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PERSPECTIVE

"If people cannot write well, they cannot think well, and if they cannot think well, others will do their thinking for them."
- George Orwell

Drunken Brawl Led to Ethnic Clashes Between Kuki and Tangkhul Nagas: Former Assam Rifles DG

IMPHAL
Fresh tensions in Manipur, particularly in Ukhrul district, may have been triggered by what initially began as a drunken brawl that later took on an ethnic dimension, according to former Assam Rifles Director General Pradeep Chandran Nair.

Drunken Brawl Led to Ethnic Clashes Between Kuki and Tangkhul Nagas Former Assam Rifles DG Security personnel patrol an area in Manipur's Ukhrul district as houses burn during the initial stage of the conflict in Litan.

In an interview with The Hindu, Nair said the confrontation between Tangkhul Naga and Kuki communities did not originally start as an organised ethnic conflict.

"What began as a drunken brawl, from what I gathered, was typically not a fight between two communities. It was just a drunken brawl which thereafter got an ethnic flavour," he said.

He explained that the altercation later escalated into broader clashes, with members of one community attacking the other, eventually leading to a series of violent incidents including killings and road blockades. Nair noted that road blockades are not new in Manipur and have frequently occurred over the years during periods of tension.

The fresh violence has emerged after a period of relative calm in the state, particularly during the time President's Rule was in place, before the restoration of an elected government earlier this year.

According to reports, at least 11 people have been killed since April 7 in incidents reported from Bishnupur district, a Meitei-majority area, and Ukhrul district, where tensions between Tangkhul Nagas and Kukis have surfaced.

WHO SAID WHAT



Parents must be free to buy uniforms, books, and stationery from any shop/vendor of their choice. There should be no coercion, no captive buying, and no single-vendor diktat.
- Rekha Gupta, CM, Delhi.

After 25 Days, Families Claim Bodies of Infants Killed in Bishnupur Blast



IMPHAL

After nearly a month of protests and negotiations, families on Saturday claimed the bodies of two infants killed in a suspected mortar blast in Bishnupur, bringing a deeply emotional chapter to a close amid continuing tensions in the state.

Relatives gathered at the mortuary of the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Imphal in the morning to take custody of the remains. The last rites are expected

to be performed later in the day. Scenes of grief unfolded at the mortuary premises as family members broke down while receiving the bodies, with women consoling one another in visible distress.

The bodies had remained unclaimed for 25 days as families, along with Joint Action Committees (JACs), held prolonged discussions with the state government, demanding justice, accountability, and stronger security measures.

The April 7 blast in Bishnupur

claimed the lives of the two infants and left their mother injured, sparking widespread outrage across Manipur.

Tensions escalated in the aftermath, with three protesters killed near a CRPF camp when security forces opened fire to disperse a crowd, further aggravating the volatile situation. The incident triggered protests, road blockades, curfews, and suspension of internet services in several parts of the state.

Given the seriousness of the case, the investigation was handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). State Home Minister K. Govindas said five persons have been arrested so far, while combing operations continue.

Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh had repeatedly appealed to the families and JACs to accept the bodies and cooperate in restoring normalcy.

The incident has intensified concerns over safety and law and order in the region, highlighting the continuing fragility of the situation in Manipur.

CoTU Calls May 3 'Separation Day', Announces NH-2 Shutdown in Manipur

GUWAHATI

The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) has announced that it will observe May 3 as 'Separation Day' in Kangpokpi district, alongside a 12-hour shutdown and blockade along National Highway 2, amid continuing ethnic tensions in the state.

The organisation said the day would be observed as a tribute to those who lost their lives defending their land and communities during the ongoing conflict in Manipur. As part of the programme, CoTU has called for a complete shutdown from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, affecting business establishments, educational institutions, private organisations, and government offices.

Exemptions have been granted for medical emergencies and funeral processions.

CoTU also urged members of the

Kuki-Zo community to suspend travel, farming, and routine activities for the day as part of a collective observance.

A central event is scheduled at 12 noon at the Martyrs' Cemetery in Phajang, where leaders from the Kuki-Zo Council, Kuki Inpi Manipur, Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills, along with church leaders, student organisations, women's groups, and other civil society representatives are expected to participate.

The organisation appealed for public cooperation and solidarity in observing the day. The announcement comes against the backdrop of the protracted ethnic conflict in Manipur since 2023, involving clashes between Kuki-Zo and Meitei groups, as well as more recent tensions with sections of the Tangkhul Naga community. The unrest has led to widespread displacement, periodic violence, and continuing political uncertainty in the state.



Nagaland Deputy CM Y Patton Calls for Unity to Expedite Naga Political Solution



DIMAPUR

Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton on Friday urged Naga political groups, tribal bodies and civil society organisations to come together to facilitate an early resolution of the long-pending Naga political issue.

Addressing the Moatsü Festival at Chuchuyimlang village in Mokochung district, Patton made a strong appeal for unity among stakeholders, particularly calling on Naga political groups to engage collectively with the Government of India to resolve the issue.

"I specifically urge the Naga political groups to unite and resolve the issue with the Government of India," he said, underscoring the urgency of a negotiated settlement.

Highlighting the political context, Patton noted that the present "opinionless government" in Nagaland was formed with the primary objective of expediting a solution to the decades-old issue.

He also appealed to church leaders to play a proactive role in promoting peaceful democratic practices, urging them to sensitise citizens against electoral violence and advocate for "clean elections".

During his address, Patton paid tribute to prominent Ao Naga figures, including P Shilu Ao, Talimeren Ao, and SC Jamir, acknowledging their contributions to Naga society across politics, sports, and community life.

The Moatsü festival at Chuchuyimlang was marked by vibrant cultural celebrations, bringing together participants from 19 villages across Mon, Tuensang, and Longleng districts. The event showcased traditional dances, folk songs, and communal feasting, reflecting a strong spirit of unity and cultural pride.

Traditionally observed by the Ao Naga community to invoke blessings for a bountiful harvest, this year's festival also served as a platform to reinforce calls for solidarity and collective action on the Naga political front.

Former Manipur Minister AS Arthur Passes Away at 99

IMPHAL

Veteran politician from Ukhrul district, Shri AS Arthur, former Minister of General Administration Department (GAD) and Forest, passed away at the age of 99 in New Delhi, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand said on Friday. His demise has been described as a major loss to Manipur's political landscape.

In a condolence message, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand expressed deep sorrow over the passing of the senior leader and noted that Arthur had served the people with dedication during his political career. Shri Arthur was elected for two terms and remained an active and respected political figure during the 1980s and 1990s. He was widely known for his commitment to public service and his efforts towards the welfare, progress, and development of the state. The Chief Minister said Arthur's contributions to Manipur's political and administrative development would be remembered with deep respect and gratitude. Yumnam Khemchand also extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members, relatives, friends, and well-wishers, praying for strength and solace for them during the difficult time.

Arthur's passing marks the end of an era for many who witnessed his long-standing service and leadership in the state's political sphere.



'Victory for Personal Liberty': Pawan Khera Hails Supreme Court Bail, Alleges Political Vendetta



NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Pawan Khera on Saturday described the grant of anticipatory bail by the Supreme Court of India in a case registered in Assam as a "victory for personal liberty" and constitutional values, while alleging misuse of state machinery for political vendetta.

In a statement issued after securing relief, Khera thanked his legal counsel, led by Abhishek Manu Singhvi, and expressed gratitude to senior Congress leaders including Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, K. C. Venugopal, and Jairam Ja-

mesh for their support during the legal proceedings.

The case relates to remarks made by Khera alleging that Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, spouse of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, held multiple passports. Following the statements, Assam Police registered an FIR against Khera on charges including forgery and defamation.

While granting anticipatory bail, the apex court observed that the allegations and counter-allegations appeared, at a prima facie level, to be influenced by political rivalry. The court also took exception to certain observations made earlier by the Gauhati High Court, terming them "erroneous" and not based on a proper assessment of the material on record.

The court directed Khera to cooperate with the ongoing investigation, refrain from influencing witnesses or tampering with evidence, and not leave the country without prior permission from the competent authority.

Reacting to the development, Khera said the order was "not only a personal victory and a source of relief," but also a reaffirmation that "in a constitutional democracy, personal liberty cannot be sacrificed for political vendetta." He concluded his remarks with the phrase, "Satyameva Jayate."

India Achieves First Captive Breeding of Assamese Snakehead, Boosting Ornamental Fisheries

GUWAHATI

In a major breakthrough for aquaculture and biodiversity conservation, scientists at the ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute have successfully achieved India's first captive breeding and larval rearing of Channa stewartii, a rare ornamental species native to the upper Brahmaputra basin.

The milestone was recorded in April 2026 at the institute's Guwahati Regional Centre and is being viewed as a crucial step towards reducing dependence on wild-caught stocks while promoting sustainable ornamental fish trade.

Commonly known as the Assamese snakehead, the species is highly valued in the ornamental fish market for its distinctive iridescent blue fins and visual appeal. Prices typically range between Rs 600 and Rs 1,200 per pair. Until now, the absence of a standardised breeding protocol meant traders relied heavily on wild populations, raising concerns about overexploitation in fragile hill-stream ecosystems across



Northeast India.

The breakthrough was achieved under the All India Network Project on Ornamental Fish Breeding and Culture, launched in

April 2024. Researchers conditioned nearly 30 wild brooders in a semi-natural setup using sand substrates, bamboo structures, and earthen shelters to replicate natural

spawning conditions.

A mature pair was later transferred to a fibre-reinforced plastic tank, where it spawned naturally without hormonal induction. The pair produced between 1,578 and 2,769 eggs, with a hatching success rate of around 73 per cent. The larvae, measuring approximately 8.4 mm, demonstrated healthy growth and active swimming behaviour under controlled conditions.

Institute Director Pradip Dey described the achievement as a "major step towards sustainable ornamental fisheries," highlighting its potential to support aquaculture-based entrepreneurship while easing ecological pressure on wild stocks.

He also emphasised the need to scale up hatchery production under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana and introduce certification systems for captive-bred ornamental fish. Experts said the development not only strengthens conservation efforts but also opens new livelihood opportunities, linking scientific innovation with sustainable economic growth in the region.

CBI to Hold May 5 Meet with Arunachal Officials on SC-Mandated Probe into Contract Allocation Irregularities

GUWAHAT

The Central Bureau of Investigation is set to hold a coordination meeting with senior officials of the Arunachal Pradesh government on May 5 as part of a Supreme Court of India-directed preliminary inquiry into alleged irregularities in the allocation of government contracts.

According to an official notice issued by the state's Public Works Department (PWD), it will take place at the Civil Secretariat in Itanagar at 4 pm, bringing together CBI and nodal officers from multiple departments.

The meeting is being convened in connection with the case titled Save Mon Region Federation vs State of Arunachal Pradesh & Others, under which the apex court ordered a preliminary probe into the allegations.

Senior officers, including chief engineers from key de-

partments such as PWD, Public Health Engineering, Urban Development, Water Resources, Rural Works, Hydropower, and Power, have been directed to attend the session.

Officials have also been instructed to furnish detailed information sought by the CBI on several firms, including M/S Brand Eagles, M/S R D Constructions, M/S Alliances Traders, M/S Frontiers Associates, M/S Goleng Construction, M/S Global Royal Constructions, and M/S Khandu Construction. The data must be submitted in the format prescribed by the investigating agency.

The proposed inquiry follows directions from the Supreme Court to examine allegations of irregularities in contract work allocations in the state. The preliminary probe is expected to scrutinize relevant records and assess the veracity of the claims as part of the court-mandated process.



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ALL EYES ON BENGAL



Despite the majority of pollsters clearly suggesting a clear victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party in West Bengal, still most of the media houses have preferred to play safe, suggesting just “an edge” for the saffron party. Ground reports indicate that there is a mood for change even in the strongholds of the ruling Trinamool Congress that has been in power for 15 uninterrupted years. So much so Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is faced with a tough challenge in her own constituency of Bhabanipur.

Uninterrupted power and that too without any checks and curbs had obviously given rise to too much of hubris that was reflected the worst by its leaders like Derek O'Brien, who scornfully addresses Prime Minister Narendra Modi as “Narendra”, the trio of Mahua Moitra, Sagarika Ghose and Sayoni Ghosh along with Kalyan Banerjee and uncouth spokesperson Riju Dutta, all of whom still believe that the TMC is invincible. Nobody is.

While the actual results will be out on May 4, the resentment and anger against the government, particularly the TMC cadres, was visible everywhere. So much so, leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had to say that there was no democracy in Bengal but a reign of terror of the TMC. This was after one of the Congress workers was hacked to death allegedly by the TMC goons. Otherwise, the Congress, particularly Gandhi, would avoid direct criticism of the TMC and Mamata Banerjee.

The Opposition criticism against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar notwithstanding, he deserves full applause for ensuring a “bloodless” election. After a long time, there was no death in West Bengal during the elections. In the 2021 assembly elections, 60 people had lost their lives. This was possible only after the Election Commission of India deployed 2,400 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces in the state with a full mandate that there has to be “zero tolerance” to violence or intimidation of Opposition voters. No wonder, the TMC's trio of crybabies—Mahua, Sagarika and Sayoni—were crying wolf and beating their foreheads.

When the famous encounter specialist, Ludhiana-born Uttar Pradesh IPS officer, Ajaypal Sharma, sounded a clear and categorical warning to one of the ruling party candidates, the entire ecosystem got jittery. Reaction to his no-nonsense message was expected. Intimidation of the Opposition supporters and voters at the hands of the ruling party workers and leaders had become normal in Bengal during the last few successive elections.

You don't and you can't handle such elements with kid gloves. They are to be dealt with like Sharma did. And this delivered the desired results. There was no fear anywhere in Bengal. The element of fear and intimidation gave an edge to the ruling party and that edge had been taken care of with heavy security arrangements.

Till 2026, it seemed to be free-for-all during the elections. That the elections are conducted by the Election Commission of India and the entire administration is under its direct control does not make much difference since the officials are obviously locals with strong preferences and prejudices.

Till now, there was no screening of partial officials who would favour the ruling party. This time the Election Commission did thorough screening and filtration. Most of the suspect officials were replaced, including the director general of police, chief secretary and commissioner of police Kolkata.

During the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), about 92 lakh suspect names were deleted from the electoral rolls. It is possible that in such a massive exercise, there may have been some genuine voters as well whose names might have been removed, but those are just exceptions. Imagine, even if 10 per cent of the 92 lakh suspect voters who were deleted were genuine, what would be the situation on ground. They would have shaken entire Bengal.

These were obviously those voters who did not exist for multiple reasons. Making fake votes is not unusual. This is a common practice prevailing across the country. Good that the Election Commission of India has started thorough screening and filtration. No matter how much the Opposition may cry that “92 lakh voters were disenfranchised”, this was the need of the hour. It is not difficult to gauge who got these names on the electoral rolls. One important thing to mention is that about 62 lakh of these voters were Hindus and the remaining 30 lakh were Muslims. It is wrong to attribute any communal motives to the deletions.

Lawlessness was one of the most important factors that played up during the elections. Added to that was a parallel administration run by the TMC cadres, which went by its own rules of the game. This was something akin to what was done by the TMC's predecessors, the CPM, who had become a law unto themselves. The RG Kar rape and murder case was the last proverbial straw for TMC as people felt that the TMC government failed to do justice with the victim. As if that was not enough, the way TMC cadres booted and intimidated the victim's mother, who contested on a BJP ticket, further cleared all doubts as to which side the TMC stood.

Despite the media trying to remain discreet and guarded in presenting the exit poll findings and projections, there are strong indications that winds of change have already started blowing in Bengal.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The memories of a man in his old age, are the deeds of a man in his prime.

- Roger Waters

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF WEST ASIAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY



ASAD MIRZA

The old framework of rigid alliances in West Asia is giving way to overlapping security partnerships, strategic hedging, internal military modernization, and new calculations shaped as much by technology and economics as by traditional geopolitics.

West Asia's defence and security architecture is undergoing one of its most profound transformations in decades. What was once defined by fixed rivalries — Arab versus Persian, state versus non-state actors, US security guarantees versus Iranian deterrence — is now evolving into a far more fluid and contested order.

At the centre of this transformation lies a hard lesson reinforced by the recent Iran-US+Israel confrontation: security in West Asia can no longer be outsourced. That realisation is driving almost every major regional power, from Saudi Arabia to Qatar, from the UAE to Jordan, to rethink deterrence, military preparedness and diplomatic balancing.

Saudi Arabia has emerged as a pivotal actor in this changing landscape. Riyadh's defence strategy is increasingly defined by dual-track thinking — strengthening military capabilities while pursuing selective de-escalation. On one hand, the kingdom continues to invest heavily in missile defence, indigenous defence production and strategic partnerships beyond its traditional US dependence. On the other, it has shown a pragmatic willingness to engage rivals, including cautious diplomatic channels with Iran. This reflects a shift from confrontation toward managed competition.

The UAE, meanwhile, has moved even further toward a model of strategic autonomy. Abu Dhabi is no longer content to be viewed simply as part of a Gulf collective security system. It is building itself as an independent defence power, combining advanced military procurement, cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence integration and diversified strategic partnerships. Its security calculations are increasingly global, extending from the Red Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean and into the Indo-Pacific. Yet, its exposure during recent regional escalation has also underscored the vulnerability even sophisticated states face in an era where energy infrastructure, ports and digital systems have become legitimate targets.

Qatar's position reflects another emerging trend — small-state resilience through strategic relevance. Anchored by diplomacy, energy leverage and its hosting of major military facilities, Qatar continues to pursue a balancing strategy that avoids rigid bloc politics while preserving strong security partnerships. This balancing approach is becoming increasingly common across the Gulf.

Oman remains unique. Long known as a mediator, Muscat's value in the evolving security order lies precisely in its neutrality. In an increasingly polarised region, neutral diplomatic actors have become strategic assets. Oman's role in mediation, maritime stability and quiet diplomacy gives it disproportionate importance relative to its size.

Jordan, meanwhile, is becoming a frontline buffer state in a more dangerous environment. Pressured by instability in Syria, uncertainty along the Israeli frontier, and risks from

regional spillovers, Amman's security doctrine is becoming increasingly defensive. It is investing in border security, intelligence coordination and air defence, while also navigating difficult domestic economic and political pressures.

Iran, however, remains central to the region's security recalibration. Despite military pressure, sanctions and internal strains, Tehran has demonstrated that it retains substantial capacity for strategic disruption — whether through missile forces, maritime leverage, proxy networks or cyber tools. Yet, Iran itself is changing. Its security thinking is increasingly shaped by the recognition that traditional proxy structures face new limits, particularly in Syria and Lebanon.

That shift is visible in Lebanon, where Hezbollah remains a major actor but operates under growing strain. Israeli pressure, domestic Lebanese fragility and changing regional calculations have all complicated Hezbollah's traditional deterrence model. Lebanon is increasingly not just a front in regional confrontation but a reflection of a larger transition in which armed non-state actors face mounting pressures from both military and political realities.

Syria presents perhaps the starkest example of how fragmented theatres are reshaping regional security. Rather than returning to centralised order, Syria has become a space of overlapping influence — involving regional powers, militias, residual extremist threats and competing external interests. In this fragmented environment, security is increasingly about managing instability rather than resolving it.

One of the most important changes across West Asia is the move away from reliance on a single external guarantor. While the United States remains a critical security actor, confidence in exclusive dependence on Washington has weakened. Regional powers are diversifying. Turkey, Pakistan, India and even limited European partnerships are increasingly being considered as part of broader security

calculations. This diversification does not replace the US influence, but it alters its exclusivity.

Another major transformation is the widening definition of security itself.

Defence in West Asia is no longer confined to armies, air forces and missile systems. It now includes cyber resilience, infrastructure protection, maritime security, food security, water stress and energy route protection. The disruption around the Strait of Hormuz reinforced that strategic chokepoints remain central to regional security, but it also showed that pipelines, data centres, desalination plants and logistics corridors are now part of the defence equation.

Technology is accelerating this shift. Drone warfare, missile interception systems, autonomous surveillance and cyber defence are reshaping the balance between large and small powers. Smaller states can now generate deterrence through advanced systems once available only to major powers. At the same time, the spread of precision strike capabilities makes traditional assumptions about strategic depth increasingly fragile.

There is also a deeper political shift underway: the region is moving from ideological blocs toward interest-based alignments. States increasingly cooperate issue by issue rather than through permanent camps. A country may coordinate with one power on maritime security, another on intelligence and a third on economic connectivity. This flexibility may reduce some risks of rigid polarisation, but it also creates a more complex and less predictable security order.

Perhaps the defining feature of the new West Asian defence landscape is that it is becoming multipolar from within. Security is no longer shaped only by external great powers imposing order. Regional actors themselves are driving the restructuring.

That does not mean the region is becoming more stable. In many respects, the opposite may be true. But it does mean the old model — based on exter-

nal protection, proxy containment and static deterrence — is giving way to something far more adaptive.

The emerging security order in West Asia is being built around resilience rather than certainty, flexibility rather than fixed alliances, and layered deterrence rather than singular guarantees.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

I don't need lessons on democracy, public discourse or decency from anyone, especially from @DrAMSinghvi. Decency and him can never be in the same room.

The real issue here pertains to a woman - who has nothing to do with politics - but has her character assassinated on national television using FORGED documents from other countries.

I am confident the courts will take note of this, sooner or later and the guilty will be punished for his brazen act of maligning a woman's character using false documents to influence electoral outcomes.

Also Dr Singhvi, it's easy to speak on a platform where I am not present to respond. That is not called a debate- it is simply avoiding a fair exchange, one which you were espousing.

And let me be clear, this is just the beginning, not the end.

Satyamev Jayate.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



Gaurav Gogoi Targets Himanta Biswa Sarma After SC Relief to Pawan Khera, Alleges 'Panic and Corruption'

GUWAHATI

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Friday launched a sharp attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma following the Supreme Court of India's observations in the case involving party spokesperson Pawan Khera.

Reacting on social media platform X, Gogoi alleged that the Chief Minister's response reflected "guilt and panic," while also accusing his administration of corruption and intimidation.

The remarks came after the apex court criticised aspects of the order passed by the Gauhati High Court, which had earlier denied anticipatory bail to Khera in a case linked to his alleged remarks against Riniki Bhuyan



Sarma.

A bench comprising Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Atul S. Chandurkar observed that the High Court's findings appeared "erroneous" and were not based on proper appreciation of the material on record.

The court further noted that the allegations and counter-allegations in the case appeared prima facie "politically motivated" and reflective of political rivalry, rather than warranting custodial interrogation.

Allowing Khera's appeal, the Supreme Court directed that he be granted anticipatory bail in the event of arrest, subject to conditions set by the investigating officer. It also held that the High Court had wrongly shifted

the burden onto the accused and made observations on provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita that were not part of the FIR.

The case originates from allegations made by Khera against Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, following which Assam Police registered an FIR. The Gauhati High Court had rejected his anticipatory bail plea on April 24.

The apex court directed Khera to cooperate with the investigation, refrain from influencing witnesses or tampering with evidence, and not leave the country without prior permission of the competent court. It also clarified that its observations were limited to the bail proceedings and would not affect the merits of the ongoing investigation.

Encroachment Allegations Surface Over Bridge Project in Assam's Sribhumi, Probe Sought

SRIBHUMI

Allegations of illegal occupation of private land have emerged in connection with an RCC bridge project near the Longai-Katakhal area adjoining Sribhumi, triggering protests by local residents and calls for an official inquiry.

The project, being executed by the Public Works Department (PWD), involves construction of a new bridge alongside an older, structurally weak one. While the main structure is nearing completion, tensions have escalated over the approach road works.

Several residents have alleged that portions of privately owned land were incorporated into the construction area without proper consent or compensation. One of the affected landowners, Ebad Uddin, claimed that part of his land was used for the project despite repeated representations to departmental engineers.

Another landowner, Islamur Rahman, alleged that a significant portion of his patta land had been taken over during the construction of the approach road.

Locals further accused PWD officials of proceeding with the work without adequately addressing grievances raised by affected families. In protest, one of the landowners reportedly erected a temporary tin structure near the approach road after receiving no response from authorities.

Residents have questioned how a project involving substantial public funds could move forward without resolving land ownership disputes, warning that unresolved issues could hinder the bridge's full operationalisation.

The matter has drawn wider attention in the area, with growing demands for intervention by the district administration to investigate the allegations and ensure that the rights of landowners are protected.

Tinsukia Prepares for May 4 Vote Count with Multi-Layered Security, Tight Monitoring

TINSUKIA

With results of the Assam Assembly elections scheduled for May 4, the district administration in Tinsukia has completed elaborate arrangements to ensure a smooth and secure counting process under strict supervision.

The counting exercise will begin at 8:00 AM. District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner Sumit Sattawan said during a press briefing on Friday, adding that all protocols laid down by the Election Commission of India are being followed.

Six counting observers have been deployed across constituencies in the district. Abhinav Tripathi will oversee the 86 No. Tinsukia seat, Limawabang Jamir the 85 No. Makum seat, Om Prakash Saharan the 82 No. Doomdooma constituency, A.G. Chinna Krishna the 84 No. Digboi seat, Mitali Namchum the 83 No. Margherita constituency, and I. Kishore the 81 No. Sadiya seat.

To streamline operations, two counting centres have been designat-

ed. Counting for Sadiya and Margherita constituencies will take place at Janata College, while the remaining constituencies—Doomdooma, Digboi, Makum, and Tinsukia—will be counted at the SAI Sarbananda Sonowal Stadium.

At Janata College, 14 counting tables have been set up for Sadiya and 11 for Margherita, along with separate tables for postal ballots. At the stadium, 10 tables each have been arranged for Doomdooma and Digboi, while Makum and Tinsukia will have 11 tables each, all supplemented by dedicated postal ballot tables.

Around 600 personnel have been deployed for the counting process, including 79 micro-observers, 67 counting supervisors, and 67 counting assistants. Officials said all personnel have undergone prior training to ensure adherence to procedures.

Strict timelines have been enforced, with officials required to report by 5:30 AM, counting staff by 6:00 AM, and counting agents and candidates by 7:00 AM to facilitate timely commencement.

GUWAHATI

The implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 in Assam is facing serious challenges due to staff shortages and inadequate infrastructure across colleges and universities. All Assam Students' Union (AASU) president Utpal Sarma said on Friday.

While institutions have introduced new courses in line with the policy, many are struggling to deliver them effectively because of an acute shortage of teaching staff, laboratory facilities, and classroom infrastructure, he noted.

Sarma said the state government should have ensured that educational institutions were adequately prepared before rolling out the policy. "We have not opposed the NEP, but it was the duty of the government to ensure that the educational institutions were ready to implement the policy," he said.

He stressed that a compre-



hensive assessment of available teaching and non-teaching staff, along with infrastructure readiness, should have preceded the implementation.

Highlighting a key concern, the AASU leader said many institutions are currently dependent on contractual teachers due to

Vacancies, Infrastructure Gaps Undermining NEP Rollout in Assam: AASU



unfilled vacancies. However, a recent government notification barring the engagement of contractual faculty could further disrupt academic functioning and adversely affect students.

He urged the government to fill all vacant posts before discontinuing contractual appoint-

ments, warning that failure to do so would strain already overburdened institutions.

Commenting on the performance of some government schools in the recent HSLC and Higher Secondary examinations, Sarma said the issue requires urgent attention. He maintained that teacher qualification is not the core problem, pointing out that educators have cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET).

"The problem lies elsewhere," he said, calling for a deeper review of systemic issues affecting school education.

Sarma also urged the government to engage with educationists, teachers, and student bodies to formulate a comprehensive roadmap for improving the quality of education. He cautioned against treating the issue as an ego matter, stressing that meaningful reform would require collaborative dialogue with stakeholders.

Mizoram Jail Fraud Exposed: 16 Inmates Freed on Forged Court Orders, 13 Rearrested

AIZAWL

A major security and procedural breach has come to light in Mizoram after 16 convicts lodged in the district jail at Lunglei were released over a four-month period using forged court documents, officials said.

The fraudulent releases, believed to have begun in January, remained undetected until last week when authorities at the Lunglei District and Sessions Court found no corresponding judicial records authorising the release of certain inmates. The discrepancy prompted immediate action, leading to a police complaint being filed on April 25.

According to Lunglei Superintendent of Police Jerome Lalmuankima, a coordinated operation was launched soon after the breach surfaced. "Thirteen of the released convicts have since been apprehended, while two remain absconding. One



individual died after being released," he said.

Investigators suspect the involvement of a larger, organised network, possibly including both insiders and external collaborators. Officials noted that the forged documents carried fab-

ricated seals and formatting closely resembling genuine court orders, allowing them to pass initial scrutiny.

Deputy Superintendent of the Lunglei District Jail Lalratsanga said prison authorities had little reason to question the authenticity of the

documents. "Court orders are treated as final and binding, leaving limited scope for delay or verification, which made the deception difficult to detect," he stated.

Preliminary investigations have identified a 22-year-old inmate, Jeremiah Lalthangura, as the suspected mastermind behind the operation. Police believe he coordinated the scheme from inside the jail, allegedly working with accomplices outside.

In a statement, Mizoram Police said Lalthangura is already facing multiple charges, including cheque fraud, cheating, and online financial scams, and is currently under intensive interrogation with heightened surveillance in custody.

Authorities indicated that further arrests are likely as the probe continues into what is being viewed as a serious breach of institutional safeguards.

Exit Polls 'Misleading, Politically Driven'; Actual Verdict Will Differ: AJP



GUWAHATI

Launching a sharp critique of exit poll projections ahead of the Assam Assembly election results, the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) on Thursday termed them "misleading" and "politically motivated," asserting that the final outcome would diverge significantly from televised predictions.

Addressing a press conference, AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi said exit polls have a "proven track record of failure," claiming that over 57 per cent of such projections in India since 1996 have turned out to be inaccurate.

"Exit polls are not facts; they are estimates, and often flawed ones," Gogoi said, pointing to past instances where predictions failed to match actual results. He cited the 2004 Indian general election, where forecasts of an NDA victory did not materialise, and the 2014 Indian general election, where the scale of the BJP's win was underestimated.

He also referred to the 2024 Indian general election, where the projected "400-plus" narrative fell short. Extending his argument to

State elections, Gogoi cited discrepancies between exit polls and actual outcomes in 2015 Delhi Legislative Assembly election, 2020 Bihar Legislative Assembly election, 2021 West Bengal Legislative Assembly election, 2022 Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly election, and 2022 Goa Legislative Assembly election.

Gogoi alleged that inaccuracies in exit polls stem not only from methodological limitations but also from "political and commercial interests," accusing sections of the media of shaping narratives favourable to ruling parties. "Exit polls are used to create a perception of a wave and can even psychologically influence the electoral process," he claimed. The party also flagged structural issues such as sampling bias, voter reluctance—especially in rural areas—to disclose preferences, and the complexity of alliance politics in a diverse State like Assam. AJP general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan said the political landscape in 2026 differs markedly from the previous Assembly elections, pointing to a more cohesive Opposition and alleged internal challenges within the BJP-led alliance. "There is a strong undercurrent of anti-incumbency which exit polls have failed to capture," he said, adding that ground realities cannot be gauged from "air-conditioned studios."

Reiterating that the electorate has voted independently, Gogoi urged citizens not to treat exit polls as definitive. "They are a media spectacle, not the mandate. The real verdict is sealed in the EVMs and will be known on May 4," he added.

Sikkim Becomes First State with Fully Paperless Judiciary, Marks Milestone in Digital Courts Push

GUWAHATI

In a significant leap towards judicial modernisation, Sikkim has become the first state in the country to operate a completely paperless judiciary, setting a benchmark for digital transformation in India's legal system.

The announcement was made by Justice Surya Kant during the inauguration of the Conclave on Technology and Judicial Education in Gangtok on Friday.

The two-day conclave, hosted by the High Court of Sikkim in collaboration with the Supreme Court e-Committee, is being held at Chintan Bhawan and Samman Bhawan. It has brought together judges, legal experts, and international participants to deliberate on the growing role of technology in courts and legal education.

Describing the transition as transformative, Justice Surya Kant said digital systems are addressing long-standing challenges such as geographical



barriers and accessibility—particularly in hilly regions like Sikkim—by enabling litigants to access justice with-

out the need for physical travel.

He noted that India's judiciary is steadily moving away from conven-

tional paper-based processes through initiatives like the e-Courts Mission Mode Project, along with real-time data tools and artificial intelligence-based platforms such as SUPACE and SUVAS. These innovations, he said, are enhancing efficiency, transparency, and case management.

At the same time, Justice Surya Kant emphasised the need for inclusive digital progress, stressing the importance of expanding e-Seva Kendras and ensuring accessibility for citizens with limited digital literacy. He also underscored the need to safeguard judicial independence and uphold ethical standards in the use of artificial intelligence.

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, who attended the event as chief guest, termed the development a historic milestone and reiterated the state government's commitment to digital governance and judicial reforms.

Chief Justice of the High Court of Sikkim, A. Muhamed Mustaque, said the shift goes beyond digitisation, representing a structural transformation aimed at improving access to justice at the grassroots level.

The conclave, being held during the state's golden jubilee year, is expected to contribute to shaping a more transparent, efficient, and citizen-centric judicial system.

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Fuel price hike likely in near future, say government sources



NEW DELHI

Amid speculations over a possible fuel price hike after the conclusion of Assembly elections in four key states, government sources on Friday said the Centre may raise prices, in view of the mounting losses and prevailing global energy market conditions.

International crude oil prices this week climbed to a four-year high of USD 126 per barrel before cooling down slightly, but remained above USD 110 a barrel as ship transits through the Strait of Hormuz remained restricted and US and Iranian leaders traded barbs amid stalled peace talks.

Government sources said the possibility of a petrol and diesel price hike in the near future is not ruled out.

However, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, earlier in the day, assured that the country will be shielded from the global shock while stressing that prices have not been increased in the last four years.

"If the time comes, the government will take the necessary decisions," the minister said.

The Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), making a statement on behalf of the industry, also said petrol and diesel prices and domestic LPG rates are not being increased despite a surge in international energy costs.

State-owned oil firms hiked prices of commercial LPG, industrial diesel, 5-kg LPG and jet fuel sold to international airlines in keeping with the cost.

Analysts had earlier flagged the possibility of price increases of Rs 25-28 per litre after the end of polling for assembly elections in West Bengal on April 29.

International oil prices spiked after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, and Tehran's sweeping retaliation that effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz -- one of the world's most critical energy arteries, linking the Persian Gulf to global markets and handling roughly a fifth of global oil trade along with significant volumes of liquefied natural gas.

Last week, a senior oil

ministry official told a news briefing that state-owned fuel retailers were incurring losses of about Rs 20 per litre on petrol and roughly Rs 100 per litre on diesel as pump prices remained frozen for nearly four years despite a surge in global oil prices.

Yet there is no plan to increase prices, she had said.

Crude, which was USD 70 per barrel last year, averaged over USD 114 this month.

Retail petrol and diesel prices have remained frozen since early April 2022 -- a period during which oil prices rose in some months and fell in other times.

When prices fell, state-owned oil firms made handsome profits, which they used to set off losses when rates rose.

Petrol is currently priced at Rs 94.77 a litre in Delhi, and diesel comes for Rs 87.67, under house arrest between 1989 and 2010. Her tough stand against military rule in Myanmar turned her into a symbol of nonviolent struggle for democracy, and won her the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.

Punjab Assembly witnesses chaos as Opposition accuses CM Bhagwant Mann of being drunk during proceedings

AMRITSAR

High drama unfolded during the special session of the Punjab Assembly after the Opposition alleged that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann came drunk to attend the Vidhan Sabha proceedings.

The Opposition parties, including the Congress, and the Shiromani Akali Dal demanded an alcohol test to be conducted on the chief minister to determine if he was intoxicated during the House proceedings.

Congress MLAs staged a walk-out and urged the Speaker to initiate action, while the party also called for dope testing of all MLAs and an independent medical check by PGIMER.

Congress leader Sukhpal Singh Khaira demanded that an alcohol test be conducted.

In a post on X, Khaira wrote, "Cm @BhagwantMann was found drunk in the Vidhan Sabha today! We @INCIndia walked out of the house demanding from the Speaker @SpeakerSandhwan that an alcohol test of Cm @BhagwantMann be conducted and we offered to undertake the test ourselves too."

"The conduct of @AamAadmiParty Cm Bhagwant Mann had lowered the prestige of the august house of Vidhan Sabha. We @INCPunjab Mla's urge @ArvindKejriwal to take action against Cm for impropriety and that too by being drunk in the assembly-Khaira," the post read.

LoP in the assembly Partap Singh Bajwa also criticised Mann for allegedly being drunk and called for an immediate dope test.

"What should we even do coming to the Assembly where the Chief Minister is in an inebriated state? What is the purpose of holding a session when the head of the state is completely sozzled? We demand that everyone's test be conducted," he said.

The Shiromani Akali Dal also made similar allegations, calling it a matter of shame and demanding



a dope test of the Chief Minister. The Aam Aadmi Party has not yet responded to the charges.

"It is a matter of great shame that @BhagwantMann showed up drunk with alcohol in the hallowed chamber of the Vidhan Sabha on the occasion of 'Labour Day' today. You can see for yourselves how the Chief Minister is behaving in the Vidhan Sabha," the party wrote in a post on X.

"The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly condemns the Chief Minister's conduct, and he should not have come after drinking on this day. The Shiromani Akali Dal demands that the Chief Minister undergo a dope test today in front of the entire Punjab so that Punjabis too can know the truth," the post read.

Further, Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal accused Mann of repeatedly attending public and official functions under the influence of

alcohol and demanded that he undergo an alcohol test.

She also called for action if the allegations are proven true.

In a post on X, Maliwal said, "Today, once again, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann has arrived at the temple of democracy, the Punjab Legislative Assembly, completely intoxicated with alcohol. This man goes to the Gurdwara Sahib after drinking, goes to the temple after drinking, used to come to the Lok Sabha after drinking, goes to government meetings after drinking, and drank so much abroad that he was deplanned."

"Before the elections, he had placed his hand on his mother's head and declared that he would never drink alcohol again. The CM of a sensitive border state like Punjab stays intoxicated all the time... signs files while under the influence. What shamelessness. How can a man who is only ever

away from alcohol during sleep possibly run Punjab? CM Mann should undergo an alcohol test, and if found guilty, he should be removed from the CM position," she said.

BJP's Sunil Jakhar also joined the chorus of opposition parties calling for a breathalyser test which he said would unmask many.

"The general session of the Assembly is important, but its significance increases even further when it is a special session. If a breathalyzer test were conducted to find out the condition in which the leaders reach the Assembly on this day, many faces would be unmasked," Jakhar said.

The Congress Legislative Party (CLP) has formally written to the Speaker, urging immediate alcohol-test and dope testing of the Chief Minister and all MLAs during the ongoing Assembly session.

In the letter, the CLP raised concerns over an incident highlighted by MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira during the session. The issue reportedly involves allegations to which the Chief Minister responded, prompting serious questions about the conduct of House members. The party stated that such concerns, if not addressed, could undermine public trust in the institution.

Citing the urgency of the matter, the CLP demanded the implementation of a transparent protocol. This includes mandatory alcohol-test of all members present in the House within one hour, starting with the Chief Minister. It also called for comprehensive dope testing of all MLAs from both Treasury and Opposition benches without exception.

The letter further suggested deploying an independent medical team from the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, to ensure fair and impartial testing.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran offers new proposal amid stalled US peace talks

TEHRAN

Iran delivered a new proposal for peace talks with the US via mediator Pakistan, state media reported Friday, with negotiations between the two sides frozen despite a weeks-long ceasefire.

The text of the proposal was handed to Islamabad on Thursday evening, the IRNA news agency reported.

The war, launched by the United States and Israel with a vast wave of surprise strikes on February 28 has been on hold since April 8, but only one failed round of direct talks has taken place between Iranian and US representatives.

In the meantime, Iran has maintained its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off vast amounts of oil, gas and fertiliser from the world economy, while the United States has imposed a counterblockade on Iranian ports.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday that US President Donald Trump had told security officials to prepare for the blockade to last months, causing oil prices to spike.

Despite the failure to negotiate an end to the war, the ceasefire has held. On Friday, judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, a senior figure and well-respected cleric, said "the Islamic Republic has never shied away from negotiations".

But in yet another sign that finding a compromise may prove difficult, Ejei said "we certainly do not accept imposition", in a video shared by the judiciary's Mizan Online website. Tehran, though, does not want a return to war he said.

"We do not welcome war in any way; we do not want war, we do not want its continuation."

The lack of fighting has not assuaged markets, with oil prices still more than 50 percent above their prewar levels as traders confront a prolonged closure of Hormuz, while the European Central Bank held interest rates amid fears of soaring inflation.



A man waves a representation of the Iranian flag during a state-organised rally in Tehran, Iran, Wednesday, April 29, 2026.

Washington, meanwhile, was gripped by a legalistic debate over whether Trump had passed a deadline for requesting congressional approval for his war with Iran.

Administration officials, including defence secretary Pete Hegseth, insisted that the ceasefire meant that the clock was paused on a 60-day deadline requiring the president to seek war powers authorisation from Congress.

"For War Powers Resolution purposes, the hostilities that began on Saturday, February 28 have terminated," a senior administration official told AFP on Thursday.

Trump is under increasing domestic pressure over the war, with no clear victory in sight, inflation spiking due

to the conflict and midterm elections due in November.

On Thursday, US government data showed slower than expected growth and inflation hit 3.5 percent.

In Iran, meanwhile, the economic consequences of the war, which come on top of years of fierce international sanctions, were beginning to bite.

On Thursday, the US military said its blockade had stopped Iran from exporting \$6 billion worth of oil, while inflation, already above 45 percent before the war, reached 53.7 percent in recent weeks, according to the national statistics centre.

"For many people, paying rent and even buying food has become difficult, and some have nothing left at all," 28-year-old Mahyar told an AFP reporter based outside Iran, saying the company he worked for had laid off 34 people -- nearly 40 percent of its

staff. Trump has repeatedly lashed out at Washington's international allies for failing to join efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. France and Britain have led efforts to bring together an international coalition of dozens of countries that would help reopen the strait, but only once peace is secured.

But on Thursday, a US official confirmed to AFP that Washington was launching its own international coalition to restart shipping, dubbed "the Maritime Freedom Construct".

That prompted French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot to insist that the two missions would complement and not compete with each other.

The US mission is "not of the same nature as the one we established... it comes as a sort of complement", Barrot said on a visit to the Gulf.

Mexico City is sinking so quickly, it can be seen from space

MEXICO CITY

Mexico City is sinking by nearly 10 inches (about 25 centimeters) a year, according to new satellite imagery released this week by NASA, making it one of the world's fastest-subsiding metropolises.

One of the world's most sprawling and populated urban areas, at 3,000 square miles (about 7,800 square kilometers) and some 22 million people, the Mexican capital and surrounding cities were built atop an ancient lake bed. Many downtown streets were once canals, a tradition that continues in the rural fringes.

Extensive groundwater pumping and urban development have dramatically shrunk the aquifer, meaning that Mexico City has been sinking for more than a century, leaving many monuments and older buildings -- like the Metropolitan Cathedral, where construction began in 1573 -- visibly tilted to the side. The contracting aquifer has also contributed to a chronic water crisis that is only expected to worsen.

In some parts of the Mexican city it is happening at an average rate of 0.78 inches (2 centimeters) a month, according to NASA's newly released report.

"It damages part of the critical infrastructure of Mexico City, such as the subway, the drainage system, the water, the potable water system, housing and streets," said Enrique Cabral, a researcher studying geophysics at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. "It's a very big problem."

Mexico City is sinking so fast that the subsidence can be spotted from space.

In some parts it is happening at an average rate of 0.78 inches (2 centimeters) a month, according to NASA's newly released report, such as at the main airport and the iconic monument commonly known as the Angel of Independence.



Overall that means a yearly subsidence rate of about 9.5 inches (24 centimeters). Over the course of less than a century, the drop has been more than 39 feet (12 meters), according to Cabral.

"We have one of the fastest velocities of land subsidence in the whole world," he said.

The NASA estimates are based on measurements taken between October 2025 and January 2026 by a powerful satellite known as NISAR, which can track real-time changes on the Earth's surface and is a joint initiative between NASA and the Indian Space Research Organization.

NISAR scientist Paul Rosen said that by capturing details of the Earth from space, the project is also "telling us something about what's actually happening below the surface."

"It's basically documentation of all of these changes within a city," Rosen said. He added: "You can see the full magnitude of the problem."

With time the team hopes to be able to zoom in even more on specific areas and someday get measurements on a building-by-building basis.

More broadly, researchers

hope to apply the technology around the world to track things like natural disasters, changes in fault lines, the effects of climate change in regions like Antarctica and more.

Rosen said it could be used to bolster alert systems, letting scientists alert governments to the need for evacuations in cases of volcano eruptions, for example.

For Mexico City the technology amounts to a big advance in studying the subsidence issue and mitigating its worst effects, according to Cabral.

For decades the government has largely ignored the problem other than stabilizing foundations under monuments like the cathedral. But following recent flare-ups of the water crisis, Cabral said, officials have begun to fund more research.

Imagery from the NISAR satellite and the data that comes with it will be key for scientists and officials as they plan on how to address the problem.

"To do long-term mitigation of the situation," Cabral said, "the first step is to just understand."

Bangladesh Under Scrutiny: Allegations, Political Upheaval and the Contested Legacy of the Yunus Interregnum

The political trajectory of Bangladesh has, in recent months, been shaped by intense debate over a turbulent eighteen-month phase widely associated with Muhammad Yunus and his interim governing structure. What some critics describe as a period marked by institutional disruption and alleged irregularities is now increasingly the subject of media investigations, political contestation, and calls for accountability.

At the centre of the controversy are a series of reports published by Kaler Kantho, which have highlighted alleged corruption, administrative overreach, and attempts to influence or control key institutions during the period in question. While these claims remain part of an ongoing political and legal discourse, they have nonetheless added momentum to demands for a comprehensive inquiry into decisions taken during that phase.

Allegations Around Institutional Control

One of the most widely discussed cases relates to the reported attempt to assert control over Gonoshasthaya Kendra, a prominent medical and social welfare institution founded by Zafrullah Chowdhury. The organisation has long been regarded as a symbol of Bangladesh's post-independence commitment to accessible healthcare and indigenous development.

Reports suggest that efforts to influence or take over the institution began even before the Yunus-led administration assumed power. Allegations have been directed at individuals associated with the interim regime, including former advisor Syeda Rizwana Hasan. A former senior official of the organisation has claimed that he was pressured to vacate his position as part of a broader attempt to reconfigure the institution's leadership.

Those named in the reports have not publicly responded to the allegations in detail, and no judicial determination has yet been made. Nevertheless, the episode has come to be viewed by critics as indicative of a broader pattern of institutional interference.

Questions Over Governance and Financial Conduct

Beyond individual cases, a wider set of accusations has emerged concerning financial management and governance practices during the Yunus period. Critics allege that decisions taken at the highest levels resulted in financial irregularities and policy distortions across sectors of the economy.

Among the issues frequently cited is the controversial handling of tax-related matters involving Yunus himself. Opponents argue that decisions taken early in the administration created perceptions of preferential treatment, though supporters of Yunus have maintained that such claims are politically motivated.

Calls for investigation have grown louder in recent weeks, with political actors and civil society voices demanding a transparent audit of decisions taken during the period. However, the absence of a unified political consensus has complicated efforts to move toward a formal inquiry.

Political Instability and the Rise of Polarisation

The Yunus interregnum coincided with a period of heightened political tension. Critics argue that the administration presided over a breakdown of conventional political processes, leading to an environment marked by unrest, distrust, and polarisation.

A central point of contention has been the alleged encouragement or failure to adequately control mass mobilisations that, according to detractors, sometimes took the form of mob action. These developments are said to have contributed to a deterioration in law and order, although interpretations of events vary widely across the political spectrum.

The subsequent political transition, culminating in the rise of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) following the February 12 elections, has not entirely resolved these tensions. Questions persist regarding the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the electoral process, particularly given the absence of the Awami League from the contest.

Institutional and Constitutional Concerns

Another area of debate relates to the constitutional framework under which the Yunus administration assumed authority. Legal experts and political commentators have scrutinised the use of Article 106 of the Constitution, arguing that its interpretation raised significant questions about the legitimacy of the transition.



Concerns have also been raised regarding the treatment of key institutional figures, including former Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury. Her reported absence from public view during a critical political juncture has fuelled speculation about the extent to which constitutional norms were adhered to during the transition.

Law, Justice and Human Rights Allegations

Perhaps the most serious allegations relate to claims of human rights violations and the politicisation of legal institutions. Critics of the Yunus period have alleged that law enforcement agencies were either unable or unwilling to prevent violence, resulting in significant casualties, including among members of the police force.

There are also claims of widespread arrests targeting political opponents, academics, and activists. The functioning of the International Crimes Tribunal has come under scrutiny, with some critics alleging that it was used in a politically selective manner. These assertions remain contested and have not been conclusively adjudicated.

Cultural and Historical Flashpoints

The period also witnessed controversies surrounding national symbols and historical commemorations. Critics allege that certain anniversaries and events central to Bangladesh's identity—including those linked to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—were either downplayed or restricted. Such moves, if substantiated, would represent a significant departure from longstanding traditions of national remembrance. However, defenders of the interim administration argue that these claims are exaggerated and driven by partisan narratives.

Foreign Policy and Strategic Realignment

The Yunus period has also been examined through the lens of foreign policy. Critics contend that there was a recalibration of Bangladesh's external relations, particularly in terms of engagement with India and Pakistan. While some view these shifts as pragmatic diplomacy, others interpret them as a departure from established strategic balances.

A particularly contentious issue has been a reported trade agreement with the United States, finalised shortly before the transition of power. Details of the agreement, as they have emerged in fragments, have sparked debate over economic sovereignty and the extent of external influence on domestic policy.

The matter has even drawn attention within Parliament, with calls for greater transparency and legislative scrutiny.

The Road Ahead: Accountability and Political Realignment

As Bangladesh navigates the aftermath of this contentious period, the question of accountability looms large. There is growing consensus across sections of

society that a credible, independent inquiry is necessary to establish the facts and restore public confidence in institutions. For the BNP-led government, the challenge lies in balancing political realities with the demand for justice. Its own position has been complicated by perceptions that it inherited power under exceptional circumstances, raising questions about its mandate and autonomy.

Meanwhile, the Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, continues to command significant support and remains a central player in the country's political future. Historical precedent suggests that questions of accountability and justice have long been integral to Bangladesh's political evolution—from the repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance to the prosecution of individuals linked to the events of 1971.

A Nation at a Crossroads

The legacy of the Yunus interregnum remains deeply contested. For some, it represents a necessary, if imperfect, attempt to navigate a moment of crisis. For others, it is a period marked by institutional erosion and missed opportunities.

What is clear is that Bangladesh stands at a critical juncture. The path it chooses—whether through reconciliation, reform, or renewed political confrontation—will shape not only its immediate future but also the durability of its democratic institutions.

As calls for investigation grow louder, the coming months may well determine whether the country can move beyond accusation and counter-accusation toward a more stable and accountable political order.

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