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## PERSPECTIVE

The truth does not mind being questioned. A lie does not like being challenged.

### Akhil Gogoi Alleges Assam UCC Will Enable 'Surveillance' of Citizens' Private Lives

**GUWAHATI**  
Rajior Dal president and Sibsagar MLA Akhil Gogoi on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on Assam's proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC), alleging that the legislation would allow the state to interfere in and monitor the private lives of citizens.

Addressing reporters, Gogoi claimed that the draft UCC framework seeks to establish a bureaucratic system capable of overseeing people's personal relationships and lifestyles, which he described as a serious violation of privacy rights.

"Look at what the UCC says about the private lives of the people of Assam, and what the State is saying. The State has created a bureaucracy to monitor the intimate and private aspects of people's lives," Gogoi said. The Rajior Dal leader alleged that the proposed mechanism could pave the way for "constant surveillance" and moral policing by authorities.

"This bureaucracy will spy on you - how you live, how you conduct your life - and there will be constant surveillance over your personal life. How can this be allowed?" he asked.

Citing constitutional safeguards and Supreme Court observations on the right to privacy, Gogoi argued that the proposed provisions amounted to undue state intrusion into citizens' personal affairs.

"What does the Indian Constitution say, and what has the Supreme Court repeatedly said? The Supreme Court has said time and again that assemblies and Parliament cannot interfere in private life in this manner," he stated.

#### WHO SAID WHAT



"Try to be as useful as possible. I think if you aspire to do true work, your probability of success is much higher. Do whatever it takes to succeed. Smash your ego, be humble. It's a super big deal." ~ Elon Musk, American Entrepreneur

## Khemchand Welcomes High-Level Demography Panel

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday welcomed the Union Government's decision to constitute a High-Level Committee to study demographic changes in the country, describing it as a "historic and long-awaited intervention" for Manipur and other border states.

In a statement issued from Imphal, the Chief Minister expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for initiating what he termed a significant step towards addressing demographic imbalance, illegal immigration and related security concerns.

Khemchand stated that Prime Minister Modi's announcement of a "High-powered Demography Mission" during his Independence Day address on August 15, 2025, followed by Union Cabinet approval on September 11, 2025, reflected the Centre's commitment to addressing demographic issues affecting several parts of the country, particularly border and tribal regions.



The Chief Minister also welcomed Amit Shah's remarks that demographic change poses a challenge not only to India's sovereignty but also to national security, law and order, social stability and the protection of tribal communities.

According to reports, Shah stated that infiltration and other "unnatural demographic changes" represent a major challenge for both the present and future of the country. He said the newly constituted committee would conduct a comprehensive assessment of demographic shifts caused by illegal immigration and other abnormal factors and recommend time-bound solutions.

Khemchand assured that the Government of Manipur would extend full cooperation to the committee

during its assessment process.

"The people of Manipur are deeply grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for their unwavering commitment towards securing India's borders and checking demographic imbalance," the Chief Minister stated.

The High-Level Committee will be chaired by retired judge Justice Prakash Prabhakar Navlekar. The panel will also include the Census Commissioner and three experts - retired IAS officer Durga Shankar Mishra, retired IPS officer Balaji Srivastava and economist Shamika Ravi. The Joint Secretary (Foreigners-I) in the Ministry of Home Affairs will serve as the Member Secretary of the committee.

According to the Centre, the committee has been tasked with conducting a scientific evaluation of demographic changes occurring across India due to illegal immigration and other unusual factors. It will examine their causes, assess their impact on social and religious communities, and recommend policy, legislative and administrative measures.

## Himanta Biswa Sarma Proposes 'One District, Three Institutions' Model for Viksit Assam

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma unveiled a new development vision for the state, proposing that every district in Assam should have three major institutions - a medical college, a university and an engineering college - to drive youth-led growth and transformation. Outlining his vision for a "Viksit Assam," the Chief Minister said the next phase of the state's development would focus on expanding access to quality education and healthcare infrastructure for young people across all districts. "My vision for the next phase of Assam's development is clear. It will be led by our youth and each district must have three key institutions to cater to their growth," Sarma stated.

The proposed "One District, Three Institutions" framework forms part of the state government's broader roadmap aimed at strengthening education, healthcare, skill development and employment generation in Assam. According to the vision shared

by the Chief Minister, the initiative seeks to ensure that students across the state have improved access to higher education and professional training closer to their homes. Under the proposed model, each district would have a medical college to strengthen healthcare services and medical education, a university to promote higher learning and research, and an engineering college to boost technical education and innovation. The Assam government has already undertaken a major expansion of higher education and healthcare infrastructure in recent years, with several medical colleges and universities either established or under various stages of construction across the state. Sarma emphasised that empowering the youth would remain central to Assam's long-term economic growth and development strategy. The initiative is also expected to contribute towards building a skilled workforce capable of supporting the state's industrial, technological and healthcare sectors in the coming years.

## Supreme Court Pushes for Speedier Trial in Manipur Violence Cases, Seeks Status Report

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court expressed concern over delays in the trial proceedings related to the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur and directed authorities to expedite the legal process while seeking a detailed status report on the progress of the cases.

A bench comprising B R Gavai and Joydalya Bagchi was hearing a plea filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation challenging the bail granted by the Gauhati High Court to two accused - Arun Khundongbam and Nameirakpam Kiran Meitei - in a case involving allegations of gang rape and public humiliation of women during the violence.

Observing that the matter required urgent attention, the apex court said the ongoing trials must move at a faster pace. The bench also directed the CBI and other authorities to ensure that victims are provided with competent legal aid counsel familiar with the situation in Manipur.

"We have said that the ongoing trial needs to be expedited. We have asked the CBI and others to provide legal aid counsel who are well-versed in Manipur to counsel the victims," the bench observed.

The court clarified that providing legal assistance to victims' families would not interfere with the ongoing judicial proceedings.

During the hearing, the bench referred to a CBI report stating that 20 chargesheets had been filed so far, with trials already underway in 16 cases. A separate status report submitted by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) stated that chargesheets had been filed in 207 cases involving more than 400 accused persons.

The Supreme Court also took note of a report submitted by former IPS officer

Dattatray Padsalgikar, which described the law and order situation in Manipur as "precarious" on April 7 and April 18 this year. The report cited continuing incidents of violence and pressure on the state police machinery.

Emphasising the importance of restoring public trust, the bench said confidence-building measures must continue to ensure that victims retain faith in the justice delivery system.

The hearing came in connection with a September 8, 2025 order of the Gauhati High Court granting bail to the two accused on the grounds that they had remained in custody for nearly two years without charges being framed, describing the prolonged incarceration as "unjustified".

The CBI has sought cancellation of the bail, arguing that the allegations are grave and warrant continued judicial scrutiny.

Ethnic violence first erupted in Manipur on May 3, 2023, following a "Tribal Solidarity March" organised in the hill districts against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. The unrest left more than 260 people dead and displaced thousands across the state.

The Supreme Court had earlier taken suo motu cognisance of the violence in July 2023 after a video showing women being paraded naked surfaced online, triggering nationwide outrage.

Earlier this year, the apex court directed state legal services authorities to appoint legal aid counsel for victims. In August 2023, the Centre also constituted the Justice Gita Mittal Commission to oversee relief and rehabilitation measures for victims and examine the government's response to the crisis.

## Nagaland Intensifies ASF Containment Measures After Fresh Outbreaks

DIMAPUR

Nagaland authorities have tightened containment and preventive measures following fresh outbreaks of African Swine Fever (ASF) in Tseminyu, Medziphema under Chumoukedima district, and Nagaland's Phek district, raising concerns among pig farmers and pork consumers across the state.

The outbreaks add to existing ASF cases reported earlier from parts of Mokochung, Dimapur and Mon districts.

In Tseminyu, Deputy Commissioner Japheth Woch confirmed that tissue samples collected from Tseminyu village tested positive for ASF at the animal healthcare laboratory. Following the confirmation, authorities declared the area within a 1-km radius of the village as an "Infected Zone," while areas extending up to 9 km beyond it were designated as a "Surveillance Zone."

The administration also reported multiple cases of pig mortality in and around Tseminyu and imposed restrictions on the slaughter, sale, purchase and transportation of pigs and pork products within the affected areas.

Residents have been advised to avoid the purchase, sale and consumption of pork and pork products in the infected and adjoining zones. Authorities further directed that carcasses of dead pigs must be disposed of only through deep burial or incineration following approved biosecurity and sanitary protocols.

The office of the Chief Veterinary Officer in Tseminyu has been instructed to carry out surveillance, quarantine, sanitisation and other disease-control measures in accordance with government guidelines and standard operating procedures.

## Assam Assembly Passes Resolution Seeking Early Implementation of 33% Women's Reservation

GUWAHATI

The Assam Legislative Assembly on Tuesday adopted a resolution seeking implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and all State Legislative Assemblies following the completion of the delimitation exercise, amid heated exchanges and a walkout by Opposition members. The resolution was moved by Assam Women and Child Development Minister Ajanta Neog during the ongoing Assembly session.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that the main legislation regarding women's reservation clearly provides that the quota would come into effect only after the Census and the subsequent delimitation process. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill aimed at operationalising 33 per cent reservation for women before 2029 was introduced in Parliament, but alleged that the Congress did not support the move. "By adopting this resolution, we are requesting Parliament to ensure that reservation for women comes into effect immediately," Sarma said in the House. The Assembly proceedings witnessed sharp exchanges between treasury bench members and Opposition MLAs over alleged remarks made by BJP legislator Bhuban Pegu during the debate.

Rajior Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi protested in the well of the House

over the remarks, while Opposition members later staged a walkout. However, TMC MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed and AIUDDF MLA Mazibur Rahman did not join the protest. The Opposition members were absent during the Chief Minister's speech but several later returned to the House after his address concluded.

During the discussion, Opposition legislators maintained that they supported women's reservation but opposed linking its implementation to the delimitation process, demanding that the reservation be enforced immediately. Congress MLA Zakir Hussain Sikdar said the party has consistently supported women's empowerment, highlighting that India's first woman Prime Minister, woman President and woman Lok Sabha Speaker emerged during Congress rule. Akhil Gogoi argued that since women constitute nearly half the state's population, there should be 50 per cent reservation for women and that it should be implemented without waiting for delimitation.

First-time MLAs Rupali Langthasa, Seuli Basumatary and Nilima Devi also stressed the importance of women's reservation in Parliament and State Assemblies and appealed for support to the resolution.

Speaking to reporters after the walkout, Zakir Hussain Sikdar alleged that Bhuban Pegu had described Opposition leaders, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, as "anti-constitutional."

## Himanta Defends Assam UCC Bill, Says Congress First Advocated Common Civil Code in 1925

GUWAHATI

Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday defended the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) legislation in the Assam Assembly, asserting that the Congress had originally championed the idea nearly a century ago and accusing the opposition party of abandoning secular principles.

Replying to questions during a discussion on The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill, the Chief Minister said the proposed legislation is rooted in Article 44 of the Constitution and not based on any ideology of the BJP or the RSS, as alleged by opposition members.

"The UCC has a long history. It was first demanded by the Congress in 1925. It was also suggested in 1937 by Jawaharlal Nehru. That same Congress is opposing it from the Quran and Shariat angle, not from the Hindu, Christian or tribal angle," Sarma told the Assembly.

The Chief Minister also criticised the composition of the Congress legislative party in Assam, alleging that it no longer reflected the state's social diversity.

"The Congress is opposing the UCC. Their Assembly composition proves that they are not representing all castes, creeds and religions, but only one specific



community," he said.

Sarma further urged the Congress to uphold India's secular traditions instead of, as he described it, moving towards "communal politics".

Referring to Goa, Sarma said it became the country's first region with a common civil code after retaining the Portuguese Civil Code following its integration with India in 1961.

He added that Assam would become the third state in the country to implement a Uniform Civil Code after Uttarakhand and Gujarat, describing the move as a significant step toward gender justice.

"Article 44 of the Indian Constitution is the foundation of this Bill," Sarma said. Defending the exclusion of Scheduled Tribes from the ambit of the proposed law, the Chief Minister said tribal communities in the state already follow customary systems governing personal matters.

"Tribals don't support polygamy, provide equal rights to girls and don't recognise live-in relationships. In many ways, they have followed principles similar to UCC for generations," he said.

The Assam government had earlier tabled The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill, seeking to establish a common legal framework for marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion. The Bill proposes banning polygamy, making registration of live-in relationships mandatory and prescribing penal provisions for violations.

However, the proposed legislation excludes Scheduled Tribes residing in Assam from its applicability.

## Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika Defends UCC, Questions Separate Marriage Laws for Muslims

GUWAHATI

Assam minister Pijush Hazarika on Tuesday strongly defended the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the Assam Assembly, arguing that laws permitting polygamy run contrary to the principles of equality and should be abolished. Participating in the discussion on the UCC Bill during the fourth day of the ongoing Assembly session, Hazarika questioned the continuation of separate marriage laws for different religious communities, particularly Muslims. "Why different marriage laws for Muslims?" the minister asked while advocating for the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code in the state.

Referring to polygamy, Hazarika said a man marrying multiple women without the consent of his existing wives should face legal punishment.

"Without the consent of the woman, her husband can marry four women. If he marries a second woman without the consent of the first wife, then marries a third woman without the consent of the second wife, and then mar-

ries a fourth woman without the consent of the first three wives, then what should happen? He should directly be sent to jail," he said in the Assembly. The minister maintained that laws based on equality should apply uniformly across all communities and asserted that the state required legal safeguards to prevent polygamy.

"Standing in this respected House, we must clearly say that rules promoting equality are the right rules," Hazarika stated.

Rejecting allegations that the proposed UCC targets any particular religion, the minister said the legislation was focused solely on civil matters and not religious practices or rituals. "Who is spreading these claims that the Uniform Civil Code is against religion?" he asked. "The Uniform Civil Code is not an attack on any religion, nor is it about interfering with any religious rituals or practices." According to Hazarika, the Bill primarily addresses issues related to polygamy, marriage, inheritance, maintenance, and property rights.



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## RUBIO'S QUAD VISIT

US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio is on a four day visit to India to attend Quad Ministerial meeting. He touched down in Kolkata instead of Delhi and attended Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in the city of joy. Why did he do that? The general feeling is that he is a devout catholic and he wanted a powerful religious symbol to start his visit to Delhi and he got one in MoC in Kolkata.

But why did he need to indulge in optics at all on his India tour? Again, the speculating commentators think that India-US relation is currently like a ship adrift in the stormy seas and he sees it his job to navigate it in the best possible way he can, and shepherd it to the harbour. The optics at Kolkata, in his estimation, afforded him the opportunity to combine his personal beliefs with a daunting professional task in conceivably the most credible setting.

Has he succeeded? Well, we will have to wait and see. This is Marco Rubio's first visit to India and it takes place under the overhang of recent near rupture in Indo-US relation. The effect of complications in relation has not been lost to anybody. When he arrived at Delhi, no official of any consequence waited at the airport to receive him. This has been seen as a snub to him. Delhi seems to have driven home the message to him quietly yet effectively that respect and admiration for Washington has diminished in the eyes of those who sit in the Kartavya Bhavan, new address of MEA. And that unless the US takes the lead in repairing the broken relation, Delhi like the US would also be happy with the new normal of dealing with the US in a transactional manner.

Marco Rubio did get audience with the PM Modi ahead of EAM Jai Shankar on day one of his visit in a departure from protocols, leading to speculation that after allowing the message of dissent to register, Delhi quickly moved to course correction in order that his tour was not unnecessarily clouded in controversies.

But Indian press has been at his throat all the time. In a joint presser with Jai Shankar, he seemed clearly rattled when he was asked a question by a media person on the increasing incidence of racism against Indians in some cases right from the top of the heap. His face when he asked a counter question to the same scribe - 'who's made that comment?' betrayed the tough time he was having dealing with an inquisitive Indian press.

Although he has made the right noises about India-US relation, his message has not registered - neither in the power corridors in Delhi nor on the streets across India. This time there is visible reluctance in India to accept Rubio's views for what they are. And it is to do with Rubio's standing or lack of it in the White House. Rubio helms the States department. But in effect, does he?

Rubio is a good human being and a career politician, who understands the nuts and bolts of politics and international relations like most of his predecessors. He has his heart in the right place unlike many of his cabinet colleagues, some of whom are business persons while others are academicians, far removed from the cut and thrust of the diplomatic world. The trouble, however, is that for all his good qualities, the boss he reports to is actually the person who has the last word on any and every issue of consequence. While he (US President Trump) speaks highly of Rubio, he has effectively sidelined him from all important international issues like the Iran war, Middle East and Russo-Ukraine war.

This is why it is difficult to believe that what he says on Indo-US relations even has a buy-in from the White house.

The US has a great person in Sergio Gor as the US ambassador to India. He is a man who since his arrival in Delhi has injected a lot of energy into the Indo US relation. On the Indo US relation, he has lent his personal touch to everything he has done. The actualisation of the trade deal, which remained held up for many months, is the product of his efforts. Gor has Trump's ears. It's another matter that India is way down Trump's list of countries of interest. There is a strong feeling amongst strategic commentators that Rubio's Delhi visit to attend Quad meeting may after all be the result of his (Gor's) persuasion. Otherwise, it is difficult to believe that Trump even remembers the Quad. Delhi should quietly work with him to redeem whatever is left of the relationship, slowly and steadily without appearing to be doing so.

On a side note, Rubio sees India visit as an opportunity to burnish his credentials as an important player in the diplomatic world. Some say that he may run for US presidency after Trump's stint finishes. He is someone seen to be currently involved in sprucing up his CV to make a strong case for the US presidency. JD Vance, US VP, another likely candidate for the US presidency seems to have lost steam recently. Jokes are doing rounds in Washington that Trump sent him to Islamabad to negotiate with the Iranian interlocutors knowing full well that Iran talks were not likely to succeed, leading to a dent in his reputation. As expected, Vance returned empty handed from Islamabad. This is stated to have cost him badly reputationally; in some quarters some say that it potentially cost him US presidency post Trump era. Quad as an alliance against China is dead in the water; it has no future. Trump in Trump 2.0 has not been enamoured of the Quad. If anything, he has been dying to have some sort of relation with China. It's another matter China has not been accommodating of whatever smaller US's interest that may be there. In the recent Trump visit to China, the body language of Trump in front of the Chinese President, Xi Jinping left nothing to imagination as to who was the boss. TV visuals revealed that Trump was clearly overawed by Xi. Xi even schooled him on how China would expect the US to conduct itself vis-a-vis Taiwan. Xi set out the Chinese red lines clearly before Trump, and so much as cautioned him against selling arms to Taiwan. Trump listened to him like a school kid listens to a headmaster. This did not come through as a relation between the two peer leaders. It appeared Xi, the overlord, was speaking to the head of a vassal state.

In such a backdrop, it does not stand to reason that Trump will invest personal equity in the Quad. The fact is that Trump does not want an adversarial relationship with Xi's China. India would be well advised to read the writing on the wall and proceed to have a heart to heart talk with Rubio on the issue. If the US does not want to remain invested in the Quad, and if the Quad is not/not going to be against China; if it does not ensure free and fair Indo pacific region; and if it does not inspire confidence amongst Quad members against the expansionary and predatory economic/military policies of China, then why do we need it? If China is not perceived as a threat to the free and democratic world, then do we really need the Quad?

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

All things are cause for either laughter or weeping.

- L.A. Seneca

# Looking Toward Bengal: Can Bengalis Across the World Regain Their Lost Glory Under the Present Government



PRADIP DUTTA ROY

Once upon a time, Bengal was the industrial hub of India. Goods produced in its factories were marketed all over the country. During British rule, Kolkata was the capital of India, and therefore the British developed industries around the region. People from different parts of the country gathered in the areas surrounding Kolkata to work in factories. Kolkata eventually became a great metropolitan city.

Although this situation continued for about a decade after independence, the central government gradually became indifferent toward Bengal. Differences emerged between the leadership of Bengal and the leadership at the Centre, which also influenced the people of the state. As a result, the Congress government in Bengal was overthrown and the United Front government was formed.

Due to the Centre's neglectful attitude, a shadow began to fall over Bengal's industries. The central government promoted industrial infrastructure in other states while pushing Bengal's industrial base toward destruction. A once industrially prosperous state gradually fell behind in productivity, and unemployment started rising sharply.

Using this situation of deprivation by the Centre as a political issue, the Left Front came to power by ending Congress rule. During the 34 years of Left Front governance, industries declined even further. Frequent agitations, strikes, and labor unrest created severe difficulties for factory owners trying to keep industries operational. The Left's lack of faith in industry-friendly policies encouraged factory owners to consider alternatives outside Bengal.

Government-run factories struggled to survive. By focusing only on labor interests, the overall industrial environment was damaged. As a result, the jute industry collapsed. Jewelry and textile industries shifted from Bengal to Gujarat. One textile mill after another shut down, while Gujarat developed strong textile manufacturing. Pharmaceutical industries also preferred other states because of fewer labor problems, causing Bengal's pharma sector to lose importance gradually.

During the Left era, an initiative was taken to establish Tata's Nano car factory in Singur. However, under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee, massive protests were organized, destroying this industrial possibility at its very inception. The movement, carried out in the name of protecting agricultural land, is now being seen as anti-industry and misguided.

The Singur issue eventually ended the 34-year Left rule in Bengal. Using the Singur movement as a political weapon, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress came to power. After coming to power, the Trinamool Congress followed the same path as the Left in damaging industries. During the Trinamool era, many factories shut down in Bengal. Even companies like Bata and Britannia shifted operations to other states.

With industries shutting down, lakhs of people became unemployed and economically vulnerable. To remain in power, Mamata introduced several subsidy-oriented welfare schemes. Through allowances and schemes such as Kanyashree and Yuvashree, the government man-

aged to retain support. Despite rising unemployment, the Trinamool government showed little interest in reviving industries.

Party leaders and workers allegedly became involved in corruption and "cut money" practices, accumulating huge wealth. The people of Bengal were becoming increasingly frustrated, but the Trinamool leadership failed to realize it. After their defeat in the 2026 Assembly elections, they now understand that people had lost trust in them. However, they continue to blame voter-list revisions and EVMs for the defeat instead of examining their own mistakes.

The psychological distance between Bengal's leadership and the rulers at the Centre began during the Congress era itself. This allowed the Left Front to rule for 34 years by using anti-Centre politics. In 1989, after the fall of the Congress government, V.P. Singh proposed the name of Bengal's then Chief Minister Jyoti Basu for Prime Minister. Unfortunately, the CPI(M) Politburo, where anti-Bengal forces were allegedly influential, rejected the proposal. Bengal lost a historic opportunity.

Later, after Rajiv Gandhi's death, Pranab Mukherjee also had the opportunity to become Prime Minister. However, the Congress leadership chose P.V. Narasimha Rao instead. Even later, when another opportunity arose, Congress made Manmohan Singh Prime Minister and sidelined Pranab Mukherjee by eventually appointing him President, effectively ending his active political career. According to the writer, Congress later realized this decision backfired, and removing a politically wise leader like Pranab contributed to the party's decline.

The conflict between Bengal and central leadership has therefore existed for decades. But now, after nearly fifty years, a government aligned with the ruling party at the Centre has come to power in Bengal. The BJP has finally captured power in the state after repeated attempts. It is still too early to judge how the BJP-led Centre will treat Bengal, and therefore no immediate conclusions

should be drawn. However, it can be said that the long-standing policy conflict between Bengal and the Centre may now end. Many people in Bengal believe this could bring positive results.

After forming the new government, several major steps have reportedly been initiated. A new SIT has been formed to investigate Abhaya's death. Investigations into political violence following the 2021 Assembly elections have also been ordered. Fresh cases have reportedly been filed regarding those incidents. Families of BJP workers allegedly killed in political violence have been promised government jobs — a major announcement according to the writer.

Apart from demolishing illegal constructions, the government has openly declared that illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators will be deported. State BJP president Shamik Bhat-tacharya reportedly stated clearly that no detention camps would be established in Bengal. Identified Bangladeshis would instead be handed over to the BSF, who would transfer them to the BGB at the border. He also reportedly said that the Bengal government has no intention of using taxpayers' money to support foreign nationals illegally staying in India.

Protests against eviction drives in the Park Street area were reportedly dealt with strictly by the police. Demonstrators allegedly threw stones at police, after which the police resorted to lathi-charge in self-defense and cleared the area. According to the writer, this demonstrates not only a change in government but also a change in the overall situation of law and order. Strict action, he argues, is necessary to restore stability in a state where law and order had deteriorated. Those who previously engaged in disorder are now becoming cornered. Whether they realize their actions harmed the public interest or not, they will now have to accept the rule of law.

After the BJP-led government came to power in Bengal, Union Home Minister Amit Shah reportedly stated that factories closed

during the Trinamool era would be reopened. The writer argues that Bengal's economy cannot be revived merely through welfare schemes. To address the severe unemployment crisis, closed factories must be reopened and new industries established.

Companies such as Bata and Britannia, which moved to other states, should be encouraged to return. The new government must create an industry-friendly environment through proper planning. People have high expectations from the gov-

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

India's strong and unapologetic rebuttal at the UNSC ...

"Independent India began its life battling with cross-border aggression by Pakistan, which coveted Indian territories that had become a part of India as a result of their complete, legal, and irrevocable accession.

Pakistan, by waging several wars and inflicting unprovoked aggression against India, and through its continued sponsorship of cross-border terrorism, has violated the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful coexistence. The use of cross-border terrorism by Pakistan and its doctrine of bleeding India by a thousand cuts exposes its hollow rhetoric, and the rhetoric of commitment to the UN Charter."

India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, delivered a powerful and fact-packed response to Pakistan at the UN Security Council open debate.

With clarity and conviction, Ambassador Parvathaneni exposed Pakistan's continued sponsorship of cross-border terrorism and its notorious 'bleeding India by a thousand cuts' doctrine. He firmly highlighted Pakistan's repeated violations of India's sovereignty, its history of wars and proxy terror campaigns, and made it crystal clear that India will not hesitate to defend itself. ~ BJP



ernment — not only political change but also socio-economic transformation. If Bengal's economic backbone becomes strong again, the state will progress in other sectors as well. Although the new government will face tremendous pressure, it must move forward systematically in the public interest. Bengal is still a state full of potential. By attracting investment in IT and other sectors, infrastructural transformation is possible. The writer believes the government must work positively to fulfill the hopes people have placed in the BJP. In this regard, the Centre is expected to cooperate fully. Just as the Centre will remain alert regarding the strategic "Chicken Neck" corridor, the writer believes that financial allocations for Bengal's development may also increase under this government. If Bengal's economic foundation becomes stronger, it will also contribute positively to India's GDP growth. The people of Bengal, according to the writer, hope that the BJP-led central government will now finally deliver justice to Bengal — after what he describes as a silent revolution through the ballot box.

(The opinions expressed are solely those of the author. The author is a former student leader and an advocate at the Gauhati High Court.)



# Assam Targets Rs 10 Lakh Crore Economy by 2028, Says CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday unveiled an ambitious economic roadmap for the state, setting a target of transforming Assam into a Rs 10 lakh crore economy by 2028 while aiming to reduce the Below Poverty Line (BPL) population to just 2-3 per cent over the next five years.

Replying to the Motion of Thanks on the Governor's Address in the Assam Assembly, Sarma described the NDA's sweeping electoral mandate as a strong endorsement of the government's development-oriented governance model.

Highlighting the scale of the alliance's victory, the Chief Minister said the NDA secured 102 Assembly seats and crossed the one crore vote mark in the state. According to him, BJP candi-



dates polled more than 81.92 lakh votes, while its allies - the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) - secured 14 lakh and 8 lakh votes respectively. "The NDA swept all Scheduled Tribe

reserved seats and tea tribe-dominated constituencies, while winning all but one seat reserved for the Scheduled Caste community," Sarma said.

Focusing on Assam's economic transformation, the Chief Minister cited NITI Aayog data to claim that nearly 35 per cent of the state's population had moved out of poverty in recent years, contributing to the rise of a growing middle class.

"The emergence of a strong middle class is creating educated youth and stronger professionals," he said, adding that poverty alleviation remained central to Assam's long-term growth strategy.

Sarma said Assam's current BPL population stands at around 17 per cent, but expressed confidence that the figure could be reduced to between 2 and 3 per

cent within five years.

The Chief Minister also highlighted improvements in healthcare indicators, particularly maternal mortality. He said Assam's maternal mortality ratio, which stood at 480 when he took charge as Health Minister in 2016, has now dropped to 84, according to the Sample Registration System report.

Describing the achievement as a major public health milestone, Sarma said it reflected broader improvements in governance and healthcare delivery across the state. On the industrial front, the Chief Minister pointed to several flagship projects that he said would re-define Assam's economic profile, including the semiconductor plant at Jagir Road, the fertiliser manufacturing unit at Namrup and the proposed thermal power project at Chapar. Sarma also outlined

the government's infrastructure and education expansion plans. Assam currently has 14 medical colleges, with 11 more in various stages of development, he said. Reiterating the government's long-term vision, Sarma said the state aims to establish one medical college, one engineering college and one university in every district. At the same time, the Chief Minister acknowledged continuing challenges related to illegal immigration, protection of indigenous land rights and development gaps in remote regions.

He stressed the need for focused intervention in char areas, where issues of displacement and encroachment persist, and called for greater attention to the development and security of Karbi Anglong, Bodoland, Barak Valley and Dima Hasao.

**Mizoram University's Department of Education Celebrates Annual Day with Cultural Performances and Awards**

AIZAWL

The Department of Education at Mizoram University (MZU) celebrated its Annual Day Function 2026 with enthusiasm and cultural performances at the MZU Auditorium on Tuesday, bringing together students, faculty members, university officials and invited guests. Vice-Chancellor of Mizoram University Prof. Dibakar Chandra Deka attended the programme as the chief guest. Registrar Prof. Lalungdanga, Finance Officer Dr. Nosekhoh Albert Khizho and Dean of the School of Education Prof. Lokanath Mishra were present as special guests. The programme commenced with a welcome song by the Green Hawk Choir, setting a festive tone for the event. Head of the Department of Education, Prof. Labiakdiki Hnamte, delivered the welcome and inaugural address, extending greetings to students, faculty members and guests. During the inaugural session, the invited dignitaries were felicitated and presented with mementoes by the department. The celebration featured a series of cultural performances by students representing different groups within the department. Among the highlights were a duet dance performance by Pushpa Roy and Vanramghakhela of Blue Raven, followed by a group dance by Camdir and Team Green Hawk. Another duet performance by Shalom and Lalramngheti of Red Phoenix also received appreciation from the audience. A major attraction of the programme was the prize distribution ceremony conducted in two phases by the distinguished guests. Students who excelled in academic, cultural and sports competitions organised by the department were honoured during the event. Addressing the gathering, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dibakar Chandra Deka encouraged students to strive for excellence in both academics and extracurricular activities.

## NCHAC Allocates Portfolios to Executive Members in Dima Hasao

HAFLONG

The North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) has officially allocated portfolios among members of its Executive Committee following a notification issued by the General Administration Department on May 25.

The notification, issued from Haflong under the provisions of the Assam Autonomous Districts (Constitution of District Councils) Rules, 1951, stated that Chief Executive Member (CEM) Debolal Gorlosa had distributed departmental responsibilities to Executive Members with immediate effect. According to the notification, CEM Debolal Gorlosa will retain charge of the General Administration Department (GAD), Personnel, Sports & Youth Affairs, Tourism, Weights & Measures, along with subjects not specifically allocated to other Executive Members.

Executive Member Dinpaino Thaoen has been assigned Town & Country Planning and Finance, while Probota Johari will oversee Health & Family Welfare and Handloom &

Textiles.

Amendun Hojai has been entrusted with Art & Culture, Cultural Affairs, Archaeology, Museum and Library departments.

Roton Jarambusa has been given responsibility for the Public Health Engineering (PHE) divisions of Maibang and Umrangso.

Monjit Naiding will supervise the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, while Niranjan Hojai has been allotted Social Welfare. Executive Member Paudaming Nirame has been assigned the Public Works Department (PWD) Mahur Division. Zosuthang Hmar will oversee Council PWD, Water Resources, Industries and DIPRO, while Samsing Engthi has been allotted Co-operative, Food & Civil Supplies and Fisheries.

Nugliminal Lienthang has been entrusted with Sericulture and Adult Education.

Monjoy Langthasa will supervise the PWD Roads Haflong Division, PWD Roads Maibang Division and PWD Building Division.

## Manipur Chiefs' Body Rejects Allegations Against Village Chief, Demands Probe into Church Leaders' Killings

IMPHAL

The Sadar Hills Chiefs Association (SAHILCA) has rejected allegations levelled against Leilon Vaiphei village chief Lalboi Vaiphei, describing them as "baseless, false and politically motivated", while demanding an impartial investigation into the killing of three church leaders and the continued captivity of 14 Kuki hostages.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the chiefs' body accused certain organisations and individuals of attempting to tarnish the image of the village chief and residents of Leilon Vaiphei without credible evidence.

The association warned that unverified allegations and inflammatory narratives could further deepen tensions amid the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur.

SAHILCA specifically dismissed accusations linked to an alleged abduction case raised by the Naga Peoples' Union (NPU), claiming that the allegations were



intended to create communal misunderstanding during the current unrest.

The organisation called for a fair, transparent and independent investigation into all allegations, asserting that innocent individuals and villages should not be

targeted through unsubstantiated claims or propaganda.

At the same time, the chiefs' body sought an inquiry into allegations involving D Adam Liangmei, claiming that certain individuals from Kongsakul village had allegedly supported armed mili-

itants involved in an ambush on September 12, 2023, in which three persons were reportedly killed.

SAHILCA also alleged that Liangmei had prior knowledge regarding the killing of three church leaders on May 13, 2026, and said the matter warranted immediate investigation by competent authorities.

The association further appealed for the immediate and safe release of 14 Kuki hostages, stressing that civilians should not become victims of political or communal conflict.

Reiterating its demand for justice, SAHILCA said the killings of the church leaders must be investigated thoroughly and impartially, without influence from political interests or communal narratives.

The organisation urged all stakeholders to exercise restraint and allow due process, verified facts and the rule of law to guide efforts toward addressing the sensitive issues surrounding the ongoing conflict in Manipur.

## AASU Intensifies Anti-Inflation Agitation, Burns Petroleum Minister's Effigy Across Assam

GUWAHATI

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) on Tuesday intensified its statewide agitation against rising fuel prices and inflation, staging coordinated demonstrations and burning effigies of Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri at district headquarters across Assam.

The protests, organised simultaneously in several districts, were aimed at highlighting the sharp increase in petrol, diesel and essential commodity prices, which the student body said had placed an unbearable burden on ordinary citizens.

In Guwahati, tensions briefly escalated near Swahid Bhawan in Uzan Bazar after protesters set fire to an effigy of the Union minister. Police personnel intervened to extinguish the flames, leading to a brief scuffle at the protest site.

AASU leaders questioned the Centre's explanation that the ongoing

crisis in West Asia was responsible for the recent fuel price hike.

Samiran Kalita, a member of AASU's Kamrup district unit, alleged that fuel prices had been deliberately kept under control before elections and accused the government of administrative failure.

"Why did prices not rise before elections? Why was the West Asia conflict not cited then? It is clear that the government has failed in governance. If it cannot fulfil its responsibilities, it should resign on moral grounds," Kalita said.

The agitation spread across multiple districts including Tamulpur, Biswanath, Bijnai and Jorhat, where protesters burnt effigies, raised slogans and staged demonstrations against the Centre and the Assam government.

In Tamulpur, members of the district unit gathered at Puran Chowk and raised slogans such as "Stop price

rise", "Down with the Government of India" and "Down with the Assam government."

"The prices of petrol and diesel are increasing every day. If both the state and central governments fail to control inflation, our protests will intensify further," one protester warned.

In Bijnai, AASU members staged a similar protest at the local market area, accusing both the Centre and the state government of failing to curb inflation.

"We condemn the government for failing to control the continuous rise in prices," a local member said. More than a hundred AASU members also assembled outside Swahid Bhawan in Biswanath to register their protest.

A local AASU leader said the rising costs of food items, LPG cylinders and life-saving medicines had severely impacted people's daily lives.

"From food commodities to medicines and LPG, everything is becoming more expensive. We urge both the state and central governments to provide immediate relief," he said.

In Jorhat, AASU members marched from the organisation's office carrying an effigy of the Petroleum Minister before burning it outside Jorhat Sadar Police Station. The protest witnessed a brief verbal altercation between demonstrators and police personnel.

Jorhat district AASU president Pritam Jyoti Saikia criticised repeated fuel price hikes linked to fluctuations in international markets and alleged that the increase in fuel costs had triggered a rise in the prices of essential commodities.

"We burnt the effigy of the Petroleum Minister demanding immediate measures to control inflation and reduce fuel prices," Saikia said.

## Zubeen Garg Death Case: Fast-Track Court Frames Charges Against Seven Accused, Trial from June 8



GUWAHATI

A fast-track court in Guwahati on Tuesday framed charges against all seven accused in the case related to the death of Assam's cultural icon Zubeen Garg, paving the way for the commencement of trial proceedings from June 8 after the accused denied all allegations.

The hearing was conducted before the fast-track court presided over by Judge Sharmila Bhuyan.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Special Public Prosecutor Ziaul Kamar said the court found sufficient grounds to proceed with the case after considering submissions from both the prosecution and the defence.

"Today, charges have been framed against all the accused persons under Sections 3(6), 3(7) and 3(8). The charges have been framed in accordance with the chargesheet, which means the investigation conducted by Assam Police has been found legitimate," Kamar said.

He further stated that conspiracy-related charges had been framed against all the accused except Sandipan Garg.

Explaining the provisions in-

Section 3(6) applies when a criminal act is carried out by multiple persons sharing common criminal intent or knowledge.

Following the framing of charges, the accused were informed about the allegations against them and asked whether they accepted or denied the charges. All seven accused denied the allegations and chose to face trial. Kamar said no further miscellaneous hearings would take place before June 8, when the trial is scheduled to formally begin.

After the proceedings, Garima Saikia Garg said the case would now move into the witness examination stage.

"Although I hope the process concludes soon, the prosecution has listed around 394 witnesses. There may be instances where not all are examined, but a considerable number will testify. We will patiently wait for the trial," she said.

The seven accused named in the case are Shyamkanu Mahanta, Siddharth Sharma, Sandipan Garg, Shekharjyoti Goswami, Amritprava Mahanta, Nandeswar Bora and Paresw Baishya.

## Slow and Steady saves the Species: School kids mark World Turtle Day in Manipur



IMPHAL

World Turtle Day was observed at Manipur Zoological Garden (MZG), Iroisemba, Imphal, under the theme "Let Turtle Live, Let Nature Thrive, Protect Wildlife, Protect Our Future". The programme was jointly organized by Manipur Zoological Garden (MZG) and Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation India (TSAFI). On 23rd May, 2026, a total of 158 students

Quest!

**Humans share 50% of their DNA with bananas.**



and 10 teachers from Grace Academy, Tarung, Imphal, participated and joined hands with MZG and TSAFI highlighting the ecological importance of turtles, threats faced by them, and the need for collective conservation action through various educational and outreach activities. Shri L. Biramongol Singh, IFS, Director, MZG quoted,

"The Manipur Zoological Garden and TSAFI have undertaken significant initiatives to conserve the critically endangered Asian Giant Tortoise in Manipur under the able guidance of Shri Anurag Bajpai, IFS, PCCF & HoFF and Chief Wildlife Warden, Manipur and Shri L. Joykumar Singh, IFS, CCF, Wildlife, Manipur. The successful conservation

breeding programme going on at the Zoo is intended to support the species' eventual rewilding in suitable habitats. Such awareness and capacity building programmes targeting youth are very important expected to bolster future conservation initiatives and mitigate direct threats to the species".

As part of the event, Dr. L. Saratchandra Singh, Veterinary Officer, MZG; Th. Gyanic Singh, Range Forest Officer, MZG; O. Ambika Devi, Deputy Ranger, MZG; and Sanjenbam Joel Singh, Associate of TSAFI, delivered talks and conducted interactive sessions on turtle conservation, wildlife protection, and the importance of safeguarding freshwater ecosystems. A pledge session was also

led by and Sanjenbam Joel Singh where all the participants pledged and vouched for the conservation of non-marine chelonians in the region. Ms. Sushmita Kar, Project Coordinator, Northeast India, TSAFI said, "Turtles are ancient, living since 220 million years ago or the Triassic era but are one of the most threatened vertebrates today. Although Manipur has very rich and unique populations of rare turtles, very limited conservation initiatives have been taken for these non-charismatic species who help to keep the environment clean through scavenging and regenerate forests through seed dispersal".

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## Amit Shah announces high-level panel to study demographic changes, cites national security concerns



NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday announced the formation of a high-level committee to examine demographic change in India, calling it a major challenge with implications for national security, sovereignty and social stability.

The announcement follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on Independence Day 2025, when he proposed setting up a dedicated panel to study demographic shifts linked to illegal immigration and other "unnatural" factors.

In a post on X, Shah said the government has now operationalised the "High-Level Committee on Demographic Change" to assess the impact of infiltration and abnormal population changes across the country.

"Infiltration and other

reasons causing unnatural demographic change pose a very significant challenge to the present and future of any nation," Shah said, adding that the committee was constituted in line with the Prime Minister's announcement on August 15, 2025.

The panel will be headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar. Its members include Census Commissioner and former IAS officer Durga Shankar Mishra, former IPS officer Balaji Srivastava, and economist Shamika Ravi. The Joint Secretary (Foreigners-I) in the Ministry of Home Affairs will serve as the committee's Member Secretary.

According to Shah, the committee has been tasked with carrying out a comprehensive study of demographic changes across India. It will examine shifts caused by illegal immigration and other

"unnatural" reasons, analyse abnormal population trends among religious and social groups, and recommend a planned, time-bound response.

Describing the issue as one that goes beyond population data, Shah said demographic change has direct implications for sovereignty, law and order, social structure and the preservation of tribal communities.

Officials said the committee will analyse demographic data, consult stakeholders and propose policy measures to address emerging concerns. The panel is expected to submit its recommendations within a fixed timeframe, with an emphasis on actionable solutions.

Reaffirming the government's stance, Shah said the initiative reflects a proactive effort to protect the country's integrity and social fabric through "well-informed and decisive action."

## Bangladeshis rush back home via Hakimpur border after Bengal government sets up holding centres



KOLKATA

Fresh rush of Bangladeshi infiltrators seeking to return to their motherland was reported at the Hakimpur border in North 24 Parganas district on Tuesday.

This comes within less than 48 hours after the West Bengal government, led by the Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, on Saturday announced setting up of 'holding centres' across districts in the state.

Since early this morning the illegal infiltrators carrying with their bag and baggage were seen gathering at the

BSF check post at Hakimpur under the Bashirhat subdivision.

More than around 150 infiltrators were found waiting for call from the BSF personnel posted at the check post so that they can go back to their own country across the border.

The same scene was witnessed in October last year when the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

With implementation of the SIR exercise, hundreds of Bangladeshi infiltrators, who used to work in dif-

ferent parts, including Rajarhat, New Town, Dum Dum, Dankuni, Howrah, etc. in Bengal, had gathered at the Hakimpur checkpoint and returned to Bangladesh.

Since then, no such rush of illegal immigrants were found at the checkpoint.

On Saturday, the first-ever BJP government in Bengal issued a notification citing guidelines issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Three suspected 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' lodged in holding centre in Bengal's Murshidabad

"Enclosed please find the letter under reference regarding the procedure to be followed for deportation of Bangladeshi/Rohingyas apprehended for staying illegally in this country. In this connection, it is requested to take initiative/appropriate action for setting up of Holding Centres in the district for apprehended foreigners as well as for the released foreign prisoners awaiting deportation/repatriation in accordance with the MHA guideline under reference," the notification issued by the Bengal home and hill affairs department on Saturday (May 23) stated.

The development comes days after the new CM Suwendu Adhikari said that his government would follow a new policy of "detect, delete and deport" while dealing with "illegal infiltrators".

"Those not covered under the CAA [Citizenship (Amendment) Act] are completely illegal infiltrators. The State police will arrest them and hand them over to the BSF. The BSF will hold talks with the BDR [now Border Guard Bangladesh] and try to deport them. This means a policy of detect, delete and deport," Suwendu had said on 20 May.

Malda has become the first district where a 'holding centre' has begun functioning.

Located at Chandan Park in English Bazar town, the facility is currently the only holding centre in the district and has already housed nine suspected Bangladeshi nationals, including three women and six minors.

In Murshidabad district with around 70 per cent Muslim population, such a 'holding centre' has also come up in the Lalgola area, where a suspected Bangladeshi infiltrator has been kept. Both Malda and Murshidabad are Muslim-majority districts and share the India-Bangladesh border.

Under the framework, suspected illegal entrants can be held for up to 30 days as district magistrates and designated officers conduct verification procedures, collect biometric details and upload records to central databases before repatriation, sources in the state home department said.

## INTERNATIONAL

## Iran condemns US strikes as a show of 'bad faith' and warns of consequences

DUBAI

Iran denounced U.S. strikes a day earlier as a sign of "bad faith and unreliability" as negotiations continue toward a possible deal to end the war.

The U.S. military has characterized Monday's strikes in southern Iran as defensive, saying targets included missile launch sites and boats placing mines, and said the U.S. acted with "restraint" in light of the weeks-long ceasefire.

Iran's foreign ministry called the strikes a ceasefire violation and warned that Washington would bear responsibility for "all consequences," without details.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will leave no act of aggression unanswered," it added in a statement.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard on Tuesday said it had shot down and deterred drones and a fighter jet that entered its airspace, according to Iran's official Mizan news agency, which did not specify when the incident occurred.

It wasn't immediately clear what the developments would mean for negotiations. The strikes came after Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf went to Qatar as part of the talks, which U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday were "proceeding nicely."

The strikes were the latest flare-up in the fragile ceasefire that began April 7 and has largely held.

Negotiations center in part on the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial waterway off southern Iran through which a fifth of the world's crude oil and natural gas passed before the war began with U.S.-Israeli strikes in February. Tehran retaliated by effectively closing the strait, stranding hundreds of ships and shocking

the global economy.

The strait has become a powerful lever for Tehran in talks, joining the long-running issue of Iran's nuclear program and highly enriched uranium. Iran in turn, wants the U.S. to lift its military blockade of Iranian ports that began on April 17.

The strait also is cause for growing concern as supplies of fertilizer are also badly affected for vulnerable global farmers.

"What we are witnessing today is not only a geopolitical crisis, it is a systemic shock to the global agri-food system," the director-general of the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization, Qu Dongyu, said Tuesday.

Trump has introduced a new angle in negotiations for a deal on the war, saying any agreement to end the war should include a requirement for several additional countries, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, to join the Abraham Accords, a series of U.S.-brokered diplomatic, economic and security agreements aimed at normalizing relations with Israel.

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates became the first countries to join in 2020; Sudan, Morocco and Kazakhstan have followed. Egypt and Jordan already formally recognize Israel and have long-standing peace treaties. Turkey first recognized Israel in 1949.

Israel's conduct against Palestinians, including in the war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, has alienated Gulf Arab states and the wider Muslim world, but Trump has been keen to build on the Abraham Accords, forged during his first term. He even has suggested that Iran eventually could sign

on DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran on Tuesday denounced U.S. strikes a day earlier as a sign of "bad faith and unreliability" as negotiations continue toward a possible deal to end the war.

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## US strikes fuel concern over Iran deal talks

TEHRAN

US forces launched overnight strikes on missile sites in Iran and boats they said were trying to lay mines in Gulf waters, sending oil prices higher Tuesday while diplomats sought a deal to end the war.

The international benchmark Brent crude jumped up by almost three percent after the US Central Command announced the new wave of bombings, and China urged both sides to respect their truce and resolve their dispute peacefully.

Iran did not immediately confirm the reported strikes, but state media reported blasts in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas, and the Revolutionary Guards Corps said its forces had downed a US drone entering its airspace and fired at an F-35 fighter jet.

In a statement marking the start of the Eid al-Adha holiday, Tehran's supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei declared that Washington was losing its influence in the Middle East and warned countries in the region to stop hosting bases from which the US could launch attacks. The United States, he said in a written statement, "in addition to no longer having any safe haven in the region for aggression and the establishment of military bases, is moving further and further away from its former position with each passing day".

Tim Hawkins, a spokesman for US Central Command, said: "US forces conducted self-defence strikes in southern Iran today to protect our troops from threats posed by Iranian forces." Government supporters hold Iranian flags and pictures of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, during a ceremony honoring the armed forces and those killed in the war with Israel and the U.S. at the Imam Khomeini Grand Mosque in

Tehran, Iran, Sunday, May 24, 2026.

He gave few details of the attacks and said only that the targets included missile launch sites and boats trying to "emplace mines."

Despite the strikes, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday that a deal remained within reach.

But he remained firm on the Strait of Hormuz, the key oil and gas shipping route out of which Iran is seeking to control. "There were some talks going on in Qatar today, so we'll see if we can make progress. I think it's a lot of talking back and forth going on about specific language in the initial document, so it'll take a few days," Rubio told reporters, during a visit to India.

He said the strait was "going to be open one way or the other," adding: "What's happening there is unlawful, it's illegal, it's unsustainable for the world, it's unacceptable." A report by the Tasnim news agency said Tehran's negotiators are seeking the release of frozen assets, with half made available as soon as an initial memorandum of understanding is signed.

This came as a top Iranian delegation was in Qatar, and after Tehran said it was finalising a 14-point framework for a deal on ending the war, which began with US-Israeli airstrikes on February 28.

"Iran's frozen assets are to be released during the course of the negotiations, and this amount is estimated at \$24 billion in accordance with the 14-point memorandum of understanding," Tasnim said, quoting what it said was an unnamed source close to the negotiating team. Government supporters hold Iranian flags and pictures of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, during a ceremony honoring the armed forces and those killed in the war with

Israel and the U.S. at the Imam Khomeini Grand Mosque in Tehran, Iran, Sunday, May 24, 2026.

Iran's top negotiator, parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, arrived in Qatar on Monday for talks along with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Central Bank Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati.

Tasnim said Ghalibaf's trip was "aimed at reaching an understanding on the implementation of Iran's demand and the method of accessing \$12 billion in the first phase".

In 2023, \$6 billion in frozen Iranian funds held in South Korean banks was transferred to Qatar pending the release of five American citizens detained in Iran.

The new strikes threatened a ceasefire that began on April 8 as the United States and Iran struggle to reach an accord to end a war that has rattled the global economy with a severe disruption of energy flows.

China, Washington's great power rival and a major energy importer, expressed concern.

"We urge the parties concerned to fulfil their ceasefire commitments, resolve disputes through peaceful means... and promote the early restoration of peace," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told r

Hopes of an accord took another blow when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to "crush" Hezbollah in Lebanon on Monday evening.

Iran has demanded that any peace accord apply to the fighting in Lebanon as well.

On Tuesday, Israel warned Lebanese civilians to evacuate the southern city of Nabatieh ahead of more planned strikes.

President Donald Trump said in a social media post that he expected Iran to hand over its enriched uranium to the US to be destroyed, or have it destroyed in Iran with an international witness.

## What Is the Government Afraid Of? The Rise of the “Cockroach Janata Party”



POONAM I. KAUSHIK

“There are already such parasites who attack the system, and you also want to become one of them. Some youth are like cockroaches who do not get employment... some become media persons, some turn to social media, some misuse the Right to Information, and then they begin attacking everyone.”

This remark by the Chief Justice about unemployed youth triggered a storm on social media. Controversies erupted, memes flooded the internet, and soon a new political phenomenon was born - the “Cockroach Janata Party” (CJP).

For 30-year-old founder Abhijeet Dipke, a former social activist associated with the Aam Aadmi Party, it had initially begun as a satirical internet meme. Later, it transformed into a symbolic movement/group, which he described as “India’s most honest party for the lazy, unemployed and forgotten citizens whom the system has ignored.”

The party claimed to represent frustrated young Indians disillusioned with mainstream politics. By May 21, the party’s Instagram account had crossed 16 million followers - a staggering 1,400 per cent increase in just a single day, surpassing even the combined followers of the BJP and Congress.

As expected, a nervous establishment celebrating recent electoral victories reacted swiftly. Citing national security concerns based on intelligence inputs, authorities blocked the CJP’s X handle and

Trinamool Congress and several opposition parties expressed concern over the suppression of youth voices, although they adopted a cautious approach in openly embracing the movement. Critics argued that Dipke himself had temporarily shut down the website to play the “victim card,” while others preferred a “wait and watch” strategy.

Yet many are missing the central issue. In a democracy, satire directed at those in power and holding authority accountable is entirely natural. This reflects the mindset of a generation that feels insulted by institutions, ignored by political parties, and patronised by leaders who only understand the language of obedience.

As a result, democratic space for political participation is steadily shrinking, even though a healthy democracy requires the inclusion of diverse viewpoints.

The real question is: why fear an organisation that has only just emerged and appears largely to be a satirical attempt to mock mainstream political parties? Is it because leaders living under the illusion of invincibility fear a new challenger - a new political force capable of replacing them?

Certainly, growing dissatisfaction with the political system, despite Narendra Modi’s popularity, economic distress, unemployment, educated graduates unable to secure even clerical jobs, and scandals such as the NEET paper leak without accountability, have all contributed to the CJP’s appeal among Generation Z (1995-2007).

Gen Z appears to be searching desper-

ately for new leaders capable of offering hope, because the Opposition has failed to effectively channel public frustration for political change.

Although it began as a joke, the CJP has now evolved into something much larger. Constant repetition has given it legitimacy. Media amplification and adoption by opposition groups as shorthand political messaging have further strengthened it, reflecting public anxieties, frustrations and aspirations.

Still, the CJP is not yet a structured

political movement or mass organisation in the conventional sense. It is more of an ideological and emotional phenomenon - a narrative wave emerging from public sentiment.

There is no guarantee that its popularity will continue to grow rapidly or that it will not suddenly fade away. It may eventually represent only a few “echo chambers” rather than a broad voter base.

It could remain merely a symbolic political expression rather than becoming a grassroots political structure, because elections in India are still largely influenced by welfare schemes, leadership image, caste-community equations and local administration - not by meme slogans alone.

However, the phenomenon reveals how politics functions in the digital age: humour, virality, storytelling and image-building.

The CJP symbolises political emotions in an intensely digital and polarised democracy rather than a concrete organisational force. For Gen Z, the attraction of the CJP is psychological because it appeals to rebellion, group identity and the simplification of political dominance through powerful symbolism.

Those in power surely understand how difficult it is to eliminate cockroaches. Similarly, in a democracy, it is difficult to suppress satire and public criticism of authority.

Only last year, Nepal witnessed a youth-led movement driven largely by Gen Z that eventually toppled the government. That mobilisation drew strength from unemployment, inflation, corruption and inequality.

The blocking of the CJP’s accounts clear-

ly indicates where the real problem lies. The issue is not with India’s restless youth - whether employed or unemployed, highly educated or otherwise.

Rather, the problem lies in the habits of a supposedly “strong” government that repeatedly uses state power to suppress humour, satire, dissent and disagreement.

Governments often forget that democracy’s greatest strength lies in providing a platform for people to express their emotions, frustrations and grievances.

Undoubtedly, the CJP offers several important lessons. If political leaders continue to ignore them, they themselves will bear the consequences.

Unemployment, rising prices and widespread corruption do not merely create explosive situations - they also generate justified anger against inequality and injustice.

This is a dangerous combination of economic frustration, rising unemployment and demands for political accountability.

At the same time, it serves as a warning to leaders who forget that they hold office because people trusted them to fulfil aspirations of employment, education and dignity.

They would do well to govern with seriousness, purpose and sensitivity.

When the “powerful” repeatedly disrupt ordinary lives and escape accountability, eventually “people’s power” emerges.

What next?

India urgently requires greater transparency, tolerance and commitment to inclusive political and economic governance. The spirit of fairness needs a voice - one that can emerge only through genuine public dialogue and honest debate, not through empty symbolism and meaningless rhetoric.

Indian politics must learn to listen to what Gen Z is saying. That is precisely why the CJP resonates so deeply with them.

Satire succeeds where politics loses credibility.

For young voters raised in the age of algorithms, legacy alone carries little value and dynastic surnames hold limited influence. They question everything - even the so-called “official truth.”

The political rise of actor Vijay in Tamil Nadu is one such example. His popularity did not stem merely from “star power.” It reflected a public mood ready to challenge familiar political narratives, where digital mobilisation became a weapon against political fatigue.

The true strength of the CJP lies in transforming humour into community, laziness into hyper-activity, unemployment into dialogue, and struggle into survival instinct - thereby turning a joke into a collective voice.

It is a voice demanding employment, fair examinations, an affordable future, freedom of expression, clean institutions and equal political opportunity without dynastic privilege.

The time has come for political leaders to understand that the finest political systems are built upon honesty, integrity and fairness.

In the long run, as the long-suppressed voices of emerging Gen Z and Gen Alpha become louder, they may signal a turning point in Indian politics.

Now is the time to protect genuine democracy.

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Instagram page. BJP supporters labelled it a “deep state political lab-generated Gen Z project.” Others alleged “foreign involvement,” claiming it was a conspiracy orchestrated by America or Pakistan. The Congress,

ately for new leaders capable of offering hope, because the Opposition has failed to effectively channel public frustration for political change.

Although it began as a joke, the CJP has now evolved into something much larger. Constant repetition has given it legitimacy. Media amplification and adoption by opposition groups as shorthand political messaging have further strengthened it, reflecting public anxieties, frustrations and aspirations.

Still, the CJP is not yet a structured

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