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PERSPECTIVE

Forgiveness is the number one trait linked to happiness in humans.

Ceiling Collapse in GMCH Plastic Surgery Ward Injures Four Patients

GUWAHATI Four patients were injured after a section of the ceiling collapsed inside the Plastic Surgery department of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) on Thursday, triggering panic among patients, attendants and hospital staff.

According to preliminary reports, a portion of the ceiling suddenly gave way and crashed into the ward, striking patients who were undergoing treatment. The unexpected incident created chaos inside the department as hospital personnel and attendants rushed to evacuate patients and provide immediate assistance. Hospital authorities said the four injured patients received prompt medical attention and are currently in stable condition. No fatalities or life-threatening injuries have been reported.Initial reports suggest that the ceiling in the Plastic Surgery department had shown signs of deterioration for some time. The collapse is suspected to have resulted from poor maintenance and delayed repair of the ageing structure, though the exact cause is yet to be officially confirmed.The incident has once again brought the spotlight on the condition of infrastructure at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, Assam's largest government-run tertiary healthcare institution, which caters to thousands of patients from across the state and the Northeast every day.

Patients and attendants expressed concern over the safety of hospital buildings, urging authorities to conduct a comprehensive structural audit of old wards and ensure timely maintenance to prevent similar incidents.Hospital officials have not yet issued a detailed statement on the cause of the collapse. An inquiry is expected to ascertain whether structural deficiencies, water seepage or inadequate maintenance led to the incident.

WHO SAID WHAT



The people and Government of Assam are working shoulder to shoulder to help every flood affected family rebuild their lives.

The ₹15,000 immediate assistance will provide timely support for cleaning homes and meeting essential needs.
~ **Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam**

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Central Team Wraps Up Assam Flood Assessment, State Seeks Enhanced Relief and Relaxation of SDRF Norms

GUWAHATI A six-member Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) on Wednesday concluded its assessment of the recent floods in eastern Assam after reviewing the extent of the damage and relief operations with Chief Secretary Ravi Kota at Janata Bhawan in Dispur.

The high-level meeting marked the culmination of a four-day field visit to some of the worst-affected districts, during which the central delegation assessed the impact of the unprecedented floods that inundated parts of Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat.

During the review, Additional Chief Secretary for Revenue and Disaster Management and Chief Executive Officer of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), L. Sweety Changsan, presented a detailed account of the factors that triggered the floods, the scale of destruction, ongoing relief measures and the challenges encountered by the state administration in responding to the disaster.

The IMCT, led by M. Ramachandrudu, Joint Secretary (DM-II),



Ministry of Home Affairs, visited Charaideo on July 26, Sivasagar on July 27, and Jorhat and Golaghat on July 28, interacting with district authorities, affected residents and officials involved in rescue and relief operations.

Senior officials from multiple state government departments, district administrations and central agencies participated in the review meeting, with several joining virtually. Representatives from the National Disaster Response Force

(NDRF), Indian Army, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), Food Corporation of India (FCI), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) also attended the deliberations.

Unusual Rainfall Triggered Unprecedented Flooding

The Assam government informed the central delegation that this year's floods differed significantly from previous flood events, particularly as Charaideo and Sivasagar, districts that have historically remained outside the state's major flood zones, witnessed extensive inundation.

Officials attributed the disaster to exceptionally heavy rainfall in neighbouring Nagaland on July 19, particularly in the districts of Mokokchung, Wokha and Mon, coupled with intense localised downpours in parts of eastern Assam. The combined effect of upstream runoff and heavy rainfall overwhelmed drainage systems and river channels, leading to widespread flooding across the affected districts.

The state described the event as an extraordinary weather phenomenon that caused extensive damage to homes, agricultural land, public infrastructure and livelihoods.

Relief, Rescue and Damage Assessment

During the meeting, officials briefed the IMCT on the rescue and relief operations undertaken in the aftermath of the floods. Rescue missions were carried out jointly by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), NDRF, Assam Fire and Emergency Services, the Indian

Army and local volunteers, ensuring the evacuation of stranded residents from inundated areas.

The government said relief assistance has been distributed in accordance with existing disaster management guidelines. To strengthen ongoing operations, family relief kits containing rice, dal, mustard oil, salt and candles are being transported from neighbouring districts to Sivasagar and Charaideo, where relief efforts continue.

Officials noted that the process of assessing losses to houses, crops, roads, bridges and other public infrastructure is still underway. A comprehensive memorandum detailing the extent of the damage and financial assistance required will be submitted to the Centre after the conclusion of the flood season.

Assam Seeks Greater Central Support

The state government urged the central delegation to recommend relaxation of the existing norms under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to enable broader assistance for people affected by the unprecedented flooding.

Fresh IMD Rain Alert for Assam, Northeast; Authorities Brace for Floods and Landslides



GUWAHATI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a fresh spell of heavy to very heavy rainfall across Assam and several northeastern states over the next three to four days, raising concerns over flooding, flash floods, waterlogging and landslides in vulnerable areas.The latest weather forecast has prompted the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) and district administrations to step up preparedness measures, particularly in flood-prone and hill districts where intense rainfall is expected between July 30 and August 1.According to the IMD, widespread rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms is likely across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, with weather systems over neighbouring states expected to significantly influence districts in Upper Assam.

An Orange Alert has been issued for Tinsukia district in Assam, indicating the likelihood of heavy to very heavy rainfall. Similar alerts are in place for Mon, Mokokchung and Wokha districts of Nagaland, where heavy precipitation and runoff are expected to affect adjoining districts of Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat in Assam.

sam.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the IMD has forecast heavy rainfall in East Siang, Lohit, Namsai, Longding, Papumpare, Lower Subansiri and Lower Dibang Valley districts. The resulting runoff from these catchment areas could impact downstream districts of Tinsukia, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur in Assam, increasing the risk of flooding.

The weather office has predicted 6 cm to 11 cm of rainfall per day across many parts of the affected Arunachal Pradesh districts, with isolated areas-particularly Papumpare district-likely to receive very heavy rainfall of 12 cm to 20 cm during the forecast period.

The ASDMA warned that the anticipated rainfall could worsen waterlogging in urban centres, trigger flash floods in low-lying areas, slow vehicular movement on major roads and increase the possibility of landslides in hilly regions.

Officials said all concerned district administrations have been placed on alert to monitor the evolving weather situation and respond promptly to any emergencies.The disaster management authority has advised residents, particularly those living in low-lying flood-prone areas, riverbanks and landslide-prone hill slopes, to remain vigilant, avoid unnecessary travel during periods of intense rainfall and strictly follow advisories issued by local authorities.

With several parts of Assam still recovering from recent monsoon floods, officials fear that another spell of intense rainfall could lead to a renewed rise in river levels and fresh inundation in vulnerable districts, underscoring the need for heightened preparedness across the region.

Akhil Gogoi Demands 10 Lakh Compensation for Every Flood-Hit Family

GUWAHATI Rajjor Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi on Wednesday mounted a strong attack on the Assam government over its handling of the flood situation in Upper Assam, demanding '10 lakh in compensation for every flood-affected family in Sivasagar and warning of a dramatic protest inside the Assembly if his demand was ignored.

Participating in the ongoing Assam Assembly session, Gogoi alleged that relief measures in the flood-ravaged district were inadequate and called on the government to announce a comprehensive compensation package for families that have suffered losses due to the recent deluge.

In a fiery speech, the Sivasagar MLA declared that he would stage an unprecedented protest at the Chief Minister's table if the government failed to provide '10 lakh to each flood-affected family.

"If '10 lakh is not provided to every flood-affected family in Sivasagar, I will perform the Shiv Tandav dance on the Chief Minister's table," Gogoi said during the Assembly proceedings.

The legislator also asserted that he would not be deterred by any legal or administrative action for pressing his demand.

"Impose the NSA against me, bring in the NIA, arrest me-do whatever you want, but '10 lakh must be given," he said.

Gogoi accused the state government of failing to respond adequately to the humanitarian crisis triggered by the floods, which have caused widespread damage to homes, agricultural land and public infrastructure in several districts of Upper Assam.

The Rajjor Dal leader also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that the Centre had not shown sufficient urgency despite the scale of the disaster.

"It has been 11 days, but the Prime Minister, who says he loves Assam, has not come," Gogoi said, referring to the continued flood crisis in the state.

Track Settlement Disrupts Train Services on Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section

HAFLONG Train services on the Lumding-Badarpur hill section of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) continue to be disrupted following track settlement at New Harangajao (NHGJ) station, forcing railway authorities to suspend operations on two of the station's three lines while restoration work is carried out.

Railway officials said Lines 1 and 2 at New Harangajao remain closed due to the track settlement, with all train movements currently being operated through Line 3 under enhanced safety protocols and continuous monitoring.

The disruption has led to delays, cancellations and rescheduling of several passenger trains connecting Assam with Barak Valley, Tripura and other parts of the Northeast.

Officials stressed that passenger safety remains the highest priority, and operational restrictions will continue until engineers certify the affected section as safe for normal traffic. The impact of the disruption was evident on Wednesday when the Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express was detained for several hours at Bandarkhal station, leaving passengers stranded and causing significant inconvenience.

According to an official railway bulletin, train movements through the affected stretch have been restricted during the night, with no trains being allowed to pass between 7 pm and 5 am until further notice.The NFR has cancelled several services and rescheduled others to minimise operational risks during restoration work.

Among the major cancellations are:

15617 Guwahati-Dullabcherra Express
15618 Dullabcherra-Guwahati Express
15615 Guwahati-Silchar Express
15616 Silchar-Guwahati Express
Several other trains have been rescheduled or regulated en route, including:
15650 Nagaon-Agartala Express
15649 Agartala-Nagaon Express
15609 Guwahati-Sangaldan Express
15610 Sangaldan-Guwahati Express
15611 Rangiya-Silchar Express
15612 Silchar-Rangiya Express
Railway authorities said additional express and special train services may also be delayed or regulated depending on operational conditions and the progress of restoration work.Passengers Advised to Check Train StatusThe Northeast Frontier Railway has urged passengers to verify the latest status of their trains before commencing their journeys, as schedules may change at short notice until normal operations resume.

Engineering teams are working round the clock to stabilise the affected track and restore full services on the strategically important hill section, which serves as the only rail link connecting Barak Valley, Tripura, Mizoram and parts of Manipur with the rest of the country. The Lumding-Badarpur hill section has witnessed repeated disruptions in recent weeks due to heavy monsoon rains, landslides and ground instability. Railway officials said continuous monitoring of the track is being carried out to ensure safe train operations while restoration efforts continue.

Manipur: One Alleged Naga Village Guard Killed, Two CoBRA Personnel Injured in Counter-Insurgency Operation in Noney

IMPHAL

A counter-insurgency operation in Manipur's Noney district on Wednesday left one alleged Naga Village Guard dead and two personnel of the CRPF's elite Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) injured, triggering protests and an indefinite emergency shutdown across several Naga-inhabited areas.

The deceased was identified as Lanbimei Riamei (22), son of Kadirang Riamei of Longmai Bazar in Noney district. According to official sources, he sustained bullet injuries during the operation and later succumbed to them.

Police said the injured CoBRA personnel were Head Constable Radheshyam and Constable (General Duty) Jitendra Kumar, who suffered minor splinter injuries during the exchange of fire. Both were evacuated for medical treatment and are reported to be in stable condition.

Officials also said that three other alleged Naga Village Guards were injured during the operation.



tion, although their identities had not been officially confirmed at the time of filing this report.

According to police and official sources, the intelligence-based operation began in the early hours near Biting village under Tupul subdivision after security agencies received specific inputs about the alleged presence of a training

camp of the Naga Village Guards (NVG), a local armed village defence group.

Security forces reportedly came under fire after reaching the area, leading to a fierce exchange of gunfire with the alleged village guards.

Following the encounter, security personnel launched extensive search, combing and area domination operations, while additional reinforcements were rushed to the area to strengthen the security cordon. Officials said the operation was continuing at the time of filing the report.

The incident sparked strong reactions from the Working Committee of the Joint Tribes Council, Manipur (WC-JTCM), which represents the Inpui, Liangmai, Rongmei and Zeme communities.

In a statement, the organisation condemned the operation and alleged that CoBRA personnel had acted in collusion with members of ZUFJ during the operation. It further claimed that the security forces had deliberately targeted members of the Naga Village

Guards, whom it described as community defence volunteers.

The allegations made by the WC-JTCM could not be independently verified, and there was no immediate response from the CRPF, security agencies or the Manipur government.

In protest, the tribal body announced an immediate and indefinite emergency shutdown across areas inhabited by the Inpui, Liangmai, Rongmei and Zeme communities.

The shutdown covers National Highways, railway construction projects and other Central government infrastructure projects passing through these areas.

However, the organisation clarified that essential services, including hospitals, healthcare facilities, schools, colleges, electricity, telecommunication networks and Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) water supply services, would remain exempt from the shutdown.

The WC-JTCM said the protest would continue until the Government of India takes what it termed

"decisive and meaningful action" over the incident.

The latest operation comes amid intensified intelligence-led counter-insurgency operations across Manipur's hill districts following recent incidents of violence and heightened security concerns. Security forces have increased surveillance and launched a series of targeted operations against armed groups in vulnerable areas of the state.

Local sources also reported disruptions in mobile communication services in parts of the Biting-Tupul area following the operation, although the cause of the disruption could not be independently verified.

Officials said a detailed report on the operation, including any recoveries, arrests and additional casualties, would be released after the operation concludes.

With security forces maintaining a heavy presence in and around Biting village, the situation in Noney district remained tense on Wednesday evening as search operations continued.



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THE COCKROACH MOVEMENT

Every generation inherits the institutions of democracy but develops its own language of dissent. India's freedom struggle was shaped by Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of satyagraha, which transformed moral conviction into political action. The post-Emergency era witnessed movements centred on civil liberties, while the anti-corruption campaign of the previous decade relied on mass mobilization and public outrage against governance failures. The emergence of the Cockroach Movement belongs to yet another phase in this evolving democratic tradition. It reflects the anxieties of a generation confronting unemployment, examination irregularities, institutional opacity, and declining faith in public accountability.

Predictably, the movement has been viewed through the prism of Gandhian politics. Such comparisons are understandable, for Gandhi remains India's enduring benchmark for non-violent public action. Yet they also risk misunderstanding both the movement and Gandhi himself. The more relevant question is not whether the Cockroach Movement is Gandhian, but whether it represents a new model of democratic engagement in an era defined by digital communication, shrinking institutional trust, and impatient citizenship.

At first glance, the similarities are striking. Like Gandhian campaigns, the movement seeks to mobilize ordinary citizens rather than political elites. It questions the concentration of power, demands accountability, and challenges institutional complacency. Its protests over examination integrity, educational reforms, and governance failures resonate with millions of young Indians whose aspirations increasingly collide with administrative inefficiency.

However, the resemblance ends there. Gandhi's politics was built on a rigorous ethical framework. Satyagraha was never simply a method of protest; it was a philosophy of public life. Truth, non-violence, self-restraint, personal sacrifice, and constructive social action were inseparable from political resistance. Gandhi insisted that democratic legitimacy rested not merely on the justice of one's cause but equally on the moral integrity of one's methods. Means and ends, in his view, were inseparable.

The Cockroach Movement represents an altogether different political vocabulary. It is rooted less in moral discipline than in symbolic disruption. Its instruments are memes, satire, digital campaigns, viral imagery, online mobilization, and decentralized public demonstrations. Rather than appealing primarily to conscience, it seeks to capture attention in an overcrowded information ecosystem where visibility itself has become a form of political power.

This distinction is neither accidental nor insignificant.

The nature of political communication has fundamentally changed. Social media has compressed political time. Public opinion is now shaped as much by algorithms as by institutions. Protest movements no longer depend solely on organizational hierarchies or ideological cadres; they can emerge spontaneously, spread nationally within hours, and mobilize thousands without conventional leadership structures. Digital platforms have democratized participation while simultaneously making political discourse more fragmented and emotionally driven.

The Cockroach Movement is therefore better understood as a product of structural changes in India's democratic ecosystem rather than merely another protest campaign.

Its rise also reflects a deeper institutional crisis. India's demographic dividend has created unprecedented educational aspirations. Millions compete every year for a limited number of seats in higher education and government employment. Entrance examinations have become gateways to economic mobility. Consequently, every allegation of examination malpractice, question paper leakage, or administrative negligence does more than undermine a recruitment process-it weakens public faith in the fairness of the State itself.

The controversy surrounding competitive examinations has exposed precisely this vulnerability. When students believe that merit is compromised by systemic failures, democratic legitimacy suffers. Governments may respond with stricter legislation, stronger criminal penalties, or administrative reshuffles. Yet punitive measures alone cannot restore trust unless institutions themselves become more transparent, technologically resilient, and professionally accountable.

This is where the policy debate must move beyond symbolism.

The credibility of examination systems requires institutional reforms rather than episodic crisis management. The National Testing Agency, public service commissions, recruitment boards, and state examination authorities need comprehensive modernization. Cybersecurity protocols must be strengthened. Independent auditing mechanisms should become routine rather than reactive. Artificial intelligence can assist in detecting irregularities, but technological reforms must be accompanied by greater transparency in examination processes and grievance redressal systems.

Equally important is communication. Institutions increasingly lose credibility not merely because errors occur but because they fail to explain decisions convincingly. In the absence of timely official communication, misinformation fills the vacuum. Digital-age governance therefore demands responsiveness alongside competence.

The movement also raises broader questions about youth policy.

India today possesses one of the world's youngest populations, yet economic opportunities have not expanded at a comparable pace. Graduate unemployment remains a persistent concern. Public sector recruitment has slowed in several sectors, while private employment often fails to provide stability or social mobility. In such an environment, every competitive examination assumes enormous significance. Delays, cancellations, litigation, or allegations of malpractice carry consequences extending far beyond individual careers. They shape perceptions of the State's fairness and effectiveness.

This explains why student protests resonate so widely.

Young citizens are not merely demanding jobs; they are demanding confidence that institutions operate impartially. The issue is therefore not only economic but constitutional. Equality of opportunity, guaranteed under the Constitution, loses practical meaning if recruitment mechanisms themselves become suspect.

The Cockroach Movement has successfully brought these anxieties into public discourse. Its greatest achievement lies not in its symbolism but in compelling governments to acknowledge that procedural integrity matters as much as policy announcements.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.

- George Orwell

PROTEST FOR REFORMING THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM



DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

The large-scale expansion of quality medical education is one of India's most pressing needs. The country requires a far greater number of doctors and medical specialists across various fields. However, the expansion of government medical institutions has not kept pace with demand, while persistent questions continue to be raised about the fairness and integrity of entrance examinations.

In recent months, nationwide protests led by the Cockroach Janata Party and activist Sonam Wangchuk over allegations of question paper leaks in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) have highlighted the deep dissatisfaction among young people with the existing examination system. Although the government accepted several demands, including the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the larger issue remains the urgent need for comprehensive reform of the examination process.

Education experts argue that resignations or isolated administrative measures alone are insufficient. Unless there is strong political will, greater transparency, and structural reforms in the examination system, such problems cannot be resolved permanently.

While private medical institutions have played an important role in meeting the country's growing demand for medical education, their exorbitant fees and concerns over educational quality remain serious issues. Ironically, investment in education and hospitals is increasingly viewed as a more profitable business than manufacturing. This trend has intensified resentment, especially among students from economically weaker backgrounds.

In a recent landmark judgment, the Supreme Court observed that private medical colleges cannot be compelled to charge the same fees as government institutions because they are self-financed establishments. The Court also noted that forcing them to reduce fees could adversely affect their operations and hinder the expansion of medical education.

The observation came during the hearing of a petition filed by a student from the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) category, who had secured admission to a general-category seat in a private medical college and was required to pay nearly ₹1.9 million (₹19 lakh) in annual tuition fees.

While the Court's reasoning may appear legally sound, it is equally important to ensure that the right to education for economically disadvantaged students is not compromised.

It is also worth considering that many private medical colleges receive land and other concessions from state governments at subsidized rates during their establishment. In such circumstances, providing reservation benefits or special fee concessions for EWS students appears justified. Otherwise, admission to private medical colleges will increasingly become the privilege of financially well-off families.

Although the Supreme Court advised the student to seek scholarships, an important question remains: should it not be the responsibility of either the government or the concerned private institution to ensure adequate financial assistance for economically weaker students?

The government should also undertake a comprehensive study to determine how many students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are actually becoming doctors. Simultaneously, it should investigate

the actual operating costs of private medical colleges and examine why they charge such high fees.

To address these concerns, the Central Government should constitute a high-level committee to review the fee structure of private medical colleges, EWS reservation, scholarship mechanisms, and other related issues before submitting detailed recommendations.

In this context, a significant judgment of the Calcutta High Court also deserves attention. The Court directed the Haldia Institute of Dental Sciences and Research to refund ₹950,000 (₹9.5 lakh) in fees to a student who had enrolled in the Master of Dental Surgery (MDS) programme in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery but later discovered that the institution lacked the basic infrastructure required to provide quality education.

The ruling raises serious questions about the quality of education offered by private medical institutions. While the judgment is commendable, its impact would have been even greater had the Court also directed the institution to improve educational standards and submit a compliance report.

The case also highlights broader concerns regarding transparency in the administration and academic functioning of private medical colleges. There is a pressing need to review faculty salaries and investigate whether students are receiving the internship stipends to which they are entitled.

It is widely known that many private medical colleges require students to sign documents acknowledging receipt of internship stipends but fail to make the actual payments. Effective government intervention is essential to address such practices.

To investigate these issues comprehensively, the Central Government should establish another high-level committee with representatives from major states. The soaring cost of medical education in private institutions has also prompted large numbers of Indian students to pursue medical degrees in countries such as China and Russia. This trend is a matter of national

concern and calls for concrete corrective measures.

Education must not be reduced to a profit-making enterprise. Licences for establishing private medical colleges and nursing homes should preferably be granted to qualified medical professionals rather than business groups whose primary objective is financial gain.

The government should also provide doctors with easy access to institutional credit to establish medical colleges and healthcare facilities. If corporate groups invest in the sector, they should clearly specify the facilities and support they will provide to students and economically weaker sections of society.

Keeping in mind the spirit of the Supreme Court's observations, policymakers should also consider whether reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) ought to be introduced in private medical institutions.

Medical education is too critical to be viewed solely through the lens of profit and loss. India urgently requires more doctors, particularly those willing to serve in rural and underdeveloped regions.

A comprehensive assessment should be conducted to determine the country's actual requirement for medical professionals. If MBBS or MDS graduates remain unwilling to serve in rural and remote areas, an expert committee could consider introducing a two-year specialised medical diploma programme for students from rural backgrounds, enabling them to provide primary healthcare services in underserved regions.

The shortage of doctors and nurses continues to be a major challenge in India, particularly as the burden of disease continues to grow. Ensuring the availability of trained medical professionals at rural health centres and community hospitals would substantially reduce the pressure on district hospitals.

According to Health Ministry data released a few years ago, India had more than 1.3 million allopathic doctors

and 565,000 AYUSH practitioners, resulting in an overall doctor-patient ratio of 1:833, better than the World Health Organization's recommended ratio of 1:1000.

However, the real problem lies in the unequal distribution of doctors. Most physicians are concentrated in metropolitan cities, urban centres, and private healthcare institutions. If only rural areas are considered, the doctor-patient ratio remains significantly below WHO standards.

Enacting stringent laws to prevent examination paper leaks is not enough. The greater challenge lies in ensuring their effective and impartial implementation.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Congratulations to every student in India on the passage of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 in Lok Sabha today.

The bill shields the dreams and aspirations of our youth by laying down iron-clad provisions imposing the harshest punishment on those who dare to breach the sanctity of public examinations.

The Modi govt will spare no one who attempts to imperil the future of our students and will leave no stone unturned to ensure that they face the full wrath of the law.

~ Amit Shah, Union Home Minister



A positive development is that the National Testing Agency (NTA) is being restructured, with leadership roles being assigned to experts in cybersecurity, forensic investigation, examination centre management, and assessment research. If implemented effectively, these reforms can restore transparency, credibility, and public confidence in medical entrance examinations, ensuring equal opportunities for deserving students from every section of society.

The government should also seriously consider appointing more paramedical and allied healthcare personnel, especially in rural and backward districts. The health sector cannot afford continued neglect, and budgetary allocations must be increased substantially.

At the same time, a long-term plan should be formulated to establish modern teaching hospitals in every subdivision. The Central Government must provide adequate financial assistance to the states to ensure that every citizen has access to quality, affordable healthcare services.

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COCOMI Alleges Non-Camp IDPs in Manipur Haven't Received DBT Aid Since July, Warns of Protest



IMPHAL

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) alleged that internally displaced persons (IDPs) living outside government relief camps have not received their Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)-based financial assistance since July, urging the state government to immediately restore the support.

Addressing a press conference at its office in Lamphel, COCOMI said discontinuing financial assistance before the permanent rehabilitation of displaced families was “unjustified” and would place thousands of vulnerable people under further hardship.

The briefing was attended by internally displaced persons, COCOMI volunteers and representatives of affected communities.

COCOMI leaders said many families displaced by the ethnic violence that erupted in May 2023 continue to remain uprooted and are dependent on government assistance for their daily survival.

They argued that withdrawing financial support at this stage would severely affect displaced families who are yet to return home or rebuild their lives.

Speaking on behalf of the displaced persons, L. Gojendro Meitei said the issue primarily concerns non-camp IDPs, who, according to him, have not received financial assistance through the DBT system since July.

He claimed that IDPs residing in government-recognised relief camps continue to receive benefits under the existing relief mechanism, while those living in rented accommodation or

with relatives have been left without assistance.

According to Gojendro, the government had been providing financial assistance of approximately Rs 100 per person per day, enabling displaced families living outside relief camps to meet essential food and household expenses.

He said the discontinuation of the benefit has made it increasingly difficult for affected families to manage their daily needs.

During the press conference, Subhachandra, Co-Convenor of the Churachandpur Meitei United Committee, warned that displaced families would launch an agitation if the pending ration assistance was not credited by July 31. “If the ration amount is not transferred by the 31st of this month, IDPs are fully prepared to organise an

agitation from the very next day,” he said. The ethnic violence that broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023, displaced tens of thousands of people across the state, forcing many to take shelter in government relief camps, rented houses or the homes of relatives.

While a section of the displaced population continues to stay in designated relief camps, many others residing outside have relied on government financial assistance as they await permanent rehabilitation or a safe return to their homes.

COCOMI maintained that relief measures, including DBT assistance, should continue until every displaced family is rehabilitated with dignity, safety and security. There was no immediate response from the Manipur government to the allegations at the time of filing this report.

Nagaland: Two Brothers Killed, Mother Injured as Landslide Hits House in Mokokchung

MOKOKCHUNG

Two brothers lost their lives while their mother was injured after a landslide struck a rented house in Nagaland's Mokokchung district on Wednesday, officials and community leaders said.

The incident occurred at Upper Penli Ward, near the Sangtam Baptist Church Pastor's Residence, when a landslide triggered by unstable terrain caused the rented house to collapse.

The deceased have been identified as Muwalong Sangtam (19) and Thsidiba Sangtam (16), sons of Merenba Sangtam from Alisopur village. Both were students of Queen Mary Higher Secondary School (QMHSS), Mokokchung, with Muwalong studying in Class XII and Thsidiba in Class XI.

According to the Eastern Nagaland People's Union Mokokchung (ENPUM), the two brothers were trapped inside the house when the landslide struck, leading to the collapse of the structure. Both succumbed to their injuries.

Their mother, who was also inside the house at the time of the incident, sustained injuries and was rushed to a hospital, where she is currently undergoing treatment.

Following the tragedy, a prayer service was held at the Sangtam Baptist Church compound. The bodies of the two brothers are being taken to their native Alisopur village for their final rites.

Expressing profound grief over the incident, ENPUM extended its condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the deceased. The organisation also wished the injured mother a speedy recovery and expressed solidarity with the family during their time of loss.

Over 82,700 Hectares of Assam Land Under Occupation of Four Neighbouring States, Government Tells Assembly

GUWAHATI

Nearly 82,752 hectares of Assam's land are currently under the occupation of four neighbouring states, the Assam government informed the Assembly on Wednesday, while reiterating that efforts are underway to resolve the long-pending inter-state boundary disputes through dialogue.

Responding to a question raised by Rajbor Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi, Assam Border Protection and Development Minister Atul Bora said that a total of 82,751.86 hectares of Assam's territory is under the occupation of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

According to the minister, Nagaland accounts for the largest portion, with 59,490.21 hectares of Assam's land under its occupation. This is followed by Arunachal Pradesh, with 16,144.01 hectares, while Mizoram accounts for 3,675.78 hectares and Meghalaya for 3,441.86 hectares.

Bora also informed the House that the neighbouring states have laid claims to significant portions of Assam's territory. Among them, Nagaland has claimed the largest area, asserting rights over 12,882.6 square kilometres (12,88,260 hectares) of Assam's land. Meghalaya has claimed 2,732.14 square kilometres, followed by Mizoram with 927.74 square kilometres and Arunachal Pradesh with 858.91 square kilometres.

Highlighting the government's approach to resolving the disputes, Bora said Assam has been engaging with neighbouring states through sustained dialogue.

“We have already signed bilateral agreements with Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh as per the directions of the Union Home Ministry,” the minister said, referring to the framework agreements aimed at settling disputed boundary stretches.

The Commission initiated the inquiry following media reports highlighting concerns over workplace safety and allegations of negligence surrounding the incident that occurred on July 27 at a factory in Pangram under Udharbond in Cachar district.

In its notice, the NHRC has sought reports from the Assam Chief Secretary and the Superintendent of Police, Cachar, asking them to furnish details of the incident, the condition of injured workers, and the compensation provided to the families of the deceased.

According to reports, the explosion occurred when molten metal allegedly spilled onto workers during operations at the factory. Family members of the victims and local residents have alleged that similar safety-related incidents had occurred at the industrial unit in the past, raising questions over compliance with workplace safety norms.

The blast claimed the lives of Sagar Nath, a resident of Agartala, Tripura, along with Appu Borai (32), Kiron Munda (28), and Shyamal Gaur. Police said all four workers died on the spot.

Following the incident, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh for the families of each deceased worker and assured strict action if any negligence was found during the investigation.

In a post on X, the chief minister said industrial negligence would not be tolerated and that those responsible for any lapses would face stringent legal action.

State Minister Kaushik Rai said the government has ordered

NHRC Launches Suo Motu Probe Into Cachar Factory Blast That Killed Four Workers

SILCHAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of the fatal explosion at a metal processing unit in Assam's Cachar district that claimed the lives of four workers, directing the state government to submit a detailed report within two weeks.

The Commission initiated the inquiry following media reports highlighting concerns over workplace safety and allegations of negligence surrounding the incident that occurred on July 27 at a factory in Pangram under Udharbond in Cachar district.

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State Minister Kaushik Rai said the government has ordered

a magisterial inquiry, a police investigation, and a separate probe by the district labour commissioner to determine whether mandatory industrial safety protocols were followed at the facility. Meanwhile, the police have arrested five persons, including the owner of the metal processing unit, in connection with the explosion.

Cachar Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Rajat Pal said four of the accused were arrested from Cachar, while the factory owner was apprehended in Guwahati on Monday. The accused have been identified as Alok Kumar Tiwari (34) of Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, Rama Kant Singh (35) of Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Shamim Akhtar (35) of Chhapra in Bihar, Rakesh Kumar Surana (63) of Guwahati, and Amichand Jangir (62) of Udharbond in Assam.

Police said Surana is the owner of Kade Global Infrastructure LLP, while the remaining four were associated with the management of the company's metal pro-

cessing unit where the explosion occurred. Investigators said the company operates two scrap metal processing units in the area, with the blast taking place at its newer facility in Pangram, which was established around a year ago.

As part of the ongoing investigation, Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) experts from Guwahati are examining the site to determine the exact cause of the explosion and assess the nature of the blast.

Cachar MLA Rajdeep Goala, who visited the site and met the bereaved families, said the district administration has also ordered a district-wide industrial safety audit to review safety standards and compliance across industrial establishments.

The NHRC's intervention adds another layer of scrutiny to the incident as multiple investigations continue to examine whether lapses in safety protocols or negligence contributed to one of the deadliest industrial accidents in Assam in recent years.

Tripura Seeks Rs 322 Crore Central Assistance for Minority Development Projects

AGARTALA

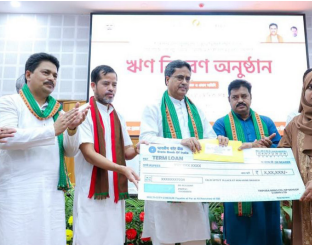
Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday said the state government has submitted a Rs 322-crore proposal to the Centre for implementing development projects aimed at accelerating the socio-economic advancement of minority communities across the state.

The chief minister made the announcement while addressing a loan distribution programme organised by the Tripura Minority Cooperative Development Limited at Pragna Bhavan in Agartala.

Cooperation Minister Shukla Charan Noatia was also present at the event.

Saha said the proposed projects are intended to improve the overall socio-economic condition of minority communities by expanding access to development initiatives and welfare programmes.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to inclusive growth,



the chief minister said the state is working to ensure that the benefits of development reach every section of society without discrimination.

“The spirit of unity in diversity is the strength of both our country and Tripura. Our government's development agenda is based on providing equal opportunities and ensuring progress for all communities,” Saha said.

He noted that the Centre, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has introduced several initiatives focused on the welfare

of religious minorities, particularly in the areas of education, healthcare, financial empowerment, women's development and security.

Saha said the state government is committed to implementing welfare schemes with transparency and accountability to strengthen public confidence.

“The state government is committed to building trust among minority communities by ensuring transparency, accountability and effective implementation of welfare schemes,” he said.

He added that development initiatives carried out with honesty and efficiency help build confidence among citizens and contribute to meaningful improvements in people's lives.

Highlighting the importance of women's empowerment, Saha said educating girls has a transformative impact on families and society.

“Educating a daughter strength-

ens an entire family,” he said, adding that the government remains focused on ensuring the safety, education and economic independence of minority women through targeted welfare measures.

The chief minister also stressed the importance of communal harmony, saying all religions are accorded equal respect and that peaceful coexistence among different communities is essential for the state's overall development.

He further said that government-backed financial assistance and loan schemes can play a vital role in promoting entrepreneurship and self-reliance among beneficiaries.

According to Saha, access to institutional finance enables individuals to become economically independent while encouraging others to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities, contributing to the broader goal of inclusive and equitable development in Tripura.

Raja Raghuvanshi Murder Case: Sonam Raghuvanshi Surrenders Before Shillong Court After Supreme Court Cancels Bail

SHILLONG

Sonam Raghuvanshi, one of the prime accused in the murder of her husband Raja Raghuvanshi, surrendered before a sessions court in Shillong on Wednesday after the Supreme Court cancelled the bail granted to her in the high-profile case.

Her surrender was carried out in compliance with the apex court's directive, which set aside the earlier bail order and directed her to appear before the trial court.

The case pertains to the alleged murder of Raja Raghuvanshi, a businessman from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, who had travelled to Meghalaya with his wife Sonam for their honeymoon shortly after their marriage in May 2025.

The couple went missing during their visit, prompting an extensive search operation by the Meghalaya Police and other agencies. Days later, Raja's body was recovered from a deep gorge near Wei Sawdong Falls in the Sohra region of East Khasi Hills district, leading police to register a murder case.

Following the discovery, the Meghalaya Police constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the incident.

According to investigators, Sonam allegedly conspired with

several others to murder her husband during the honeymoon trip. Police claim the killing was premeditated and that multiple accused were involved in planning and executing the crime.

The prosecution has alleged that Sonam played a key role in the conspiracy, while the investigation also examined the alleged involvement of her former partner and other individuals suspected of assisting in the murder.

The case attracted nationwide attention because of the sensational circumstances surrounding Raja's disappearance and the allegation that what appeared to be a honeymoon trip had been used to execute a planned murder.

Sonam had earlier secured bail from a lower court, but the order was challenged before the Supreme Court. After hearing the matter, the apex court cancelled the bail, paying the way for her surrender before the Shillong sessions court.

Following her appearance before the court on Wednesday, Sonam was remanded to judicial custody in accordance with the court's directions.

The Raja Raghuvanshi murder case remains under judicial consideration, with further proceedings expected before the Shillong court as the trial continues.

BTC Unveils Rs 1,588.31 Crore Budget for 2026-27, Prioritises Education, Infrastructure and Welfare

KOKRAJHAR

The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) on Wednesday presented a Rs 1,588.31 crore Budget for the financial year 2026-27, with a strong focus on education, infrastructure development and public welfare, alongside continued investments in the implementation of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Accord.

BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary, who also holds the Finance portfolio, tabled the Budget on the opening day of the two-day Budget Session of the BTC Legislative Council, being held on July 29 and 30.

The Budget estimates total outlay at Rs 1,58,831.32 lakh, reflecting the council's emphasis on strengthening public infrastructure, improving educational opportunities and supporting welfare initiatives across the Bodoland Territorial Region.

A major component of the Budget is the allocation of Rs 90,000 lakh under the Consolidated State-Owned Priority Development (SOPD) Grant, which will fund a range of development projects across the BTC.

An additional Rs 20,000 lakh has been earmarked for infrastructure development, creation of capital assets and implementation of provisions under the Bodoland Territorial Region Accord. Another Rs 20,000 lakh has been set aside



as special assistance for Centrally Sponsored Schemes, while Rs 9,757.25 lakh has been allocated as an infrastructure grant.

The Budget also includes Rs 2,530.22 lakh as administrative grant and Rs 2,794.44 lakh as a special grant to the BTC. Besides these, Rs 1,000 lakh has been earmarked as ex gratia assistance for martyrs, while another Rs 1,000 lakh has been allocated for the construction of a BTC Guest House in Chennai.

Mohilary also presented the council's estimated receipts and expenditure under the Normal Budget, which is based

on the BTC's own revenue sources.

According to the estimates, the council expects receipts of Rs 9,131.42 lakh, while projected expenditure stands at Rs 16,285.94 lakh, resulting in an estimated deficit of Rs 7,154.47 lakh for the financial year.

The earmarked SOPD-G funds have been distributed among various BTC departments in line with the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for 2026-27, aimed at ensuring planned and sector-specific implementation of development projects.

Speaking to reporters after the Budget

presentation, BTC Executive Member Derhasat Basumatary described the financial plan as people-centric, development-oriented and welfare-focused.

He said the Budget gives particular importance to strengthening the education sector while promoting balanced development across all sectors in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

“The Budget has been prepared with the objective of improving public services and ensuring inclusive development throughout the BTC region, with special emphasis on education,” Basumatary said.

During the Question Hour of the Legislative Council session, BTC Executive Member for Education Rabiram Narzary announced a major change to one of the council's flagship education initiatives.

Responding to a question from MCLA Daobaisa Boro regarding the future of the Bodofa Super-50 Mission, Narzary said the programme would be rebranded as the UN Brahma Free UPSC, APSC, NEET and JEE Coaching Programme.

He also announced that the scheme would be significantly expanded, with the number of beneficiaries increased well beyond the existing intake of 50 students, enabling more aspirants from the region to receive free coaching for competitive examinations.

The announcements underline the BTC's continued focus on improving educational access and creating greater opportunities for students preparing for civil services, engineering and medical entrance examinations, while simultaneously investing in infrastructure and welfare measures to drive overall development in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

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Azadi’ slogans against Brahminism, RSS should not bother anyone: Ramdev



HARIDWAR

Yog Gurus Ramdev on Wednesday said that slogans of “Azadi” against Brahminism and the RSS should not bother anyone, asserting that the Constitution provides equal rights to all communities.

Speaking to reporters here, Ramdev said that raising slogans against Brahminism or the RSS was not appropriate and stressed that the Constitution provides equal rights to all communities.

“The country will not run through streets. The country will run only through Parliament. Who will be the Education Minister will not be decided on the streets. PM and Parliament of the country will decide this,” Ramdev said.

Reacting to slogans of “Azadi” from Brahminism and the RSS, he said, “If Pralhad Joshi was born in the Brahmin community and learned nationalism from the RSS, this should not bother anyone.”

“The Constitution of the country provides rights to Brahmins too, as well as the Dalits and oppressed. So, abusing Brahminism is

unconstitutional. Abusing Shudras is also unconstitutional,” he added.

Ramdev also criticised the protests by Gen Z at Jantar Mantar, alleging that the demonstrations brought disrepute to the country.

“Gen Z gathered at Jantar Mantar and defamed India. Abuses are not our culture or nature. We have always respected our elders. We have walked the path shown by our parents and gurus,” he said. Earlier, Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Wednesday said the government “should be ashamed” over its handling of student protesters and warned of a fresh nationwide agitation if action against them continued despite assurances given by the Centre. Dipke alleged that students protesting against the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak had been subjected to excessive force and said the CJP would soon return to the streets if the government failed to change its approach.

“The government should not do all this. These were students who were protesting for their future, protesting for their rights. They were not enjoying doing this. They

faced baton charges on July 20. Even if the government’s greed is not satisfied after shedding so much blood, and if they continue to harass the students like this, we will hit the streets again, and we will do it soon. Using pellet guns on students as if they are terrorists? They should be ashamed! Were they terrorists? Amit Shah and Narendra Modi should be ashamed,” Dipke told.

When asked whether the CJP would launch another agitation, Dipke reiterated, “We will do it very soon. If the Government does not agree, does not mend ways, we will have to do it.” Reacting to BJP MP Kangana Ranaut’s remarks on Gen Z, Dipke dismissed them, saying, “Who even takes her seriously?”

“His remarks come a day after CJP Chief Spokesperson Saurav Das warned of a nationwide protest if the government failed to provide written assurances on withdrawing FIRs registered against student protesters.

Das had alleged that the Centre had assured the CJP that FIRs filed against protesters in Delhi and other BJP-ruled and NDA-governed states would be withdrawn, but no written confirmation had been provided despite the deadline lapsing.

The developments come after the Supreme Court directed states to release students below the age of 18 arrested during the nationwide protests over the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak, provided they have no criminal antecedents, while permitting investigations to continue in accordance with law.

JP nadda slams Opposition for disrupting Parliament, says “Modi government ready to discuss every issue”

NEW DELHI

Union Minister and Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha JP Nadda on Thursday accused the Opposition of deliberately disrupting Parliament and asserted that the Narendra Modi-led government was prepared to discuss every issue, saying the Opposition lacked substantive matters to raise.

Addressing the Rajya Sabha, Nadda said the Opposition had focused on obstructing the functioning of the House since the beginning of the Monsoon Session.

“The Opposition’s role has been negative. Ever since the session began, their entire focus has been on disrupting and obstructing the proceedings of the House rather than allowing it to function. I have observed that the Opposition lacks any substantive issues. It is their habit to constantly shift the goalposts,” Nadda said.

He said the government had always been open to discussions in Parliament and accused the Opposition of avoiding debates.

“On behalf of the government, I want to make one thing clear: the government led by PM Modi is ready to discuss every issue—and this is not limited to the current session alone. In all previous sessions, the government has always been prepared to discuss every matter, and whenever a discussion has taken place, the Opposition has faced embarrassment and received a befitting reply because they lack any real issues,” he said.

Referring to the day’s business, Nadda said a discussion was scheduled in the Rajya Sabha and criticised the Opposition for repeatedly changing its demands.

“Even today—regarding the discussion they had demanded, Jitendra Singh is scheduled to initiate a dis-



cussion at 2 PM; a bill is coming up for debate. Yet, it is their habit to keep shifting the goalposts. I strongly condemn the Opposition’s conduct... the government led by Modi ji is ready to discuss any issue. It should be noted that the Opposition is behaving irresponsibly,” he added.

Following Nadda’s remarks, Opposition members staged a walk-out from the Rajya Sabha.

The developments came amid continuing protests by Opposition parties over the alleged police action against student protesters at Delhi’s

Jantar Mantar on July 20. Earlier in the day, MPs from several INDIA bloc parties demonstrated at Makar Dwar in the Parliament complex, holding placards questioning who ordered the alleged police action and demanding accountability from the Centre.

The Opposition has also sought the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and demanded that Union Home Minister Amit Shah make a statement in Parliament on the issue.

Meanwhile, the Lok Sabha was

adjourned till 2 pm amid uproar over Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi’s remarks regarding the alleged firing during the July 20 student protest and his allegations against Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Before adjourning the House, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla congratulated Indian athletes Murali Sreeshankar, Dilip Mahadu Gavitt and Mohammed Basil Morssinganakathi for their medal-winning performances at the Commonwealth Games 2026.

INTERNATIONAL

PoK unrest: Over 30 civilians killed in brutal crackdown by Pakistani forces



NEW DELHI

A brutal crackdown by Pakistani security forces on protesters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) over the last two days has reportedly left more than 30 civilians dead and over 33 injured, government sources said on Wednesday.

The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) has been leading the protests amid local body elections in the PoK.

The PoK has been witnessing massive protests since last month over inflated living costs, alleged administrative apathy and political discrimination and atrocities against minorities.

New Delhi on Tuesday described the elections in PoK as an attempt by Islamabad to camouflage its illegal occupation and hide its “grave” human rights violations in the region.

Pakistani security forces used lethal force against the protesters during JAAC’s long march from Rawalakote to Muzaffarabad and the crackdown reportedly resulted in the deaths of over 30 civilians and left over 33 protesters

injured, the sources said.

Among the deceased is Usman Nazir, the brother of JAAC Central Committee member Umar Nazir, they said.

The JAAC has officially appealed to United Nations Human Rights Council and international rights organisations for an immediate, independent investigation into the unlawful killings, immediate halt of lethal force and accountability for any excessive or unlawful use of force, they pointed out.

The phase one of the regional elections in Mirpur division saw an estimated voter turnout of below 10 per cent, the sources said citing independent reports.

This sharply contradicting official figures of 45 per cent turnout, they said, adding major towns observed complete shutdowns in solidarity with JAAC’s boycott call.

Organisations like Jammu Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSF) have openly condemned the repression, the sources said.

They said the security forces contin-

ue to maintain a heightened presence in Rawalakote, Muzaffarabad and other major areas to prevent any gatherings.

The election boycott call is an evidence of declining public confidence in the political process and continued dissatisfaction with the administration, the sources said.

Authorities continue to impose communication blackouts and suspended services across PoK, stripping citizens of basic rights and shielding the brutal crackdown from scrutiny, they added. A brutal crackdown by Pakistani security forces on protesters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) over the last two days has reportedly left more than 30 civilians dead and over 33 injured, government sources said on Wednesday.

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Russian strikes kill at least 8, wound more across Ukraine



KYIV

Russian strikes killed at least eight people and wounded more than a dozen others across Ukraine, authorities said on Thursday, after President Volodymyr Zelensky warned of Moscow launching another massive attack overnight.

A ballistic missile struck a village house near the central city of Kryvyi, killing four adults and two girls aged five and 12, local officials said.

Eight other people were wounded in the attack, Kryvyi Rig’s defence council reported, warning “the death toll may rise”.

Officials in Ukraine’s eastern Poltava region, meanwhile, said one person was killed in a drone strike on a warehouse, while at least 15 people were wounded in attacks on the western city of Lviv.

Kyiv’s city military administration confirmed one person was killed and two others wounded in the capital after Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Russia was “attacking the capital with ballistic weapons”.

“The threat of further attack remains present. Stay in shelters!” Klitschko said early Thursday, adding there

were fires in several districts of the city.

Five other people were reportedly wounded in attacks in an eastern Kyiv district.

“The Russians prepared a massive attack several days ago, and there is a high probability that the strike will be carried out tonight,” Zelensky said in a post on X late Wednesday.

“Please, in all regions of Ukraine, pay attention to air raid alerts today and stay safe.”

Zelensky in his post repeated his request to Ukraine’s allies to supply Kyiv with the missiles its air defence system lacks.

Zelensky spoke on Tuesday with American counterpart Donald Trump at the White House and discussed the possibility of Ukraine producing Patriot interceptors.

The photograph shows smoke in the sky following Russian missile strikes over the western Ukrainian city of Lviv on July 30, 2026, amid the Russian invasion in Ukraine.

Ukraine hits two major Russian oil refineries hours after Zelensky-Trump meeting

An AFP journalist in the capital heard air raid sirens, followed by several explosions. Photos shared by the

city’s emergency service on Thursday showed firefighters blasting water into bombed buildings and sifting through rubble.

Last month was the deadliest for civilians in Ukraine since April 2022, as Moscow ramped up its long-range strikes on towns and cities across Ukraine, according to the United Nations.

Ukraine has escalated its retaliatory strikes on Russia in recent months, partly to pressure Moscow to the negotiating table after nearly four-and-a-half years of war.

In early July, Trump had expressed his intention to allow Ukraine to make surface-to-air missiles, at a time when Russia had stepped up its ballistic missile strikes.

Only the American Patriot systems are capable of shooting them down, but Ukraine is desperately short of PAC-3 interceptor missiles.

This shortage has also worsened since the war launched by the United States and Israel against Iran in February.

Zelensky said on Tuesday he had a “good meeting” with Trump and said the US president “accepted that he will give us (Patriot) licenses”.

India's Electric Vehicle Transition Could Save 1.7 Million Lives by 2050-But Time Is Running Out

Road transport pollution has emerged as one of India's deadliest public health crises. A new global study argues that a rapid shift to zero-emission vehicles could prevent millions of premature deaths, reduce childhood asthma, and transform urban air quality. Yet achieving these gains will require far more than selling electric cars-it demands a comprehensive overhaul of India's transport ecosystem.

India's battle against air pollution has long focused on coal-fired power plants, industrial emissions and crop residue burning. However, an equally dangerous but often underestimated source of pollution continues to grow on the nation's roads. Vehicular emissions have quietly become one of the country's biggest public health threats, particularly in densely populated urban centres where millions breathe toxic air every day.

A new report by the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), titled Health Benefits of Zero-Emission Transport through 2050: India, presents perhaps the strongest public health argument yet for accelerating India's transition to electric mobility. According to the study, India could prevent approximately 1.7 million premature deaths and 97,200 cases of paediatric asthma between now and 2050 if it succeeds in achieving a fully zero-emission road transport system by 2045.

The findings arrive at a critical moment when India is simultaneously pursuing ambitious electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing goals, expanding renewable energy capacity and attempting to reduce urban pollution under multiple national programmes.

Pollution Beyond Climate Change

The conversation around electric vehicles of ten revolves around climate change and carbon emissions. Yet the ICCT study shifts the focus towards an immediate and deeply personal issue-human health.

According to the report, road transport pollution currently causes around 90,000 premature deaths every year in India, making vehicle emissions one of the country's largest environmental killers.

In addition, approximately 15,300 children develop asthma annually due to pollution generated by road transport, exposing an entire generation to chronic respiratory illness.

These are not abstract projections.

The report estimates that one person dies prematurely from transport-related air pollution approximately every six minutes somewhere in India.

Unlike climate impacts, which unfold gradually over decades, the health consequences of vehicle emissions are immediate, affecting lungs, hearts and brains every single day.

Delhi-NCR: India's Pollution Epicentre

No region illustrates this crisis more starkly than the National Capital Region (NCR).

Although Delhi-NCR represents only about 5 percent of India's population, it accounts for:

“ 23 percent of all road transport-related childhood asthma cases

“ Around 8,100 premature deaths annually, nearly 9 percent of India's total transport-related mortality

“ Nearly 3,500 new paediatric asthma cases each year

Perhaps the most alarming statistic concerns particulate pollution.

According to the ICCT report, road transport alone contributed a population-weighted PM2.5 exposure of 13 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³) in Delhi during 2024.

The World Health Organization recommends an annual average PM2.5 concentration of only 5 µg/m³ from all pollution sources combined.

This means that vehicle emissions by themselves generate more than two-and-a-half times the WHO's recommended total annual exposure limit, without even accounting for industrial emissions, construction dust, biomass burning or power plants.

For millions of Delhi residents, simply commuting to work has become a daily exposure to hazardous air.

India's Global Position

The report places India in an uncomfortable international position.

As of 2024, India ranks second globally in premature deaths linked to road transport pollution, behind only China.

This reflects not only India's rapidly expanding vehicle fleet but also its fast-growing urbanisation, increasing freight movement and dependence on diesel-powered transport.

India today has more than 380 million registered vehicles, according to government transport data, with two-wheelers accounting for nearly three-fourths of the total fleet. Passenger cars, commercial trucks, buses and three-wheelers make up the remainder.

Although vehicle emission standards have improved significantly with the nationwide implementation of Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) norms in 2020, rising vehicle ownership has offset many of these gains.

The number of vehicles on Indian roads continues to increase every year, adding pressure on already polluted cities.

The Electric Vehicle Opportunity

The ICCT analysis argues that India's most effective long-term strategy lies in complete electrification of road transport.

Under a scenario where all new vehicles be-



come zero-emission by 2045, the cumulative health benefits through 2050 include:

“ 1.7 million premature deaths avoided

“ 97,200 childhood asthma cases prevented

“ Significant reductions in exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5)

“ Improved respiratory and cardiovascular health nationwide

These benefits would accumulate gradually as older petrol and diesel vehicles are replaced by electric alternatives.

Unlike conventional vehicles, battery-electric vehicles produce zero tailpipe emissions, eliminating direct emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide and other toxic pollutants responsible for respiratory illnesses. When powered increasingly by renewable electricity, EVs also reduce lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions.

Why Children Face Greater Risks

Children remain among the most vulnerable victims of transport pollution.

Medical studies have consistently shown that exposure to fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide affects children's developing lungs far more severely than adults.

Long-term exposure has been linked to:

“ Childhood asthma

“ Reduced lung growth

“ Increased respiratory infections

“ Lower cognitive development

“ Higher risk of cardiovascular diseases

later in life

Urban schoolchildren living near highways or busy traffic corridors experience significantly higher pollution exposure during their formative years.

Reducing vehicle emissions therefore becomes not merely an environmental policy but a child health intervention.

Economic Costs of Dirty Air

Air pollution imposes enormous economic costs beyond hospital bills.

Premature deaths reduce workforce productivity.

Respiratory illnesses increase healthcare expenditure.

Parents miss work caring for sick children.

Businesses suffer from absenteeism.

Several international studies estimate that air pollution costs countries between 3 and 7 percent of GDP annually through healthcare expenses and productivity losses.

For India-the world's fourth-largest economy-these costs amount to hundreds of billions of dollars over time.

Investments in cleaner transport therefore generate returns not only through environmental improvements but also through lower public health expenditure and stronger economic productivity.

India's EV Journey So Far

India has made considerable progress in promoting electric mobility over the past decade.

Government initiatives such as:

“ Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME)

“ Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for advanced batteries

“ Battery manufacturing incentives

“ State EV policies

“ Public charging infrastructure programmes

have accelerated market adoption.

Electric two-wheelers have witnessed particularly rapid growth.

Several cities have also expanded electric bus fleets under central government support.

Major domestic manufacturers, along with global automobile companies, have announced large investments in electric mobility.

Battery prices have also declined substantially over the past decade, making EVs increasingly competitive.

However, penetration remains uneven.

Electric cars still constitute a relatively small share of overall passenger vehicle sales, while heavy-duty trucks remain overwhelmingly diesel-powered.

Challenges Ahead

Despite encouraging progress, achieving a fully zero-emission transport system by 2045 remains an enormous challenge.

Charging Infrastructure

India requires hundreds of thousands of additional charging stations across highways, urban centres and rural regions.

Range anxiety continues to discourage many potential buyers.

Electricity Supply

Greater EV adoption will significantly increase electricity demand.

This requires simultaneous expansion of renewable energy generation and modernisation of the power grid.

Battery Manufacturing

India remains dependent on imports for sever-

al battery materials, including lithium and cobalt.

Developing domestic battery manufacturing and recycling capacity will be essential.

Commercial Transport

Heavy trucks and long-distance freight remain difficult sectors to electrify due to battery size, charging time and operational requirements.

Alternative technologies such as hydrogen fuel cells may complement battery-electric solutions in certain segments.

Electric Vehicles Alone Are Not Enough

Experts caution that EV adoption cannot become the sole transport strategy.

Urban planning also matters.

Cities need:

“ Better public transport

“ Metro expansion

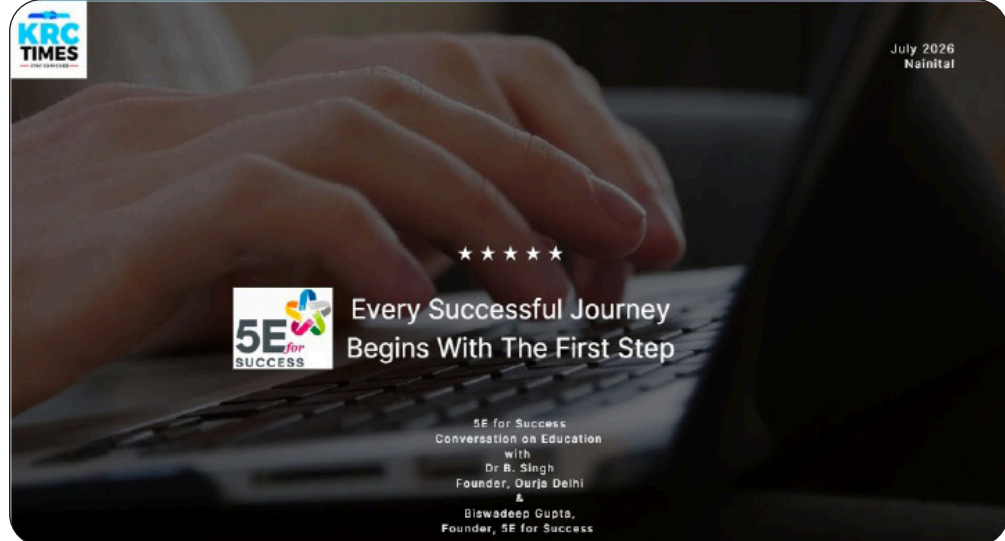
“ Electric buses

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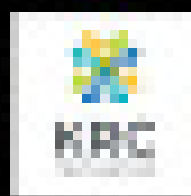


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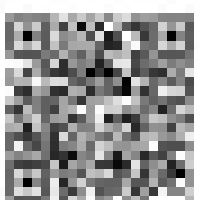


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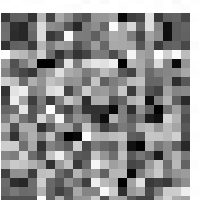


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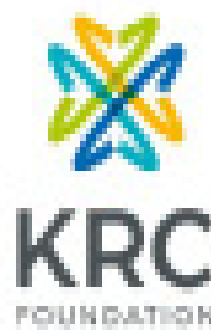
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