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**PERSPECTIVE**

The kindest people actually cut people off with no warning.

## Decomposed Body of Young Woman Recovered from Field in Sribhumi

SRIBHUMI

The decomposed body of a young woman was recovered from an agricultural field near Makkerkul village in Assam's Sribhumi district on Saturday, prompting police to launch an investigation.

According to local residents, the body was found near No. 568 Makkerkul Primary School after a person visiting the field spotted it in the morning.

The advanced state of decomposition suggested that the body may have been lying at the location for several days.

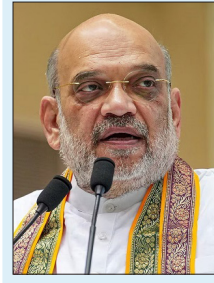
Residents alerted the police after the discovery and urged authorities to take immediate action. Police have since begun efforts to establish the identity of the deceased and determine the circumstances surrounding her death.

Some villagers have raised suspicions that the woman may have been sexually assaulted before being killed and that her body was later dumped in the field. However, the allegations have not been established, and the circumstances leading to the woman's death remain unclear.

Police are investigating the case and are expected to examine evidence from the scene and question people who may have information about the incident.

The exact cause of death will be established through a post-mortem examination. Further details are awaited as the investigation progresses.

**WHO SAID WHAT**



The BJP government is committed to granting citizenship to the religious minorities of neighboring countries. At the same time, in the case of infiltrators, the BJP's detect, delete, and deport policy is completely clear. ~ Amir Shah, Union Home Minister



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# Assam, Meghalaya Officials Meet to Defuse Tensions After Shillong Violence, Jorabat Protests

GUWAHATI

Senior officials of Assam and Meghalaya held a high-level meeting in Guwahati on Saturday to review the situation along the inter-state border following violence in Shillong and protests at Jorabat.

Assam Border Protection and Development Minister Atul Bora and Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar led the meeting, which focused on restoring normal movement between the two states and preventing further escalation.

The meeting came days after vehicles carrying tourists from Assam were allegedly attacked during a black-flag protest organised by the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) in Shillong on August 19. Several vehicles were reportedly vandalised, with windows and windshields smashed, while some tourists sustained injuries.

Bora described the Shillong incident as "unwarranted and unfortunate" and said Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had promptly taken up the matter with



Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma.

According to Bora, Sangma had entrusted Dhar with discussions on the prevailing situation and efforts to maintain peace and ensure the smooth movement of people and vehicles between the two states.

"I would like to appeal to people of both states to maintain peace and harmony because our relationship is very old," Bora said.

The Shillong violence subsequently triggered protests by motor vehicle workers' unions in Assam. Jorabat, a major entry point between Assam and Meghalaya, witnessed demonstrations from the following day, with protesters stopping Meghalaya-registered vehicles from entering Assam and, in some cases, forcing them to return.

The protests continued for a third day on Friday, with demonstrators

demanding compensation for vehicles allegedly damaged in Shillong and an apology from the authorities concerned.

Security was strengthened at Jorabat, with police and reserve personnel deployed to prevent the situation from escalating. Protesters also said that any damage caused to Meghalaya-registered vehicles during the Jorabat demonstrations should be compensated. A protesting cab driver questioned the security arrangements during the KSU protest in Shillong and said the police deployment at Jorabat had helped prevent damage to vehicles from Meghalaya.

The Shillong violence occurred during a KSU black-flag protest, when unidentified masked individuals allegedly targeted vehicles carrying tourists from Assam. Three senior KSU leaders - president Raymond Kharjana, vice-president Pynkmenlang Sanmiet and general secretary Reuben Najiar - were arrested late Wednesday in connection with the incident.

On Thursday, Sarma said he had

spoken with Sangma and that the immediate priority was to address the concerns of Assam residents who remained stranded in Meghalaya amid the tension.

The developments have also prompted calls for stronger action from organisations in Assam. The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCPC) on Friday called for an economic blockade and warned of retaliatory action against Meghalaya residents living in Assam if attacks on Assamese people in Shillong continued.

The latest inter-state meeting assumes significance as both governments seek to prevent the situation from spilling over into wider tensions. Officials are expected to focus on ensuring uninterrupted movement, strengthening security at sensitive border points and addressing concerns arising from the recent incidents.

Bora appealed to residents of both states to exercise restraint and not allow isolated incidents to undermine the longstanding ties between Assam and Meghalaya.

## Delhi Meetei Group Condemns Force Against Protesters Seeking Justice for Six Naga Civilians



NEW DELHI

The Delhi Meetei Coordinating Committee (DMCC) has condemned the alleged use of tear gas and force against protesters demanding justice for six Naga civilians who were allegedly abducted and killed by suspected Kuki militants.

According to the organisation, security personnel allegedly used tear gas to disperse protesters who had gathered to demand action in the case. Several people were reportedly injured during the incident, including the wife of one of the six deceased civilians.

The protest came as the families marked 100 days since the six civilians were allegedly killed.

The DMCC criticised the govern-

ment over what it described as a lack of visible progress in bringing those allegedly responsible for the killings to justice. It said the prolonged delay had deepened concerns among the victims' families over the investigation and legal proceedings.

The organisation also raised questions over what it termed unequal treatment of civilians and an injured suspected militant. It alleged that a suspected Kuki militant injured in an earlier clash received medical treatment under security protection, while civilians injured during a protest seeking justice were allegedly met with force.

"Demanding justice is not a crime," the organisation said, while calling for peaceful protesters to be allowed to exercise their democratic rights without excessive use of force.

The DMCC demanded an impartial investigation into the deaths of the six Naga civilians and called for prompt legal action against anyone found responsible.

It also sought an independent inquiry into the alleged use of excessive force during the protest and demanded accountability if any security personnel were found to have acted improperly.

The organisation further called for medical assistance and compensation for those injured during the protest.

The DMCC said the families had continued their campaign for justice for nearly 60 days and urged the government to take immediate steps to address their grievances and ensure equal treatment under the law.

## Manipur Muslims protest inclusion of non-Muslims in Waqf Board

IMPHAL

Members of the Muslim community in Manipur's Thoubal district staged a protest against the state government's appointment of non-Muslim members to the Waqf Board, saying the move had hurt the sentiments of the Panggal community.

The protesters marched nearly 4 km from Usoipokpi to Lilong Bazar, raising slogans against the BJP-led government and demanding a review of the appointments. The state government had on August 3 appointed seven members to Manipur's eighth Waqf Board, including BJP state president and Rajya Sabha MP A Sharda Devi. Members of the Panggal community expressed concern over the inclusion of non-Muslim members, arguing that the move could affect the community's role in managing its religious affairs. "The inclusion of non-Muslim members has deeply hurt the sentiments of the Panggal community. It also raises concerns over our religious identity and the long-standing practice of managing our own religious affairs," a protester told reporters. The appointments were made under provisions of the Waqf Amendment Act, which allows the inclusion of non-Muslim and women members on Waqf management boards. Amid the growing resentment, Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh said he had met representatives of civil society organisations from the Panggal community to hear their concerns regarding the Waqf Board. Waqf Board chairman Y Antaz Khan also attended the meeting. Singh said in a social media post. The Chief Minister added that he had assured the representatives that their concerns would be examined on priority. The Coordination Committee for Protection of Waqf Properties Manipur (CCPWPM) welcomed the meeting and said the Chief Minister was aware of the concerns raised by members of the Panggal community.

## Manipur's polo heritage takes centre stage at Miss Universe India 2026



JAIPUR

Manipur's rich cultural heritage took centre stage at the Miss Universe India 2026 pageant in Jaipur, with the state's traditional textiles, craftsmanship and polo legacy reflected in the costume worn by its representative, Thadoi.

The ensemble, designed by Manipuri fashion designer Robert Naorem, draws inspiration from Manipur's long association with polo, locally known as sagol kangjei. The design presents the sport not merely as a game but as a symbol of strategy, skill and grace rooted in the state's cultural history.

The costume combines traditional tribal motifs, handcrafted fabrics and sarong-inspired drapes, while textiles associ-

ated with the Tangkhul and Kabui communities have been incorporated into the ensemble.

According to Naorem, the design seeks to bring together Manipur's diverse communities and showcase their shared craftsmanship and cultural traditions on a national platform.

Thadoi is representing Manipur at the ongoing Miss Universe India 2026 pageant in Jaipur. Naorem, who serves as the state director of Miss Universe India, holds the licence to organise the state-level pageant in Manipur.

The costume's emphasis on indigenous textiles and motifs highlights the diversity of Manipur's traditional craftsmanship while connecting it with the state's distinctive polo heritage.

The Miss Universe India pageant combines beauty with advocacy, confidence and cultural representation. Manipur's participation this year has provided another platform for the state's traditional fashion and heritage to gain national visibility.

India has produced three Miss Universe winners - Sushmita Sen, Lara Dutta and Harnaaz Sandhu. All three have previously visited Manipur and walked in creations by Naorem, further contributing to the visibility of Manipuri fashion on national and international pageant platforms.

With its fusion of polo heritage, indigenous textiles and community traditions, the latest ensemble places Manipur's cultural identity at the heart of the national pageant stage.

# North East Fest 2026 to Showcase Northeast's Cultural Diversity in Delhi

NEW DELHI

The ninth edition of 'North East Fest' is set to bring the diverse culture, cuisine, music, fashion and traditions of Northeast India to the national capital, with the two-day event scheduled at Talkatora Indoor Stadium on September 4 and 5.

Organised by NGO My Home India, the festival has emerged as a major annual platform for the Northeast community in Delhi and for visitors seeking to experience the region's cultural diversity. Previous editions have drawn more than 25,000 visitors.

The festival is expected to feature traditional and contemporary music, folk performances, regional cuisine, handicrafts and fashion from across the eight northeastern states.

Artists including Chorun Mugli, AJ Maisnam, Dikshu Sharma, Sourabhee Debbarma, Moko Koza, Lily Sawian and Siampuii Ralte are scheduled to perform.

The event will also feature Danube Kangjam, who was crowned Miss Manipur in 2024 and Miss Asia Pacific International in 2025, as well as Lunia Tadu, Miss Arunachal 2024.

Food is expected to be among the ma-



for attractions, with stalls representing all eight northeastern states showcasing regional specialities.

Visitors will get an opportunity to sample dishes featuring ingredients such as khorisa, akhuni, Naga chilli, pepper seeds and ngari, along with popular

preparations including smoked pork, thukpa, momos and jadoh.

Organisers said the culinary showcase is intended not only to promote the region's food traditions but also to offer people from the Northeast living in Delhi a taste of home.

The festival will also present folk dances and traditional performances from across the region. Cultural troupes from other parts of the country, including Haryana, are expected to participate, promoting cultural exchange between the Northeast and other regions.

Traditional attire and handicrafts will feature prominently in the fashion segment, with models showcasing the textiles, designs and craftsmanship associated with different communities of the Northeast.

Sanoj Kumar, convenor of North East Fest 2026, described the festival as My Home India's flagship programme and a bridge between the Northeast and the rest of the country.

He said the event would focus not only on showcasing the region but also on promoting cultural exchange and highlighting the traditions of smaller tribal communities.

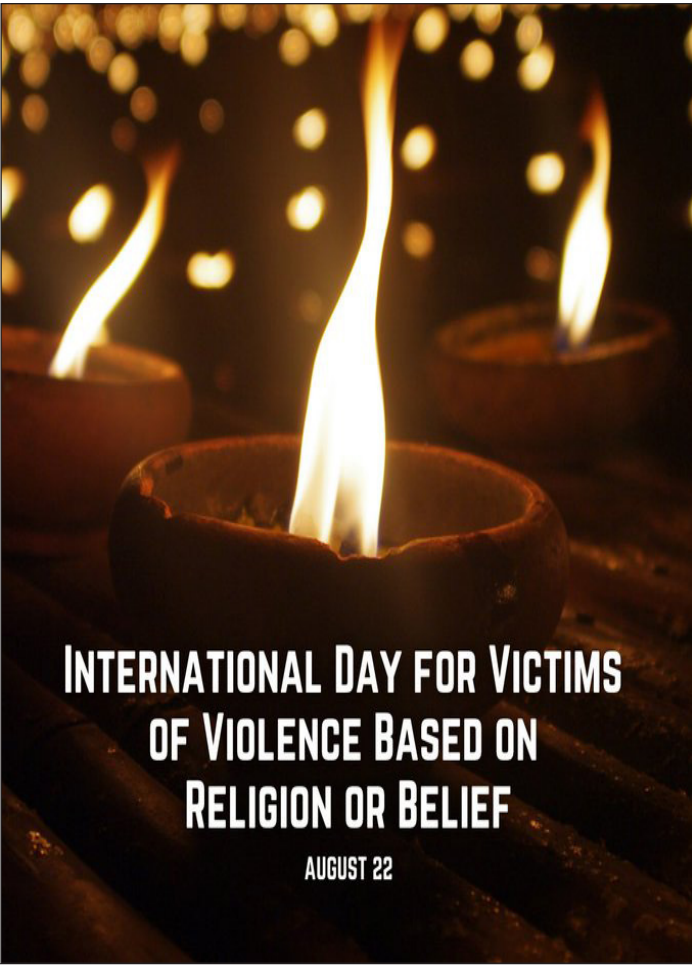
Several dignitaries are expected to attend the event, including Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, Mizoram Governor Vijay Kumar Singh and Maharashtra Governor Jishnu Dev Varma.

For members of the Northeast community living in Delhi, however, the festival holds a significance beyond its cultural showcases.

Paul Debbarma, an MBBS student from Tripura who has attended the festival for the past two years, said the event provides a rare opportunity to feel connected with home while living in the national capital.

Astera Sangma, a Delhi-based student from Meghalaya, said last year's festival gave her an opportunity to see her community's language, food and traditional attire represented outside Meghalaya.

With its ninth edition approaching, the North East Fest continues to position itself as both a cultural showcase and a meeting point for people from the region living in Delhi, while offering audiences from across the country an opportunity to experience the Northeast's diverse heritage.



INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

AUGUST 22



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 855

E20

The debate over E20 petrol has become a classic case of how rumours can travel faster than facts. Claims that the government rushed into ethanol blending, that E20 will damage vehicle engines, drastically reduce mileage, invalidate insurance claims or even threaten motorists' safety have gained considerable traction. But much of this narrative collapses when examined against the available evidence.

E20 - petrol containing up to 20 per cent ethanol - did not emerge overnight. It is the product of more than two decades of experimentation, policy formulation, infrastructure development and consultations with the automobile, petroleum and agricultural sectors. To describe it as a sudden or impulsive decision is therefore misleading.

The government's ethanol-blending programme began with pilot initiatives in 2001, followed by the introduction of E5 in several states in 2006. A formal policy framework followed in 2013, while the National Biofuel Policy of 2018 expanded the range of feedstocks to include maize and surplus grains. The roadmap for achieving 20 per cent blending, prepared after consultations with stakeholders and released by NITI Aayog in 2021, set out a clear trajectory for nationwide implementation.

The numbers themselves tell the story. Ethanol blending, which stood at barely 1.5 per cent in 2013-14, rose to 8.1 per cent in 2020-21 before increasing steadily in subsequent years. The achievement of the E20 target in the 2025-26 supply cycle was therefore the culmination of a long policy journey, not an administrative experiment conducted in haste.

There is also a larger strategic argument behind the programme. India remains heavily dependent on imported crude oil, exposing the economy to international price shocks, geopolitical tensions and disruptions in global supply chains. Every litre of domestically produced ethanol that substitutes for imported petroleum reduces, at least marginally, that vulnerability.

According to figures presented in Parliament, the ethanol programme has already resulted in substantial foreign-exchange savings, crude-oil substitution and reductions in carbon emissions. These are not abstract claims. They represent measurable changes in the country's energy balance.

The programme has another important dimension: agriculture. Ethanol production has created an additional market for sugarcane, maize and surplus grains. More than 71.66 lakh crore has reportedly flowed to farmers through ethanol-related procurement since the programme expanded. For the sugar industry, which has historically struggled with cyclical surpluses and accumulated cane arrears, ethanol has provided an additional avenue for monetising production.

This does not mean the E20 programme is beyond criticism. It should not be. Any major change in the fuel mix of a country of India's scale deserves rigorous scrutiny. Questions concerning vehicle compatibility, fuel efficiency, long-term maintenance, feedstock availability, food-versus-fuel concerns and the economics of ethanol production are legitimate. The government and automobile industry must continue to publish transparent, independently verifiable data on these issues.

What is unhelpful, however, is replacing legitimate scrutiny with alarmism.

The most persistent criticism concerns mileage. Ethanol has a lower energy content than petrol, and consequently an increase in ethanol content can have some effect on fuel economy. But the frequently repeated suggestion that mileage will fall by anything close to 20 or 30 per cent is not supported by the technical evidence. The relevant comparison is between E20 and the petrol blend the vehicle was previously using, not between pure petrol and E20.

Similarly, the claim that E20 is inherently destructive to vehicle engines ignores a crucial fact: modern vehicles designed and certified for E20 are engineered to operate with the blend. With millions of vehicles already using E20-compatible fuel, claims of widespread engine failure would be expected to produce corresponding evidence in warranty records, service data and consumer complaints. Such evidence has not emerged on the scale suggested by social-media narratives.

There are, nevertheless, legitimate concerns about older vehicles. Compatibility depends on the age, design and certification of individual vehicles, and motorists should follow manufacturers' recommendations rather than relying on generic claims circulating online. A responsible transition requires clear labelling at fuel stations, transparent communication from automobile companies and accessible information for vehicle owners.

The same principle applies to insurance. Social-media posts claiming that insurers will automatically reject claims merely because a vehicle uses E20 have created unnecessary confusion. Insurance coverage depends on the terms of the policy and the circumstances of a claim; fuel compatibility cannot simply be reduced to an internet rumour or an isolated screenshot.

Another misleading line of argument portrays ethanol blending as a policy imposed on India by foreign interests. There is little basis for such a sweeping interpretation. The programme is fundamentally rooted in domestic considerations: reducing oil-import dependence, creating additional agricultural markets, supporting rural incomes and lowering emissions.

Indeed, the strongest case for ethanol blending is not that every aspect of the programme is perfect. It is that India needs to diversify its energy sources. A country importing the overwhelming majority of its crude oil cannot afford to remain entirely dependent on a single fuel pathway.

At the same time, ethanol cannot become an excuse for complacency. The government must ensure that the expansion of biofuel production does not create new distortions in food markets, excessive pressure on water resources or an unhealthy dependence on a narrow set of crops. Greater investment in second-generation ethanol, agricultural residues and other sustainable feedstocks would make the programme more resilient.

The transition must also be consumer-friendly. If motorists are expected to adapt to a changing fuel ecosystem, they deserve accurate information rather than political messaging from either side. Automobile manufacturers should clearly communicate which models are E20-compatible. Oil companies should ensure consistent fuel quality. Regulators should monitor consumer complaints and publish periodic assessments of vehicle performance.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The single common denominator of men and women who achieve great things is a sense of destiny.  
- Brian Tracy

KILLINGS OF ANTI-INDIA  
TERRORISTS IN PAKISTAN



HARSHA KAKAR

Pakistan army sponsored terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) claims that over 30 operatives of its group, Jaish-e-Mohamad and Hizbul Mujahideen, have been killed in recent years by unknown gunmen. One of its leaders, Rizwan Hanif, accused India of being behind the attacks. He mentioned in a public gathering, 'In the last four years, 30 of our people were killed by Indian intelligence agents-someone in Peshawar, someone in Karachi, someone in Rawalpindi, someone in Muzaffarabad, someone in Rawalakot.'

While in terrorist groups, death of an individual is a small setback, as another replaces him, the fact remains that the leadership is forced to take additional precautions. Hafiz Saeed is known to be protected by the Pak army and SSG commandos. He is more secure than Pakistan's PM, despite supposedly being in prison. Pakistan is the global hotbed for terrorists with almost all UN sanctioned terrorists and terrorist groups existing on its soil. The fact that a LeT leader, whose group is sanctioned by India, US and the UN, could speak freely in public and make this announcement, speaks volumes of the Pak army's support to them. But Pakistan is a nation which has historically harboured terrorists, including Bin Laden, hidden just round the bend from their military academy. The Pak army has literally handed over its national security responsibilities to terrorist organizations.

Based on Trudeau's false claims of India being involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in 2023, since retracted, Pakistan's foreign office spokesperson jumping on the bandwagon, had then stated, 'Indian agents used technology and safe havens on foreign soil (implying Afghanistan) to commit assassinations in Pakistan. They recruited, financed and supported criminals, terrorists and unsuspecting civilians to play defined roles in these assassinations.' Pakistan has always sought to blame India for all happening within the country. India, on the other hand, denies these allegations.

Surprisingly, five senior terrorists, Riyaz Ahmed, Hanzla Adnan, Khwaja Shahid, Maulvi Ramimullah Tariq and Shahid Latif, were all killed between Sept and Dec 2023, when India-Canada relations were at an ebb post the killing of Harjit Singh Nijjar in Canada. This large number of sudden deaths raises doubts on Pakistan's claims of Indian involvement. Interestingly, even without investigation, Pakistan's security agencies blame India.

Pakistan's police and intelligence agencies have been unable to solve even a single killing to date, while they claim to be effective. This is either due to their incapability or intentional. Most likely intentional. Further, Pakistan is known to pick up innocents and force them to accept responsibility as also having done it on directions of Indian agents based in Dubai. With nothing of this sort happening, it appears that their deaths are intentionally not being investigated, as their own are involved.

The truth behind the killings is being hidden by the ISI and its terrorist groups. Each group is led by corrupt leaders, who draw in illiterate and unemployed youth for a pittance, brainwash them on religion and exploit them as terrorists. They receive nothing but a one-way ticket to India through infiltration, their leaders aware that they will ultimately be killed by Indian security agencies and their supposed

salary will go into their pockets.

It was this pocketing of money which led to the latest murder of LeT member Qari Saeed Abdul Aziz, just outside a Mosque, responsible for providing financial support to terrorists eliminated in J and K. Simultaneously, these groups are involved in fund raising in Mosques, most going into pockets of heads of the group. Not a single terrorist leader has ever launched his own kith and kin across the border as a terrorist, rather trained them to be his successor. Many also have their children settled in Gulf countries. Terrorist leaders live a life of luxury in palatial houses, protected by the Pak army, while the poor terrorist is nothing but cannon fodder. With passage of time, an internal struggle for control of funds and power commences.

This struggle is largely because of family transition, which others seek to challenge, considering themselves more deserving, having risen up the ladder. This friction results in internal targeting of rivals. With killers on their payroll, it is easily feasible. This is rarely out in public domain, especially in a country like Pakistan, where the media is tightly controlled. Truth emerging would impact credibility of these groups, reduce intake of terrorists as also flow of funds.

Another factor is Pakistan's ISI eliminating terrorists who have outlived their utility. Some terrorists, long past their prime, on the global radar for involvement in terrorist activities in India, are a burden and an embarrassment to the Pak army. Their security, salaries and provision of employment, post them being incapable of terrorist activities are costs, which can be cut down by their killing.

Their elimination and subse-

quently blaming India serves the Pak army well. It achieves its aim of eliminating wasted terrorists as also accusing India on the global stage of carrying out extra-territorial killings.

Killing of terrorists in Pakistan also has two additional fallouts. Firstly, India's RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) is projected as far more capable than Israel's MOSSAD and the US's CIA, when it comes to eliminating its enemies. Its agents are supposed to be roaming Pakistan freely, seeking marked terrorists, and eliminating them at will, despite many being protected by the Pakistan deep state, without a single agent ever being caught. This view has gained credence in Pakistan after the release of the film Dhurandhar.

Secondly, Pakistan is playing a double game with its own terrorist groups and their erstwhile members. Those who question the group's leadership for a higher role or have outlived their utility are eliminated and India blamed. This is then exploited by the group's leaders in their speeches as India being responsible, thereby recruiting sympathizers, whom they then brainwash and push across the LoC.

No matter what the truth, the reputation of India's RAW as an effective agency has gained ground amongst the Pak public, while the image of its own investigating agencies, including local police and ISI, has taken a beating. For India, those whom it seeks are being killed, irrespective of who eliminates them.

The author is Major General (Retd)SHRI scheme has also failed to achieve its objective of opening schools in all districts of the country. At the very least, there should be an immediate effort to introduce Classes 9 to 12 in schools in back-

ward districts. Higher education also needs attention, and curricula should be designed in such a way that students who do not wish to pursue further studies are still able to earn a dignified livelihood. It is imperative that an expert committee, after consulting educationists, prepare a policy paper on the issue at the earliest. As far as higher education is concerned, undergraduate enrolment in educational institutions has declined for the first time. Experts attribute the decline to the government's increasing emphasis on vocational education, growing disillusionment among young people regarding the value of higher education, and limited employment opportunities. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports for 2022-23 and 2023-24, undergraduate enrolment in 2023-24 declined by one lakh students compared with the previous year.

Former UGC chairman Prof. S.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

"Today, we pay tribute to the victims and survivors of terrorism. We honour their courage; amplify their voices; reaffirm our commitment to their dignity & rights. Instead of letting terror divide us, we can and must stay united."

~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations



Thorat and other experts have attributed the decline to the increasing emphasis on skill education at the school level, the availability of multiple exit options at the undergraduate level, declining public funding for higher education institutions, and the discontinuation of several scholarship schemes at both school and college levels.

The above figures, together with the ground realities of rural schools, make it clear that the present situation offers little reason for optimism. Beyond the factors mentioned above, education is not receiving the priority it deserves as one of the fundamental foundations of life. The government must therefore urgently take note of the serious state of education and undertake concrete and corrective measures.



# Gogoi threatens ‘Tandav Nritya’ protest if flood relief is not fully disbursed

SIVASAGAR

Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi on Saturday warned that he would stage a dramatic protest against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma if flood-affected people in his constituency fail to receive the full relief assistance promised by the state government.

Gogoi said he would perform a “Tandav Nritya” on the Chief Minister’s table if the government failed to provide the promised assistance to affected families.

“I will do Tandav Nritya on Himanta’s table if all the people do not receive the one-time relief and the full amount,” Gogoi said.

He was speaking about what he alleged was a delay and negligence in the distribution of relief to flood-affected people in Sivasagar and Charaideo districts.

According to Gogoi, nearly 80 per cent



of his constituency was affected by the recent floods, with several families losing their homes and belongings. He questioned the delay in extending immediate assistance to people who, he claimed, had been waiting for relief for several days.

The MLA also criticised the district administration’s handling of the relief process and referred to his interaction with Sivasagar Deputy Commissioner Mridul Jadav.

Gogoi alleged that while the administration had identified more than one lakh affected people, the process for providing the one-time assistance had not begun as expected. He further claimed that the deputy commissioner had acknowledged that more than two lakh people had suffered losses.

He also alleged discrepancies in the beneficiary lists and questioned why

flood-affected communities but alleged that the extent of the devastation was still being underestimated.

Responding to protests against him by employees of the Deputy Commissioner’s office, Gogoi said he welcomed the demonstrations and also invited BJP workers planning protests against him to come forward.

He further alleged that large quantities of silt remained inside the homes of flood victims and urged the IAS Officers’ Association to visit Sivasagar to assess the damage firsthand.

Gogoi also issued a broader warning over compensation for families that had lost everything in the floods. He said that if the government failed to provide the promised Rs 10 lakh assistance to such families, he would perform the “Tandav Nritya” on the Chief Minister’s table and resign as MLA.

## Tripura Announces Rs 117 Crore Power Subsidy to Offset Fixed-Charge Hike

AGARTALA

The Tripura government has announced an additional subsidy of Rs 117.13 crore to the Tripura State Electricity Corporation Ltd (TSECL) to shield consumers from the recent increase in fixed electricity charges.

Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath announced the decision on Friday, a day after the state Cabinet approved the additional allocation following protests and complaints over a sharp rise in electricity bills. The Tripura Electricity Regulatory Commission (TREC), a quasi-judicial body, had increased the fixed charges in June, triggering protests in several parts of the state. “We were worried over the abnormal hike in fixed charges in energy bills by the Tripura Electricity Regulatory Commission. Due to this, consumers have started agitating in several areas demanding immediate relief from the exorbitant bills,” Nath said at a press conference.

## JTCM Announces Indefinite Ban on Goods Vehicles in Naga Areas



IMPHAL

Track Court of Cachar Kiran Lal Baishnav convicted Hussain Ahmed Laskar and Hassan Ahmed Laskar, both residents of South Mohanpur Part-I, in the murder of Abdul Alim Laskar. The incident took place on October 28, 2022, when Abdul Alim was allegedly attacked following an argument involving Hassan Ahmed.

According to the prosecution, Hassan and his brother Hussain later went to Abdul Alim’s house and attacked him with a machete and a wooden stick.

Abdul Alim reportedly attempted to escape through a

nearby paddy field, but the accused allegedly chased him and assaulted him again.

The victim sustained critical injuries and was taken to Silchar Medical College and Hospital, where he died on October 30, two days after the attack. Following the incident, Abdul Alim’s elder brother, Abdul Khaliq Laskar, lodged an FIR at Sonai Police Station. After a prolonged trial, the court convicted both accused based on evidence and witness testimonies presented by the prosecution. On Wednesday, the court sentenced the brothers to life imprisonment under Sections 302/34 of the Indian Penal Code and imposed a fine of Rs 5,000 on each.

The court further ordered that in case of default in payment of the fine, each convict would undergo an additional six months of imprisonment.

Public prosecutor Pradip Kumar Patowary represented the prosecution in the case.

## Assam CM Sarma Highlights 100-Day Push for Farmers, Rural Development

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday highlighted the state government’s achievements in agriculture and rural development during the first 100 days of the NDA 3 government, citing farmer assistance, rural housing and employment initiatives.

In a post on X, Sarma said the government was working towards building “stronger farms” and “stronger rural communities” while outlining key measures undertaken during the first 100 days.

According to the Chief Minister, Rs 373 crore has been disbursed to 18.60 lakh farmers in Assam under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN).

The scheme provides direct financial assistance to eligible farmer families, with the state government highlighting the scale of coverage as part of its agriculture-focused initiatives.



Sarma also highlighted progress under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), stating that 1.46,550 rural families had received houses under the scheme.

The housing programme seeks to provide pucca houses to eligible rural households and improve living

conditions in villages.

Another key initiative highlighted by the Chief Minister was the rollout of VB-GRAM-G. Sarma said Assam had become the first state in the country to implement the initiative, describing it as an important step towards strengthening rural

employment and development.

The Chief Minister said the government’s focus on agriculture and rural development was aimed at combining direct welfare assistance with measures to improve housing, employment opportunities and livelihoods.

Agriculture and rural development remain key components of Assam’s economy, with a large section of the state’s population dependent on farming and related activities.

Sarma said the initiatives undertaken during the first 100 days reflected the government’s commitment to ensuring that development benefits reach farmers and rural households.

He described the first 100 days as a period of focused action aimed at strengthening the foundations of Assam’s rural economy and creating more sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural communities.

## Manipur CM Flags Off 16 Youths for Skill Training, Jobs in Japan

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Friday flagged off 16 candidates selected for overseas skill training and employment in Japan under the state’s State Livelihood Empowerment and Entrepreneurship (SLEE) initiative.

The flag-off ceremony was held at the Chief Minister’s Bungalow in Imphal, where Singh urged the candidates to embrace the opportunities ahead while remaining connected to their roots and cultural identity.

Presenting each candidate with a replica of the Pena, Manipur’s traditional musical instrument, the Chief Minister said their exposure to Japan would introduce them to a different culture, traditions and development model.

He urged the candidates to

remain proud of their Manipuri identity while adapting to their new surroundings.

Citing Singapore as an example, Singh said people there take pride in their national identity and expressed concern that some people in Manipur were increasingly hesitant to identify themselves as Manipuris. He called for a change in mindset and urged the youth to carry the state’s cultural identity with confidence wherever they go.

The Chief Minister also announced the resumption of public transport services along the Imphal-Dimapur-Guwahati route through National Highway-2, describing it as an important step towards restoring connectivity and facilitating movement.

Singh urged people to make use

of government bus services without fear and noted that high airfares between Imphal and Guwahati had placed an additional financial burden on travellers.

As part of the initiative, the State Bank of India (SBI) has signed a memorandum of understanding with SLEE to provide financial support to the selected candidates during the programme.

The candidates have completed Japanese language training at the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) International Academy before securing employment in different parts of Japan.

They will work in cities and regions including Tokyo, Hokkaido and Okinawa, primarily in the healthcare and hospitality sectors. One of the selected candidates,

Dhanapriya Tensubam, has secured employment at Miyakojima Tokyu Hotel and Resort in Okinawa. She thanked the Chief Minister and said she would work professionally while remaining proud of her Manipuri heritage. The SLEE initiative is aimed at expanding livelihood opportunities for young people by providing skills, overseas employment opportunities and avenues for entrepreneurship.

The programme was attended by MLA Kh. Joykisan Singh, Manipur University Vice-Chancellor Prof. R.K. Hemakumar Singh, Secretary of Skill, Labour, Employment and Entrepreneurship N. Bandana Devi, SBI Deputy General Manager (B&O) Ejaz Ahmed and NSDC State Engagement Officer Masotni Zimik, among others.

## Assam Launches ‘Shiksha Yatra’ to Bring Out-of-School Children Back to Education



GUWAHATI

Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu has inaugurated ‘Shiksha Yatra: From Challenges to Aspirations’, a statewide initiative aimed at identifying out-of-school children and helping them return to formal education. The programme, launched for the 2026-27 financial year, will focus on tracing school dropouts and children with prolonged absenteeism and facilitating their enrolment or re-enrolment in schools. Under the initiative, District Quality Managers and Education Volunteers of Samagra Shiksha Assam will conduct a statewide survey to identify children who have dropped out or remain outside the formal education system.

The survey will be conducted from August 20 to September 23, 2026, with 2,862 surveyors deployed across the state.

Officials said children requiring additional assistance will be connected with residential and non-residential Special Training Centres

(STCs), while eligible children may also be linked with the Open School system. The initiative is aimed at strengthening the identification, enrolment and mainstreaming of out-of-school children by creating support pathways based on their individual needs. The government said the exercise seeks to ensure that children who have discontinued schooling or remained absent for extended periods are brought back into the education system. The programme was inaugurated at Jyoti Bishnu Antarjati Kala Mandir in Guwahati. The initiative is expected to provide district-level teams with a comprehensive picture of children currently outside the formal education system and enable targeted interventions to help them resume their studies.

The state government has emphasised that the campaign is guided by the objective of ensuring that no child is left behind and that every child has an opportunity to continue education and build a better future.

## Nagaland Signs 25-Year PPA for 20 MW Solar Project in Mon District

KOHIWA

The Nagaland government has signed a 25-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Tvaksas Renewable Pvt Ltd for a 20 MW solar power project at Tizit in Mon district, marking the state’s first private-sector solar Independent Power Producer (IPP) initiative.

The agreement was signed on August 20 at the Nagaland Civil Secretariat Conference Hall in Kohima between the Department of Power and the renewable energy company. The project will be developed at Lapa Lampong village in Tizit.

Under the agreement, the Phase-I project is scheduled to be commissioned within 20 months and will supply power to the state grid at a fixed tariff of Rs 4.12 per unit, as approved by the Nagaland Electricity Regulatory Commission.

The project is expected to strengthen Nagaland’s renewable energy capacity and help the state meet its Renewable Consumption Obligations.

Power demand projected to rise

Chief Engineer (Transmission and Generation) Nitovi A. Wotsa said Nagaland’s current peak power demand stands at around 203 MW and is projected to increase to 482 MW by 2034-35.

He said the state was working to expand its power generation capacity and encouraging private investment alongside government-led projects to increase local generation and meet the growing demand.

The Principal Secretary, Power, said solar projects could be developed relatively quickly compared with projects involving longer gestation



periods, making them particularly suitable for Nagaland.

He urged the developer to complete the project ahead of schedule and ensure employment opportunities for local residents during both the construction and operational phases.

Company plans 100 MW solar capacity

Tvaksas Renewable said it plans to expand its solar power programme in Nagaland to 100 MW in phases.

The 20 MW project is expected to generate around 35 million units of electricity annually over the 25-year PPA period. Officials said the project would help reduce Nagaland’s dependence on electricity purchased from outside the state and contribute to lowering power costs.

The project is also expected to prevent nearly 25,000 tonnes of carbon emissions annually and generate employment opportunities for local youth during its construction and operation.

Tvaksas Renewable Director Bhakti Dave said the project would create new avenues for employment and youth development while encouraging further investment in Nagaland. She said the long-term PPA would provide greater predictability in electricity costs and contribute to infrastructure development in the district. Director Hardik Dave said the company would work closely with the Nagaland Power Department to ensure smooth implementation and long-term maintenance of the project.

Finance Director Nayan Ratandhaya said the Tizit location was strategically important and thanked the Department of Power and the Nagaland Electricity Regulatory Commission for their support.

The project is expected to contribute to Nagaland’s clean energy transition while supporting India’s broader renewable energy goals, including the national target of 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.

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# ‘Took 30 days and 7-hour dharna by LoP to register FIR’: Chidambaram on pellet injury case

NEW DELHI

It took 30 days and a seven-hour protest by Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi for an FIR to be registered over pellet injuries suffered by a 19-year-old student during the July 20 Jantar Matar protest, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said, coming down heavily on the Delhi police.

The delay was contrary to the Supreme Court's position that police must promptly register an FIR when a complaint discloses a cognisable offence, Chidambaram said.

In a post on X, the former Union minister congratulated the injured complainant, Sahil Lochav, for pursuing the matter and Rahul Gandhi for demonstrating what he described as the "power of

satyagraha". The FIR was eventually registered by the Delhi Police on Friday, after Gandhi staged a sit-in outside the Parliament Street police station seeking action on Lochav's complaint. The case has been filed under Sections 118 and 125 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Lochav had alleged that he was injured in pellet gun firing at Connaught Place on July 20 and that the police initially failed to register his complaint. He said he subsequently underwent surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), but continued to suffer impaired vision.

Gandhi, who was accompanied by Congress leaders including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, had questioned how the incident

could have occurred if, as claimed by the Delhi Police, its personnel had not fired pellet guns.

Referring to Lochav's medical records, Gandhi said an AIIMS report indicated that more than 200 pellets were lodged in the victim's body, including three in his eye. He also claimed that pellets were located near the victim's heart and could not be removed.

"Someone must have done it," Gandhi said, arguing that the injuries established that a crime had taken place and required investigation.

Lochav later thanked Gandhi for supporting his demand for an FIR, saying he believed the case may not have been registered without the Congress leader's intervention.

# Cyber fraud victims can now seek online restoration of frozen funds through MHA's I4C module



NEW DELHI

The I4C, the cyber wing under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has built an online money restoration module for victims of cyber fraud whose money has been frozen or held in a beneficiary's or suspected scammer's bank account, officials said on Friday.

The online facility allows eligible victims to initiate the refund process without having to visit government offices or bank branches, but the restoration process would be subject to verification and applicable legal procedures, they said.

The officials associated with the cyber wing of the MHA said victims whose complaints have resulted in an

eligible amount being held in a beneficiary account can submit a restoration request through the Money Restoration Module (MRM).

"Victims who have reported financial cyber fraud through the national cybercrime helpline 1930 or the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) must first access the MRM and select the "Raise Refund Request" option. They are required to enter the 14-digit NCRP acknowledgement number issued when the complaint was registered and authenticate the request using an OTP," a senior official said.

"Once verified, the victim can view the account details provided for receiving the refund under the "Refund Account Details" section. Complainants

are advised to carefully enter the correct bank account details, as errors could delay or affect the restoration process," he added. If a court order is available, it can be uploaded through the "Select Court Order" option, the officials said, adding that applicants must also upload a copy of their PAN card, complete the captcha and submit the request.

After submission, a 14-digit request ID is generated and sent to the complainant's registered mobile number and email address and victims are advised to preserve the number for future reference and ensure that all information submitted is accurate, they said.

"The process does not mean that every reported loss will automatically be refunded. Victims must wait for an

SMS or email confirming that an eligible amount has been identified for restoration. They can then log in using their NCRP acknowledgement number and OTP, verify their complaint and refund-account details, confirm the amount available for restoration, upload the required documents and submit the request," the official said.

A Unique Request Number (URN) is subsequently generated for tracking, they noted while saying that victims might also be required to submit an indemnity bond to the police, after which the restoration proceeds according to the applicable legal process.

The government's latest data underscores the scale of financial cybercrime and the response mechanism. According to figures shared by Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar in Parliament, more than Rs 11,158 crore had been saved in over 32.80 lakh complaints through the Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS) up to June 30, 2026.

Launched in 2021, the CFCFRMS enables the immediate reporting of financial cyber fraud and helps authorities and banks act quickly to prevent fraudulent transfers and the siphoning of funds.

The government has also stepped up action against the wider cybercrime ecosystem. Through the I4C's Sahyog portal and coordination with technology intermediaries, more than 2.77 lakh fraudulent or illegal apps, websites, URLs, links, email accounts and other online identifiers had been blocked or acted upon by June 30.

Separately, 3,718 mobile applications, including fraudulent loan apps, were blocked under provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

The I4C's suspect registry, launched in September 2024 in collaboration with banks and financial institutions, has also expanded significantly. More than 30.48 lakh suspect identifiers and 32.08 lakh Layer-1 mule accounts had been shared with participating entities, while transactions worth more than Rs 25,698 crore were declined.

Authorities have also blocked over 15.75 lakh SIM cards and 5.77 lakh IMEI numbers reported by police agencies.

# INTERNATIONAL

## 16 killed, 130 injured as Russian drones slam into busy shopping centre in eastern Ukraine



KYIV

Russian drones slammed into a busy shopping centre in eastern Ukraine Friday, killing 16 people in an attack condemned as "cynical and despicable" by President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The attack on Kryvyi Rig, Zelensky's hometown, comes as Russia has intensified its bombardments of Ukrainian cities in recent months.

Four more people, including three minors, were killed in another strike in the southern Mykolaiv region, Interior Minister Ivan Vygodsky said on Telegram.

Videos on social media of the Kryvyi Rig incident showed rescuers rushing to help the wounded on

the street outside, as smoke poured out of the building.

A second drone smashed into the roof of the building around half an hour after the first -- a repeat strike that Zelensky said in a post on X was "targeting the emergency responders". Ukrainian emergency services initially said the attack had killed 15 people, wounding 130 others, 23 of them children.

Oleksandr Ganzha, the head of the Dnipropetrovsk regional military administration, later posted on Telegram that "the death toll from the enemy attack has risen to 16".

In his X post, Zelensky condemned "an absolutely cynical and despicable strike...carried out by the Russians against an ordinary shopping centre".

Kryvyi Rig, an industrial city roughly 60 kilometres (37 miles) from the front line, has come under repeated Russian attacks throughout the war.

The United Nations reported that the civilian death toll in 2026 had risen to its highest level since the first months of the war.

Ukraine's allies are to meet on Monday to reaffirm their support for Kyiv in talks held on the country's independence day.

The meeting of the so-called Coalition of the Willing will be co-chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron -- joining via video link -- German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and the new British Prime Minister Andy Burnham.

Around 10 leaders including

European Council chief Antonio Costa will be in Kyiv for the coalition meeting, according to an EU official.

"The world must respond to them accordingly -- with real pressure on the aggressor. For peace to be possible, Russia must face real accountability," he said.

Zelensky held a call with UN chief Antonio Guterres on Friday, updating him on Russian strikes and the civilian casualties they have caused, the Ukrainian leader said on X.

The European Union's top diplomat condemned the strike "as terror by design" and threatened "the most far-reaching Russia sanctions listings since the start of the war".

"Russia's attack against a shopping centre in (Kryvyi Rig) shows the absolute and utter depravity of Moscow's war," Kaja Kallas wrote on X, claiming that Moscow "wants to make Ukrainian cities unlivable".

Kyiv has repeatedly appealed to its allies for additional support as Russia steps up its strikes, with Ukrainian forces struggling in particular to intercept salvos of ballistic missiles.

Ukraine has also escalated retaliatory strikes on Russia in recent months, in part to try to pressure Moscow into coming to the negotiating table to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II.

Diplomatic efforts have failed to move the two sides towards a deal, with Russia demanding sweeping territorial and political concessions from Kyiv.

Zelensky has ruled out agreeing to those terms, arguing it would amount to an effective capitulation that would leave his country dangerously exposed to another Russian attack.

## US imposes 50% tariffs on USD 20 billion worth of Canadian products; Carney vows to retaliate



WASHINGTON

Hefty US tariffs on some Canadian products took effect on Saturday after days of negotiations that went down to the wire failed to produce an agreement.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney vowed that his country will match the US tariffs "dollar for dollar to protect our workers and businesses", after officials said late Friday that Washington and Ottawa had not managed to strike a deal.

The lack of a final agreement means that new 50-per-cent duties, set to impact some USD 20 billion of Canadian exports to the United States, took effect on Saturday.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer told reporters on Friday that "tonight, Canada declined to finalize the trade deal under the terms agreed earlier this week."

That came despite Washington's offers for tariff reductions in sectors like steel and aluminum, he added.

The surprise announcement came after Trump said that the United States "should be able to have a deal with Canada," citing his "good relationship" with Carney.

After hours of trade talks

on Friday, however, Canada's top negotiator Dominic LeBlanc told reporters that officials still "have more work to do."

LeBlanc and Greer also met for around three hours on Thursday.

Greer said that the Trump administration put on the table "significant tariff reductions on steel, aluminum, autos and lumber" in exchange for concessions from Canada.

He said that Canada was also maintaining its "prolonged retaliation" against the United States.

But Carney said in a statement that "last-minute changes in the US proposed terms were unfair, uneconomic, and called into question the reliability of any deal."

Canada Prime Minister Mark Carney and President Donald Trump hold a press conference at the White House in Washington, D.C., Oct. 7, 2025.

Canada's regional leaders said previously that the United States was particularly irritated by one retaliatory measure: the removal of US alcohol and wine from liquor stores.

The White House had alleged "discriminatory treatment" by Canada against US alcohol, automobile and dairy

products in introducing the duties.

They were originally set to take effect on Wednesday, before Trump issued a last-minute delay of three days -- citing major progress in talks.

Canadian negotiators have been camped out in Washington this week to firm up a deal that aimed to address various flash points.

Canada has been seeking relief from Trump's tariffs on autos, steel and aluminum, which have battered the country's economy, forced job losses and strained what was once an iron-clad trade relationship.

Carney has repeatedly told Canadians that relations with the United States have been forever changed, regardless of what happens with an individual trade deal.

He says the country must diversify and reduce its reliance on the United States, which currently accounts for roughly 70 percent of Canadian exports.

Beyond the ongoing negotiations, the United States and Canada still have to agree on revisions to the North American free trade agreement, USMCA, which Trump declined to renew last month.

# Before Counting Manipur, Address the Crisis of Demographic Trust

The controversy over conducting the Census before an exercise such as the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur should not be reduced to a dispute over enumeration schedules. Beneath the immediate demand lies a much deeper crisis of trust — over displacement, migration, land, identity, political representation and the ability of the state to protect the interests of its indigenous communities.

That is why the protests surrounding the NRC-before-Census demand deserve a political response rather than merely an administrative one. Manipur undoubtedly needs a Census. Reliable population data are essential for public policy, welfare programmes, infrastructure planning and allocation of resources. No serious argument can be made against counting people.

The more difficult question is whether the demographic picture produced at a time when thousands of people remain displaced by conflict can provide a reliable basis for decisions that may have consequences well beyond the immediate Census exercise.

This distinction is at the heart of the present controversy.

A Census in a State Still Living Through Displacement

Manipur has been living with the consequences of the violence that erupted in May 2023. Thousands of people have been uprooted from their homes and continue to live away from their original places of residence.

That creates an unusual demographic situation.

A family displaced from one district and living in another may be counted where it currently resides. On paper, that may be entirely consistent with the methodology of population enumeration. But the resulting figures could nevertheless present a demographic geography shaped by displacement rather than normal settlement patterns.

This is not a technical distinction without consequences.

Population figures eventually become part of the foundation on which governments plan infrastructure, allocate resources and formulate public policy. In politically sensitive states, demographic data can also acquire significance in discussions over representation, delimitation and reservation.

For a state fractured by prolonged conflict, therefore, the question is not simply how many people are present at a particular location on the day of enumeration. It is also about whether the numbers can accurately represent the state's ordinary demographic structure.

That concern deserves a serious institutional examination.

It should not, however, be allowed to become a reason for casting suspicion on entire communities. Displacement is a consequence of conflict, and displaced citizens do not cease to be citizens because they are temporarily living elsewhere.

The challenge is to ensure that administrative data do not unintentionally turn the consequences of displacement into a permanent demographic reality.

The Bigger Anxiety Behind the NRC Demand  
The demand for an NRC before the Census has emerged from a wider debate about who belongs to Manipur, how migration is regulated and how indigenous communities can protect their land and political interests.

These are sensitive questions, but sensitivity cannot be an excuse for avoiding them.

Over the years, Manipur has witnessed debates over land ownership, forest administration, constitutional safeguards, migration, tribal status and the protection of indigenous interests. Some of these debates have been deeply contested. Different communities have advanced competing interpretations of history, law and political rights.

Yet the cumulative effect is important.

When several unresolved questions remain open for years, a new administrative decision rarely remains confined to its immediate subject. The Census has consequently become connected, in the public imagination, with much larger fears about demographic change and political marginalisation.

For many of those protesting, the demand is therefore not simply about an enumeration exercise. It is about whether the indigenous population will retain sufficient demographic and political security to shape its own future.

That anxiety may contain claims that require verification. Some allegations may prove exaggerated or unsupported. But dismissing the entire concern as politically motivated or communal would be equally unwise.

A government does not have to accept every claim made by protesters to recognise the legitimacy of their underlying fear.

Demography and Political Representation

The political implications of population data are another reason the issue has acquired such intensity.

Population figures can influence the distribution of administrative resources and, depending on constitutional and statutory processes, become relevant to questions surrounding electoral representation, delimitation and reservation.

This naturally makes demographic change a politically sensitive subject.

Manipur has historically experienced periods of relatively high population growth. According to figures cited in the debate, the state's decadal population growth was 35.04 per cent in 1961, 37.52 per cent in 1971 and 24.50 per cent in 2011, compared with India's 17.64 per cent growth during 2001-11.

Such figures, by themselves, do not establish the cause of population change. Population growth can result from fertility, migration, mortality patterns, administrative reclassification and several other factors.

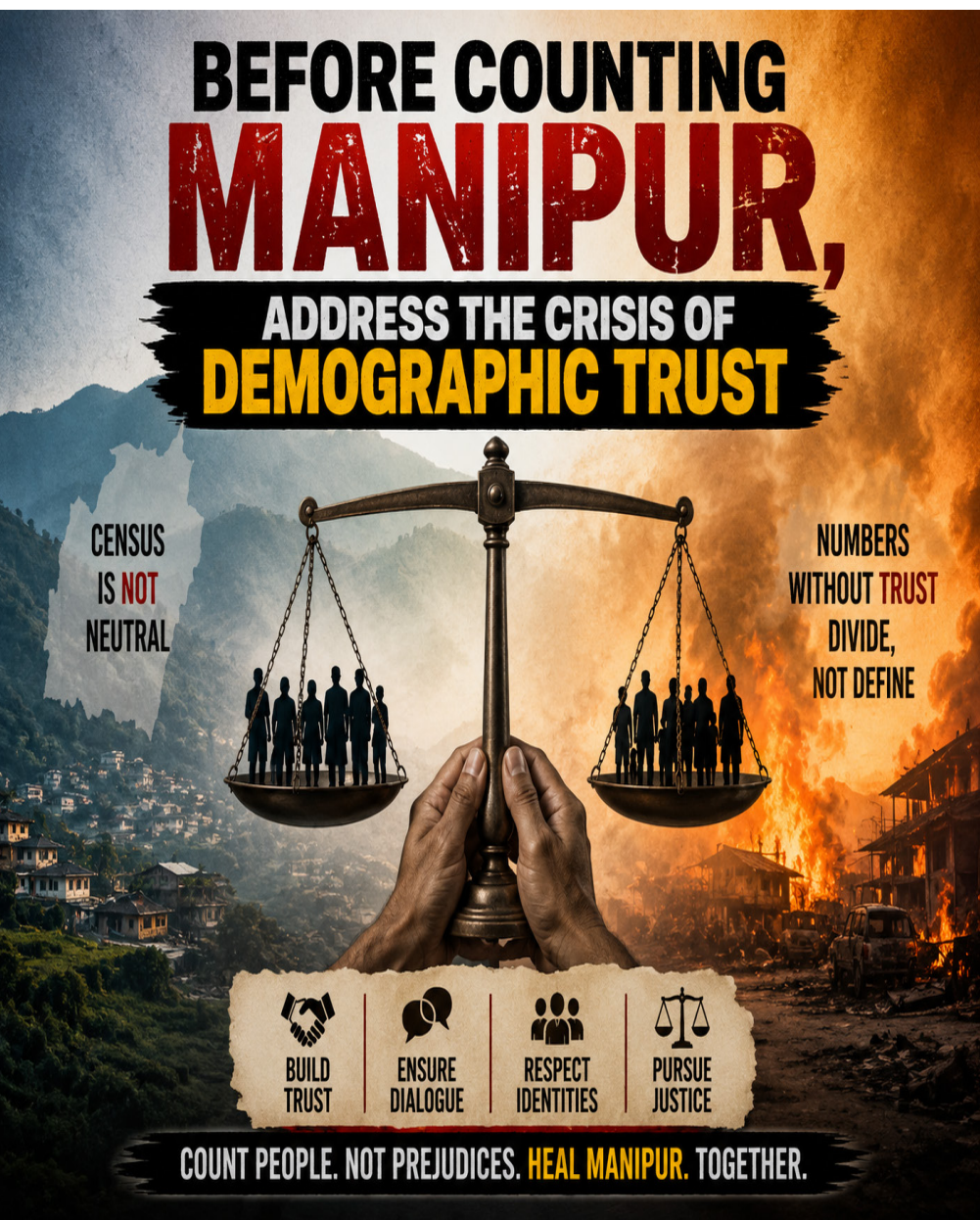
That is precisely why the debate should move from political assertion to credible data.

If there are concerns about migration, the answer should be verification. If there are concerns about undocumented residents, the answer should be lawful identification mechanisms. If there are concerns about displacement, the answer should be accurate demographic accounting. And if there are concerns about political representation, the answer should be a transparent constitutional discussion.

Fear cannot substitute for evidence.

But evidence is also not a substitute for political sensitivity.

Why Political Leadership



Failed to Read the Warning Signs

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the current episode is not that the NRC-before-Census demand emerged. It is that political leaders appeared to respond only after the issue had already reached the streets.

By the time administrative action was taken to cancel a scheduled Census training programme in Lilong on August 19, protests and public mobilisation had already gathered momentum.

Students had demonstrated. Women's groups had participated. Organisations had submitted memorandums and appeals. A general strike had been called.

These developments should have been treated as warning signs.

The cancellation may have helped prevent an immediate confrontation, but it also raises a broader question: why was political dialogue not initiated when the concerns were first becoming visible?

Good governance is not simply the ability to retreat from a contentious decision after protests erupt. It is the ability to identify potentially explosive issues early enough to create a space for consultation.

Manipur has experienced enough conflict to know the cost of allowing public distrust to deepen.

In such an environment, even a routine administrative exercise can acquire political meaning.

That is why the government should have anticipated the reaction rather than waiting for it.

Delhi Cannot Always Be the First Stop

The reported move by BJP Manipur leaders and legislators to approach the party's central leadership in New Delhi reflects the importance of the issue. Matters relating to the Census and any possible NRC process inevitably involve the Union government and cannot be resolved entirely at the state level.

Seeking central intervention is therefore understandable.

But it also highlights a recurring problem in Manipur's politics.

Too often, political leaders appear to become most active after a local issue has transformed into a crisis. Delegations travel to Delhi, memorandums are submitted and appeals are made to the Centre — after public anger has already intensified.

Delhi may ultimately have to take a decision. But Imphal must first listen.

Elected representatives are not merely messengers between the people and the Centre. They are also the first political interface between citizens and government.

Their responsibility is to engage communities before confrontation becomes inevitable.

They must explain government policy, test public sentiment, challenge misinformation, negotiate where possible and communicate genuine concerns to the Centre before an administrative controversy becomes a street movement.

Political leadership is measured as much by crisis prevention as crisis management.

What the Government Should Do Now

The immediate priority should be to create a credible mechanism for dialogue.

The Centre and the Manipur government should engage political parties, civil society organisations, student bodies, women's organisations, community representatives and constitutional experts.

The objective should not be to produce an immediate agreement on NRC. Instead, it should be to separate the different questions currently bundled together under the slogan.

What exactly are the concerns regarding Census methodology?

How should internally displaced persons be recorded?

What safeguards exist to prevent temporary displacement from distorting demographic understanding?

What evidence exists regarding undocumented migration?

What constitutional and legal mechanisms already exist to protect indigenous land and political interests?

Could additional safeguards be considered?

And what, if any, relationship would popula-

tion data have with future questions of representation?

These questions should be answered publicly and in accessible language.

A transparent process would also help distinguish genuine concerns from misinformation.

That is particularly important because demographic anxieties can rapidly become communal narratives if governments fail to communicate clearly.

NRC Must Be Evidence-Based, Not Emotion-Driven

There is also a responsibility on those leading the agitation.

Demanding an NRC cannot mean treating migration as synonymous with membership of a particular ethnic or religious community. Nor can demographic concerns justify hostility towards citizens who have been displaced by conflict.

Any identification exercise must operate within the Constitution and established law.

Claims regarding illegal migration should be investigated through evidence and due process. Citizenship cannot be determined by political rhetoric or street mobilisation.

Likewise, the Census should not become a vehicle for turning one community's demographic presence into another community's political accusation.

Manipur's social fabric is already fragile. Any political campaign built around demographic insecurity carries the risk of deepening divisions unless it is anchored in facts and constitutional safeguards.

The objective should be protection, not exclusion.

The Question Is Bigger Than the Census

The most important lesson from the present controversy is that Manipur's demographic debate cannot be solved by discussing Census procedures alone.

The NRC-before-Census demand has become a political expression of a much wider insecurity.

It reflects fears that displacement may permanently alter settlement patterns. It reflects concerns about migration and undocumented populations. It reflects anxiety over land and indigenous protections. It reflects uncertainty about future political representation. And, above all, it reflects a growing perception among sections of society that the government has not responded adequately to these questions.

That perception cannot be dismissed simply because some of the claims behind it may be contested.

At the same time, the government must resist the temptation to respond to public pressure by making decisions without adequate legal and factual examination.

There is a middle path — consultation, verification and constitutional safeguards.

That is the path Manipur needs.

The state should not be forced to choose between conducting a Census and listening to its citizens. It can do both. But before asking people to trust the numbers, the government must explain how those numbers will account for displacement and how they will be protected from being misinterpreted.

The Census should count citizens accurately. An NRC, if pursued, should establish status through law and due process. Political representation should be determined through constitutional mechanisms. And indigenous concerns should be addressed through enforceable safeguards rather than political assurances.

None of these objectives are inherently incompatible.

What is incompatible is attempting to govern a deeply divided and conflict-affected society without addressing its underlying crisis of confidence.

Manipur does not merely need to know how many people live within its borders.

It needs confidence that the institutions responsible for counting, governing and representing its people understand the extraordinary circumstances in which those numbers are being produced.

That is why the present agitation should not be viewed merely as a confrontation over a Census timetable.

It is a warning about the distance that has developed between government institutions and a section of the public.

The answer should not be another administrative order, another delegation to Delhi or another temporary withdrawal.

It should be sustained political engagement.

Before Manipur counts its people, its leaders must listen to them. And before demographic numbers are allowed to shape the state's political future, the government must ensure that those numbers are understood in the context of displacement, conflict and constitutional rights.

That is the real issue beneath the NRC-before-Census debate — not whether Manipur should be counted, but whether its people can trust the process by which they are counted.

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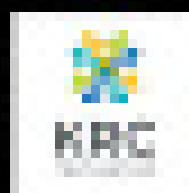


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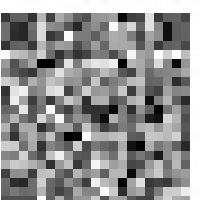


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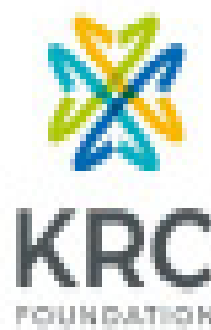
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