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PERSPECTIVE

Set your intentions for the week ahead. People who plan, achieve.

Meira Paibi activists stage torch rally in Imphal, demand NRC update before Census

IMPHAL Hundreds of Meira Paibi activists took to the streets of Imphal on Thursday night, carrying flaming torches and demanding that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) be updated before the commencement of the Census exercise.The rally was organised by the North Imphal Meira and Clubs Coordinating Committee under the banner of the Campaign for Justice and Fair Delimitation (JFD).The protesters marched through key stretches of Imphal, raising slogans in support of their demand that the government complete the NRC update before undertaking the Census.The procession began at Koirengei village and proceeded along National Highway-2 before moving towards Liberal College in Luwangangbam village.The rally was held under heavy police security amid the prevailing sensitive situation in the state.The protesters have also been demanding that the Census exercise be deferred until the NRC process is undertaken, arguing that updating the citizens' register should precede the population enumeration exercise.Thursday night's demonstration was part of a wider campaign that has gathered momentum across Manipur in recent weeks.On August 23, Meira Paibi activists organised a similar torch rally along Tiddim Road, while another protest was held in Imphal on August 20 following a JFD appeal.The campaign intensified from August 16, with demonstrations and torch rallies reported from several parts of the state.

Protest marches were organised along Uripok-Kangchup Road, Tiddim Road, Kongba Road and Khurai-Lamlong, while protesters also approached Deputy Commissioners' offices as part of efforts to press the government to defer the Census.

WHO SAID WHAT



The next chapter of Assam's growth will be written on highways, bridges and tunnels. With ₹55,000+ crore worth of transformative connectivity projects, #AssamBudget2026 is shrinking distances, accelerating economic growth and building the infrastructure of a #ViksitAssam.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM Assam

African swine fever confirmed in three Kohima villages; pork movement restricted

DIMAPUR African swine fever (ASF) has been confirmed in three villages in Nagaland's Kohima district, prompting the district administration to impose restrictions on the movement and sale of pigs and pork products in the affected areas.

The disease was confirmed in Kiruphema Bawe, Chiechama and Nerhema after laboratory test reports received by the office of the Chief Veterinary Officer, Kohima, returned positive, officials said.

Following the confirmation, Kohima Deputy Commissioner B Henok Buchem on Thursday declared a 1-km radius around the infected premises as an infected zone and a 10-km radius as a surveillance zone.

With immediate effect, the order prohibits the import, export and movement of live pigs and pork products within, into or out of the designated zones.

Pork markets and butcher shops operating within the infected and surveillance areas have also been directed to remain closed until further orders.

The administration has advised pig



IMPHAL Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand on Friday said the trust deficit between communities remains the "root cause" of the state's prolonged crisis and stressed the need to identify and take legal action against those seeking to undermine peace."There are people who don't want peace. We have to identify them as soon as possible. As far as the law is concerned, we have to book them," Khemchand said while speaking at a guest lecture on "Manipur Situation: Prevailing Trust Deficit and the Path Towards Trust Building" in Imphal.

The programme was organised by the Assam Rifles in collaboration with Manipur University and the Manipur State Film Development Society (MSFDS).

Khemchand said rebuilding trust would require sustained interaction and dialogue among communities. Recalling his visits to Jiribam in February and March this year, he said representatives of three communities had met, sat together and shared a



meal before returning home safely.

"There must be a starting point. People need to come forward and begin talking to one another. If we do not talk, we cannot understand each other's pain or begin to close the trust gap," he said.

However, the Chief Minister said the fragile sense of normalcy was disrupted the following day when bomb blasts occurred at Tronglaobi, killing

two students.

"Bomb blasts tore through the quiet - two students lost their lives, and the same terrible fear returned. My heart still aches remembering that moment," he said.

Khemchand said forces seeking to perpetuate violence within society must be identified and stopped, while asserting that people across communities want peace.

Medical team attacked despite CRPF escort in Kangpokpi, ambulances vandalised

IMPHAL A team of doctors and laboratory technicians from Kangpokpi District Headquarters was allegedly assaulted and attacked by a group of people at Chawangkinging Liangmei Naga village on Thursday, despite travelling under CRPF escort.

The incident occurred around 2.30 pm, when the medical team was travelling to Primary Health Centre (PHC) T. Waichong, around 12 km from Kangpokpi town, as part of a district administration initiative to provide essential healthcare services at the centre, where medical officers are currently unavailable.

The team was travelling in a convoy of three ambulances accompanied by CRPF personnel.

According to an ambulance driver who was part of the convoy, the vehicles were stopped by a large group of people at Chawangkinging Liangmei Naga village. While the situation was initially calm, it allegedly turned violent shortly afterwards, with members of the crowd assaulting the medical personnel.

The three ambulances were allegedly vandalised during the incident. Medicines being transported for the scheduled medical outreach programme were reportedly taken out of the vehicles and destroyed.

In one incident, a person allegedly climbed onto the bonnet of an ambulance carrying a large stone and smashed its windshield.

Dr Pum Za Mang Shoute, one of the members of the medical team, sustained facial injuries from shattered windshield glass. He was provided first aid at Kangpokpi District Hospital after the team returned from the site.

"We were carrying medicines to save lives, yet we were attacked, our ambulances were smashed and the medicines meant for patients were destroyed," Dr Shoute said, expressing concern over the safety of medical personnel working in vulnerable areas.

The medical team members reportedly could not identify the alleged attackers by name, although some were said to be known to them by face.

The incident has raised concerns over the safety of civilian medical personnel travelling on official duty, particularly in areas where security remains fragile. Questions have also been raised over the ability of security personnel to protect government teams operating under escort.

The destruction of medicines meant for patients at PHC T. Waichong could further disrupt healthcare services in an area already facing a shortage of medical officers.

Following the incident, authorities at District Hospital Kangpokpi lodged a formal complaint at Kangpokpi Police Station, seeking registration of an FIR and legal action over the alleged assault, vandalism and destruction of medical supplies.

The medical team had been deployed by the Kangpokpi district administration as part of efforts to address the shortage of medical officers at PHC T. Waichong and ensure access to basic healthcare for residents.

The incident has now prompted calls for a swift investigation, identification of those responsible and adequate security arrangements for medical and other government personnel deployed to provide essential services in vulnerable areas.

Assam destroys drugs worth Rs 300 crore in 100 days, says Himanta

GUWAHATI Assam has destroyed narcotics worth around Rs 300 crore during the first 100 days of the BJP-led government, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

The seized drugs were destroyed at Daulasal in Nalbari district using the state's first dedicated narcotics incinerator.

"Tick tock on the clock. The crackdown doesn't stop. 100 days, 100% action," Sarma said in a post on X.

He said the government's intensified anti-narcotics drive had focused on seizures, arrests and dismantling drug trafficking networks, asserting that there was "no place to hide" for those involved in the illegal trade.

Sharing details of recent operations under the "100 Days of Surakshit Assam" campaign, Sarma said narcotics valued at around Rs 300 crore had been destroyed at the Nalbari facility.

The Chief Minister also said anti-narcotics operations conducted across nine districts over a 10-day period resulted in the seizure of drugs worth Rs 472.51 crore.

The seizures included 30.7 kg of heroin and 5,499 kg of ganja, he said.

The Assam government has stepped up its campaign against drug trafficking and peddling since Sarma became Chief Minister in May 2021, with authorities conducting regular seizures, arrests and destruction of confiscated narcotics.

The latest action comes amid the state government's continued efforts to curb drug trafficking networks and strengthen enforcement against the illegal narcotics trade.

Manipur ambush survivor says attackers in camouflage opened fire on vehicle



IMPHAL A survivor of the ambush in Manipur's Kangpokpi district that killed four Naga civilians on Thursday has alleged that the attackers were dressed in full camouflage uniforms and fired at their vehicle from an isolated location.

Gaikamang Ringkangmai, 44, who sustained a bullet injury to his left arm, is undergoing treatment at Senapati District Hospital. Security forces rescued him from the ambush site.

"I am from Makui village. Yesterday, there were six of us in a vehicle. We frequently travelled by that route. We were going to Senapati district when we were ambushed by militants. Four of our colleagues died on the spot, while two of us escaped," Ringkangmai told reporters.

He said he was shot in the arm but managed to jump out of the vehicle and hide in nearby bushes.

According to Ringkangmai, the attackers were positioned in pairs and wore full camouflage uniforms.

"They had red ribbons tied to the top of their rifles, from which they continued firing," he alleged.

The other survivor has been identified as Japou MK.

Assam Police DIG reviews security along Dhubri's India-Bangladesh border



DHUBRI Deputy Inspector General of Police, Western Range, Yeshe Tsering Gwatso inspected sensitive stretches of the India-Bangladesh border in Assam's Dhubri district to review security arrangements and assess measures to curb cross-border illegal activities.During his visit on August 27, Gwatso inspected key border locations, including Patamari, Takimari and Sastar Ghat, and took stock of the existing security measures along the international boundary.

The DIG also interacted with residents in border areas to understand their concerns and strengthen coordination between

teractions with internally displaced persons (IDPs), saying families from different communities shared the same basic desire to return to their homes safely.

During a visit to Litan, he recalled meeting Kuki IDPs who repeatedly asked when they would be able to return home.

According to the Chief Minister, the question reflected the pain and uncertainty faced by displaced families regardless of their community.

He stressed that while vigilance and enforcement of law would remain necessary, the larger objective should be peace, reconciliation and a secure future for the younger generation.Author Sudeep Chakravarti, whose works include The Eastern Gate, was the guest speaker at the programme.

The lecture was organised under an existing memorandum of understanding between the Assam Rifles and MSFDS aimed at promoting dialogue and understanding on key regional issues.



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AN ALL-WEATHER ALLIANCE

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow this week, followed by his co-chairing of the 27th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission with First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, should not be dismissed as routine diplomatic business. At a time when geopolitical certainties are collapsing and the international order is being reshaped by war, sanctions, trade rivalries and competing strategic blocs, the engagement is a reminder of the unusual durability of the India-Russia relationship.

For India, Russia has been an all-weather partner in the most consequential meaning of the term. The phrase may have become a diplomatic cliché, but its substance is rooted in history and experience. For more than seven decades, the relationship has survived ideological shifts, changes of government in both countries and dramatic transformations in the global balance of power.

The foundations were laid during the Cold War, when India's defence establishment became deeply dependent on Soviet technology and equipment. MiG and Sukhoi aircraft, T-72 and T-90 tanks, missile systems, radar technology and small arms became integral to India's military architecture. That dependence has since been substantially reduced as New Delhi has diversified its defence partnerships with the United States, France, Israel and other countries. Yet diversification has not translated into abandonment. Russia remains deeply embedded in India's defence ecosystem, including through maintenance, spares, technology cooperation and joint production.

The clearest demonstration of India's strategic confidence came with its decision to acquire the S-400 Triumf air-defence system from Russia despite the prospect of American sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. New Delhi made a calculated choice: national security could not be subordinated to the preferences of another power. The decision was a practical expression of India's long-standing doctrine of strategic autonomy.

That autonomy is becoming even more important in an increasingly transactional international system.

Energy has emerged as perhaps the most powerful contemporary pillar of the relationship. India's purchase of Russian crude rose dramatically after the Ukraine conflict and the subsequent restructuring of global energy markets. For New Delhi, Russian oil provided an important source of relatively affordable energy at a time when global prices were volatile. For Moscow, India became a major alternative market as Western sanctions and restrictions transformed traditional energy trade.

The significance of that relationship extends beyond crude oil.

The global energy market is vulnerable to geopolitical shocks that can travel rapidly from a distant conflict to Indian households. Disruptions in major shipping routes, instability around the Strait of Hormuz and attacks or threats against commercial shipping can affect the cost of crude, liquefied petroleum gas, fertilisers and other essential commodities. For a country of more than 1.4 billion people, such disruptions are not merely matters of international diplomacy. They have direct consequences for inflation, transportation, agriculture and food security.

It is in such circumstances that the value of dependable partners becomes evident. Russia's willingness to maintain supplies of energy and fertilisers to India, even amid mounting geopolitical pressures, demonstrates the practical dimension of the relationship. Partnerships are ultimately tested not when circumstances are favourable but when the costs of remaining dependable begin to rise. Moscow's assurances to New Delhi therefore carry significance beyond the immediate commercial arrangements. The economic partnership remains considerably less developed than its political and strategic ties. Bilateral trade has expanded sharply in recent years, rising from around \$13 billion five years ago to nearly \$60 billion, with both countries targeting \$100 billion by 2030. But the enormous trade imbalance, with India importing vastly more from Russia than it exports, remains a structural weakness.

This imbalance cannot be solved through declarations at annual summits. India needs greater access to the Russian market, while Russian businesses need clearer pathways into Indian markets. Payments mechanisms, logistics, insurance, banking channels and investment flows will require sustained attention. Indian pharmaceuticals, agricultural products, machinery, automobiles and technology services have considerable potential in Russia, but potential is not the same as performance. The two governments must therefore encourage private-sector partnerships rather than allowing the relationship to remain excessively dependent on state-to-state transactions. Nuclear energy offers another area where the partnership can acquire greater strategic depth. Russia has already been an important partner in India's civilian nuclear programme, most visibly through the Kudankulam project. As India seeks to expand nuclear power as part of its long-term energy transition, cooperation with Russia in reactors, fuel supply and associated technologies could remain significant. The larger geopolitical context, however, is the most compelling reason to watch the Jaishankar-Putin engagement closely. That context is BRICS. The grouping has evolved considerably from its original economic conception. As emerging economies seek greater representation in global institutions and alternatives to excessive dependence on Western-dominated financial structures, BRICS has acquired a larger geopolitical significance. Its expansion has also brought together countries with very different political systems and strategic priorities, making it less a traditional alliance than a platform for negotiating a more plural international order. India's hosting of the BRICS Leaders' Summit in New Delhi on September 12-13 therefore assumes particular importance. Putin's expected presence will give the summit an added strategic dimension. Jaishankar's Moscow visit and his discussions with Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov should consequently be viewed not simply as bilateral diplomacy but also as part of the preparatory groundwork for a high-stakes multilateral engagement.

India cannot afford to alienate the United States, with which it has developed an increasingly important strategic, technological and defence partnership. Nor can it afford to weaken ties with Europe, France, Japan or the countries of West Asia. At the same time, India's interests require continued engagement with Russia and a stable relationship with countries across the wider Eurasian space.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The greatest gap in life is the one between knowing and doing.

- Dick Biggs

DECLINING EMPLOYMENT AND GAPS IN GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

Recent surveys by the Reserve Bank of India indicate that income growth has stagnated. The net response regarding current income has declined from 3.0 to 0.9, while the overall spending sentiment has also fallen from 78.4 to 74.5. At a time when unemployment and even underemployment have emerged as serious problems, affecting even the highly educated, it is a matter of concern that employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) witnessed a sharp decline in 2025-26. In the same year, the Central Government repealed MGNREGA and replaced it with the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act.

Apart from unfavourable market conditions, the Central and state governments are also leaving a large number of vacancies unfilled in various sectors, including education. According to official figures, the unemployment rate is only 3.1 per cent, but it should not be below 4 per cent. In 2025, 56.2 per cent of workers were casual labourers, while only 23.6 per cent had regular salaried or wage employment. The share of regular wage employment increased from 21.7 per cent in 2023-24 to 23.6 per cent in 2025, but over the past two decades, it has risen by only a few percentage points. Compared with neighbouring countries, 46 out of every 100 workers in Vietnam receive wages, compared with 55 in China and 77 in South Korea, whereas the corresponding figure in India is only around 26.

According to a national report released by private research organisation Labtech India, titled "Decline in Employment and Income under MGNREGA in FY 2025-26," the number of person-days generated under MGNREGA fell from 412 crore in 2023-24 to 268 crore in 2024-25 and 211 crore in 2025-26. The average number of person-days per household also declined sharply, from 50.18 in 2024-25 to 42.95 in 2025-26. Significantly, only 0.37 crore households were able to complete the stipulated 100 days of employment in 2024-25, and this figure fell to 0.22 crore in 2025-26. It would therefore be fair to say that the last financial year was one of the most difficult years in terms of employment.

allocation of person-days has been reduced by 49.04 per cent. It would not be reasonable to attribute such a sharp, nearly 50 per cent decline in employment generation merely to the "agricultural pause period" provided for under the new law. Despite an increase in working days during the financial year, the number of employment days available to the rural poor has declined considerably. Much remains to be done to ensure the successful implementation of the scheme, particularly because states will have to bear 40 per cent of the financial burden, while the budgetary allocation of Rs 95,000 crore is quite inadequate if the targets are to be achieved. Meanwhile, the State of the Global Workplace Report 2026, which surveyed the well-being of 1,41,444 employees across 160 countries, found that employee engagement declined for the second consecutive year. The decline was most pronounced in South Asia, with India making a significant contribution to the trend. A comparison with data from the past 15 years highlights the seriousness of the decline. Although the proportion of actively disengaged employees in India has fallen, the "not engaged" category, described as "quiet quitters", accounts for 59.02 per cent of the sample of 3,095 respondents. "Quiet quitting" refers to a situation in which employees do not actually resign but perform only the minimum work required and become emotionally detached from their roles. Moreover, engagement levels among workplace managers fell from 30 per cent during 2022-24 to 20 per cent during 2023-25.

This suggests that Indian workplaces lack effective leadership capable of keeping team morale high. Long working hours and job insecurity also undermine motivation. South Asia has the lowest proportion of thriving and satisfied employees. At the same time, over the past 15 years, feelings of anger among employees in India have increased by 6 per cent and sadness by 15 per cent. The consequences include declining productivity, reduced innovation and weakening organisational structures. India's unemployment rate has remained around 5 per cent, but even among those who are employed, indifference towards work is increasing. Clearly, more employment opportunities

need to be created and governments must fill all vacant positions. Meaningful work, fair wages and opportunities for growth are essential.

The economy is passing through a critical phase amid rapidly rising oil prices and shortages of fertilisers. Against this backdrop, it is difficult to expect any significant increase in employment generation during the current financial year. Moreover, around eight million graduates are entering the job market every year, while the demand for additional employment remains limited. Over the past decade, inflation-adjusted real wages have declined by around 5 per cent annually. Despite government efforts, employment generation remains a major challenge because of inadequate capital resources and insufficient levels of state investment and private capital.

In fact, employment elasticity in India stood at 0.41 per cent in the 1990s but has fallen to 0.01 per cent in 2026. This means that economic growth is producing virtually no meaningful expansion in formal employment. The coming months, and even the current financial year, appear quite disappointing in terms of employment generation in both the formal and informal sectors.

On the other hand, entrepreneurship and start-ups are creating some employment through various projects. However, they need greater encouragement through government support so that skilled manpower can be effectively utilised. Experts argue that innovation should be encouraged and higher education institutions should work with small and micro enterprises to develop products that can gain global acceptance. The government should prioritise filling vacant positions for teachers and professors, particularly in educational institutions in rural and semi-urban areas. It appears that nearly one million school-teacher positions are vacant, adversely affecting rural children. One reason could be the lack of resources available to state governments. Some alternatives could be considered, such as raising funds for this purpose by imposing a small tax on millionaires and billionaires. In addition, corporate houses could be asked to bear the salaries of temporary teachers in two schools - a total of eight teachers, each receiving Rs 20,000 per month. This amount could be allowed as a deduction under the income-tax provisions. If 15 business houses were identified for this purpose, salaries for 60 teachers could be ensured, while also creating

Tax concessions granted to the affluent sections and the resulting fiscal constraints - intended to attract the corporate sector for business and investment - have not proved particularly beneficial. The expected investment in the manufacturing sector has not materialised. Instead, business groups have invested in relatively safer sectors such as education and healthcare, as well as in services. Private healthcare centres and educational institutions are earning substantial profits and primarily catering to the needs of the upper sections of society.

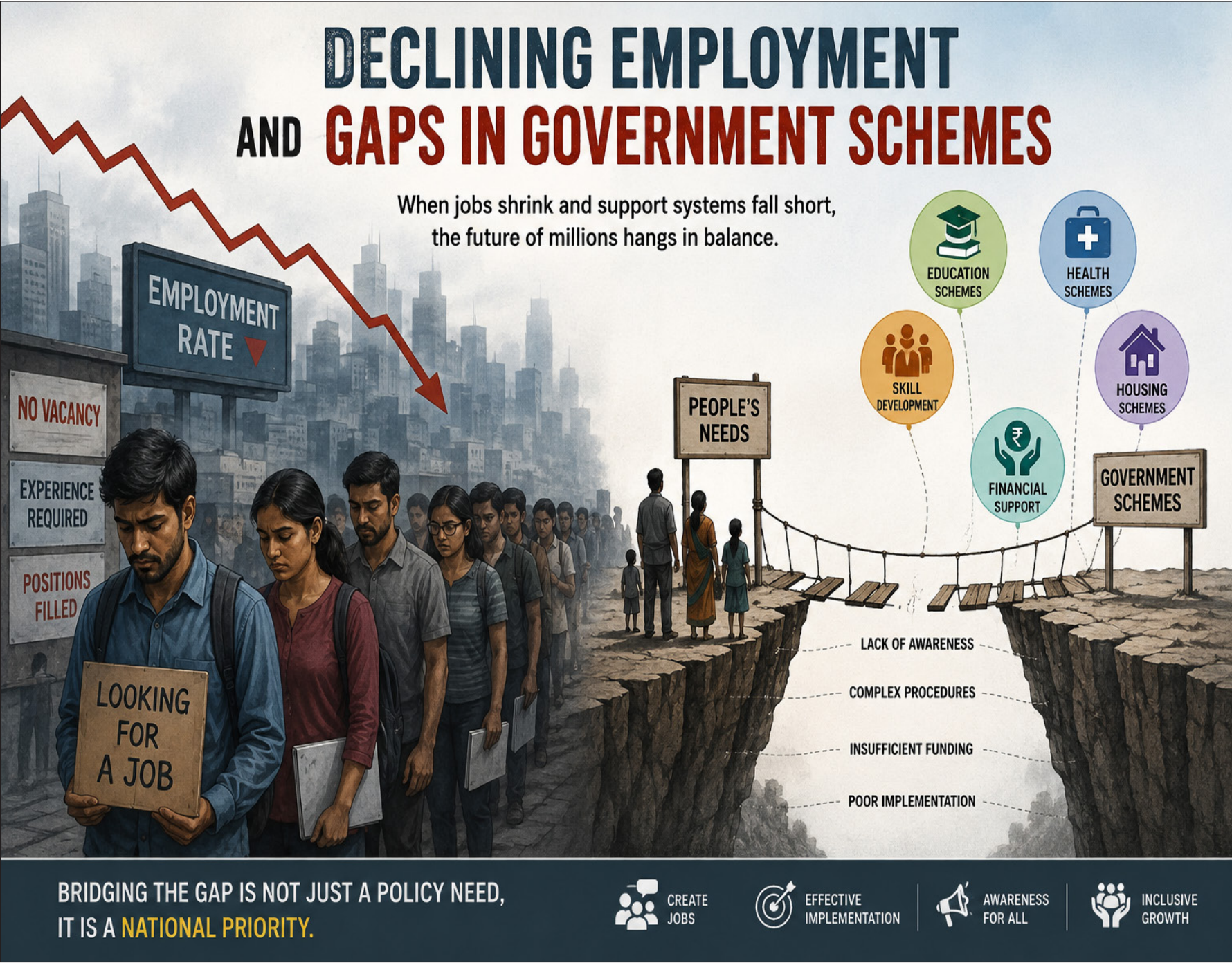
Given the current geopolitical circumstances, attention must be paid to the feasibility of manufacturing domestically those products that are currently imported. This would not only save foreign exchange but also create employment opportunities. Defence manufacturing, fertiliser production, coal gas-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The UN is supporting the Government-led response in Nepal following the catastrophic flash floods on Wednesday. Together with humanitarian partners, we are mobilizing supplies & personnel, delivering urgent assistance to support affected communities. ~ United Nations



ification, machine-tool manufacturing, electronics and tourism should be among the priority sectors. These sectors have the potential to generate employment and utilise skilled manpower. This could also



ment generation, particularly at a time when unemployment had already reached alarming levels.

Under the new Viksit Bharat Guarantee and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), which came into effect in July, reports indicate that the

tunities need to be created and governments must fill all vacant positions. Meaningful work, fair wages and opportunities for growth are essential.

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ing oil prices and shortages of fertilisers. Against this backdrop, it is difficult to expect any significant increase in employment generation during the current financial year. Moreover, around eight million graduates are entering the job market every year, while the demand for additional employment remains limited. Over the past decade, inflation-adjusted real wages have declined by around 5 per cent annually. Despite government efforts, employment generation remains a major challenge because of inadequate capital resources and insufficient levels of state investment and private capital.

help contain growing social unrest and protests among the youth.

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Manipur Wetlands Authority seeks coordinated action to protect state's wetlands

IMPHAL

The Manipur State Wetlands Authority (MSWA) has called for coordinated efforts among government departments, experts and other stakeholders to strengthen the conservation and sustainable management of the state's wetland ecosystems.

Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, who also holds the Forest, Environment and Climate Change portfolio, chaired the sixth meeting of the MSWA on Thursday at the Deputy Chief Minister's Conference Hall at the Civil Secretariat in Mantripukhri.

The meeting reviewed the status of wetland conservation initiatives across the state and discussed measures to improve the protection, management and sustainable use of wetland ecosystems.



Director of the Environment and Climate Change Department and MSWA Member Secretary, Dr T. Brajakumar Singh, placed five agenda items before

the authority. These included confirmation of the proceedings of the previous meeting and reconstitution of MSWA committees; the notification status of seven State Priority Wetlands; physical demarcation of wetlands awaiting notification; preparation of Brief Documents and Health Cards for 71 ground-truthed wetlands; the status of Integrated Management Plans (IMPs) and Ramsar Site proposals; and matters related to W.P. (Civil) No. 304 of 2018 concerning wetlands before the Supreme Court.

The authority approved the agenda items after deliberations.

Dr Singh also presented an overview of the MSWA's mandate, activities and achievements. He briefed members on the preparation of Brief Documents, Health Cards and IMPs, besides the notification status of wetlands in various

districts and sites identified for IMP preparation under the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA).

According to the presentation, 132 wetlands have been ground-truthed in the state. Of these, 71 have been digitally demarcated or delineated, while seven have undergone ground demarcation. Three wetlands have so far been notified.

Loktak Lake remains Manipur's only Ramsar Site and has held the designation since 1990 under Ramsar Site No. 463.

The meeting was also informed that the publications Wetlands of Manipur Version 1.0 and Version 1.1 were brought out in 2025. Construction of a Cultural and Wetland Museum has also begun as part of efforts to promote

awareness of the state's wetland resources.

Dikho stressed the need for greater coordination among departments, technical experts and other stakeholders to ensure effective conservation of wetlands.

He called for collective efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability and protection of Manipur's wetland ecosystems, while welcoming the discussions and decisions taken during the meeting.

The meeting was attended by senior officials, forestry and fisheries experts, representatives of the Loktak Development Authority, Manipur Remote Sensing Application Centre, Manipur University, NIT Manipur and Wetlands International South Asia, among others.

Tripura records 3.15% rise in tourist footfall in 2025-26, foreign arrivals decline

AGARTALA

Tripura recorded a 3.15 per cent increase in overall tourist footfall during the 2025-26 financial year, with domestic tourism driving the growth despite a sharp decline in foreign tourist arrivals.

Tourism Minister Su-shanta Chowdhury informed the Tripura Legislative Assembly about the figures on Thursday while replying to a question raised by MLA Antara Sarkar Deb.

According to the minister, Tripura received 7,29,414 tourists in 2025-26, compared with 7,07,173 in 2024-25.

Domestic tourist arrivals rose from 6,27,705 in 2024-25 to 7,10,243 in 2025-26. However, foreign tourist arrivals fell substantially, from 79,468 to 19,171 during the same period.

The state had recorded 5,45,299 tourist arrivals in 2023-24, comprising 4,69,328 domestic and 75,971 foreign visitors.

The latest figures show a sustained increase in domestic tourism over the past two financial years, even as the foreign tourist segment witnessed a significant contraction in 2025-26.

The minister said the government has been taking steps to promote Tripura as a tourist destination by highlighting its natural landscapes, cultural heritage, historical sites and other attractions.

The state government is also seeking to expand tourism opportunities and attract more visitors by showcasing Tripura's diverse cultural and natural assets.

While the overall tourist footfall has continued to grow, the sharp fall in foreign arrivals remains an area of concern for the state's tourism sector.

Arunachal Indigenous Affairs Directorate engages Adi body on language, cultural preservation

PASIGHAT

The Directorate of Indigenous Affairs, Arunachal Pradesh, held discussions with the executive members of the Adi Agom Kebang (AAK) at Siang Guest House to address challenges related to the preservation and promotion of the Adi language and cultural heritage.

The meeting, held on Tuesday, was attended by a delegation from the Directorate led by Indigenous Affairs Director Likha Suraj and Assistant Director Tapun Taki. Representatives of Billion Readers (BIRD) and the Planet Readers-Ani Books team from Roing also participated. The AAK delegation was led by president Bodong Yirang and general secretary Taging Taki, who briefed the officials on the organisation's history, objectives and activities.

Yirang outlined the initiatives undertaken by the AAK to preserve the Adi language and safeguard traditional cultural practices. He also highlighted challenges faced by the organisation and sought support from the Directorate to strengthen

its ongoing preservation efforts.

AAK general secretary Taging Taki and other executive members raised concerns and outlined the organisation's requirements, requesting necessary assistance from the department.

Taki thanked the Directorate for initiating direct engagement with the community organisation and for showing interest in efforts to protect and promote the Adi language and cultural heritage.

Director Likha Suraj said he had sought direct interaction with the AAK to understand the challenges confronting indigenous languages and the communities working to preserve them.

He assured the organisation that the Directorate would explore possible avenues of support for its initiatives.

The meeting is expected to improve coordination between the Directorate of Indigenous Affairs and the AAK and strengthen long-term efforts to preserve, protect and promote the Adi language and cultural traditions of Arunachal Pradesh.

Debabrata Saikia rules out BJP switch, accuses Himanta of spreading 'false propaganda'



GUWAHATI

Senior Congress leader Debabrata Saikia has rejected speculation that he could join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accusing Assam Chief Minister Himanta

Biswa Sarma of spreading "false political propaganda" ahead of elections.

In a statement, Saikia said rumours about his possible defection to the BJP had been circulated repeatedly before elections

with the alleged intention of misleading voters. He claimed that a social media network and propaganda machinery were being used to promote such speculation.

"There is no question whatsoever of joining the BJP," Saikia said, asserting that his political commitment remained with the Congress. The former Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Assembly said he continued to be committed to the "secular and democratic principles and ideals" of the Congress. He ruled out joining the BJP under its present political approach and said he would not consider such a move unless the party changed what he described as its "communal politics". Saikia also referred to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and the contribution of former

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to nation-building while explaining his political position.

The Congress leader further accused the BJP of using intimidation against political leaders who switch parties. He said his political record since 2016 reflected his commitment to raising issues concerning the people of Assam.

"As I was the Leader of the Opposition, I have been fighting relentlessly from the Legislative Assembly to the courts for the rights, concerns, and justice of the people of Assam," Saikia said.

Saikia alleged that continued rumours and political pressure would not change his position. He said he would continue to oppose what he described as the "misrule" of the BJP-led government in Assam.

NIT Silchar temporary staff resume indefinite hunger strike over job regularisation

SILCHAR

Temporary employees of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Silchar resumed their agitation demanding regularisation of their services, with six workers beginning an indefinite hunger strike on the institute premises.

Other members of the NIT Workers' Union are staging a sit-in in support of the hunger strikers.

The employees had earlier launched a protest on August 10 over the same demand. During the agitation, Barak Valley MLA Kishor Nath held discussions with the NIT Dean and Director on August 13, reportedly following a direction from the Chief Minister.

According to the protesters, they were assured that a positive resolution to the issue would be reached by August 24. Based on the assurance, the employees temporarily with-

Tech, AI must help make justice more accessible:
CJI Surya Kant

NEW DELHI

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant on Thursday highlighted the growing economic relationship between India and Germany, stressing the need for trust in international commerce and robust arbitration mechanism. Speaking at the Indo-German arbitration conclave in Berlin, Germany, CJI Kant said disputes are a natural feature of commercial activity, but their existence does not indicate a failure of trust.

“What matters is whether the legal system provides a reliable mechanism through which disagreements can be resolved with-

out undermining the commercial relationship itself,” he said. CJI Kant added that an arbitration agreement is more than a procedural clause in a contract, and it represents a commitment to a method of resolving future disagreements.

He also said that the judiciary’s governing principle is that artificial intelligence may augment judicial reasoning, but it cannot substitute judicial conscience, and that a permanent apex body has been proposed to supervise the accountability of the new technology.

Speaking at the bilateral meeting with Ulrich Herrmann, the presiding judge of the Federal Court

of Justice at Karlsruhe in Germany, CJI Kant said that artificial intelligence (AI) is being used in certain defined support functions.

He also outlined India’s ongoing digital transformation through Phase III of the eCourts Mission Mode Project.

Speaking at the bilateral meeting with Ulrich Herrmann, the presiding judge of the Federal Court of Justice at Karlsruhe in Germany, CJI Kant said that AI is being for support functions like legal research, judgement translation into 16 languages and as a conversational interface for citizens to look for case status and procedures.



290 Indians remain uncontactable after Nepal floods; rescue efforts intensify



NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said 290 Indian nationals remain uncontactable following the devastating flash floods in Nepal, while around 200 Indians undertaking the Mansarovar Yatra have sought evacuation.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said those uncontactable include people working on hydropower projects, tourist groups and pilgrims from several states. A large group from Sadhguru’s Isha Foundation also remains untraceable, he said.

Jaiswal said 63 workers of the Trishuli-1 project and 21 Indians from Tamil Nadu have been rescued, while

several Indians remain stranded on the Chinese side.

The 290 Indians include those working on the Trishuli-1 power project, groups from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and other states who had travelled to Nepal for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and other purposes.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Indian authorities were coordinating with Nepalese officials, state governments, tour operators and project authorities to trace those still out of contact.

“Urgent efforts are underway to ascertain the status and well-being of all Indians in the flood-affected areas,” Jaiswal said. “We are working closely with the Nepali side, both on this aspect

and on the relief efforts.”

The MEA said communication lines in the affected areas have been “totally disrupted”, making it difficult to establish contact with those missing.

India has sent two aircraft carrying relief materials to Nepal and is coordinating rescue and evacuation efforts with Nepali authorities, Jaiswal said.

The MEA has also set up a dedicated control room at its headquarters in New Delhi, while Indian diplomatic missions in Nepal have activated emergency help-lines and are coordinating with state governments to trace affected nationals.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also held a review meeting with the Foreign Secretary and the

Indian diplomatic teams in Kathmandu and Beijing to assess the situation.

The government has stressed that “uncontactable” does not mean that a person is necessarily missing, injured or dead. It indicates that officials have so far been unable to establish communication.

The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has issued the helpline numbers +977 985 131 6807 and +977 970 910 7500 for assistance and updates. The Embassy of India in Beijing has also provided 0086 185 1428 4905 for Indians stranded on the Chinese side.

The Nepal Tourism Board has activated helplines at 1234 and 1144, while the Tourist Police can be reached at 9851289445.

According to Nepalese authorities, the death toll from the flash floods has risen to 362, with over 900 people still missing.

The floods caused widespread destruction across affected areas, damaging homes, roads, bridges, hydropower facilities and other critical infrastructure.

The scale of the disaster is growing. A newly formed lake at the flood site is also reportedly rising after a river blockage, prompting Nepal’s disaster authorities to warn residents and rescuers to stay away from riverbanks amid fears of a possible outburst.

The crisis has struck a region crowded with pilgrims, trekkers and workers. Rasuwa is home to major trekking and religious destinations, including Langtang Valley, Gosainkunda and Timure, while the wider Himalayan corridor draws pilgrims travelling towards Kailash and Lake Mansarovar.

The timing has compounded concerns. With Raksha Bandhan and Shrawan Purnima approaching, pilgrimage activity in high-altitude areas is particularly heavy.

The absence of a comprehensive record of travellers moving through the remote region is making it harder for authorities to determine the full number of people affected.

INTERNATIONAL

Satellite images reveal bedrock and glacier collapsed on the Nepal-Tibet border, then rivers flooded

BEIJING

As rescue teams searched for missing people following catastrophic flooding along the Nepal-China border, Earth scientists reviewed satellite imagery for clues to the cause and assessed the devastation.

The flooding Wednesday killed hundreds of people in Nepal and Tibet, and hundreds more are missing, including foreigners and pilgrims.

Geomorphologists Kristen Cook and Dan Shugar said initial images from Nepal were obscured by clouds and dust from the debris, so they could only see that part of a glacier had broken off from Langtang Lirung peak, near the border with Tibet. In clearer images from Thursday, they said they could see that the bedrock underneath the glacier had collapsed, taking the massive chunk of ice down with it and sending boulders and ice into the valley.

“It shows the whole area without anything hidden, and we could see that, yes, it looked like there was not only this glacier that had failed, but a much larger chunk of the bedrock of the mountainside itself that had given way,” said Shugar, associate professor at the University of Calgary. “You have this big bedrock failure that took part of the glacier with it.”

Shugar said it’s heart-wrenching to look downstream from there on the images, to where people were living, and see how the debris has buried villages.

After slamming to the valley floor, the debris maintained its momentum through the steep, narrow valley as ice melted, said Cook, at the Université Grenoble Alpes in France. Water and



mud several stories high swept through communities.

The Trishuli River surged during the flooding. Before and after satellite images of the Kolpur, Betrawati and Syapru Besi areas of Nepal show that the river is now much wider, and brown and black, because it overtopped its banks in some areas and filled with debris in others. The change in the color of the water shows how much sediment the flow was carrying, turning from greenish to very brown because it’s full of mud, Cook said.

Towns and villages that were devastated along the river banks are submerged in debris and mud. They appear as areas of brown. Some houses are still poking through in an image of the Betrawati area.

The flooding toppled and swept away buildings in Syapru Besi, a popular tour-

ist spot where a famous trek to Langtang begins. In before and after images, a side river is now wider too, because the flow was so powerful it pushed upstream.

The flooding “left a wasteland in its wake” that will take many years to recover from, said Alton Byers, a mountain geographer at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Byers lived in Nepal and now returns there yearly to study glacial hazards and work with communities to prepare. This is the largest glacier flood he has seen, by far.

Byers, faculty research scientist at the university’s Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, said he thinks Wednesday’s flooding is related to climate change. The Earth’s warming is melting glaciers and permafrost, causing instability and the breakage of massive amounts of snow and ice

at high altitudes. That can be a catalyst for a series of cascading events, he said.

“All the indicators, to me, point to the impacts of warming trends,” he said. “In this case, the permafrost that for millennia has helped to hold together high-altitude rock and ice and soil and glaciers is now weakening and becoming unstable.”

Cook and Shugar said that at this point, they can’t say for sure there’s a direct link to climate change. Slopes fail and landslides happen, Cook said, though permafrost is melting and that is destabilizing mountainsides.

“While we cannot at this point directly link this collapse to climate change, it is not unexpected to see more events of this type with a warming climate,” Cook said. “Not this big, hopefully not this big.”

Death toll in Nepal floods rises to 469



KATMANDU

The death toll from flash floods triggered by an ice-rock avalanche near the Nepal-Tibet border rose to 469 in Nepal on Friday, as rescue teams continued search operations for a third consecutive day.

Nepal Police said the bodies had been recovered from eight districts, with the highest number reported from Chitwan (178), followed by Nawalparasi East (110), Gorkha (44), Nuwakot (37), Dhading (33), Tanahu (28), Nawalparasi West (27) and Rasuwa (12).

At least 1,545 people have so far been rescued from affected areas, including those who were stranded by the floods. Of them, 84 are undergoing treatment at hospitals in Kathmandu.

The search and res-

cue operation involves 7,451 security personnel, including 2,391 Nepal Army personnel, Nepal Police said.

The disaster struck on Wednesday after an ice-rock avalanche, triggered by a glacial collapse near the Nepal-Tibet border, sent a massive torrent of water, mud and debris downstream. Towns and villages were inundated, while homes, vehicles, roads and bridges were swept away and hydropower infrastructure damaged.

Nepal authorities have reported 910 people missing, with rescuers searching river corridors choked with mud and debris. Families have also gathered at hospitals as efforts continue to trace those unaccounted for.

On the Tibet side, 558 people have been report-

ed missing, taking the total number of missing persons in Nepal and Tibet to 1,468.

India has also stepped up efforts to trace its nationals caught in the disaster. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said 290 Indian nationals remain uncontactable and that “urgent efforts” were under way to ascertain their whereabouts and coordinate their rescue.

The MEA said 84 Indian nationals had been rescued so far, including 63 workers from the under-construction Trishuli-I run-of-river hydroelectric project and 21 people from Tamil Nadu.

Meanwhile, around 200 Indian nationals on the Tibet side have sought assistance from Indian authorities for evacuation.

Assam's Youth Under Drug Threat

Jorhat and Majuli represent two distinct but deeply interconnected dimensions of Assam's identity. Jorhat has long been associated with education, intellectual life and civic consciousness, with its schools, colleges, research institutions and cultural organisations shaping generations of young minds. Across the Brahmaputra, Majuli stands as the spiritual and cultural heartland of Assam, where satras, naamghars, Satriya traditions and community life have preserved a remarkable civilisational inheritance.

It is precisely this inheritance that makes the emerging concern over substance abuse among young people particularly disturbing.

When places that have traditionally given Assam its intellectual confidence and cultural continuity begin confronting the drug menace among their youth, the issue can no longer be treated merely as an isolated law-and-order problem. It has become a social and public-health challenge that requires the involvement of families, schools, communities, health professionals and law-enforcement agencies.

The warning signs are already visible. In Majuli, awareness programmes against drug abuse have been organised in educational institutions, bringing students, teachers, police personnel and community representatives into the conversation. Such initiatives matter not because they establish that every educational institution is facing a drug crisis, but because they demonstrate that the issue has entered the consciousness of campuses themselves.

The wider Assam picture makes the concern harder to ignore. Drug-related arrests and seizures have repeatedly brought narcotics into public attention. But statistics alone cannot tell the whole story. A seizure says something about supply; it does not reveal how many young people are experimenting, how many have developed dependence or how many families are quietly struggling to cope.

That distinction is crucial. Drug availability, experimentation, occasional use, substance dependence and organised trafficking are connected, but they are not identical problems. Treating every young user simply as a criminal may drive the problem further underground. At the same time, treating organised traffickers as if they were merely another category of offenders fails to recognise the deliberate destruction of lives for profit.

A young person struggling with dependence may need counselling, medical care and rehabilitation. Someone who knowingly supplies drugs and targets vulnerable young people requires determined investigation and prosecution.

A sensible response must therefore combine compassion with firmness.

The first line of defence

For many young people, the journey into substance use does not begin with a conscious decision to become addicted. It can start with curiosity, experimentation, peer influence or a desire to fit in. Academic pressure, family tensions, loneliness, relationship problems, unemployment and a lack of purpose can make some young people more vulnerable, although none of these factors should be treated as a universal explanation.

Availability is another part of the equation.

What begins as "just trying it once" can, for some, develop into repeated use and eventually dependence. By the time parents or teachers recognise the seriousness of the change, the young person may already be dealing with a problem requiring professional intervention.

That is why the first line of defence must be built long before addiction becomes visible.

Schools and colleges cannot wait for a student to fail examinations, stop attending classes or undergo a dramatic behavioural transformation before asking what may be happening. Teachers are not medical professionals, and educational institutions cannot be expected to diagnose addiction. But they can create an environment where warning signs are noticed and help becomes accessible.

Counselling, confidential avenues for seeking assistance, meaningful engagement with parents and reliable referral mechanisms can make the difference between early intervention and a crisis that has been allowed to deepen.

The family is equally important.

Parents are often the first to notice changes in a young person's behaviour, friendships, routine, sleep, academic performance or emotional state. Yet recognising a problem is only the beginning. A child who believes that admitting drug use will immediately lead to humiliation, physical punishment or rejection may choose silence instead.

Families need to combine concern with firmness, but they must also create enough trust for a young person to say: "I need help."

Shame may conceal a problem. It rarely solves one.

Turning peers into partners

The influence of friends deserves similar attention. Young people often speak to their peers before approaching adults. The same peer network that can introduce a student to substance use can also become a powerful

source of resistance. Schools and colleges should therefore encourage responsible peer leadership. Students can be equipped to recognise risky



situations, challenge the casual normalisation of drugs and guide friends towards adults and professionals when necessary.

Young people are often more receptive when the message comes from someone who understands their world.

But prevention cannot stop at awareness campaigns. Posters, rallies and occasional seminars may generate attention, but they cannot substitute for sustained engagement.

Students need meaningful alternatives, safe spaces and opportunities to build confidence.

Sports, NCC, Scouts and Guides, literature, music, theatre, cultural activities, volunteering and community service cannot make drugs disappear. They can, however, create friendships, discipline, confidence and a sense of achievement.

A young person who finds purpose on a football field, on a stage, in a literary club, through music, in community service or within a cultural institution is building an identity around something constructive.

That matters because the fight against addiction is also a fight against emptiness.

The supply chain cannot be ignored. None of this should weaken the focus on the supply side.

There is a fundamental difference between a young person caught in dependence and the person knowingly profiting from that dependence. The former may need treatment and rehabilitation; the latter needs determined investigation and prosecution.

A trafficker who sees adolescents as a market is not merely selling a commodity. He is converting vulnerability into profit and damaging families and communities in the process.

Compassion for the user and firmness towards the trafficker must therefore coexist.

Law enforcement must look beyond the last person caught with a packet or a small quantity of drugs. The more important questions are where the substance came from, who supplied it, who financed the operation, how it reached a locality and who facilitated its distribution.

Assam's geographical position within the Northeast makes intelligence-sharing and coordination between agencies particularly important. Narcotics trafficking does not necessarily respect administrative boundaries. A sustained response requires cooperation between districts, states and enforcement agencies.

The objective should not simply be to produce impressive seizure figures. It should be to dismantle the networks that make those drugs available in the first place.

Majuli's community strength

Majuli possesses an advantage that should not be underestimated: its community institutions. The satras and naamghars have historically been centres not only of religious life but also of social interaction, cultural transmission and collective identity. Village organisations, youth groups, sports clubs, cultural associations and educational institutions add further layers of community engagement.

Together, these networks can give young people something increasingly important in an age of social fragmentation — a sense of belonging.

But culture should not be romanticised as a cure for addiction.

Cultural and spiritual institutions can provide moral grounding, purpose and community support. They cannot replace doctors, psychologists or scientifically supervised treatment.

That distinction becomes particularly important when rehabilitation is discussed.

A young person who decides to escape addiction has already taken a difficult step. That person deserves access to treatment that is lawful, professional and humane. Unregulated rehabilitation centres, physical punishment, humiliation or illegal confinement have no place in a system that claims to restore lives.

Recovery cannot be built by subjecting a vulnerable person to another form of abuse.

Families must also be able to distinguish between genuine professional care and institutions that exploit desperation.

The mental-health dimension

The mental-health dimension also deserves greater attention. Substance use can coexist with anxiety, depression, trauma, loneliness and other psychological difficulties. That does not mean that mental illness causes every instance of drug abuse, nor that every young user requires psychiatric treatment.

It does mean that a student should not

automatically be reduced to the label of a "problem child".

The behaviour may be a visible symptom of difficulties that adults have failed to understand. Better counselling and referral systems in educational institutions and public-health services can help identify those difficulties before they become overwhelming.

Early intervention is far less costly — socially, emotionally and financially — than dealing with the consequences of entrenched addiction.

A threat to Assam's demographic future

The stakes are ultimately larger than the number of drug cases registered in a district.

Assam's young population represents one of its greatest resources. But a demographic dividend exists only when young people are healthy, educated, skilled and capable of participating productively in society.

Addiction can interrupt education, damage family relationships, weaken employability and leave scars that extend across generations.

Every young person pulled away from education and aspiration represents a loss that cannot be measured merely in a police register.

The national campaign for a drug-free India therefore has a particularly important meaning in Assam. Government programmes and police action are necessary, but no campaign can succeed if it remains confined to official events.

The message has to enter classrooms, homes, hostels, neighbourhoods and community institutions.

Parents must know how to respond. Teachers must know when to refer a student for professional help. Students must know where they can seek confidential assistance. Health services must be prepared to treat dependence. Police must pursue the networks that profit from it. Community leaders must be willing to speak about the problem without either sensationalising it or pretending that it does not exist.

Protecting the inheritance

For Jorhat and Majuli, the challenge car-

ries an additional weight because of what these places represent.

Jorhat's intellectual traditions and Majuli's cultural inheritance have contributed enormously to Assam's sense of itself. Their young people are not merely another demographic category. They are the future teachers, researchers, artists, entrepreneurs, administrators, farmers, professionals and community leaders who will determine what survives and what changes in the next generation.

The measure of success, therefore, should not be confined to the number of arrests made or kilograms of drugs seized.

It should be whether a teenager is prevented from taking the first step; whether a student struggling with dependence can seek help without being condemned; whether a parent knows where to turn; whether a school can recognise a warning sign early; and whether those supplying drugs to vulnerable young people are being pursued all the way to the networks behind them.

Assam does not need another cycle of alarm followed by silence.

It needs sustained attention, intelligent enforcement, credible treatment and a community response strong enough to reach young people before the traffickers do.

Jorhat and Majuli possess something many places would struggle to build from scratch: educational institutions, cultural traditions and community networks capable of giving young people both knowledge and belonging.

The drug menace is serious, but it is not inevitable.

The real question is whether Assam will allow its young people to inherit its cultural legacy only as history, or whether it will give them the strength and opportunity to carry that legacy forward.

In Jorhat and Majuli, the answer will be determined not merely by what the police seize or what the government announces, but by what families, schools and communities choose to do before the next young person hears the deceptively simple invitation: "Just try it once."

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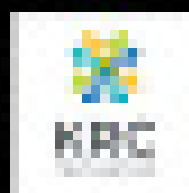


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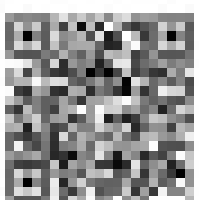


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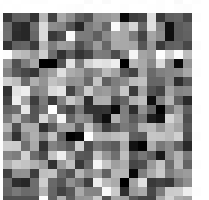


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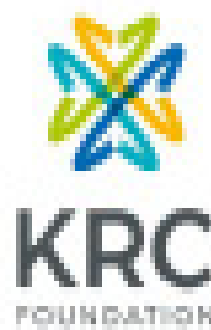
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