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PERSPECTIVE

People change, feelings fade, things go wrong, memories remain but life goes on.

Assam Flood Situation Improves, Death Toll Rises to 105; Nearly 32,000 Still Affected

GUWAHATI

Assam's flood situation showed signs of improvement on August 17, but one more person died in Sivasagar, taking the flood-related death toll in the state this year to 105.

According to the latest bulletin issued by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), around 31,900 people remained affected across four districts - Golaghat, Jorhat, Nagaon and Sivasagar.

Nagaon remained the worst-hit district, with nearly 20,000 people affected, followed by Jorhat with more than 5,000 and Sivasagar with over 4,500.

The latest figures marked an improvement from the previous day, when nearly 52,000 people across five districts were affected by floodwaters.

Authorities are currently operating 15 relief camps and distribution centres in the affected districts, providing assistance to 2,782 people.

Despite the receding waters, the floods continue to leave a trail of damage. As many as 147 villages remain submerged, while approximately 3,198.77 hectares of cropland have been affected across the state.

Floodwaters have also damaged several embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure, according to ASDMA.

The disaster has further affected livestock and poultry, with 16,323 animals reported to have been impacted.

The administration continues to monitor the situation in the affected districts and maintain relief operations as floodwaters gradually recede.

WHO SAID WHAT



Extortion? Denied. Cut money? Cancelled. Asking for money illegally? Let me know!
~ Suwendu Adhikari, CM, West Bengal

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Apprised Amit Shah of Manipur people's demand for NRC before census: Biren Singh



NEW DELHI

Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Tuesday said he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi and raised the people's demand for conducting the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before any census exercise in the state.

Singh, who returned to Imphal after a two-day visit to the national capital, said he also discussed the impact of economic blockades and count-

er-blockades, which have disrupted supplies of essential commodities and driven up prices.

"I went to Delhi to meet Home Minister Amit Shah and met him yesterday after getting an appointment," Singh said. He added that Shah had assured him that the issues would be addressed soon.

Singh said he also apprised the Home Minister of the demand for an NRC, which his government had sought in February 2023, before ethnic

violence erupted in the state.

According to Singh, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Registrar General had then informed the state government that the request was under consideration. He said people were not opposed to the census but wanted the NRC to be conducted first.

Students demanding implementation of the NRC before the census staged a demonstration outside the Directorate of Census Operations in Imphal on Sunday. Police fired tear gas shells to disperse the protesters.

Hundreds of people in Imphal East and Imphal West also held a torch rally on August 16, calling for the NRC before any census activity to identify alleged illegal immigrants.

Singh said people were concerned that the presence of alleged illegal immigrants had contributed to demographic changes in the state.

He also said there were 926 unrecognised villages according to government records and that people had

48-Hour JFD Strike Brings Valley Districts Across Manipur to a Standstill



IMPHAL

Normal life was severely disrupted across Manipur's five valley districts on Monday as a 48-hour general strike called by the Campaign for Just and Free Delimitation (JFD) began, with the organisation demanding implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the Census.

Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Kakching and Bishnupur witnessed widespread shutdowns, with major commercial centres, shops and markets remaining closed throughout the day.

Public transport, auto-rickshaws and commercial vehicles stayed off the roads, leaving major streets and highways largely deserted, apart from a limited number of private vehicles.

Schools, colleges, banks, fuel stations and other educational institutions also remained closed. Government offices reported low attendance as the strike affected routine administrative activities across the valley.

JFD supporters moved through several areas to enforce the shutdown, while roads and key highways were blocked at multiple locations using makeshift barriers, including burning tyres, bamboo poles and boulders.

The strike has been called as part of the JFD's continuing campaign for the implementation of the NRC before the Census exercise. The organisation has

also raised concerns linked to the identification and documentation of people displaced by the ongoing conflict in the state.

Security forces remained deployed at strategic locations to prevent escalation and maintain the movement of essential traffic.

Officials said security forces continued to facilitate movement along National Highway-37, the main road link between Jiribam and Imphal, with CRPF-escorted convoys operating depending on road conditions and the security situation.

Convoy operations were adjusted according to the extent of blockades and the need to clear stranded vehicles, officials said. The arrangements were particularly important for the movement of large numbers of trucks and tankers stranded along the highway.

Emergency and essential services were kept outside the purview of the shutdown. Medical services, law enforcement, utility maintenance and the movement of essential food and other supplies were allowed to continue.

The JFD has been pressing for the NRC to be carried out before the Census, arguing that a prior verification of residents is necessary to safeguard the interests of the indigenous population.

The latest shutdown comes amid continuing political and public debate in Manipur over population documentation, displaced persons and the protection of indigenous interests. The issue has remained particularly sensitive in the state following the ethnic conflict that began in May 2023.

With the strike scheduled to continue for 48 hours, authorities are expected to maintain heightened security across the valley districts and monitor road blockades and the movement of essential supplies.

Bajali's Major Rupam Das Awarded Sena Medal for Gallantry in Manipur



BAJALI

Major Rupam Das, a native of Dubi Kathokuchi village in Assam's Bajali district, has been awarded the Sena Medal (Gallantry) for his bravery during military operations in Manipur.

The award was announced as part of the gallantry honours approved by President Droupadi Murmu ahead of Independence Day 2026.

According to the Ministry of Defence, the President approved 78 gallantry awards, including 13 posthumous honours, for personnel of the Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces.

Major Das, bearing service number IC-83402N, is serving with 8 Bihar of the Indian Army and is currently posted in Manipur.

He was among the personnel recognised with the Sena Medal (Gallantry) for his conduct during operations in the region.

The honour has brought recognition to Major Das's native village and the wider Bajali district, with local residents expressing pride in his achievement.

The Sena Medal is awarded to members of the Armed Forces for individual acts of exceptional courage and devotion to duty.

Major Das's recognition is being seen as a source of inspiration for young people in Bajali and across Assam who aspire to join the armed forces and serve the country.

644 Trucks, Fuel Tankers Reach Valley Under Security Escort Ahead of Strike

IMPHAL

A total of 644 loaded trucks and fuel tankers reached Manipur's valley districts under security escort ahead of a 48-hour general strike that began at midnight on August 17.

The convoy, which originated from Jiribam near the Assam-Manipur border, reached its destinations before the shutdown came into force. The strike, called by the Campaign for Just and Fair Delimitation (JFD), will continue until midnight on August 19.

The protesters are demanding that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) be updated before the Census exercise is carried out in the state.

Officials said the convoy comprised 469 goods-laden trucks and 175 fuel tankers. Three security convoys were deployed to escort the vehicles along the route. The first convoy left Jiribam at around 6:25 am on August 17, while the final convoy departed at approximately 9 am. The Transporters' and Drivers' Council (TDC) welcomed the increased security deployment, saying it would help move stranded vehicles and ease congestion around Jiribam and the Assam-Manipur border.

TDC president Hijam Ranjit said the additional security cover would provide relief to truck drivers and handymen who had been stranded for extended periods along the highway.

He also said increasing the number of CRPF companies assigned to escort duties from eight to 10 would further strengthen security and help clear the backlog of vehicles waiting to enter Manipur.

The TDC had earlier issued an ultimatum to the government, demanding additional security convoys along the highway. It had warned that stranded vehicles would be moved in bulk from Monday irrespective of whether adequate security arrangements were provided. The convoy operation was expanded days after Nageena Kumar Mahato, a truck driver from Bihar, was found dead inside his vehicle near the Assam-Manipur border on August 12. He had reportedly remained stranded on the route for several days. The movement of the 644 vehicles has provided temporary relief to supply lines serving Manipur's valley districts as the 48-hour shutdown continues across the state.

46 KCP-Taibangngaba Cadres Surrender Arms, Return to Mainstream in Manipur



IMPHAL

Forty-six cadres of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP)-Taibangngaba group, including four women, laid down their arms and joined the mainstream at a homecoming ceremony held at the 1st Manipur Rifles Parade Ground in Imphal on Tuesday.

The cadres surrendered 20 arms, 216 rounds of ammunition and three explosives during the ceremony, marking another step in the government's efforts to reintegrate armed cadres into mainstream society and advance the peace process in Manipur.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh attended the ceremony along with senior ministers, civil and police officials, security personnel and other dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering, Khemchand said prevailing cir-

cumstances and difficult situations often push people towards taking up arms. He welcomed the decision of the KCP-Taibangngaba cadres to abandon armed activities and return to civilian life.

"Many people take up arms due to the situation. However, while responding to my call, KCP (Taibangngaba) agreed to lay down arms. I appreciate them," the Chief Minister said.

Under the government's rehabilitation programme, each returning cadre will receive four fixed deposits and a monthly stipend of Rs 6,000 for three years to support rehabilitation and reintegration into mainstream society.

The government urged the former cadres to make constructive use of the rehabilitation package, reconnect with their families and communities and contribute to the development of the state.

Security agencies and the state government reiterated their commitment to creating conditions conducive to lasting peace while maintaining the rule of law and ensuring the safety and security of citizens.

The homecoming ceremony concluded with an appeal to all stakeholders to work collectively towards peace, reconciliation and restoration of normalcy in Manipur.

The surrender comes amid continuing efforts by the government and security agencies to encourage armed groups and their cadres to abandon violence and participate in the state's peace and rehabilitation process.

Census 2027: Over 11.64 Lakh Assam Households Complete Self-Enumeration

GUWAHATI

The self-enumeration phase of Census 2027 has been completed in Assam, with 11,64,586 households submitting their details during the notified period, officials said on Monday. Cachar, Sribhumi and Kokrajhar emerged as the three top-performing districts in the self-enumeration exercise. Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Biswajit Pegu, Director of Census Operations, Assam, said the self-enumeration process was successfully completed on August 16 and thanked citizens for their participation. The next stage of the exercise, the Housing and Housing Census, began across Assam on August 17. During this phase, trained enumerators will visit households across the state to collect the required information. The exercise will continue until September 15.

Pegu said the Census would follow the principle of "No Omis-

sion, No Duplication" to ensure that every household is covered without duplication. He also assured citizens that the information collected during the Census would remain confidential and secure. Under the Census Act, 1948, information collected during the Census is not admissible as evidence in a court of law. The official urged citizens to cooperate with enumerators and provide the required information during household visits to ensure the Census exercise is completed accurately.

Partha Pegu, State Nodal Officer for Census 2027 and Additional Secretary in Assam's General Administration Department, also stressed the importance of continued public participation throughout the Census process.

The Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, appealed to citizens to extend full cooperation to Census personnel and facilitate the smooth completion of the Housing and Housing Census.

Manipur Assembly Session Set for September 2 Amid Cabinet Expansion Buzz

IMPHAL

The eighth session of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly has been summoned for September 2, amid growing speculation over a possible expansion of the state Cabinet.

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalra, exercising powers under Article 174(1) of the Constitution, has summoned the Assembly to meet at 11 am on Wednesday, September 2, at the Assembly Hall in Imphal.

An official notification was issued by Manipur Legislative Assembly Secretary Rohit Sapam on Monday.

The announcement comes amid heightened political activity in the state, with reports suggesting that the Cabinet may soon be expanded. Senior BJP leaders, including the party's National General Secretary and North East in-charge, are also expected to visit Imphal ahead of the Assembly session.

Former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and several other



state leaders travelled to New Delhi over the weekend for meetings with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Sources said Biren Singh travelled to the national capital at the Home Minister's request for discussions on political de-

velopments in Manipur.

The movements of other senior leaders have also fuelled speculation. State Home Min-

ister K. Govindas, MLA Kh. Joykisan and Assembly Speaker Th. Satyabrata were among those who left Imphal. Govindas said his visit was personal and had no connection with any communication from the BJP's central leadership, while Speaker Satyabrata travelled to Bali, Indonesia.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh took office on February 4, 2026, after President's Rule was revoked. His ministry currently has five members.

With the maximum permissible strength of the Council of Ministers being 12, seven ministerial positions remain vacant, making a Cabinet expansion a key focus of political discussions ahead of the Assembly session.

The September 2 sitting is expected to provide the political backdrop for further developments as the government navigates the state's continuing political and security challenges.



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ROADMAP TO VIKSIT BHARAT

When PM Modi addressed the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 80th Independence Day, he did more than deliver a customary speech. He laid out a blueprint - seven streams, or saptadharas, that he believes will carry India towards its 2047 goal of becoming a developed nation. These streams - manufacturing, power, agriculture and food processing, technology and innovation, gatisakti, defence power, the green and blue economy, and soft power - are not disconnected slogans. Read together, they reveal a government trying to correct decades-old vulnerabilities while positioning India for a very different kind of global competition: one fought with chips, satellites, submarines and skilled hands rather than slogans alone. It is worth pausing on how far the country has travelled in a single decade. India was, for the better part of its independent history, one of the world's largest importers of arms and ammunition, dependent on foreign suppliers even for basic military hardware. Today, the narrative has begun to shift. Domestic defence production has risen from a modest Rs 46,000 crore in 2014 to Rs 1.78 lakh crore in 2025-26, while defence exports have reached Rs 38,424 crore, with Indian equipment now reaching nearly 100 countries. Work on indigenous systems such as the Sudarshan Chakra air defence shield signals an ambition that goes beyond import substitution towards genuine strategic autonomy. The vision, quite plainly, is to convert India from a nervous buyer of weapons into a confident seller of them within the next decade - a transformation that would have seemed fanciful not so long ago. However, solving the deeper problem of energy security is essential to realising any of this ambition, without solving the deeper problem of energy security. The recent turbulence in West Asia, sparked by tensions between Iran and the United States, exposed just how vulnerable India remains to global energy shocks. Fuel, gas and fertiliser supplies wobble whenever geopolitics turns volatile in the Gulf, a reminder that strategic autonomy on the battlefield means little if the lights can be switched off by events thousands of miles away. The government's answer lies in an ambitious nuclear push: a target of 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047, five new reactors this decade, and the recent criticality of the indigenous Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam. The SHANTI Act, enacted to modernise India's nuclear regime, is meant to be the legislative scaffolding for this leap. If executed well, it could prove the single biggest game-changer in India's quest for energy self-reliance, insulating the country from every external shock. Agriculture remains the backbone of rural India, and the government's renewed push on increasing yield through scientific farming and food processing aims to raise farmer incomes by adding value beyond the farm gate, reducing post-harvest losses and opening export markets. Alongside this sits the blue economy - fisheries, aquaculture and coastal livelihoods - identified as one of the seven saptadharas driving India towards Viksit Bharat. Investment in modern hatcheries, cold chains and deep-sea fishing capacity is intended to boost output while safeguarding marine resources. The focus is to look beyond traditional grain output towards a diversified, resilient rural economy rooted in land and sea alike.

No nation has industrialised its way to prosperity without an accompanying technological revolution, and the present age unmistakably belongs to artificial intelligence and semiconductors. India's decision to invest extensively in chip manufacturing, through the Semicon India programmes, is therefore not a vanity project but a strategic necessity. Three plants are already producing, exports have begun, and five to eight more are expected within seven to eight years. Alongside this sits India's remarkable rise as a mobile phone manufacturer and exporter, a sector that has grown thirty-three-fold and now counts smartphones among the country's top exported commodities. The IndiaAI Mission, with tens of thousands of GPUs now available to researchers and start-ups and plans to train a crore of young people in AI skills, suggests the government understands that data centres and algorithms will decide the next phase of economic competitiveness as surely as steel and cement decided the last.

Yet technology and defence, however dazzling, mean little without the two constituencies that ultimately determine whether a nation moves forward or stagnates: women and youth. No path to Viksit Bharat is credible without their full participation. The push for self-help groups, designed to build household-level micro-economies, and the promise of free online coaching for competitive examinations are attempts to address very real anxieties - the burden coaching fees place on poor and middle-class families and the economic marginalisation many women still face. These are not glamorous announcements, but they may prove more consequential than any semiconductor plant if implemented with sincerity, since they touch the daily lives of millions rather than the balance sheets of a few corporations. Equally significant is what has been achieved on the security front. Terrorism and Naxalism, once treated as near-permanent features of the Indian landscape, have been all but eliminated in their traditional strongholds. The sight of Tiranga rallies moving through Jammu and Kashmir's once terror-hit districts, and the tricolour now flying over Kureggutta hills in what was long a Maoist stronghold, would have been unthinkable a decade ago. These are not merely symbolic victories; they represent the restoration of state authority and ordinary civic life in troubled regions. Alongside this, the expansion of expressways and high-speed rail networks is quietly laying the physical infrastructure without which no industrial revolution - Make in India or otherwise - can succeed. There remain, of course, real challenges. India must still look beyond its traditional markets for exports, given the uncertainties in global trade. Its dependency on imported raw materials for infrastructure and energy projects needs urgent attention if self-reliance is to be achieved at the earliest. Simultaneously, ambitions on the sporting field - a nationwide talent hunt for children aged five to fifteen, aimed at improving India's dismal record in disciplines such as swimming, rowing and cycling ahead of the 2036 Olympic bid - will require years of patient investment before results show on the medal table. What ties all these threads together is a sense of national purpose: nationalism and patriotism harnessed not for slogans but for a disciplined developmental strategy. Governments the world over announce plans; fewer manage to sustain them across the friction of politics, bureaucracy and time. India's progress on defence exports, energy diversification, semiconductors, women's empowerment and internal security suggests a complete coherence between vision and execution.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

What a child doesn't receive he can seldom later give.

- P. D. James

The Unemployment Crisis Among Generation Z: Is the Government's 2047 Target a Form of Escapist Thinking?



SHIVAJI SARKAR

People who were once described with such adjectives as “holy cockroaches” by a powerful member of the judiciary are today shaking the country's systems, even as deep unemployment and disguised employment continue to worsen.

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, although the overall unemployment rate in the country is around 3 per cent, the employment crisis among young people is far more severe. The unemployment rate among Generation Z stands at 11.9 per cent. This figure exposes the widening gap between claims of rapid economic growth and the creation of stable, productive employment. India's much-discussed demographic dividend is also coming under increasing pressure. The uncertain nature of employment, including short-term defence recruitment schemes such as Agniveer, further aggravates the challenge.

The problem is particularly serious among educated youth. The graduate unemployment rate is 29 per cent among young men and 36.9 per cent among young women. This makes it clear that the economy is failing to create enough employment opportunities for a rapidly expanding educated population.

The Economic Survey 2025-26 has also warned about the growing insecurity of the gig economy. Between financial years 2021 and 2025, the casualisation of employment increased by 55 per cent. Gig workers are paid for each assignment rather than receiving regular salaries, and they often lack adequate social security. As work pressures increase, a greater share of economic risk is also being transferred to these workers. India may be creating more work opportunities, but the price is increasingly being paid through declining job security and the erosion of the dignity of labour.

The problem, therefore, is not merely a shortage of jobs but a shortage of stable, productive and formal employment. India must move beyond a growth model that increases output without generating sufficient employment. Labour-intensive manufacturing, industry-oriented skill development, stronger coordination between education and employment, and a broad expansion of formal-sector jobs have now become essential.

Generation Z, generally defined as people born between 1997 and 2012, constitutes a large and increasingly important part of India's working-age population. According to PLFS 2023-24 data, around 299.4 million members of Generation Z are part of India's labour market.

This generation lies at the heart of India's demographic opportunity. The country is aiming to become a \$30 trillion economy by 2047. Its ability to transform its young population into a skilled and productive workforce will therefore be decisive.

But the question is: Is this a realistic target? Why has the target been set for 2047 instead of 2030? By the time 2047 arrives, not only millennials but a large part of Generation Z will also be at a very different stage of life from the one they occupy today.

Is setting a target so far into the future a form of escapist thinking? When the time comes to review it, most of those who are promising this target today may no longer be around to answer for it. In other words, it is a promise whose accountability could disappear into the fog of time. Or is it a way of concealing the risk that the demographic dividend could eventually turn into a demographic burden?

At the same time, amid high unemployment and the continuing expansion of informal and gig employment,

the fundamental question remains: Can rapid economic growth generate a sufficient number of dignified and productive jobs?

India's gig economy is expanding rapidly. One reason is the country's large young population; another is the shortage of formal jobs offering regular salaries. Easy entry requirements, flexible working hours and immediate payments make gig work appear attractive. However, digital aggregator and contracting companies can expand their businesses on a large scale while avoiding many of the costs associated with permanent employees.

Under this system, a significant portion of business risk is shifted from companies to workers. The burden of fuel costs, vehicle maintenance, fluctuations in demand and uncertainty of income is largely borne by workers. In the absence of adequate social security, companies can ensure expansion and cost control, but workers' bargaining power and income stability continue to weaken. The casualisation of employment is increasing workers' difficulties, while insecurity is deepening.

India's ambition to become a \$30 trillion economy by 2047 will be meaningful only if Generation Z does not remain

trapped in unemployment or in a low-productivity, insecure informal economy.

Nearly 72 lakh crore is reportedly being spent on the construction and demolition of railway infrastructure, roads and office buildings. This generates profits for various companies, but the question is whether the benefits are reaching workers adequately. Should the direction of such expenditure not be reconsidered?

If India fails to create sufficient productive employment before its working-age population reaches its peak around 2030, the demographic dividend could gradually turn into a demographic burden. By 2055, the elderly population will increase, while the risk of many elderly people lacking adequate income and social security could also grow.

The problems of low wages and underemployment are equally serious. It is reported that around one in every four casual workers receives less than the statutory minimum wage. At the same time, a large number of educated and skilled young people remain trapped in insecure or low-paid employment.

India's economic reform process is also increasingly taking a “K-shaped”



form, with a large share of wealth and capital gains concentrated at the top, while vulnerable sections-particularly Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes-continue to depend heavily on casual and informal employment.

There is a clear shift away from permanent and regular employment towards temporary, contractual, casual and gig work. This makes cost management easier for companies, but transfers a greater share of employment-related uncertainty and risk to workers.

Casual employment may reduce employers' permanent labour costs, but the risks of unemployment, illness, accidents and fluctuations in income are transferred to workers. This

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

After extensive discussions with Abdul's family, CJP demands four things from the West Bengal government. Fulfill these demands within 10 days. If demands are not met, we will enforce a peaceful gherao of the Bankura DM Office in West Bengal.

1. **File an FIR against all unidentified accused involved in the crime.**
2. **Ensure a court monitored, impartial probe into police complicity and misconduct.**
3. **Provide round the clock state protection for the victim's family.**
4. **Abdul's family does not want compensation, but instead demand a world class school named after his deceased father Shek Mohammed Mafik. ~ Cockroach Janata Party**

weakens their bargaining power, puts downward pressure on wages, reduces social security and increases inequality.

Thus, the casualisation of employment creates the appearance of employment while, in reality, promoting insecurity and unfairly low wages.

The impact of the employment crisis is now clearly visible in the economic condition of families. In the hope of securing better jobs, families are spending heavily on higher education. But when education fails to translate into employment, the investment itself becomes an economic burden. This weakens household savings and eventually affects household consumption as well. Persistent youth unemployment can lead to forced migration, overcrowding in urban settlements and social tensions.

A large population of educated but unemployed young people could eventually become a source of labour and industrial unrest. The most serious impact is being felt by women. Among urban Generation Z, the female unemployment rate is around 22.6 per cent, while more than 27 per cent of women remain confined exclusively to domestic work. This leaves a significant portion of India's potential workforce outside productive economic activity. Although the female labour force participation rate increased to 41.7 per cent in 2023-24, women continue to face barriers such as childcare responsibilities, limited mobility, workplace safety concerns and a lack of adequate employment opportunities.

There are also substantial differences in employment opportunities across states. The unemployment rate reportedly ranges from 8.3 per cent in Goa to just 0.9 per cent in Gujarat. This reflects the wide disparities among states in industrialisation, investment, infrastructure and their ability to absorb workers into productive employment. Therefore, the central challenge is not simply to create more jobs. India needs sufficient, dignified, productive, stable and formal employment that can prevent an entire generation from becoming unemployed, underemployed or insecure workers. To fully benefit from its demographic dividend by 2047, India needs to bring forward its targets to around 2033. A stronger alignment must be established between the number of young people emerging from the education system and the changing requirements of the labour market. Generation Z must be moved out of informal and insecure employment and towards safe, quality formal jobs that are compatible with technological change.

But the question remains: Will this actually happen, or will it too turn out to be a “castle in the air”?

Gaurav Gogoi Questions Disaster Fund Utilisation, Cites CAG Report



GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has questioned the utilisation of disaster management funds by the Centre and the Assam government, citing findings from a recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report.

In a post on X, Gogoi alleged that both the Union and Assam governments had failed to effectively utilise funds intended for disaster management and relief.

“The Assam Government has repeatedly failed to use disaster funds effectively. The latest CAG report shows that this problem extends to the Union Government as well,” Gogoi said.

Citing the CAG findings, the

Assam Congress MP claimed that the Centre sanctioned Rs 11,474 crore under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) in 2024-25, but only Rs 5,356 crore was transferred to states, leaving Rs 6,118 crore unspent.

Gogoi further claimed that nearly 75 per cent of the National Disaster Mitigation Fund and more than 83 per cent of special assistance to states remained unutilised.

He also referred to the CAG’s observations regarding significant amounts of disaster management funds remaining unspent in Assam as of March 2025.

Gogoi criticised the government over what he described as a gap between policy commitments

and the delivery of relief during disasters.

“While the promise was ‘Maximum Governance, Minimum Government’, the reality is a double-engine government unable to ensure that disaster funds reach people when they need them most,” he said.

His remarks came as the flood situation in Assam showed signs of improvement, although thousands of people remained affected across several districts.

The state’s flood-related death toll this year stood at 104, while 14 revenue circles and 170 villages across Golaghat, Sivasagar, Nagaon, Dhemaji and Jorhat remained affected.

More than 51,800 people were

still affected by the floods, with Nagaon reporting the highest number at 32,132, followed by Jorhat with 7,426 and Sivasagar with 5,676.

Around 3,628 hectares of crop-land remained submerged, while 18,474 animals were reported affected. Roads and other infrastructure have also suffered damage in several parts of the state, with authorities continuing to assess the extent of losses caused by the floods.

Gogoi’s allegations come amid growing political debate in Assam over the adequacy, utilisation and distribution of disaster relief funds as the state works to recover from the latest wave of flooding.

Akhil Gogoi Seeks National Disaster Status for Flood-Hit Assam Districts

GUWAHATI

Rajjor Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to declare the recent floods in Assam’s Sivasagar, Charaideo and Jorhat districts a “national disaster” and provide financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh each to affected families and business establishments. In a letter to the Prime Minister, the Sivasagar MLA submitted a 22-point charter of demands covering immediate relief, rehabilitation and long-term reconstruction in the flood-affected areas.

Gogoi also sought a CBI probe into the causes of the July 19 floods, alleging that illegal coal mining along the Assam-Nagaland border and illegal sand and stone mining along the Dikhow riverbed may have aggravated the situation. He alleged that such activities were being carried out with political patronage. The MLA said the floods had affected not only lives and agricultural land but also the cultural and civilisational heritage of Assam, warranting intervention at the national level. He demanded a Rs 1,000-crore special reconstruction package for infrastructure in the Sivasagar and Nazira Assembly constituencies, which he described as among the worst-hit areas. Gogoi also urged the Centre to ensure that the Rs 15,000 one-time assistance announced by the Assam government reaches every affected family, including those left out because of errors or omissions in official assessments. For farmers, he sought measures to restore irrigation facilities in flood-affected agricultural land and ensure the supply of quality seeds. He also demanded alternative land and permanent houses for families who lost their homes in Nepalikhuti village in Nazira, besides housing assistance under Central and state schemes for affected families across the three districts. On flood control, Gogoi called for strengthening and raising embankments, rebuilding damaged sections and installing modern sluice gates at strategic locations to improve drainage.

Manipur: KNF Denies Role in Langka Incident That Left Two Dead

GUWAHATI

The Kuki National Front (KNF) has denied allegations linking its Home Secretary Jangboi Kipgen and its cadres to the recent Langka incident in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district, in which two people were killed. In a statement, the KNF said neither Kipgen nor any of its cadres had any involvement in the incident, describing the allegations as “completely baseless, unfounded and devoid of truth”.

The outfit alleged that certain vested interests were attempting to link its leadership and cadres to the incident to create what it called a “false narrative” and malign the organisation.

The KNF also accused unnamed groups of misusing its name for “political or ulterior purposes” by circulating unsubstantiated allegations, misinformation and propaganda.

“The death of innocent people must never be used to settle

scores, manufacture narratives, malign individuals or organisations, or create hostility between communities,” the organisation said.

The outfit urged those making the allegations to refrain from repeating them, warning that such claims could deepen mistrust between communities and undermine peace in the state.

The KNF maintained that allegations relating to the deaths should be based on facts and credible evidence rather than speculation or unverified claims.

It reiterated that Kipgen had no role in the Langka incident and that none of its cadres were involved.

The statement comes as investigations continue into the circumstances surrounding the deaths in Langka. The KNF did not identify the individuals or groups it alleged were attempting to link its leadership and cadres to the incident.

Meghalaya Clears Rs 140-Crore Road Project to Boost South West Khasi Hills Connectivity

MAWKYRWAT

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma laid the foundation stone for the upgradation of the Weilo-Mawkyrwat-Rangthong road in South West Khasi Hills, describing the Rs 140-crore project as a major step towards improving connectivity and opening up new opportunities in tourism, agriculture and trade.

The project, which will be funded entirely from the state’s own resources, is aimed at strengthening connectivity between villages and economic centres while improving access to healthcare, education, markets and other essential services.

Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, Tourism Minister Timothy D Shira and MLAs Renikton Lyngdoh, Piyush Marwein, Olan Singh Suin and Dr Celestine Lyngdoh were among those present at the foundation stone-laying ceremony.

Addressing the gathering, Sangma said investment in roads should

be viewed as an investment in people and their livelihoods rather than merely infrastructure.

“Every rupee we put into connectivity is not spent on tar and stone. It is invested in people,” he said, highlighting the role of roads in improving access to hospitals, schools and markets.

The Chief Minister said the government was pursuing balanced development across Meghalaya, with particular focus on districts that have historically faced infrastructure and connectivity gaps.

He identified South West Khasi Hills, South Garo Hills and East Jaintia Hills as emerging priorities in the state’s development agenda, saying remote areas should be transformed into new growth centres.

According to Sangma, more than Rs 850 crore worth of projects have been implemented in South West Khasi Hills since 2018, while the cumulative financial commitment to the district has reached nearly Rs 990 crore. The invest-

ments cover roads, drinking water projects, educational institutions, healthcare facilities and tourism infrastructure.

Sangma also said more than 3,200 km of roads had been constructed across Meghalaya over the past eight years, significantly expanding the state’s connectivity network. He described the Weilo-Mawkyrwat-Rangthong road as a potential “growth corridor”, rather than simply another road project. The upgraded route, he said, would reduce travel time and transportation costs while improving access to markets and public services.

The project is also expected to strengthen tourism prospects in South West Khasi Hills by making scenic and relatively unexplored destinations more accessible.

Improved road connectivity could simultaneously benefit farmers, small businesses and local entrepreneurs by allowing them to transport agricultural produce and other goods to wider markets.

Reiterating the government’s decentralised development approach, Sangma said Meghalaya’s economic growth could not remain concentrated around Shillong.

“Meghalaya is beyond Shillong. Our responsibility is to ensure that every district, every village, receives equal attention and opportunity,” he said.

The Chief Minister added that the government had been taking governance initiatives and major events to different districts to encourage more balanced development. He also stressed the importance of completing projects rather than focusing solely on announcements.

“We do not measure ourselves by the promises we make, but by the projects we complete,” Sangma said.

He added that South West Khasi Hills would be positioned as one of the emerging engines of growth as Meghalaya seeks to build a more inclusive and economically connected state.

Assam CM Pushes Police Reforms for Faster, People-Centric Law Enforcement



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma called for a stronger, modern and people-centric policing system, with greater focus on crime prevention, faster investigations and

timely convictions.

Sarma reviewed the state’s law and order situation at a meeting with Director General of Police Harmeet Singh and senior officials from the Police and Home departments. The

meeting examined policing, public safety and several administrative and operational issues.

Key issues discussed included child marriage, polygamy, crime prevention, reforms involving Home Guards and Village Defence Parties, Dial 112 emergency services, police battalion projects, police housing and the rationalisation of police station jurisdictions. The Chief Minister stressed the need to strengthen the investigation process and ensure that criminal cases reach their logical conclusion through timely prosecution and conviction of offenders. The emphasis on improving investigations comes amid concerns over Assam’s relatively low chargesheeting rate. The state government told the Assembly on July 6 that police had filed chargesheets in only 54 per cent of nearly 10 lakh cases registered across Assam since the BJP came to power in 2016.

The latest review therefore places greater emphasis on improving investigative efficiency and strengthening the overall criminal justice process. In a separate development, Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota met Major General Inderjit Singh Bhinder, Inspector General of Assam Rifles (East), on Monday. The meeting focused on improving coordination between civil authorities and security forces, particularly in the areas of security, border management and development.

Kota also acknowledged the Assam Rifles’ role in maintaining peace and security and its continued engagement with communities across the Northeast.

The two meetings underline the state government’s focus on strengthening both civilian policing and coordination with security forces as part of its wider law-and-order and public safety strategy.

Assam Set to Resume Eviction Drive Against 59 Families Along Nagaland Border

GUWAHATI

The Assam government is preparing to resume an eviction drive against 59 families living at No. 2 Negherbil along the Assam-Nagaland border after the Supreme Court cleared the way for the Golaghat district administration and Forest Department to proceed.

A team of officials from the district administration and Forest Department visited the area on Sunday and served a final notice to the remaining families, directing them to vacate their homes by August 18.

As part of preparations for the proposed eviction, officials numbered the houses and conducted a detailed survey of the area using drone cameras. The Forest Department had earlier carried out an eviction drive against 205 families in No. 2 Negherbil. However, 59 families resisted the action and approached the Gauhati High Court before subsequently moving the Supreme Court.

The families had secured a stay on the eviction proceedings while the matter remained under judicial consideration. The Supreme Court has since ruled in favour of the Assam government, paving the way for the authorities to resume the eviction process, officials said.

Following the court’s decision, the district administration issued notices directing the remaining families to vacate within the stipulated deadline. Officials indicated that if the families fail to comply, an eviction drive could be carried out after August 18.

The development comes amid renewed efforts by Assam and Nagaland to prevent their long-standing border dispute from escalating.

Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton met Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati on July 29 to discuss inter-state relations, cooperation and proposed oil and gas exploration along the border.

Patton has maintained that border-related issues should be addressed through dialogue, joint action and co-ordination between the two states while respecting existing agreements, including the 1972 Interim Agreement.

Nagaland has also maintained that while it supports action against illegal encroachment, evictions and other activities in sensitive border areas should be undertaken in coordination with the administrations of both states to prevent fresh tensions along the disputed frontier.

Kaushik Rai takes development review to the ground, checks healthcare and key project works in Silchar

SILCHAR

Assam Govt’s Minister for Food, Public distribution, Consumer affairs, Housing and Urban affairs and Cooperation, Kaushik Rai on Monday took a ground-level look at healthcare services and ongoing infrastructure works in Silchar, visiting three sites and seeking direct feedback from patients, officials and those executing major government projects.

At Silchar Medical College and Hospital, Minister Kaushik Rai inaugurated a newly installed advanced CT Scan machine and later went around different departments to assess the services being provided to patients. He reviewed the availability of facilities for patients and their attendants, cleanliness and the overall functioning of the hospital.

The minister also spoke to patients undergoing treatment and their family members, listening to their experiences and the difficulties they were facing. He asked the hospital authorities to address the issues raised during the interactions and ensure that patients do not face avoidable difficulties while accessing treatment and other services.

After inaugurating the CT Scan facility, Minister Rai said its availability would make advanced diagnostic services quicker and more accessible to people across the Barak Valley.



“People requiring advanced diagnostic tests should not have to travel outside the region whenever such facilities are needed. The new CT Scan machine will help patients get diagnosis done here and enable doctors to take treatment decisions more quickly,” Minister Kaushik Rai said.

He said improving access to mod-

ern and quality healthcare remained a priority of the government led by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. The minister said the focus would remain on improving medical infrastructure as well as the day-to-day experience of patients visiting government health institutions.

The Minister later inspected the

ongoing construction of the Integrated District Commissioner’s Office in Cachar and reviewed the progress of the work at the site. Cachar District Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta and officials of the Public Works Department (Building) accompanied him during the inspection.

The Minister also sought an update on the progress of construction and discussed the work schedule with the officials. He directed the PWD officials and the contractor to ensure that the project progress without unnecessary delay and is completed within the stipulated timeframe while maintaining construction quality.

After inspecting the sites, Minister Rai said field visits give the administration a clearer picture of the actual situation and help identify problems that may not always be apparent from official reports.

“Whether it is a hospital providing services to patients or a government building under construction, our responsibility is to ensure that the work on the ground matches the expectations of the people. We have to identify shortcomings, respond to people’s concerns and ensure that projects are completed on time,” he said.

While sharing his reaction Minister Kaushik Rai said such inspections would continue and that departments would be expected to follow up on the issues raised during field visits, particularly those directly affecting public services and the timely completion of government projects.

This is stated in a press release issued by the Regional Office of Information & Public Relations Barak valley Zone Silchar Assam.

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Nearly 50% of Lok Sabha MPs face criminal cases, over 4,000 pending against lawmakers: SC told

NEW DELHI

As many as 251 of the 543 Lok Sabha MPs and 75 of the 233 Rajya Sabha members have declared criminal cases against them, according to data submitted by the amicus curiae in a report on the criminalisation of politics before the Supreme Court. The affidavit filed in the apex court by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, said that there are over 4,000 criminal cases against Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs).

Hansaria has been appointed as amicus curiae (Friend of the court to assist in the case) in a PIL filed by lawyer and Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, seeking expeditious dispos-

al of criminal cases against MPs and MLAs. The affidavit filed before the Supreme Court has stated that the chief ministers of 14 out of 28 states have declared criminal cases, including serious ones. According to the data submitted to the SC, Telangana CM Anumula Revanth Reddy faces the highest with 89 cases, followed by West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari with 29 cases, and Karnataka CM D K Shivakumar with 19 cases. Senior advocate Hansaria assisting the court as amicus, informed the bench that 4,192 criminal cases are pending against current and former MPs/MLAs. In 2025 alone, 1,243 cases were decided, while 1,050 new cases, were registered.

Citing ADR (Association for Democratic Reforms) data, the affidavit said 251 of 543 Lok Sabha MPs have criminal cases, with 170 being serious. In the Rajya Sabha, 75 of 233 members have cases, with 40 serious offences. Hansaria is assisting the court in the PIL filed by Upadhyay for speedy disposal of cases against the lawmakers. State-wise, 95% of Kerala MPs face charges, followed by 82% in Telangana and 76% in Odisha. Haryana and Chhattisgarh have just one MP each with cases. Hansaria sought directions for Special Courts for MPs/MLAs to conduct trials exclusively and for High Courts to monitor progress monthly to ensure disposal within one year of framing of charges.



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court directed the court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya to expedite its investigation and bring it to a logical conclusion. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana directed the SIT to file its status report in a sealed cover on the progress made in the investigation into the alleged donation theft case. The court, in its order, also asked the SIT to objectively consider any suggestions made by the different litigants before the court for qualitative improvement of the investigation and its transparency.

The bench passed these important directions after hearing a batch of pleas, as it said the SIT must conclude the investigation expeditiously and take it to its logical conclusion. The batch of petitions sought an inquiry into the allegations that donations made by devotees for the temple construction were not properly accounted for. The petitioners argued that, given the scale of public donations and the religious importance of the project, transparency was essential. The court noted that the SIT had already been constituted to look into the matter. It refrained from giving further directions on the scope of the probe but stressed that the investigation should not be delayed. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi

Teerth Kshetra Trust, which is overseeing the construction of the Ram temple, has earlier denied any irregularities and said all donations are duly recorded. The matter will now be taken up again by the top court after the SIT files its report before it. According to the petition, there were claims of improper accounting of devotees' contributions. The petitioners sought a court monitored probe to ensure accountability. The court did not expand the terms of reference but made it clear that the investigation should be completed at the earliest and the findings placed before it. The PIL (Public Interest Litigation) filed by advocates Narendra Kumar Goswami, Ajay Kumar Rai and Dinesh Kumar Yadav and others sought a

court monitored probe by the CBI and other agencies into the alleged misappropriation of donation funds collected at the Ram Mandir. The plea also said that there was urgency in the case, as physical, electronic, digital, banking and inventory records relating to donations and offerings at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, Ayodhya, are preserved. "CCTV/DVR/NVR data, QR/UPI/ payment gateway logs, hundi registers, counting sheets, bank records, vault access records, inventory records and all connected material are not destroyed, overwritten, altered, moved, substituted or tampered with. The available CCTV/DVR/NVR footage and digital payment records are forensically copied/hash sealed. The SIT status/preliminary report, if submitted, is kept available in sealed cover before this Court," the plea added. The petitioners also submitted that preservation of records would not prejudice any respondent. "It will not declare guilt. It will not interfere with any religious affair. It will not obstruct temple administration, worship, darshan, rituals, sewa or puja paddhati. It will only preserve the subject matter of justice," the petition stated.

The petitioners further added tat public faith is not weakened by transparency; it is strengthened by it. A matter concerning donations and offerings made by millions of devotees cannot be treated as an ordinary private accounting dispute. It concerns constitutional morality, public accountability, fiduciary responsibility and the rule of law in the secular administration of sacred public offerings. Goswami also stressed that the petition was confined strictly to secular aspects such as receipt, custody, counting, accounting, audit, digital trail, inventory control, CCTV preservation, QR/UPI verification, bank reconciliation and public accountability of donations and offerings. "It does not seek to touch religious practices protected under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution of India," the plea stated.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump says Kim Jong Un has responded to overtures, calls ties with North Korea 'very positive'

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump said that Kim Jong Un had responded to his recent overtures, a day after he scaled back military drills with South Korea and praised his relationship with the North Korean leader. Trump said he was making the situation "much safer" through his ties to Kim, whom he met three times in his first spell in the White House, but has yet to encounter during his second term. While praising the leader of nuclear-armed North Korea, he rebuked key ally Seoul for failing to help Washington fight Iran -- a war Trump says is aimed at stopping Tehran from getting the atomic bomb. Asked why Kim hadn't replied to his requests for a conversation since returning to office last year, Trump told reporters in the Oval Office: "How do you know he hasn't responded?" When pressed about whether Kim had actually responded, Trump said: "Yeah, he has." Asked what stage the conversations with Kim were at, Trump said "it's very positive," but provided no further detail. Trump then doubled down on his praise for Kim, saying their ties reduced tensions. "You see, I'm actually making it much safer. Kim Jong Un has always treated me with great respect," Trump said. "I understand him. He understands me." Trump initially took aim at South Korea on his Truth Social network on Sunday night, abruptly announcing that he had ordered the Pentagon to scale back "inappropriate and hostile" military drills with Seoul.



He also linked the decision to South Korea's refusal to help with the US-Israeli war with Iran. "Wait a minute. We have 39,000 soldiers over there, guarding you from Kim Jong Un, your next-door neighbor, and you're not going to help us on a very easy military operation in Iran. That's strange," Trump said in the Oval Office. Trump once again called into question US support for both South Korea and NATO allies that have refused to contribute to the Iran war. "We can't go around and protect all of these countries, especially when they're not there to help us," he said. South Korean officials said the

exercises had begun as planned and that they hoped the personal chemistry between Trump and Kim would bring them back to talks. North Korea has not responded publicly, although it has previously voiced anger at the regular joint maneuvers that take place in the South. The top US Senate Democrat on military affairs slammed Trump's order to downsize the Korean drills, and said China and Russia were "watching how easily this president abandons America's allies." "This is another inane, hap hazard decision by President Trump and his chaotic administration," Senate Armed Services Committee ranking member Jack

Reed said. The 11-day Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises are designed to prepare for a possible war with North Korea. Colonel Ryan Donald, spokesman for the US and South Korean Combined Forces Command, has said they will simulate combat against North Korean troops hardened by their deployment on Russia's side in its invasion of Ukraine. Seoul's presidential office told AFP it remained in "close coordination" with Washington over the exercises. Pyongyang decries the drills as dress rehearsals for an invasion. It recently test-fired a ballistic missile over the Sea of Japan, and warned on Friday it could respond to the exercises with a "new level of deterrent". During his first term, Trump said after his initial meeting with North Korea's Kim in Singapore in June 2018 that Washington would suspend the "provocative" drills. The United States stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to bolster the country's defenses, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War that ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty. Trump's repeated criticism of time-honored alliances has cast doubt on US commitments to security in East Asia. The announcement of the scaled-down drills came as the only US aircraft carrier operating in the Pacific region, the USS George Washington, is being redeployed to the Middle East to relieve the long-deployed USS Lincoln, which has been the focus of concerns over mental health and supply issues.

UN report on Al-Qaeda's presence in Bangladesh 'assumption-driven': Govt



DHAKA

Bangladesh termed a recent UN Security Council report on Al-Qaeda's attempt to establish cells in the country as "assumption-driven", saying the government is not taking any action based on the report. The 38th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted to the Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee concerning ISIL and Al-Qaeda said that there was some concern about Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) "trying to exploit Bangladesh to establish cells there." "We are not taking this (report) into consideration. I have not read the report yet. Besides, as far as I have heard, it says they have assumed that such a thing could happen. So, we are not taking any action based

on an assumption-driven report," Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed told reporters while replying to questions. The report, which was issued and circulated among member states last week, said that "AQIS continued to evolve from a fragmented group into a regional terrorist entity." "AQIS established logistics and financial networks, working in decentralised small, scattered cells instead of large units. The attack in November 2025 on the Red Fort in Delhi was officially attributed to AQIS," it said. Bangladesh police have said they had no specific info on AQIS cell risk. But a senior Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit officer of police, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Daily Star that Bangladesh's counter-terror-

ism capacity suffered over the last two years, when an interim regime largely ran the country. The Muhammad Yunus-led interim administration assumed power after a violent street protest toppled then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5, 2024. The interim regime continued until the elections on February 12, which installed Tarique Rahman's government. According to the paper, the CTTC official said that "experienced teams were weakened and surveillance on terrorism suspects released on bail was curtailed" during the past two years. Bangladesh last month ordered a nationwide security alert, particularly asking police to take care of their own personnel and vehicles, while a separate order was issued to heighten security at airports.

Why Dhaka Is Looking Past Hasina's December Return Plan

Bangladesh's latest position on Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's proposed visit to India has brought the strained ties between Dhaka and New Delhi back into focus. The Bangladesh Foreign Ministry's decision to link any rethink on the visit to India's handling of Dhaka's demand for the extradition of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is significant not only for bilateral relations but also for the political calculations surrounding Hasina's possible return home.

What is striking, however, is that Dhaka's official statement largely sidestepped one of the most politically consequential developments of recent weeks: Hasina's own announcement that she intends to return to Bangladesh in December.

Her declaration came during an online press conference held from outside Bangladesh. Rather than addressing the substance of her proposed return, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticised the very event at which she spoke and reiterated Dhaka's demand for her extradition from India.

That omission may be deliberate. Hasina's return presents Bangladesh with a political and legal dilemma that cannot easily be resolved through diplomatic pressure on New Delhi.

A relationship undergoing a rethink. The latest diplomatic friction comes at a time when a section of Bangladesh's establishment is openly arguing for a reassessment of relations with India.

A day before Dhaka ruled out Tarique Rahman's India visit, M. Humayun Kabir, president of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute and a former Bangladeshi ambassador to the United States, wrote in The Daily Star that bilateral relations had reached a point where they needed to be reconsidered from a "new perspective".

Kabir acknowledged that India's renewed interest in Bangladesh was understandable because the two countries remain deeply connected by geography, history and mutual dependence. But he also argued that Bangladesh was seeking to avoid excessive dependence on any single partner and instead pursue relations based on its own interests.

That argument reflects a broader debate inside Bangladesh over the country's foreign-policy direction.

For years, India was a central partner of the Sheikh Hasina government. Her administration maintained close security and economic cooperation with New Delhi, while India consistently regarded her government as an important stabilising force in the region.

The political landscape has changed dramatically since then.

With the BNP-led government now in office, sections of Bangladesh's political establishment are advocating a more diversified foreign policy, including stronger engagement with Pakistan and other external partners. For India, the shift has obvious strategic implications.

Domestic pressures complicate the picture. The BNP government is also facing substantial domestic challenges.

After six months in office, expectations for visible improvements in law and order, energy security and economic management remain high. Critics have argued that the government has been stronger on political messaging than on delivery.

The government is under pressure to contain inflation, mobilise revenue and address persistent energy shortages. Bangladesh's economic recovery remains vulnerable to external shocks as well.

The World Bank has projected Bangladesh's economic growth to slow to 3.9 per cent in fiscal year 2026. A prolonged conflict in the Middle East could further complicate the situation by increasing energy costs, fuelling inflation, reducing fiscal space and weakening the current account through higher import bills, softer exports and lower remittances.

In such circumstances, political instability is the last thing Dhaka needs.

That is precisely why Hasina's December announcement carries considerable weight.

Why December matters. Hasina has said that she intends to return to Bangladesh in December, coinciding with the country's Victory Month celebrations.

The timing is politically loaded. December is associated with Bangladesh's liberation in 1971 and carries enormous emotional significance. By choosing this period, Hasina is seeking to place her return within the broader narrative of the country's independence, sacrifice and national resilience.

She has also acknowledged that imprisonment or even death could await her.

The message is unmistakably political: Hasina is attempting to present herself not simply as a former prime minister returning to face the consequences of her political career, but as a leader willing to accept personal risks in the interest of Bangladesh's democratic future.

For the BNP-led government, this creates a difficult choice.

If Hasina returns and is arrested, the country could face demonstrations, confrontation between rival political forces and renewed street mobilisation. If she is prevented from returning, her supporters could portray the government as denying her the right to come home.

If the government negotiates with her, it could be accused by political opponents of compromising with a leader whose party has been banned from political activity.

There is no easy option. The Awami League factor. Hasina's possible return cannot be separated from the future of the Awami League.

The party, which dominated Bangladeshi politics for much of the past decade and a half, has been barred from political activity. Hasina remains its most prominent leader and the central figure around whom its political identity continues to revolve.

Her physical return could therefore have consequences far beyond an individual legal case.

It could energise the Awami League's organisational network, mobilise her supporters and intensify political competition at a time when the BNP government is attempting to consolidate its position.

The possibility of renewed confrontation is particularly sensitive because Bangladesh has already experienced pro-found political

HASINA'S DECEMBER RETURN PLAN

After months in exile, Sheikh Hasina signals a comeback to Bangladesh in December.

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE

- DECEMBER RETURN**
Hasina aims to return to Dhaka in December 2025.
- RALLY & MOBILISATION**
She plans a massive public rally to reassert her leadership.
- POLITICAL STRATEGY**
Rebuilding Awami League support and regrouping party leaders.
- SECURITY & SUPPORT**
Relying on loyalists, grassroots networks and security assurances.
- EYES ON ELECTIONS**
Positioning for the next elections and a return to power.

"I WILL RETURN TO MY BELOVED COUNTRY. THE PEOPLE WILL DECIDE MY FATE."

— SHEIKH HASINA

upheaval. The government would therefore have to balance the demand for accountability with the need to prevent a new cycle of instability.

Jamaat and the Pakistan question. The government is also facing criticism from another direction.

The opposition alliance led by Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has attacked the BNP government over its outreach to Pakistan, arguing that improving ties with Islamabad should not come at the expense of relations with India.

Jamaat's position carries particular historical significance.

The party opposed Bangladesh's independence in 1971 and was subsequently banned during the Hasina era. That ban was lifted under the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus. Jamaat has since emerged as a significant opposition force and is pressing the government to implement the July Charter, although the initiative continues to face legal and constitutional questions.

The government therefore finds itself caught between competing pressures: one side demanding a tougher line on India and closer engagement with Pakistan, and another warning against allowing bilateral relations with New Delhi to deteriorate.

Hasina's case sits directly at the centre of that foreign-policy debate.

The extradition treaty. Dhaka's demand for Hasina's extradition is based partly on the existence of an extradition treaty between India and Bangladesh, signed in 2013 and amended in 2016.

But the treaty is not as straightforward as a simple obligation to surrender an accused person. Article 6 provides scope for refusing extradition in cases involving political offences. At the same time, the treaty excludes certain serious crimes from the category of political offences, including murder, manslaughter, grievous assault and certain offences involving explosives or firearms intended to endanger life.

This creates a complicated legal question for New Delhi.

The Bangladeshi government may view the extradition demand as a matter of justice and accountability. India, however, must examine the request through the treaty, domestic law and the judicial process surrounding the charges against Hasina.

The fact that a death sentence hangs over the former prime minister makes the issue even more sensitive.

A dangerous political dilemma. Hasina, now 78, is not an ordinary political fugitive. She is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding leader of Bangladesh, and a former prime minister who dominated the country's political system for years.

The history of her family makes the current situation even more emotionally charged.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his wife Begum Fazilatunnesa, their sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and 10-year-old Sheikh Russel, along with other family members, were killed in coordinated attacks in Dhaka in August 1975. Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana survived because they were abroad at the time.

Hasina's personal history therefore remains deeply intertwined with Bangladesh's political history.

Her opponents see her as responsible for serious abuses and demand accountability. Her supporters continue to regard her as the political heir of the country's founding leadership.

Her return could bring those competing narratives into direct confrontation.

India's difficult calculation. For New Delhi, the issue is equally sensitive.

India has traditionally valued political stability in Bangladesh and has developed extensive cooperation with Dhaka on security, connectivity, trade, border management and regional infrastructure.

The present deterioration in bilateral relations therefore carries costs for both sides.

India must weigh its treaty obligations and judicial considerations against the strategic importance of maintaining a functional relationship with Bangladesh. Any decision regarding Hasina could also affect India's wider standing among Bangladesh's political constituencies.

Handing her over in circumstances involving a possible death sentence would carry significant legal and political consequences. Refusing extradition could further deepen tensions with the current

Bangladeshi government.

The issue cannot, therefore, be reduced to a simple diplomatic demand.

Why Dhaka may be avoiding the December question.

This explains why the Bangladeshi government may be choosing not to engage directly with Hasina's December declaration.

Acknowledging her proposed return would force Dhaka to confront the question of what happens if she actually arrives.

Would she be arrested immediately? Would authorities guarantee a legal process? Would her supporters be allowed to mobilise? Would her return trigger street violence? Would the government risk turning her arrival into a political spectacle? Every answer carries risks.

By focusing instead on the extradition request, Dhaka can keep the initiative in the diplomatic arena and leave the immediate question of Hasina's physical return largely in the hands of New Delhi. But that strategy may not remain viable if Hasina follows through on her announcement.

Wait and watch.

Bangladesh is navigating a fragile political and economic transition. The BNP government is under pressure to deliver on the economy, improve public security and consolidate political legitimacy. At the same time, opposition forces are testing

its foreign-policy choices.

Against that background, Hasina's proposed return in December could become the single most disruptive political event on the horizon.

Her arrival could strengthen the Awami League's mobilisation, provoke confrontation with the government and expose deep divisions within Bangladesh's political system. Her arrest could produce unrest and international scrutiny. Her continued stay in India could keep the extradition dispute alive and place additional pressure on India-Bangladesh relations.

For Dhaka, therefore, ignoring Hasina's December statement may be less an indication that the announcement is unimportant than a recognition of how difficult the issue is.

For New Delhi, the challenge is equally formidable. The extradition treaty provides a framework, but the death sentence, the nature of the charges and the political circumstances surrounding the case demand careful legal examination.

The coming months will show whether Hasina's December declaration was a political statement, a serious plan to return, or the opening move in a much larger confrontation over Bangladesh's political future.

For now, both Dhaka and New Delhi appear to have strong reasons to wait and watch.

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- Website
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ABOUT JIGYASU

Jigyasu, a brand of Dasco Education Pvt. Ltd., is transforming education through experiential learning. We develop innovative science and technology models that simplify complex concepts and make learning engaging for students.

ROLE

Drive sales by demonstrating products to schools and offering technical solutions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Conduct demos & presentations
- Understand client needs
- Travel for meetings
- Achieve sales targets

REQUIREMENTS

- Graduate/PG in Science and Engineering
- Good communication skills
- Sales interest & willingness to travel

DETAILS

₹25,000-₹35,000/month + incentives

Locations: Kolkata, Delhi, Bhubaneswar, Bangalore, Guwahati, Silchar

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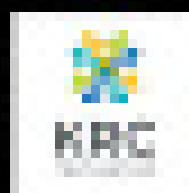


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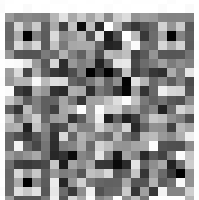


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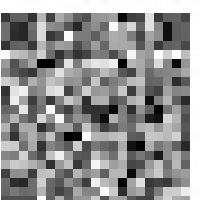


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ABOUT US

KRC TIMES Is a Journalistic Initiative from KRC Foundation where we follow our core philosophy of 'Connecting the unconnected' We cater to the untold and unheard stories with an aim to reach the last mile.

KRC TIMES E-COPY NE India Edition

- 5 Page e-copy published every evening
- Front Page, Editorial, Regional, National & 5Es/Advertorials

Why e-paper

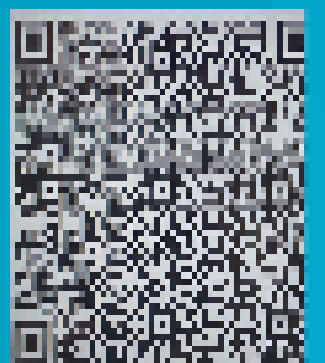
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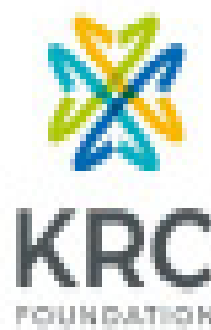
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Writing Star Contest

MAY-NOV 2026

DIGITAL PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATE
THE SELECTED ARTICLE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON
WWW.KRCTIMES.COM

"I can shake off everything as I write;
my sorrows disappear, my courage is
reborn."
- Anne Frank

TOPICS

- INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NER (ROADS, RAILS, AVIATION, HYDROPOWER & SECURITY)
- PROMOTING TOURISM, MSME, AGRO & HORTICULTURE, ACT EAST DIPLOMACY
- DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ADVENTURE SPORTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
- SE FOR SUCCESS- PROMOTING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Open to Students from Class VI to Senior Citizens, divided into 5 categories+topics

Each entry will receive a digital participation certificate

There is NO fee for participation

The selected entry will be published on www.krcetimes.com

email articles: info@krcfoundation.org

5 categories: A- Class- VI, VII, VIII | B- Class- IX, X, XI, XII | C-College & PG Students | D- Working Class & Homemaker | E- Retired & Senior Citizen (60+)

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