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PERSPECTIVE

A man died of hunger, but food was served at his funeral.

Self-Immolation Bid Outside Lok Bhavan Foiled Amid Anger Over Tronglaobi Blast

IMPHAL

A 32-year-old man allegedly attempted to set himself on fire outside Lok Bhavan on Thursday, in an apparent protest against the recent deadly bomb attack in Tronglaobi. The attempt was thwarted by security personnel, who intervened in time and detained him.

The individual has been identified as Sinam Appollo, a resident of Mayang Langjing in Imphal West district and an advocate by profession. According to sources, the incident occurred around 1 pm when Appollo arrived near the high-security complex in a vehicle.

Eyewitnesses said Appollo poured kerosene over himself in a bid to self-immolate. Security personnel deployed at the site acted swiftly, restraining him before he could ignite the fuel. During the scuffle, he reportedly pleaded with officials not to stop him.

A team from the City Police later reached the spot and took him into custody for questioning. No injuries were reported.

Sources indicated that the extreme step was driven by anguish and anger over the bomb attack in Tronglaobi earlier this week, which claimed several lives. The episode reflects the mounting public distress over the continuing cycle of violence in Manipur.

Officials have yet to issue a formal statement on the incident.

WHO SAID WHAT



As long as Hezbollah continues to threaten our civilians, we will continue to operate against them. ~ Israel Defence Force

Curfew Breached in Manipur Valley as Protests Intensify Over Bishnupur Child Killings

IMPHAL

Curfew restrictions were openly defied across parts of the Imphal valley on Thursday as protests intensified over the killing of two minor children in a suspected rocket attack in Bishnupur district, with demonstrators demanding swift arrests and accountability from the State government.

In a measured yet firm response, personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force's Rapid Action Force (RAF) declared in Keisampat unlawful, displaying warning banners and repeatedly directing protesters to disperse. The announcement, delivered through loud warnings, cautioned participants of legal consequences in case of non-compliance.

Despite the tense backdrop, demonstrations in Malom and along the Kwakeithel-Keisampat stretch remained largely peaceful, aided by heavy deployment and active regulation by security forces. Authorities conducted flag marches across sensitive zones as part of area domination exercises to deter escalation and maintain order.

One of the major mobilisations, organised under the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), was held in Malom in Imphal West. Another rally that began near Imphal College at Kwakeithel was halted at Keisampat after encountering multiple layers of security barricades.

At the Keisampat checkpoint, RAF personnel held up a large red banner declaring the assembly unlawful and issued repeated warnings—"listen, listen, listen"—urging the crowd to disperse immediately. Protesters, however, remained resolute, highlighting the depth of public outrage over the incident.

Security forces, while maintaining a strict posture, avoided direct confrontation. Their approach combined restraint with enforcement, ensuring that demonstrations did not spiral into violence even as emotions ran high.

During the protests, Th. Komdombi, speaking on behalf of five prominent civil society organisations, sharply criticised the government's handling of the Tronglaobi incident.

"We are not satisfied with the ac-



tions taken so far. Two minor children have lost their lives in a rocket attack. We demand accountability and decisive steps from the government," she

Assam Sees Surging Voter Turnout, Crosses 80% Mark CM HIMANTA BISWA SARMA VOTES IN AZARA, TAKES SWIPE AT CONGRESS

GUWAHATI

Assam recorded an impressive voter turnout in the ongoing Assembly elections on Thursday, with polling figures crossing 80 per cent, signalling robust public participation across the state.

According to official data, 80.91 per cent of eligible voters had exercised their franchise by the afternoon, placing Assam among the leading states in terms of polling percentage in the current election cycle. The steady turnout trend throughout the day points to a strong electoral response in what is being seen as a closely watched political contest.

Polling was conducted across all 126 Assembly constituencies, covering an electorate of over 2.50 crore voters. A total of 722 candidates are in the fray, making it one of the most expansive electoral exercises in the state's recent history.

From early morning, voters queued up outside polling stations in both urban and rural areas, contributing to the consistent rise in turnout figures. Election authorities maintained strict security arrangements, with central forces and state police deployed extensively to ensure smooth and peaceful voting.

In several districts, including Kamrup, polling concluded in phases with offi-



cially promptly securing electronic voting machines following the end of voting. Authorities reported that the process was largely peaceful, with no major disruptions affecting the overall conduct of the polls. The high turnout is being viewed as a key indicator of voter engagement, with both the ruling BJP-led alliance and opposition parties closely tracking participation trends. Analysts suggest that such strong polling could play a decisive role in shaping the electoral outcome.

With voting continuing till evening in remaining areas, officials expect the final turnout figure to climb further, potentially setting a new benchmark for Assem-

blly elections in the state. The counting of votes is scheduled for May 4. Guwahati, April 9: With polling underway across Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma cast his vote on Thursday at a polling station in Azara's Gorol area, accompanied by his wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma and their two children.

After exercising his franchise, Sarma urged voters to turn out in large numbers, emphasising the significance of the electoral mandate. "Like every other citizen, casting my vote is my duty. Today's decision will determine the future of the state for the next five years. I urge the people of Assam to come out and vote for

development," he said.

Reflecting on his campaign in the Jalukbari constituency, which he has represented since 2001, Sarma acknowledged limited personal canvassing in the run-up to polling. He credited party workers and local residents for carrying forward the campaign. "Even though I couldn't campaign much, BJP workers and the people of the constituency ensured outreach. After the elections, we will work for the betterment of the constituency," he added.

Taking a swipe at the Indian National Congress, Sarma dismissed allegations levelled by its leaders. Responding to remarks by Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera regarding his wife, the Chief Minister said he saw no reason to engage. "Why should I reply to him?" he remarked, also describing Khera as a "bhagora." He declined to address further political questions during polling hours, citing Election Commission norms. "I don't want to break any rules and have FIRs registered unnecessarily. I will respond to all questions after 5 pm," he said.

Sarma also reiterated his decision to stay away from visiting his constituency during polling, stating that the move was aimed at ensuring a free and fair voting

process without influencing voters. Expressing confidence in voter participation, he pointed to Assam's consistently high turnout. "Around 78-80% voting is usually recorded in Jalukbari, and across the state too turnout remains high compared to other regions," he noted.

The interaction briefly turned tense when a reporter questioned his choice of language against the Opposition during the final phase of campaigning. Sarma responded sharply, defending his remarks and asserting that his language was "better than that of the organisation" the journalist represented, before moving on.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister visited Kamakhya Temple and Dol Govinda Temple to offer prayers before casting his vote.

Commenting on the weather, Sarma said early morning showers had briefly affected voter enthusiasm, but conditions improved as the day progressed. "The weather affected the mood briefly, but it cleared up soon and there is enthusiasm among voters," he said.

Polling across Assam began at 7 am and will continue till 5 pm, with the results set to shape the state's political course for the next five years.

Gaurav Gogoi Votes in Jorhat, Signals Push for 'Progressive Leadership' Amid High Turnout



GUWAHATI

Senior Congress leader and Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi cast his vote in the Jorhat Assembly constituency on Thursday, underscoring what he described as a growing public inclination towards "progressive leadership" amid a high voter turnout across Assam.

Gogoi, accompanied by his mother Dolly Gogoi, voted at polling station number 52 located at Devicharan Barua Higher Secondary Girls' School. The two stood in queue alongside other voters and followed standard polling procedures.

Calling the moment personally significant, Gogoi said he felt "fortunate" that his mother could join him this time, noting that she had been unable to participate in the previous Lok Sabha

elections due to health reasons.

Reflecting on the ongoing polling, he pointed to the high voter turnout as an indicator of public sentiment. "The enthusiasm among people suggests support for good leadership and the ideals of a progressive Assamese society," he said.

Framing the election in broader terms, Gogoi emphasised that the exercise goes beyond electoral competition. "This is about the aspirations of the people and the ideals of a democratic nation. We are grateful for the support and goodwill we have received," he added, expressing confidence in the outcome.

Highlighting what he termed a rise in political awareness, the Congress leader said the electorate's voice had grown stronger. "That is a positive sign. Assamese society values self-respect and seeks to move forward with confidence," he observed.

Earlier in the day, Gogoi paid floral tribute to his father, former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, at his residence in Nazir Ali before heading to cast his vote. He said his father's legacy continues to shape his understanding of Assam's history, culture and public concerns.

After voting, Dolly Gogoi expressed satisfaction with the polling process and voiced her support for her son.

The Jorhat constituency is among the key seats in the ongoing Assembly elections, which have witnessed brisk polling across the state, reflecting heightened voter engagement and a closely contested political landscape.

HSLC results to be declared on April 10



GUWAHATI

Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu on Thursday announced that the results of the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examination will be declared on April 10, a day after the State's Assembly polling.

"The results are ready. As today is polling day, we had earlier indicated that the results would be declared after the election. Students will get their results tomorrow," Pegu said.

The announcement brings clarity for over 4.38 lakh students who appeared for the HSLC examinations this year—the highest number of candidates in the history of the Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB).

Officials said the large volume of examinees posed logistical challenges, but the evaluation process was completed within the scheduled timeframe. ASSEB Controller of Examinations Nayan Jyoti Sarma had earlier stated that around 95% of the evaluation work had been completed.

To handle the workload, 45 evaluation centres were set up across the State, operating on a fast-track schedule to ensure timely declaration of results while maintaining accuracy and transparency.

The HSLC examinations for 2026 were conducted from February 10 to February 27 across 1,046 centres.

Tamulpur Poll Tension: Three UPPL Workers Shot Amid Allegations of Cash Distribution



GUWAHATI

Tension gripped parts of Tamulpur in Assam following a late-night incident of alleged poll-related violence in Panbari village under the 43 Tamulpur Assembly constituency, where three workers of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) sustained serious gunshot injuries.

According to local sources, the violence erupted during a confrontation reportedly linked to the alleged distribution of cash from a vehicle by individuals said to be associated with a candidate of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The situation escalated quickly, and gunfire was allegedly opened during the altercation.

The injured have been identified as Dharanidhar Boro, Raju

Boro, and Dinesh Boro, all said to be affiliated with the UPPL. They were initially taken to a nearby medical facility before being shifted to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital in Guwahati for advanced treatment. Hospital sources described their condition as critical. UPPL president and Lok Sabha MP Pramod Boro visited the site of the incident to assess the situation and interact with local residents.

The episode has further intensified political tensions in the constituency amid the ongoing Assam Assembly elections. Political parties have raised concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation, with demands for a comprehensive probe and stricter security arrangements in vulnerable areas.

said, echoing sentiments widely shared among demonstrators.

Amid mounting pressure, representatives from five organisations were permitted to meet Chief Minister Y. Kheanchand Singh at the Secretariat. The meeting was also attended by Home Minister K. Govindas Singh and several legislators.

Describing the interaction as "constructive and substantive," the Chief Minister said the government had taken a serious note of the concerns raised by civil society groups, including AMU-CO, MSF, Poirei Leimarol, COHR and AMAWOVA. He termed the killings "deeply unfortunate" and assured that those responsible would be identified and dealt with strictly in accordance with the law.

He further stated that the State government is in constant coordination with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, signalling the Centre's involvement in monitoring the evolving situation.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the Chief Minister reiterated the government's commitment to restoring normalcy and appealed to civil society

organisations to cooperate in maintaining peace.

Meanwhile, the valley continues to remain tense under a blanket of heightened security. Curfew enforcement, reinforced deployment and continuous patrols are in place to prevent further unrest.

The latest wave of protests follows a series of violent developments in Bishnupur district earlier this week. Protesters had stormed a CRPF camp, vandalised infrastructure and set fire to vehicles belonging to the force. In the ensuing confrontation, security personnel opened fire, resulting in the deaths of three protesters.

The unrest has its roots in the Tronglaobi incident, where two children were killed in what authorities suspect was a rocket attack—an episode that has triggered widespread anger and renewed concerns over civilian safety in conflict-hit areas of Manipur.

As tensions persist, the State faces the dual challenge of maintaining order while addressing growing public distrust over security lapses and the protection of vulnerable populations.



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EFFECTIVE PILL FOR ONLINE ILLS

Over the last few months, several states have sent a clear message long overdue: in today's age, child safety can no longer be treated as an afterthought. Calls for stronger restrictions on minors' social media use are already being voiced citing mental health, academic performance and overall well-being.

From Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to Goa and Punjab, state governments have begun recognising the seriousness of challenges children face online, and the fact that it is no longer a scattered concern but a national problem that demands urgent attention. The concern is not remote to my state, Odisha, either. This is not a sudden overreaction or a passing political trend, but rather the consequence of years of mounting harm and toxicity, and the ineffectiveness of platform safeguards.

Even this year's Economic Survey framed social media addiction as a health challenge in which compulsive use among young Indians is leading to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, sleep disturbances, reduced concentration and poorer academic performance.

Among the things children are exposed to on social media platforms are sexualised material, influencer-driven content, unrealistic lifestyles and manipulative trends. Added to this is the rising threat of bullying, predatory contact and generative artificial intelligence-enabled harms that overwhelm young users with misleading and often harmful material. It is for this reason that state-level conversations on social media regulation have largely framed the public health lens. While platforms are making efforts to improve a child's experience on social media through measures such as teen accounts and parental tools, such efforts are clearly not enough.

As parliamentarians, we should read this carefully. When state governments with varied political dispensations move in the same direction, it signals that a public concern has crossed a threshold and policymakers are losing patience. The question, therefore, is not merely whether banning social media for children is a sustainable approach. Banning technology is not the solution, but the status quo also needs to change.

The bigger question is whether the existing platform-led model of child safety online remains defensible at all. Are we starved for workable solutions? While platforms have had years to remodel these spaces meaningfully safer for users, the harms have only exacerbated.

Now, with the mainstreaming of gen-AI, the culture of platforms seems to be becoming even more exploitative and difficult to govern. In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that governments reach for bans and regulatory restrictions, which could be considered the easiest tools available when no one has offered a better alternative.

The next phase of this conversation must be about platform accountability in its most achievable form. For that, we first need to acknowledge that social media platforms function as systems of public consequence. It would not be an understatement to say that they actively shape what we see, how we think and what kinds of social behaviour are normalised.

Second, since the question of harm is no longer restricted to content alone and has become more about design and culture, our accountability mechanisms must keep that in mind. For that, platforms accessed by children must move away from design architectures that involve meaningful friction, including age-appropriate time limits, safer late-night defaults, reduced virality features for younger users, stronger break prompts and greater restraint around design choices that are built to prolong use.

On top, the focus should shift towards a preventive model of moderation focused on improving the quality of the environment itself. This means stronger human moderation for high-risk youth-facing spaces, faster escalation channels, greater visibility into how harmful trends spread. Platforms should also take more responsibility on platforms to disrupt repeated cycles of manipulation, pile-ons and algorithmically-amplified mischief before they harden into culture.

Just as importantly, platforms must also learn to slow down, especially in times of AI. They can't continue to roll out high-impact features, generative tools and engagement mechanisms into youth-heavy environments as though society must absorb the consequences later.

Significant product changes should go through sandboxes, testing environments and external review before large-scale deployment. Parents, young users, educators, child-rights experts and mental-health professionals should be consulted in product design and rollout.

It may no longer be enough to rely on scattered rule-making and platform-specific responses to tackle what we are dealing with today. What is now needed is a more specialised digital-safety regulator capable of monitoring risks to minors, demanding meaningful disclosures and reviewing high-risk design features. Such an approach should not focus only on content takedowns, but on the broader conditions that make harm more likely.

The role of the regulator would be particularly crucial in India, where the scale of platform use is enormous and enforcement remains uneven. Moreover, at a time when different states are beginning to respond in different ways, there is a need for an institutional mechanism that can bring coherence and ensure effective enforcement of safety obligations.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Save your energy: don't entertain toxic people.
- Akin Olokun

WEST ASIA AND THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN SUPREMACY



SAMEER REKHI

The war on Iran and the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz are being read, understandably, as a security and energy crisis. But beneath the immediate turmoil lies a deeper rupture – one defined less by fear than by resentment. Across West Asia, particularly in the Gulf, there is a growing sense that American power no longer guarantees stability, and worse, that it increasingly exports risk to its own partners.

For decades, the United States positioned itself as the ultimate security guarantor in the region. The bargain was implicit but clear: alignment with Washington would ensure protection, predictability, and the steady flow of energy through critical chokepoints like Hormuz. That bargain now appears frayed.

The Strait of Hormuz – through which roughly a fifth of global oil passes – has become a contested and unpredictable zone. Iranian actions, ranging from harassment of shipping to calibrated disruptions, have demonstrated how quickly global energy lifelines can be choked. Oil markets have reacted sharply, supply chains have been strained, and the cost of instability has been borne most immediately by those closest to it: the Gulf economies.

Yet what is striking is not just the disruption, but the reaction of America's traditional

partners.

There is unease, but also quiet anger.

From Riyadh to Abu Dhabi, policymakers have been careful in their public language. But the underlying sentiment is increasingly visible: that escalation with Iran – particularly when driven or accelerated by US and Israeli actions – has imposed disproportionate costs on regional states without offering commensurate control over outcomes.

This is not a new concern, but it has now acquired sharper edges.

The Iraq war, the inconsistent handling of Syria, and the abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan had already seeded doubts about American judgement and reliability. The current crisis deepens those doubts. Gulf states are being asked, implicitly, to absorb the economic and security fallout of a confrontation in which they have limited say.

The result is a subtle but important shift: from dependence to defensive autonomy.

Rather than lining up behind a US-led response, regional actors are hedging. Some are re-opening or sustaining channels with Tehran. Others are pursuing quiet understandings to ensure the safety of their shipping. The instinct is no longer to rely solely on Washington, but to manage risk through multiple pathways.

This is where the sense of betrayal becomes most evident.

For many in the region, the expectation was not that the United States would eliminate all threats, but that it would prevent crises from spiralling in ways that directly endanger its partners. Instead, the current situation suggests a different dynamic – one in which US strategy can trigger escalation, but cannot fully contain it.

China's role in this shifting landscape is instructive. It has avoided overt military involvement, yet its economic centrality and diplomatic engagement have allowed it to remain relevant without being blamed for the crisis. Its earlier brokering of the Saudi-Iran rapprochement now appears, in retrospect, as part of a broader pattern: offering stability without entanglement.

Russia, meanwhile, continues to operate as a flexible power, maintaining ties with Iran while benefiting from higher energy prices and a distracted West. Neither Beijing nor Moscow is positioned to replace Washington – but both are contributing to a system in which American primacy is no longer uncontested or sufficient.

For the Gulf states, this creates both risk and opportunity. The risk lies in operating within a more volatile and less predictable security environment. The opportunity lies in greater strategic room to manoeuvre – to engage multiple powers, diversify partnerships, and reduce exposure to any single actor's decisions.

For India, the implications are immediate. With nearly 60 per cent of its crude imports linked to this region and millions of its citizens living and working there, instability in Hormuz translates directly into economic and social vulnerability. But equally, the shifting order reinforces India's long-standing instinct for multi-alignment – engaging all sides while avoiding entrapment.

What is unfolding, then, is not simply a regional crisis. It is a recalibration of expectations.

The United States remains the most powerful actor in West Asia. But power is no longer measured only by the ability to project force. It is measured by the ability to shape outcomes without alienating partners. By that measure, the current moment is revealing clear limits.

The anger in the Gulf is unlikely to erupt into open rupture. Security ties with the United States remain deep and,

in many cases, indispensable. But the psychological contract has weakened. Trust, once taken for granted, is now conditional.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

It's high time the glory of West Bengal is restored. TMC politics is built only and only on fear. This has had a negative impact on West Bengal's growth. No wonder people are tired of TMC.

~ Narendra Modi, PM



That has long-term consequences.

Alliances endure not just on shared interests, but on confidence in judgement. When partners begin to believe that alignment brings exposure rather than protection, they do not necessarily break away – but they begin to look elsewhere, hedge quietly, and act independently.

The Strait of Hormuz crisis is, in that sense, more than a disruption of oil flows. It is a disruption of assumptions.

West Asia is entering a phase where American power is still central, but no longer sufficient; where partners are still aligned, but no longer assured; and where conflict does not consolidate order, but fragments it.

The United States is not being pushed out of the region. But it is no longer being followed unquestioningly.

That may prove to be the more consequential shift.

(The author is a retired IPS officer and an observer of geopolitical issues)



Transport Breakdown in Guwahati Ahead of Polling Leaves Voters Stranded, Fares Soar

GUWAHATI

On the eve of polling for the Assam Assembly elections, Guwahati witnessed a severe transport crisis, leaving thousands of voters stranded across key transit points and raising concerns over their ability to reach polling stations.

From GS Road and Zoo Road to the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport corridor and Lamb Road, the sudden disappearance of city buses disrupted normal life, triggering chaos across the city. Major hubs such as Khanapara and Jalukbari saw large crowds of commuters waiting for hours, many uncertain whether they would make it home in time to vote.

The situation worsened as people attempted to travel to their hometowns ahead of polling day. With buses largely off the roads, limited transport options



have been stretched thin, leading to overcrowding and sharp fare hikes.

Auto-rickshaw and small vehicle operators have reportedly increased fares up to five times the usual rates. Trips that typically cost between Rs 10 and Rs 30 are now being charged at Rs 70 to Rs 100, adding to the hardship faced by commuters.

At Jalukbari, one of the worst-affected areas, long queues formed at bus stops as stranded passengers waited in the heat. Many reported delays of several hours, with little assurance of securing transport.

Pinky Kashyap, a voter travelling to Hajo, said she had been waiting for over two hours. "There are barely any buses. It's disheartening that people who want to vote are facing such difficulties. Many may not even make it home in time," she said.

Kamal Medhi, attempting to reach Goreswar, echoed similar concerns. "We've been waiting for hours with no buses in sight. Smaller vehicles are charging exorbitant fares and refusing to move without full occupancy. It feels exploitative," he said.

Passengers bound for Rangiya and Nalbari reported comparable struggles, citing inflated fares and a near-total absence of public transport. Rajiya Sultana, travelling to Rangiya, described the situation as "extremely difficult," while Riju Das from Nalbari feared he might miss voting altogether due to the uncertainty. Another commuter, Nilam Boro, summed up the growing frustration. "We came here to vote, but transport has become a major hurdle. If this continues, many may lose their chance to participate in the

election," she said.

The disruption comes at a crucial juncture, with polling scheduled to begin at 7 am and over 1.25 lakh polling personnel already deployed across the state. While election machinery is operating in full swing, the lack of coordinated public transport arrangements has exposed a significant gap in facilitating voter movement.

Authorities have yet to issue a detailed response on the transport crisis, even as police and district administrations remain on high alert to ensure peaceful polling.

For many voters, particularly those living away from their constituencies, the journey home has turned into an ordeal-one that could ultimately impact voter participation in the ongoing elections.

FIR Filed Against Kharge in Assam Over 'Inflammatory' Speech Targeting BJP, RSS

GUWAHATI

A complaint has been lodged against Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge at Basistha Police Station in Guwahati, alleging that he made inflammatory and derogatory remarks during a political rally in Assam's Sribhumi district.

The complaint, filed by BJP Assam spokesperson Ranjib Kumar Sarmah, pertains to a speech delivered by Kharge at Nilambazar on April 7. According to the FIR, Kharge allegedly described the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as "poisonous" and likened it to a "poisonous snake."

The complaint further alleges that the Congress leader called for the "elimination" of the BJP during his address-remarks the complainant claims are derogatory and capable of inciting tensions.

According to the FIR, such statements have hurt the sentiments of party members and may promote enmity between groups, potentially disturbing public peace and communal harmony in the state, which has a sensitive socio-political environment.

Police officials at Basistha Police Station have confirmed receipt of the complaint and indicated that further investigation will proceed in accordance with legal provisions.

There was no immediate response from Kharge or the Congress party at the time of filing this report.

No blanket beef ban, says Himanta Biswa Sarma; stresses curbs in public spaces amid poll heat

GUWAHATI

As Assam heads into a crucial Assembly election, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday clarified that the state government is not imposing a blanket ban on beef consumption, but is enforcing restrictions in public spaces in line with existing law.

Speaking amid a politically charged campaign, Sarma said the Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 2021 does not prohibit private consumption of beef. However, it places limits on its sale and consumption in public places, including restaurants, and within a five-kilometre radius of temples and satras.

The Chief Minister emphasised that the government's approach seeks to balance individual dietary choices with the need to maintain communal harmony. He noted that his appeal was largely directed at members of the Hindu community, adding that some people have shifted to consuming buffalo

meat instead of beef.

The remarks have triggered political reactions, with Akhilesh Yadav taking a swipe at Sarma over the issue, further fuelling debate during the election season.

The controversy has also deepened following Sarma's warning of possible action against the parents of an Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) candidate, Kunki Chowdhury, over allegations related to beef consumption and the circulation of images on social media.

Chowdhury has denied the allegations, calling them false and politically motivated. She has filed a police complaint, alleging that AI-generated deepfake videos targeting her and her family are being circulated online.

With beef consumption emerging as a flashpoint in the campaign, political tensions have escalated in the run-up to polling. Assam is scheduled to vote for its 126-member Assembly on April 9, with counting slated for May 4.

Manipur Child Rights Panel Flags Surge in Violence Against Children, Seeks Urgent Intervention

IMPHAL

The Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights has expressed grave concern over a spate of violent incidents in the state that have severely impacted children, calling for immediate and decisive action by authorities.

In a statement issued on April 8, the Commission highlighted multiple recent cases, including the alleged rape and murder of an eight-year-old internally displaced girl from Moreh. The child, who had reportedly gone missing from a relief camp in Imphal East district, was found dead beneath the Singjamei bridge on April 6.

The panel also drew attention to a separate incident in Tronglabi in Bishnupur district, where a rocket attack in the early hours of April 7 resulted in the death of two siblings-a five-month-old infant girl and her five-year-old brother-while leaving their mother critically injured. The incident has intensified concerns over the



vulnerability of civilians, particularly children, in conflict-affected areas.

In related unrest in the Tronglabi Maning area, two civilians were killed and several others sustained bullet injuries near a security forces post. Reports indicated that enraged residents, alleging lapses in security, later stormed and vandalised the post.

The Commission said the inci-

dent reflects a disturbing escalation of violence in which women and children are increasingly becoming direct victims. It termed such acts as serious violations of child rights and fundamental human rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

Calling for urgent intervention, the MCPCR urged the state government and concerned authorities to ensure prompt, impartial and time-bound investigations into all incidents, and to bring those responsible to justice. It also stressed the need to strengthen security arrangements in relief camps and other vulnerable locations to safeguard children and civilians.

Further, the Commission emphasised the importance of activating and reinforcing child protection mechanisms, including the provision of immediate psychosocial support, trauma counselling and rehabilitation services for affected children and families.

Reiterating that the protection of children is non-negotiable, the MCPCR said the state carries both a constitutional and moral responsibility to ensure the safety, dignity and fundamental rights of every child.

The Commission added that it would continue to monitor the situation closely and take necessary steps within its mandate to safeguard the rights and well-being of children in Manipur.

Nagaland Govt Dismisses LPG, Fuel Shortage Rumours; Urges Public Against Panic Buying

KOHIMA

The Department of Food & Civil Supplies Nagaland has clarified that there is no shortage of LPG or petroleum products in the state, urging citizens not to panic amid rumours of supply disruptions.

In a press note, the department stated that adequate stocks of both domestic and commercial LPG, along with other petroleum products, are being maintained by oil marketing companies, with supply chains operating normally across Nagaland.

The clarification follows the circulation of unverified claims suggesting a possible shortage. Officials cautioned that panic buying or hoarding of LPG cylinders and fuel could disrupt the existing distribution system and create avoidable scarcity for other



consumers.

The department advised the public to rely only on official communication channels and refrain from sharing or acting on unverified information, particularly on

social media platforms. It warned that misinformation could trigger unnecessary panic and adversely affect public order.

To ensure smooth supply and distribution, Deputy Commissioners and district authorities have been directed to maintain close monitoring. Officials have been instructed to prevent hoarding and black marketing, ensure uninterrupted availability, and enforce adherence to prescribed pricing norms. Reiterating that sufficient stock levels are available, the department said there is no cause for concern and appealed to citizens to cooperate in maintaining orderly distribution.

The public has also been encouraged to contact district authorities or the department directly for accurate information regarding fuel availability.

NPP Alleges Fake Security Personnel Ahead of Nagaland By-Poll, Seeks EC Intervention



KOHIMA

The National People's Party (NPP) has approached the Election Commission of India alleging the presence of individuals impersonating security personnel a day ahead of the by-election in Nagaland's Koridang (ST) Assembly constituency.

In a formal complaint submitted on April 8, NPP national secretary Saidul Khan claimed that suspected impersonators posing as India Reserve Battalion (IRB) personnel were unlawfully regulating villagers' movement, creating an atmosphere of fear that could impact voter turnout. The party cited inputs pointing to such activities in Chungtia, Longkhum, and Mangmetong villages in Mokochung district, all of which fall within the constituency. It warned that the situation poses a serious threat to the conduct of free and fair elections, raising concerns over voter intimidation, possible booth capturing, and disruption of public order.

The NPP further alleged that the presence of unauthorised individuals violates the Model Code of Conduct and norms governing

the deployment of security forces during elections. Calling for urgent intervention, the party urged the Election Commission to verify the identity of all IRB personnel deployed in the constituency and remove any unverified individuals. It also sought the replacement of IRB personnel with Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), citing the need for neutrality during the polling process. A copy of the complaint has also been submitted to the Nagaland Director General of Police, seeking immediate verification and legal action against those found impersonating security personnel. The by-election has six candidates in the fray. The ruling People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) has fielded a nominee from the Bharatiya Janata Party, while the Congress has also put up its candidate. The NPP has fielded I Abenjlang, alongside three independent contenders.

The by-poll was necessitated by the death of sitting BJP legislator Imkong L. Imchen, a five-time MLA, who passed away on November 11 at the age of 75.

Counting of votes is scheduled for May 4.

Tipra Motha Win in TTAADC Polls Could Pave Way for Tribal CM in 2028: Pradyot Debbarma

AGARTALA

Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma, founder of the Tipra Motha Party, on Wednesday asserted that a victory in the upcoming Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections could lay the groundwork for an indigenous Chief Minister in the 2028 Assembly polls.

Addressing election rallies at Champahour and Ramchandraghat in Khowai district, Debbarma described the TTAADC polls moment for the indigenous Tiprasa community, framing the contest as a choice between political power backed by resources and community-driven representation.

He urged voters to decide whether to support the ruling leadership under Chief Minister Manik Saha or rally behind indigenous aspirations through Tipra Motha.

"The strength of our movement lies in the unity and resolve of our people, not in money or machinery," Debbarma said, adding that the outcome of the council elections would shape the political future of the state.

Criticising the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he alleged disparities



between promises and implementation, including issues related to village council elections and language policy. He also accused rival parties of attempting to divide the Tiprasa community.

Debbarma emphasised that his political agenda centres on securing land rights, improving access to education, and ensuring direct funding mechanisms for indigenous communities.

Calling for unity among Tiprasa voters, he said internal divisions would weaken their collective bargaining power.

He also issued a warning to party members allegedly in contact with rival parties, cautioning against defections driven by short-term gains.

Framing the elections as a larger movement rather than a routine political contest, Debbarma said the TTAADC outcome could serve as a stepping stone towards greater political representation.

"If we secure victory now, it will strengthen our position to ensure that in 2028, Tripura can have a Chief Minister from the indigenous community," he

said.

Polling for the TTAADC elections is scheduled in phases this month, with results expected to have significant implications for the state's political trajectory.

Conrad Sangma Meets Kiren Rijiju Over FCRA Changes, Seeks Safeguards for NGOs

New Delhi, April 8: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Wednesday met Union Minister Kiren Rijiju to discuss concerns surrounding proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), particularly their potential impact on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in the state.

Sangma was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong and a delegation from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

During the meeting, the delegation underscored the critical role played by NGOs in delivering essential services such as education, healthcare, and social welfare, especially in remote and tribal regions of Meghalaya. They stressed the need for safeguards to ensure that any regulatory changes do not disrupt these services while maintaining transparency and accountability.

According to Sangma, Rijiju assured that wider consultations would be held with stakeholders before finalising any amendments to the law. The chief minister welcomed the assurance and reiterated the state government's commitment to engaging constructively with the Centre to protect the interests of its people.

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‘My life began from here’: Mamata marches from home to file Bhabanipur nomination



KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday walked out of her Kalighat residence and proceeded on foot to file her nomination for the Bhabanipur Assembly seat, surrounded by a large crowd of supporters who turned the route into a show of strength for the Trinamool Congress chief. Wearing her trademark simple attire and greeting people with folded hands and a smile, Banerjee acknowledged party workers lined along both sides of the road as she walked approximately 800 metres to the Alipore Survey Building to complete the formalities.

Throughout the march, TMC supporters raised slogans such as “Mamata Banerjee zindabad” and “TMC zindabad”, turning the procession into a high-energy political display. The three-time MLA from Bhabanipur is expected to face BJP candidate Suvendu Adhikari in what is being seen as a closely watched electoral contest. “I was born and brought up here in Bhabanipur only. I stay here 365 days a year. My life, my work, my movements -- everything revolves around Bhabanipur. Everything in my life began from here. I thank and salute the people of Bhabanipur,”

Banerjee said after filing her nomination papers.

Seeking to widen the contest beyond Bhabanipur, Banerjee appealed to electors across Bengal to vote for the TMC.

“I appeal to the people not only in Bhabanipur but in all the 294 seats to ensure the victory of our candidates. We will win with a bigger mandate,” she said.

The TMC had won 213 of the 294 seats in the 2021 assembly polls. But the sharpest political message of the day came through the issue of voter roll revision. Banerjee alleged that large-scale deletions under the SIR had hit Muslims and women disproportionately and said the TMC would again move a court against the freezing of electoral rolls. “I am really pained that so many names have been deleted from the electoral rolls,” she said. The TMC supremo also said, “I moved the Supreme Court and 32 lakh names, out of 1.2 crore, have been restored. Those who are in the adjudication list should also be restored. I fail to understand why the voter rolls have been frozen. We will again move a court.”

The TMC believes the SIR has disproportionately affected Muslims and women -- two of Banerjee’s strongest social constituencies -- and is trying

to recast the election narrative from corruption, lack of jobs and anti-incumbency to one centred on identity, citizenship and deleted names.

That is particularly significant in Bhabanipur, where nearly 47,000 names have reportedly been deleted from the rolls, and another 14,000 were kept under adjudication.

More than 56 per cent of those whose names are under adjudication are Muslims, though the community forms only around 24 per cent of the electorate.

The TMC sought to project Bhabanipur as a “mini India” -- a constituency where Bengali Hindus, Gujarati and Marwari traders, Punjabi families, Jains and Muslims have coexisted for decades.

The message was visible even in the proposers to Banerjee’s nomination papers -- Rubi Hakim, wife of Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim; businessman Nispal Singh Rane, TMC leader Bablu Singh; and Miraj Shah of the Bhabanipur Education Society.

Spread across eight Kolkata Municipal Corporation wards, Bhabanipur has long been one of the state’s most socially diverse constituencies.

Roughly 42 per cent of its electorate are Bengali Hindus, 34 per cent non-Bengali Hindus and around 24 per cent Muslims.

The BJP, however, believes the constituency is no longer the fortress it once was for Banerjee. Though the TMC won Bhabanipur by nearly 29,000 votes in 2021 and Banerjee later increased that margin to more than 58,000 in the bypoll after her defeat in Nandigram, the party’s lead in the Bhabanipur assembly segment shrank to just 8,297 votes in the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Centre tells SC adultery, same-sex rulings based on ‘constitutional morality’ not good law

NEW DELHI

The Centre told the Supreme Court that two landmark rulings decriminalising adultery and same-sex consensual relationships were based on a subjective interpretation of “constitutional morality” and should not be treated as good law.

The submission was made before a nine-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, which is hearing petitions on discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, and examining the scope of religious freedom across faiths.

The court has framed seven key questions on religious freedom, including the scope and meaning of the term “morality” under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, and whether it encompasses constitutional morality.

Advancing arguments on the second day, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, submitted that the concept of constitutional morality is a sentiment and not a doctrine on which legislation can be tested.

“In a country governed by democratic principles, it is always the majoritarian view that prevails, particularly when it comes to testing a law, because it is the majority that enacts the law. How do you then define morality on that basis? Thereafter, subsequently, there may be an evolution or change in understanding,” Mehta said.

The bench, on Tuesday, clarified that the court will not tolerate being told the legislature has the “last word” in such matters and observed that courts cannot shy away from testing practices against constitutional principles, even if they are rooted in faith.

It, however, questioned how persons who are not devotees of Lord Ayyappa could challenge the temple custom invoking the PIL jurisdiction of the court.

The court while citing examples of other superstitious practices -- witchcraft, cannibalism, and Sati -- asked the Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta, senior law officer for the Centre, if



witchcraft is considered part of religious practice, would you or would you not consider it superstition?, to which the SG replied, yes and I will.

Rejecting the Centre’s submission that the secular court cannot decide the issue with regard to superstitious practices, the Supreme Court on Tuesday -- while hearing a batch of review pleas challenging the Sabarimala judgement -- said that it has the authority to examine whether certain practices in a religion amount to superstition.

The court also observed that it was an issue of gender discrimination where equality in general has not been respected in the law, women has been deemed to be a property not being sui generis...this is the fundamental ratio as we read it.

Dealing with the scope of judicial review, Mehta referred to Supreme Court judgements decriminalising adultery (Joseph Shine) and same-sex consensual relationships (Navtej Singh Johar).

The top court, on a plea filed by NRI Joseph Shine, had in 2018 struck down Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code dealing with adultery, holding it unconstitutional. In the same year, a five-judge Constitution bench had decriminalised homosexuality by partially striking down the colonial-era provisions of Section 377 of the IPC on a plea filed by dancer Navtej

Singh Johar.

Mehta said, “One of the questions is what is the extent of judicial review and what is constitutional morality. Whether social or constitutional morality, there is a judgment in the Joseph Shine case. This is a judgment, I am little concerned as a citizen, as a student of law and therefore, this was an adultery provision under challenge.

“Some ‘Feminist Legal Methods’ by Katharine T. Bartlett, Harvard Law Review, is quoted which is a law under Article 141 of the Constitution and binds 140 crore Indians,” he said.

The Chief Justice observed that the Joseph Shine judgment cites Jeffrey A. Segal as a well-known American legal scholar. “Who is this Segal? He has almost been referred here as if he is the second Ambedkar?” the CJ said.

Mehta pointed out that paragraph 195 of the Joseph Shine judgment also cites a JNU professor. “I do not wish to trouble the learned professor. She is known for certain views, including that the Indian State is illegally occupying certain States, etc., etc. I am not going into that. But now, that view finds place in a Supreme Court judgment. It has the status of being part of the record,” he said.

“The observations in the case of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India have elevated the concept of ‘constitutional morality’ to being a test for

judicial review of legislation. It is submitted that the same is alien to the concept of separation of powers and the doctrine of checks and balances, and further militates against the mandate of Article 13,” Mehta said.

The Solicitor General also criticised the use of foreign law and academic writings in the adultery judgement, saying courts should not base binding law on “individual and subjective views” drawn from selective sources.

He argued that treating constitutional morality as a standalone test for judicial review is “alien” to the doctrine of separation of powers and termed the concept “vague”.

“The judgment in Joseph Shine proceeds on a premise which is not only against the society’s morality but even against constitutional morality,” Mehta told the bench, which also comprised Justices B V Nagarathna, M M Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan and Joydeep Bagchi.

The Centre had earlier filed written submissions urging the court to declare the law and reasoning in the Joseph Shine case as not a good law. “The law and the reasoning in Joseph Shine [Supra] be declared not to be a good law. No arguments are advanced on the validity of Section 497, which was declared unconstitutional in the said judgment, as they are not within the scope of reference,” it said.

In September 2018, a five-judge Constitution bench, by a 4:1 majority, lifted the ban on entry of women between the ages of 10 and 50 into the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple in Kerala, holding the centuries-old practice unconstitutional.

Later, on November 14, 2019, another five-judge bench headed by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, by a 3:2 majority, referred the issue of discrimination against women at various places of worship to a larger bench.

The bench had framed broad issues on religious freedom, observing that such questions could not be decided without the facts of individual cases.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran closes Strait of Hormuz again following Israeli strikes on Lebanon



TEHRAN

Iran has reportedly closed the Strait of Hormuz following Israeli strikes on Lebanon, according to Iranian state media reports, escalating tensions in West Asia despite fresh diplomatic efforts to pause the conflict.

The move comes less than 24 hours after the US, Israel and Iran signalled a halt in hostilities. A two-week ceasefire was agreed between Iran and the US earlier today, with the first in-person direct negotiations expected to take place in Islamabad.

At least 112 people were killed and 837 others were wounded in Lebanon on Wednesday after Israel launched an unprecedented

wave of strikes, according to the Lebanese health ministry.

“The Israeli enemy’s airstrikes on numerous Lebanese areas, reaching the capital Beirut, have led, in an updated non-final toll, to 112 martyrs and 837 wounded,” the ministry said in a statement.

Following the attacks, Hezbollah asserted its right to retaliate.

“We affirm that the blood of the martyrs and the wounded will not be shed in vain, and that today’s massacres, like all acts of aggression and savage crimes, confirm our natural and legal right to resist the occupation and respond to its aggression,” the Iran-backed group said.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards

also issued a warning, saying they would respond if Israeli strikes on Lebanon continue.

“We issue a firm warning to the United States, which violates treaties, and to its Zionist ally, its executioner: if the aggression against beloved Lebanon does not cease immediately, we will fulfil our duty and deliver a response,” the Revolutionary Guards said in a statement carried on state TV.

Israel, however, clarified that the US-Iran ceasefire does not extend to Lebanon, which has been drawn into the conflict following Hezbollah’s attacks on Israel.

US President Donald Trump echoed this position, stating that the Israel-Hezbollah conflict is not

covered under the temporary truce.

“They were not included in the deal,” Trump said, according to a social media post by PBS News Hour correspondent Liz Landers. He added that it was “because of Hezbollah,” the Iran-backed group.

“That’ll get taken care of too,” he reportedly said, adding: “That’s a separate skirmish.”

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar also cast doubt on the sustainability of the ceasefire, pointing to deep differences between Washington and Tehran.

“Nothing is over yet,” he said in an interview, adding, “I don’t see how it is possible to bridge the positions of the US and Iran.”

Meanwhile, the United Nations strongly condemned the Israeli strikes, highlighting the civilian toll.

“The United Nations strongly condemns the strikes by Israel across Lebanon that resulted in significant civilian casualties,” said Farhan Haq, the deputy spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

“We continue to call on all sides to avail themselves of diplomatic channels, cease hostilities” and use the new US-Iran ceasefire as an opportunity to prevent further loss of life, he added.

Meanwhile, confusion persists over the terms of the ceasefire. A US official said a 10-point plan published by Iran does not reflect what was agreed with the White House.

“The document being reported by media outlets is not the working framework,” the official said, adding, “We’re not going to negotiate in public out of respect for the process.”

Earlier, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth claimed that Iran “begged” for the ceasefire, alleging that the country’s supreme leader Mojtaba Ali Khamenei is “wounded and disfigured”.

Taiwan opposition leader says China visit to sow ‘seeds of peace’



NANJING

Taiwan’s opposition leader, a proponent of closer ties with Beijing, said on Wednesday she hoped to sow the “seeds of peace” during a rare visit to China.

Kuomintang (KMT) chairwoman Cheng Li-wun is the party’s first leader to visit China in a decade but her trip -- during which she hopes to meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping -- has sparked debate in Taiwan.

Critics, including those within her own party which traditionally supports relations with China, have accused her of being too pro-Beijing.

China claims self-ruled Taiwan is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to seize it.

“I hope that today we plant the seeds of peace not only for Chinese people on

both sides of the Strait, but for all humankind,” Cheng said on Wednesday, in comments broadcast by Taiwanese media.

She spoke during a symbolic visit to the eastern city of Nanjing, where she visited the mausoleum of revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen, one of the few Chinese historical figures revered in both Beijing and Taipei.

Beefed-up security at the mausoleum prevented foreigners from entering, AFP journalists saw.

China severed high-level contact with Taiwan in 2016 after Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party won the presidency and rejected Beijing’s claims to the island.

Cross-strait relations have worsened since then, with China ramping up military pressure with near daily deployments of fighter jets

and warships near Taiwan and regular large-scale military drills.

However, Cheng said in a speech after her arrival on Tuesday evening that “the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are not doomed to war, as the international community has feared”.

“Taiwan should not be reduced to a geopolitical pawn,” she said in a Facebook post, in an apparent reference to tensions between China and the United States, Taiwan’s main arms supplier.

Her visit, she added, would mark a “historic journey of peace”.

In a park surrounding the mausoleum, 74-year-old Nanjing resident surnamed Fen told AFP on Wednesday that he had come to the area after hearing of Cheng’s visit.

“I hope she will contribute to the reunification of the motherland,” he said.

Drowning in Data: How Information Overload Is Eroding Human Thought in the Digital Age

We inhabit a paradox that defines the 21st century: never before has humanity had access to such an abundance of information, and yet never before has it struggled so profoundly to think clearly.

At first glance, this appears contradictory. Greater access to knowledge should logically produce more informed, thoughtful societies. But the reality unfolding around us suggests otherwise. The issue is not that we lack information; it is that we are inundated by it in ways that quietly erode our ability to process, interpret, and act upon what we know.

The crisis, therefore, is not informational scarcity but cognitive saturation.

The Myth of "Too Much Information"
The prevailing explanation for modern mental fatigue is simple: there is just too much information. From this perspective, the remedy seems equally simple—consume less. But this diagnosis is incomplete, even misleading.

The true problem is not quantity alone, but the effect that relentless exposure has on the mind's internal environment. Every news alert, social media update, climate statistic, or geopolitical crisis does not merely pass through us. It leaves behind a residue—a subtle psychological imprint.

Individually, these imprints seem negligible. Collectively, they accumulate.

A headline about war casualties. A report on economic instability. A warning about climate tipping points. Updates on artificial intelligence displacing jobs. Each piece adds another layer. These layers do not organize themselves neatly into understanding. Instead, they stack chaotically, compressing earlier impressions and distorting our ability to interpret new ones.

Over time, the mind does not become more informed. It becomes burdened.

Every Contact Leaves a Trace
To understand this accumulation more precisely, it helps to borrow a principle from forensic science. In the early 20th century, criminologist Edmond Locard introduced what is now known as Locard's Exchange Principle: every contact leaves a trace.

In forensic investigations, this means that whenever two objects interact, each leaves something behind on the other. No interaction is ever neutral or consequence-free.

The same principle applies to our interaction with information.

Every article read, every post scrolled past, every statistic encountered leaves a cognitive trace. These traces are not always conscious. They may manifest as fleeting emotions—anxiety, outrage, helplessness, or numbness—that do not lead to action but remain embedded in the mind.

Over time, these traces accumulate like sediment.

What begins as awareness gradually becomes interference. The mind, saturated with unresolved impressions, starts to resemble a contaminated crime scene. In such a state, distinguishing signal from noise becomes nearly impossible. Not because the evidence is false, but because it is layered, displaced, and contextually distorted.

The result is not ignorance, but confusion.

The Limits of the Human Mind

This cognitive overload is not merely metaphorical; it is grounded in well-established psychological constraints.

In 1956, cognitive psychologist George A. Miller proposed that human working memory can hold approximately seven units of information at a time, give or take two. This limitation defines how much we can actively process and make sense of at any given moment.

Modern information ecosystems routinely exceed this capacity.

Further research by educational psychologist John Sweller introduced the concept of cognitive load, which helps explain why. Cognitive load can be divided into three types:

- **Intrinsic load:** the inherent complexity of the material
- **Extraneous load:** distractions or poor presentation of information
- **Germane load:** the mental effort required for meaningful learning and understanding

In today's media environment, intrinsic and extraneous loads dominate. Complex global issues are presented rapidly, often without context, while distractions—from notifications to algorithm-driven feeds—fracture attention.

The result is that germane load, the kind that enables deep thinking and comprehension, is crowded out.

We are processing constantly, but understanding rarely.

When the Mind Stops Trying
As this imbalance persists, a critical shift occurs. The mind rec-



ognizes its own limitations. It senses that it cannot meaningfully engage with the volume of information it holds.

And so, it adapts—not by improving its processing capacity, but by disengaging.

This is where the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance becomes central. Introduced by psychologist Leon Festinger, cognitive dissonance refers to the discomfort experienced when our knowledge and actions—or emotions—are misaligned.

Consider the modern individual: aware of climate crises but unable to act meaningfully; informed about global conflicts but powerless to intervene; conscious of systemic injustices but uncertain how to respond.

This gap between knowing and doing creates tension.

To resolve this discomfort, the mind often chooses avoidance. It looks away.

This is not apathy or laziness. It is a coping mechanism.

Empirical evidence supports this trend. A 2024 report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that a significant proportion of people actively avoid news, citing overwhelm and emotional fatigue. The more people know without the ability to act, the more likely they are to disengage.

In effect, knowledge becomes a burden rather than a resource.

The Erosion of Collective Reason

The consequences of this shift extend far beyond individual well-being. They are structural.

Societies depend on the cognitive capacity of their citizens to make informed decisions—whether in elections, public policy debates, or technological adoption. These decisions require more than surface-level awareness. They demand sustained attention, critical reasoning, and the ability to weigh complex evidence.

But these are precisely the faculties that information overload undermines.

When public discourse is shaped by fragmented impressions rather than coherent understanding, collective decision-making deteriorates. Opinions become reactive rather than reflective. Judgments are formed quickly, often based on emotional cues rather than careful analysis.

The problem is not simply misinformation or "fake news," though those issues are real and significant. The deeper issue is that even accurate information loses its impact when buried under layers of competing signals.

In such an environment, importance itself becomes indistinguishable.

Everything feels urgent. Nothing feels actionable.

A Contaminated Cognitive Landscape
Returning to the forensic analogy, a heavily contaminated crime scene presents a fundamental challenge: investigators can no longer determine what evidence is original and what has been introduced through subsequent interactions.

Similarly, in a saturated information environment, the mind struggles to identify which ideas are genuinely significant and which are artifacts of repetition or amplification.

New information does not arrive on a clean slate. It lands on accumulated residue.

This accumulation distorts perception. It flattens distinctions between trivial and critical, immediate and long-term, local and global. As a result, even the most urgent issues can fail to register with the clarity they demand.

The mind, overwhelmed by traces, loses its ability to prioritize.

Toward Epistemic Discipline

If the problem is not merely the volume of information but the way we engage with it, then the solution cannot simply be withdrawal. Reducing exposure may provide temporary relief, but it does not address the underlying cognitive dynamics.

What is required instead is a more disciplined relationship with information—one that resembles the methodological rigor of forensic investigation.

Faced with a contaminated scene, investigators do not abandon their work. They proceed with greater care. They isolate variables, trace origins, and distinguish between relevant and irrelevant evidence.

A similar approach is needed in the information age.

This involves slowing down consumption, not necessarily reducing it. It means asking where a piece of information comes from, how it fits into a broader context, and whether it warrants emotional or cognitive investment.

It requires distinguishing between signal and noise.

Most importantly, it demands patience—the willingness to sit with complexity rather than react to immediacy.

Relearning How to Think

The challenge before us is not technological but cognitive. It is about reclaiming the ability to think deeply in an envi-

ronment designed for speed and volume.

This does not mean rejecting modern information systems. It means engaging with them differently.

To think clearly today is an act of resistance.

It involves resisting the pull of constant updates, the lure of instant opinions, and the pressure to react. It means creating space for reflection, allowing ideas to settle, and revisiting them with intention.

Only then can we begin to reconstruct a cognitive environment that supports genuine understanding.

The Traces We Choose to Read

Locard's principle reminds us that every contact leaves a trace. In the digital age, we are in constant contact with information. The traces are inevitable.

The question is not whether they exist, but whether we can learn to interpret them. Beneath the layers of accumulated impressions lies the possibility of clarity.

But reaching it requires effort—careful, deliberate, and sustained.

In a world overflowing with data, the ability to think is no longer a given. It is a skill to be protected, cultivated, and, perhaps most importantly, slowed down.

Only then can we hope to see through the noise—and recover the truth buried beneath.

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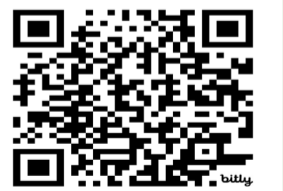
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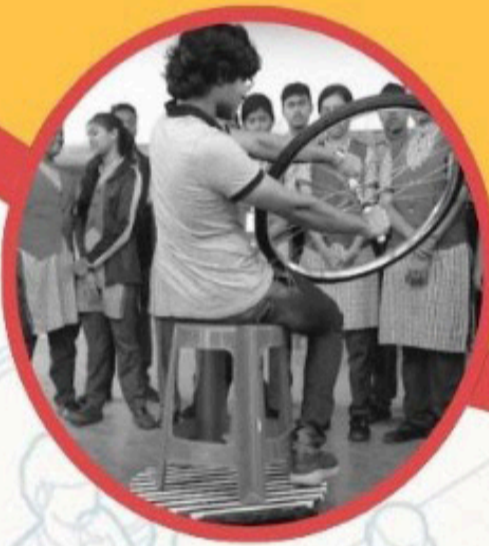
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