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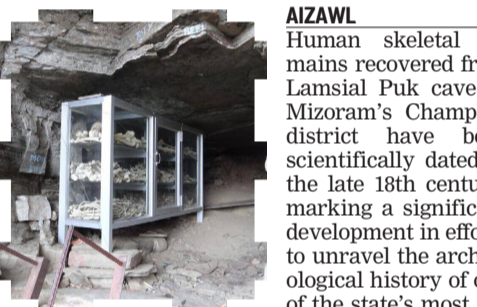
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PERSPECTIVE
Forgiveness is the key to happiness, according to psychologists.

Radiocarbon Dating Places Mizoram Cave Remains in Late 18th Century



AIZAWL
Human skeletal remains recovered from Lamsial Puk cave in Mizoram's Champhai district have been scientifically dated to the late 18th century, marking a significant development in efforts to unravel the archaeological history of one of the state's most important heritage sites.

The Mizo Archaeological Society (MAS) said radiocarbon (Carbon-14) analysis of a skeletal sample recovered from the cave dated the remains to between AD 1729 and AD 1789.

The sample was sent to a specialised radiocarbon dating laboratory in Miami, Florida, where scientific analysis was carried out to determine its age. The results provide one of the first scientifically established dates for human remains discovered at the cave.

However, MAS cautioned that the findings relate only to the single sample tested and should not be interpreted as representing all the skeletal remains found at the site.

The cave contains numerous human bones and skulls, and further radiocarbon testing will be required to establish the age and chronology of the remaining remains, the society said.

"The result applies only to the tested sample. Additional scientific investigations are necessary to determine the age of other skeletal remains recovered from the cave," MAS stated.

WHO SAID WHAT

50% of the Indonesian language is derived from Sanskrit.
~ Prabowo Subianto, President of Indonesia

Meghalaya Pineapple Festival to Spotlight Farmers, Exports and Market Linkages in New Delhi

SHILLONG/NEW DELHI

Meghalaya will showcase its flagship horticultural produce and seek to expand market opportunities for farmers as the fourth edition of the Meghalaya Pineapple Festival gets underway at Dilli Haat in New Delhi from July 10 to 12.

Organised by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the festival has evolved into a key platform for connecting pineapple growers from the state with consumers, retailers, food processing companies, institutional buyers and exporters. The initiative aims to strengthen the agricultural value chain while improving income opportunities for farmers.

The event comes at a time when Meghalaya is seeking to position agriculture as a major driver of economic growth. Officials said the festival will facilitate business partnerships, enhance market access and promote value-added products, enabling farmers to secure better returns from their produce.

Meghalaya's pineapples are widely known for their sweetness, low acidity and high Brix value, characteristics that have helped the fruit gain recognition in domestic and international markets. Exports to destinations in the Gulf region,



including Dubai and the United Arab Emirates, have opened new avenues for farmer-producer organisations and strengthened the state's presence in global fruit markets.

The state government said the festival has delivered measurable economic benefits in recent years. Fresh pineapple sales

Khemchand Singh Appeals for Inter-Community Unity After Release of 14 Kuki Youths

Talks Between Manipur Government and UNC End Without Breakthrough, NH-2 Blockade Continues

"WE ARE ALL MANIPURI"

IMPHAL
Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday called for greater unity and reconciliation among the state's communities, saying peace remains the foundation for Manipur's development, as he welcomed the safe release of 14 Kuki youths who were recently held captive. During a visit to Kangpokpi district, the chief minister met the released youths and interacted with residents of Taphou Kuki village. Addressing the gathering, he emphasised the shared identity of the state's diverse communities and urged people to look beyond ethnic divisions.

"Whether it is Kuki, Naga, Meitei or any other community, we are all citizens of India. Secondly, we are all Manipuri," Khemchand said, adding that people from different communities should work together for a peaceful and prosperous Manipur.

The chief minister also referred to his recent meeting with representatives of the United Naga Council (UNC) in Senapati district



and expressed gratitude for the organisation's role in facilitating the safe release of the youths through dialogue and peace initiatives. He noted that the youths had returned unharmed and described their safe return as a positive step towards restoring trust and normalcy in the state. Highlighting the government's commitment to peace, Khemchand said it was the responsibility of the administration to create conditions in which all communities could coexist harmoniously. He stressed that development and progress would remain difficult

to achieve in the absence of lasting peace.

At Kangpokpi headquarters, the chief minister also met church leaders and appealed to them to play an active role in strengthening peace-building efforts. Calling for reconciliation, he urged people to move beyond past grievances and work together in the interests of future generations. He further said that he had been encouraging Meitei youths to reject violence and hoped that leaders of other communities would make similar efforts to promote harmony and mutual understanding. The church leaders later submitted a memorandum outlining issues and concerns faced by local communities. Later in the day, Khemchand visited Namdilong in Imphal West district, where he met women from the Liangmei Naga community and listened to their grievances. The visit comes amid ongoing efforts by the state government and civil society groups to rebuild trust and foster dialogue among communities following more than three years of ethnic tensions and unrest in Manipur. Efforts by the Manipur government to persuade the United Naga Council (UNC) to withdraw its indefinite economic blockade along National Highway-2 failed on

Wednesday, with talks between Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand and the apex Naga body ending without a breakthrough. The meeting, held at the Deputy Commissioner's Complex in Senapati district, lasted for about an hour and focused on the ongoing blockade and the killing of six Liangmai Naga men, an incident that has sparked widespread protests across Naga-inhabited areas of the state. Government representatives urged the UNC to lift the blockade in view of its impact on the movement of essential commodities and public convenience. However, the council maintained that the agitation would continue until its key demands are addressed. The UNC has also refused to claim the bodies of the six victims, which remain at the mortuary of the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal, insisting that justice must be delivered before any further steps are taken. Addressing reporters after the meeting, UNC president Ng Lorho described the discussions as "fruitful and meaningful" but said no agreement had been reached. He indicated that the organisation could intensify its agitation if the government fails to act on its demands.

The council's four-point charter includes the immediate abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki militant groups, the arrest of all those allegedly involved in the abduction and killing of the six Naga civilians, including the chief of Leilon Vaiphei village, the removal of Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen from office, and the declaration of the Kuki National Front-President Group (KNF-P) as a terrorist organisation. The crisis stems from the abduction of six Liangmai Naga men from Leilon Vaiphei village in Kangpokpi district on May 13. Their bodies were recovered nearly a month later on June 10, triggering public outrage and protests in several Naga-majority districts.

The indefinite blockade on NH-2, one of Manipur's principal supply routes linking the state with neighbouring regions, has raised concerns over the movement of goods and essential supplies.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, Independent MLA J. Kumo Saha, BJP MLA Tongbram Robindro Singh and NPP MLA Sheikh Noorul Hassan as part of the government's efforts to find a resolution to the impasse.

Manipur Civil Society Bodies Push for NRC Update Ahead of Census 2027



IMPHAL

Fourteen civil society organisations from Manipur have urged the Centre to implement an update of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state before the completion of Census 2027, citing concerns over demographic changes and alleged illegal immigration.

A delegation representing the organisations visited New Delhi between July 5 and 7, where it met Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India Mritunjay Kumar Narayan and senior officials of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to press for the demand. In a statement issued after the meetings, the organisations called on the Centre to notify the NRC update in Manipur before the Census 2027 exercise is completed or, alternatively, to conduct both processes simultaneously. The delegation further urged the Centre to withhold the final Census 2027 population figures for Manipur until the NRC exercise is concluded. It also sought a halt to any delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies in the state until the NRC process is completed.

According to the organisations, de-

acades of cross-border migration from Myanmar have had a significant impact on Manipur's demographic profile. They appealed to the High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes, constituted under the Union Home Ministry, to prioritise an inquiry into the issue.

The groups also referred to resolutions adopted by the Manipur Legislative Assembly and communications sent by the state government to the Centre in January 2023 seeking implementation of the NRC in the state.

While welcoming the ongoing Census 2027 exercise, the organisations expressed concern over what they described as longstanding discrepancies in census figures in certain hill districts. They argued that unresolved demographic issues could influence future delimitation and representation.

In addition to the NRC demand, the delegation sought the inclusion of a representative from a proposed Manipur Population Commission in the High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes. It also urged the Centre to expedite the committee's inquiry into demographic concerns in the state.

Calls for updating the NRC in Manipur have intensified among several Meitei civil society organisations since ethnic violence erupted in the state in May 2023. These groups have maintained that unchecked illegal immigration from neighbouring Myanmar has contributed to demographic changes and social tensions.

However, Kuki-Zo organisations have rejected this claim, arguing that the ongoing conflict is rooted in political, administrative and constitutional issues rather than migration-related factors.

Assam Nears 20% EV Penetration as Green Mobility Gains Momentum

GUWAHATI

Assam has recorded nearly 20 per cent electric vehicle (EV) penetration in new vehicle registrations over the past three months, underscoring the state's growing role in India's transition towards cleaner and sustainable transportation.

Sharing the figures on Thursday, Forest and Environment Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said the steady rise in EV adoption has been supported by expanding charging infrastructure, affordable electricity tariffs, reliable power supply and policy measures aimed at encouraging the use of clean-energy vehicles.

According to data released by the minister, electric vehicles accounted for 15.7 per cent of all new vehicle registrations in April. The figure rose to 19.4 per cent in May and further increased to 19.6 per cent in June, placing Assam among the faster-growing EV markets in the country.

Baruah said the state government is working to strengthen the ecosystem required for large-scale EV adoption, including the expansion of charging facilities and measures to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply.

"The consistent growth in EV registrations reflects increasing public confidence in electric mobility and the effectiveness of initiatives undertaken to make clean transportation more accessible," he said in a post on X. The minister attributed the progress to the state's focus on creating a supportive policy environment while improving infrastructure needed for electric vehicles. He said the government's efforts are aligned with broader goals of promoting renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions and enhancing environmental sustainability.

Officials believe the rising adoption of EVs will contribute to lower fuel consumption, reduced urban pollution and greater energy efficiency in the transport sector.

Manipur to Revamp Security Strategy After Assam Rifles Ambush: Home Minister



IMPHAL

Manipur Home Minister Konhthoujam Govindas said the state government will adopt a new security strategy following the recent ambush on personnel of the 40th Battalion of the Assam Rifles that left two security personnel dead.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the inauguration of the 1st Bishnupur District Olympic Games 2026 at the DSA Ground in Bishnupur, the Minister described the attack as a tragic incident and said security agencies were working to identify and apprehend those responsible.

"The attack on security personnel is extremely unfortunate. They were deployed to protect the people and maintain peace, but were ambushed and killed. Efforts are underway to trace the culprits and bring them to justice," Govindas said. He said no organisation has claimed responsibility for the attack so far, while reports indicate that the NSCN has denied any involvement. Investigations are continuing, he added.

In the aftermath of the ambush, the Home Minister chaired a meeting with senior security officials, including the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force

(CRPF), to review the situation and formulate a stronger operational response.

According to Govindas, the meeting decided to implement a new security strategy aimed at enhancing counter-insurgency operations and improving coordination among security forces deployed in the state.

"We are confident that the new approach will yield results, though it may take some time before its impact becomes visible," he said.

The Minister also confirmed that personnel of the COBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action), the CRPF's specialised anti-insurgency unit, have begun deployment in parts of Manipur. However, he noted that adequate accommodation and logistical infrastructure must be established before full-scale operations can commence.

"These arrangements may take two to three months. Once completed, operations can be carried out more effectively," he said.

Reiterating that restoration of peace and normalcy remains the government's foremost priority, Govindas said security measures would be complemented by initiatives aimed at promoting social harmony.

Referring to the inaugural Inter-District Olympic Games, he said the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports plans to organise more sporting events across the state to encourage interaction among communities.

"Sports have the power to unite people. Through such initiatives, we hope to strengthen social bonds and contribute to lasting peace in Manipur," the Minister added.

Heavy Rain Batters Tripura; 300 Houses Damaged, Over 3,100 Take Shelter in Relief Camps

AGARTALA

Heavy rainfall across parts of Tripura over the past 24 hours has damaged around 300 houses and forced more than 3,100 people to take shelter in relief camps as rising river levels triggered flooding in several districts.

According to official reports, a total of 300 houses were damaged in the worst-affected districts of Dhalai, Khowai and Unakoti. Of these, 44 houses were completely destroyed, 70 sustained severe damage and 186 were partially damaged.

Dhalai district reported the highest level of destruction. In Longtharai Valley subdivision alone, 267 houses were damaged, including 43 fully destroyed, 67 severely damaged and 157 partially damaged. Ambassa subdivision reported damage to 11 houses, while 22 houses were affected in Gandacherra subdivision. Officials said several rivers, including the Khowai, Manu, Deo and Juri, were flowing above danger levels following continuous rainfall. Floodwaters inundated low-lying areas and entered residential localities, forcing many families to leave their homes.

The state government has opened 31 relief camps across the affected dis-

tricts, where 3,161 people have taken shelter. Khowai district accounted for the highest number of displaced residents, with 14 relief camps accommodating 1,703 people. In Dhalai district, 13 relief camps have been set up, sheltering 1,187 people, while four relief camps in Kumarghat subdivision of Unakoti district are housing 271 affected residents. State authorities said arrangements have been made to provide food, drinking water and milk for children at the relief camps. Medical teams have also been deployed to conduct health check-ups and provide essential healthcare services to camp inmates. Meanwhile, rescue and relief operations continued in flood-hit areas. Tripura Legislative Assembly Chief Whip Kalyani Saha Roy, along with local representatives and district officials, visited affected localities and relief camps to assess the situation. Teams also assisted in evacuating residents stranded in waterlogged areas.

The administration is closely monitoring river levels and weather conditions as rainfall continues in parts of the state, with authorities remaining on alert for any further deterioration in the flood situation.



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WILL THEFT AFFECT HINDUTVA, UP POLL?

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust had outsourced the cash-counting process to the local SBI branch, which in turn hired an external agency, 'Sainik Security Services'. SBI deployed 19 personnel, which included the few recommended by the Trust.

Of the eight arrested, six were from this counting team, and two were Trust employees—one of whom betrayed the immense trust placed in him by Trust general secretary Champat Rai on the quintessential RSS ethos that 'trust breeds trust.'

The theft occurred because of over reliance on personal trust instead of systemic rigour. The counting protocols were overly relaxed, allowing for collusion.

This led to administrative negligence, paving the way for the theft. As Champat Rai himself noted, he was betrayed by someone he trusted deeply.

To date, Rs 80 lakh out of the stolen cash has been recovered. The special investigation team (SIT) set up by the UP government is actively tracking the remaining assets of the accused and investigating if any other valuables were compromised. The government's resolve against the wrongdoers is manifest in the move to bulldoze a Rs 80-lakh house built by one of the thieves whose salary was a mere Rs 20,000.

The Ram Mandir is said to have received over Rs 3,000 crore in donations to date, with reportedly more than 90% arriving securely via bank transfers. Between April 2025 and February 2026, Rs 74 crore was reportedly collected in cash via the Hundi. It was only from this cash pool that the theft occurred.

Based on internal audits and preliminary SIT reports, the embezzled amount was reportedly estimated at Rs 7 crore to 7.5 crore initially. The latest estimate of the theft gathered from Trust sources is far less, out of which most has been recovered partly in cash and partly traced as properties.

Trust sources confirm that there is not a single gram of jewellery lost. The latest estimate of the stolen cash, and the absence of any loss of jewellery, if finally established by SIT, will be a serious blow to the reckless opposition charge of a huge Rs 200 crore scam.

Already, their demand for a court-monitored investigation ignores the stark contrast between inaction in government Trust cases forcing the courts to step in to initiate the probe and the super promptness of the Mandir Trust's action.

Now come to the politics and ideological clashes triggered by the theft that is inevitable as the Mandir battleground of UP goes to polls early next year.

Even a single rupee stolen is a tragic betrayal of Shri Ram. Ram is not merely an idol. He is the very soul of this ancient nation. He is the very symbol of the Ayodhya movement that decisively course-corrected the pseudo-secular polity, which fractured our civilisational ethos. To recall how the Ram Mandir movement reoriented our national life, here is a bit of history that the media often forgets.

After independence, the inspiring ideals and symbols of the freedom movement—the concept of Hindu nationalism expounded by Swami Vivekananda and Maharishi Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Ram Rajya, the rallying freedom battle cries of Bharat Mata Ki Jai and Vande Mataram—were marginalised. The Ram Mandir movement catalysed their renaissance.

Most of those guiding the national discourse are unaware that the concept of a 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu nationalism) is not an invention of the RSS. Yes, it is not the RSS' conception. Decades before the RSS was formed, this nationalism was preached by Vivekananda and Aurobindo. It became the driving force of the freedom struggle. It was thoroughly embraced by leaders like—believe it!—Gandhi, Nehru, and even Communist stalwart Rajani Palme Dutt.

In his seminal work *Hind Swaraj* (1909), Gandhi wrote that Hindu theerth yatra, pilgrimage to Chardhams and reverence to Ganga Jal symbolise and proclaim our national integration and nationalism. He wrote that they "make us as one in the sense in which no two Englishmen are". When asked about Muslims, he said they must be assimilated into the overarching national mainstream. How many in the media know this?

Jawaharlal Nehru hailed Swami Vivekananda as the pioneer of India's freedom movement. He wrote in his *Glimpses of World History* (1935), "the Hindu nationalism preached by the Swami was rooted deeply in Hindu religion and culture, yet was in no way anti-Muslim." (p. 437).

Further, Nehru acknowledged, "It is not easy to draw a line between Hindu nationalism and true nationalism. The two blend together, as India is the only home of the Hindus and they form a majority there." (p. 720). How many participants in public discourse today have read Nehru's *Glimpses of World History*?

Rajani Palme Dutt, the Indian who founded the Communist Party of Great Britain, wrote in his book titled *India Today* that even if Indians had grown up in monastic isolation learning only the Sanskrit Vedas, they would have undoubtedly drawn inspiration required for the freedom struggle from them. How many in the media know his name, know that he wrote that book in 1939 and revised it in 1973 and still did not change what he had said in 1939?

This freedom movement, firmly anchored in Hindu nationalism, changed course drastically on one specific day—22 March 1940. That was the day the Muslim League under M.A. Jinnah passed the resolution for partition of the nation. From that day, the Hindu nationalist perspective was systematically erased from the freedom narrative.

Vande Mataram and Bharat Mata Ki Jai began fading from public life. After independence, the Nehru-led Congress actively rejected the very ideals and symbols Nehru himself had once celebrated. The foundational pillars of our independence—Hindu nationalism, Vande Mataram, Bharat Mata Ki Jai, and Ram Rajya—were orphaned by the pseudo-secular political establishment. It was the RSS which kept the flame of these noble thoughts and symbols alive amid the pseudo-secular tsunami drive for vote bank politics.

Finally, it was the RSS-led mass Ram Mandir movement that reclaimed the pre-independence values of Hindu nationalism and reoriented the derailed national polity. When pseudo-secularists challenged Hindutva as not compatible with India's secular Constitution, the Supreme Court delivered a historic verdict in 1996, and ruled unequivocally that Hindutva is the national soul, culture, and way of life of the Indian people. When approached to review the ruling several times later, the court refused, thus confirming the Hindu foundations of our nation and nationalism.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You have to know the past to understand the present. - Carl Sagan

CHINA'S WAITING GAME ON THE LAC



BRIG ADVITYA MADAN

More than three decades after India and China agreed to maintain peace along the border, Beijing continues to benefit from ambiguity over the Line of Actual Control.

The meeting between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during the recent BRICS National Security Advisers' gathering offered another reminder that despite decades of dialogue, the India-China boundary dispute remains unresolved. Conventional explanations focus on competing territorial claims and differing historical narratives. Yet a more important question deserves attention: What if China sees strategic value in keeping the Line of Actual Control (LAC) ambiguous rather than settling it?

That possibility helps explain a persistent pattern in India's dealings with China. More than three decades after both countries agreed to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border, Beijing continues to resist efforts aimed at clarifying the LAC. The issue is no longer only about where the boundary lies. It is also about the strategic advantages that flow from keeping it undefined.

This is particularly relevant in Arunachal Pradesh, which remains central to China's territorial claims. The roots of the dispute go back to the Simla Conference of 1914 attended by representatives of British India and Tibet. The boundary in the eastern sector, later known as the McMahon Line, was initialled in draft form on April 27, 1914. The Chinese representative declined to sign the final convention on July 3, 1914, primarily because of disagreements relating to the status and boundaries of Tibet rather than a direct objection to the India-Tibet boundary alone.

The historical context is important. Following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, China exercised little effective control over Tibet until the entry of Communist forces in 1950. Yet contemporary Chinese claims increasingly overlook this reality while asserting expansive positions on Arunachal Pradesh, including repeated attempts to rename locations that remain firmly under Indian administration.

The modern dispute over the LAC has its origins in a letter written by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on November 7, 1959. It was in this correspondence that Zhou first proposed a "Line of Actual Control" and suggested that both sides withdraw 20 kilometres from it. Nehru rejected the proposal. After the 1962 war, Zhou reiterated a similar formulation in his letter of November 15, 1962. Acceptance would have effectively legitimised Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin.

A crucial point often overlooked in public discussions is that India eventually accepted the concept of the LAC, but never accepted the Chinese defini-

tion of it. The Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement (BPTA) of 1993 provided a framework for maintaining peace pending a final settlement. Article I committed both countries to respecting and observing the LAC. However, India's acceptance of the concept did not amount to acceptance of the Chinese claim line first articulated in 1959.

China's negotiating position on the broader boundary dispute also underwent significant changes. During Zhou Enlai's visit to India in 1960, Beijing proposed what later became known as the "package proposal" - Chinese flexibility in the eastern sector in return for Indian accommodation in the western sector. Deng Xiaoping conveyed a broadly similar approach during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China as External Affairs Minister in 1979.

The turning point came in 1985 when China altered its position and began insisting that India should first make substantive concessions in the eastern sector before receiving corresponding concessions elsewhere. India rejected this approach. During subsequent negotiations, New Delhi successfully ensured that the interests of settled populations in border areas would be protected in any future settlement, an important principle reflected in the 2005 Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles.

Having served with 27 Punjab in the aftermath of the Sumdorong Chu crisis and later participated in several Border Personnel Meetings with Chinese counterparts while serving as Brigade Major in the Galwan sector, I have seen firsthand how differing perceptions on maps translate into friction on the ground. The challenge has never been the absence of agreements. The challenge has been the absence of

process was intended to identify areas of disagreement and work towards a common understanding of the LAC. Yet the effort stalled. By 2002, maps had been exchanged only in the middle sector, where differences were relatively limited. China showed little willingness to proceed similarly in the western sector. India maintained that both sides should exchange maps reflecting their respective perceptions, but the process effectively collapsed in 2004.

The significance of that breakdown is insufficiently appreciated. A mutually clarified LAC would reduce opportunities for competing patrol claims and recurring stand-offs. An ambiguous LAC serves a different purpose. It allows China to exert pressure while remaining below the threshold of conventional conflict. The pattern was visible before Galwan in 2020 and remains evident in Chinese behaviour today.

China's method is often one of calibrated escalation. It advances claims, creates pressure and then partially disengages while preserving some strategic advantage. This approach enables Beijing to alter facts on the ground without incurring the costs of a full-scale military confrontation.

The larger strategic question is whether China now sees value in not resolving the dispute at all. An unsettled boundary compels India to devote substantial military resources to the continental front. It requires sustained deployment, infrastructure development and defence expenditure along the Himalayan border. Every additional division committed to the mountains is a resource unavailable elsewhere.

This has implications beyond the boundary itself. China's principal



a common understanding of where the LAC actually lies.

Recognising this problem, the 1996 agreement on military confidence-building measures envisaged clarification of differing perceptions through an exchange of maps. Such a

long-term strategic concerns lie in the maritime domain, including critical sea lanes passing through the Malacca Strait. An India preoccupied exclusively with the continental challenge is an India less able to project influence across the wider Indian Ocean

Region. From this perspective, preserving ambiguity on the border imposes costs on India while generating strategic space for China.

India must therefore avoid viewing the boundary dispute in isolation. Vigilance and military preparedness along the LAC remain essential. Equally important is the need to continue strengthening India's maritime posture, including strategic initiatives such as the Great Nicobar project. New Delhi must ensure that China's border strategy does not succeed in narrowing India's strategic horizons.

As India and China continue their diplomatic engagement, the question before New Delhi is not simply whether the boundary dispute can be re-

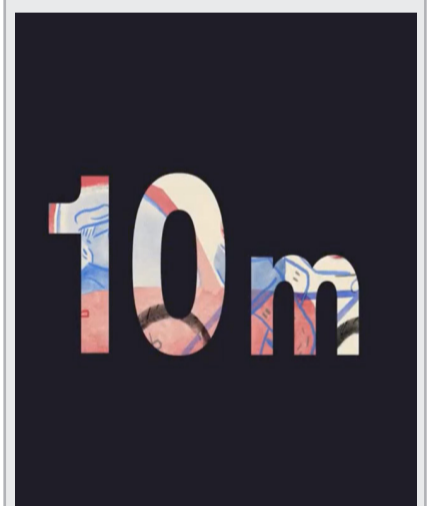
DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Behind every number is a name. A family member, a friend, a colleague.

The cancer risks are there and growing — but a #cancer diagnosis does not mean a death sentence. Cancer detected at an early stage can be treated. Early diagnosis is key to cancer survival.

However, cancer care is still not optimal in low- and middle-income countries where health systems are least prepared <https://bit.ly/4wxY9VT>

~ World Health Organisation (WHO)



solved. China may well have concluded

ed that an unresolved dispute serves its interests better than a settled one. If that is the case, India's challenge is larger than defending a line on a map. It is to deny Beijing the strategic advantages that flow from keeping that line undefined.

Fresh Monsoon Fury in Arunachal: Floods, Landslides Affect Over 94,000 People Across 26 Districts

GUWAHATI

Fresh waves of heavy rainfall have intensified the flood and landslide situation across Arunachal Pradesh, affecting more than 94,000 people and causing widespread damage to infrastructure, agriculture and forest areas, according to the latest report from the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC).

The SEOC said that 94,243 people living in 333 villages spread across 237 administrative circles in 26 districts have been impacted during the ongoing monsoon season. Among the worst-affected districts are Upper Siang, Siang and Kra Daadi, where repeated rainfall has triggered multiple incidents of flooding and landslides.

In the past 24 hours alone, Changlang district reported heavy rainfall accompanied by flooding and a landslide.



Upper Subansiri recorded two flood incidents and three landslides, while Upper Siang witnessed as many as 16 landslides. A rain-induced rockfall was also reported from East Kameng district, highlighting the continuing vulnerability of the state's hilly terrain to extreme

weather events.

The monsoon-related disasters have claimed four lives so far this season. One person was killed in a landslide at Sarti village in Anjaw district on June 28, while three others lost their lives in a flash flood at Possa in Keyi Panyor

district. Authorities also reported that 21 people have sustained injuries, while two women remain missing.

Rescue and relief operations are continuing in affected areas with coordinated efforts from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and various state government agencies.

The impact on livelihoods has been significant. According to the SEOC, floods and landslides have damaged 334.2 hectares of crop land, including 185.5 hectares under horticulture and 148.7 hectares under agricultural cultivation. In addition, nearly 1,010 hectares of forest area have been affected by the ongoing weather-related disasters.

Public infrastructure has suffered extensive losses across several districts. Damage assessments indicate that 131

roads, 19 bridges, 21 culverts and 191 water supply systems have been affected. The disasters have also damaged 58 government buildings, 21 power transmission lines, 224 electric poles, four hydel projects and seven flood protection structures.

Essential public facilities have not been spared. Two hospitals and three schools have sustained damage, while hundreds of residential houses have either been partially or fully affected by floods and landslides.

In Keyi Panyor district, where flash floods caused significant destruction earlier this season, two relief camps remain operational. A total of 252 displaced residents are currently taking shelter in these camps as authorities continue relief and rehabilitation measures.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorolog-

ical Department (IMD) has warned that rainfall activity is likely to persist over the coming days. Heavy to very heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning is forecast over Lohit, Changlang and Tirap districts on Wednesday.

On Thursday, intense rainfall is expected in Lower Dibang Valley, Namsai and Tirap districts. The weather department has also predicted heavy rainfall on Friday in Upper Subansiri, Lower Siang, Lower Dibang Valley, Namsai, Tirap and Longding districts.

With more rain forecast across the state, disaster management authorities have urged residents in vulnerable areas to remain alert and follow advisories issued by local administrations as Arunachal Pradesh continues to grapple with one of the season's most challenging monsoon spells.

Major Arms Haul in Manipur; Three Insurgents Arrested in Joint Security Operations

IMPHAL

Security forces have recovered a large cache of arms, ammunition and explosives during a series of intelligence-based operations conducted across Manipur over the past week, officials said on Wednesday.

The operations, carried out jointly by the Assam Rifles, the Indian Army and the Manipur Police, also resulted in the arrest of three active insurgent cadres linked to banned militant outfits operating in the state.

According to officials, the seized arsenal included an M16 assault rifle, a Type-81 assault rifle, four pistols, four improvised mortars locally known as Pompi, and five Pompi mortar bombs. Security personnel also recovered 22 single-bore rifles, three shotguns, eight communication sets and eight magazines during the operations.

The ammunition recovered comprised 73 rounds of 5.56 mm ammunition, 36 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition, 10 rounds of 9 mm ammunition and seven 12-bore cartridges. In addition, bulletproof equipment, communication devices and other warlike stores were seized from various locations. Officials said the operations led to the apprehension of three cadres associated with the outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party-People's War Group and the proscribed Revolutionary People's Front, which serves as the political wing of the armed People's Liberation Army.

All recovered weapons, explosives and related materials, along with the arrested insurgents, have been handed over to the concerned police authorities for further investigation and legal proceedings. Security officials described the operations as part of ongoing efforts to curb insurgent activities, disrupt militant networks and prevent the movement of illegal arms in the region.

Two Bat Species Recorded in India for First Time During Biodiversity Survey in Mizoram

AIZAWL

Researchers have documented two bat species in India for the first time during biodiversity surveys in Mizoram, a discovery that expands the known distribution of the mammals into South Asia and highlights the ecological significance of Northeast India's forests.

The findings, published in the journal Animal Taxonomy and Ecology, were made by a team of Indian and Hungarian scientists led by researchers from the Zoological Survey of India, Shillong.

The study reports the first Indian records of the Indo-Chinese thick-thumbed bat (*Glischropus bucephalus*) and the Indo-Chinese mouse-eared bat (*Myotis indochinensis*). With these additions, India's known bat diversity has increased to at least 138 species, further underscoring the country's rich mammalian biodiversity.

The discoveries were made during extensive field surveys conducted across Mizoram between 2023 and 2025. Researchers confirmed the identity of both species through a combination of morphological examinations, molecular genetic analysis and echolocation stud-

ies, ensuring accurate classification.

According to the study, *Glischropus bucephalus* had previously been recorded only in Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.

The species was identified in Serchhip, extending its known geographical range approximately 670 kilometres westward from its earlier westernmost record in Myanmar. The second species, *Myotis indochinensis*, was discovered in Reiek. Previously known from Vietnam, Laos and southern China, the finding extends the bat's documented distribution by nearly 1,300 kilometres to the west.

Researchers also indicated that a genetic sequence recently reported from Bangladesh and currently attributed to at least 138 species, further underscoring the country's rich mammalian biodiversity. The discoveries were made during extensive field surveys conducted across Mizoram between 2023 and 2025. Researchers confirmed the identity of both species through a combination of morphological examinations, molecular genetic analysis and echolocation stud-

GUWAHATI

A six-member Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) has begun an on-ground assessment of flood damage in Assam, with visits scheduled across six districts that were severely affected during the 2025 and 2026 flood seasons.

The delegation, led by Praveen Kumar Rai, Joint Secretary (UT) in the Ministry of Home Affairs, arrived in Guwahati on Tuesday and was briefed by officials of the Assam Revenue and Disaster Management Department and the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on the extent of flood-related losses and the state's response measures.

The central team includes representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, and the National Remote Sensing Centre, reflecting a multi-sectoral approach to evaluating the impact of recurrent



floods in the state.

To facilitate field inspections, the IMCT has been divided into two groups. One group will visit the flood-affected districts of Dhemajai, Lakhimpur and Gohpur in Biswanath district, while the second team will assess the situation in Cachar, Bajali and Chirang. The field visits will continue until July 11.

Central Team Begins Assam Flood Damage Assessment Across Six Districts

impact of floods on roads, embankments, public facilities and rural livelihoods in the affected areas.

The delegation will also hold a review meeting with the Assam Chief Secretary and senior state government officials at Janata Bhawan in Dispur, where observations from the field visits and preliminary findings will be discussed.

The state government's presentation to the visiting team was led by Additional Chief Secretary and ASDMA Chief Executive Officer L. Sweety Changan. Senior officials, including Parag Kumar Kakaty, Alakananda Medhi and Pankaj Chamua, were also present during the briefing.

The visit of the Inter-Ministerial Central Team is expected to play a key role in assessing the overall impact of recent floods in Assam and in facilitating central support for restoration, reconstruction and disaster mitigation measures in the affected districts.

Officials said the exercise is intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of damage caused to infrastructure, agricultural land, public utilities and other assets, which will help determine the extent of assistance required for recovery and rehabilitation.

During their visit, the team is expected to interact with district administrations and examine the

Meghalaya Climbs National School Education Rankings, Exits Lowest PGI Category

SHILLONG

Meghalaya has recorded a significant improvement in school education performance, moving out of the lowest category of the Performance Grading Index (PGI) for the first time since the national ranking framework was introduced by the Union Ministry of Education.

Announcing the achievement on Wednesday, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said the state has improved its classification from Akankshi-3 to Akankshi-1, reflecting notable gains across key indicators used to assess the quality of school education.

According to the Chief Minister, Meghalaya's PGI score rose from 401.62 in 2022-23 to 525.71 in 2025-26, registering an increase of more than 124 points over three years. The improvement places Meghalaya among the fastest-progressing states in the country in terms of school edu-



cation outcomes.

Sangma attributed the advancement to a series of reforms undertaken by the state government in areas such as teacher development, school infrastructure, curriculum delivery, governance mechanisms, digital education systems and stu-

dent learning outcomes.

He said the progress was the result of the combined efforts of teachers, students, parents, School Management Committees, education department officials and local communities working together to strengthen the state's education ecosystem. Describing the development as a major milestone, the Chief Minister congratulated all stakeholders associated with the education sector while emphasizing that the state remains committed to further improvements.

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to building a world-class, inclusive and future-ready education system that empowers every child in Meghalaya to realise their full potential," he said.

The Chief Minister added that the government would continue implementing reforms aimed at enhancing educational standards,

improving classroom learning and ensuring equitable access to quality education across the state.

The Ministry of Education developed the Performance Grading Index as a national assessment framework to evaluate the performance of states and Union Territories across multiple parameters, including learning outcomes, infrastructure, governance, equity and access to education.

Education officials said Meghalaya's improved ranking reflects steady progress in the state's education reform agenda and signals growing momentum in efforts to strengthen foundational learning and institutional capacity.

The latest PGI results are being viewed as an important benchmark in Meghalaya's ongoing efforts to transform its school education system and improve opportunities for students across both urban and rural areas of the state.

Land governance and regularization to reform Karbi Anglong political landscape

SUSHANTA ROY

DIPHU: The twin pillars of land rights and administrative governance have taken center stage in the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong.

As political parties subtly position themselves for the crucial "Member of Autonomous Council" (MAC) elections slated for 2027, the region is witnessing deep grassroots mobilization driven by extensive anti-encroachment demands and massive public sector employment regularizations.

The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), acting in alignment with Supreme Court directions to clear common community lands, issued eviction notices targeting unauthorized occupants across Professional Grazing Reserves (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserves (VGR).

The move was intended to protect traditional tribal land holdings secured under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The eviction directives faced litigation in the Gauhati High Court, which issued interim stays to verify the precise notification boundaries of the PGR/VGR lands.

Tensions peaked by December 2025, leading to a multi-day indefinite hunger strike at Phelangpi. Minor clashes and widespread public anxiety forced temporary internet suspensions and prohibitory orders across the twin districts. Shifting from chaotic agitation to organized democratic leverage, civic bodies recently organized a massive, multi-day sit-in protest in the headquarter town of Diphu.

Demonstrators demanded that the KAAC strictly and uniformly execute eviction drives on all government and grazing reserves, leaving no room for selective administration.

Simultaneously, providing an immense boost to the region's socio-economic fabric, the government hosted a ceremonial handover of regularized appointment letters to thousands of primary teachers.

This marked the successful culmination of the Special Recruitment Drive (SRD 2.0), a process initiated late last year to transition eligible Contractual and State Pool Teachers (under Samagra Shiksha Assam) with over 3 years of service into formal, permanent government pay. The current administrative environment reflects the stakes of the upcoming 2027 MAC elections.

Following the ruling party's historic sweep during the previous local council elections, the administration faces the dual challenge of fulfilling structural promises while keeping regional peace intact.

Political observers note that the Diphu sit-in protests indicate a hyper-vigilant electorate. Activists have made it clear that their votes in 2027 will be tightly bound to how transparently the KAAC maps out and secures the borders of indigenous community grazing reserves.

Conversely, the rapid, ceremonial distribution of standardized appointment letters highlights an active counter-strategy centered on governance delivery, systemic reform, and economic empowerment.

Centre to Examine Meghalaya's Coal Mining Reform Proposal Through Expert Committee

GUWAHATI

The Union government has agreed to constitute a committee to examine Meghalaya's proposal seeking greater state-level authority over coal mining approvals, a move that could have significant implications for the future of scientific coal mining in the hill state.

The matter was discussed during a meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday between Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma and Union Coal and Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy. Also present at the meeting was Santa Mary Shylla.

During the discussions, Sangma urged the Centre to reconsider the existing framework governing coal mining approvals and sought the transfer of powers under Section 26 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, to the Meghalaya government. He submitted a memorandum outlining the state's concerns and the challenges faced by local landowners under the current regulatory system.

According to the Chief Minister, Meghalaya's coal reserves are distributed across numerous small parcels of land owned by individual families and traditional clan groups. This unique pattern of land ownership, he argued, makes the conventional mining model followed in other parts of the country difficult to im-



plement in the state.

Sangma pointed out that the requirement for a minimum 100-hectare mining concession has become a major obstacle for many tribal landowners, as such large and contiguous landholdings are rare in Meghalaya. He also noted that obtaining approvals from central agencies often proves costly and impractical for operators working on comparatively small coal deposits.

The state government has sought

notifications under Section 26 of the MMDR Act, along with relevant provisions of the Mineral Concession Rules, 1960, and the Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2017. Meghalaya believes these changes would enable local authorities to process approvals more efficiently while ensuring compliance with environmental and legal standards.

Responding to the proposal, Kishan Reddy agreed to the formation of a committee that will study the state's de-

mands and recommend an appropriate course of action. The Chief Minister welcomed the decision and expressed hope that the panel would be constituted in the near future.

The discussions assume significance against the backdrop of the 2014 ban on rat-hole coal mining imposed by the National Green Tribunal, which effectively halted coal extraction activities across large parts of Meghalaya. The ban was aimed at addressing environmental degradation and unsafe mining practices but also had a substantial economic impact on communities dependent on the sector. Districts such as East Jaintia Hills, where coal mining has traditionally been a major source of livelihood, witnessed significant economic disruption following the restrictions. The state government has also argued that the decline in mining activity affected revenue generation through taxes and royalties.—Officials clarified that the Centre has not approved any policy changes at this stage. The proposed committee will only examine Meghalaya's request, assess its legal and administrative implications, and submit recommendations to the Union government.

Any future reforms, if approved, are expected to focus on facilitating scientific and regulated mining practices while maintaining strict safeguards related to environmental protection, worker safety and regulatory oversight.

The committee's findings are likely to play a key role in shaping the next phase of Meghalaya's efforts to revive coal mining under a framework that balances economic interests with environmental and legal responsibilities.

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ED freezes Rs 440 crore in TMC's bank accounts over aircraft leasing probe



NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has frozen Rs 440.42 crore held in bank accounts belonging to the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) as part of a money laundering investigation into chartered flights used by a senior party leader, the agency said on Wednesday.

The ED conducted searches at five locations in and around Kolkata in West Bengal targeting private aviation firm Carewell Aviation, its directors and an electoral trust. The agency said the frozen funds were held in three HDFC Bank accounts.

"Investigation revealed that around Rs 160 crore was transferred from AITC bank accounts to M/s Carewell Aviation India Pvt. Ltd. and its related entity, mostly between April 2023 to June 2026," the

agency said in a statement.

The federal agency further said that Carewell Aviation Pvt Ltd routed Rs 82.96 crore between 2023 and 2026 to another newly incorporated related entity to purchase an Embraer Legacy 600 aircraft and an Agusta 109 Grand helicopter. A total of Rs 112 crore was used to make the purchases.

The agency further found that a loan of USD 1.7 million was arranged in 2023 from a Cayman Islands-based entity as an unsecured loan to purchase the helicopter.

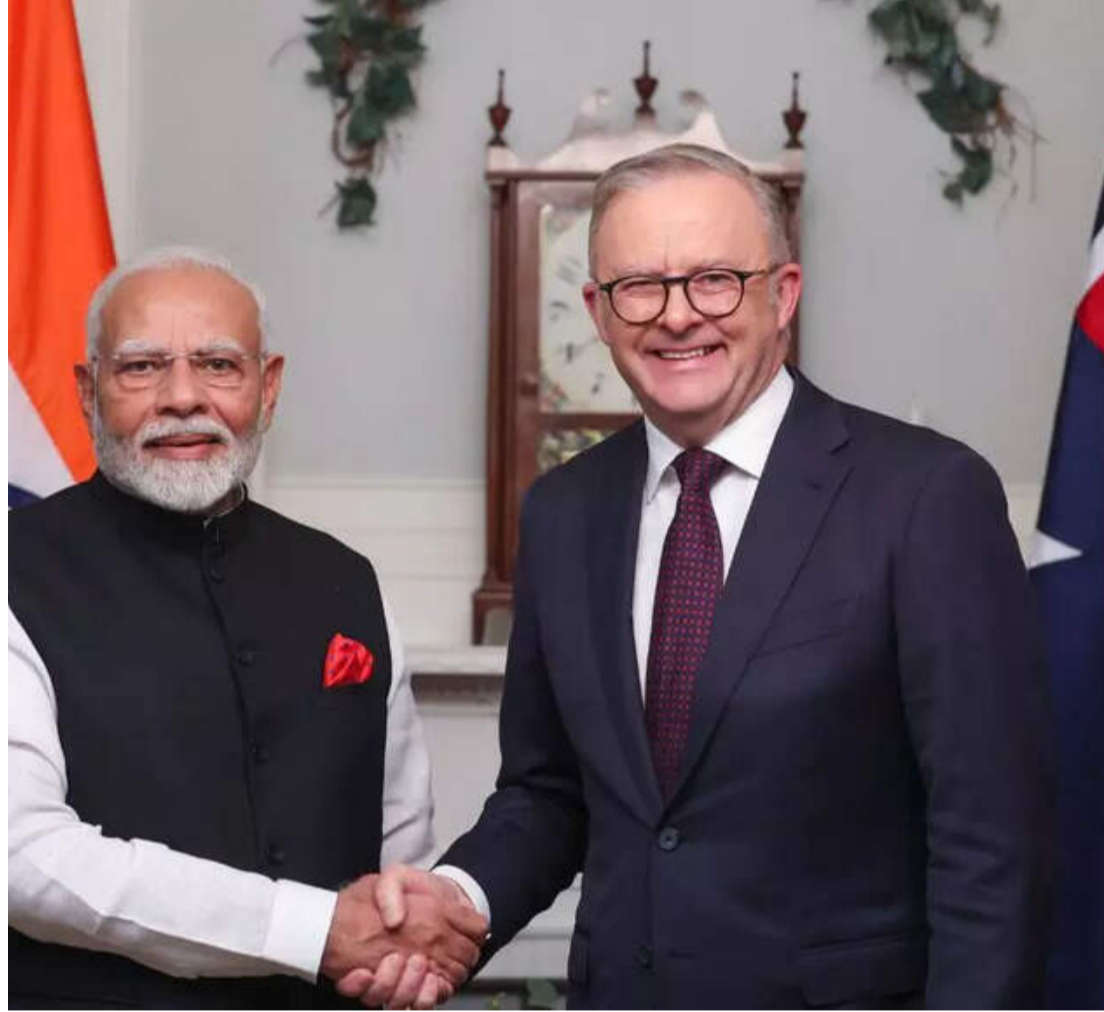
The Embraer Legacy 600 aircraft and the Agusta helicopter were subsequently leased to the AITC, even though they had been purchased using funds from the party's corpus. Thereafter, substantial amounts were transferred on the pretext of

aircraft usage. The ED said the arrangement was under investigation to ascertain the actual beneficial purpose of the transactions. The probe was initiated following a police complaint alleging that chartered flights used by TMC's general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and a senior party leader, were funded through improperly collected money, agency sources said. The TMC has not yet issued a public response to the searches.

The raids come amid an internal split within the party, which has led to a separate legal dispute over control of the TMC's finances, now pending before the Calcutta High Court. The court declined on Tuesday to fast-track a related petition, court records showed.

The ED said its investigation was continuing.

MODI VISITS AUSTRALIA FOR MINERALS TALKS AND ROCKSTAR WELCOME



MELBOURNE

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi lands in Australia on Wednesday ahead of talks tipped to focus on defence ties, critical minerals and securing prized uranium.

Modi is set to receive a rockstar welcome at a community rally held inside a Melbourne stadium on Thursday, with organisers anticipating more than 20,000 people could flock to the event.

India and Australia have grown considerably closer in recent years, a relationship partly driven by a joint desire to keep Beijing's military ambitions in check while cultivating trading partners outside China.

"It's historically been quite a difficult relationship, given India and Australia's differing positions during the Cold War," said Teesta Prakash from the Australia India Institute.

"But now we are in a starkly different strategic environment."

Securing a reliable uranium pipeline is expected to be a key topic of discussion when Modi sits down with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese on Thursday.

Energy-hungry India -- the world's most populous country with 1.4 billion people -- has plans to drastically expand its nuclear power capacity.

And mining giant Australia

is estimated to hold as much as 28 percent of the world's uranium resource, according to the World Nuclear Association.

India and Australia entered a nuclear cooperation agreement in 2015 that paved the way for uranium exports, but legal hurdles remain and trade today is largely non-existent.

"Uranium has always been a hot topic between Australia and India," said Prakash. "Historically, India has been asking to have Australia ship it to India. But is Australia willing to do that?"

With ambitions of cornering the electric vehicle market, India is also on the lookout for critical minerals such as lithium -- another resource Australia has in abundance.

Australia, India, the United States and Japan are members of the Quad, a group seen as a counterweight to China in the Asia-Pacific region.

But with the United States seemingly less interested in the alliance, New Delhi and Canberra have shown an increasing willingness to work one-to-one on matters of defence.

Modi drew 20,000 people to a community rally during his last trip to Sydney in 2023. Albanese took to the stage at that event to declare "Modi is the Boss", quipping that his crowd-pulling power eclipsed even that of US rock icon Bruce Springsteen.

Organisers have said that even bigger crowds are expected at the "Melbourne meets Modi" event hosted at the city's Marvel Stadium.

Modi's visit is also expected to stir up opposition.

Australia's Alliance Against Islamophobia said it would protest outside the stadium event, drawing attention to what it said was the persecution of minority groups in India. A separate protest against Indian migration to Australia is also planned.

Modi is scheduled to fly to New Zealand after Australia.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump threatens Iran's civilian infrastructure as ceasefire unravels amid fresh US strikes

DUBAI

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened Wednesday to strike Iran's civilian infrastructure and to seize Kharg Island, with its oil infrastructure, as his ceasefire with Tehran appeared to be in tatters.

Trump made the threats after announcing that the U.S. was preparing for a second night of strikes against Iran after Iranian attacks on American military sites in the Gulf.

If the U.S. has to, Trump said, it will take out Iran's electric plants and desalination plants. He said Tuesday's strikes included attacks on Kharg Island but not its oil facilities.

"Maybe we'll take over Kharg Island. We may take over Kharg Island. There's not a thing they could do about it," Trump said.

"We hit them very hard last night," Trump said when asked about a possible return to hostilities. "We'll probably hit them hard again tonight."

Trump made the remark in Ankara, Turkey, on the sidelines of a NATO summit. He said the strikes are continued retaliation for Iranian attacks on commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

"They are behaving very badly," he said of Iran, accusing the country of launching drones and a missile at ships.

The latest exchange of fire raised fears that the war in Iran could reignite, and Trump fueled those concerns by saying the interim agreement to pause fighting was "over," although he added that he would allow negotiations to continue.

Attacks have repeatedly threatened the shaky ceasefire, but Trump's comments added new uncertainty, and oil prices shot up after he spoke. A renewed conflict could engulf the wider Middle East and would likely again halt energy shipments through the strait that are crucial to the global economy.

"For me, I think it's over," Trump said when asked about the status of the ceasefire. He added that U.S. representatives can continue negotiations, but he cast doubt



on the outcome. "They can talk, but I think they're wasting their time," he said.

Negotiations to reach a final deal had been due to start after the dayslong funeral for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed Feb. 28 in the war's first moments. The funeral, which ends Thursday, was supposed to be a period of lower tensions.

The talks are meant to focus on the toughest matters, including fully reopening the strait and rolling back Tehran's disputed nuclear program.

"The era of bullying and extortion is over," Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf wrote on X. "It leads nowhere. We don't fold."

The U.S. military's Central Command said American forces launched strikes "to impose heavy costs for targeting and attacking commercial shipping crewed by innocent civilians in an international waterway." It said it hit Iranian targets including air-defense systems, radars and over 60 small boats used by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

Those boats have been key to threatening ships in the strait, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil and natural gas passed before the war. Iran's ability to bring shipping in the waterway to a near halt during the war proved its greatest strategic advantage. Rising prices for energy supplies, fertilizer and food put

pressure on the U.S. to make a deal. On Wednesday, the price of Brent crude, the international standard, spiked over 5% after Trump's comments.

The U.S. military remains "prepared to hold Iran accountable when the agreement is not adhered to or obeyed," it added, saying this round of attacks had ended.

Iranian state media reported explosions in several locations, including in Bandar Mahshahr, where a Revolutionary Guard member was killed. It also reported attacks on Bushehr, home to Iran's nuclear power plant complex.

On Wednesday morning, both Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, and Kuwait, home to U.S. Army forces, sounded missile alerts. The Revolutionary Guard issued a statement acknowledging targeting U.S. military installations in both countries. Kuwait said it intercepted two ballistic missiles and 13 drones launched by Iran. The Kuwaiti Electricity Ministry said a number of lines were out of service after shrapnel fell on them. A similar spate of Iranian attacks on shipping and U.S. retaliatory strikes occurred late last month, which similarly drew Iranian attacks on Bahrain and Kuwait. Wednesday's strikes came as Trump was in Turkey for a summit of the NATO military alliance.

Anwar Gargash, a senior diplomat in the United Arab Emirates, called Iran's

attacks on Bahrain and Kuwait "a clear indicator that Tehran remains incapable of committing to the requirements of de-escalation and turning the page on war."

had allowed Iran to conduct oil sales openly in U.S. dollars, as part of the interim deal. Iran long had been suspected of selling sanctioned crude at below-market prices to China.

The revocation came after the strikes on shipping. One tanker was off the coast of Oman when it was hit and caught fire, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. Iranian state television said the tanker came under attack after ignoring warnings but did not directly claim the assault.

Majed al-Ansari, a spokesperson for the Qatari Foreign Ministry, said the tanker was carrying Qatari natural gas and called the strike an "unacceptable attack" on international navigation and global energy security. He said Qatar, which has been a key mediator alongside Pakistan in the talks, holds Iran "fully legally responsible."

Two other ships sustained some damage, but no one was injured, and both continued on their way, the U.K. agency said.

Iran and the United States agreed as part of the interim deal to allow ships to pass through the strait without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran has insisted it must control the vessels' routes and vowed to later charge fees for passage. That would upend decades of practice in the waterway. The ships attacked Tuesday all appeared to be using a route close to Oman's shore, rather than one ordered by Tehran. The U.S. and many Gulf Arab states say they will not agree to Iran charging for passage through the strait.

Funeral ceremonies for Khamenei were held Wednesday in the Iraqi city of Najaf. Attending the services were Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and other Iranian as well as Iraqi officials, including Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Falah al-Zaidi. Funeral prayers were planned later at the Imam Hussein shrine in Karbala.

Some health workers in Congo's Ebola outbreak go on strike over pay issues as deaths near 600



BUNIA

The healthcare workers at the epicenter of Congo's Ebola outbreak are walking off their jobs to protest delays in their payments, threatening efforts to slow the outbreak that officials said continues to spread faster than the response.

In Ituri province, the hardest hit among the three provinces in eastern Congo affected by the outbreak, some of the health professionals and other front-line workers told The Associated Press they've not been paid their wages and bonuses since the outbreak was declared on May 15. They also alleged they were working with limited gear, and were being treated unfairly by authorities as well as response teams.

"Since the Ebola virus disease outbreak was declared, we've been demanding payment for our work," Dr. Biensi Kano, a member of the epidemiological surveillance committee in Ituri's capital, Bunia, told The Associated Press.

The latest government data shows 1,708 recorded cases, including 580 deaths, and that the first month of this Ebola outbreak was already the worst on record, health authorities said. The strike comes at the start of enrollment for clinical trials for the treatment of the Bundibugyo virus that is responsible for this outbreak.

The World Health Organization representative

in Congo, Dr. Anne Anicia, said Tuesday that the virus continues to spread, fueled by population movements and insecurity, while some treatment centers are at near-full capacity.

The non-payment of benefits "exposes us and our families to significant socio-economic difficulties and seriously undermines our living conditions," said Kano.

In an official notice to national and provincial authorities over the weekend, front-line workers in Ituri threatened to strike if the wages were not paid in 24 hours. By Tuesday, some had already stopped working although no official strike has been declared.

The aggrieved front-line workers also include safety and security teams, those that often embark on community outreach as well as those burying patients who died from Ebola. Congo's government did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the situation. Officials in Ituri, however, said they've met with the workers and their concerns are being addressed.

"The fact that Bunia airport is closed is hampering the very implementation of the response, particularly certain aspects of the flow of funds. This is one of the reasons that may account for the delay in payment," Akilimali Pierre, incident manager at Congo's National Institute of Public Health, told The Associated Press.

Some of the workers organized a protest Monday outside the Rwampara Ebola treatment center. They set tires alight, causing a brief panic in the vicinity before the police intervened to restore order.

Health workers face other challenges as well, including attacks from angry residents and skepticism about the virus.

Dr. Ben Bakule, a community investigator, said he narrowly escaped death in late May when a group of angry young men attacked him and his colleagues while they were tracing contacts of a confirmed Ebola case in the village of Tutu, in Djugu territory.

"We spend money on transport to get to work. We thought we'd be rewarded. At the moment, nothing is going right because we're not being paid. We don't deserve this sort of treatment," he told The Associated Press.

"We might have to give up our jobs. These are risks we're taking. We risk dying for nothing. This government wants this epidemic to continue," Bakule added, his voice tinged with frustration.

When he visited the mining town of Mongbwalu -- considered the hot spot for the disease -- last month, Congo's Minister of Health Roger Kamba assured the response teams that the government was prioritizing their working conditions.

"All doctors, all nurses and all staff working on the response will be fully supported. We have the money for that," Kamba said at the time.

But front-line workers say the reality is different.

"We are doing everything we can to make the public understand how dangerous this disease is. I came here to save people's lives, but this is how I am being thanked. We are working day and night without being paid," said Dr. Ghislain Maneba, an epidemiologist and community investigator in the Rwampara health zone.

Myanmar's Assurance Offers Hope, But Manipur and Northeast India Remain on the Frontline of a Changing Border Security Landscape

GUWAHATI/IMPHAL



However, Myanmar's civil war has significantly altered the operational environment.

The intensification of fighting between the Myanmar military and resistance groups has reportedly forced several insurgent organisations to relocate camps, disperse cadres or adapt their activities to the changing circumstances.

While some analysts believe the conflict has disrupted traditional insurgent infrastructure, others caution that the emergence of multiple armed actors could create new opportunities for illicit networks to exploit areas with weak governance.

Drug Trafficking: A Growing Threat
Beyond insurgency, one of the most pressing concerns for Manipur and the Northeast is the growing challenge of narcotics trafficking.

Manipur remains a major component of the infamous Golden Triangle, one of the world's largest centres for illicit drug production. The region has witnessed a sharp increase in the manufacture and trafficking of synthetic drugs, particularly methamphetamine.

Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland have increasingly become transit routes for narcotics entering India.

In recent years, law enforcement agencies have made several high-value seizures of heroin, methamphetamine tablets and precursor chemicals. Security officials believe that instability in Myanmar has contributed to the expansion of drug trafficking networks.

The weakening of administrative structures in conflict-affected areas has made it easier for criminal organisations to operate and transport contraband across borders.

For Manipur, where authorities have launched extensive anti-drug campaigns, controlling the flow of narcotics has become both a law-and-order challenge and a public health priority.

The issue is closely linked to broader concerns about organised crime, money laundering and the financing of armed groups operating across the region.

Arms Smuggling and Border Security
The movement of illegal weapons remains another major concern.

Security agencies have repeatedly warned that porous borders and conflict zones create favourable conditions for arms trafficking networks.

The availability of sophisticated weapons in Myanmar's conflict areas has raised fears that such arms could find their way into criminal and insurgent networks operating in Northeast India.

Manipur's recent history has highlighted the dangers posed by the proliferation of weapons. Authorities remain vigilant about preventing illegal arms from entering the state through cross-border routes.

This is one reason why India has intensified efforts to strengthen border infrastructure and surveillance mechanisms along the frontier.

The Free Movement Regime Debate
The security challenges emerging from Myanmar have also influenced India's border management policies.

The Centre's decision to terminate the Free Movement Regime (FMR) and proceed with border fencing reflects growing concerns about illegal migration, insurgent movement, drug trafficking and arms smuggling.

Under the earlier arrangement, residents of designated border areas could travel across the frontier within specified limits without a visa.

The government argues that the changed security environment necessitates stronger controls and more effective monitoring of cross-border movement.

However, the decision has sparked debate across the Northeast.

Many tribal communities living along the border share deep ethnic, cultural and familial ties with populations residing in Myanmar. In states such as Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland, communities on both sides of the border often belong to the same tribes and have maintained social connections for generations.

Critics of the policy fear that fencing and restrictions on movement could disrupt traditional

relationships and affect local livelihoods.

The debate illustrates the difficult balance policymakers must strike between national security requirements and the socio-cultural realities of border communities.

Refugees and Humanitarian Challenges
Myanmar's civil war has also generated a significant humanitarian dimension.

Thousands of people fleeing violence have crossed into India, particularly into Mizoram and parts of Manipur.

Local communities have often provided shelter and assistance to displaced families, reflecting longstanding ethnic and cultural bonds that transcend national borders.

At the same time, authorities have faced the challenge of managing refugee flows while addressing security concerns.

The issue has highlighted the broader regional impact of Myanmar's conflict and the need for coordinated responses that address both humanitarian and security considerations.

For border states with limited resources, accommodating displaced populations while maintaining public order remains a difficult task.

Northeast India's Strategic Importance

The developments in Myanmar have reinforced the strategic importance of Northeast India in India's security and foreign policy framework.

The region serves as India's gateway to Southeast Asia under the Act East Policy and plays a crucial role in connectivity initiatives linking India with ASEAN nations.

Stability along the India-Myanmar border is therefore not only a security requirement but also an economic necessity.

Projects involving roads, trade corridors and cross-border connectivity depend on a peaceful and secure environment.

Persistent instability in Myanmar threatens to undermine these ambitions and complicate efforts to deepen regional integration.

For states such as Manipur, which occupy a central position in India's connectivity plans, developments across the border have direct implications for future economic opportunities.

Diplomacy Meets Ground Reality
Myanmar's assurance to India reflects a shared recognition of the importance of cooperation in addressing common challenges.

The two countries have a long history of security collaboration and continue to engage through institutional mechanisms aimed at strengthening border management.

However, the effectiveness of such commitments ultimately depends on conditions on the ground.

Myanmar's civil war has transformed the security landscape in ways that neither side can ignore. Multiple armed actors now control significant territories near India's border, complicating traditional approaches to cooperation.

For policymakers in New Delhi, the challenge is to maintain engagement with Myanmar while adapting to rapidly changing realities along the frontier.

Looking Ahead
For Manipur and the wider Northeast, Myanmar's assurance is a positive diplomatic signal, but it is not a complete solution.

The region remains on the frontline of the security, humanitarian and economic consequences of Myanmar's conflict. Issues such as insurgency, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, refugee movements and border management will continue to shape the relationship between the two neighbours.

As Myanmar's internal situation evolves, the stability of India's northeastern frontier will depend not only on diplomatic commitments but also on effective coordination among security agencies, improved border infrastructure and sustained engagement with local communities.

For Manipur in particular, developments across the border will remain a critical factor influencing security and governance in the years ahead. The message from New Delhi and Naypyidaw may be one of cooperation, but for the people living along the India-Myanmar border, the real test lies in whether that cooperation can translate into peace and stability on the ground.

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coordinated military operations against such camps. These operations demonstrated the importance of bilateral security cooperation in addressing shared threats.



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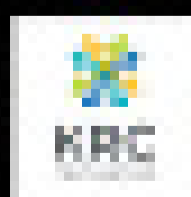


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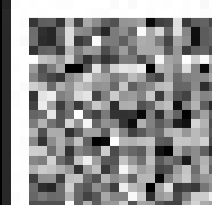


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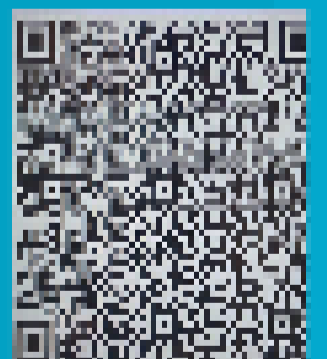
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- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
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