, a Trump ally who rarely breaks with the president, said on the "John Solomon Reports" podcast, reports ABC News.

But in reality, as per CNBC reports neither impeachment nor the use of the 25th Amendment is likely at the moment, with Republicans

in control of both chambers and no open revolt within the Trump administration over the Iran war.

Section 4 of the 25th Amendment has never been invoked and would require buy-in from Vice President JD Vance, the Cabinet and eventually two-thirds of Congress if Trump argued he is not incapacitated.

Vance, who would assume the role of president if the 25th Amendment were invoked, on Tuesday lauded Trump from a stage in Budapest where he spoke in support of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

Even a Jewish leader in the US has decried President Trump's threat to destroy "a whole civilization" as his deadline for Iran nears. "We know what it means when leaders call for communities and populations to be wiped out," Amy Spitalnick, CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, says in a statement. "Any suggestion that this advances Jewish or Israeli safety is simply an exploitation of our community to advance horrific war crimes and the President's broader extreme anti-democratic agenda", reports Times of Israel.

She urged people to recognise "multiple truths" that Iran's government is repressive and dangerous, but the Trump administration is increasingly flouting its constitutional and humanitarian obligations.

In its analysis the news website The Hill dissecting the president's post on Truth Social says that let's just strip away the shock value for a moment and consider what this represents in practical terms. This is not a stray remark at a rally. Nor was it a misstatement quickly corrected by staff. This is a public declaration, directed at a geopolitical adversary, during an active and escalating international crisis.

And it also raises a question that Washington has spent years trying to avoid: What happens when the risk is not external, but presidential? The 25th Amendment to the

American Constitution was not written for partisan convenience. It was designed for moments when the continuity and stability of executive decision-making come into question. Its purpose is not to punish a president but to protect the country.

For decades, the 25th Amendment has been treated as politically radioactive. That made sense when the threshold was hypothetical or remote. But it makes far less sense when real concerns are playing out in real time, in full public view, during a potential military escalation in one of the most volatile regions in the world.

This is not about ideology, too. It is not about whether one supports or opposes the administration's broader policies. It is about capacity. The presidency demands a level of judgment that is measured, deliberate and anchored in an understanding of consequence. Words spoken—or posted—by a president are not just rhetoric. They are signals. Markets react to them. Allies interpret them. Adversaries test their elasticity.

When those signals become erratic, inflammatory, or untethered from strategic coherence, the risk is not abstract. It is immediate.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday evening, Trump announced a two-week ceasefire but it did not assuage his critics. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, posted to X after the announcement that he was "glad Trump backed off and is desperately searching for any sort of exit ramp from his ridiculous bluster."

The sole driving force behind president Trump's war against Iran is evident from his statement on April 7, when he said that the United States could take control of Iranian oil resources as part of the outcome of the ongoing conflict, framing it as a potential economic return for military action.

"If I had my choice... yeah, because I'm a businessman first," Trump said when asked about securing Iran's oil. He pointed to past US

actions elsewhere to justify the idea. He framed the approach as a departure from past US policy. "To the victor belong the spoils... we haven't had that in this country probably in 100 years," Trump said.

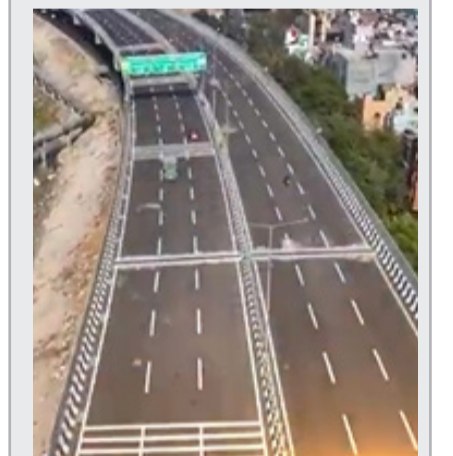
This sort of thinking or justification of his actions, shows that President Trump is not guided by any strategy, rule of law or other obligations but just by money.

Though charges of nepotism were levelled against Trump's predecessor Joe Biden also, but no POTUS himself has brazenly spoken about earning money from global crises, as the current one.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor is set to redefine travel between the National Capital Region and Uttarakhand by unlocking new opportunities for tourism, trade, and local development across the region.

By diverting through-traffic away from congested urban stretches, it will improve mobility, reduce pollution, and support balanced, sustainable growth across the region. Watch the full video: <https://youtu.be/uwAD2a8b3kk> ~ NHA



Nagaland DCs' meet begins in Kohima; Rio stresses governance reforms, census readiness and fiscal discipline

KOHIMA

The Deputy Commissioners' Conference 2026 commenced at the Civil Secretariat in Kohima on Friday, bringing together district administrators and senior officials for a two-day review of governance priorities, development strategies and administrative reforms across Nagaland.

Inaugurating the conference, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio underscored the evolving role of Deputy Commissioners (DCs), stating that while traditional responsibilities such as law and order, revenue administration, elections and census operations remain fundamental, their mandate has expanded significantly in recent years.

He said DCs are now central to implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes, managing disasters, ad-

ressing public grievances and ensuring inter-departmental coordination, marking a shift from regulatory functions to a more facilitative and development-oriented role focused on last-mile delivery.

Highlighting the changing nature of governance, Rio noted that administration has become increasingly citizen-centric, technology-driven and outcome-oriented. He stressed the need for district officials to strike a balance between maintaining law and order and accelerating development.

"Deputy Commissioners today are not just administrators but key drivers of coordination and delivery at the grassroots, acting as a crucial link between the government and the people," he said.

On institutional reforms, the Chief Minister pointed to initiatives

aimed at enhancing transparency and meritocracy, including the establishment of the Nagaland Staff Selection Board. He also highlighted livelihood-focused programmes such as the Chief Minister's Micro Finance Initiative.

Addressing employment and skilling, Rio said the Nagaland Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Mission has transitioned into a demand-driven model aligned with sectors such as construction, hospitality, transport and IT-enabled services. He added that job fairs and partnerships are increasingly linking training with employment, with over 73,000 applicants currently registered.

He further cited global employment opportunities under the Nagaland Japan Connect 2026 initiative, noting that more than 450 youth have

registered and 65 candidates have already received recruitment intent across sectors including agriculture, manufacturing and shipping.

On healthcare, Rio said 83 medical officers and junior specialists appointed during the COVID-19 period are currently serving but expressed concern over low participation in recent recruitment drives. He noted that only 193 of 1,553 registered doctors under the Nagaland Medical Council had applied, indicating a gap between available manpower and public service engagement.

Raising fiscal concerns, the Chief Minister flagged challenges arising from the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission, including a reduced share in central taxes and the absence of Revenue Deficit Grants for the 2026-31 period. He warned of mounting deficits and

called for revenue augmentation and fiscal prudence. On governance and indigenous rights, Rio highlighted the role of tribal and village councils in implementing the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN). He urged strict scrutiny in issuing Indigenous Inhabitant Certificates, stressing accountability and the protection of indigenous identity. Emphasising data accuracy, he noted that the upcoming Census of India 2027 will be the country's first fully digital census, to be conducted in two phases starting with houselisting in July 2026. He cautioned that inaccuracies in data could adversely impact governance, planning and representation. In his concluding remarks, Rio urged DCs to adopt a results-driven approach, focusing on accountability and measurable outcomes. Earlier, Chief Secretary Senti-

yanger Imchen said the extended conference was convened in view of the upcoming census and the expanding responsibilities of DCs. He added that the platform would help integrate field-level insights into policymaking and strengthen coordination among departments.

The conference is being attended by Deputy Chief Minister Yanhango Patton, senior officials and district administrators. Deliberations on the first day covered issues such as solid waste management under the Swachh Bharat Mission, land acquisition under the RFCTLARR Act, skilling initiatives and administrative reforms. The second day will focus on RIIN, Inner Line Permit (ILP), border affairs and census preparedness, alongside discussions on long-term development under the "Viksit Nagaland for Viksit Bharat 2047" vision.

**EIF Organiser
Shyamkanu
Mahanta Files Bail
Plea in Zubeen
Garg Death Case;
Hearing Set for
April 22**

GUWAHATI

Shyamkanu Mahanta, a key accused in the death case of Assamese singer Zubeen Garg, has filed a fresh bail application before a special fast-track court in Guwahati, with the hearing scheduled for April 22.

Special Public Prosecutor Zaur Kamar said the defence had sought an earlier hearing date of April 13, but the court fixed April 22 for arguments on the plea. He added that the prosecution will submit its objections to the bail application.

Mahanta had earlier moved a bail plea in the case but later withdrew it.

The matter is currently being heard on a day-to-day basis by a special sessions fast-track court. Zubeen Garg died on September 19 last year while swimming near Lazarus Island in Singapore, a day before he was scheduled to perform at the North East India Festival (NEIF). Following the incident, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Assam Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) conducted a probe and filed a chargesheet in December, naming seven accused. Four of them, including Mahanta, have been charged with murder.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier told the Assam Assembly that the case appeared to be a "plain and simple murder."

In contrast, a separate investigation by the Singapore Police found no evidence of foul play in the incident. However, authorities in Assam have maintained that the findings of the foreign probe will not affect the ongoing case being pursued in the state.

The court is expected to hear arguments from both sides on April 22 before deciding on the bail application.

Manipur extends mobile internet ban in five districts by two days amid security concerns

IMPHAL

The Government of Manipur has extended the suspension of mobile internet and data services, including VPN access, across five districts for an additional two days, citing a volatile law and order situation.

According to an official order issued by the Home Department, the restrictions will remain in force in Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Kakching, and Bishnupur districts from 2:00 PM on April 10.

Authorities said the decision followed a review of the prevailing security situation, with concerns raised over the potential misuse of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and X for spreading misinformation and rumours. Officials warned that such content could trigger mob mobilisation, leading to violence, arson, and damage to property.

The order was issued under Rule

3 of the Temporary Suspension of Telecommunication Services Rules, 2024, with the approval of the Governor. Officials noted that monitoring and regulating mobile data services in real time remains technically challenging, necessitating continued restrictions as a preventive measure.

The state government had initially imposed a three-day suspension on mobile internet services beginning at 2:00 PM on April 7. While broadband services - including Internet Leased Line (ILL) and Fiber to the Home (FTTH) connections - were partially restored on April 8 under regulated conditions, curbs on mobile internet have remained in place.

Officials said the directive was issued ex-parte due to the urgency of the situation and will be widely communicated through print and electronic media. The government has also warned that any violation of the order will invite legal action under applicable laws.

Women lead voter surge in Assam polls; turnout hits record 85.91%

GUWAHATI

Assam's electoral landscape has registered a significant shift in the 2026 Assembly elections, with women voters not only turning out in record numbers but also surpassing male participation, marking a milestone in the state's democratic trajectory.

According to official data, overall voter turnout in the 2026 elections stood at an impressive 85.91 per cent - among the highest ever recorded in the state. Notably, female voter turnout reached 86.50 per cent, overtaking male participation, which stood at 85.33 per cent.

The trend reflects a steady rise in women's electoral participation over recent election cycles. In the 2021 Assembly polls, female turnout had already edged past male participation at 82.01 per cent compared to 81.60 per cent. A similar pattern was observed in



2016, when women voters marginally outnumbered men at polling stations, signalling an emerging shift.

Historically, however, the gender gap in Assam's elections was pronounced. During the 1960s and

1970s, male voter turnout significantly exceeded that of women, mirroring broader social and structural barriers. In the 1962 Lok Sabha elections, for instance, male turnout stood at 58.39 per cent, while female participation

lagged at 42.05 per cent.

Over the decades, overall voter engagement in the state has also seen a steady climb. From a modest 47.54 per cent turnout in the first general elections in 1951, Assam crossed the 70 per cent mark in the 1990s and has consistently recorded over 80 per cent participation in recent years.

Analysts attribute the rise in women's turnout to a combination of improved electoral infrastructure, targeted voter awareness campaigns, and broader socio-political changes that have enhanced women's access to and engagement with the democratic process.

The 2026 figures underscore a broader transformation within Assam, highlighting not only higher voter participation but also a more inclusive electorate where women are playing an increasingly decisive role in shaping political outcomes.

Gogoi alleges Sarma in 'panic mode' amid escalating political row in Assam

GUWAHATI

The political sparring in Assam intensified on Friday as Congress MP and state party president Gaurav Gogoi launched a fresh attack on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, accusing him of being in "panic mode" following a recent press conference by senior Congress leader Pawan Kherra.

Addressing the media, Gogoi alleged that the Chief Minister's recent statements and conduct reflected anxiety rather than political confidence. He claimed that Sarma had resorted to "abusive language" and attempts to intimidate journalists and media proprietors in response to the controversy triggered by Kherra's remarks.

"Since Pawan Kherra's press conference, the Chief Minister



appears panicked. He has been making abusive remarks and threatening journalists and



media owners. Power cannot be used to suppress the truth," Gogoi said.

The Congress leader further asserted that additional revelations, which he described as "shocking allegations," are likely to surface in the coming days, potentially deepening the confrontation between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition Indian National Congress in the state.

The ongoing row stems from allegations raised earlier by Kherra concerning passport and property disclosures linked to the family of the Assam Chief Minister. The Sarma family has firmly rejected these claims, dismissing them as "AI-generated fabrications" and politically motivated misinformation.

There was no immediate response from Chief Minister Sarma to Gogoi's latest remarks at the time of filing this report.

Tripura ADC polls: BJP's Devid Debbarma terms Ramchandra Ghat contest 'one-sided'



AGARTALA

Campaigning for the upcoming Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections gathered momentum as BJP state secretary Devid Debbarma expressed confidence of a decisive victory from the key Ramchandra Ghat constituency, describing the contest as "one-sided".

A large bike rally held in support of Debbarma in Khowai district witnessed significant participation from party workers, youth supporters, and local residents, signalling strong mobilisation by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the April 12 polls.

The Ramchandra Ghat seat has emerged as a closely watched constituency in the TTAADC elections, with the BJP fielding a prominent organisational figure against James Debbarma of the Tipra Motha Party, setting the stage for a high-stakes contest.

Speaking during the rally, Devid Debbarma termed the election a crucial moment for both development and identity in the Autonomous District Council areas.

"This is a very significant election, not just for development and progress in the ADC areas, but also for the peo-

ple of Ramchandra Ghat. For the first time, a national party candidate is contesting from here, and the response from the public has been overwhelming," he said.

Highlighting the visible enthusiasm among supporters, the BJP leader said the turnout at campaign events reflected growing aspirations for change in the region.

"People are celebrating what they believe will be a victory - not just for me, but for the party and for leadership that stands for progress," he added, indicating that more large-scale campaign programmes are planned in the coming days.

Taking aim at his opponent, Debbarma downplayed the challenge from Tipra Motha, alleging that his rival lacks local roots. "This is not a big concern for us. He is not even from this constituency and is seen as an outsider," he said.

With campaigning intensifying, Ramchandra Ghat is shaping up as a key battleground in the TTAADC polls, reflecting broader political currents in the tribal council areas where issues of development, representation, and identity remain central to the electoral discourse.

Tension in Dibrugarh as AJP Alleges Unauthorised Police Search at Party Chief's Residence



DIBRUGARH

Tension flared in Assam's Dibrugarh district on Friday after lead-

Quest!

91% of people are no longer friends with someone they called their "best friend."

of forcibly entering the premises without prior notice or legal sanction.

According to party leaders, the police arrived in search of an individual linked to the party. However, AJP workers present at the residence claimed that the personnel failed to produce a warrant or any official documentation authorising the search.

AJP secretary Chittaranjan Basumatary alleged that the police not only entered the premises forcefully but also intimidated those present. "They barged in without permission and even compelled the house owner to sign documents. When we questioned them, they left the premises," he claimed.

Basumatary further questioned the legality of the operation, stating that no magistrate accompanied the police team and no formal notice was issued. He alleged that around 20 to 30 personnel were involved in the operation.

The confrontation escalated as party supporters gathered at the site, eventually forcing the police team to leave, AJP members claimed. Another party functionary alleged that despite being informed that the individual being sought did not reside at the location, the police conducted an extensive search of the premises. He also accused the personnel of attempting to seize

Form 17C documents, which contain detailed polling data, including voter turnout and vote counts recorded in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

"When we resisted, they threatened to take us to the police station," the party member alleged.

The incident comes amid heightened political tensions following reports of poll-related violence in Kutuha village under the Khowang constituency on April 9. AJP leaders accused the police of acting in a partisan manner, alleging inaction on complaints filed by their supporters.

Basumatary claimed that an AJP member was assaulted during the Kutuha incident and that no arrests had been made so far. He also alleged threats from individuals linked to political rivals.

The party further accused the ruling establishment of using the police to intimidate opposition workers during the ongoing electoral process, a charge that could not be independently verified.

AJP leaders have warned of protests against the alleged police action, stating that demonstrations will be organised against the Dibrugarh police administration.

There was no immediate response from the police regarding the allegations at the time of filing this report.

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UP final voter list at 13.39 crore after revision, over 2 crore names deleted



LUCKNOW

The State Election Commission of Uttar Pradesh has published the final voter list following the completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. It shows the number of voters in the state to be 13.39 crore.

Sharing the draft of final voter list on Friday, Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that it had 2.05 crore voters less than the number of voters that existed in the official records when the SIR began.

There were 15.44 crore voters in the state records on October 27, 2025, when the first phase of the SIR exercise began, but it came down to 12.55 crore voters after the first phase of revision ended on January 6, 2026.

As per the final roll released on Friday, the state now has

7,30,71,061 male (54.54%), 6,09,09,525 female (45.46%) and 4,206 transgender voters. The number of first-time voters in age group of 18-19 years stands at 17,63,360, while the gender ratio is 834:1,000.

According to Rinwa, Uttar Pradesh registered a net increase of 84,28,767 voters in the final draft list from the first list released on January 6. This rise includes 42,27,902 additional male, 42,00,778 female, 87 third-gender and 14,29,379 first-time voters. The final list shows the gender ratio has marginally improved, Rinwa said.

Rinwa said Prayagraj recorded the highest growth in voter numbers, with 3,29,421 new voters, followed by Lucknow (2,85,961), Bareilly (2,57,920), Ghaziabad (2,43,666), and Jaunpur (2,37,590). But at the level of assembly segments,

Sahibabad saw the highest increase with 82,898 new voters, followed by Jaunpur (56,118), Lucknow West (54,822), Loni (53,679), and Firozabad (47,757).

Rinwa said that between January 6 and April 10, a total of 8,15,996 voters were deleted from the list, out of which, 3,50,026 names were deleted for not responding to notices sent to them by the Election Commission after the completion of the first phase.

The official added that notices were served on a total of 3.26 crore voters, from which 3.28 lakh names were deleted as they had shifted out, 79,076 names were deleted due to the entries appearing at multiple places, 55,865 were deleted due to death and 2,069 names removed because either the voters were underage or not Indian citizens.

Amit Shah releases BJP's West Bengal poll manifesto; promises Rs 3,000 to women every month, UCC in six months

KOLKATA

The BJP released its election manifesto, 'Sankalp Patra', for the West Bengal Assembly polls, promising a Rs 3,000 monthly allowance for women and unemployed youth, implementation of a Uniform Civil Code within six months, and a policy to "detect, delete and deport" alleged infiltrators if it comes to power in the state.

While unveiling the manifesto in Kolkata, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said women and unemployed youth in West Bengal would receive a monthly assistance of Rs 3,000 each after the BJP forms the government in the upcoming Assembly elections.

The saffron camp, however, has accused the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government of bribing voters through its women's social security scheme 'Lakshir Bhandar', which provides Rs 1,500.

Under the existing schemes, beneficiaries receive Rs 1,500 through 'Lakshir Bhandar', while unemployed youth aged between 21 and 41 are given Rs 1,500 under the 'Yuva Sathi' scheme.

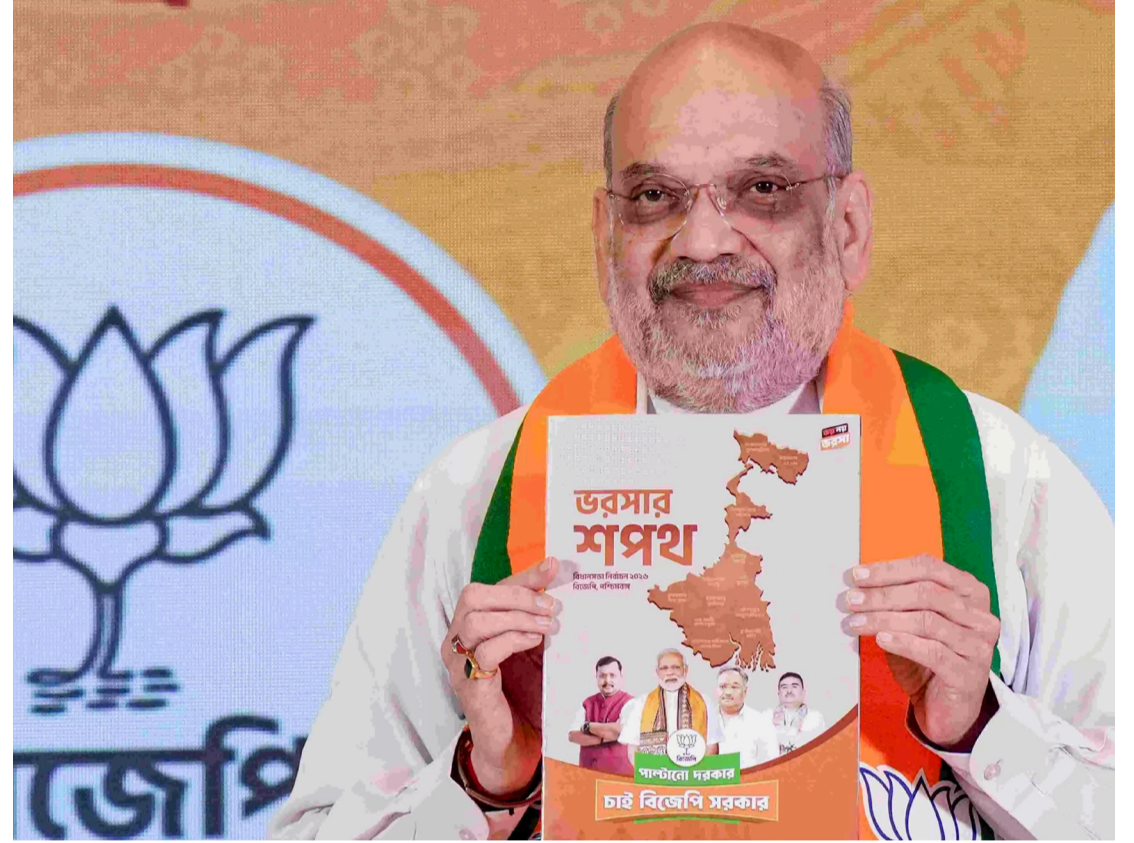
When asked about the Chief Ministerial candidate, Shah said a BJP government in Bengal would not interfere with the state's food habits and clarified that the manifesto does not mention any restrictions on beef consumption. He also said that a Bengali would be the BJP's Chief Minister in the state.

"Consumption of fish and eggs will not be stopped. This is a negative campaign against BJP by the Trinamool Congress," Shah said.

West Bengal is among the few states in India where beef is legal; in most states, only buffalo meat is permitted.

After unveiling the manifesto, Shah reiterated the party's stand on infiltration, alleging that the Trinamool Congress government is indulging in appeasement politics for its minority vote bank.

He said a BJP government would



adopt a policy of "detect, delete and deport" against alleged infiltrators.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing a poll rally in Haldia in East Midnapore district on Thursday, also accused the Mamata Banerjee government of turning Bengal into a "factory of infiltrators" for vote bank politics. Escalating his attack, he said that infiltrators would be expelled from the country.

The manifesto also promises the setting up of the Seventh Pay Commission for state government employees within 45 days of assuming power.

Shah further said that a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) would be implemented within six months of the BJP coming to power in the state.

"The recommendation for the uniform civil code is not of the BJP. It is of the Constituent Assembly," Shah said, claiming it remained unimplemented for decades because of "appeasement politics".

"It was because of appeasement politics that the UCC was not implemented for so long in the state. We have implemented them in BJP-ruled states, and we will do it in Bengal too," he said.

Shah also dismissed speculation

over purported videos of Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) chief and former expelled Trinamool Congress MLA Humayun Kabir, allegedly released by the ruling party, in which a person resembling Kabir claims proximity with BJP leaders to split minority votes.

"Humayun Kabir and the BJP are at two opposite poles. Rather than having an understanding with such a party, we would prefer to sit in the Opposition for 20 years," Shah claimed.

He added that the Sankalp Patra would guide farmers, youth and women, giving them a new direction.

INTERNATIONAL

Islamabad under tight security as Pakistan readies US-Iran talks amid fragile truce

ISLAMABAD

Uncertainty continues to loom over the conflict in West Asia, even as the streets of Islamabad remained under strict lockdown, with Pakistan preparing to host negotiations between the United States and Iran following a fragile two-week ceasefire.

This comes amid scrutiny of Islamabad's handling of the two-week ceasefire, after Pakistan — which has emerged as a key intermediary between Tehran and Washington — said the agreement covered Lebanon, a claim dismissed by both the US and Israel.

Despite uncertainty, Pakistan has announced a "visa on arrival" facility for delegates and journalists travelling to the country for the talks.

"Pakistan welcomes all delegates including journalists from participating nations, traveling in relation to Islamabad Talks 2026. To this end, all airlines are requested to permit boarding to all such individuals without Visa. Immigration authorities in Pakistan will issue them Visa on Arrival," Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said in a social media post on Friday morning.

A heavy security presence has been deployed across the capital, Islamabad, which remains on "red alert" ahead of the talks. Officials say more than 10,000 police and security personnel are in place to ensure multi-layered protection for visiting delegates. Police and paramilitary Rangers are deployed, with support from the army.

The Red Zone, which houses key government buildings, is being guarded by the army and Rangers. It remains accessible only through Margalla Road, with entry restricted to authorised officials and residents.

The negotiations will be closely watched around the world, with their outcome likely to have far-reaching



implications for security in West Asia, global energy markets, and international diplomacy. However, the talks appear increasingly uncertain, with the US and Iran casting doubt as there was no official word on the arrival of delegates on Friday.

With US Vice President JD Vance heading to Islamabad to lead the American delegation, President Donald Trump appeared to cast doubt on the ceasefire's effectiveness, writing on his social media platform: "Iran is doing a very poor job, dishonorable some would say, of allowing oil to go through the Strait of Hormuz."

"That is not the agreement we have!" Trump wrote of the trickle of ships Iran has allowed to pass through the crucial waterway.

Tehran's participation remained uncertain after deadly Israeli strikes on Lebanon threatened this week's fragile truce, even as a US State Department official claimed that Israel and Lebanon are set to hold talks in Washington next week, despite Hezbollah's rebuke.

Iran's official news agencies have rejected international media reports that senior officials, including

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, have travelled to Pakistan for talks with the United States, Press TV reported on Friday.

Citing Tasnim News Agency, Press TV said a well-informed source denied that either Araghchi or Ghalibaf had left the country, adding they remained in Tehran carrying out official duties amid regional developments.

Iranian state broadcaster Press TV, quoting Tasnim, also dismissed a Wall Street Journal report that senior officials had travelled to Islamabad for talks with Washington. Citing a senior official, Tasnim reported that any negotiations would remain on hold until Israeli attacks in Lebanon stop and the United States fulfils its ceasefire commitments.

"The news from some media outlets that an Iranian negotiating team has arrived in Islamabad, Pakistan, to negotiate with the Americans is completely false," the source told Tasnim.

Press TV said Iran's Fars News Agency had also rejected the Wall Street Journal report, adding that Iran had "no plans to attend peace talks with the American side until a ceasefire is estab-

lished in Lebanon." Fars, citing a source, also denied that any Iranian negotiating delegation had travelled to Islamabad. Iran's ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amir Moghadam, said in a statement that a 10-member Iranian delegation would arrive in Islamabad.

"Despite skepticism of Iranian public opinion due to repeated ceasefire violations by the Israeli regime to sabotage the diplomatic initiative, invited by Hon PM Shehbaz Sharif, Iranian delegation arrives tonight in Islamabad for serious talks based on 10 points proposed by Iran," he wrote on X on Thursday.

Hours later, the post was deleted as the situation in Lebanon deteriorated, with Israeli aerial attacks described as a violation of the ceasefire agreement.

Iran's president Masoud Pezeshkian also cast doubt on the talks, saying in a post that the process would be in question if Israel continued its attacks on Lebanon. "Renewed aggression by the Zionist regime against Lebanon blatantly violates the initial ceasefire. Such actions signal deception and non-compliance, rendering negotiations meaningless," he wrote on X.

"Our hands remain on the trigger. Iran will never forsake its Lebanese brothers and sisters," Pezeshkian added. Officials have not provided a timeline for the arrival of delegates, citing security reasons, adding to uncertainty as the day of the talks approaches with no confirmation of participants.

The talks have also been strained by Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif's remarks on Israel, which have drawn strong condemnation from Tel Aviv, raising concerns over Islamabad's role as a mediator.

Asif, in a now-deleted post on X, called Israel "evil" and a "curse for humanity", and urged people "to get rid of European Jews", prompting Tel Aviv to vow to defend itself against "terrorists" seeking its destruction.

Beijing calculates its next steps in Iran ceasefire ahead of Trump's trip to China

WASHINGTON

With a fragile ceasefire agreement between the US and Iran holding for now, China is calculating its role in helping find a durable endgame to the war in the Middle East.

After prodding China, which is more reliant on Persian Gulf oil than the US, to get involved in reopening the choked-off Strait of Hormuz, President Donald Trump told the French news outlet Agence France-Presse this week that he believed China played a part in encouraging Iran to agree to this week's temporary truce. Three diplomats who were familiar with China's behind-the-scenes efforts also confirmed that Beijing, the biggest purchaser of Iranian oil, used its leverage to urge the Iranians back to the negotiating table. It was a major moment for Beijing, which had decried the US and Israel's war against its economic partner Iran as misguided before getting directly involved in the push to call off the fighting, including discouraging strikes by Iran. Talks between the sides are expected to begin in Pakistan this weekend.

With the precarious truce hanging in the balance, China will now need to make a careful calculation about whether it will tread deeper into the waters of diplomacy as it weighs the impact that a long-lasting war could have on the global economy. Middle East turmoil goes against Beijing's interests, while its efforts may boost its global standing and strengthen its hand in negotiating thorny trade issues during Trump's visit to China next month. "Beijing is not in the business of expending its leverage as a favor to others or for the greater good," said Danny Russel, a former senior diplomat in President Barack Obama's administration.

Mao Ning, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, told reporters this week that China "has worked actively to

help bring about an end to the conflict."

The Chinese economy is already feeling pressure from Iran's effective shuttering of the Strait of Hormuz, where about 20% of the world's crude normally flows. The blockade is having an enormous impact on Asia, a factor that seems to have informed the Chinese government's efforts to consult with Pakistan to help mediate a two-week ceasefire. China does not appear interested in providing guarantees for Iran's long-term security as part of a deal to end hostilities, something Tehran has hoped for and sees as critical to deterring the US and Israel from carrying out strikes in the future. Iran's ambassador to China suggested this week that its two closest allies — China and Russia — as well as the United Nations ensure the guarantee, which Tehran has sought before without success. Asked about that possibility, Mao would only say that "we hope that all parties will resolve their disputes through dialogue and negotiation." Still, Chinese officials are cognizant that a lasting war threatens to have real impact on Beijing's bottom line. Premier Li Qiang announced last month that the government was projecting relatively modest 4.5% to 5% economic growth this year during a property slump and growing uncertainty around the globe. It's the lowest growth target since 1991.

Ultimately, China's foremost goal is "growth and development," according to one of the diplomats familiar with Chinese deliberations on the war.

The diplomat, who like the others was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, added that a continued closure of the strait ran counter to that interest. It not only limits the flow of a significant supply of crude to China but also cuts off an important shipping lane for

Chinese exports to the Mideast.

Trump will likely underscore that argument to Chinese President Xi Jinping during their much-anticipated Beijing summit next month. The talks, which were originally slated for this month, were pushed back so Trump could oversee the US bombardment of Iran.

"That the United States and Iran have at least temporarily edged away from the precipice of a catastrophic escalation owes in part to China's support for the ceasefire that Pakistan brokered," said Aili Wyne, a senior research and advocacy adviser for US-China relations at the International Crisis Group.

"Even if short-lived, that breakthrough affords Beijing another opportunity to present itself as a stabilizing force and Washington as a reckless one."

To be certain, China's view is shaped by a heavy measure of skepticism.

Some in Beijing see Trump's decision to launch the Iran war, as well as the military operation in January to capture then-Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, as being at least partially motivated by his strategy at containing China, diplomats say. Beijing was a major customer and investor in the South American country's oil industry.

Privately, the Chinese have made clear that the US and Iran would have to show compromise for a deal to coalesce. Beijing also is looking to press Trump to remove sanctions on Chinese companies doing business with Iran as part of a potential settlement, diplomats say. The moment provides Xi some leverage at next month's summit. "Trump was in a crisis, and China helped," said Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Washington-based think tank Stimson Center. "The optics of that alone helps to lighten the mood and sweeten the pot."

Manipur's Endless War: When Civilian Homes Become Frontlines and Justice Remains Distant

In the early hours of a quiet morning in Tronglaobi Awang Leikai, a village in Manipur's Bishnupur district, a family lay asleep, unaware that their home had already become part of a battlefield. There were no warning sirens, no visible troop movements, no sign that war had arrived at their doorstep. Yet, at around 1:30 a.m., a rocket-propelled grenade tore through the silence and through their lives.

Five-year-old Oinam Tomthin and his infant sister, Oinam Yaisana, barely five months old, were killed instantly as the explosion ripped apart the room where they slept beside their mother, Oinam Binita. Their mother, a nurse who had returned home from Guwahati just days earlier, now lies critically injured in an intensive care unit, her body bearing the violence that has become tragically routine in Manipur.

This was not an isolated act of brutality. It was, in many ways, a chilling reflection of how deeply normalized violence has become in the state—a place where civilian homes are no longer safe, where ordinary lives are routinely caught in the crossfire of a protracted and unresolved conflict.

A Home Turned Battlefield
The timing of the attack adds a layer of cruelty that is difficult to ignore. Binita had returned home for a deeply personal and sacred occasion—the Chakumba ceremony of her infant daughter, a traditional rite marking a baby's first taste of solid food. What should have been a moment of familial joy turned into a scene of devastation.

Instead of preparing for celebration, the family is now preparing for funerals.

Their father, Oinam Mangalngamba, a Head Constable with the Border Security Force posted in Bihar, is racing back home—not to embrace his children, but to mourn them. His story is emblematic of a larger, painful contradiction: those tasked with safeguarding the nation often find their own families left unprotected in regions gripped by internal strife.

The Changing Nature of Violence
The use of a rocket-propelled grenade in this attack signals something far more troubling than sporadic clashes. It reflects a dangerous escalation in both capability and intent. This is not merely violence driven by spontaneous anger or local disputes. It suggests access to military-grade weaponry, coordination, and planning.

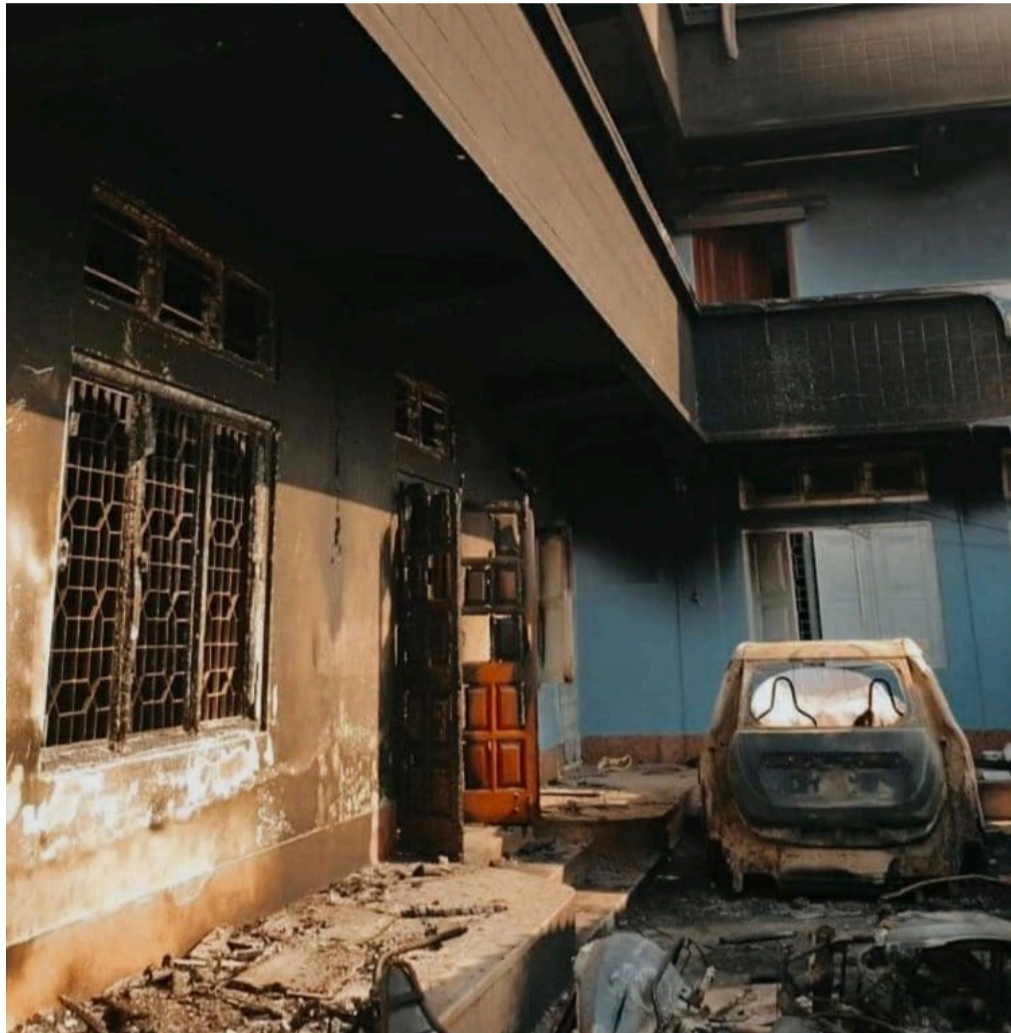
In recent years, Manipur has witnessed a disturbing shift in the nature of conflict. What began as ethnic tensions has gradually evolved into a more complex and militarized confrontation. Reports of drones being used to drop explosives, targeted ambushes, and coordinated attacks on villages have become increasingly common.

The recovery of additional unexploded RPGs near civilian settlements after this incident further reinforces the idea that such attacks are neither accidental nor isolated. They are part of a pattern—one that blurs the line between insurgency and organized terror.

Civilians in the Crossfire
Perhaps the most distressing aspect of this ongoing conflict is the consistent targeting—or at the very least, endangerment—of civilians. Women, children, and the elderly, who have no role in the conflict, continue to bear its heaviest burden.

The deaths of Tomthin and Yaisana are not just tragic—they are symbolic of a deeper systemic failure. In any functioning democracy, the protection of civilian life is a fundamental responsibility of the state. Yet, in Manipur, this basic assurance appears increasingly fragile.

Communities living in border areas, particularly in vulnerable villages, have found themselves exposed



to repeated attacks. For them, the absence of security is not an abstract concern—it is a daily reality.

The Cycle of Response
In the aftermath of such incidents, the response from authorities follows a familiar pattern. Statements of condemnation are issued. Senior officials visit hospitals. Assurances are made that those responsible will be brought to justice. Investigations are announced, often handed over to central agencies.

In this case, too, expressions of grief and promises of action have come from multiple quarters of the administration. While such responses are necessary, they have increasingly come to be seen as insufficient. The problem lies not in the words, but in the gap between words and outcomes.

For many residents of Manipur, justice feels distant and delayed. Investigations stretch on for months, sometimes years, with little visible progress. Arrests are rare, convictions even rarer. Meanwhile, new incidents continue to occur, reinforcing a sense of impunity among perpetrators and helplessness among civilians.

A Conflict Without Closure
Manipur has been grappling with ethnic violence since 2023, and despite numerous interventions, the situation remains volatile. What makes the crisis particularly challenging is its layered complexity—historical grievances, territorial disputes, identity politics, and external influences all intersect to create a volatile environment.

Allegations of cross-border support and the flow of weapons from neighboring regions, particularly amid instability in Myanmar, have further complicated the security landscape. While these claims are often difficult to independently verify, the increasing sophistication of attacks suggests that the conflict is being sustained by more than just local dynamics.

At the same time, efforts at dialogue and reconciliation have struggled to gain traction. Talks have been initiated at various levels, but they often lack the continuity and trust required to produce meaningful outcomes.

The Erosion of Trust
One of the most significant consequences of prolonged violence is the erosion of public trust. When communities feel that their safety is not guaranteed, and that justice is not forthcoming, it creates a vacuum that can be filled by fear, anger, and, in some cases, calls for self-defense. This is a dangerous trajectory. It risks further fragmenting society and deepening divisions, making eventual reconciliation even more difficult.

groups.
“Fast-Tracking Justice: Establishing mechanisms for time-bound investigations and trials, with regular public updates to maintain transparency.”

“Building Trust Through Accountability: Demonstrating, through action, that no individual or group is above the law.”

“Revitalizing Dialogue Efforts: Creating inclusive platforms for dialogue that involve all stakeholders and are backed by tangible confidence-building measures.”

The Human Cost
Amid discussions of strategy, policy, and security, it is important not to lose sight of the human cost. The loss of two young children is not just a statistic—it is a profound tragedy that will leave an indelible mark on their family and community. Their mother's struggle for survival is a reminder of the physical and emotional toll of violence. Their father's journey home is a testament to the silent sacrifices made by countless individuals who serve the nation while their own lives remain vulnerable.

A Test for the System
The events in Tronglaobi Awang Leikai are, ultimately, a test—a test of the state's ability to protect its citizens, to deliver justice, and to restore a sense of normalcy in a region that has seen far too much violence.

They also raise broader questions about how conflicts within a democracy are managed, how accountability is ensured, and how trust is rebuilt once it has been broken.

For Manipur, the path forward will not be easy. It will require political will, administrative efficiency, and a commitment to placing the safety and dignity of civilians above all else.

The deaths of Tomthin and Yaisana should not be seen as just another tragic episode in a long list of incidents. They should serve as a turning point—a moment that compels both the state and society to confront the reality of the situation and to act with urgency and resolve.

Because when homes become battlefields, and when children are no longer safe in their sleep, it is not just a local crisis—it is a collective failure.

And unless that failure is addressed with honesty and determination, the cycle of violence will continue, claiming more lives, and leaving more families to grapple with loss that should never have occurred.

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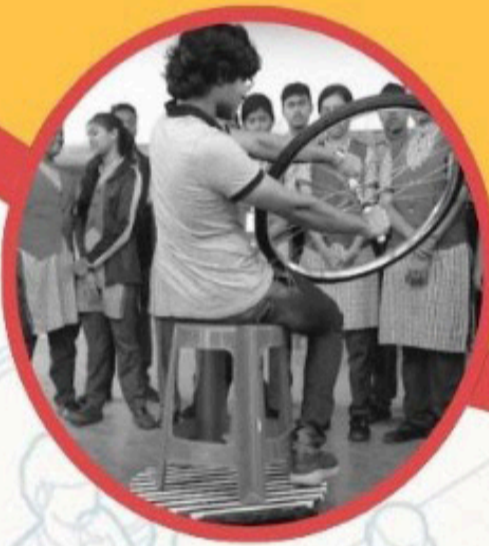
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