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PERSPECTIVE

Daydreaming is said to help people focus on what they want in life.

Plain Flowerpecker returns to Manipur’s Kamjong after nearly 30 years

IMPHAL
The elusive plain flowerpecker (*Dicaeum minululum*) has been recorded at Kasom Khullen in Manipur’s Kamjong district after nearly three decades, drawing renewed attention to the biodiversity and ecological significance of the region’s forested areas.

The bird was spotted by environmental activist Jojo Robertson in the forested landscape along Manipur’s southeastern frontier with Myanmar. The sighting is considered significant as the plain flowerpecker has not been recorded in the area for several decades. Measuring around 8 to 9 cm in length, the plain flowerpecker is a small songbird with relatively subdued plumage. It has brownish-olive upperparts, pale olive-toned underparts, a short, slightly curved dark bill and large dark eyes.

The active bird is commonly associated with flowering plants, feeding on nectar and small insects.

Locally known as Aentek, the species also has a close ecological association with the red-spoke mistletoe, locally called Aenjet Thae. The parasitic plant grows on the branches of mature trees and relies on birds for seed dispersal.

The flowerpecker feeds on the mistletoe’s sticky berries. After feeding, the bird often rubs its bill against tree bark, leaving behind seeds that can eventually germinate on tree branches and establish new mistletoe plants.

WHO SAID WHAT



The so called “disconnect” of Assam began after it decisively repelled successive Islamic invasions. As large parts of India came under Islamic rule, Assam remained unconquered and gradually drifted away from the nation’s consciousness. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

Assam STF Arrests Alleged Pakistan-Based Terror Network Operative In Hailakandi

GUWAHATI
The Assam Police Special Task Force (STF), in a joint operation with Hailakandi District Police, arrested another alleged operative of the Pakistan-based Shahzad Bhatti Network (SBN) in Hailakandi district early Wednesday, taking the number of arrests linked to the network in the state to four.

The arrested person has been identified as 21-year-old Fazal Islam Barbhuiyan, a resident of Ramnathpur in Hailakandi. Police said he had been evading arrest in connection with STF Police Station Case No. 06/2026.

According to the STF, the arrest was made on the basis of leads generated during the investigation following the detention of three other suspected operatives in different districts of Assam. Police said incriminating articles and documents were recovered from Barbhuiyan and seized during the operation.

The STF had earlier arrested three alleged SBN operatives in coordinated operations with police teams in Dhubri, Chirang and Barpeta in July.

The three were identified as Akramul Islam of Beparipara in Dhubri, Aminur Rahman of Dhupiri in Pan-



bari, Chirang, and Abdul Hussain of Dabandia in Kalgachia, Barpeta.

The arrests followed intelligence inputs concerning the activities of the Shahzad Bhatti Network, which Assam Police alleges has been involved in recruitment, online radicalisation, reconnaissance, logistics, espionage, illegal procurement of arms, establishment of sleeper cells and the facilitation of terrorist activities. Police have also alleged that the network operates in association with, and under the direction of, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Investigators have claimed to

have uncovered links between the alleged network and several organisations, including the Khalistan Armed Force (KAF), Punjab Sovereignty Alliance (PSA), Khalistan Liberation Army (KLA), Sher-e-Punjab Brigade (SPB), United Sikh Brotherhood (USB), Sikh Tigers of Khalistan (STK) and Tehrik-e-Taliban Hindustan (TTH).

According to Assam Police, these groups are suspected of being used as front organisations to conceal the network’s operational structure and its alleged cross-border links.

The SBN first came under the Assam Police’s radar during an investigation in Nalbari district, which led to the arrest of an alleged operative on May 22 this year. The latest arrest comes amid a wider nationwide security operation against the alleged Shahzad Bhatti network. On August 12, security agencies claimed to have foiled a major terror plot ahead of Independence Day and arrested 253 people across 14 states. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the multi-state raids were part of a coordinated operation aimed at dismantling a Pakistan-backed ISI module allegedly operated by Shahzad Bhatti.

Kohima to host F1 Sim Racing India Open round for first time



KOHIMA

Nagaland is set to host a round of the F1 Sim Racing India Open 2026 for the first time, with Kohima scheduled to stage the two-day competition on August 28 and 29 as part of the Tech X Gaming (TXG) Expo Nagaland 2026. The event will be held at the NBCC Convention Hall and will feature separate junior and senior categories. Participants will compete using the official F1 game.

Organisers said the Kohima round will provide young racers and gaming enthusiasts from Nagaland and other parts of the Northeast with an opportunity to compete on a national platform.

Ishaan Bhatnaya of Mumbai Falcons Racing Limited, which is conducting

the Kohima round, said the championship is India’s first official Formula 1-sanctioned national sim racing competition and is designed to identify and develop emerging motorsport talent.

The event is expected to bring together esports, motorsport and technology, while providing participants with exposure to competitive sim racing at the national level.

The F1 Sim Racing India Open is also being positioned as a platform for discovering and nurturing young talent with an interest in motorsport and digital racing.

The TXG Expo Nagaland 2026 will run alongside the competition and feature activities centred on gaming, esports, technology, artificial intelligence and digital creativity.

Organisers have planned competitions, workshops, exhibitions and interactive sessions during the two-day expo. The event is expected to attract gamers, students, young creators, technology enthusiasts and others interested in emerging digital industries.

The hosting of a national-level sim racing event in Kohima is being seen as an opportunity to expand the region’s presence in the rapidly growing esports and gaming ecosystem while giving local participants greater access to national competitions.

Centre clears 3.8 lakh PMAY homes for Assam, Rs 5,000 crore investment



GUWAHATI

The Centre has approved 3.8 lakh new houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) for Assam, involving an investment of nearly Rs 5,000 crore, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday.

Sarma met Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who formally handed over the approval documents for the housing projects. The Union minister also assured the Chief Minister of additional assistance under PMAY for families whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the recent floods, allowing them to rebuild at the earliest.

“Deeply grateful to Hon’ble Union Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan Ji for the priority and support he continues to extend to Assam,” Sarma said in a post on X.

According to the Chief Minister, the Centre has approved 3.8 lakh new houses under PMAY with an investment of close to Rs 5,000 crore. Additional support will also be extended for housing development in Assam’s tea garden areas.

The announcement comes as the

State continues its recovery from the recent floods, which caused extensive damage to homes and infrastructure across several districts.

Sarma said the additional housing assistance would help flood-affected families rebuild their homes and resume normal lives.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister also received a sanction letter for Rs 139 crore under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). The funds are aimed at strengthening agricultural investment and promoting sustainable farming practices in Assam.

Sarma thanked Chouhan for what he described as prompt decisions and continued support to the State, particularly during the recent floods.

The latest housing approval is expected to provide a major boost to Assam’s rural housing programme while supporting reconstruction efforts in flood-affected areas.

With additional assistance planned for tea garden communities, the initiative is also likely to benefit sections of the population living in some of the State’s economically vulnerable areas.

Assam bags three spots among India’s first certified Tea Sommeliers

GUWAHATI
Assam has secured three spots in the country’s first batch of formally certified Tea Sommeliers, marking a significant step towards building professional expertise and adding greater value to India’s tea industry beyond production.

Bhargav Raj Barkakoty, Jayant Jalan and Pritam Kr Sharma were among seven participants from across India who successfully completed the 60-hour “Essentials of Tea Sommelier” course conducted by the Tea Board of India at the Darjeeling Tea Research & Development Centre (DTRDC), Kurseong, from August 3 to 9.

The other four successful candidates were Anandh Kumar of Tamil Nadu, Bhumeet Nandal of Haryana, and Akash Deep Roy and Ajay Sashankar of West Bengal.

The programme is the first government-launched, NCVET-approved certificate course in Tea Sommelier skills and is aligned with NSQF Level 4. The qualification is issued by the Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI) under the NCVET framework and carries 60 hours of training and two credits.

Unlike conventional tea production courses, the programme focuses on the art and science of understanding, tasting and presenting tea. Its curriculum includes tea appreciation in fine-dining and premium settings, tasting protocols, palate development, tea blending and innovation, as well as artisanal and emerging tea practices.

The development is particularly significant for Assam, which accounts for roughly half of India’s tea

production and is among the world’s most recognised tea-growing regions.

Assam has traditionally been known for the scale and strength of its tea production. The emergence of professionally trained tea sommeliers, however, could help expand the value chain through premium tea promotion, hospitality, retail, professional tea service, consumer education and tea tourism.

A tea sommelier’s role extends beyond serving the beverage. Professionals trained in the field are equipped to identify and explain variations in aroma, flavour, appearance, liquor, preparation methods and craftsmanship, helping transform tea from a routine beverage into a more experiential and knowledge-driven product.

The course was open to beginners, hospitality professionals, tea enthusiasts, aspiring sommeliers and those involved in tea retail and marketing.

The participation of three candidates from Assam in the inaugural batch is therefore notable for a State where tea remains closely linked to its economy, culture and identity.

The initiative reflects a broader shift in the tea industry towards recognising tea not simply as an agricultural commodity, but as a product whose value can be enhanced through expertise, presentation, experience and professional service.

For Assam, the emergence of its first batch of certified Tea Sommeliers could pave the way for a stronger ecosystem of tea professionals and help take the State’s tea narrative beyond the plantation and into premium markets, hospitality spaces and the global tea experience.

Over 65 Guwahati jail inmates reportedly test HIV positive

GUWAHATI

More than 65 inmates at Guwahati Central Jail have reportedly tested positive for HIV, sources said, raising concerns over healthcare, screening and preventive measures inside the prison.

According to sources, over 65 prisoners currently lodged at the jail are living with HIV. A significant number of those reportedly affected are facing cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

The reported figures have brought renewed attention to the health risks faced by prison inmates, particularly those involved in drug-related cases.

However, the circumstances in which the inmates contracted HIV have not been established. While substance use may have been a factor in some cases, there is no official confirmation linking the infections to any particular mode of transmission. Details about the inmates’ treatment, access to antiretroviral therapy and their present health condition were not immediately available. The reported cases have also highlighted the need for regular HIV screening, timely treatment, counselling and stronger preventive healthcare measures in correctional facilities.

Authorities are yet to publicly clarify the total number of HIV-positive inmates at the jail or provide details of the medical protocols being followed to ensure their treatment and prevent further transmission.

Census duty leaves Assam schools short of teachers, syllabus completion suffers

GUWAHATI
The deployment of teachers for Census 2027 duties has disrupted regular classes in government schools across Assam, with acute staff shortages leaving several institutions struggling to complete their syllabi ahead of the half-yearly examinations.

The impact is particularly severe in primary schools, many of which operate with only one or two teachers. Teachers’ organisations said the situation could worsen in the coming months as schools prepare for examinations, the third phase of Gunotsav and the next stage of the census exercise.

Assam State Primary Teachers’ Association general secretary Ratul Chandra Goswami said the disruption at the primary level had become particularly serious.

“The average number of teachers in primary schools in Assam is two. From the first week of August, teaching has almost stopped in many schools,” Goswami said.

Several government schools in the State function with a single teacher, a situation that has also been acknowledged by the Education Minister in the Assembly. Teachers said districts such as Chi-

rang, Baksa, Nalbari and Sonitpur were among those facing significant difficulties because of staff shortages.

The shortage has forced schools to adopt unusual arrangements to keep students engaged. In some institutions, cooks have been asked to supervise children, while senior students have been helping younger ones with lessons.

At Hatigaon High School in Guwahati, principal Abha Saikia said regular classes had been severely affected as teachers were being called for census training and field duties.

“We already have two teachers on leave, and two teachers are pregnant. How can we afford to send six teachers for census duty? We are managing five classes with only five teachers now,” she said.

Teachers’ organisations stressed that they were not opposed to the census, describing it as an important national exercise. Their concern, they said, was the manpower planning required to ensure that the exercise did not disrupt school education.

The timing of the exercise has added to the problem. In Assam, self-enumeration was conducted from August 2 to 16, while the House listing and Housing Census began on August 17 and will continue

until September 15. Goswami suggested expanding the pool of personnel involved in the exercise by including teachers from private schools. “If the government can bring the fee structure of private schools under law, conduct examinations through government mechanisms and involve their teachers in evaluation of answer scripts, why can’t private school teachers also be engaged in census duty?” he asked.

Teachers have also raised concerns over their safety during door-to-door enumeration. Utpal Chakrabarty, secretary of the Assam Junior College Teachers’ Association and general secretary of the Sadou Assam Sanmilita Sikshak Mancha, said the organisation had taken up the issue with the State government following incidents involving teachers engaged in census work.

In Bongaigaon district, a teacher was allegedly threatened with a sharp weapon while conducting enumeration in the Abhayapuri subdivision. In another incident, a woman teacher was injured in a dog attack at Dergaon. Enumerators in some other areas have also reported instances of harassment while carrying out their duties. The disruption has raised particular concern ahead of the half-yearly examinations scheduled for September.

“The half-yearly examinations are scheduled in mid-September, and the syllabus has not been completed yet,” Chakrabarty said.

Teachers’ organisations are also looking ahead to an increasingly crowded academic calendar. The third phase of Gunotsav is expected to begin in the first week of February, followed by the HSLC and HS final examinations around mid-February. The Population Enumeration phase of Census 2027 is expected to add another major administrative exercise to the period.

“It will be an immensely difficult situation, with no answers in sight,” Chakrabarty said. The teachers’ organisations have raised their concerns with Education Minister Dr Ranaj Pegu, who has assured them that the government will work out a mechanism to address the problem.

However, teachers remain sceptical about arrangements that could place additional responsibilities on an already stretched workforce.

Chakrabarty said teachers had earlier been directed to perform census duties alongside their regular school responsibilities, but the order was withdrawn following protests.

Two lanes of Dolaichonga elevated corridor open early, easing Haflong-Silchar traffic

HAFLONG

Traffic movement along the Haflong-Silchar route has eased considerably with two lanes of the newly constructed elevated corridor at Dolaichonga being opened to vehicles ahead of schedule.

The two lanes of the elevated section of the Silchar-Saurashtra East-West Corridor were opened to traffic on Monday, providing relief to commuters who had been facing prolonged congestion and delays along the hilly stretch.

The Dolaichonga section had emerged as a major bottleneck on the Haflong-Silchar route due to difficult terrain, ongoing construction and traffic restrictions. Long queues of passenger buses, goods-laden trucks and private vehicles were frequently reported, particularly during peak hours. The elevated corridor has been constructed as part of efforts by the national highways authorities to improve traffic flow and strengthen connectivity along the strategic highway.

According to the authorities, the Dolaichonga elevated corridor was originally scheduled to be completed by September 20. However, the

first two lanes were opened nearly a month ahead of the deadline on August 24. The remaining two lanes are expected to be opened to traffic by September 15, officials said. The early opening has brought considerable relief to residents and regular commuters. The route is particularly vulnerable during the monsoon, when landslides, road repair works and heavy traffic often disrupt movement through the hilly terrain. Residents welcomed the opening of the elevated section but urged the authorities to accelerate work on the remaining portions of the highway. Several stretches of the Haflong-Silchar road are still under construction, and commuters said timely completion of the works would be crucial to ensuring smoother movement, particularly during the ongoing monsoon season.

The full commissioning of the Dolaichonga elevated corridor is expected to further reduce congestion and improve travel time along the important Haflong-Silchar connection, which serves as a key link between the hill district and the Barak Valley.



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GAGGING THE DIGITAL JESTER

A democracy cannot remain healthy when the powerful become increasingly intolerant of ridicule. Yet that is precisely the danger posed by the growing attempts to control dissent on social media. At a time when much of the conventional press has lost public credibility and appears increasingly dependent on government patronage, citizens have turned to digital platforms for alternative voices, satire and criticism. The old newspaper cartoon once performed that role. Today, the meme, parody video and satirical post have become the new political cartoon. Their irreverence is not a threat to democracy; silencing it is.

The reported crackdown on the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), a satirical youth movement that emerged in May 2026 amid anger over education reforms and examination leaks, illustrates the larger problem. What began as political satire reportedly acquired an extraordinary following, with its Instagram account crossing 23 million followers. The subsequent removal or restriction of protest-related content and the temporary suspension of the account raise uncomfortable questions about the relationship between governments and technology platforms.

Particularly troubling is the alleged use of Section 79(3) (b) of the Information Technology Act to remove content, rather than relying on the judicial safeguards associated with Section 69A. If political criticism can be erased through administrative pressure without adequate transparency or meaningful avenues of appeal, the issue is far bigger than the fate of one satirical organisation. It concerns the constitutional space available to every citizen to question those in power.

The right to ridicule authority is one of democracy's oldest safety valves. India's political and cultural traditions have long recognised the importance of the court jester who could say what others could not. Birbal, Tenali Rama and the Vidushaka represented, in different ways, the power of humour to expose arrogance and puncture the pretensions of the powerful. Satire survives because it speaks uncomfortable truths in a language that ordinary people understand.

The digital meme is the modern incarnation of that jester.

Governments may find criticism unpleasant, but discomfort is not a legitimate reason for censorship. A government secure in its democratic mandate should be able to withstand parody, mockery and sharp political criticism. Indeed, the ability to absorb ridicule is often a better measure of democratic confidence than the ability to win elections.

This is especially important at a time when young Indians face deep anxieties over employment, education, competitive examinations and administrative accountability. Suppressing their digital expression does not eliminate those grievances. It merely removes one of the most accessible avenues through which those grievances are articulated.

History offers a warning. The Emergency demonstrated that censorship can temporarily silence newspapers, political opponents and dissenting voices. It could not, however, erase public anger. When citizens eventually received an opportunity to express their verdict, the political consequences were severe. Suppression can postpone confrontation; it cannot permanently settle the questions that produced dissent in the first place.

India must therefore be careful not to drift towards a model in which political speech on the internet is controlled through informal pressure on technology companies. Democracies should not aspire to the tightly controlled digital environment associated with authoritarian systems. Nor should the country normalise internet restrictions and communication blackouts as convenient instruments of political management.

That does not mean social media should be treated as an unquestionable source of truth. It is not. Fake news, manipulated videos, anonymous propaganda and coordinated disinformation are genuine threats. Platforms have a responsibility to act against unlawful and demonstrably harmful content. But fighting misinformation cannot become a convenient justification for suppressing political dissent.

The distinction is fundamental. A democracy must regulate harmful conduct without criminalising disagreement.

Transparency is therefore essential. When political content is removed, citizens should know who ordered its removal, under what law, on what grounds and with what avenue of appeal. Technology companies must not become opaque extensions of executive authority. Nor should government agencies be able to exert informal pressure that achieves through the back door what cannot be justified openly through law.

The Opposition, too, cannot escape responsibility for this democratic deficit. Parliament remains the country's principal forum for political debate and executive accountability. Disrupting proceedings, staging walkouts and reducing parliamentary business to repeated confrontation may generate headlines, but it weakens the very institution that should provide the strongest platform for challenging government policy.

A functioning democracy requires both a responsible government and an effective Opposition. When either side abandons debate, citizens inevitably search for alternative arenas. Social media then becomes not merely a source of entertainment but a parallel political forum.

That transformation should concern everyone, but the answer cannot be to silence the forum.

The traditional media has an equally important responsibility. If newspapers and television channels increasingly appear reluctant to question authority, the public will naturally look elsewhere. The answer is not to blame citizens for consuming social media. It is for professional journalism to reclaim its credibility through independent reporting, rigorous investigation and fearless scrutiny of those in power.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You never get over it, but you get to where it doesn't bother you so much.
- Jeffrey Eugenides

India-Bangladesh ties amid tensions: Tarique's Delhi visit, Hasina's return to Dhaka



NAEEM NIZAM

The existing complexities in India-Bangladesh relations are showing no sign of easing. Amid multiple ongoing crises, the issue of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visit to India has now emerged as a major point of discussion in the diplomacy and politics of the two countries.

Whether Tarique Rahman will visit India or not is currently one of the most discussed issues between the two countries. A new factor is Bangladesh's possible joining of the joint defence alliance recently formed among Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey, described as an "Islamic NATO".

Bangladesh State Minister for Foreign Affairs Humayun Kabir has told the media that, considering the country's national interests and the changing dynamics of global trade, Bangladesh is positively considering joining the alliance.

The question now is how India is viewing the development.

Bangladesh has already conveyed to India in various ways that relations will not return to what they were before and that Dhaka will not compromise on the question of its dignity.

A major setback to normal relations between the two countries came after the fall of the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024. The friendship built through the Liberation War of 1971 also suffered a setback, while relations came under further strain after Dr Muhammad Yunus became Chief Adviser.

After assuming power, Yunus not only played the anti-India card but also further aggravated tensions between the two countries. He allegedly incited people in Bangladesh against India and made provocative speeches concerning the "Seven Sisters", which were seen as lacking diplomatic etiquette. These remarks were also carried by international media.

Even after the departure of Yunus and Company and the return of a political party to power, anti-India propaganda has not stopped in Bangladesh. Though it has somewhat declined, the main opposition Jamaat-e-Islami and its student allies, the NCP, have maintained a strongly anti-India position.

The two groups have maintained close relations with Paki-

stan and China. They are opposing the Prime Minister's proposed visit to India and have set conditions for the trip. The government in power is also facing pressure over these demands.

In an Awami League-less Bangladesh, opposition Jamaat-e-Islami is historically regarded as pro-Pakistan. The party opposed the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 and wanted to preserve undivided Pakistan. It has still not accepted India's 1971 position in favour of Bangladesh's independence in a normal manner.

Two of its supporter spokespersons, Barrister Fuad and Barrister Shahriar, have openly made anti-India remarks in the media. As many as 211 institutions, parties and organisations are now active in Bangladesh with an anti-India position, according to the article, and are directly involved in anti-India campaigning.

After the BNP came to power, the government led by Tarique Rahman has favoured rebuilding relations with India. Proposals on ending the existing distances and identifying and resolving bilateral problems have also been placed on the table.

However, Tarique Rahman's party and government have yet to overcome their discomfort over India's relations with the Awami League government and the perceived lack of importance given to the BNP at that time.

In this situation, many believe that Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visit to India could help end many of the existing complications. A country can change friends, but it cannot change its neighbours. In geopolitical calculations, both countries need each other.

Economic and bilateral crises cannot be resolved without discussions at the negotiating table. Much, therefore, depends on the Prime Minister's visit to India.

The government in power has not been able to ignore the anti-India camp over Tarique Rahman's proposed visit. Instead, opposition to the visit has created fresh tension, sending what could be a wrong message in both countries.

Last July, Tarique Rahman was invited by India to attend the BRICS summit, but he did not go. A fresh invitation is now on his table.

Despite uncertainty surrounding the visit and intense diplomatic tensions, discussions have

not ended. The Bangladesh Prime Minister has placed conditions regarding his visit to India.

The question is whether India will accept the conditions and, if so, how.

Among the conditions placed before India are the return of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Bangladesh and the handing over to Bangladesh of two people detained in West Bengal who are accused in the murder of Hadi, a controversial student leader who had been involved in hardline anti-India and indecent propaganda.

Meanwhile, former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is living in India, has herself announced that she will return to Bangladesh next December.

Her announcement has prompted the Bangladesh government to reassess the situation. Sheikh Hasina continues to have a large support base in Bangladesh, and her announcement has created renewed mobilisation among her supporters.

There are also discussions within the government. If Sheikh Hasina returns, the government will have to provide her security. Even if she is detained in prison after returning, there are concerns that her party and supporters could become further energised. This could alter many political calculations in Bangladesh.

Diplomats, however, believe that diplomatic relations cannot progress very far through conditions. Many crises can be resolved at the negotiating table through friendship and dialogue. Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Mr Trivedi is considered an experienced politician. He has been more active than before in efforts to resolve the crisis and has been holding extensive engagements in Dhaka to build positive relations between the two countries. He is also active regarding Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's proposed visit.

Meanwhile, amid a severe fuel crisis in August, Bangladesh again sought additional diesel from India. India agreed to the request, marking the beginning of what could be described as fuel diplomacy.

There is no final word in diplomacy. The two countries will have to move forward keeping in mind the spirit of being neighbours.

No relationship can now remain dependent on one side as it was in the past. Rather, both coun-



tries are trying to create a new balance according to their respective needs.

The Ganges Water Treaty signed in 1996 is also likely to come up for discussion. The 30-year term of the agreement is nearing its end.

India and Bangladesh now need to discuss all river-related issues under the Joint Rivers Commission, not merely for discussion but with the objective of finding fresh solutions to the outstanding problems.

At the same time, the two sides need to hold frank discussions to avoid misunderstandings over

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Global food supply must not become collateral damage of conflict. Maritime chokepoints must never become instruments of coercion. ~

Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations

Bangladesh joining a military alliance involving countries such as Pakistan and Turkey.

If Bangladesh joins the alliance, the strategic distance between Dhaka and New Delhi and the wall of mistrust could increase further.

Bangladesh believes that, from a geopolitical perspective, joining the alliance would provide it with modern technology, military training and opportunities for joint arms production from militarily advanced countries such as Turkey and Pakistan.

It also expects stronger economic relations with a major economy such as Saudi Arabia. Bangladesh believes this could help strengthen its position in the Middle Eastern market, which is important for energy security and remittances.

By reducing excessive dependence on any single regional power, Bangladesh could make its foreign policy more diversified and independent.

However, the negative and risky aspect is that joining the alliance could create tensions with India in regional relations. It could bring fresh heat to the existing cold relationship.

If Bangladesh joins a military alliance involving countries such as Pakistan and Turkey, the strategic distance between Dhaka and New Delhi and the wall of mistrust could increase further.

Given the instability and conflict currently prevailing in the Middle East, involvement in such an alliance could also expose Bangladesh, unwillingly, to a conflict in the distant Middle East. The pressure to maintain a geopolitical balance could increase.

Amid rivalry among major powers such as the United States, China, India and Russia, Bangladesh has traditionally maintained a non-aligned position.

Entering a specific military bloc could expose the country to diplomatic and trade pressure from Western countries or major powers. The crisis surrounding Bangladesh's secular image could also deepen.

In the long term, the distance between Bangladesh and India could increase further.

(The author is the former editor of Bangladesh Pratidin, one of Dhaka's leading daily newspapers. Views are personal)

Tripura government provided 22,365 direct jobs:Manik Saha

AGARTALA
The Tripura government has provided direct employment to 22,365 people so far, including appointments under the die-in-harness scheme, while another 26,228 people have been engaged through contractual and outsourcing channels since 2018-19, Chief Minister Manik Saha said on Tuesday.

Saha, who also holds the Health portfolio, was speaking at a programme at Pragna Bhavan in Agartala where appointment offers were distributed to 42 General Duty Medical Officers (GD-MOs). The programme also included a state-level training programme for Medical Officers (Dental), Dental Surgeons and Community Health Officers.

The Chief Minister said the government had initially requisitioned the Tripura Public Service Commission (TPSC) to fill 224 GDMO vacancies. The commission recommended 216 candidates, following which appointment offers were issued to 214 after excluding two candidates who had already joined as Specialist Medical Officers.

Of the 214 candidates who received



offers, 160 accepted them and 152 have already joined government service, he said.

Saha said after learning that the TPSC panel remained valid for one year, he directed officials to expedite the recruitment process. Subsequently, on June 2, the commission recommended another 42 candidates, whose appoint-

ment offers were handed over at Tuesday's programme.

'Appointments based purely on merit'

Emphasising transparency in recruitment, Saha said appointments had been made solely on merit.

"No one was given a job here through favouritism. They secured these positions solely on the strength of their own merit," he said, referring to recruitment conducted through examinations and selection processes involving TET, JRBT and TPSC.

Addressing the newly appointed doctors, Saha said government service should not be viewed merely as employment but as a responsibility involving human lives.

He urged the doctors to work with patience, empathy and compassion and earn public trust through dedication to their duties.

The Chief Minister said the government was taking steps to address shortages of doctors in districts and subdivisions while also strengthening dental healthcare services.

Tripura has 123 sanctioned dental posts, of which 68 are currently filled and 49 remain vacant. Under the National Health Mission, 51 dental posts have been sanctioned, with 49 already filled.

Healthcare infrastructure expanded

Saha said the state's healthcare infrastructure had expanded significantly

in recent years, with hospital bed capacity increasing from 727 to 1,413. Another 100 beds are planned, he said.

The government is also developing super-speciality and critical-care facilities, communicable disease centres, evening outpatient departments and district-level healthcare infrastructure.

Saha said the government was working to establish Tripura as a medical hub through the expansion of medical colleges and institutions for dental, nursing and pharmacy education. Proposals for Ayurvedic and homoeopathic medical colleges and a separate Health University are also being pursued, he said.

He also stressed the importance of technology-driven healthcare, highlighting the Integrated Health Management Information System and AB-HA-linked digital medical records.

Focus on private-sector jobs

On employment generation, Saha said government jobs alone could not meet the aspirations of all job seekers and stressed the need to expand private-sector employment and invest-

Assam drivers await written proposal before Meghalaya transport talks

GUWAHATI
The Assam State Drivers' Association (ASDA) is awaiting a formal written communication from its Meghalaya counterparts before agreeing to talks to resolve the ongoing transport dispute between the two states.

The development comes amid reports of a proposed meeting between transport operators from Assam and Meghalaya on August 26. ASDA president Dhrubaraj Axom said the association had so far received only a verbal proposal over the phone from the All Khasi Meghalaya Tourist Taxi Association.

"We have received a verbal communication through phone for proposal of a meeting with All Khasi Meghalaya Tourist Taxi Association from Meghalaya," Axom said on Tuesday.

He said ASDA had sought a written communication before proceeding with any formal engagement.

"We had asked for a written assurance and so far, we have not received any. A formal meeting cannot be carried out without written communication. The next step depends on it," he said.

The issue comes days after Assam-registered tourist taxis resumed entering Meghalaya on August 24 following the withdrawal of a blockade by Meghalaya-based tourist taxi associations at Umiam.

The transport dispute erupted after violence during a Khasi Students' Union (KSU) rally in Shillong on August 19, during which several Assam-registered vehicles were allegedly attacked.

In response, drivers' and transport organisations in Assam launched protests and blocked key entry points to Meghalaya, severely disrupting passenger and commercial movement between the neighbouring states.

48 days on, flood relief still awaited: Akhil Gogoi leads Sivasagar protest

SIVASAGAR
Sivasagar MLA and Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi on Tuesday led a large protest demanding immediate disbursement of the Assam government's promised Rs 15,000 one-time assistance to families affected by the recent floods.

The protest was held at the Boarding Playground in Sivasagar town, where thousands of flood-affected residents gathered to voice their grievances over the alleged delay in receiving the relief.

Protesters claimed that 48 days after the Dikhow River floods caused widespread damage, several affected families were yet to receive the promised financial assistance. They alleged that the Sivasagar district administration had failed to ensure timely delivery of the relief despite the extent of the damage.

"It is sad to learn that 48 days have passed yet, the one-time flood relief has not reached the victims of Assam floods yet. We cannot tolerate this, hence today we are organising a mass protest," Gogoi said.

The MLA also demanded that the government increase the one-time assistance to Rs 10 lakh per flood-affected family, arguing that the scale of destruction warranted substantially higher compensation.

Gogoi warned that if the government failed to respond to the demands, he would lead affected residents to Guwahati to protest outside the Chief Minister's Office.

The protesters said the floods, triggered by the swelling Dikhow River following the release of water downstream from neighbouring Nagaland, caused extensive damage in parts of Sivasagar, Charaideo and Jorhat districts.

Residents taking part in Tuesday's demonstration said many families were struggling to recover from losses to their homes, property and livelihoods and had not yet received even the assistance announced by the government. They demanded immediate release of the pending relief and enhanced financial support for families that suffered substantial losses.

Over 1,100 Meghalaya government schools run with a single teacher

SHILLONG
As many as 1,124 government schools in Meghalaya are functioning with only one teacher, while 893 teaching posts remain vacant across the state, the Legislative Assembly was informed on Tuesday.

Education Minister Lakhmen Rymbui provided the figures during the autumn session in response to a question from legislator Mizanur Kazi on the status of infrastructure and staffing in government schools.

Of the 893 vacant teaching posts, 748 are in lower primary schools, 38 in upper primary schools, 91 in secondary schools and 16 in higher secondary schools.

The minister also informed the House of gaps in basic infrastructure across government-run schools. As many as 76 schools do not have science laboratories, while 18 schools lack computer facilities. One school was also reported to be without a library.



Rymbui said the government was taking several measures under its Mission Education initiative to improve infrastructure in government schools, particularly in the plain belt areas.

According to the minister, new school buildings have been constructed at several locations, while construction work is continuing at others. Infrastructure development has also been completed at a number of schools under the first two phases of the Mission Education programme.

Among the schools listed as completed under Phase I are Charbatapara Government LP School, Milonpur Government LP School, Bholarbhitia JB Government LP School, Pushkarni Para Govern-

ment LP School and Magurmari Government LP School.

Under Phase II, Ronkhala Government LP School, Chibinang Government LP School, Batabari Government LP School and Bhajamara Government LP School have been completed.

Hallidayganj JB Government LP School and Peradanga Government LP School have been completed under Phase III, while work at Golagre Government LP School is still underway.

The figures placed before the Assembly underscore the continuing challenges facing Meghalaya's government school system, with more than 1,100 schools dependent on a single teacher and hundreds of teaching posts yet to be filled.

The staffing shortage, coupled with gaps in laboratories, computer facilities and other basic infrastructure, remains a major challenge to ensuring adequate educational facilities for students across the state.

Nagaland Police to launch single-window complaint portal within 12 days

KOHIMA
The Nagaland Police will launch a single-window online complaint portal within the next 10 to 12 days to enable residents to lodge grievances, track their status and access police inquiry reports, Director General of Police Rupin Sharma said on Tuesday.

Addressing a state-level convergence meeting on violence against women and children, Sharma said the proposed system would allow people to submit complaints to the police regardless of whether the matter was eventually found to be criminal or civil in nature.

Under the new system, every complaint received will be assigned by the officer-in-charge of the concerned police station to an investigating officer for preliminary inquiry. The officer will then determine whether the complaint involves a cognisable offence, a non-cognisable offence or a purely civil dispute. If a cognisable

offence is established, the police station will be required to register an FIR. In non-cognisable cases, complainants may be advised to approach a magistrate, while purely civil disputes will fall outside police jurisdiction, Sharma said. Complainants will also be able to electronically track the progress of their cases and, in accordance with the new criminal laws, download a copy of the police inquiry report.

Senior police officers, from the police station level to the DGP's office, will also be able to monitor complaints through the portal.

Sharma said the system could be particularly useful in cases involving domestic violence, child abuse, stalking and harassment. A record of repeated complaints, he said, could help police identify behavioural patterns and intervene before situations escalate into more serious offences. "Your complaints will not

go unanswered," Sharma said, adding that complainants would be able to find out whether an FIR had been registered and, if not, the reasons for the decision. The DGP also highlighted the problem of under-reporting of violence and urged victims and members of the public to come forward with complaints. Failure to report incidents, he said, makes it difficult for authorities to assess the actual scale of the problem and plan resources, including manpower, shelter homes, vehicles and helpline services. Sharma clarified that while the police could not intervene in purely civil disputes, they could act when a criminal element was involved.

He also cautioned NGOs, village councils, customary institutions and other civil society organisations against taking the law into their own hands, particularly in cases involving cognisable offences such as rape and stalking.

Meanwhile, Director of Social Welfare Tosheli Zhimomi said one-stop centres across Nagaland handled 311 cases of gender-based violence during the last financial year, while the Women Helpline received 144 cases.

The cases included domestic violence, cybercrime, sexual assault, missing persons and other situations involving women in distress.

Under Mission Vatsalya, Child Welfare Committees received 640 cases involving children in need of care and protection during 2025-26, while Juvenile Justice Boards handled 56 cases involving children in conflict with the law.

Zhimomi said 639 children were residing in child care institutions across the state.

She added that Child Helpline 1098 received 2,632 cases between September 1, 2023, and March 25, 2026.

Arunachal contract row: SC seeks fresh CBI status report

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to submit a fresh status report on its preliminary enquiry into allegations of preferential allotment of government contracts in Arunachal Pradesh to firms allegedly linked to family members of Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

The direction came after the Arunachal Pradesh government told a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta that it had complied with the court's earlier direction to provide the CBI with the necessary records and documents.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state government, said the chief secretary and principal secretary (Home) of Arunachal Pradesh were present in court in compliance with the apex court's August 3 order.

Mehta said the state would demonstrate that it had complied with the court's directions "in letter and spirit" and sought time to place the relevant facts on record. He also told the bench that all documents sought by the CBI had been provided to the agency.

The bench granted the state two weeks to place its stand on record. After being informed that various documents had been handed over to the probe agency, the court asked the CBI to confirm whether it had received them.

The development assumes significance as the CBI had alleged in a status report filed before the Supreme Court last month that the state government was not cooperating in providing records as directed by the court.

During Monday's hearing, senior advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner organisations Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena, questioned whether the material collected and examined during the CBI's preliminary enquiry was sufficient to warrant registration of a regular case.

The bench said the question would have to be examined by the CBI. Bhushan subsequently sought a direction for the agency to submit an updated status report before the next hearing. The court accepted the request and directed the CBI to file a fresh report.

The Supreme Court had on April 6 directed the CBI to register a preliminary enquiry within two weeks into allegations of preferential allotment of government contracts in Arunachal Pradesh. The order followed a petition by Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena seeking an investigation by the CBI or a Special Investigation Team.

Nine Northeast teachers selected for National Teachers' Award 2026

GUWAHATI
Nine teachers from the Northeast have been selected for the National Awards to Teachers 2026, with educators from Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Sikkim, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh making the list.

President Droupadi Murmu will present the awards at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on September 5, coinciding with Teachers' Day celebrations.

The Northeast's representation includes two educators in the higher education and polytechnic category and seven school teachers.

From Assam, Gauhati University Professor and Head of the Department of Communication and Journalism Ankuran Dutta has been selected in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and polytechnics category. Rajesh Bordoloi of Adarsha Tribal Higher Secondary School in Jorhat has been chosen in the school teachers category.

Dutta and Dr Pukhrambam Lilabati Devi, Assistant Professor in the Department of Dance and Music at Manipur University, are the only two educators from the Northeast among the 21 awardees selected nationally in the HEI and polytechnic category.



Dutta, a communication scholar, cultural researcher and media practitioner, has more than two decades of experience across academia, media, diplomacy and the development sector. He received the National Award for Science and Technology Communication in 2018 for his contribution to media education and public communication.

He also founded Jnan Taranga, described as the Northeast's first community radio station, and e-Jnan Taranga, a web radio platform aimed at promoting grassroots communication and indigenous cultural outreach.

Manipur faculty member makes history

Dr Lilabati Devi has become the first faculty member of Manipur University to receive the National Award to Teachers.

With around 15 years of experience in teaching, research and performance, she has worked extensively in Manipuri dance and Bharatanatyam. She has authored books and research papers and has also undertaken a major research project under the UGC's STRIDE programme.

The Ministry of Education has selected 21 teachers and faculty members from HEIs and polytechnics across the

country for this year's awards. The list includes 12 educators from central HEIs, five from state universities and affiliated colleges, and four from government and private polytechnics.

Each award carries a Certificate of Merit, a silver medal and a cash prize of Rs 50,000.

Seven Northeast school teachers selected

Seven school teachers from the Northeast have been selected among the 48 awardees in the school teachers category.

The awardees are Ranjan Debnath of PM SHRI Sabroom Girls Higher Secondary School, Tripura; Sushma Tamang of PM SHRI Government Senior Secondary School Dikling, Sikkim; Wanglambam Gobin Singh of Laikon Upper Primary School, Manipur; Lalnunmawii of Government Electric Veng High School, Mizoram; R Ronald Meru of GHSS Sechu Zubza, Nagaland; Rajesh Bordoloi of Adarsha Tribal Higher Secondary School, Jorhat, Assam; and Yaku Tame of Government Secondary School, G-Sector Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh.

Notably, Meghalaya is the only Northeastern state without representation in the school teachers category this year.

The awards ceremony on September 5 will also feature short documentaries highlighting the contributions and achievements of each awardee.

The selection of nine educators from the region has brought national recognition to teachers working across schools, universities and higher education institutions in the Northeast.

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Amit Shah sets one-year target for full rollout of new criminal laws; eyes 25% rise in convictions



NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday announced that the government will ensure 100% implementation of the country's three new criminal laws within the next year, aiming to enable the disposal of criminal cases, including at the Supreme Court level, within three years and increase the conviction rate by 25%.

Addressing the valedictory session of the Intelligence Bureau's National Security Strategy Conference here, Shah said the meet must look 15-20 years ahead, identify emerging threats and formulate strategies to prevent them before they become major challenges.

Shah said the government was working towards strengthening border security and making the country

"infiltrator-free" in a short period. He said he had visited all land-border states over the past eight months and shared with them a document outlining a quadrangular approach to border security.

The Home Minister described infiltration as a threat to India's security, economy and demographic balance, asserting that only citizens of the country have the right to live in it.

Emphasising the growing importance of technology in national security and policing, Shah said an integrated database linking the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS), Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS), National Intelligence Grid (NatGrid) and National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) has been created.

The Home Minister also urged young intelligence and police officers to use integrated data, advanced analysis and artificial intelligence to generate actionable intelligence and identify criminal modus operandi. Such technology-driven intelligence, he said, would be critical to anticipating and preventing future security challenges.

Shah's remarks underscore the government's focus on simultaneously transforming the criminal justice system, tightening border security and using data and artificial intelligence to strengthen national security.

The three-year case-disposal target, coupled with the proposed increase in conviction rates, places greater emphasis on faster investigation, prosecution and judicial processes across the criminal justice system.

India, China push for political settlement of border dispute in 'long-term' interests

NEW DELHI

India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks in Beijing on Tuesday, with the two sides agreeing to continue dialogue on their long-running boundary dispute and seek a "fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable" settlement.

The discussions between the two countries' Special Representatives were described by Beijing as "comprehensive, in-depth, friendly and candid", as New Delhi said both sides agreed to "continue their work in seeking a political settlement of the boundary question in the context of their overall and long-term interests."

During the visit, the two Special Representatives co-chaired the 25th round of the Special Representatives' Talks on the India-China Boundary Question. According to the Indian statement, the two sides noted progress in implementing the important consensus reached by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Kazan in October 2024 and Tianjin in August 2025. They also expressed satisfaction at the steady resumption of people-to-people and cross-border exchanges, including the ongoing Kailash Manasarovar Yatra and border trade through the three designated border trading passes.

Under the strategic guidance of Prime Minister Modi and President Xi, the two Special Representatives held a "candid and in-depth exchange of views" on the boundary question and agreed to continue working towards a political settlement, keeping in view their overall and long-term interests, the Indian statement said.

The Indian side also highlighted the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas for the continued development and progress of bilateral relations.

According to a Chinese readout, Wang and Doval held detailed discussions on the boundary question and bilateral relations, including advancing



boundary delimitation negotiations, strengthening border management and control, improving existing mechanisms and promoting cross-border cooperation.

The two sides reaffirmed that they would follow the political guiding principles agreed in 2005 and make full use of the Special Representatives' mechanism to work towards a "fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable package solution" to the boundary issue.

Wang said China and India were "important neighbors to each other", as well as major developing countries and representatives of emerging economies. He argued that stable ties served the interests of both countries and had significance beyond the bilateral relationship.

"China-India relations have gone beyond the bilateral scope and carry global and strategic significance," Wang said, according to the Chinese readout. He said Beijing was ready to work with New Delhi from a "strate-

gic height and long-term perspective", strengthen communication, improve mutual understanding and "eliminate differences" so the two countries could become "good neighbors and friends of amity as well as partners for mutual success."

Wang also said both sides were implementing understandings reached through previous Special Representatives' meetings and that institutional exchanges and cooperation were gradually resuming. He called for the two countries to learn from past experience and ensure that "dialogue, peace, consultation, and cooperation become the mainstream" in managing the boundary question.

Doval, according to the Chinese readout, similarly stressed the importance of a stable relationship, saying India and China were "partners for cooperation rather than rivals."

He said a "stable, predictable, and forward-looking India-China relationship" served the common interests of

the two peoples and was important for Asia and the wider world. Doval said that, under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping, "India-China relations have returned to the right track", with peace maintained along the border and exchanges and cooperation in various areas gradually advancing.

India was willing to strengthen strategic communication with China, expand mutually beneficial cooperation and "effectively manage the border areas" while exploring solutions to the boundary dispute, the Chinese statement said.

The two sides also discussed bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest, according to the Indian statement. Doval also called on Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng during his visit.

India and China agreed that the 26th Meeting of the Special Representatives on the China-India Boundary Question will be held in India in 2027.

INTERNATIONAL

Canada strikes back at US with retaliatory tariffs as trade war escalates

TORONTO

Canada struck back at the United States on Tuesday with retaliatory tariffs on about USD 20 billion worth of American goods, including steel, dairy products, appliances and farm equipment, as the trade war between the once-friendly neighbours escalated sharply.

The tension threatened one of the world's largest trading relationships. The new tariffs extended well beyond industrial goods, hitting everyday purchases such as seafood, cheese, clothing, cosmetics and toilet paper, with some facing duties as high as 50 per cent.

Canada's retaliation came after the Trump administration imposed 50 per cent tariffs over the weekend on Canadian goods following the collapse of trade negotiations.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney accused Washington of trying to subordinate Canada and said US demands during the failed talks showed that Americans wanted to "destroy our major industries".

President Donald Trump intensified the confrontation Monday, telling Canadian leaders to "fall in line" or face consequences "far WORSE" than existing tariffs and threatening new 50 per cent tariffs on Canadian vehicles, auto parts and steel.

Trump added another provocation Tuesday, saying the United States was giving "serious consideration" to renaming Lake Ontario "Lake America" in a feud with Ontario Premier Doug Ford. Such a change would be reminiscent of the Republican president's unilateral action last year by executive order to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America.

The tariffs will take effect Sept 8 at rates of 15 per cent, 25 per cent and 50 per cent, with Canada matching



the corresponding US tariff rate on more than 700 products such as pulp and paper and electronics.

The tariffs on many American products would double from 25 per cent to 50 per cent, with the largest share of the new measures affecting steel and aluminum.

Minister of Finance and National Revenue Francois-Philippe Champagne speaks at a news conference on Canada's response to U.S. tariffs, at a roofing company in Ottawa, on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2026.

Canadian officials said the goal is not to raise revenue but to protect Canadian companies and reduce US imports.

US steel imports, for example, have already fallen 30 per cent since Canada imposed a 25 per cent tariff, and the new 50 per cent rate is expected to cut them further, Canadian officials said.

Goods facing 50 per cent tariffs include some steel and aluminum products, furniture and clothing. Appliances, dairy products including cheese, fish and seafood, and certain steel and aluminum derivatives will face 25 per cent tariffs. Existing Canadian countertariffs on US autos will remain in place.

Canada also announced a support package for workers and business-

es affected by the dispute worth 7.5 billion in Canadian dollars (USD 5.4 billion).

Canadian officials acknowledged the counter tariffs will raise costs for some businesses and consumers but said they expect the overall economic effects to be moderate.

They said the government has provided more than 30 billion Canadian dollars (USD 21.7 billion) in tariff-related support since the beginning of 2025 — far more than it has collected in retaliatory duties — as it tries to cushion the blow from the trade fight.

Canada and the United States have deeply integrated supply chains across autos, energy, agriculture and manufacturing, making a prolonged trade fight potentially costly for businesses and workers on both sides of the border.

Businesses and consumers are caught in the middle, facing uncertainty about how much prices may increase.

Michael Howard II, owner of a furniture business in Warren, Michigan, outside Detroit, said the tariffs will hamper the "ability for us to put food on the table for our family" and affect "the ability for us to give back to our community".

Howard and his wife started their

business a decade ago. They make and sell everything from dining room tables to bookcases.

"To say that we don't need Canada is just disingenuous," he said. "It's dishonest. And it's just absolutely not truthful. We need our neighbour, but also they need us."

Carney said Monday that Canada may need to move away from matching US tariffs dollar for dollar and instead use more targeted retaliation aimed at protecting Canadian workers and businesses.

"An attitude at the negotiation table that Canada is a subsidiary of the United States" is "not something we're going to accept," Carney said.

"We learned during the negotiations that the Americans want to destroy our major industries, including autos, steel and aluminum," Carney said. "That was one of the main reasons we said no. It was a bad deal."

On Monday, Carney said US negotiators had raised the discoverability of French-language content on streaming platforms, along with French-language labelling rules, as trade irritants.

He rejected the idea that those protections were negotiable, saying in French: "For the Americans, questions about the French language, Quebec culture, francophone culture and Canadian culture are irritants. Here in Quebec, here in Canada, they are rights."

In a social media post early Tuesday, Trump wrote: "I would never interfere with Canadians speaking French! In fact, I have never even thought of doing such a stupid thing. This lie was made up by a weak and ineffective Prime Minister in an attempt to gain political support, which he has totally lost, from the people of Quebec. I love French Canadians!"

NYC Mayor Mamdani opposes RSS chief Bhagwat's planned Madison Square Garden event



NEW YORK

Mayor Zohran Mamdani voiced his opposition to a planned event at Madison Square Garden where RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat is set to address members of the Indian diaspora.

However, he said the city may not have the jurisdiction to cancel the "private" event, scheduled for August 29.

Bhagwat arrived in the US earlier in the day as part of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's centenary-year global outreach programme. During his stay in New York, he would participate in the Universal Oneness programme and address a gathering of around 5,000 people at the iconic Madison Square Garden (MSG) on Saturday.

"I don't support the rally, but I don't know if the city has any jurisdiction on cancelling a private event," Mamdani said at a news conference here.

The Indian-origin mayor was responding to a question on RSS, the planned event at

MSG and the protests against the event. He was asked whether the "rally" at MSG should be cancelled. "I also stand here as the first Indian-American Mayor in our city's history, and my mother's family is all still in India," Mamdani said.

He said the vision of India that he was taught by his family and the one that he grew up being very familiar with was that of "a pluralistic society, of a secular republic that believed in the belonging of each and every person who was from India". "And it has been incredibly troubling to see the rise of a movement that is predicated on an exclusionary vision of any country, frankly, and so it is one that I find myself in deep opposition to, not only as an Indian-American but also as the Mayor of a city that believes deeply in the belonging of each and every person, no matter their colour, their creed, their religion, their faith, wherever they're from," Mamdani said. Several interfaith and civil rights organisations held

a press conference outside New York City Hall, the seat of the city government, opposing Bhagwat's appearance at MSG and urged the iconic venue to cancel the event.

The organisations included Hindus for Human Rights, Indian American Muslim Council and Interfaith Centre of New York, among others.

The Universal Oneness Celebration, organised by AHEAD Forum, which is hosting Bhagwat, said in a social media post that the RSS chief will attend the Universal Oneness Celebration in New York on August 29.

"The event carries a timeless and universal message: 'The world is one family'. It calls upon us to look beyond artificial divisions and differences, recognise the bonds that unite humanity, and embrace a spirit of mutual respect, harmony, and oneness," the post said.

Bhagwat is visiting the US, Canada and the UK as part of the Sangh's centenary-year global outreach programme.

China's Evolving Shadow Network in Myanmar and Its Regional Implications

The civil war in Myanmar has long ceased to be an exclusively domestic conflict. What began as a struggle between the military junta and a diverse pro-democracy resistance has evolved into a complex contest involving ethnic armed organisations (EAOs), regional powers, transnational criminal networks and competing geopolitical interests.

At the heart of this shifting landscape is China. Beijing's influence over Myanmar's powerful ethnic armed groups has grown steadily, particularly along the country's northern and eastern frontiers. While China has publicly projected itself as a mediator seeking stability, its extensive economic, political and security interests have given it considerable leverage over several armed organisations operating near its border.

The relationship, however, should not be reduced to a simplistic master-and-puppet equation. Many EAOs have their own political ambitions, territorial interests and survival strategies. Their engagement with Beijing is often transactional. China, for its part, appears willing to use this interdependence to protect its strategic interests while retaining sufficient flexibility to deal with whichever political order eventually emerges in Myanmar.

The result is a form of calculated dependency that gives Beijing significant influence without requiring direct control.

Among the most consequential organisations in this equation are the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA). Several of these groups have been associated with the Three Brotherhood Alliance and played important roles in the military setbacks suffered by the Myanmar junta during Operation 1027 and subsequent offensives.

China's influence over these groups matters for reasons extending far beyond Myanmar's internal conflict. It is closely connected to Beijing's economic and strategic ambitions, including the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), access to the Indian Ocean and the security of China's southwestern frontier.

Beijing's Border Leverage

China's relationship with Myanmar's EAOs has developed over decades. The geographical reality is crucial: several of Myanmar's most powerful armed organisations operate in territories bordering China or in areas heavily dependent on trade with Yunnan province.

The UWSA, in particular, occupies a strategically important position. Its military strength, territorial control and proximity to China have made it an indispensable actor in the northern Myanmar equation.

Beijing's leverage does not necessarily require the formal deployment of Chinese forces. Cross-border trade, access to markets, communications, financial channels, weapons supplies and diplomatic engagement can provide considerable influence.

Chinese mediation has also become an important instrument. Whenever fighting threatens to spill across the border or jeopardise major Chinese investments, Beijing has demonstrated its ability to bring pressure on the parties involved.

This gives China a unique position: it can simultaneously engage the Myanmar military, ethnic armed groups and other political actors.

The strategic objective is therefore not necessarily to determine every battlefield outcome. It is to ensure that no development seriously threatens Chinese interests.

The Intelligence Dimension

The role attributed to China's intelligence establishment, particularly the Ministry of State Security (MSS), deserves careful examination. Claims about specific MSS operational structures inside Myanmar are difficult to independently verify and should therefore be treated as assessments rather than established facts.

Nevertheless, China possesses extensive intelligence, diplomatic and security capabilities along its Myanmar frontier.

These capabilities allow Beijing to monitor developments among EAOs, assess military movements, protect its economic interests and maintain communication with influential armed and political actors.

China's border provinces also provide an enormous logistical advantage. Yunnan is economically integrated with northern Myanmar, and commercial networks connect Chinese towns with EAO-controlled territories.

The border itself can consequently function as an instrument of leverage. Access to trade, fuel, equipment and markets can be expanded or restricted depending on Beijing's assessment of developments.

This does not mean that every EAO operates according to Chinese instructions. Rather, dependence creates influence.

Weapons, Trade and Financial Networks

The military capabilities of several northern EAOs have expanded significantly over the years. Their arsenals include sophisticated weapons and equipment that have transformed the balance of power in parts of Myanmar.

The precise origin and routing of individual weapons are often difficult to establish. China has maintained that it does not support armed groups in Myanmar, while critics argue that weapons and other military equipment have reached some organisations through informal cross-border networks.

The UWSA has long been regarded as one of the most heavily armed ethnic organisations in Myanmar. Its military capacity has also enabled it to function as an important power centre within the northern ethnic armed landscape.

Alongside military supplies, trade remains a critical source of influence.

Northern Myanmar's border economy involves jade, timber, rare earths, minerals, agricultural products and other commodities. Casinos and other illicit or semi-illicit commercial activities have also contributed to the region's shadow economy.

These financial networks can provide armed organisations with resources while simultaneously creating opportunities for external actors to exert influence.



icant: traditional banking systems are only one component of the financial architecture operating along the China-Myanmar frontier.

Informal banking, cash transactions, border trade and commercial intermediaries can allow large sums to move beyond conventional international scrutiny.

Operation 1027 and China's Strategic Interests

The dramatic offensive launched by the Three Brotherhood Alliance in October 2023 demonstrated the military vulnerability of the junta.

The offensive captured significant territory and border crossings, placing additional pressure on the military government. China subsequently became deeply involved in efforts to broker cease-fires and stabilise the northern frontier.

For Beijing, the objective was not simply peace for its own sake.

Instability threatens Chinese citizens and businesses, disrupts cross-border commerce and places major infrastructure projects at risk. At the same time, armed groups controlling strategically located territory can provide Beijing with leverage over the future political and economic configuration of Myanmar.

China's approach can therefore be understood as pragmatic rather than ideological.

Beijing can engage the junta while maintaining channels to ethnic armed groups. It can support negotiations while protecting its economic interests. And it can oppose Western pressure without necessarily committing itself unconditionally to any single faction.

Implications for India

For India, the consequences are particularly serious.

Myanmar is central to New Delhi's Act East policy. India's connectivity projects depend upon a degree of stability across Myanmar, while the country also forms India's principal land bridge to Southeast Asia.

The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project seeks to connect India's northeastern region with the Sittwe port in Rakhine State and onward through the Kaladan river system. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is intended to establish another crucial link between India and mainland Southeast Asia.

Conflict and territorial fragmentation have repeatedly complicated these ambitions.

The security situation in western Myanmar is particularly important for India because of its proximity to Mizoram and other northeastern states. The expansion of armed groups, refugee movements, narcotics trafficking and illicit arms flows can all have consequences for India's internal security.

New Delhi therefore has to manage two seemingly contradictory imperatives.

First, it must deepen engagement with Myanmar's military authorities and state institutions because they remain important interlocutors on border security, connectivity and diplomatic matters.

Second, it cannot ignore the growing influence of ethnic armed organisations and other non-state actors controlling large stretches of territory.

India's strategy must consequently remain flexible and pragmatic.

The China-US Contest

Myanmar has also become another arena in the broader strategic competition between China and the United States.

Washington has imposed sanctions on Myanmar's military leadership and adopted legislation, including the BURMA Act, aimed at supporting democratic forces and responding to human-rights abuses.

China, meanwhile, remains determined to prevent Myanmar from becoming another arena in which Western strategic influence expands unchecked.

For Beijing, the most important consideration is geographical.

The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor provides China with a direct route towards the Indian Ocean. The Kyaukphyu deep-sea port and associated infrastructure in Rakhine State are particularly significant.

The route offers Beijing an alternative pathway for energy imports and trade, reducing at least to some degree its dependence on routes passing through the Malacca Strait.

This gives Myanmar importance beyond its immediate borders.

A Different Approach for India and the United States

Any response to Chinese influence should avoid turning Myanmar into another arena of great-power confrontation.

India and the United States would benefit from greater intelligence cooperation, particularly on cross-border arms trafficking, narcotics, organised crime, illicit finance and the movement of armed groups.

For India, cooperation with neighbouring states and local communities along the northeastern frontier is essential. Better surveillance, border infrastructure and intelligence-sharing mechanisms can help prevent instability inside Myanmar from becoming a wider security problem.

The United States, meanwhile, has greater technological and financial capabilities that can contribute to monitoring illicit networks and sanctions evasion.

But support for Myanmar's democratic forces must also recognise the fragmented nature of the resistance.

Not all EAOs are aligned with China, and not all possess the same political objectives.

Groups such as the Karen National Union (KNU), the Chin National Front/Chin National Army and the Karenni National Progressive Party have pursued their own political and military agendas. Their geographical distance from China's northern frontier also gives them a different strategic orientation.

Washington and its partners should therefore distinguish between humanitarian assistance, political engagement and military support.

The priority should be protecting civilians, supporting democratic and federal institutions, and preventing the further expansion of criminal economies.

Cross-border humanitarian corridors through Thailand and India could play an important role, provided they operate transparently and in coordination with regional governments and international humanitarian agencies.

India Must Preserve Its Myanmar Options

For New Delhi, the temptation to view Myanmar exclusively through the prism of China would be a mistake.

India has historically maintained relations with Myanmar's military establishment because of its security interests and the need to manage the porous northeastern frontier. That engagement should continue, even as India expands contacts with other relevant stakeholders.

Myanmar's leadership has periodically sought closer engagement with India, and New Delhi should make full use of such openings.

At the same time, India needs a deeper understanding of the political forces operating in Myanmar's ethnic states. A policy based exclusively on Naypyidaw risks overlooking the realities of territorial control on the ground.

The answer is not to choose one side. It is to maintain multiple channels.

The Larger Strategic Picture

China's influence in Myanmar is neither absolute nor uncontested. The country's ethnic

armed organisations have demonstrated considerable agency, while the military junta continues to retain important capabilities.

Nevertheless, Beijing has constructed an unusually powerful position by combining geography, commerce, diplomacy and strategic leverage.

The emerging order along Myanmar's northern frontier demonstrates how economic dependency can become a geopolitical instrument.

For India and the United States, the challenge is therefore larger than simply countering Chinese influence. It is about ensuring that Myanmar does not become a permanent source of instability along India's northeastern frontier or an uncontested platform for any external power.

The appropriate response must combine intelligence cooperation, border security, economic engagement, humanitarian assistance and sustained diplomacy.

Most importantly, India must avoid viewing Myanmar solely as a theatre of competition with Beijing. Myanmar is a country with its own political history, ethnic aspirations and internal contradictions.

China's influence has grown partly because Beijing has been willing to work with a wide range of actors simultaneously.

India will need similar strategic patience.

The future of Myanmar is unlikely to be decided solely in Naypyidaw, nor entirely on the battlefield. It will emerge from negotiations among the military, ethnic armed organisations, democratic forces, neighbouring states and external powers. For New Delhi, the imperative is clear: remain engaged, retain strategic autonomy and ensure that instability in Myanmar does not become a permanent vulnerability for India's Northeast. For Washington and its partners, the task is equally complex to support democratic aspirations without turning Myanmar into another proxy battlefield in the wider US-China rivalry.

The most effective strategy, ultimately, will be one that recognises Myanmar not merely as a chessboard for competing powers, but as a country whose fragmented political landscape demands patience, nuance and sustained engagement.

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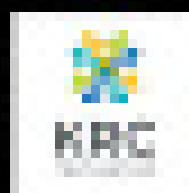


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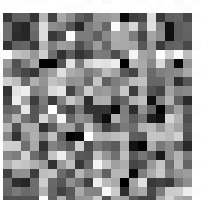


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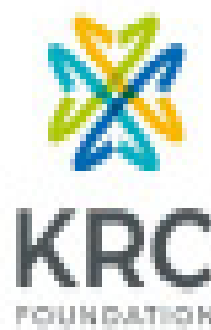
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