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PERSPECTIVE
"Stay focused on what really matters." ~ Tim Cook

Assam Commando Trainee Found Dead at Camp in Baihata Chariali; Police Launch Probe

GUWAHATI



A woman commando trainee was found dead at a battalion camp in Baihata Chariali on Wednesday, prompting an official investigation into the circumstances surrounding the suspected suicide.

The deceased has been identified as Aparna Pandit, a resident of Bokajan in Karbi Anglong. She was undergoing training at a Commando Battalion camp at the time of the incident.

Preliminary information suggests that Pandit may have been under significant mental stress in the days leading up to her death. A suicide note was reportedly recovered from near the body, though authorities have not yet confirmed its contents or established a definitive cause.

Police have registered a case and begun an investigation, with officials stating that further clarity will emerge after examination of the note and completion of procedural formalities.

The body has been sent to her hometown for last rites, even as investigators continue to piece together the events leading up to the incident at the training facility in Baihata Chariali.

If you or someone you know may be struggling, reaching out to local support services or trusted individuals can make a difference.

WHO SAID WHAT



Australians are becoming an endangered species ~ Elon Musk, American Entrepreneur

COCOMI Plans Protest Along Imphal-Thoubal Stretch on Khongjom Day, Signals Escalation of Agitation

NEW DELHI

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has announced a fresh round of demonstrations along the Imphal-Thoubal road on Wednesday, coinciding with the observance of Khongjom Day, as it intensifies its campaign seeking what it calls an "appropriate response" from the government.

Addressing the media, COCOMI executive member Shanta Nahakpam said the organisation has been carrying out sustained protests since the Tronglaobi incident and will extend its agitation through coordinated demonstrations along the Thoubal stretch. The timing of the protest is significant, with several ministers and legislators expected to visit the Khongjom War Memorial for official observances.

According to Nahakpam, the



demonstrations aim to draw attention to the group's demands, with participants expected from across Manipur.

He said the agitation would continue as the government has yet to respond to key issues raised by the organisation.

tion.

COCOMI has consistently maintained that the ongoing crisis in Manipur is a "proxy conflict," alleging the involvement of Kuki militant groups—a claim it has reiterated throughout its campaign. The organisation also flagged concerns over the prevailing law and order situation, stating that despite the presence of a popularly elected government representing different communities, there has been little visible progress toward restoring peace.

The group further argued that while developmental projects continue to be inaugurated, efforts toward dialogue and conflict resolution remain inadequate. The planned protest along the Imphal-Thoubal corridor, it said, is intended to convey public sentiment directly to political leaders attending the Khongjom Day programme.

Nahakpam also referred to a recent confrontation in Wangjing, in Thoubal district, where protests during the inauguration of a Block Development Office reportedly escalated into clashes. He said such incidents reflect deeper public discontent and should not be viewed in isolation.

COCOMI confirmed that a larger mass agitation scheduled for April 25 will go ahead as planned. On issues such as alleged narco-terrorism and the movement of cadres from Suspension of Operations (SoO) camps, the organisation said these concerns remain central to its demands.

Responding to a fresh invitation from the state government for talks, Nahakpam said the communication had been received earlier in the day, but the organisation is yet to decide whether it will participate in the proposed meeting.

VDF Personnel Injured as Police Open Fire to Disperse Crowd During CM Visit in Thoubal



Singh, a resident of Heirok Part 2 in Thoubal district, was immediately rushed to Raj Medicity Hospital for treatment, where he is currently undergoing medical care.

According to officials, the firing took place at Wangjing Tentha area when a large group of people gathered during a visit by the Chief Minister of Manipur to the district.

Reports indicate that the crowd, allegedly armed with stones and catapults, advanced towards the venue and was suspected to be attempting vandalism at a newly constructed Block Development Officer (BDO) office.

Security personnel on duty issued repeated warnings and appeals for the crowd to disperse. However, officials said the group continued to move forward in what was described as an aggressive manner, posing a potential threat to public property, dignitaries, and overall law and order.

Police initially resorted to minimum force to control the situation. When these measures failed, controlled firing was carried out as a last resort in accordance with established protocols, officials added. During the operation, Singh was hit by a bullet, leading to his injury. Security forces subsequently managed to bring the situation under control, preventing further escalation and damage to property. Officials said the timely intervention ensured the safety of those present at the venue.

Further details on the circumstances leading to the firing and the condition of the injured personnel are awaited.

IMPHAL

A Village Defence Force (VDF) personnel was injured after police opened fire to disperse a large crowd during a high-level visit in Thoubal district on Tuesday, officials said.

The injured has been identified as Elangbam Nandbir Singh (40), a Village Defence Force Special Police Officer (SPO) attached to Alpha Company under the Manipur Home Department. He sustained a bullet injury to the abdomen during the incident.

13-Hour Shutdown Halts Life in Churachandpur Over MLA Vungzagin Valte's Death

IMPHAL

Normal life came to a standstill across Churachandpur on Wednesday as a 13-hour shutdown called by Zomi groups and allied organisations disrupted transport, businesses, and public services, intensifying demands for action over the death of BJP legislator Vungzagin Valte.

The shutdown, which began at 5 am and continued till 6 pm, was supported by Kuki civil society bodies and Hmar organisations. Shops, schools, offices and commercial establishments remained closed, while public transport stayed off the roads. Key routes, including Tipaimukh Road and Guite Road, saw no vehicular movement during the protest.

Despite the widespread disruption, officials said the bandh passed off peacefully, with no reports of violence or untoward incidents. Notably, there was no visible deployment or movement of police or security forces during the day, and the overall situation remained calm.

Organisers said the shutdown was aimed at pressing for "immediate and appropriate justice" for Valte, alleging a lack of progress in the case nearly two months after his death. A representative of the Zomi Coordination Committee stated that around 60 days had elapsed without any substantive response from authorities, warning that protests would continue until action is taken.

Valte had died on February 20, 2026, at a hospital in Gurugram, months after he sustained injuries in a mob attack in May 2023 during the early phase of ethnic violence in Manipur. Protesters have linked the shutdown to what they describe as official inaction in delivering accountability.

On Tuesday evening, residents held a candlelight vigil in Churachandpur, reiterating demands for a thorough investigation and justice for the late MLA. Organisers indicated that further agitation could follow if their demands remain unmet.

RTI Disclosure Lays Bare Human Cost of Manipur Conflict: Nearly 59,000 Displaced Since 2023

IMPHAL

A Right to Information (RTI) disclosure has revealed the staggering human toll of the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur, with more than 58,000 people forced to flee their homes over nearly three years of unrest.

Data released by the state's Home Department Secretariat on April 20 shows that 58,821 individuals were displaced between May 3, 2023 and March 30, 2026. The figures, obtained through an RTI application filed by Hareshwar Goshwami after a seven-month wait, provide one of the clearest official snapshots yet of the scale of the crisis.

The disclosure also confirms that at least 217 people lost their lives during the period, based on ex-gratia payments issued to victims' families. However, authorities did not furnish a detailed account of those injured, leaving a significant gap in understanding the full extent of casualties.

Relief and rehabilitation efforts continue across the state, though the numbers underscore the enormity of the challenge. As of March 10, 2026, as many as 174 relief camps remained operational, sheltering thousands of internally displaced persons who have yet to return home. In a parallel effort to address long-term resettlement, around 3,000

pre-fabricated houses have been constructed by the Manipur Police Housing Corporation Ltd.

The destruction of property has been equally severe. Official data indicates that 7,894 houses were completely destroyed, while another 2,646 suffered partial damage during the violence—figures that point to widespread devastation across affected districts.

The conflict, which erupted in May 2023, stems from ethnic tensions between the valley-based Meitei community and Kuki groups residing in the hill regions. What began as sporadic clashes soon escalated into one of the most prolonged and disruptive crises in the state's recent history.

Even as sporadic incidents continue to be reported, the RTI findings highlight a deeper, unresolved humanitarian emergency. The scale of displacement, the continued reliance on relief camps, and the slow pace of rehabilitation collectively signal that normalcy remains elusive in Manipur.

With thousands still unable to return to their homes and livelihoods, the data underscores the urgent need for sustained policy attention, transparent rehabilitation measures, and long-term peacebuilding efforts to address the roots of the conflict and prevent further displacement.

Three Arunachal Girls Selected for ISRO's YUVIKA 2026, Boosting State's Presence in Space Education

ITANAGAR

In a significant boost to science education in the Northeast, three students from Arunachal Pradesh have been selected for the prestigious Young Scientist Programme (YUVIKA) 2026 conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation.

The selected students—Geyon Talom from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), Geku in Upper Siang; Lukshmi Sikom from Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Kuporijo in Upper Subansiri; and Jennifer Neri from JNV Seppa in East Kameng—have earned a place in the national-level programme aimed at nurturing young talent in space science. The YUVIKA initiative, launched by ISRO, is designed to spark interest in space science among school students through hands-on training, expert mentorship, and exposure to cutting-edge research. The programme provides selected participants an opportunity to interact with scientists and gain practical insights into India's



space missions and technologies. Officials noted that the selection of three students from

Arunachal Pradesh reflects the growing enthusiasm and aptitude for science among youth in the frontier state.

Congratulating the students, Dasanglu Pul, Minister for Women and Child Development, said their achievement is a matter of pride for the state.

She said that the accomplishment not only brings recognition to the students' families and institutions but also highlights the potential of young minds in Arunachal Pradesh to excel in advanced fields like space research. Pul expressed hope that the success of the three students would inspire more children across the state to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). She extended her best wishes to the students for their future endeavours, expressing confidence that they would make the most of the opportunity and contribute meaningfully to India's scientific progress.

The YUVIKA programme continues to play a crucial role in identifying and nurturing the next generation of scientists, with increasing participation from states across the Northeast.

Guwahati Flood Aftermath: Three Found Dead Across City, Probe on Into Suspected Link

GUWAHATI

Three bodies were recovered from different locations across Guwahati on Tuesday, with police suspecting a possible connection to the recent floods that have battered the city, even as authorities await confirmation pending investigation.

Officials said all three individuals had been reported missing since Sunday, when large parts of Guwahati were grappling with severe waterlogging and overflowing drains following heavy rainfall. According to police, the bodies were recovered from the Basistha river, the Mora Bharalu river, and a pond near Lachitgarh. While two of the deceased have been identified, efforts are underway to ascertain the identity of the third individual, whose body was found in a pond in the Pamohi area. Police said he was wearing a shirt bearing the word "Mittal," which may aid identification. Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Balin Deuri said preliminary findings suggest the deaths could be flood-related,

though a detailed probe is ongoing to establish the exact causes.

One of the deceased, Akhtar Ali (28), a specially-abled person who reportedly suffered from epilepsy, was found in the Basistha river. A resident of Hatigaon Notboma, he had been missing since April 19, with his family filing a report at Hatigaon Police Station. Another victim, Asim Kalita from Datalpara, was recovered from the Mora Bharalu river in the Jyotikuchi area. His family had also reported him missing since Sunday. In a separate but related incident highlighting the dangers posed by the floods, Payal Nath (32), a resident of Dharapur, died after being swept away by an overflowing drain at Maligaon Chariali on Sunday night. Kamrup (Metro) Deputy Commissioner Swapnaneel Paul said the administration had received information regarding the recovery of bodies from the Bharalu river and a private campus pond in Pamohi. He added that details surrounding some of the recoveries were still being verified.



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TRUMP'S CONSISTENT INCONSISTENCIES

Financial markets are often accused of being cold, shortsighted and morally indifferent, yet they do possess one quality that political systems frequently lack in moments of conflict: an ability to strip away theatre and price only what appears durable. That seems to be what has happened with Donald Trump's blockade strategy around the Strait of Hormuz and the wider pattern of mixed messaging that has marked his war posture toward Iran.

The first reaction was unsurprising. Oil jumped, nerves frayed and investors moved instinctively toward safety because Hormuz is not merely another geopolitical flashpoint. It is one of the world's most sensitive economic pressure points, a narrow corridor through which the global economy reads the possibility of inflation, supply shock and broader instability. But once the initial alarm subsided, the market's reading became more disciplined. Traders began to treat the blockade less as the opening act of a much larger war and more as a coercive instrument designed to improve bargaining leverage.

That distinction matters. Markets are not rewarding conflict here; they are responding to restraint hidden beneath confrontation. Even when the rhetoric has sounded maximalist, the behaviour of the principal actors has suggested limits. Washington has projected force, but it has also kept signalling that force is not the final objective. Tehran, for its part, has every reason to posture defiantly, yet it too appears aware of the immense costs of turning a controlled crisis into a direct and prolonged regional war. When both sides appear to understand the danger of overreach, markets begin to discount the loudest statements and focus instead on the boundaries neither side seems willing to cross.

This is why the blockade has increasingly been interpreted not as a prelude to total escalation, but as a negotiating gambit wrapped in military packaging. Trump's style has long relied on brinkmanship, spectacle and deliberate uncertainty. He frequently seeks advantage by creating a sense that he may go further than anyone expects, only to use that perceived unpredictability as leverage in a bargain. That method produces whiplash in diplomacy and confusion in markets, but it also creates a pattern that investors eventually learn to recognise. Once a pattern becomes legible, its power to shock diminishes. The financial world appears to have reached that point with this phase of the Iran confrontation. It has begun to separate the optics of the blockade from the probable destination of policy.

That does not mean markets are relaxed in any absolute sense. It means they are making a relative judgement that the probability of a catastrophic spiral has fallen from the level implied by the headlines. There is a crucial difference between a dangerous situation and an uncontrollable one. In the opening phase, investors priced the possibility that Hormuz could become the trigger for a broad energy and security crisis. After watching the signals from both capitals, many now seem to believe the crisis is being managed, however crudely, toward an exit. The key phrase is managed toward an exit, because nothing about Trump's method suggests elegance or consistency. The administration's statements have often looked contradictory, alternating between pressure, reassurance and hints of diplomatic flexibility. Yet inconsistency in this case may not be evidence of strategic confusion alone. It may also be part of the pressure architecture itself, keeping Tehran off balance while leaving room for a climbdown.

Markets can live with inconsistency more easily than they can live with strategic blindness. What they needed to know was whether the United States was seeking regime collapse through open-ended war or bargaining dominance through controlled coercion. The answer now seems closer to the second. That is why the tone has shifted from panic to conditional optimism. A blockade presented as absolute force might have driven prices into a sustained risk spiral. A blockade increasingly seen as leverage for talks invites a different reaction: the gradual unwinding of the war premium. The broader significance lies in how markets assess intentions through actions rather than speeches. If either Washington or Tehran truly wanted escalation, the indicators would look different. One would expect broader military mobilisation, harsher diplomatic closures, more direct attacks on critical infrastructure and a collapse in any language suggesting off-ramps. Instead, what appears to be emerging is a familiar but still consequential geopolitical choreography: show strength, absorb the shock, test resolve, then search for a formula that lets both sides claim something. That is not peace in any noble sense. It is transactional de-escalation. But markets do not require nobility. They require pathways. The moment a plausible pathway appears, capital begins to move as though the worst-case scenario is no longer the base case.

There is also a deeper point about credibility. Trump's political method depends heavily on surprise, but repeated use of shock tactics reduces their marginal effect. Financial markets have now seen enough of his style to ask not whether a dramatic move has occurred, but what practical end it is meant to serve. Once that question becomes standard, the emotional impact of each new manoeuvre weakens. A blockade that might once have been treated as an unmistakable signal of imminent escalation is now assessed within a broader Trump framework of pressure-first negotiation. This does not eliminate risk. It simply means the market is no longer willing to confuse noise with destination.

Iran too is being judged through the same lens of constrained self-interest. Tehran may issue defiant statements and maintain an adversarial posture, but investors appear to believe its leadership also understands the limits imposed by economics, military exposure and domestic strain. A state under pressure may still lash out, but a state seeking survival often preserves room for mediated compromise. That reading helps explain why the market mood has tilted toward sanity. It is not faith in goodwill; it is faith in mutual caution. What emerges from this episode is a reminder that markets are often better at detecting reluctant realism than political commentary in the heat of the moment. Public debate tends to focus on the theatrical surface of events, especially when Trump is involved, because his style thrives on spectacle and contradiction. Markets, after a brief overreaction, moved on to the colder question of incentives. Neither side benefits from a prolonged uncontrolled escalation through Hormuz. Both sides, in different ways, need an outcome they can frame as strength without paying the full cost of war. Once that became visible, the interpretation changed from looming catastrophe to pressured diplomacy.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

WORKING INDIA : JOB CREATION CRITICAL



DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

India's challenge is not just job availability, but job quality. Unemployment and underemployment and whether the government has concrete plans to address the needs remains largely ignored. Additionally, there is a widely acknowledged disconnect between what the education system produces and what the labour market demands. Degrees often do not translate into employability. What measures either the Centre or states propose to take to usher in reform are unknown. Electoral politics tends to prioritise short-term narratives—blame, identity issues, or welfare announcements—over detailed employment strategies. Job creation plans, when presented, are often headline-driven (targets, incentives) rather than backed by transparent roadmaps, timelines, and accountability metrics.

In such a situation, a report titled 'State of Working India 2026' noted that between 2004 and 2023 50 lakh-odd graduates were added every year, while the number of employed graduates rose by only around 28 lakh annually, out of which 17 lakh were salaried. Obviously, graduate employment has not kept pace with education because of which educated unemployment and underemployment is a serious spectre across the country.

The share of graduates among unemployed youth (29-29 years) has more than doubled over the past two decades, at a time when India has made substantial progress in expanding access to higher education for its youth, stated a report released by Azim Premji University recently. Data showed that around 67 per cent of unemployed in 2023 (around 1.1 crore) in the country were graduates, up from 32 per cent in 2004 (30 lakh). At same time, share of graduates among youth has risen to 28 per cent in 2023 (6.3 crore) from just 10 per cent in 2004 (1.9 crore).

An issue that has not been covered in the report is what percentage has come from the lower segments of society in relation to both the percentage of graduates and those who got employment amongst them. In both these areas, the privileged sections get maximum opportunities, as an established fact. The report has rightly emphasised on skill training, vocational and technical, to increase the chances of employment generation. The world of work must be made class and caste agnostic.

At a recent conference, Secretary of Higher Education Vineet Joshi, pointed out that India's education system is changing under the influence of the National Education Policy 2020 and employability and entrepreneurship are now being seen as essential outcomes. But it is difficult to agree with him as the recent budget has not given priority to education and this is evident from the rather poor financial allocation. Moreover, despite all skilling efforts, there is just 20 per cent annual growth in the last three years, forming just 0.3 per cent of

the workforce compared to about 4 per cent in the U.K. and Germany.

At the same conference, Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) stated recently that outdated curricula had long been a complaint from the industry and institutions had been forced to move towards more frequent revision and closer consultation with employers. He and other experts called for continuous curriculum reform in tune with the changing demands of industry. In line with this, the skilling policy needs to be linked to broader job creation, specially in manufacturing and related sectors that can absorb both graduate and non-graduate workers.

Thus, one cannot but disagree with the poor quality of education imparted in colleges located in rural and backward districts. Moreover, the poor funding to these institutions has aggravated in recent years. Unless there is a strategic transformation, obviously through more allocation of funds in the education sector as well as making the curriculum more job-oriented and introducing more courses in this direction, there may not be any significant change in Indian education and increasing employability.

The Lokniti-CSDS survey in 2024 found nearly two-thirds of respondents claimed getting jobs harder than five years ago. Many aspire to go abroad for education and better jobs but either lack the resources or opportunities. Moreover, with anti-immigration sentiments rising globally immigration options for India's Gen Z are getting fewer.

Many young Indians acknowledge that the government hasn't delivered on earlier promises on 'achhe din' or created millions of new good jobs. However, a section credited Modi with strengthening India's global standing and projecting confidence about the country's future. Though a section of young

part of the educated workforce. Beneath this layer of highly employable talent lies a much larger group of employable talent struggling to find suitable jobs.

Meanwhile, another side of the unemployment problem is the low payment that is given, even for qualified candidates. The salaries have not kept pace with recent times. On the other hand, though an increasing number of women have been joining the workforce, the payments given to the opposite sex are much lower than their male counterparts. The condition of informal sector workers is even worse.

The crisis has been aggravated with political parties making false promises before elections but not giving sufficient attention thereafter. The critical situation of most states where industries do not find a congenial climate to grow due to various factors has further hampered the prospect of job creation.

Steps to increase employment generation are not quite pronounced. However, the Union Cabinet recently approved spending Rs 33,660 crore (\$3.63 billion) to develop 100 industrial parks in joint ventures with state governments and a state-run company. This, of course, is a long-term plan which should have been announced much earlier and the government offering financial support of up to Rs 1 crore per acre for core and social infrastructure sounds impressive. But the time taken for these parks to come about is not known though it is understood to generate about 15 lakh direct jobs after all the parks are developed.

This is not encouraging when job creation needs to be taken up with all urgency. Primarily, as Raghuram Rajan, the former RBI governor rightly pointed out recently, there is a need to expand skilling massively, marrying traditional methods of skilling with modern ones, monitoring provider needs and customer experience and looking for con-



scientists, innovators and engineers and coders are creating new technologies and inventing new ideas in different scientific and engineering dimensions, this is just a very small

stant improvement. Technological advancement must be inducted into skilling to meet global standards. There is a need to change attitudes towards working with hands, start-

ing in schools. For this the government, both at the Centre and states should prepare an action plan, announcing incentives for small and cottage industries as well as the service sector where there would be considerable job creation.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that most political parties are still not according adequate priority to the urgent challenge of job creation. Prolonged unemployment and underemployment—particularly among the youth—carry within them the seeds of deep social unrest. Such unrest may not always be immediately visible, but its gradual accumulation can eventually trigger a situation that becomes difficult to manage or contain. Ignoring this reality risks

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Through the day,
as I travelled
across various
constituencies of
West Bengal, I
could sense the
yearning of the
people for good
governance, peace,
security and an
atmosphere where
Bengal's great
culture thrives and
all these WILL BE
ENSURED by
@BJP4Bengal**

**~ Dr. Himanta
Biswa Sarma,
Assam CM**



not only economic stagnation but also a serious strain on social stability and public trust.

Bhagwat flags 'divisive forces', calls for unity and cultural awareness at Tripura event

AGARTALA

Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday warned against attempts to foment internal discord in India, asserting that "selfish powers" were seeking to exploit differences within the country even as he underscored the need to preserve unity amid diversity.

Addressing a religious gathering at Mohanpur in West Tripura district, the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh said global forces wary of India's rise were encouraging divisions. "All the selfish powers of the world know that if Bharat Varsha rises, their dominance will be challenged. This is why these powers are trying hard to create internal conflicts in the country," he said.

Framing India's diversity as a



source of strength rather than friction, Bhagwat pointed to the country's long history of plural traditions. "Our linguistic traditions, food habits, beliefs,

and worship of different deities have always been diverse. This diversity is the celebration of our unity," he said, cautioning that attempts were being made to pit communities against each other.

Calling for greater societal awareness, he urged people to remain rooted in cultural values. "It is time to make society conscious of our ancient wisdom and remind ourselves that despite diversity, we remain united," he said.

On language, Bhagwat described the evolution and expansion of linguistic identities as a natural process. He noted that several dialects of Hindi had, over time, developed into distinct languages, adding that such changes should not be viewed with concern.

He also stressed the importance of resilience and courage in public life. "We have to be fearless. Society must be

prepared to walk the path of truth and face all circumstances," he said.

Turning to education, Bhagwat argued against reducing knowledge to economic utility. "Knowledge cannot be equated with earning money. Education that is limited to survival is incomplete," he said, advocating a broader understanding of learning that includes self-realisation and a deeper engagement with the world.

Reflecting on traditional institutions, he said temples historically functioned as centres of social and economic life, facilitating trade, education and community welfare. He also acknowledged the role of religious organisations in social service.

On philosophical themes, Bhagwat spoke of interconnectedness, suggesting that consciousness ex-

tends beyond individual boundaries. "Everything is interconnected... consciousness is not local but universal," he said, adding that such ideas continue to be explored in modern science.

He further emphasised the need to balance strength with spiritual grounding. "Shakti without Bhakti can lead to disorder. Strength must be accompanied by devotion," he said. Bhagwat was in Tripura to attend the inauguration of the Devi Chinmayi Soundarya Temple, an event organised by the Chinmaya Seva Trust. The programme coincided with Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti, with priests from Nepal conducting rituals including the Prana Pratishtha and Kumbha Abhishekam ceremonies.

Man run over in Digboi sparks violent protests; vehicles torched, clashes reported on NH-38

MARGHERITA

Tension flared in Assam's Digboi town on Tuesday after the alleged murder of a man triggered widespread protests, with angry residents blocking a key highway, torching vehicles, and clashing with police.

The unrest followed the death of Akash Tiwari at Pawai under Digboi Police Station limits. Police suspect he was deliberately run over by a truck, an incident that quickly escalated into a major law-and-order situation across the area.

Alleged murder sparks outrage

According to preliminary findings, the incident stemmed from an earlier altercation involving multiple individuals. Tiwari was reportedly attacked while unloading goods from a vehicle before the situation turned fatal.

Police said one of the accused allegedly rammed a truck into Tiwari multiple times, leading to his death. The accused later surrendered before police at Margherita and was subsequently taken into custody by authorities under Digboi jurisdiction.

Highway blockade, vehicles set ablaze

News of the killing spread rapidly, prompting hundreds of locals to pour onto National Highway-38, demanding swift and stringent action against those responsible. Protesters blocked traffic along the busy stretch, bringing movement to a standstill.

As tensions escalated, at least two vehicles were set on fire by the mob, sending thick plumes of smoke into the air. Eyewitnesses described chaotic scenes, with demonstrators raising slogans and expressing anger over what they alleged to be a brutal and deliberate killing.

Border Talks on Hold: Meghalaya Waits for Post-Poll Assam Government to Restart Negotiations

SHILLONG

The next round of boundary negotiations between Meghalaya and Assam will resume only after a new government is formed in the neighbouring state, Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar said on Tuesday, signalling a temporary pause in efforts to resolve the long-standing inter-state dispute.

Speaking to reporters, Dhar underlined that while dialogue between the two states remains ongoing in principle, the immediate continuation of talks depends on administrative clarity in Assam following its recently concluded Assembly elections.

"Dialogue with the counterpart is a continuous process. Let us wait till the new government is formed in Assam, and we will continue the discussion. That is very clear," he said.

Dhar pointed out that uncertainty over leadership on Assam's side has stalled further engagement. The constitution of regional committees-key to carrying

forward negotiations-will only be possible once the new government assumes office.

"As of now, we don't know who will be the chairman from their side as the new government is yet to be formed," he added.

Assam voted for its 126-member Legislative Assembly on April 9, with results scheduled to be declared on May 4. Officials indicated that structured talks are unlikely to resume until the new dispensation finalises its negotiation team and administrative framework.

On whether the decades-old border dispute could be resolved before the next Meghalaya Assembly elections in 2028, Dhar refrained from committing to a timeline, stressing the complexity of the issue.

"We are always trying to resolve the issue... but it is not so easy," he said. "I cannot say whether we can solve it in two years or in two months, but we will always try our best to resolve it at the earliest."

LoP Debabrata Saikia moves AHRC over Guwahati floods, flags 'systemic governance failure'

GUWAHATI

Leader of Opposition in the Assam Legislative Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, has approached the Assam Human Rights Commission seeking suo motu intervention into the recurring flood crisis in Guwahati, describing it as a "continuing violation" of fundamental rights.

In a letter addressed to AHRC chairperson Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, Saikia urged the commission to take cognisance of widespread waterlogging following recent heavy rainfall that claimed at least one life and severely disrupted normal life across the city.

"Multi-layered failure of governance"

Saikia alleged that the situation reflects a "multi-layered failure of governance," pointing to collapsing civic infrastructure, non-compliance with judicial directives, and ineffective public expenditure.

"I respectfully submit this representation seeking urgent intervention regarding the continuing and systemic human rights violations affecting residents of Guwahati," he said.

He argued that recurring urban flooding in the city should be treated as a "preventable hazard" rather than a natural inevitability, citing multiple legal provisions related to the right to life, dignity, livelihood, and education.

Highlighting recent incidents, the Opposition leader referred to cases of residents being swept away in open drains, fatalities linked to uncovered drainage systems, electrocution risks in waterlogged areas, and extensive storm damage to homes.

He also raised concerns over disruptions to education due to repeated school closures and pointed to the economic impact on daily wage earners, office-goers, and small businesses.

"Citizens continue to suffer

loss of life, livelihood and dignity," the letter stated, underlining the broader social and economic consequences of the crisis.

Questions over Silsako eviction, public spending

Saikia further criticised the outcomes of the Silsako eviction drive, noting that around 1,200 homes were demolished in the name of flood mitigation, yet effective flood control remains elusive.

He also alleged financial irregularities, citing RTI findings that indicate flood-control equipment, including super sucker machines and drainage tools, may have been procured at rates higher than prevailing market prices.

The claims, he said, raise serious questions about transparency and utilisation of public funds by the Urban Development Department.

Demand for probe, accountability In his appeal, Saikia called for a comprehensive inquiry into

drainage failures, artificial flooding, and safety hazards across Guwahati, including waterlogging on major roads and flyovers.

He urged the AHRC to:

" Seek compliance reports on orders issued by the Gauhati High Court between 2022 and 2024

" Conduct an independent audit of flood-related public expenditure

" Scrutinise procurement records under RTI findings

" Fix accountability of officials and recommend criminal or vigilance action where necessary

He also sought time-bound corrective measures with periodic compliance monitoring.

Call for immediate relief measures

Pending a final inquiry, Saikia requested urgent interim steps, including covering open drains, clearing blockages, ensuring electrical safety in waterlogged areas, and restoring normal civic life.

BJP Plans Statewide 'Mahila Akrosh' Protests in Assam, Targets Congress on Women's Representation

GUWAHATI

The Bharatiya Janata Party has announced a statewide "Mahila Akrosh" protest in Assam on April 23, stepping up its political offensive against the Indian National Congress over issues related to women's participation and empowerment.

According to a statement issued from the party's state headquarters, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan in Guwahati, the demonstration is part of a broader nationwide campaign being undertaken by the BJP.

The party has accused the Congress of obstructing measures aimed at enhancing women's political representation.

Preparations for the protest are underway across Assam, with BJP units mobilising workers at district, mandal, and booth levels. To oversee coordination, the party has assigned responsibilities to 26



leaders, including MP Bijuli Kalita Medhi, Bodoland Territorial Council executive member Rekharani Das Boro, former MP Queen Oja, and party general secretary Anup Barman.

State BJP president and Darrang-Udalguri MP Dilip Saikia reviewed the preparations during a meeting with office bearers of the Guwahati

aimed at strengthening women's representation in governance.

The BJP also accused the Congress of maintaining a pattern of opposing key policy initiatives, citing issues such as the abrogation of Article 370, the Citizenship Amendment Act, and the criminalisation of triple talaq.

The party further pointed to the current composition of Parliament, stating that of the 74 women Members of Parliament, 31 belong to the BJP while 14 are from the Congress. It argued that despite this, opposition parties continue to criticise its position on women-centric reforms.

Reiterating its stance, the BJP said it remains committed to advancing women's rights and political participation, adding that the April 23 protest would serve as a key mobilisation effort in its ongoing campaign on women's issues.

SC Upholds Acquittal in 2017 Hojai Rape-Murder Case, Flags Serious Probe Failures

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of India has acquitted the main accused in the 2017 rape and murder of a 58-year-old school headmistress in Assam's Hojai district, citing glaring lapses in the police investigation and prosecution, and underscoring the absence of reliable evidence linking the accused to the crime.

A Bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta upheld a 2022 verdict of the Gauhati High Court, which had acquitted Moinal Haque of charges of rape and murder. The apex court dismissed the Assam government's appeal challenging the High Court's findings.

In its April 16 judgment, the court observed that the arrest of Haque was "shrouded in a cloud of doubt" and found the prosecution's case riddled with inconsistencies. It noted that the case, built entirely on circumstantial evidence, failed to establish a complete and convincing chain linking the accused to the crime.

The Bench held that there was no credible proof to substantiate the allegations of rape or murder, reinforcing the principle that suspicion, however strong,

Quest!

Human saliva has a painkiller called opiorphin that's more powerful than morphine.



cannot substitute for legally admissible evidence. Significantly, the court went beyond the scope of the appeal to set aside Haque's conviction under Section 201 of the Indian Penal Code-pertaining to destruction of evidence-even though the accused had not specifically challenged that part of the verdict.

Clarifying its powers, the Bench stated that the absence of an appeal by the accused does not restrict the court's appellate jurisdiction when it comes to ensuring complete justice. It ruled that the conviction under Section 201 was untenable both in fact and in law.

Haque has been directed to be released immediately.

The case dates back to May 31, 2017, when the headmistress was allegedly raped and murdered. Her body was recovered the next day near the Kopili River in the Jamunamukh area.

Police had arrested Haque along with co-accused Salim Uddin, who allegedly confessed to following the victim, assaulting her, and disposing of the body.

A trial court in Hojai had sentenced Haque to death, while Uddin received a five-year rigorous imprisonment term for a lesser offence. However, in 2022, the Gauhati High Court acquitted both of rape and murder charges, citing lack of substantive evidence, and reduced Haque's sentence to three years for de-

struction of evidence.

The Supreme Court endorsed the High Court's reasoning, pointing to serious deficiencies in the investigation and prosecution, including the failure to produce concrete evidence of sexual assault.

The ruling also casts a spotlight on investigative shortcomings flagged earlier by then Assam Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, who had acknowledged lapses in the probe. He had noted that crucial charges under Sections 120(B) (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (common intention) of the IPC were not invoked during the investigation.

Following the High Court acquittal, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had indicated that the state would examine the judgment and consider legal recourse, eventually leading to the appeal before the apex court.

During the proceedings, Senior Additional Advocate General Chinmoy Pradip Sharma represented the state, while senior advocate PV Dinesh assisted the court as amicus curiae. Reiterating a settled principle of criminal jurisprudence, the Supreme Court emphasised that convictions must be grounded in clear, cogent, and reliable evidence. The verdict serves as a reminder that procedural lapses and weak investigation can undermine even the most serious prosecutions, with the court holding that suspicion alone-regardless of its intensity-cannot form the basis of a criminal conviction.



GUWAHATI

The All Assam Students' Union has sharply criticised the Assam government over recurring urban flooding in Guwahati, terming it a result of administrative failure and inadequate planning, and warning of continued protests if lasting solutions are not implemented.

Addressing the issue, AASU Chief Advisor Samujjal Bhattacharyya expressed concern over the city's vulnerability to even brief spells of rainfall, saying the situation reflects systemic shortcomings within government departments.

"Just one spell of heavy rainfall leads to flooding across Guwahati, putting lives at risk. There have been incidents of people being washed away. This clearly points to the failure and incapability of the government," he said.

"Protests will continue"

Bhattacharyya said the organisation's ongoing demonstrations are aimed at pushing authorities

toward long-term, sustainable solutions rather than temporary relief measures.

"Our protest is against this continued negligence. This is not the end but only the beginning. We will continue our protests until concrete and effective solutions are implemented," he asserted.

He reiterated that AASU would not scale down its agitation unless visible and meaningful action is taken to address the crisis.

Call for expert-led solutions

The student body also criticised what it described as official silence and inaction in tackling a recurring urban challenge. Bhattacharyya urged the government to adopt a consultative approach involving experts and stakeholders.

"There is an urgent need to consult scientists, urban planners, public representatives, and citizens' groups to find a permanent solution to Guwahati's flood problem," he said.

Chronic urban issue

Guwahati has long struggled with artificial flooding and waterlogging, with several localities inundated even after moderate rainfall. The issue becomes particularly acute during the monsoon, raising persistent concerns over drainage infrastructure, unchecked urbanisation, and flood management planning.

The latest remarks from AASU add to mounting public pressure on the government, as residents continue to grapple with the impact of recurring floods on daily life, safety, and urban mobility.

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Amit Shah attacks Mamata Banerjee over women's reservation bill, says "next Bengal CM will be BJP karyakarta, not 'Bhaipo'"



WEST MEDINIPUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah attacked West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, alleging that she worked to "defeat" the women's reservation bill brought by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and asserted that the BJP would form the next government in the state with a leader "born and brought up in Bengal," who would be a "BJP karyakarta" and not a "Bhaipo," referring to Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

Addressing a public meeting in Salboni, West Medinipur, Shah said, "Just now, Modi ji had brought a bill to provide 33

percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, but it is Mamata Didi who has worked to defeat this bill."

"She only wants her nephew to become the Chief Minister. She is misleading people by claiming that an outsider will be the CM of Bengal if the BJP wins," he added.

Assuring party workers and supporters, Shah said the BJP would install a local leadership if voted to power. "I assure you that the next CM of Bengal will be from the BJP, born and brought up in Bengal. Certainly, he won't be Bhaipo; he will be a karyakarta of BJP," he said.

Shah also made strong

remarks on religious and political issues. Referring to the Ram Mandir movement, he said, "In Ayodhya, where the Babri Masjid once stood, we built the Ram Mandir and chanted Jai Shri Ram."

He further alleged attempts to promote communal projects in Bengal, saying, "Mamata Didi wants her disciple Humayun Kabir to build a Babri Masjid in Bengal... we will never allow a Babri Masjid to be built in Bengal."

Raising concerns over women's safety, Shah accused the state government of failing to protect women. "How many atrocities have been committed here against sisters, women, and mothers. Mamata Didi says that after 7 PM, mothers and sisters should not step out of their homes," he said.

He promised improved security under a BJP government. "Even if a little girl goes out on a scooter at 1 AM, no thug will have the courage to raise an eye. The BJP will ensure the safety of women here," Shah said.

Calling the election a decisive political battle, Shah said it was not about individual leadership ambitions but about removing alleged illegal infiltration in the state.

"This election is not about making someone an MLA or a BJP worker the Chief Minister. It is about liberating Bengal from infiltrators," he said, adding that voters should support the BJP to bring change in the state.

Polling for the 2026 West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections will be held in two phases on April 23 and 29, with counting of votes on May 4.

Kharge accuses Modi of 'terrorising' Opposition, alleges misuse of central agencies; BJP hits back



NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge intensified his criticism of Narendra Modi, accusing the Prime Minister of "terrorising" political parties and the public through the alleged misuse of government machinery and central investigative agencies.

Speaking at a press conference in Chennai alongside KC Venugopal, the Congress president initially used the word "terrorist" to refer to PM Modi, while attacking the AIADMK's alliance with the BJP. He later clarified that he did not intend to use the term literally, stating instead that the Prime Minister was "terrorising" the democratic fabric of the country. "He is terrorising people and

political parties. I never said he is a terrorist in the literal sense," Kharge said, adding that the government was misusing its authority to target opposition parties.

Kharge also alleged that institutions such as the Election Commission were functioning as an "extension of the BJP office." He also accused the prime minister of violating the Model Code of Conduct in the final phase of the election campaign through his address to the nation on April 18.

He further claimed that central agencies, including the CBI, ED and the Income Tax Department, were being used to intimidate political opponents.

Taking offence at Kharge's remarks on PM Modi, the BJP called it a "deliberate conspiracy"

by the Congress.

Reacting to Kharge's statement, BJP leader Sambit Patra said, "This is not only condemnable but also reflects the Congress party's mindset. This is no slip of tongue. Even if he is offering any explanation, remember this is a deliberate conspiracy by the Congress party... Every day, Rahul Gandhi uses abusive language against the Prime Minister in his speeches, and today, at Rahul's behest, Mallikarjun Kharge called the Prime Minister a terrorist."

"The Congress party should remember that whenever the Congress party has abused the Prime Minister, the people of India have punished it. This time too, the people of India will give a reply," he added.

Meanwhile, Congress leader KC Venugopal defended the party president and said the BJP is attempting to "make a non-issue an issue."

"They (BJP) will try to make a non-issue become an issue... Prime Minister Modi is trying to terrorise people by using ED and the CBI. That's what Mallikarjun Kharge said. You also know all these camera tricks. They are using only that particular clip... And Kharge himself clarified that he does not call PM Modi a 'terrorist'... then why BJP targeting him, that's an unwanted thing," Venugopal said.

Speaking during the last leg of election campaigns in Tamil Nadu, Kharge also targeted the BJP over the now-rejected Constitution Amendment Bill linked to delimitation and implementation of women's reservation in Parliament.

He argued that the government was misleading the public, noting that the Women's Reservation Bill had already been passed unanimously in 2023.

"If the government is sincere, it can implement 33 per cent reservation for women within the existing 543 Lok Sabha seats. Why delay it?" he asked.

He also raised concerns over the proposed delimitation exercise, warning that it could disadvantage southern and other progressive states that have successfully controlled population growth. According to Kharge, the move could undermine their democratic representation.

Reaffirming the strength of the DMK-Congress alliance, Kharge and Venugopal dismissed speculation of a rift between Rahul Gandhi and M. K. Stalin, describing their relationship as close and cooperative.

Kharge reiterated key promises made by the alliance for Tamil Nadu, including monthly financial assistance for women and senior citizens, enhanced support for food security, and a commitment to fill all government vacancies within 300 days.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump extends ceasefire, says giving Iran time to negotiate; Hormuz blockade to continue

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Tuesday extended the US ceasefire with Iran to allow more time for peace talks, as Tehran's deadline to end the pause came and went without incident.

Trump indefinitely pushed back the end of the two week truce, crediting a request from mediator Pakistan and stressing the need to give Iran's "fractured" leadership time to form a proposal. But he said the US blockade of Iran's ports - a sticking point for Tehran - would continue.

Trump had previously indicated he would not extend the ceasefire and had warned of a resumption of bombing when it expired.

"I have...directed our Military to continue the Blockade and, in all other respects, remain ready and able, and will therefore extend the Ceasefire until such time as their (Iran's) proposal is submitted," Trump wrote on social media.

Ahead of Trump's eleventh-hour intervention, it had been unclear exactly when the original ceasefire would expire, with Pakistan indicating it would end at 2350 GMT Tuesday.

This moment came and went with no reports of new military activity by Iran, which had said the ceasefire would end at 0000 GMT. Iran made no immediate public comment in response to Trump's announcement.

The fate of peace talks hosted by Pakistan was hanging in the balance following Trump's announcement.

A White House official confirmed that Vice President JD Vance would not travel to Pakistan for talks Tuesday as previously planned, pending the submission of an Iranian proposal.

"Any further updates on in-person meetings will be announced by the White House," the official said.

In Islamabad, heavily armed police



and soldiers on Tuesday secured the city's government quarter, which was virtually shut down even as no Iranian-US meeting was fixed.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Trump for extending the ceasefire. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres also welcomed it.

As the original ceasefire deadline drew in, Iran preemptively threatened to attack its Gulf neighbors' oil production facilities if their territory was used to attack it once the ceasefire expired. "The southern neighbors should know that if their geography and facilities are used in the service of the enemies to attack the Iranian nation, they should bid farewell to oil production in the Middle East," the

commander of the Guards' aerospace force, Majid Mousavi, was quoted by Fars news agency as saying.

Since the first round of talks in Islamabad, Trump has announced a blockade of Iranian ports, while Tehran has closed the Strait of Hormuz again. The US Defense Department said Tuesday that its forces intercepted and boarded a "stateless sanctioned" vessel as part of Washington's efforts against networks that provide support to Iran.

AFP has identified the vessel as one affiliated with Iranian activity. Both sides have accused the other of ceasefire breaches.

Residents in the Iranian capital who spoke to Paris-based AFP journal-

ists say life has only worsened despite the truce, squeezed by the government and the war's impact.

"This cursed ceasefire has broken us. There is no light at the end of the tunnel," said Saghar, 39. "The situation is terrible. I don't know anyone around me who is doing well."

Experts said Iran's noncommittal public stance was an attempt to put pressure on Washington.

"The current standoff between the United States and Iran is no longer a clash of capabilities but rather a struggle of political endurance and bargaining leverage," Daniel Byman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote in a commentary.

Despite the ongoing uncertainty, stocks rose on Tuesday amid lingering hopes for a deal to end the conflict.

On another front in the war, Israel and Lebanon, which have no diplomatic relations, will hold fresh talks in Washington on Thursday, a State Department official told.

A separate 10-day ceasefire was agreed between the two nations on Friday and included Hezbollah, whose rocket fire in support of Iran drew Lebanon into the wider Middle East conflict. Sporadic violence has continued and Israel's military warned civilians against returning to dozens of villages in southern Lebanon. On Tuesday, the Israeli army said the "Hezbollah terrorist organization launched several rockets" at its troops in Lebanon, adding it had "struck the launcher from which the rockets were launched."

Israeli attacks on Lebanon have killed at least 2,454 people since the start of the war, a Lebanese government body said in its latest toll.

Hezbollah said it launched an attack on northern Israel on Tuesday in retaliation for what it said were Israeli violations of the ceasefire, the first such claim since the truce began.

Trump accuses Iran of violating ceasefire 'numerous times' as peace talks set to resume in Pakistan



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday accused Iran of violating a fragile ceasefire with the US "numerous times," a day before the agreement is set to expire and both countries are deliberating over a possible new round of peace negotiations.

"Iran has violated the ceasefire numerous times!" Trump wrote in a post on his Truth Social platform.

According to reports, the US and Iran have signalled that they will hold a new round of ceasefire talks in Islamabad.

Neither the US nor Iran has publicly confirmed the timing of the talks, with Iranian state television denying any official was already in Pakistan's capital.

Pakistan-led mediators received confirmation that the top negotiators, US Vice President JD Vance and Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, will arrive in Islamabad early Wednesday to lead their teams in the talks, the officials said, according to a report by The Associated Press.

President Donald Trump

listens to speeches before signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House, Saturday, April 18, 2026, in Washington.

Trump also said that the US forces intercepted a ship carrying a "gift" to Iran from China as Tehran tries to restock its military during a ceasefire period.

US had earlier seized an Iranian cargo ship in the Gulf, which was reportedly carrying chemical materials used to make missiles, which further heightened tensions in the region.

The ship had "a gift from China", which "wasn't very nice," Trump told CNBC.

"I was a little surprised," he added, saying he thought he had an "understanding" with China's President Xi Jinping.

A week ago, Trump announced that Xi had assured him there would be no Chinese weapons deliveries to Iran, a close partner with Beijing for years. Beijing had rejected claims that it was connected to the Iranian cargo ship.

Earlier in the day, Trump claimed that the US was in a strong negotiation position.

"We're going to end up with

a great deal. I think they have no choice... We're in a very, very strong negotiating position." Trump told broadcaster CNBC.

President Donald Trump listens to speeches before signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House, Saturday, April 18, 2026, in Washington.

"Strangled": Pakistan faces economic imperative in Iran war peace push

Both sides remain dug in rhetorically, with US President Donald Trump warning that "lots of bombs" will "start going off" if there's no agreement before the ceasefire deadline, and Iran's chief negotiator saying that Tehran has "new cards on the battlefield" that haven't yet been revealed.

White House officials have said that Vance would lead the American delegation, but Iran hasn't said who it might send, and Iranian state television on Tuesday broadcast a message saying that "no delegation from Iran has visited Islamabad ... so far."

The ceasefire is likely to be extended if talks resume, even as Trump earlier said he may not extend it.

Women's Reservation Bill: Opposition's Stand and Efforts



Last Friday was historic in many ways. First, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the central government faced its first major defeat in Parliament since coming to power in 2014. Second, for the first time since 2011, a Constitutional Amendment Bill failed in the Lok Sabha. The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, could not secure the required majority and fell short by 54 votes.

The aim of this bill was to provide 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state legislative assemblies before the 2029 elections. However, it failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority needed for a constitutional amendment. The bill received 298 votes in favor and 230 against, while 352 votes were required for passage.

A key reason for its failure was that it was linked to the Delimitation Bill, 2026, which proposed redrawing constituencies based on the 2016 census. The government proposed increasing Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850 and a 50% increase in seats in state assemblies. However, due to lack of trust and disagreements between the government and opposition parties, consensus could not be reached, and the delimitation proposal had to be withdrawn.

Prime Minister Modi accused the opposition of being anti-women and even blamed them for female foeticide. The bill was introduced at a time when assembly elections were ongoing in five states, which further deepened mistrust and reduced chances of dialogue between the government and opposition. The situation deteriorated to the point where traditional methods of resolving disputes broke down.

The BJP ensured that the debate remained focused on two issues: granting 33% reservation to women and ensuring fair representation based on population. It portrayed the opposition as regressive and obstructive, accusing them of blocking pro-people policies and labeling them anti-women.

However, regional parties often prioritize their own political calculations over national reforms. Still, the government cannot escape responsibility, as it failed to pass its own bill, showing the limits of its power. Any major reform requires consultation with all stakeholders.

ers, especially when institutional trust is under question.

It must be remembered that numbers in Parliament do not replace trust. For the opposition, this moment reinforces that unity and collective voice can make them effective. They argued that the bill was rushed and questioned the government's shift in stance since 2023. Concerns were also raised about implementing

weaken their position.

Historically, delimitation was frozen in 1976 and again in 2001 due to concerns from southern states that it would favor northern states and increase regional imbalance. Now, the 2027 census could revive these concerns.

Despite the bill's defeat, the commitment to women's reservation remains. Parliament had already shown consensus in 2023

on this issue. The key is that political parties should avoid divisive issues like north vs south or caste politics and focus on unity.

The delimitation process must be institutionalized with fairness, requiring generosity, trust, and patience from all parties. The Lok Sabha has made its decision, but the fight for women's rights and political representation is not over. The government should learn from this defeat and change its approach. Governance is not just about passing laws but also about listening to all sides. Concerns about delimitation and its impact on political representation need careful handling.

In conclusion, if the implementation of women's reservation continues to be delayed, questions may arise about the BJP's credibility. The opposition may attack the government over delays, though its own past ambiguity weakens its position. Women constitute nearly 50% of the population, and the demand for reservation has long been a major political issue. Women's reservation is a powerful idea and should be implemented.



women's reservation based on ongoing census data, which includes caste enumeration.

Additionally, doubts were expressed about the institutional framework of delimitation, with fears that it could disturb the delicate balance between representation and federal fairness, potentially creating conflicts among states.

The INDIA alliance made its position clear: increase Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850 through the amendment, but separate the implementation of women's reservation from the next census. Since the census process is ongoing and may take years to complete, the reservation cannot be implemented before 2024.

The opposition also noted that the bill aims to implement 33% reservation for women only from 2029, based on the 2011 census, raising concerns about regional inequality and caste dynamics.

However, the opposition cannot celebrate this victory for long. Defeating the government on a bill is different from winning the national narrative. It must clearly explain to the public why it opposed the bill and what alternative it proposes, as its political future depends on this.

Regional leaders, especially those facing state elections, must avoid falling into the trap of the women's reservation debate and instead focus on issues like seat redistribution, which could

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