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**PERSPECTIVE**

"Nothing makes you happier than kids. Kids are my greatest source of happiness. I really encourage everyone to have kids." - Elon Musk

## Emergency a bid to silence democracy, says Himanta

**GUWAHATI**  
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday termed the 1975 Emergency a "dark chapter" in India's democratic history, alleging that it was imposed to suppress democratic values and curtail civil liberties across the country. Marking the anniversary of the Emergency, the chief minister paid tribute to those who opposed the measure, describing them as courageous defenders of democracy who resisted authoritarian rule during one of the most controversial periods in independent India's history. In a social media post, Sarma said the Emergency, imposed in 1975, was an attempt to crush the nation's democratic ethos and fundamental freedoms. "We remember that dark chapter in the history of Indian democracy, when in 1975 the Emergency was imposed in an attempt to crush the country's democratic values and civil liberties," he wrote. The chief minister also saluted those who fought against the Emergency, stating that their struggle helped protect democratic institutions and constitutional rights. "Humble salutations to all the brave warriors who struggled to protect democracy," he added. The Emergency was declared on June 25, 1975, under Article 352 of the Constitution and remained in force until March 21, 1977. The 21-month period witnessed widespread restrictions on civil liberties, press censorship, political arrests and the suspension of several constitutional freedoms. Since 2025, the Union government has officially observed June 25 as Samvidhan Hatya Diwas. A gazette notification issued by the government stated that the Emergency was marked by a "gross abuse of power", during which citizens were subjected to excesses and atrocities.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

Deeply saddened by the devastation caused by the severe earthquakes in Venezuela. On behalf of the people of India, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Venezuela, especially to the families who have lost their loved ones. We pray for the speedy recovery of those injured and stand in solidarity with all those affected during this difficult time. India stands ready to extend all possible assistance.

- Narendra Modi, PM India

# Assam Government Orders Major Bureaucratic Reshuffle, Transfers Senior IAS and ACS Officers

**GUWAHATI**  
The Assam government on Wednesday carried out a significant administrative reshuffle, transferring and reassigning several senior IAS and ACS officers across key departments and district administrations. According to a notification issued by the Department of Personnel, the changes affect senior officials in the state secretariat, district administrations and various government departments, and take immediate effect. Among the senior-level appointments, IAS officer Syedain Abbasi, currently serving as Special Chief Secretary of the Public Health Engineering and Water Resources Departments, has been relieved of the additional charge of the Housing and Urban Affairs Department. He has now been entrusted with additional responsibility as Special Chief Secretary of the Irrigation Department. Om Prakash, Managing Director of Samagra Shiksha Axom Mission, has been appointed Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of



Assam in the Environment and Forest Department as well as the Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department. Hojai District Commissioner Deba Prasad Misra has been transferred as

# Assam Flood Situation Worsens as Over 20,000 Affected; High Alert Issued Across Vulnerable Districts

**GUWAHATI.**  
The first wave of monsoon floods has intensified across Assam, affecting more than 20,000 people in Dhemaji district and prompting authorities to issue high alerts in several vulnerable districts as rivers continue to swell following heavy rainfall in Assam and neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh. State authorities have placed flood-prone areas on maximum alert amid warnings that rising river levels, embankment breaches and continued rainfall could worsen the situation over the next 24 to 48 hours. According to inputs from the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati and the Meteorological Centre in Itanagar, intense rainfall in upper catchment areas has significantly increased river discharge, raising concerns for downstream districts. Officials said the flood wave is expected to impact Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Biswanath and Sonitpur before moving further downstream through the Brahmaputra basin and eventually reaching Dhubri. Acting on the directions of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the state government has instructed all district



administrations and line departments to remain fully prepared. Teams of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and other emergency agencies have been kept on standby for rapid deployment. Authorities have advised residents in low-lying and flood-prone areas to stay vigilant and move to safer locations when directed by local administrations. People have also been urged to avoid entering flooded areas or travelling in small boats across the Brahmaputra and its tributaries due to strong river currents. A high alert has been sounded in Lakhimpur district after water levels in the Ranganaadi River rose sharply following the release of water from an upstream hydroelectric project. Emergency response measures have been activated, while SDRF personnel have been deployed to vulnerable locations. Officials said water levels in the Dikrong and Singra rivers are also rising rapidly. An emergency control room has been set up, and residents have been asked to seek assistance through the district helpline if required. Dhemaji district remains the worst affected by the current flood spell. Continuous rainfall over the past several days, coupled with heavy precipitation in adjoining Arunachal Pradesh, has caused rivers and streams to overflow, inundating large areas. Official estimates indicate that more than 20,000 people across 84 villages have been affected so far. Floodwaters have submerged nearly 920 hectares

of agricultural land, causing extensive damage to standing crops. The overflowing Jadhral River has inundated villages such as Bhoju Gaon, Dihiri, Salmari and Goroimari under the Dhemaji Revenue Circle, leaving many residents grappling with shortages of food and drinking water. Similarly, the swollen Na-Nadi has flooded 32 villages under the Gogamukh Revenue Circle, including Chutakari, Bordoi-Bali, Chelajan, Lotia, Na-pam and Berbhonga, affecting more than 500 families. Road connectivity has also suffered significantly. Floodwaters have submerged portions of the Gogamukh-Ghilamara PWD road at Champora, disrupting communication between Bordoibam and Ghilamara for the past three days. Large stretches of agricultural land in Bilmukh and Konwarbari have also gone under water. In Jonai subdivision, rising waters of the Dikari River entered residential areas in Jamuguri, Sijari, Uluwani and Majagon, while the Sille River flooded parts of Malbhog-Santipur and Rabhakathoni, causing widespread waterlogging and disruption to daily life. To support affected residents, the district administration has opened a relief camp at Dharampur Lalikjan LP School under Jadhral Panchayat, where families displaced by the floods have been provided shelter. Water Resources Department officials said the Brahmaputra is flowing close to the danger mark at Sissikolghar, while the water levels of several tributaries continue to rise, increasing the likelihood of further flooding if rainfall persists. The first spell of floods has also impacted Bajali district, where the Kaldia River breached nearly 50 metres of an embankment on Tuesday evening. The breach inundated agricultural fields and damaged road infrastructure in several areas. Floodwaters submerged key road stretches, including the Dr Jinaram Road-Kaoimari Road and the Kaoimari-Rampur Road, disrupting transportation and affecting nearby residential localities. Officials reported that nearly 35 hectares of agricultural land have been flooded, while around 2,000 livestock have been affected, raising concerns among farmers about crop and livelihood losses.

## Massive Landslide Blocks NH-37 in Manipur's Tamenglong, Hundreds of Vehicles Stranded



**IMPHAL**  
A major landslide triggered by continuous rainfall disrupted traffic along the Imphal-Silchar National Highway (NH-37) in Manipur's Tamenglong district on Wednesday, leaving hundreds of vehicles stranded and cutting off a crucial transport corridor connecting the state with the rest of the country. Officials said the landslide occurred between Shanti Khunou and Rengpang near the 87 CRPF Battalion camp, where a large section of the highway was buried under mud, rocks and debris, bringing vehicular movement to a complete standstill. The blockage has affected hundreds of vehicles, including passenger vehicles and goods carriers. A significant number of the stranded vehicles are trucks transporting essential commodities from Silchar to Imphal through Jiribam, while several others were travelling towards Jiribam from the state capital. Authorities confirmed that no casualties or injuries have been reported in the incident. Prior to the landslide, security agencies had facilitated the movement of

392 vehicles carrying essential supplies along the highway. NH-37 remains one of Manipur's critical lifelines, particularly during disruptions on other major routes. Officials said security forces continue to maintain strict convoy protection and surveillance along vulnerable stretches of the highway to ensure the safe movement of vehicles and essential goods. Restoration work began shortly after the incident. Personnel from Ganpati Construction Company, which is responsible for the maintenance and blacktopping of the Imphal-Jiribam road section, have been deployed to clear the debris and restore traffic movement. Heavy machinery has been pressed into service to remove mud and rocks from the affected stretch, though continuous rainfall has posed challenges to the clearance operation. The landslide comes amid widespread monsoon-related disruptions across several parts of Northeast India, where heavy rainfall has triggered flash floods, road blockages and infrastructure damage in recent days. District authorities have advised commuters to avoid non-essential travel along NH-37 until the road is reopened and conditions stabilise. "All possible efforts are being made to clear the obstruction and assist stranded travellers. Restoration operations are in progress," a district official said. Officials said updates on the restoration work and traffic movement will be issued as the situation develops.

## NSCN-IM Denies MHA Allegations Linking Outfit to Poppy Field Destruction and Fatal Gunfire

**IMPHAL**  
The National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) has strongly refuted allegations made by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) linking the organisation to the destruction of poppy plantations, an exchange of gunfire and the resulting deaths in Manipur. In a statement issued on Thursday, the outfit criticised an order issued by the Ministry's Counter Terrorism and Counter Radicalisation (CTCR) Division, describing it as an accusation based on assumptions rather than verified facts. The NSCN-IM rejected the allegations in their entirety and asserted that it had no involvement in the destruction of poppy fields, the reported gunfire or any casualties arising from the incident. According to the group, the Centre had attributed responsibility without presenting evidence or conducting a fair and independent investigation. "By casually attributing a grave and politically sensitive incident to the NSCN, the Government of India has once again chosen presumption over proof and narrative over evidence," the organisation said in its statement. The outfit further argued that it is neither a terrorist organisation nor a banned group under Indian law and accused the government of attempting to shape public opinion through unsubstantiated claims. The NSCN-IM maintained that the allegations appeared intended to create a predetermined narrative before the facts of the incident had been independently established. Rejecting the government directive, the group described it as a "reckless attempt to manufacture guilt without proof" and called on the Centre to act transparently while honouring commitments made under the Milan Memorandum of Understanding.

## Manipur CM Calls on Meiteis to Help Bridge Kuki-Naga Divide



**IMPHAL**  
Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on June 25 appealed to the Meitei community to take on the role of a "big brother" in helping resolve the ongoing tensions between the Kuki and Naga communities, stressing that sustainable peace is critical for the state's development and progress. The Chief Minister made the remarks while addressing a programme organised by the BJP's Manipur unit at the party headquarters to observe Samvidhan Hatya Diwas, marking the anniversary of the Emergency imposed in 1975. The event commemorated what party leaders described as the "dark chapter" of the Emergency era under the Congress government. Speaking as the chief guest, Khemchand said the recent Kuki-Naga tensions had emerged at a time when the state was gradually witnessing a return to normalcy in several regions. Highlighting improvements in the security and social environment, he noted that peace had largely returned to the valley districts over the past few months. Referring to Jiribam district, he said communities including Hmar, Paite, Meitei, Kuki and Naga residents had resumed living together peacefully. According to the Chief Minister, many internally

displaced people have also returned to their native villages and restarted their daily lives. Emphasising the link between stability and economic growth, Khemchand said the restoration of a popularly elected government following President's Rule had enabled the administration to focus on completing long-pending development projects across the state. "Development cannot move forward without peace and normalcy," he said. Describing the Kuki-Naga conflict as unfortunate, the Chief Minister asserted that the Meitei community has an important role in fostering dialogue, reconciliation and mutual understanding between the two groups. Khemchand also underlined the strategic significance of Jiribam, stating that the district has the potential to become a major commercial gateway for Manipur. He announced that a significant development project would soon be launched in the district under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, though further details would be revealed at a later stage. Turning to the Emergency period of 1975, the Chief Minister criticised the then Congress government, alleging that the era was marked by authoritarian governance and suppression of democratic values. He said the rise of the BJP was rooted in public resistance to such politics and reiterated that the people remain supreme in a democratic system. During the programme, several individuals who had been jailed for opposing the Emergency were honoured for their role in defending democratic principles. The event was attended by BJP ministers, legislators and party workers from across the state.



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## KICKING DOWN THE AI LADDER

The debate over regulating artificial intelligence has entered a new and consequential phase. As frontier AI systems become more powerful, calls for international oversight, safety standards and coordinated governance are growing louder. Yet behind the language of responsibility and risk management lies a deeper geopolitical question: Who gets to shape the rules of the AI age, and who is expected merely to follow them?

The latest intervention comes from Anthropic chief executive Dario Amodei, who has urged governments to move swiftly on AI regulation, including mandatory third-party testing of advanced models and closer cooperation among democratic nations on AI supply chains. Framed as a necessary response to emerging technological risks, the proposal appears sensible on the surface. Few would dispute the need for safeguards against misuse, cybersecurity threats, autonomous weapons or the possibility of losing control over increasingly capable systems.

However, history offers a cautionary lesson. Global regulatory frameworks often emerge only after dominant powers have secured their advantage. Once that advantage is established, regulation can become less about protecting humanity and more about preserving existing hierarchies.

The comparison with nuclear governance is difficult to ignore. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 was celebrated as a landmark achievement in arms control. It undoubtedly slowed the spread of nuclear weapons. Yet it also institutionalised a system in which a handful of countries retained permanent privileges while others were expected to accept restrictions. More than half a century later, the treaty's promise of eventual disarmament remains largely unrealised.

Artificial intelligence risks following a similar trajectory. A small group of American technology firms, supported by unmatched computational resources and access to cutting-edge semiconductor infrastructure, have developed AI capabilities with relatively limited oversight. Now, as these companies consolidate their lead, the conversation is shifting toward regulation, safety mechanisms and international cooperation.

There is nothing inherently wrong with regulation. Indeed, some form of oversight is essential. But the timing and structure of proposed frameworks deserve scrutiny.

Amodei's recommendation for mandatory third-party testing of frontier AI systems is presented as a neutral technical measure. Yet when those testing bodies are authorised and supervised by governments closely aligned with the countries already dominating AI development, neutrality becomes difficult to guarantee. Regulatory approval can quickly evolve into a mechanism of strategic control.

Recent events illustrate the concern. Following export-control directives from Washington, access to certain advanced AI capabilities was restricted for users outside the United States. Whether justified on security grounds or not, the episode demonstrated a fundamental reality: those who control the infrastructure of AI possess the power to determine who can access it and under what conditions.

Such authority extends far beyond commercial considerations. Advanced computing power increasingly underpins military systems, cybersecurity operations, scientific research and economic competitiveness. Control over AI is therefore becoming synonymous with control over future strategic capabilities.

This is why proposals for coalitions of democracies managing AI supply chains warrant careful examination. While such arrangements are often presented as partnerships among like-minded nations, they can also function as instruments of technological gatekeeping. Countries outside the core group may find themselves dependent on approvals, licensing arrangements and export controls that limit their ability to innovate independently.

India has already encountered aspects of this reality. Access to advanced AI chips remains subject to restrictions and regulatory frameworks largely designed elsewhere. These limitations are not simply about commerce. They reflect broader concerns among major powers about preserving technological superiority.

The challenge for India is not whether AI should be regulated. The challenge is ensuring that regulation does not become a form of regulatory capture that entrenches existing power structures while constraining future competitors.

Equally troubling is the growing prospect of private corporations exercising quasi-governmental influence over global technological governance. Companies that build foundational AI models increasingly shape discussions about acceptable use, risk thresholds and deployment standards. While many of their concerns are legitimate, the concentration of such authority raises difficult questions about democratic accountability.

Who decides what constitutes an acceptable risk? Whose priorities determine regulatory action? And whose interests are protected when restrictions are imposed?

The answers matter because the risks associated with AI are not experienced equally across the world. For advanced economies, concerns may centre on cybersecurity threats, bioengineering risks or autonomous weapons. For developing countries, however, the most immediate challenge may be labour displacement, economic disruption and widening inequality. Millions of workers across emerging economies could face profound transformations in employment as AI systems automate tasks previously performed by humans. Yet these concerns often receive far less attention in regulatory discussions dominated by Silicon Valley and Western policymakers. Voluntary corporate commitments are unlikely to provide sufficient protection for societies that lack extensive social safety nets. India's own experience with nuclear technology offers an instructive precedent. For decades, New Delhi resisted what it regarded as an unequal global nuclear order. It endured sanctions, technology restrictions and diplomatic pressure while steadily building indigenous capabilities. Ultimately, its persistence resulted in international recognition and a place within the global nuclear framework. The lesson is not that India should reject international cooperation. Rather, it should recognise that meaningful participation in global governance requires capability, leverage and strategic relevance. Nations earn influence not by accepting rules written by others but by developing assets that others cannot ignore.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

You have to be odd to be number one. - Dr. Seuss

# INDIA'S EUROPE OUTREACH AND 2026 G-7 DIPLOMACY



PROF. D. MUKHERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's June 2026 visits to France and Slovakia, followed by participation in the G-7 Summit at Evian-les-Bains, reflected a significant shift in India's engagement with Europe rather than a routine diplomatic exercise. The outreach occurred amid major global changes marked by conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, supply-chain disruptions, competition for critical minerals, and an intensifying race for technological leadership. These developments have reshaped strategic priorities worldwide. Against this backdrop, Europe is seeking dependable economic and security partners, while India aims to attract investment, access advanced technologies, strengthen supply-chain resilience, and enhance its role in global governance. The France visit demonstrated the growing breadth of the India-France strategic partnership, which now extends beyond defence cooperation to include artificial intelligence, digital innovation, nuclear energy, maritime security, and industrial resilience. During their meeting in Nice, Prime Minister Modi and President Emmanuel Macron agreed on a roadmap to double bilateral trade within five years and deepen collaboration in emerging technologies and economic security. The Slovakia visit was equally important. It marked the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister since Slovakia's independence in 1993 and resulted in the elevation of bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Partnership. Together, these engagements illustrate India's broader European strategy, expanding beyond traditional partners and major capitals toward a diversified network of strategic relationships shaped by geopolitical realities and geo-economic interests.

A defining feature of PM Modi's 2026 European outreach was its blend of strategic depth and geographic diversification. While France remains India's principal strategic partner in continental Europe, the inclusion of Slovakia reflected New Delhi's growing interest in Central and Eastern Europe as emerging hubs of manufacturing, technology, defence production, and industrial innovation. In France, discussions centred on future-oriented cooperation. The launch of the "Bharat Innovates" platform in Nice brought together startups, universities, investors, and technology leaders, highlighting a shared belief that technological competitiveness will increasingly shape geopolitical influence. The initiative also showcased India's expanding innovation ecosystem and its ambition to become a key technology partner for Europe. Economic cooperation formed another major pillar of the visit. India and France agreed to establish a mechanism aimed at doubling bilateral trade to about \$32 billion within five years. Civil nuclear energy, defence manufacturing, artificial intelligence, supply-chain resilience, and economic security emerged as priority areas of collaboration. Slovakia offered complementary opportunities. PM Modi and Robert Fico elevated bilateral ties to a 'Comprehensive Partnership' and signed a 'Letter of Intent' on defence cooperation. Both sides identified automobiles, advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, electronics, and labour mobility as key sectors for future engagement. Collectively, these visits underscored India's increasingly geo-economic approach toward Europe, emphasizing technology, innovation, industrial capacity, and resilient supply chains as critical determinants of future geopolitical influence.

India's participation in the 2026 G-7 Summit highlighted its growing importance in addressing contemporary global challenges. Although not a formal member of the G-7, India's repeated invitations reflect international recognition of its role in promoting economic growth, energy security, technological governance, and global stability. The summit took place amid economic fragmentation, debt vulnerabilities, energy transitions, and geopolitical tensions. In this context, India occupied a distinctive position as both a major



economy and a leading voice of the Global South. Prior to the summit, Prime Minister of India emphasized that India would represent the concerns and aspirations of developing nations, reinforcing New Delhi's efforts to bridge the gap between advanced economies and the developing world. India's presence was also underpinned by economic realities. As the world's fifth-largest economy and one of the fastest-growing major markets, it has become central to discussions on supply-chain resilience, critical minerals, digital infrastructure, climate action, and sustainable development. The acknowledgement by G-7 leaders of India's growing economic and strategic significance further underscored this reality. More broadly, India's participation reflected an evolving international order. The G-7 increasingly recognizes that effective global governance requires engagement with influential non-member states. Consequently, India's role at the summit symbolized not only its rising global stature but also the gradual emergence of a more inclusive, plural, and multipolar system of international governance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with United States President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the G-7 Summit highlighted the growing strategic importance of India-US relations amid geopolitical competition, technological rivalry, and global economic uncertainty. While cooperation between the two countries has expanded significantly over the past decade, the partnership is driven more by shared interests than formal alliance commitments. Discussions focused on critical and emerging technologies, defence cooperation, artificial intelligence, supply-chain resilience, semiconductor production, clean energy, and stability in the Indo-Pacific. These priorities reflect the evolution of the relationship from a predominantly security-oriented partnership to a broader collaboration encompassing innovation, advanced manufacturing, and economic security. At the same time, India continued to

emphasize strategic autonomy. New Delhi seeks closer ties with Washington while preserving the flexibility to engage other major partners across Europe, the Gulf, Southeast Asia, and the Global South. This balanced approach remains a defining feature of Indian foreign policy. The meeting also underscored shared concerns regarding maritime security, critical technologies, and resilient supply chains. Ultimately, India-US relations are increasingly anchored in trade, innovation, educational exchanges, diaspora connections, and mutual strategic trust, providing stability and resilience in an uncertain global environment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

2026 engagements in France, Slovakia, and at the G-7 Summit demonstrated India's growing role in shaping an evolving international order marked by geopolitical competition and geo-economic uncertainty. Anchored in the principle of strategic autonomy, India's foreign policy seeks to expand partnerships without becoming constrained by rigid alliances, enabling cooperation with major powers while preserving independent decision-making. The visits highlighted the increasing importance of economic state-

craft in contemporary diplomacy. Agreements on trade, advanced technologies, defence cooperation, innovation, industrial development, and supply-chain resilience reflected the growing interdependence of economic and strategic interests. India's expanding digital capabilities, large market, and sustained economic growth have further enhanced its attractiveness as a global partner. At the G-7, India's participation underscored international recognition of its relevance in addressing global challenges, from economic resilience and technological governance to sustainable development. More broadly, India's diplomacy reflects the realities of an emerging multipolar world where influence is distributed across multiple centres of power. The broader significance of these engagements lies in India's effort to promote a more inclusive and representative global order. By serving as both a partner to advanced economies and a voice for the Global South, India is strengthening its capacity to bridge geopolitical divides and contribute meaningfully to the future of conflict free global governance based on multipolar power centric equity and fairness.

{The author is an educationist, management scientist and an independent researcher}

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### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

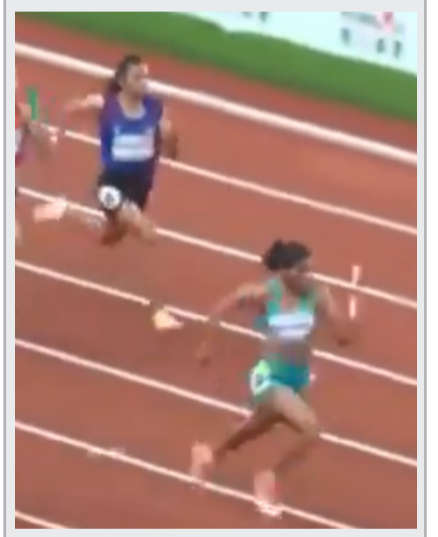
Winning against the Chinese. In China. At the Asian Relay Championships. Srabani, Sudeshna, Sneha & Tamanna in the 4x100 relay.

Power. Speed. Grace. Commitment. But above all, teamwork. This clip has it all. I'm watching it on loop.

More of this please.

□

~ Anand Mahindra, Chairman, Mahindra Group



craft in contemporary diplomacy. Agreements on trade, advanced technologies, defence cooperation, innovation, industrial development, and supply-chain resilience reflected the growing interdependence of economic and strategic interests. India's expanding digital capabilities, large market, and sustained economic growth have further enhanced its attractiveness as a global partner. At the G-7, India's participation underscored international recognition of its relevance in addressing global challenges, from economic resilience and technological governance to sustainable development. More broadly, India's diplomacy reflects the realities of an emerging multipolar world where influence is distributed across multiple centres of power. The broader significance of these engagements lies in India's effort to promote a more inclusive and representative global order. By serving as both a partner to advanced economies and a voice for the Global South, India is strengthening its capacity to bridge geopolitical divides and contribute meaningfully to the future of conflict free global governance based on multipolar power centric equity and fairness.

{The author is an educationist, management scientist and an independent researcher}

# Three Missing, 18 Houses Washed Away as Flash Floods Ravage Arunachal's Keyi Panyor

ITANAGAR

Three people have gone missing and at least 18 houses have been washed away after flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rainfall struck Arunachal Pradesh's Keyi Panyor district, prompting extensive rescue and relief operations, officials said on Wednesday.

The flash flood hit the NEEPCO Colony area near the Panyor Lower Hydroelectric Project, formerly known as the Ranganadi Hydroelectric Project, following intense rainfall across the region, according to Deputy Commissioner Sweta Nagorkoti.

Floodwaters carrying large volumes of debris swept through the area, destroying homes and causing significant damage to public infrastructure. Authorities have launched a large-scale



search and rescue operation, with teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) deployed under the supervision of the district administration.

Officials said efforts are underway to trace the missing persons, while assessments of damage to property and infrastructure are being carried out. Restoration work will begin once weather

conditions improve and affected areas become accessible.

Rescue operations have faced additional challenges after the helipad in the affected area sustained damage and became unusable. The disruption has hampered plans by the Army and the Indian Air Force to deploy helicopters for aerial search and rescue missions.

Heavy rainfall also triggered a major landslide around 43 kilometres from the NEEPCO colony, where mud, rocks and debris engulfed stretches of roadway, severely affecting vehicular movement and connectivity.

Amid the worsening situation, authorities opened one spillway gate of the Panyor Lower Hydroelectric Project by 1.5 metres at noon on Wednesday after a sharp increase in water inflow. Officials said the gate was releasing approx-

imately 230.83 cubic metres of water per second as a precautionary measure.

Reports of debris flow and damage to houses and local infrastructure have also emerged from parts of Yazali and surrounding areas.

Meteorological data from the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Guwahati, and the Meteorological Centre, Itanagar, showed that Yazali in Lower Subansiri district received about 72.8 mm of rainfall during the past 24 hours. The heaviest downpour occurred between 6 am and 9 am on Wednesday.

According to weather officials, satellite imagery and radar observations indicated an episode of intense rainfall within a short period, triggering flash floods and causing a sudden rise in river flows across the region.

The situation has raised concerns in

neighbouring Assam, where authorities have issued alerts over a likely increase in river levels in downstream districts over the next 24 to 48 hours.

Districts including Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Biswanath, Sonitpur and Dhubri have been placed on alert as floodwaters from Arunachal Pradesh move downstream. The Assam government has directed all concerned departments to remain on high alert and closely monitor the evolving flood situation.

Meanwhile, residents in vulnerable areas of Arunachal Pradesh have been advised to remain vigilant, avoid unnecessary travel and follow official advisories. Weather forecasts indicate the possibility of further rainfall in the coming days, prompting authorities to maintain heightened preparedness for additional flooding and landslides.

## Illegal Fishing Threatens Survival of Indigenous Fish Species in Manipur

IMPHAL

The increasing use of poisonous chemicals, electric currents and explosives for fishing is posing a serious threat to Manipur's aquatic ecosystems, with environmentalists warning that several indigenous fish species are facing rapid population declines.

Experts say illegal fishing activities during the crucial breeding months of May and June have severely impacted fish populations across the state. The problem has been compounded by the shrinking of rivers, wetlands and other freshwater bodies, reducing natural habitats essential for breeding and survival.

Conservationists have raised concerns that continued exploitation of water resources could trigger long-term ecological consequences, affecting biodiversity as well as communities that depend on fisheries for their livelihoods.

Despite repeated warnings, environmental groups allege that enforcement against destructive fishing practices remains inadequate. They argue that the lack of effective intervention threatens not only native fish species but also the ecological balance of Manipur's freshwater ecosystems.

Several indigenous species are reportedly witnessing sharp declines, including Meetei Ngamu or Porom (Striped Snakehead), Ngakichou (Gunt-ea Loach), Ngakra (Cattfish), Pengba Tharak-often referred to as the "Hilsa of Manipur" and recognised as the state fish-along with Khabak (Minor Carp), Nganap (Coolie Loach/Spiny Eel), Ngamhai (Glass Perchlet), Ngaton (Reba Carp), and Ngakha or Nganoi (Ticto Barb).

Environmentalist Khangembam Shamungou described the situation as alarming, noting that several species once abundant in the state's rivers and wetlands have become increasingly rare, while some have virtually disappeared from their traditional habitats.

## Tripura Pushes for Restoration of Reserved Engineering Seats in West Bengal Colleges

AGARTALA

The Tripura government has initiated efforts to restore reserved seats for students from the state in government engineering colleges in West Bengal, Higher Education Minister Kishor Barman said on Wednesday.

The issue was raised during a meeting between Barman and West Bengal Higher Education Minister Jagannath Chattopadhyay at Bikash Bhavan in Kolkata. According to Barman, he urged the West Bengal government to reinstate reserved seats for Tripura students in government engineering institutions, including the Government College of Engineering and Textile Technology, Serampore and the Government College of Engineering and Textile Technology, Berhampore. The Tripura minister said the West Bengal government responded positively to the request. He added that Chattopadhyay assured him that the matter would be examined and necessary steps would be taken to restore the reserved seats at

the earliest.

Barman said the initiative is aimed at protecting the educational interests of Tripura students and expanding their access to quality technical and professional education opportunities outside the state.

He claimed that the reservation arrangement for Tripura students in West Bengal's government engineering colleges had been discontinued during the tenure of the previous government in the neighbouring state.

Describing the discussions as constructive, Barman said the move could help strengthen academic cooperation between Tripura and West Bengal while creating additional opportunities for students aspiring to pursue engineering education in reputed institutions.

Officials noted that if the reserved seats are restored, students from Tripura would gain greater access to engineering and technical programmes in West Bengal, potentially easing competition for admissions and widening their higher education options.

## Hand Grenade With 'Last Warning' Note Found at Contractor's Home in Imphal East

IMPHAL

A hand grenade accompanied by a note bearing the words "Last Warning" was recovered from the residence of a contractor in Manipur's Imphal East district, prompting a police investigation and protests by local residents.

According to police, the explosive device was found planted at the entrance gate of the residence of a contractor identified as John in Kongpal Kongkham Leikai, near Pong Lambi.

The incident came to light after authorities received information through a WhatsApp alert regarding a suspected explosive threat. A team from the Manipur Police Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) was immediately dispatched to the location.

Bomb disposal personnel successfully detected and defused the grenade, preventing any casualties or damage to property.

The recovery of the explosive device sparked concern among



residents of the area. On Tuesday evening, local people, led by Meira Paibi women activists and supported by several community organisations, staged a sit-in protest at a nearby market shed.

The demonstration was jointly organised by the Kongpal Kongkham Leikai Welfare Association, Nupi Lup and the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA).

Protesters condemned the planting of explosives in residen-

tial neighbourhoods and densely populated areas, describing it as a serious threat to public safety. Many carried placards demanding an end to acts of intimidation and violence.

Addressing the gathering, A. Radhamani of the Welfare Association Nupi Lup said such incidents create fear and insecurity among residents and undermine peace within the community.

She stressed that disagree-

ments and disputes should be resolved through dialogue and lawful means rather than threats or violence.

"Had the grenade exploded, innocent lives could have been lost. Who would have taken responsibility?" she asked, urging those responsible for the act to reveal their motive.

Residents also appealed to the authorities to strengthen security arrangements in the area and take measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

No individual or organisation has claimed responsibility for planting the grenade. Police have registered a case and launched an investigation to identify those involved and determine the motive behind the threat.

The incident comes amid continued security concerns in parts of Manipur, where authorities remain on alert against acts that could endanger public safety and disturb law and order.

## Congress Demands Time-Bound Roadmap for Peace Restoration in Manipur

IMPHAL

Leader of the Congress Legislature Party in Manipur, Keisham Meghachandra, has urged the state government to present a clear timeline and comprehensive roadmap for restoring peace and normalcy in the violence-affected state.

In a statement shared on social media platform X, Meghachandra said the people of Manipur have endured more than three years of hardship, displacement and uncertainty since ethnic violence erupted on May 3, 2023.

The Congress leader noted that the BJP-led state government, which has been in office for nearly five months, should now be in a position to provide a transparent and practical plan for restoring peace, rebuilding trust and addressing the concerns of affected communities.



"While the situation remains complex, the people deserve clarity and concrete action. The government must explain the measures being taken to restore public confi-

dence, ensure rehabilitation, facilitate the safe return of displaced persons and create conditions for lasting peace," Meghachandra said.

He called on the government to disclose its strategy for peace restoration and sought details on rehabilitation and resettlement plans for families displaced by the conflict.

The Congress MLA also demanded a timeline for the return of normalcy and asked the government to outline steps being taken to ensure justice, security and reconciliation among communities affected by the violence.

"Peace cannot remain an open-ended promise. There must be a transparent, time-bound and inclusive plan that addresses the concerns of all affected communities. The people of Manipur expect accountability, decisive action and visible progress towards a peaceful

and secure future," he said.

Manipur has been grappling with ethnic tensions and violence between Meitei and Kuki communities since May 2023, resulting in significant loss of life, widespread displacement and extensive damage to property. According to official estimates, the conflict has claimed at least 260 lives and displaced thousands of residents, many of whom continue to live in relief camps and temporary shelters.

Meghachandra's demand comes amid ongoing efforts by the government and security agencies to restore normalcy, facilitate the return of displaced families and promote dialogue among communities affected by the conflict.

The state government has yet to respond publicly to the Congress leader's call for a time-bound roadmap for peace and rehabilitation.

## Centre Approves Rs 211.71 Crore for 96 Rural Road Projects in Tripura Under PMGSY-IV



AGARTALA

The Union Ministry of Rural Development has approved 96 road projects worth Rs 211.71 crore in Tripura under the fourth phase of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-IV) for the 2026-27 financial year.

The projects, sanctioned under Batch-I of the scheme, will cover a total road length of 163.872 kilometres and provide all-weather connectivity to 96 habitations across the state that currently lack reliable road access.

Officials said the initiative is expected to significantly improve connectivity in remote and underserved areas, enabling easier access to essential services such as schools, health-care facilities and rural markets. The new road infrastructure is also expected to facilitate the movement of people and goods, strengthen rural economies and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the beneficiary communities.

According to officials, the provision of all-weather roads will help improve living standards in rural areas while advancing the government's vision of inclusive growth and a

"Viksit Bharat".

The latest sanction adds to the Centre's continuing investment in rural connectivity in Tripura through the PMGSY programme.

Since the launch of the scheme, the Ministry of Rural Development has approved 1,594 road projects spanning 6,284 kilometres and 66 bridges in the state, involving a cumulative investment of Rs 4,479 crore.

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, one of India's flagship rural infrastructure programmes, aims to provide reliable road connectivity to unconnected habitations and bridge infrastructure gaps in rural regions. The scheme has played a crucial role in improving access to education, health-care, markets and government services across the country.

Officials said work on the newly approved projects will commence after the completion of administrative formalities and tendering processes. Once completed, the roads are expected to enhance connectivity, support economic activity and improve access to public services for thousands of residents in Tripura's rural areas.

## Manipur Hosts Workshop on AI in Journalism, Stresses Need for Human Oversight

IMPHAL

The Manipur government on Tuesday organised a one-day workshop on the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism and media fact-checking, bringing together journalists, media professionals and government officials to examine the opportunities and challenges posed by emerging technologies in the news industry.

Organised by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), the workshop focused on the growing role of AI in modern journalism while emphasising the continued importance of human judgment in maintaining accuracy, credibility and ethical standards in news reporting.

Addressing the programme as chief guest, Information and Public Relations Secretary Hungyo Worshang said the rapid advancement of technology is transforming the media landscape and that journalists must adapt to effectively utilise AI-powered tools.

While acknowledging the potential of artificial intelligence in areas such as data analysis, content creation and information verification, Worshang stressed that editorial decisions ultimately require



human oversight to ensure responsible and trustworthy journalism.

"Technology is evolving rapidly, and its adoption is becoming inevitable. However, while AI can assist in many aspects of journalism, human judgment remains essential in ensuring accuracy and maintaining public trust," he said.

Delivering the keynote address, IPR Director Dr. Th. Charanjit Singh highlighted the increasing

integration of AI across sectors and its growing relevance to the media industry. He noted that AI can assist journalists in report writing, content curation and automating routine newsroom processes, thereby improving productivity and operational efficiency.

The workshop featured several technical sessions led by experts from academia and the technology sector, offering participants prac-

tical insights into the applications of AI in journalism. Dr. Haobam Joyremba Singh, CMD of Cube Ten Technologies Pvt. Ltd., delivered a session on "AI Myths and Realities," where he addressed common misconceptions about artificial intelligence and discussed its practical uses in contemporary media operations. In another session, Dr. Hanjabam Saratchandra, Head of the Department of Computer Science at Manipur Technical University, examined the role of AI in news gathering and fact-checking. He also highlighted the growing threat posed by misinformation, deepfakes and manipulated digital content, underscoring the need for robust verification mechanisms.

Dr. Angom Buboo Singh, Academic Head at NIELIT, demonstrated how AI-powered tools can help streamline newsroom workflows, improve efficiency and strengthen fact-checking processes by enabling faster verification of information. Participants from various media organisations and DIPR attended the programme, which explored how technological innovation can be integrated into journalism without compromising editorial integrity.

The discussions concluded with a consensus that while artificial intelligence has the potential to transform newsrooms and enhance reporting capabilities, responsible deployment and human supervision remain critical to safeguarding journalistic standards and preserving public confidence in the media.

Quest!

Negaholic: Somebody addicted to negativity, even when they are happy

## PM Modi recalls Emergency, says period saw 'assault' on Constitution and democratic institutions



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday described the Emergency imposed in 1975 as a "direct assault" on the Constitution, saying the period witnessed the suspension of civil liberties, restrictions on freedom of expression and attacks on democratic institutions.

Paying tribute to those who resisted the Emergency, Modi said the period represented one of the "darkest chapters in India's history" but also highlighted the courage of citizens who stood up for constitutional values.

"The Emergency was a direct assault on our Constitution. It witnessed the suspension of civil liberties,

curbs on freedom of expression, arrests of political leaders, journalists, social workers and an assault on institutions that are the bedrock of our democracy," Modi said in a post on X, referring to the declaration of Emergency on June 25, 1975.

The Prime Minister said the Constitution represents the aspirations, rights and duties of 140 crore Indians.

"We reaffirm our collective commitment to safeguarding constitutional values. Guided by the spirit of our Constitution, we will build an India that remains ever committed to justice, liberty, equality and fraternity," he said.

The Emergency was imposed in India between June 25, 1975, and March 21, 1977, under Article 352 of the

Constitution.

Since 2025, the Narendra Modi government has observed June 25 as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas'. A gazette notification issued in this regard stated that the Emergency was declared on June 25, 1975, following which there was "gross abuse of power by the government of the day and people of India were subjected to excesses and atrocities".

In another post on X, Modi said 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' serves as a reminder of the period when "Indian democracy was brutally crushed".

"It inspires us to always remain committed to protecting democracy, the Constitution, and citizens' rights. My respectful salutations to all the luminaries who opposed the Emergency," he said in a Hindi post.

The Emergency marked a major turning point in India's constitutional history, with the executive gaining sweeping powers and greater central control over state authority. Constitutional safeguards were suspended, while the press and flow of public information faced strict restrictions through administrative measures.

During the period, Parliament passed several constitutional amendments that limited judicial review and weakened institutional checks. The Emergency also saw the controversial forced sterilisation campaign.

The Emergency formally ended in March 1977 after a political shift following general elections, which led to a change in government.

## Five dead, 20 rescued in Kolkata warehouse collapse; CM suspends TMC-era projects in the city until July 31

KOLKATA

Five workers were killed and 20 others were rescued and hospitalised after the part of a warehouse under construction collapsed in Kolkata's Taratala area on Wednesday afternoon.

All those rescued were admitted to the Trauma Care Centre at the state-run SSKM Hospital, where three were reported to be in a critical condition, hospital authorities said. About 15 more workers still remained trapped under the massive debris of concrete and steel at the accident site, sources said.

Following the incident, West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari ordered suspension of all construction projects approved under the TMC regime within the city's civic body area till July 31.

The police have also arrested three persons, including the project supervisor in connection with the incident.

Rescue operations were being carried out by teams from state and central agencies, including the Indian Army's Eastern Command, alongside personnel from the Kolkata Police and the state disaster management department.

Chief Minister Adhikari, who visited the site earlier, said rescue operations were continuing and that about 17 more people were believed to be trapped beneath the rubble.

"So far, 21 people have been rescued; three of whom have perished. The others have been admitted to SSKM Hospital where all efforts are being made to provide them with adequate medical attention," the CM had said earlier, following which the death toll increased to five.

"The Army has already established contact with those who still remain trapped," Adhikari said, amid estimates that, given the large blocks of concrete that still have to be removed, the rescue operations could continue for a formidable period of time.

The CM also said that "faulty" construction plans of the warehouse received sanction from the KMC on January 17 this year, during TMC regime.

"What I saw convinced me that the collapse did not take place on account of the rains or possible soft soil on which the construction was taking place. It was



because of a faulty structural design in which the iron beams weren't able to take the load of concrete and crumbled to the ground," Adhikari said.

"I have directed the KMC commissioner and the Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Department to stop work at all under-construction projects approved by the previous government, especially commercial buildings, including projects where permission was granted after filling up water bodies.

They will undergo an audit. Construction work at such sites will remain suspended till July 31," he said.

Work can resume at the sites from August 1, subject to their passing the scrutiny, Adhikari said. The audit would subsequently be extended to the Howrah and Bidhannagar municipal areas, he said.

The CM said the audit would be conducted by a multi-agency team comprising officials from the Public Works Department, Civil Defence, Fire Services, Kolkata Police and the KMC. "The team will function under the

guidance of the chief secretary. It will examine site plans, building plans and conduct spot inspections before submitting its report," he said.

Adhikari said he would declare penal measures against the Taratala builder company and compensation to the victims on Thursday in the assembly, which is currently in session.

The CM also took to social media to express his condolences to the bereaved families and visited the hospital to meet the injured. The collapsed warehouse is a lease-hold property under the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in the city, an official said.

State Sports Minister Indranil Khan, who also rushed to the spot soon after the incident, said the government is prioritising the immediate rescue of the trapped workers.

"Fire services, police personnel and disaster management have been pressed into service. Our priority is to intensify the rescue operation as fast as possible so that people trapped inside can be rescued immediately," the minister said.

Massive chunks of iron beams and concrete crumbled during the construction, where several workers were engaged.

Bulldozers and steel-cutting equipment were being used to clear the debris and reach those feared trapped underneath. Gas cutters were being used to cut through the iron and concrete, and rescue workers were trying to reach the trapped victims using vertical drilling.

"The roof of the warehouse located on the Transport Depot Road near Brace Bridge in the Taratala area collapsed around noon. Some people were working at the site at the time of the incident," a police officer said.

Eyewitnesses at the site said they heard trapped victims crying for help from beneath the debris.

"Construction activities were taking place on the ground floor while the RCC structure for the first and second floors had been completed. The entire structure has come crashing down," an eyewitness said.

Army officials were also seen aiding rescue operations, while cranes and heavy equipment lifting machinery were deployed at the site to remove the collapsed iron beams.

"We are following the cries of help of the trapped people coming from under the debris. We are assuring them that they will be rescued soon," a member of the Kolkata Police disaster management group said.

According to locals, the incident occurred around 1.30 pm. Around 30-40 people were inside the warehouse near Brace Bridge railway station, as the rooftop on the third floor collapsed, bringing down the entire building, eyewitnesses said. The locals and some workers stated that the warehouse has been under construction for nearly a year. According to a fire department official, the roof of the three-storey under-construction warehouse collapsed during casting work. He also alleged that substandard materials were being used in the construction of the warehouse.

Meanwhile, Minister Agnimitra Paul and Kolkata Municipal Corporation administrator Smeeta Pandey rushed to the spot to oversee the rescue operations.

## INTERNATIONAL

### At least 32 dead, more than 700 injured after twin earthquakes rock Venezuela

CARACAS

Powerful back-to-back earthquakes that struck Venezuela on Wednesday evening killed at least 32 people and injured at least 700, the nation's acting president said, as communities across the South American country sustained damage.

Acting President Delcy Rodríguez warned the toll was expected to rise as rescuers search collapsed buildings and emergency crews reach devastated areas after the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that struck shortly after 6 p.m.

Rodríguez declared a state of emergency in an address to the nation late Wednesday and said the quakes caused damage in several states. The casualty figures released early Thursday excluded the state of La Guaira, which Rodríguez described as a "disaster zone" and the area hardest hit.

"Dozens of buildings have collapsed there, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Caracas, and we are currently carrying out intensive rescue operations to save lives," she said.

The earthquakes, among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century, roiled the region, with buildings evacuated in cities and areas impacted as far as Brazil's Amazon about 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from Venezuela's capital Caracas.

The earthquakes damaged and closed Simón Bolívar International Airport near Caracas, the country's main airport, Rodríguez said, adding that subway and natural gas services in Caracas were canceled. She urged Venezuelans to report any damages through a government app.

Rodríguez said school classes would be canceled for several days. The Ministry of Education said some school buildings would be used as shelters and donation centers.

"We urge our population to remain calm," said Rodríguez, who asked health care professionals to report to hospitals to assist the injured. "We urge unity."

The U.S. Geological Survey initially said the first earthquake had a magnitude of 7.1, later revising that to 7.2. Its epicenter was west of Morón on the country's Caribbean coast about 168 kilometers (104 miles) west of Caracas. The quake had a depth of 22 kilometers (13.6 miles).



The USGS reported an even larger 7.5-magnitude earthquake just a minute later. The second quake had a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) with an epicenter 16 kilometers (10 miles) southwest of Morón.

In the coastal state of Falcon, Gov. Victor Clark said 32 people had been hospitalized and there were 15 people trapped in the hours after the earthquake.

Offers of help were made by various governments including the United States, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay.

Jeremy P. Lewin, the U.S. undersecretary of state for foreign assistance, said the State Department had mobilized a disaster assistance team and task force to coordinate aid including search-and-rescue teams, medical and humanitarian supplies and other resources in coordination with the interim Venezuelan government.

El Salvador President Nayib Bukele, once diametrically opposed to Venezuela's government, said in a post on X Wednesday night that he had offered aid.

"We send you all our solidarity and our prayers. Stay strong, Venezuela," Bukele wrote.

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa said he had ordered the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid to help respond to the emergency.

"Ecuador will respond with the speed and commitment this moment demands because, despite our enormous differences, humanity must always guide the actions of a leader," Noboa wrote.

Bolivian President Rodrigo Paz, who less than a week ago declared a state of emergency in his country following weeks of anti-government protests, said his country stood ready to provide any needed assistance.

The administration of Brazil President Luiz Inácio da Silva expressed solidarity and said no Brazilians reported being injured.

During the quakes, people evacuated swaying buildings in Caracas, many visibly shocked as they saw collapsed walls that left furniture visible from the street. Dust columns could be seen in two capital neighborhoods with typically busy restaurants and other businesses.

People remained on the streets for hours, some sitting on the ground hugging pets as dust gathered around them. Collapsed buildings, toppled electric poles and debris blocked streets. Parts of the capital lost power and cellphone signal.

"It started off gently and then gradually grew, and in the end, we all had to leave our houses, go outside and gather together," Caracas resident Hector Ricci said.

Roberto Gamas, another Caracas resident, said the building he was in "really

shook from side to side. Unreal. The force was incredibly strong."

The lack of cellphone signal in parts of Venezuela deepened the distress of many families, particularly those among the more than 7.7 million people who have left the country during its protracted crisis.

Venezuela opposition leader María Corina Machado, in exile after leaving Venezuela in December, took to X to send prayers and wish strength to Venezuelans.

"May strength, serenity, and solidarity prevail among us in the face of this difficult time," she said on X.

Venezuela Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said the quake could be felt in several states and asked motorists to give way to ambulances and other emergency vehicles.

There were collapsed homes and buildings in the Altamira neighborhood, he said, suggesting people were injured.

"We understand that some people may be desperate, but we are acting according to protocols to activate aid and rescue efforts to help those who need it most," Cabello said on state television.

He urged people to remain outside as aftershocks could further damage structures.

"Be very careful with children and the elderly. Call each other and check that no one has been harmed."

Buildings in Manaus, Belem and Macapá in Brazil's Amazon were evacuated, according to reports on TV Globo.

The quakes also were felt in Colombia's Caribbean and northeast regions, but there were no reports of damages or injuries.

The U.S. Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued several tsunami alerts in the wake of the earthquakes that were quickly lifted.

Strong earthquakes are unusual in Venezuela. While Venezuela sits near multiple fault lines, its position straddling the South American and Caribbean plates make earthquakes much less common than in other parts of Latin America.

Earthquakes are frequent along the Pacific coast, including in Mexico and Chile, which both sit along the seismically active tectonic belt known as the Ring of Fire, an area that the USGS said is responsible for 90% of earthquakes.

## US promises to protect Gulf states' interests in Iran talks

KUWAIT

Secretary of State Marco Rubio promised the United States' Gulf allies that Washington would protect their interests as it seeks to hammer out a final settlement of the Middle East war in talks with Iran.

Rubio was on a regional tour to reassure the Gulf states, which were targeted by Tehran's missiles and drones during the conflict and saw their crucial oil and gas shipments effectively cut off by an Iranian blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran has emerged emboldened from the war, vowing not to relinquish control of the vital waterway and going so far as to call its initial deal with Washington to stop the fighting "a declaration of America's defeat".

During a visit to Kuwait City, Rubio said Washington would be on the same page as Gulf states as it wrangles with Iran over a permanent settlement to the conflict.

"We're going to be completely aligned with our partners in the Gulf. That's why we're meeting with all of them tomorrow," he said, adding the US would "engage them on conversations about every decision that's made with regards to this negotiation".

Rubio is due to attend a Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Bahrain on Thursday after sitting down with the leaders of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday.

The initial US-Iran deal, which sets out a 60-day negotiating process aimed at reaching a long-term agreement, failed to address Gulf nations' long-standing concerns about Iran's missile programme and region-

al proxies.

But Rubio insisted Washington was "not going to do anything that undermines the security of our allies".

Tehran, however, has already portrayed the deal as a victory.

Its top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Wednesday that the agreement, reached with the help of Pakistani mediation, was "the result of the resistance and authority of the brave Iranian nation".

"That is why the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding became a declaration of America's defeat," he said.

Both Rubio and Pakistan said that technical talks between the US and Iran were expected to resume in the coming days following a first round in Switzerland.

Rubio also insisted on Wednesday that the US was committed to preserving the pre-war status quo of toll-free navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, which carries a substantial proportion of global oil and gas shipments.

"I know of no country on the planet that supports tolling or fees for the use of the strait," he said in Kuwait.

Iran, however, has repeatedly said it intends to retain control over the strait, along with Oman, and charge what it calls maritime service fees for crossing it.

On Wednesday US President Donald Trump wrote on social media that Iran had told Washington it would charge "NO TOLLS, NO INSURANCE COSTS, & NO OTHER CHARGES OF ANY KIND", but did not clarify whether that commitment would outlast the 60-day negotiating period.

Qatar's prime minister, meanwhile, travelled to Oman to initiate talks on the strait between the Gulf states, Iraq and Iran, a diplomat told AFP, explaining Gulf countries would push for no-charge freedom of navigation, while Iran was expected to ask for an environmental and security service fee.

Speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, another diplomat said separate talks on reconciliation between Gulf countries and Iran were expected to be held in Saudi Arabia, though they did not specify a date.

Iran's Ghalibaf reiterated Wednesday that peace in Lebanon, which was drawn into the war when Tehran-backed Hezbollah launched attacks on Israel, was a fundamental pillar of reaching a definitive agreement with the US. "For us, the ceasefire in Lebanon has been and is as important as the ceasefire in Iran," he said.

The violence in Lebanon has ebbed in recent days, but Israel's defence minister insisted that its troops in the neighbouring country's south were going nowhere.

"We have announced that in any case we are not withdrawing and, as of this moment... there is no American demand for Israel to withdraw from Lebanon," Katz said in an interview in Tel Aviv.

In the beachside Lebanese city of Tyre, 40-year-old Hussein Hassan was welcoming customers to his barbershop, despite one of its walls being cracked and its glass facade blown away in Israeli strikes.

Tyre residents "love life and work. We shake off the dust and rise up again like the phoenix," he said proudly.

## When Opportunity Slips Away: What Assam Must Learn from a Cancelled Diplomatic Visit

The cancellation of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's proposed visit to Assam has triggered intense debate across the state. While official diplomatic engagements often change due to a variety of factors, the development has sparked a larger conversation about Assam's preparedness to seize opportunities that could shape its economic future.

At the heart of the discussion lies a difficult question: when a state loses an opportunity that could have brought investments, partnerships, and global attention, who ultimately bears the cost?

The answer is neither simple nor comfortable. It extends beyond politics and administration, touching upon society, public sentiment, governance, and the collective aspirations of Assam's people.

**A Visit That Promised More Than Symbolism**

High-level diplomatic visits are rarely ceremonial alone. They are often platforms where governments discuss investment possibilities, strengthen economic cooperation, and explore long-term partnerships.

Japan has emerged as one of India's most significant strategic and economic partners. Over the years, Japanese investments have transformed infrastructure, transportation, and manufacturing sectors across several parts of India. A visit by Japan's Prime Minister to Assam would have carried significance far beyond a diplomatic photo opportunity.

Such a visit could have showcased Assam's potential as a gateway to South-east Asia, highlighted its strategic location in the Northeast, and opened doors for discussions on industrial development, infrastructure projects, technology transfer, and employment generation.

For a state that is actively seeking to attract investments and position itself as a key economic hub in eastern India, the visit represented a valuable opportunity to strengthen international engagement.

Its cancellation therefore naturally raised concerns about what Assam may have missed.

**The Ganeshguri Controversy and Public Reaction**

The debate surrounding the cancelled visit gained momentum amid discussions about the controversy linked to the removal of a mural of Assamese music icon Zubeen Garg near the Ganeshguri flyover.

Few public figures command the kind of emotional connection that Zubeen Garg enjoys in Assam. For generations of Assamese people, he is not merely a singer or performer. His music, activism, and cultural influence have made him a symbol of Assamese identity and pride.

When news of the mural's removal emerged, public reactions were swift and emotional. Many viewed the issue not as a matter of urban management or administrative decision-making but as an affront to a cultural figure deeply woven into Assam's social consciousness.

The widespread reaction demonstrated how cultural symbols can unite people and mobilize public sentiment in ways that governments and institutions sometimes underestimate.

What may have appeared to some as a routine administrative issue quickly evolved into a larger public controversy.

**The Cost of Escalation**

The central concern is not whether people had the right to express their emotions or whether the administration handled the issue appropriately. Democratic societies thrive on public participation and the freedom to voice concerns.

The more important question is whether a local controversy should be allowed to escalate to a level where it overshadows broader developmental priorities.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated on June 23 that India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri informed Assam's Chief Secretary late on Monday night that the Japanese Prime Minister's Assam visit would not take place.

Soon after, social media became flooded with theories, accusations, speculation, and political interpretations.

Yet amid the noise, one critical aspect often remained overlooked: the opportunities that young people, entrepreneurs, investors, and job seekers might have gained if the visit had proceeded as planned.



never happen, partnerships that never begin, and investments that never materialize.

**A Familiar Pattern**  
This is not the first time Assam has witnessed the cancellation of a high-profile visit amid political or social turbulence.

During the anti-CAA protests of 2019, concerns about stability and public unrest also affected important engagements and perceptions about the state.

Such incidents highlight a recurring challenge. Every region has political disagreements, public movements, and moments of social tension. These are natural features of democratic societies.

However, the ability to manage disagreements without undermining larger developmental goals often determines how investors, international partners, and institutions perceive a region.

Perception matters.  
Investors do not simply evaluate land, resources, or incentives. They also assess stability, predictability, public confidence, and the ability of institutions to manage challenges effectively.

In an increasingly competitive world, states are constantly competing for attention, capital, and partnerships. Every opportunity counts.

**Development and Identity Are Not Opposites**

One of the unfortunate consequences of the current debate is the emergence of a false choice between cultural pride and economic development.

Assam does not have to choose one over the other.

Respecting cultural icons such as Zubeen Garg and pursuing economic growth are not contradictory goals. In fact, successful societies often achieve both simultaneously.

Zubeen Garg himself has long represented the aspirations, struggles, and dreams of ordinary Assamese people. His work has consistently reflected a desire for progress, dignity, and unity.

It would therefore be inaccurate to frame the issue as a conflict between supporting a cultural icon and supporting development.

The real challenge lies in ensuring that emotional issues are addressed responsibly while preserving opportunities that can benefit future generations.

Assam's cultural identity is one of its greatest strengths. It should serve as a foundation for growth rather than become a source of division.

**Can Assam Become an Entrepreneurial Hub?**

This question has become increasingly important as the state seeks to redefine its economic future.

Assam possesses several advantages

that few regions can match.

Its strategic location makes it a natural bridge between mainland India and Southeast Asia. The state has abundant natural resources, a growing urban population, expanding infrastructure, and a young workforce eager for opportunities.

Government initiatives over the past decade have sought to attract investments in sectors such as logistics, tourism, manufacturing, renewable energy, information technology, and food processing.

Yet infrastructure and policy incentives alone cannot create an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Such ecosystems flourish when there is confidence, openness to innovation, and a collective willingness to embrace change.

Young entrepreneurs need platforms where ideas can grow. Investors need assurance that opportunities can be pursued without unnecessary disruptions. Skilled professionals need confidence that their ambitions can be realized within the state.

The success of Assam's economic transformation will depend as much on mindset as on policy.

**The Youth Must Shape the Conversation**

Perhaps the most important stakeholders in this entire debate are Assam's young people.

The discussion should not be limited to assigning blame between the government and the public. Nor should it be reduced to political point-scoring.

Instead, the focus should be on a more fundamental question:

What kind of Assam do the youth want to inherit five years from now?

Do they envision a state that attracts global investment and creates jobs?

Do they want stronger industrial growth, thriving startups, modern infrastructure, and greater opportunities for innovation?

Do they want a state where talented young people can build successful careers without feeling compelled to leave in search of better prospects elsewhere?

These questions deserve greater attention than arguments over who was responsible for a particular controversy.

Because ultimately, the consequences of missed opportunities are felt most deeply by the younger generation.

**The Need for Collective Responsibility**

The narrative of "government versus people" rarely leads to constructive outcomes.

Governments are responsible for governance, communication, and decision-making. Citizens are responsible for participating in public life while safeguarding the larger interests of society.

Development is not achieved by governments alone. Nor can citizens achieve it independently of institutions.

Progress requires partnership. For Assam, this partnership is especially important.

Compared to larger and more established business communities in other parts of India, Assam is still in the process of building a robust entrepreneurial culture. The state cannot afford unnecessary divisions when competing for investments and opportunities.

Unity does not mean the absence of disagreement. It means recognizing shared goals despite differences.

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Business establishments, educational institutions, individual service providers etc. can enlist themselves or advertise their products or services at the most reasonable cost in InfoCom Diary. Send your details to InfoCom Solutions at: info.com.krc@gmail.com Submit Here: https://bit.ly/InfoComDiaryForm

### STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP

Students can apply for a three-months internship with KRC Foundation. During the internship the student can get an opportunity to work on a live project. On successful completion the student is awarded a certificate. Apply to 5E for Success: 5eforsuccess@gmail.com For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/krccstudentinternship or www.krccfoundation.org/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship

### NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

Participate in NE India Writing Star Contest and get your writings published. Eligibility: From Class VI onwards. Each participant receives a digital participation certificates. Send articles at: info@krccfoundation.org For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest www.krccfoundation.org/campaigns-csr/ne-india-writing-star-contest

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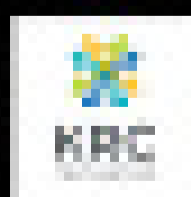


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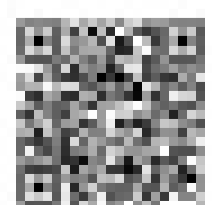


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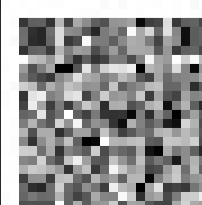


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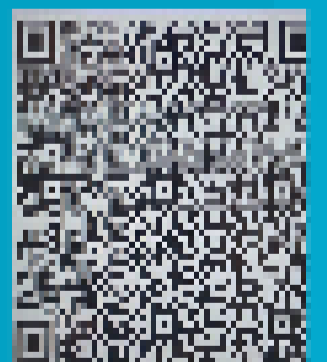
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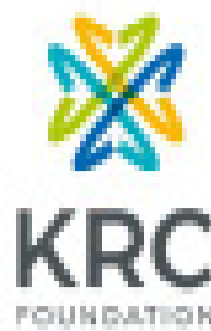
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**MAY-NOV 2026**

DIGITAL PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATE  
THE SELECTED ARTICLE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON  
[WWW.KRCTIMES.COM](http://WWW.KRCTIMES.COM)

*"I can shake off everything as I write;  
my sorrows disappear, my courage is  
reborn."*  
- Anne Frank

### TOPICS

- INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NER (ROADS, RAILS, AVIATION, HYDROPOWER & SECURITY)
- PROMOTING TOURISM, MSME, AGRO & HORTICULTURE, ACT EAST DIPLOMACY
- DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ADVENTURE SPORTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
- 5E FOR SUCCESS- PROMOTING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Open to Students from Class VI to Senior Citizens, divided into 5 categories+topics

Each entry will receive a digital participation certificate

There is NO fee for participation

The selected entry will be published on [www.krcetimes.com](http://www.krcetimes.com)

email articles: [info@krcfoundation.org](mailto:info@krcfoundation.org)

5 categories: A- Class- VI, VII, VIII | B- Class- IX, X, XI, XII | C- College & PG Students | D- Working Class & Homemaker | E- Retired & Senior Citizen (60+)

FOR RULES AND DETAILS, PLEASE VISIT

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