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PERSPECTIVE

What we share online can have consequences in the real world. On Tuesday's Social Media Day — and every day — take a moment to pause before sharing content. Verify information by asking basic questions and doing your own research. ~ United Nations

Fake Gold Hallmarks Lead Consumer Fraud Cases in Assam as BIS Intensifies Crackdown

GUWAHATI

Counterfeit gold hallmarks have emerged as one of the most serious forms of consumer fraud in Assam, with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) uncovering multiple cases of fake hallmarks during recent enforcement drives that have raised concerns over the authenticity of gold jewellery sold in the state.

According to BIS officials, three major cases involving counterfeit hallmarking of gold ornaments have been detected in the past three months alone, exposing an organised pattern of illegal certification that threatens consumer trust in the hallmarking system designed to guarantee the purity and authenticity of precious metals.

The latest enforcement action came on June 18, when BIS officials raided an alleged unauthorised assaying and hallmarking centre at Lakh-tokia in Guwahati. During the operation, investigators seized a laser marking machine allegedly used to stamp fake BIS hallmarks on gold jewellery and recovered counterfeit hallmarking materials bearing forged BIS logos. Legal proceedings have been initiated under the BIS Act, 2016.

Earlier, in May, BIS conducted another search and seizure operation at a jewellery shop in Basistha Chariali after receiving complaints about the alleged misuse of the BIS Hallmark logo and the sale of jewellery bearing fake hallmarks. Investigators found that the establishment was displaying the BIS hallmark symbol without authorisation and was allegedly selling ornaments carrying spurious hallmarks.

WHO SAID WHAT

your phone number is personal and sometimes you want to connect without handing it over. that's why we're introducing usernames for WhatsApp. starting this week, you can reserve a username to use later this year when we launch the feature. It takes just a few seconds, make sure you have the latest version of WhatsApp and then go to Settings > Account > Username. ~ WhatsApp

Tripura GSDP Nears Rs 90,000 Crore; Per Capita Income Rises to Rs 1.93 Lakh

AGARTALA

Tripura's economy has recorded steady growth over the past two years, with the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) rising to an estimated Rs 89,682 crore in 2024-25 and per capita income increasing to Rs 1.93 lakh, according to figures presented during the state-level observance of Statistics Day on Monday.

The event, held at Pragna Bhavan in Agartala, was organised by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (DES) to mark the 133rd birth anniversary of renowned statistician Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis.

Official estimates showed that Tripura's GSDP increased from Rs 70,633 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 89,682 crore in 2024-25. During the same period, the state's per capita income rose from Rs 1.54 lakh to Rs 1.93 lakh, reflecting an upward trend in economic activity and income levels.

Planning (Statistics), Tribal Welfare, and Handloom, Handicrafts and Sericulture Minister Bikash Debbarma was scheduled to attend the programme as the chief guest but could not participate due to prior official commitments.

Director of Census Operations Ratan



Biswas attended the event as the special guest, while Director of Economics and Statistics Devananda Reang presided over the programme.

Addressing the gathering, Biswas highlighted the significance of the upcoming Census 2027 and said house-listing activities are expected to commence in August. He emphasised that census

data plays a crucial role in helping governments design evidence-based policies and development programmes.

The theme for Statistics Day 2026, announced by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, was "Unlocking the Potential of Administrative Data," with a focus on data sharing, standardisation, interoperability and

institutional coordination to support informed governance.

More than 250 participants, including government officials, heads of departments, faculty members, students and statistical personnel, attended the programme.

Officials said the Directorate of Economics and Statistics showcased its ongoing surveys and preparations for the 81st round of the National Sample Survey. The department also outlined preliminary activities for Census 2027, including house-listing and population enumeration exercises.

A demonstration of self-enumeration for Census 2027 was conducted during the event. The directorate also showcased the Sustainable Development Goals Monitoring Web Portal developed in collaboration with National Institute of Technology Agartala and released the publication "Tripura At-a-Glance 2025-26."

The latest economic indicators presented during the programme point to sustained growth in Tripura's economy, accompanied by a steady rise in per capita income over the past two financial years.

Manipur DGP Reviews Security Preparedness, Prioritises Illegal Arms Recovery and Anti-Drug Drive

IMPHAL

Manipur Director General of Police (DGP) Mukesh Singh reviewed the state's security preparedness, law and order measures, and policing initiatives during visits to Kakching district, the 8th Manipur Rifles (MR) headquarters at Leikun, and Chandel district.

Accompanied by the Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order), Singh assessed the readiness of security forces in vulnerable areas and held interactions with police personnel, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), Assam Rifles and representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs).

During his visit to Kakching, the DGP reviewed security arrangements in view of the ongoing farming season and directed officers to maintain heightened vigilance in sensitive and vulnerable areas to prevent any untoward incidents.

Addressing officers from the district police, CAPFs and other central agencies, Singh stressed the need for effective investigation of criminal



cases, expeditious disposal of pending cases and sustained operations against anti-national elements and drug trafficking networks.

He also directed police personnel to intensify efforts to recover illegal arms and ammunition, describing the initiative as a key priority in re-

storing peace and enhancing public safety across the state.

The DGP assured officers that personnel displaying exceptional professionalism, dedication and efficiency in the line of duty would be duly recognised and rewarded.

Singh lauded the Kakching Dis-

trict Police's Cycle Patrol initiative, calling it an effective model of community-oriented beat policing that improves police visibility and strengthens engagement with local residents. He later met representatives of various civil society organisations to discuss issues related to law and order and community policing.

At the 8th Manipur Rifles headquarters in Leikun, the DGP chaired a review meeting on personnel deployment, security arrangements at posts and outposts, static guard duties and other operational responsibilities.

He emphasised the importance of professionalism, discipline and a healthy work culture while encouraging officers and personnel to maintain a harmonious working environment. Singh also urged the unit to explore innovative ways of utilising available land and resources for the welfare of police personnel.

In Chandel district, the DGP inaugurated a newly renovated conference hall at the Office of the Superintendent of Police and a new Cyber Cell aimed at strengthening cybercrime

investigations and modernising policing infrastructure.

He subsequently held separate meetings with district police officers, civil society representatives and Assam Rifles personnel.

Reviewing the district's security challenges, Singh underscored the need for professional, accountable and people-centric policing. He appreciated the cooperation between the district police and local civil society organisations in maintaining peace and harmony and stressed the importance of continued coordination among security agencies.

The DGP also encouraged local youth to participate in the upcoming Manipur Police recruitment rally, stating that greater community participation would further strengthen grassroots policing efforts in the district.

The visit is part of the Manipur Police's broader efforts to enhance operational preparedness, improve policing standards, modernise infrastructure and strengthen inter-agency coordination amid the state's evolving security environment.

Meghalaya Launches 'Achiever of the Month' Programme to Celebrate Entrepreneurs and Inspire Innovation



SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday launched the "Achiever of the Month" programme, a flagship initiative aimed at recognising outstanding individuals from diverse sectors while promoting entrepreneurship and innovation across the state.

Meghalaya Launches 'Achiever of the Month' Programme to Celebrate Entrepreneurs and Inspire Innovation

The initiative seeks to create a platform where achievers can share their success stories, inspire aspiring entrepreneurs, and demonstrate how government support and individual determination can work together to drive economic growth and sustainable livelihoods.

Launching the programme in Shillong, the Chief Minister said entrepreneurship is the key to transforming Meghalaya's economy and creating long-term employment opportunities. While acknowledging the government's role in creating enabling policies, infrastructure and financial support, he stressed that real economic growth ultimately depends on the efforts of entrepreneurs.

"Government creates the base, but it is entrepreneurship that makes the economy take off," Sangma said. "Entrepreneurship is the bedrock of sustainable livelihood generation and economic progress."

Explaining the vision behind the initiative, the Chief Minister said the programme is intended to bring inspiring stories from different sectors into the public domain, encouraging more people to pursue innovation and enterprise.

"We want to share your stories with the world. What may seem simple to you is truly inspiring for others," he remarked, adding that many successful entrepreneurs began with limited resources but achieved remarkable results through hard work, perseverance and determination.

As part of the initiative, Sangma announced that the entire month of July will be dedicated to entrepreneurs, during which the government will organise storytelling sessions, interactive engagements, and extensive social media campaigns to highlight entrepreneurial journeys from across Meghalaya.

The event featured entrepreneurs from different parts of the state who shared their personal experiences, speaking about the challenges they faced while establishing their businesses and the determination required to overcome setbacks. Many described how government initiatives had helped them expand their ventures and thanked the Chief Minister for introducing a programme that publicly recognises entrepreneurs and motivates others to pursue similar paths.

Father, Daughter Held with Heroin, Narcotic Tablets in Cachar Drug Bust

SILCHAR

In a significant anti-narcotics operation, Cachar Police arrested a father and daughter and seized a substantial quantity of suspected heroin and psychotropic tablets during a raid in Assam's Cachar district on Sunday.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs, a police team carried out an early morning search operation at Alipur Part-II under the jurisdiction of the Banskandi Police Outpost. The raid was conducted at the residence of Shamsul Uddin, who was allegedly involved in narcotics-related activities.

During the search, police recovered 200 vials of suspected heroin and 310 narcotic tablets concealed inside a scooter bearing registration number AS-11K-5955, which was parked within the premises.

Following the recovery of the contraband, police arrested Shamsul Uddin and his daughter Rahina Begum on charges related to possession and suspected trafficking of narcotic substances.

Officials said a case has been registered at Lakhimpur Police Station under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Investigators are currently questioning the accused to determine the source of the seized drugs and to identify possible links to a wider trafficking network operating in the region.

Police described the operation as part of an intensified crackdown on drug trafficking and illegal narcotics trade across the district. The latest seizure adds to a series of anti-drug operations conducted by law enforcement agencies in Cachar in recent months.

Further investigation is in progress.

Grenade Thrown at Railway Construction Site on Assam-Nagaland Border, Fails to Explode



DIPHU

A grenade was allegedly hurled at an under-construction railway project along the Assam-Nagaland border in Karbi Anglong district, but the device failed to explode, averting any casualties or damage, officials said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Monday afternoon at Rongaphar Siding in the Dhansiri area, where railway construction work is currently underway.

According to officials, the explosive device was thrown at the construction site but did not detonate. No workers were injured in the incident, and no damage to property or infrastructure was reported.

Police personnel were immediately deployed to the area follow-

ing the incident, and a probe has been launched to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the attack.

Investigators are examining possible leads and efforts are underway to identify those involved in the incident.

Authorities have not yet indicated any motive behind the grenade attack. Security agencies are continuing their investigation, and additional surveillance measures have been put in place in the area as a precaution.

The incident has raised concerns over security along the sensitive Assam-Nagaland border region, where major infrastructure projects are currently being executed. However, officials said construction activities at the site have not been affected.

General Dhiraj Seth takes charge as Chief of Army Staff

NEW DELHI

General Dhiraj Seth on Tuesday took charge as the new Chief of the Army Staff, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi, who retired on the same day, after an illustrious career spanning over 40 years in the armed forces.

Gen Seth is an accomplished military officer with the rare distinction of heading two operational Army commands along the western front. He assumed the reins of the 1.3 million-strong force at a time when it is forging a path to become a self-reliant and future-ready Army while meeting challenges on the borders. Gen Seth is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla. He was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.

Prior to becoming the 31st Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), he served as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff.

Gen Seth took over as the COAS at a time when the global geo-strategic environment remains dynamic, with challenges in the security domain



becoming more pronounced due to technological advancements and the ever-changing character of modern warfare.

On his elevation to the rank of an Army Commander, he served as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the South Western Command (based in Jaipur) and the Southern

Command, earning the rare distinction of commanding two operational commands along the western front, the defence ministry earlier said. During his military career spanning nearly four decades, he has had extensive experience across operational, strategic, capability development and institutional domains, contributing significantly to the Indian Army's combat effectiveness and long-term transformation. Tenantry pivotal appointments earlier in strategic planning and capability development verticals of the Army Headquarters, he shaped its modernisation trajectory, capability roadmap and long-term force structuring initiatives.



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CITIZENSHIP IN QUESTION

The debate over citizenship and proof of identity has once again moved to the centre of India's public discourse, raising uncomfortable questions about the relationship between citizens and the State. Nearly eight decades after Independence, a growing sense of uncertainty surrounds a matter that should, in any modern democracy, be clear and beyond dispute: how does an Indian citizen conclusively prove that he or she belongs to the Republic of India?

The issue is not merely legal or procedural. It touches the very foundation of democratic citizenship. In recent years, a series of judicial observations and official clarifications have exposed a troubling gap between the documents that millions of Indians rely upon in their daily lives and the legal standards used to determine citizenship.

The controversy first gained prominence when courts observed that commonly used identity documents such as Aadhaar cards, PAN cards and voter identity cards do not, by themselves, constitute proof of Indian citizenship. The reasoning behind these observations is rooted in law. Aadhaar was created primarily as a proof of identity and residence, not nationality. PAN cards serve taxation purposes, while voter IDs establish eligibility to participate in elections rather than citizenship in the strict legal sense.

Yet for ordinary citizens, these distinctions are far from academic. For decades, government agencies have encouraged citizens to enrol in these systems, linking them to welfare benefits, banking services, taxation, travel and numerous other aspects of daily life. Consequently, many Indians have come to regard these documents as evidence of their place within the nation's institutional framework.

The latest controversy emerged following a clarification that an Indian passport, while a valid travel document, is not in itself conclusive proof of citizenship. Legally, this position may not be entirely new. Citizenship in India is governed by the Citizenship Act and related legal provisions, while passports are issued under the Passports Act. However, the public reaction reflects a deeper concern: if even a passport-issued after extensive verification and accepted internationally as a symbol of national identity cannot conclusively establish citizenship, what document can?

This concern is particularly significant because the passport occupies a unique place in the public imagination. Unlike many other identity documents, it is internationally recognised and is generally issued only after verification of an applicant's credentials. For millions of Indians, it represents not merely permission to travel but an affirmation of their relationship with the nation.

The resulting confusion highlights a broader problem. India has developed multiple identity systems over the decades, each serving different purposes. Aadhaar verifies identity and residency. PAN facilitates taxation. Voter IDs enable electoral participation. Passports permit international travel. Yet none of these documents, either individually or collectively, has been universally accepted as definitive proof of citizenship.

This fragmentation creates uncertainty, particularly for vulnerable populations. Many families possess incomplete records due to migration, displacement, natural disasters, administrative lapses or historical events such as Partition. For them, the prospect of being asked to establish citizenship through documentary evidence can be daunting.

The issue has inevitably acquired political dimensions. Opposition parties have accused the government of creating confusion at a time when electoral roll revisions and citizenship-related debates are attracting heightened public attention. Government representatives, on the other hand, maintain that legal distinctions between identity documents and citizenship proof have always existed and that recent clarifications merely restate established principles.

Regardless of political interpretations, the underlying concern remains valid. Democratic citizenship cannot function effectively if large sections of the population remain uncertain about how their legal status may be established when challenged. A modern state has a responsibility not only to define citizenship clearly but also to provide citizens with practical and accessible means of demonstrating that status.

The problem is further complicated by the absence of a universally accepted citizenship document. India's identity architecture has evolved through separate initiatives undertaken at different times and for different objectives. The result is a patchwork system in which multiple documents coexist, each carrying limited legal significance in specific contexts. Other democracies have addressed this challenge through more integrated approaches. While systems vary across countries, many have established mechanisms that provide citizens with clearer and more definitive documentation of nationality. Such arrangements reduce ambiguity, simplify administrative processes and strengthen public confidence in state institutions.

India may eventually need to consider similar reforms. Any future framework must balance legal precision, administrative feasibility and the realities of a vast and diverse population. It must also ensure that genuine citizens are not burdened by excessive documentation requirements or subjected to recurring uncertainty regarding their status.

Most importantly, clarity must replace confusion. Citizenship is not a privilege granted at the discretion of changing bureaucratic interpretations. It is the foundational bond between an individual and the Republic. That bond should be secure, transparent and easily demonstrable.

As India approaches eight decades of independence, the country has every reason to take pride in its democratic institutions and its remarkable achievements in digital governance. Yet the continuing uncertainty over proof of citizenship reveals a significant institutional gap. Citizens should not be left wondering whether the documents issued by the State will be accepted tomorrow as evidence of belonging today. A democracy as large and mature as India deserves a citizenship framework that is both legally robust and publicly understandable. The question is not whether citizens should be able to prove who they are. The question is whether the State can provide a clear, consistent and trustworthy answer when they ask how.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves. - Carl Jung

WILL YOGI'S POLITICAL ACUMEN RESCUE THE BJP IN UP!



PRABHAT RANJAN DEEN

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections are now approaching. Political turmoil has already begun. Political allegations and counter-allegations are underway. In view of the NDA's victories in Bihar and West Bengal, discussions are intensifying in political and social circles about the prospects in Uttar Pradesh. After Bihar and West Bengal, the NDA is expected to remain in a strong position in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections as well. However, the theft of offerings from the Ram Temple has dealt a blow to the BJP's efforts to consolidate Hindu faith-based support. It remains to be seen how wisely the BJP manages this setback and finds an effective remedy.

UP politics has always played a decisive role in determining the direction of national politics. This state, with 403 Assembly seats, does not merely elect a state government; it also sends political signals regarding power at the Centre. The Assembly election is scheduled for 2027, and political parties have already intensified their strategies. The NDA's success in Bihar and West Bengal has certainly increased the confidence of the BJP-led alliance in Uttar Pradesh politics. However, the UP election will ultimately be decided by its own social, religious, caste-based, and political equations.

Before the election year arrives, the exposure of 'Chadhawa-Chori' at the Ram Temple has created the risk of adversely affecting existing political calculations and narratives of BJP. Although the Yogi government is making efforts to deal with this matter strictly and Yogi's political acumen may rescue the BJP from this crisis, there is no doubt that the 'Chadhawa-Chori' issue will have a significant impact on Uttar Pradesh politics in the coming elections. The Ram Temple is not merely a religious issue; for the last three decades, it has also been a major part of the BJP's political identity.

Therefore, if the issue of theft of offerings from the Ayodhya Ram Temple becomes a major political controversy, its impact could be far more than an ordinary corruption case. Its impact will mainly depend on three factors-how much public trust is established in the findings of the investigation, how cleverly the BJP leadership handles the matter, and how effectively the opposition raises the issue among voters. However, so far, opposition parties have failed to give the matter widespread political momentum.

In the expert's view, the impact on the BJP's core supporters is likely to be limited, but it may certainly have an emotional effect on a broader section of Hindu voters. The large section of citizens who value transparency in governance may take this issue seriously. If a perception develops among this broader group that attempts were made to suppress the Ram Temple theft case, that the investigation was not impartial, or that insignificant individuals were framed merely to cover up the matter, the BJP could face significant political loss. The opposition could have benefited from this issue as a moral attack against the BJP, but it appears to have missed the opportunity. For the Samajwadi Party, Congress, and Bahujan Samaj Party, this was an opportunity to launch a strong ethical challenge against the BJP, but

that opportunity now seems to be fading.

Nevertheless, while attempting to recover from the Ram Temple offering theft controversy, the BJP does not appear to be ensuring the essential condition of complete transparency in the investigation. There is no visible indication of comprehensive and strict action against all responsible officials. The Uttar Pradesh government and BJP leaders have tried to convey that the guilty will not be spared, but the action appears limited to local-level officials and has not reached the state or central levels.

If this continues, the BJP may fail to establish that this was merely a crime committed by a few individuals rather than a failure of the entire system. In that case, the political damage to the BJP may not remain limited. The investigation so far has not revealed what role, if any, senior-level officials played in the theft of offerings. A theft involving assets worth millions cannot occur without widespread negligence or collusion. The failure to reveal large-scale negligence, collusion, or political protection-despite public doubts-could become a serious electoral challenge for the BJP, because the matter is not merely about corruption; it concerns faith and trust.

The Ram Temple offering theft controversy is a warning signal for the BJP, which can transform into an electoral crisis. The BJP may argue that its electoral strength does not depend only on the Ram Temple issue or this controversy. It has other foundations, including a strong organization, beneficiaries of welfare schemes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity, and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's clean administrative image.

However, the ground reality is that an issue like the Ram Temple is more sensitive for the BJP than ordinary political matters. Therefore, in the coming time, the depth of the investigation, complete transparency, and the nature of strict action will determine whether this controversy becomes

politically damaging for the BJP or not. The public believes that the role of top-level officials in the 'Chadhawa-Chori' may never be revealed in investigation, and the BJP and the Yogi government are also aware of this perception.

Therefore, the BJP is likely to make every effort to shift voters' attention toward other important issues. The BJP may highlight free ration schemes, the Prime Minister's housing scheme, roads and expressways, electricity supply, law and order, women's safety, investment, and employment opportunities. It is trying to build a large social support base among beneficiaries of welfare schemes.

To counter the Ram Temple theft controversy, the BJP is preparing to present the development of Ayodhya as a positive narrative. Issues such as new infrastructure, tourism, the hotel industry, local businesses, and employment opportunities created through Ayodhya's development are likely to become a major part of its election messaging. The BJP's strategy is that the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly election should not revolve around "Ram Temple offering theft" but around "Development, Good Governance and Hindutva." In the 2017 and 2022 Assembly elections, the BJP successfully managed caste equations, with support from non-Yadav OBC groups and non-Jatav Dalit communities playing an important role. The BJP is attempting to strengthen this social base again for 2027.

Another important factor is the issue of law and order and Hindutva. BJP supporters believe that the Yogi government has worked on crime control, development of religious sites, and administrative firmness. After the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, this issue can continue to serve as cultural and emotional capital for the BJP. A third factor is the benefit of welfare schemes. Free ration, housing, toilets, electricity, healthcare, and women-focused schemes of the central and state governments have directly

benefited poor families. Women voters may also play a decisive role in Uttar Pradesh. The fourth factor is NDA's alliance expansion. Discussions on seat-sharing and social equations with allies such as the Nishad Party and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party are part of the BJP's strategy.

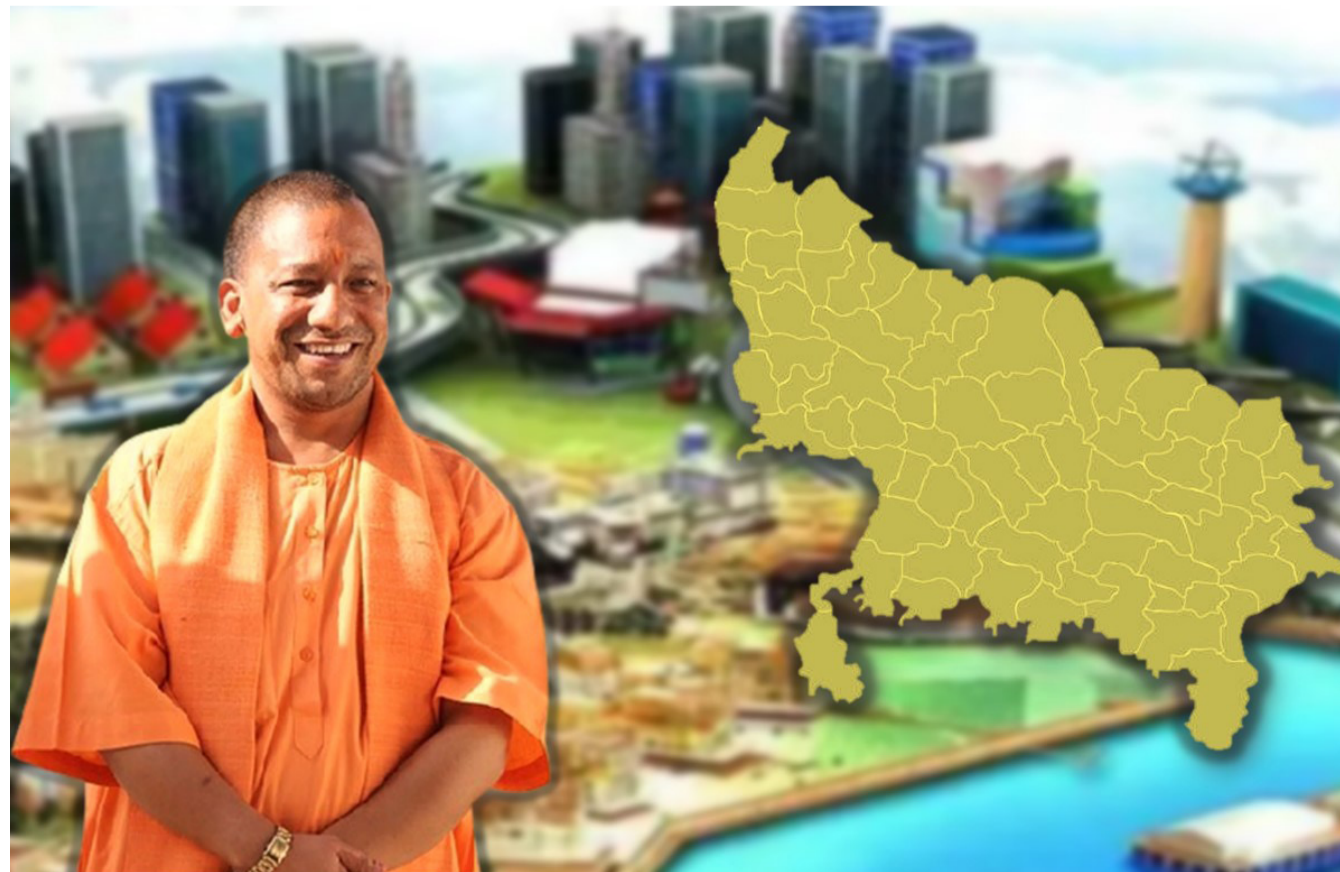
Therefore, if the BJP deals with the present crisis wisely and maintains its social alliance intact, keeps anti-incumbency under control, and remains organisationally active, the NDA may remain in a position to retain power again in Uttar Pradesh.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

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marking 81
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#UNCharter, the
Secretary-General
urged Member
States to uphold
the principles
of the Charter
and strengthen
cooperation to
address today's
global challenges.**

~ United Nations



Tear Gas Fired as Naga Women Block Essential Supplies Convoy in Manipur's Kangpokpi

IMPHAL

Security forces fired tear gas shells and used mock bombs to disperse hundreds of Naga women protesters who attempted to block a convoy carrying medicines, food and other essential supplies through Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Sunday night, officials said.

The convoy, transporting relief and essential commodities to Kuki-inhabited areas, was moving under heavy security when it encountered resistance at several locations in the district.

The most intense confrontation took place at Twilang, where a large group of women carrying torches occupied the road and prevented the convoy from proceeding. Officials said security personnel repeatedly appealed to the protesters to clear the route, but the crowd



refused to disperse.

Following the standoff, security forces resorted to firing tear gas shells and using mock bombs to break up the gathering and reopen the road. No injuries were reported during the operation.

Attempts to stop the convoy were also reported from Thonlang and Atongba village, where demonstrators assembled along the route to obstruct the movement of vehicles carrying essential supplies.

Security personnel later cleared the affected stretches, enabling the convoy to continue its journey.

The convoy operation came amid growing tensions over transportation and access restrictions in parts of the state. The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) has issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the Centre and the Manipur govern-

ment, demanding the removal of what it termed "unauthorised checkpoints" and restrictions on movement along National Highway-2.

CoTU has warned of intensified democratic protests if its demands are not addressed, alleging that the restrictions have disrupted the supply of essential commodities to Kuki-Zo inhabited areas.

Meanwhile, the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) has claimed that transportation disruptions have affected several villages, including Chassad and Aishi in Kamjong district and Kotlen and Leilon in Kangpokpi district.

According to the council, shortages of food, medicines, fuel and other daily necessities have emerged due to restrictions in parts of Senapati and Namliong. It has urged the authori-

ties to ensure uninterrupted humanitarian access to affected areas.

The protests by Naga women come in the aftermath of the abduction and killing of six Naga civilians earlier this month, an incident that has sparked widespread anger across Naga-inhabited regions.

Since the killings, torchlight rallies, demonstrations and road blockades have continued in several parts of Kangpokpi district.

The bodies of the six victims remain at the mortuary of the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (INIMS) in Imphal. Naga civil society organisations have maintained that they will not claim the bodies until those responsible for the killings are identified and brought to justice.

Assam CM Orders Streamlining of e-Transit Permit System, Seeks Stronger Action Against GST Evasion

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday directed officials to streamline the electronic Transit Permit (e-TP) system for the movement of forest produce and minerals while strengthening measures to curb GST evasion and revenue leakages in the sector.

The directions were issued during a high-level review meeting attended by senior officials from the Environment and Forest Department and the Finance Department. The meeting focused on enhancing revenue generation from Assam's natural resources through improved management, stronger regulatory oversight and technology-driven governance.

State Finance Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said the discussions centred on measures to maximise revenue from forest and mineral resources while ensuring greater transparency and accountability in their transport and trade.

During the review, the Chief Minister emphasised the need to make the e-Transit Permit system more efficient and transparent to facilitate better monitoring of forest produce and mineral movement across the state.

Sarma also called for stricter enforcement mechanisms to detect and prevent GST evasion, stressing that revenue leakages in the forest and mining sectors must be addressed through co-ordinated action and improved monitoring.

Officials discussed the use of technology-based systems to strengthen compliance, improve tracking of goods in transit and enhance overall accountability in resource management.

The meeting forms part of the state government's broader efforts to improve governance, boost revenue collection from natural resources and ensure effective regulation of forest and mining-related activities through digital platforms and stricter enforcement measures.

Amit Shah Reviews Arunachal Flood Crisis

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday directed officials to streamline the electronic Transit Permit (e-TP) system for the movement of forest produce and minerals while strengthening measures to curb GST evasion and revenue leakages in the sector.

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Meghalaya Launches Month-Long Electoral Roll Verification Drive Under Special Intensive Revision

SHILLONG

Meghalaya on Monday commenced the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) beginning a month-long door-to-door verification exercise across the state to update voter records and ensure greater accuracy in the electoral database.

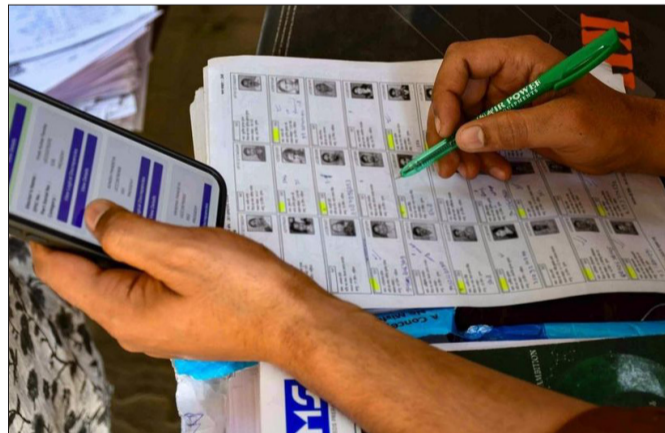
The verification drive will continue until July 29 and forms part of the nationwide initiative of the Election Commission of India to maintain error-free and updated electoral rolls ahead of future elections.

Under the exercise, BLOs will visit households in all 60 Assembly constituencies and distribute self-enumeration forms to electors whose names appeared in the 2005 electoral rolls, which have been adopted by the Election

Commission as the reference base for the ongoing revision.

Election officials said the exercise aims to verify voter details, facilitate corrections where required and ensure that all eligible citizens are properly included in the electoral rolls.

Appealing for public cooperation, Abhilash Baranwal, Deputy Commissioner of East Khasi Hills district, urged residents to assist BLOs during the verification process.



Commission as the reference base for the ongoing revision.

Election officials said the exercise aims to verify voter details, facilitate corrections where required and ensure that all eligible citizens are properly included in the electoral rolls.

Arunachal on High Alert as Floods Intensify; Home Minister Assures Full-Scale Relief and Rescue Operations

ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister Mama Natung said the state government is on high alert and fully prepared to tackle the worsening flood situation, with rescue and relief operations being carried out on a war footing across affected districts.

Speaking amid continuing heavy rainfall and rising floodwaters in several parts of the state, Natung said the government is closely monitoring the situation and coordinating efforts through multiple agencies to ensure timely assistance to affected residents.

He said teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), state police and district administrations have been deployed in vulnerable areas to carry out rescue operations and provide



relief to stranded people.

The Home Minister added that helicopters are being deployed with support from the Indian Air Force (IAF) to reach remote and inaccessible flood-hit locations where road connectivity has been disrupted by flooding and landslides.

Assuring residents that essential supplies would continue to

reach affected areas, Natung said the government has taken measures to prevent shortages of food grains and other necessities.

"There will be no shortage of ration or essential commodities in the flood-affected areas of the state," he said.

The minister also appealed to the public to remain vigilant and avoid unnecessary travel during

the peak monsoon period, citing the risks posed by flash floods, landslides and road blockages.

"I appeal to all to avoid movement during this peak monsoon period. The government is committed to extending full support to the people during this difficult time in our geographically vast northeastern state," Natung said.

The assurance comes as several districts across Arunachal Pradesh continue to experience heavy rainfall, triggering floods and landslides that have disrupted normal life and prompted intensified rescue and relief efforts by disaster response agencies and local authorities.

Officials said the government remains focused on ensuring public safety, restoring connectivity and providing assistance to communities affected by the ongoing monsoon-related disasters.

Assam CID Cracks Fake Government Job Racket, Seven Arrested in Water Resources Recruitment Scam

GUWAHATI

The Crime Investigation Department (CID) of Assam Police has unearthed an alleged fake government recruitment racket that duped job seekers by promising appointments in the Water Resources Department using forged documents and fabricated recruitment records.

Police said seven people have been arrested so far in connection with the case, which investigators believe was operated by a well-organised network spread across multiple districts of the state.

According to the CID, the accused allegedly collected large sums of money from unemployed youths by falsely assuring them of government jobs. Victims were reportedly convinced that they had secured legitimate appointments through what appeared to be an official recruitment process. "The accused, operating as part of an organised racket, allegedly cheated job-seeking youths of substantial sums of money. Victims were made to believe that they were being offered genuine government jobs," a CID official said.

The case has been registered at the CID Police Station as Case No. 04/25 under Sections 61(2), 318(4), 336(3) and 340(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.

The latest arrest was made on June 27, when Gunamoni

Baishya was apprehended from Nalbari district. Investigators suspect that the operation may involve a larger network and are examining financial transactions, forged documents and possible links to additional individuals.

Officials said the accused allegedly used fake appointment letters, fabricated government seals and forged recruitment notifications purportedly issued by the Water Resources Department to make the scheme appear authentic.

The fraud came to light after several victims discovered that the appointment letters and recruitment procedures were fraudulent and subsequently lodged complaints with the authorities. Police have not ruled out further arrests as the investigation progresses and efforts continue to identify other individuals who may have been involved in the racket. Following the crackdown, Assam Police urged job aspirants to verify the authenticity of government recruitment notifications through official channels and cautioned against making any payments to intermediaries or individuals in exchange for employment.

"The public is strongly advised to verify the authenticity of any government recruitment notice through official channels and to refrain from making any payment in exchange for government employment," the CID said.

Nagaland University Scholar Highlights Indigenous Youth Challenges at UN Conference in Nepal

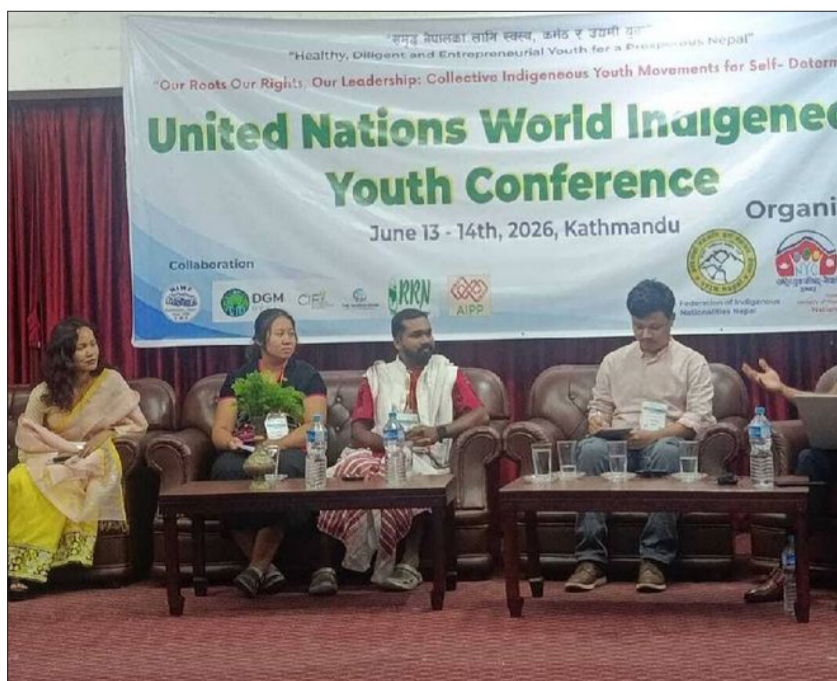
KOHIWA

A research scholar from Nagaland University represented India at the United Nations World Indigenous Youth Conference 2026 in Kathmandu, Nepal, where he highlighted the challenges faced by Indigenous youth and stressed the need to balance economic development with the preservation of indigenous identity and cultural heritage.

Repakaba Tzudir, a research scholar in the Department of Sociology at Nagaland University, Lumami, attended the two-day international conference on June 13 and 14 as an International Delegate and Indigenous Scholar.

Organised jointly by the Youth Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (YFIN), Nepal, and the National Youth Council (NYC), Nepal, the conference was held under the theme, "Our Roots, Our Rights, Our Leadership: Collective Indigenous Movement for Self-Determination." The event brought together nearly 150 Indigenous youth leaders, academics, activists and community representatives from across Asia.

Tzudir participated alongside delegates from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and various parts of India. He also served as a panel speaker during a session on "Indigenous Youth Movement in Asia," where he spoke about the realities



confronting Naga youth, particularly unemployment and the tendency for immediate socio-economic concerns to overshadow broader Indigenous rights and identity-related issues.

Reflecting on the conference, Tzudir said discussions revealed striking similarities in the experiences of Indigenous communities despite differences in geography and cultural backgrounds.

He noted that issues such as protec-

tion of identity, preservation of land and culture, and the need to create meaningful opportunities for young people emerged as recurring themes throughout the event.

According to him, one of the key discussions focused on how Indigenous youth are navigating the challenge of preserving traditional values while adapting to rapidly changing social and economic environments.

Tzudir said concerns relating to unemployment, migration, limited access to education and livelihood opportunities, as well as the gradual erosion of Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge, were shared by participants from several countries.

Drawing from the discussions, he observed that economic pressures often become the immediate priority for many young people in Nagaland, reducing engagement with broader issues concerning Indigenous identity and rights.

At the same time, he acknowledged the growing role of Indigenous youth organisations across Asia in promoting leadership, advocacy, cultural revitalisation and community participation.

Emphasising that economic growth and Indigenous identity should not be viewed as competing objectives, Tzudir called for sustainable development strategies that create employment opportunities while preserving cultural values and community traditions.

He further stressed the importance of investing in youth leadership, strengthening community-based initiatives and fostering regional cooperation to amplify Indigenous voices across Asia.

The scholar said the conference helped build stronger networks among Indigenous youth and deepened understanding of common challenges faced by Indigenous communities, reinforcing his commitment to research, advocacy and community engagement.

His participation in the conference was supported by the Indigenous Peoples of Asia Solidarity Fund (IPAS Fund) and the Youth Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (YFIN), Nepal, which provided travel and hospitality assistance.

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Mallikarjun Kharge takes oath as Rajya Sabha member after re-election



media platform X, the Vice President's office confirmed that Kharge had taken oath as a re-elected member of the Council of States from Karnataka, sharing photographs of the ceremony.

Kharge also posted on X expressing gratitude for the opportunity to continue serving as Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, calling it a matter of "immense pride and responsibility."

He thanked Vice President Radhakrishnan and Deputy Chairman Harivansh for their support, as well as Congress leadership including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, along with party colleagues and workers for their continued backing.

He also expressed appreciation to leaders across parties, particularly INDIA bloc members, and said he looked forward to stronger coordination during the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament to ensure greater accountability from the government.

Apart from Kharge, BJP leader Tarun Chugh, and six other new members including Jitendra Meghji (Karnataka) and Mansingh Meraman Parmar (Gujarat), M Nagaraja (Karnataka), Rajendra Hiralal Jain (Maharashtra), Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi (Manipur) and Alka Singh (Rajasthan), also took oath. Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, Leader of the House J P Nadda, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal were present at the oath-taking, both inside the chairman's chamber as well as in the House. Kharge took oath in Hindi while holding a copy of the Constitution in his hand.

VP Radhakrishnan congratulated and welcome the new members into the House.

NEW DELHI

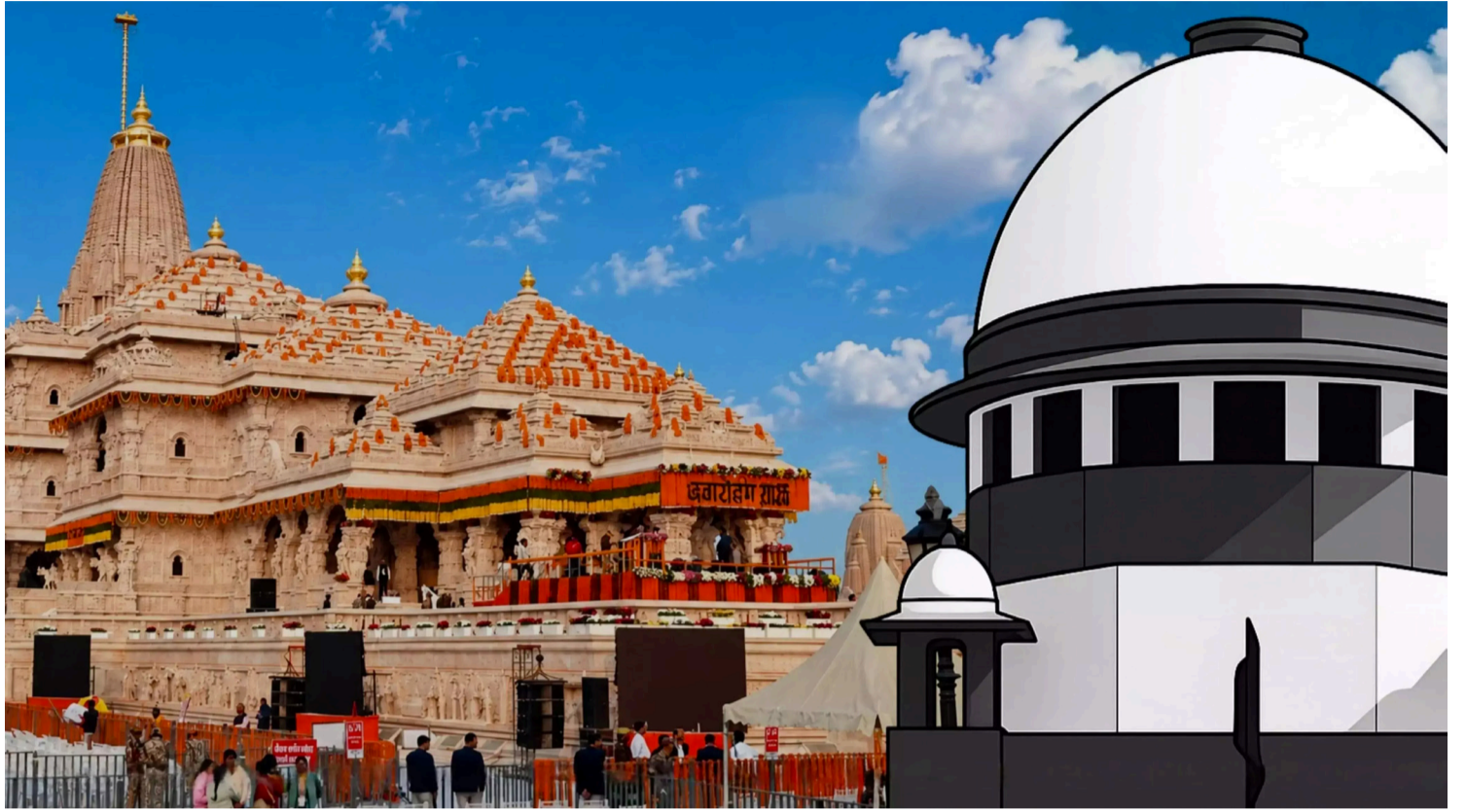
Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge was sworn in as a member of the Rajya Sabha after being re-elected to the Upper House.

The oath of office was administered to Kharge by Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President C P Radhakrishnan in his chamber at Parliament House. He took the oath in Hindi and was seen holding a copy of the Constitution during the ceremony. Vice President Radhakrishnan congratulated Kharge and said the Upper House would benefit from his long parliamentary experience. Following the

oath-taking, Kharge said he would continue to raise the concerns, aspirations and voices of the people with sincerity and conviction, while also holding the government accountable. He reiterated that these responsibilities would remain central to his role in Parliament. Senior Congress leaders, including Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, were present during the ceremony. Union ministers J P Nadda, Kiren Rijiju, Arjun Ram Meghwal, and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh also attended the occasion.

In a post on social

'Heavens are not going to fall': SC rejects urgent hearing on Ram temple donation row plea



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court declined an urgent hearing on a petition seeking a fair and time-bound probe into the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ayodhya Ram temple.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Sheel Nagu said the matter will be listed for hearing after the summer break.

"Heavens are not going to fall... What is the urgency," the bench observed orally.

The petition, filed by advocates Ajay Kumar Rai and Dinesh Kumar Yadav, said a CBI-led multi-disciplinary special investigation team (SIT) should investigate the alleged financial irregularities and other purported illegalities concerning the affairs and administration of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth

Kshetra Trust.

The petition calling for an FIR in the matter also sought directions to the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government and the temple trust to constitute and operationalise such regulatory, supervisory and audit mechanisms as may be necessary to safeguard public interest and maintain the confidence of millions of devotees and donors.

"Whether or not the reports regarding missing funds and other alleged irregularities concerning the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust are ultimately found to be true, such reports have caused deep concern among the generations that struggled for the restoration of the glory of Ayodhya," the plea said. The SIT constituted

by the Uttar Pradesh government has commenced its inquiry into the matter without the registration of an FIR or any regular criminal case, it alleged.

A view of the Supreme Court of India building in New Delhi.

The plea said the veracity of reports concerning alleged missing funds and other purported irregularities involving the temple trust ought to be independently verified through a professional investigation conducted by a unified agency possessing the requisite expertise, resources and institutional mechanisms for handling complex financial and criminal investigations.

"Such an inquiry would inspire greater public confidence than a preliminary probe conducted by a special investigation

team (SIT) comprising administrative officers who may not possess specialised credentials in criminal investigation," the plea said.

It said the issues involved not only concern the possible commission of cognisable offences but also directly affect the faith, sentiments and confidence of countless devotees and the public.

On June 13, the Uttar Pradesh government constituted the SIT on a request from the temple trust following allegations of misappropriation of donations received at the Ram temple.

The SIT comprised Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, IGP Kiran S and Finance Department Special Secretary Neel Ratan.

INTERNATIONAL

Zelenskyy condemns 'horrific attacks' as Russian strikes kill eight, wound 35 in Ukraine

KYIV

Russian missiles and drones killed at least eight civilians and injured 35 others in Ukraine on Monday in what Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described as "horrific attacks."

Since Russia launched its all-out invasion of its neighbor more than four years ago, its forces have conducted strategic bombing in an effort to destroy the country's infrastructure and sap Ukrainian morale. More than 16,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed, according to the U.N.

A Russian missile targeting infrastructure struck the central city of Dnipro, killing five people and wounding 29, Zelenskyy said on social media.

Russian drones also hit a passenger minibus in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, killing three and wounding six, including a child, he said.

In addition, Russia drones killed a 69-year-old woman and a 77-year-old man in Ukraine's northeastern Sумы region, National Police said.

Other deadly attacks occurred in at least six other regions of Ukraine, authorities said.

Some customers in eight Ukrainian regions were left without power Monday after Russian strikes, after hot weather drove up electricity use as people turned on air conditioners, grid operator Ukrenergo said.

Zelenskyy renewed his plea for Europe to step up its development of air defenses to block Russia's ballistic missiles, which are hard to stop.

"People need greater protection from such horrific attacks," Zelenskyy said. "Above all, we need anti-ballistic capabilities. It is essential that Europe is as active as possible in developing its own anti-ballistic defense - its own systems and missiles."

A marked shift has taken place in the war in recent months, Western offi-



cials say, as Ukraine's expanding drone strikes have brought fuel shortages in Russia and Russia-occupied territory. The attacks have weakened the Russian military's supply lines to the front in eastern and southern Ukraine, slowing their advance, according to analysts.

Ukraine's innovative drone engineering has given it an edge in the war and made it a world leader in the technology's military use, and it is now helping partner countries after previously pleading for foreign military support.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday acknowledged that repeated

Ukrainian long-range drone strikes on Russia's oil facilities have caused fuel shortages. The scarcity has triggered public anger and frustration as people wait in line for hours to fill up at gas stations. But Putin ruled out making any concessions to end the invasion and insisted that Russia will ultimately prevail in the war despite what he called "temporary" setbacks.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russia's position on Ukraine remains unchanged, insisting that Russian troops are continuing their front-line offensive.

Their effort "makes us confident that our goals will be achieved," Peskov

told reporters.

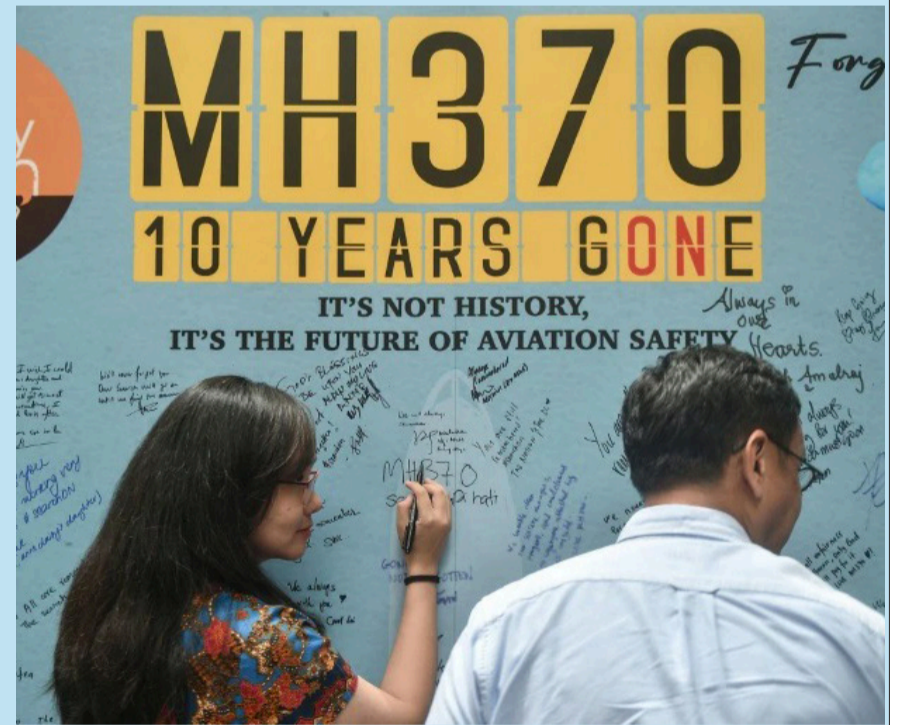
The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said the Kremlin's stance is an attempt to push the West and Ukraine to giving in to Russia's demands.

But, it added, "Russia's battlefield performance continues to decline in 2026 and Russia's ability to seize its objectives militarily is in question."

Russia's Defense Ministry said that air defenses downed 209 Ukrainian drones from late Sunday through early Monday.

Ukraine's air force said it shot down 82 of the 108 drones that Russia launched overnight.

Malaysia extends long-missing flight MH370 search deal to 2027



KUALA LUMPUR

The search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 will be extended for another year, Malaysia said, more than a decade after the plane disappeared.

The Boeing 777 carrying 239 people vanished from radar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing in one of aviation's greatest enduring mysteries.

Two-thirds of the passengers were Chinese, and the rest included Malaysians, Indonesians and Australians, as well as Indian, American, Dutch and French nationals.

Despite the largest search in aviation history, the plane has not been found.

Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke said on Monday the extension will run until June 30, 2027, and maintains all terms and conditions of the existing agreement with

exploration firm Ocean Infinity.

This includes a "no find, no fee" principle, meaning Ocean Infinity will only be paid \$70 million if the wreckage is located. "This decision is a manifestation of the government's continuous and unwavering commitment to provide a closure for the next of kin of the passengers aboard flight MH370," Loke said in a statement.

"The approval of this extension aims to allow the remaining search area of 7,428.54 square kilometres (2,868 square miles), to be fully completed by the company," he added.

The extension, Loke said, also took into account new commercial commitments received by Ocean Infinity that required its primary search assets to be temporarily redeployed to another location.

"The redeployment and rescheduling of these assets can only be conducted between November 2026

and April 2027, during the calm sea season, to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the search," he said.

The most recent search took place in two stages, beginning in March 2025, but the firm returned empty-handed. Families of the Chinese passengers published an open letter on March 8 - the 12th anniversary of the flight's disappearance - criticising the lack of information they received during the latest search.

"We understand the difficulties of the search," the relatives said in their letter to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in which they thanked him for the initiative.

"However, since 15 January this year, families have received no further search briefings whatsoever," they said.

Ocean Infinity conducted previous unsuccessful searches in 2018, as did Australia for three years until January 2017.

India and Myanmar at a Strategic Crossroads: Can New Diplomatic Momentum Deliver Lasting Gains?

The five-day state visit of Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing to India from May 30 to June 3, 2026, has opened a new chapter in the evolving relationship between the two neighbours. More than a routine diplomatic engagement, the visit reflected a deliberate effort by both countries to strengthen strategic cooperation at a time when regional geopolitics, border security challenges, and great-power competition are reshaping South and Southeast Asia.

As President Hlaing's first official foreign visit since assuming office in April 2026, the trip carried considerable symbolic and strategic significance. For India, it represented a continuation of its pragmatic approach toward Myanmar—one that prioritises engagement over isolation while balancing democratic concerns with national security and regional interests.

India's Pragmatic Myanmar Policy New Delhi has long maintained a delicate balancing act in dealing with Myanmar. While continuing official engagement with the government in Naypyidaw, India has also consistently emphasised the importance of an inclusive political process and democratic reconciliation. During the latest visit, India reportedly reiterated its concern for the welfare of democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi while maintaining constructive dialogue with the Myanmar leadership.

By extending a formal invitation to President Hlaing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government signalled its preference for sustained engagement rather than diplomatic disengagement. Indian policymakers believe that direct communication offers greater leverage in addressing shared concerns, ranging from border security and insurgency to economic connectivity and regional stability.

The visit was accompanied by a large Myanmar delegation that included Cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, senior officials, business leaders, and Buddhist clergy. The breadth of representation underscored Myanmar's interest in expanding cooperation across multiple sectors.

During the visit, President Hlaing met President Droupadi Murmu, held extensive discussions with Prime Minister Modi, participated in business forums, and visited industrial and energy facilities. The talks covered a broad range of issues, including trade, investment, connectivity, defence cooperation, border management, development assistance, capacity building, and cultural exchanges.

India also used the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to its "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East" policies, positioning Myanmar as a crucial partner in connecting India with Southeast Asia.

Beyond Symbolism: Key Areas of Cooperation The renewed diplomatic engagement highlighted several strategic areas where both countries see opportunities for deeper collaboration.

Border Security and Regional Stability Border security remains one of the most pressing concerns for both governments. India and Myanmar share a 1,643-kilometre border that traverses difficult terrain and passes through regions affected by insurgency, illegal migration, arms trafficking, and narcotics smuggling.

The violence and political instability within Myanmar since 2021 have had direct consequences for India's northeastern states, particularly Manipur and Mizoram. Insurgent groups operating along the border have exploited the challenging geography and limited state presence in certain areas.

Consequently, discussions during the visit focused heavily on enhancing security coordination, intelligence sharing, and measures aimed at preventing cross-border militant activity. India also reiterated its support for a peaceful and inclusive political settlement within Myanmar, recognising that long-term stability there is essential for security in India's Northeast.

Connectivity Projects Regain Momentum Perhaps the most significant outcome of the visit was the renewed commitment to long-delayed connectivity projects that form the backbone of India's Act East strategy.

Foremost among these are the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, both of which have faced repeated delays due to security concerns, logistical challenges, and political instability.

The Kaladan project is particularly important because it seeks to connect India's northeastern states to the Bay of Bengal through Myanmar's Rakhine State, reducing dependence on the narrow Siliguri Corridor and providing alternative trade routes.

Similarly, the trilateral highway is intended to link



India directly with Southeast Asia through Myanmar and Thailand, creating new opportunities for trade, tourism, and regional integration.

Both governments agreed to accelerate work on these projects and explore mechanisms to facilitate cross-border trade, including discussions on local currency settlement arrangements.

Managing the Border: Fencing and Cooperation

India's decision to proceed with fencing portions of the Indo-Myanmar border remains a sensitive issue, particularly among communities with longstanding ethnic and familial ties across both sides of the frontier.

Groups in Mizoram and other border regions have expressed concerns about restrictions on traditional movement patterns, especially among Chin communities whose social and cultural links transcend modern political boundaries.

Nevertheless, New Delhi views enhanced border management as a sovereign necessity, citing concerns over illegal migration, narcotics trafficking, and security threats. During the visit, India reportedly explained its plans for designated border gates and regulated entry points to maintain stability while facilitating legitimate movement.

Both countries also agreed to intensify cooperation against transnational crime networks involved in drug trafficking, cybercrime, and illegal arms movements that affect India's northeastern states.

Tackling Insurgency Along the Border One of India's longstanding security concerns has been the presence of several Northeast insurgent groups operating from bases inside Myanmar.

Previous joint operations, including Operation Sunrise launched in 2019, demonstrated the potential effectiveness of coordinated military action against insurgent camps and logistical networks.

During the recent discussions, President Hlaing reportedly assured India that Myanmar's territory would not be allowed to serve as a sanctuary for anti-India militant organisations. Such assurances are significant given the persistent challenges posed by insurgent groups operating in remote border areas.

However, implementation remains complicated by Myanmar's internal conflict, which has stretched the capabilities of its security forces and fragmented authority across several regions.

Rare Earths and Critical Minerals: A New Strategic Dimension

An emerging area of cooperation is critical minerals and rare earth elements, resources that are increasingly central to global technology supply chains.

Myanmar possesses substantial deposits of rare earth elements, particularly in Kachin State. These minerals are essential for manufacturing electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, advanced electronics, and defence equipment.

India's interest in diversifying its supply chains and reducing dependence on Chinese-controlled sources has made cooperation with Myanmar strategically attractive.

Recent discussions reportedly explored possibilities for collaboration in mining, processing, and securing access to these critical resources. For India, such cooperation could strengthen its industrial and technological capabilities while enhancing supply-chain resilience.

The Cultural Connection Beyond strategic and economic interests, both nations continue to draw upon deep civilisational links rooted in Buddhism.

President Hlaing's visit began with a trip to the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhi Gaya, highlighting the enduring religious and cultural ties between the two countries.

Despite possessing significant Buddhist heritage, India has arguably yet to fully leverage this cultural connection as a component of its regional diplomacy. Strengthening people-to-people exchanges, tourism, educational cooperation, and cultural outreach could complement strategic engagement and foster deeper public goodwill.

Myanmar's Geostrategic Importance Myanmar's importance to India extends far beyond bilateral considerations. Geographically positioned between South Asia

and Southeast Asia, it serves as a critical gateway for India's regional ambitions. For China, Myanmar provides strategic access to the Bay of Bengal through the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the deep-water port at Kyaukphyu. These projects offer Beijing an alternative route to the Indian Ocean that bypasses the Strait of Malacca, reducing vulnerability to maritime disruptions.

For India, Myanmar is equally indispensable. The success of the Act East Policy depends significantly on stable connectivity through Myanmar. Any prolonged instability threatens infrastructure projects, trade routes, and broader regional integration efforts.

The ongoing conflict inside Myanmar has already disrupted progress on several key projects while generating refugee flows and security challenges along India's eastern frontier.

The Shadow of Great-Power Rivalry No assessment of India-Myanmar relations can ignore the growing strategic competition among major powers in the region. China remains Myanmar's most influential external partner, maintaining extensive economic, political, and military ties. Beijing has cultivated relationships not only with the Myanmar government but also with various ethnic armed groups operating near its border, allowing it to retain influence regardless of shifts in the internal balance of power.

At the same time, the United States has adjusted its approach toward Myanmar in response to evolving regional dynamics. Washington seeks to limit China's influence while promoting its own strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific.

The broader competition between China and the United States increasingly extends

into neighbouring Bangladesh as well. China's economic footprint there continues to grow, while expanding security cooperation between Bangladesh and the United States has introduced new geopolitical variables into the Bay of Bengal region.

These developments create a complex strategic environment for India, which must navigate multiple competing interests while safeguarding its own security and economic priorities.

Challenges Ahead Despite the positive atmosphere surrounding President Hlaing's visit, significant obstacles remain.

Myanmar continues to face internal armed conflict involving multiple ethnic insurgent groups and resistance forces. Large portions of the country remain contested, complicating governance, infrastructure development, and economic activity.

The security situation in states such as Kachin, Rakhine, and Chin has direct implications for India's connectivity projects and border management efforts. Transporting resources, constructing infrastructure, and maintaining trade corridors through conflict zones involve considerable logistical and financial risks.

Furthermore, competing external interests could complicate bilateral initiatives. Infrastructure projects, mineral resource development, and regional connectivity plans increasingly intersect with the strategic calculations of larger powers.

A Window of Opportunity

The renewed warmth in India-Myanmar relations presents an important opportunity for both countries. For India, engagement with Myanmar is essential for securing its northeastern frontier, advancing regional connectivity, accessing critical resources, and strengthening its position in Southeast Asia.

For Myanmar, closer ties with India offer economic opportunities, diplomatic balance, development assistance, and an important partnership beyond its traditional dependence on China.

Yet the success of this renewed engagement will ultimately depend on factors beyond diplomatic goodwill. Internal stability within Myanmar, effective implementation of connectivity projects, and the ability of both countries to navigate an increasingly competitive geopolitical landscape will determine whether current momentum translates into lasting strategic gains.

The central question therefore remains: can India and Myanmar transform this diplomatic thaw into a durable partnership that serves their mutual interests, or will regional instability and great-power rivalry continue to constrain the full potential of their relationship? The answer will shape not only bilateral ties but also the future strategic architecture of South and Southeast Asia.

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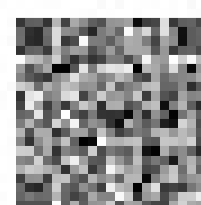


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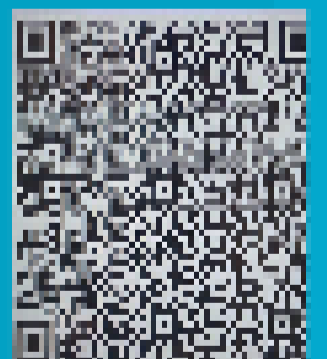
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