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PERSPECTIVE

Politeness costs nothing and gains everything

Manipur Police Seize Rs 80 Crore Drugs, Truck Bound for Assam



IMPHAL

Manipur Police have seized suspected narcotic tablets valued at around Rs 80 crore after intercepting a truck in Jiribam district, officials said on Friday.

The truck was allegedly carrying the consignment from Imphal towards Cachar in Assam when it was stopped by police in Jiribam. The seizure has brought renewed attention to the Manipur-Assam corridor as a suspected route for transporting illegal drugs.

A large quantity of suspected narcotic tablets was recovered from the vehicle during the operation, police said.

Investigators are now working to establish the source of the consignment, identify those involved in its transportation and determine its intended destination.

The seizure is part of an ongoing crackdown by Manipur Police on drug trafficking and the movement of narcotic substances through the state.

Officials are also examining the network behind the consignment and whether the intercepted vehicle was part of a larger trafficking operation.

WHO SAID WHAT



y. Dergaon Golaghat

Assam will soon set up an Anti Narcotics Task Force to strike hard at the narcotics value chain. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

Assam to Raise Two Specialised Police Battalions for Disaster Response, Oilfield Security

GUWAHATI

Assam will raise two new specialised police battalions - one for disaster response and another for the security of oil and gas installations - as part of a broader plan to strengthen the state's policing and security infrastructure, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The announcement came after a two-day conference of senior police officers in Dergaon, where measures to improve law and order, investigation, disaster response and the fight against organised crime were discussed.

Addressing the media after the conference, Sarma said the government had decided to establish a new State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) battalion and a dedicated battalion to protect installations of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL).

"To strengthen Assam Police, we have decided to establish a new SDRF battalion and another battalion for the security of ONGC and OIL," the Chief Minister said.

The government also decided to step up its campaign against drug trafficking, with particular emphasis on identifying



major traffickers, disrupting their financial networks and seizing assets linked to the illegal trade.

Sarma said Assam would improve coordination with neighbouring Manipur, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh to tackle drug trafficking routes and would examine measures such as preventive detention against major traffickers.

He also announced that an Anti-Nar-

cotics Task Force would be constituted within a month.

"The Centre has asked us to constitute one," Sarma said, adding that the proposed unit would focus on property attachment, stronger forensic investigation, disruption of traffickers' financial networks and preventing procedural lapses that could benefit accused persons.

The government will also examine the



KRC TIMES

STAY ENRICHED

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Manipur Security Questioned After Blast at Congress MLA's Residence

IMPHAL

A suspected hand grenade exploded near the residence of Congress MLA and party Legislature Wing leader Keisham Meghachandra Singh at Bishmunaha in Thoubal district on Thursday night, police said. No casualties were reported.

The explosive was allegedly hurled by an unidentified person around 8.15 pm, following which security personnel reached the spot and launched a search operation. The attacker's identity and motive are yet to be established, officials said.

Police are investigating the incident and examining the circumstances surrounding the blast. Further details on the explosive and any property damage were not immediately available.

The incident prompted the Congress on Friday to question the security situation in Manipur, saying

the attack raised concerns about the safety of ordinary citizens if the residence of an elected political leader was not secure.

The party criticised the Centre's handling of the situation, alleging that the ground situation in Manipur was different from the picture of normalcy being projected by the government.

The Congress urged the authorities to identify those responsible and take prompt action, saying attacks of this nature should not go unanswered.

It also called for stronger security measures and said people in Manipur were entitled to peace, security and justice.

The blast comes amid continuing reports of violence and attacks in parts of Manipur, where security forces remain deployed in vulnerable areas.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the incident.

Unidentified man found dead with bullet injury

IMPHAL

An unidentified man was found dead with a bullet injury to his head along the Kangla Sangom Shang-Angom Laiching Road in Imphal East district early Friday, police said.

The body was spotted by commuters around 4.30 am, following which personnel from Lamlai Police Station reached the spot and recovered it. The deceased was later shifted to the mortuary of the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) for identification, officials said.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation to ascertain the identity of the deceased and determine the circumstances leading to his death.

The incident comes amid fresh violence in parts of Manipur, including Kangpokpi district, where several houses were allegedly torched earlier this week.



On September 2, at least 25 houses were allegedly set ablaze in Tiporam village under Chalwa Police Station, officials said. The incident came a day after 10 houses were reportedly burnt in three nearby Liangmai Naga villages - Tapon Khullen, Tapon Khunou and Makui Tiporam. Gunfire was also reported during the attacks, in which a village church pastor sustained bullet injuries, according to local residents.

A Tiporam resident alleged that five houses were burnt on September 1 and

that armed men subsequently threatened to torch more homes. The resident claimed that another 25 houses were set ablaze the following day before the attackers left the area. Five of the houses were reportedly owned by members of the Nepali community.

Residents said villagers from Tiporam had earlier been evacuated to Makui following the violence. They alleged that after returning to the village, the residents came under gunfire and were forced to seek shelter again at a relief centre in Makui, about 15km away. They also alleged that security forces had been informed about the arson but that no action was taken until the houses were set ablaze. The latest incidents have added to tensions between communities in the region, where sporadic violence has continued despite the presence of security forces.

Gogoi asks ECI to intervene in Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll



GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to intervene in the upcoming Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election, citing concerns over the resignation of former Nagaon Deputy Commissioner Devasish Sharma and his reported plans to contest the poll on a BJP ticket.

Gogoi alleged that Sharma, who also served as the district election officer, had handled several sensitive electoral matters in the months preceding his resignation. He sought an independent, time-bound inquiry, saying any failure to address the concerns could affect public confidence in the electoral process.

In a post on X, the Congress MP from Jorhat said decisions taken by Sharma during his tenure as DC-cum-DEO could have a bearing on the perceived neutrality of the forthcoming bypoll.

Gogoi also alleged irregularities in the use of 15th Finance Commission funds at the Gram Panchayat level and raised questions over the alleged role of administrative influence in their implementation.

He called on the ECI to conduct an independent inquiry into Sharma's tenure as district commissioner-cum-district election officer and examine the allegations relating to the Panchayat funds.

Gogoi said the inquiry should be completed within a specified timeframe to ensure transparency ahead of the by-election.

The state government has re-

Tripura: 806 Km of Bangladesh Border Fenced, Nearly 50 Km Still Pending



AGARTALA

Tripura has completed 805.99 kilometres of barbed-wire fencing along its 856-kilometre international border with Bangladesh, leaving nearly 50 kilometres still unfenced, the state Home Department informed the Assembly.

The details were provided in a written response to a question raised by Tipra Motha MLA Ranjit Debbarma, who sought an update on the progress of border fencing, including the stretches where construction remains incomplete and steps being taken to complete the work.

According to the Home Department, fencing is yet to be completed at several locations across the state.

The pending stretches include Belonia in South Tripura; Longtharai Valley, Kamalpur, Ambassa and Gandacherra in Dhalai district; Kanchanpur in North Tripura; Khowai; and Sonamura in Sepahijala district.

The state government has re-

peatedly taken up the issue with the Centre, seeking intervention to ensure that the remaining portions of the border fence are completed without further delay, the department said.

The government attributed the delay to several factors, including difficult terrain, rivers and streams along proposed fencing routes, objections raised by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and delays by agencies responsible for executing the construction work.

Tripura shares an 856-kilometre international boundary with Bangladesh, making border fencing a key component of the state's efforts to strengthen surveillance and prevent unauthorised cross-border movement.

With nearly 50 kilometres of the boundary still awaiting fencing, the unfinished stretches continue to pose challenges for effective border management and security, particularly in areas where terrain and access constraints have slowed construction.

The state government has maintained that completing the remaining stretches is essential to strengthening border infrastructure and improving security along the international boundary.

The Assembly response comes amid continued efforts by Tripura authorities to address gaps in border infrastructure and ensure better coordination between state agencies, central authorities and border security forces.



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INDIA'S STEADY GROWTH

While the world's major economies have lurched between contraction, stagflation and hesitant recovery over the past few years, India's growth rate has settled into a remarkably stubborn habit: 7 percent or thereabouts, year after year, regardless of what the rest of the planet throws at it. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's recent remarks reaffirming that this year too growth will hold in that range are not merely a politician's optimism. They are, on the evidence, a fair reading of the numbers.

Consider the backdrop against which this consistency has been achieved. The Russia-Ukraine war disrupted energy and food markets across the globe. American tariff actions unsettled trade flows just as exporters were finding their footing again. Then came the Iran-Israel-USA-linked conflict in West Asia, with the attendant fear of a blockade at the Strait of Hormuz - a chokepoint through which a significant share of the world's oil and liquefied petroleum gas passes. For an economy that imports the bulk of its crude, this was no small threat. Add to this the periodic unpredictability of the monsoon, and the ingredients for a serious economic wobble were all present. Yet India recorded no major fuel shortage, no runaway inflation in cooking gas, and no collapse in fertiliser availability for its farmers. That this happened without passing on additional costs to households is worth dwelling on, not glossing over.

Much of this resilience is structural rather than accidental. India's sheer demographic scale - some 150 crore people - is often described as a burden. In terms of the logistics of feeding, fuelling and employing that population, it certainly is a formidable administrative challenge. But the same scale is also India's economic ballast. A market of this size generates enormous domestic consumption, which cushions the economy when export demand or global supply chains falter. Unlike smaller, trade-dependent economies that rise and fall sharply with global cycles, India has a vast internal engine that keeps turning even when the external environment sours.

The Reserve Bank of India's own assessment lends independent weight to the Government's confidence. On 5 August, the RBI projected real GDP growth for 2026-27 at 6.7 percent, a full ten basis points higher than its June estimate - an upward revision made, notably, after accounting for the geopolitical turbulence, trade uncertainty and erratic first-quarter monsoon that the finance minister referenced. A Central Bank does not casually raise a growth forecast in the middle of global disruption unless the underlying data genuinely support it. That the RBI moved in this direction, rather than trimming its numbers as many might have expected, is itself a telling signal.

None of this is to suggest that India sailed through the past year unscathed. Import costs for fertiliser and other essential commodities did see temporary scarcity, and exporters faced real difficulty as the wider conflict disrupted sea logistics. These were genuine hiccups, not manufactured ones. What softened their impact was a combination of diplomatic goodwill from friendly nations willing to assist with supply lines and a Government prepared to make mid-course corrections rather than persisting rigidly with policies overtaken by events. That willingness to adapt - on fertiliser procurement, on energy sourcing, on managing the rupee and import bills - has mattered as much as any single policy decision.

There is also something to be said for public confidence itself as an economic input. When citizens believe that essential supplies will not run dry and that the Government is actively managing shocks rather than merely absorbing them, consumption and investment sentiment hold up. Confidence, once eroded, is difficult to rebuild; India's policymakers appear to understand this and have generally acted early enough to prevent panic-driven behaviour in fuel or food markets.

The task now is not to marvel at 7 percent but to ask what comes next. Sustaining this trajectory - and ideally improving upon it - will require continued discipline in fiscal management, further investment in energy diversification to reduce vulnerability to chokepoints like Hormuz, and structural reforms that widen the base of manufacturing and exports rather than relying solely on domestic consumption. India has shown that it can absorb shocks others might not survive intact. On the evidence so far, there is good reason for cautious confidence.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.” - Erin Majors

THE GROWING THREAT OF GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURSTS

An Integrated Strategy Is the Need of the Hour

The Growing Threat of GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURSTS

THE THREAT IS REAL

- Thousands of glacial lakes in the Himalayas.
- Rising temperatures increase instability.
- Sudden outbursts cause flash floods.
- Communities, infrastructure and lives at risk.

THE WAY FORWARD

- MONITOR** – Real-time satellite & field monitoring.
- WARN** – Early warning systems for timely alerts.
- PREPARE** – Risk assessment, mapping & emergency plans.
- PROTECT** – Stronger infrastructure and community awareness.
- COOPERATE** – Regional collaboration across borders.

GLACIERS DON'T RECOGNIZE BORDERS. NEITHER SHOULD OUR RESPONSE.

DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

The nature and scale of disasters around the world are becoming increasingly alarming. Millions of people are being affected by them. The recent tragedy of a glacial flood in Nepal is a fresh and deeply disturbing example. The disaster was so severe that, according to Nepal's disaster response agency, the death toll reached around 788, while more than 2,500 people were reported missing. Around 275 of them are believed to be Indians. It has been reported that the disaster began when a glacial lake formed after a landslide burst. A review of satellite images by The New York Times indicated that the lake's natural dam had broken, unleashing a massive torrent of water that caused widespread devastation.

Scientists at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) estimate that the movement of large quantities of ice and rocky debris generated an extremely powerful flow of water, sediment and huge boulders downstream. Similar incidents have occurred in the Himalayas in the past. This brings back memories of the 2021 Chamoli tragedy in Uttarakhand, when a massive avalanche of rock and ice suddenly turned into a flash flood. Around 200 people were killed and two hydropower projects were destroyed in that disaster. According to geologists, rock-and-ice avalanches are particularly dangerous because they can trigger an entire chain of events. Experts say that rising temperatures are further increasing the instability of high-altitude mountain regions. Geologists believe that the sudden floods in Nepal and Tibet were triggered by a series of landslides and avalanches at high altitudes, which sent huge volumes of water rushing downstream. Disaster experts say that such events are extremely difficult to predict. Moreover, the sudden collapse of a lake or ice dam occurs so rapidly that there is often very little time to issue an advance warning.

Available data indicate that Nepal has 2,070 glacial lakes, of which 21 were classified as high-risk lakes in a 2020 report by the International Centre for

Integrated Mountain Development. There are also numerous such lakes in the Himalayan regions of China and India. Between 1900 and 2000, a total of 135 glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) events were recorded in the Karakoram region, while around 85 such incidents have already occurred in the present century. Approximately 22,800 square kilometres of the Himalayas are covered by glaciers. This region is warming faster than the planet as a whole. As a result, the likelihood of such floods is increasing in the future. Rising temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns are accelerating this process. This is why such incidents are generally more common between June and August. Scientists estimate that a large number of glaciers will melt rapidly in the coming years, and according to some assessments, nearly 65 per cent of the region's ice reserves could disappear by 2100.

In such a situation, around one million people living within a 10-kilometre radius of glacial lakes face an increasing disaster risk. They therefore need to be relocated to safer areas away from narrow river valleys. Greater caution is also required while undertaking infrastructure projects in mountainous regions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere needs to be taken seriously. The report warns that, as temperatures rise, glacial lake outburst floods could occur more frequently. This is because the same warming that is causing glaciers to shrink is also increasing the amount of water in lakes beneath and around them, while making these lakes increasingly unstable.

According to an assessment by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, between 1951 and 2024, average southwest monsoon rainfall over the Gangetic plains declined by around 0.5 millimetres per day per decade. This indicates a clear trend towards increasing dryness across the region, including Bihar. However, this does not mean that episodes of heavy rainfall are becoming less frequent. On the contrary, despite the decline in average monsoon

rainfall, precipitation is occurring in shorter, more intense and highly concentrated spells.

In the Indian context, it is noteworthy that India records the highest number of deaths from GLOF events such as those witnessed in Nepal. Experts from a global group comprising specialists from six or seven countries have also drawn attention to this. A study titled Glacial Outburst Flood Risk, Response Strategies and Adaptation in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region analysed data from 1995 to 2025. According to the study, China recorded 199 GLOF events, Pakistan 152, India 62 and Nepal five.

The study rightly highlights that climate-related factors - particularly the rapid rise in temperatures since the beginning of this century - have played a significant role in increasing the frequency of such avalanches. It also points out that the predominance of moraine- and ice-dammed lakes in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region is a major reason behind GLOF events and the deaths they cause. The inherent instability of such natural dams in a warming climate is a matter of serious concern.

Today, we have access to satellite-based monitoring, which puts us in a much better position than before. However, as experts have made clear, accurately predicting such events remains difficult. Nevertheless, countries connected to mountainous and glacial regions - such as China, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan - must establish better coordination to ensure the safety of people across borders. Unfortunately, effective coordination of this kind has not yet been achieved.

Under India's National GLOF Risk Mitigation Programme, 195 glacial lakes have been identified as high-risk lakes. The programme has five key priorities: risk assessment, monitoring, early warning, risk mitigation and community awareness. A high-level coordination committee has also been constituted to reduce GLOF risks.

In October 2023, around 14.7 cubic metres of rocky debris fell into South Lhonak Lake in Sikkim, generating a displacement wave nearly 20 metres high. The wave destroyed sev-

eral hydropower assets and settlements located downstream. Subsequently, the Government of India took a positive step by allocating Rs 150 crore under the National GLOF Risk Mitigation Programme for four Himalayan states with high-risk

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

With the death toll from #Nepal's catastrophic flash floods nearing 1,000, humanitarian teams are struggling to reach survivors as the threat of infectious disease looms.

~ United Nations



glacial lakes. The government has begun paying attention to the threat posed by glacial lake outbursts, but the Sikkim tragedy, the subsequent Chamoli incident in 2025, and the recent disaster in the neighbouring country provide serious lessons that must be learned. Equipment capable of transmitting real-time data directly to monitoring centres should be installed to continuously monitor glacial lakes and glaciers in mountainous regions. In addition, artificial intelligence (AI)-based systems can be used to detect changes in glaciers and prepare their risk profiles. Several countries around the world have already adopted such systems. Experts warn that if safety measures are not strictly implemented and populations at risk are not relocated to safer areas, a disaster on a much larger scale could strike the region. It would be advisable to rehabilitate vulnerable populations in safe areas at least 5 to 10 kilometres away from glaciers and glacial lakes.

The time has come to develop an intergovernmental mechanism involving India, Bhutan and Nepal and, if possible, China as well. Its objective should be to establish a long-term, co-ordinated strategy for continuous monitoring of glaciers, risk assessment, and preventing GLOF events or reducing their impact. Glaciers and glacial lakes do not recognise national boundaries. Therefore, this shared natural risk can only be confronted through co-operation that extends beyond borders. Regional cooperation, real-time data sharing and effective early-warning systems are no longer options; they are

Manipur: 36,000 IDPs Resettled, 24,000 Still in Relief Camps, CM Tells Assembly

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Thursday said around 36,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been resettled since the ethnic conflict erupted in the state in May 2023, while nearly 24,000 displaced people continue to live in relief camps.

Replying to a short-duration discussion initiated by Congress MLA Th Lokeshwar Singh in the Manipur Assembly, Khemchand said the government was continuing efforts to facilitate the return and rehabilitation of those still displaced. The Chief Minister said the resettlement process had progressed through the collective efforts of legislators and other stakeholders. He added that displaced people from both the hills and the valley shared a common desire to return to their homes and rebuild



their lives in peace. Khemchand said his visits to relief camps and conflict-affected areas had given him an opportunity to interact with people from different communities. According to him, the aspirations of displaced families, irrespective of their community, centred on returning to their respective homes and resuming normal life.

The government is also holding consultations with representatives of

displaced persons to identify further measures for rehabilitation. Khemchand said he had met representatives of six to seven joint associations of IDPs last month to discuss ways to extend assistance and accelerate the resettlement process.

Despite the return of around 36,000 displaced people, the government is continuing to provide financial assistance to nearly 59,000 IDPs, the Chief Minister said.

He explained that several families who have returned home continue to face livelihood and income-related difficulties. As a result, the government has decided to continue monthly financial assistance to support them during the rehabilitation process.

Khemchand, however, acknowledged that financial assistance alone would not be sufficient to address the

long-term consequences of a conflict that has continued for more than three years. "The impact of the conflict is not limited to economic losses," he said, pointing to the psychological trauma suffered by people affected by the violence.

The Health Department is taking steps to address the mental health and psychological impact of the prolonged crisis, he said.

The Chief Minister also said he was consulting the Planning Department on additional measures aimed at strengthening rehabilitation and livelihood opportunities for displaced families.

Among the measures being considered are employment-related initiatives, including labour cards issued through the Labour Department, which could help affected people access work opportunities and rebuild sustainable liveli-

hoods. Khemchand urged all sections of society to contribute suggestions for resolving the displacement crisis and said the issue should be addressed without political considerations.

"Displaced persons should be viewed primarily as people in need of rehabilitation and support," he indicated, stressing the need for a collective approach to the crisis.

On restoring connectivity and economic activity, the Chief Minister said the Imphal-Dimapur-Guwahati bus service had resumed successfully.

He also said the government was working towards reopening the Moreh trade route, a key connectivity and commercial link between Manipur and Myanmar.

Khemchand identified the trust deficit between communities as one of the biggest obstacles to restoring

normalcy in the state. He said the government was working to rebuild trust and create conditions that would allow displaced people to return safely, while also restoring economic and social activities across Manipur.

The Chief Minister's remarks come as the state continues to grapple with the humanitarian and economic consequences of the violence that erupted in May 2023, which displaced tens of thousands of people and disrupted communities across the hills and valley.

The government now faces the dual challenge of completing the resettlement of those still living in relief camps while ensuring that families who have already returned receive adequate livelihood, financial and psychological support to rebuild their lives.

Manipur's August Rainfall Deficit Touches 49% as Monsoon Turns Increasingly Erratic

IMPHAL

Manipur experienced a sharp decline in rainfall in August, recording 99.1 mm against the normal 194.8 mm, a deficit of 49 per cent, as meteorologists flagged an increasingly uneven southwest monsoon pattern across the state.

Data from the Meteorological Centre, Imphal, showed that rainfall has fluctuated considerably during the current monsoon season, with some months and districts receiving normal or excess rain while others recorded significant deficits.

Manipur received 169.1 mm of rainfall in June against the normal 224.9 mm, registering a deficit of 22.5 per cent.

Rainfall increased sharply in July, with the state recording 278.6 mm against the normal 222.8 mm, resulting in excess rainfall at the state level. However, several districts continued to experience deficient rainfall, highlighting the uneven distribution of the monsoon. The situation reversed in August, when the state received only 99.1 mm of rain - nearly half of its normal rainfall. Dr K Ambethkar, a scientist at the Meteorological Centre, Imphal, said rainfall patterns had varied considerably between districts during the three months.

"In June, we received normal rainfall in Senapati district, but other districts received deficit rainfall. In July, Imphal East, Senapati and Ukhrul received normal rainfall, while other districts recorded deficits. In August, Ukhrul received normal rainfall, while other districts recorded deficit and large deficit rainfall," he said.

Meteorological experts said the southwest monsoon was increasingly characterised by short spells of intense rainfall followed by prolonged dry periods.

Kuki MLA Seeks Exam Centre in Kangpokpi, Better Facilities for Relief Camps

IMPHAL

Kuki leader and Saikul MLA Kinmeo Haokip Hangshing on Thursday urged the Manipur government to improve access to essential services in conflict-affected areas and strengthen support for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Speaking during the eighth session of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly, Hangshing highlighted the disruption caused by the prolonged conflict to education, livelihoods and the supply of essential commodities in Kangpokpi district.

The MLA placed three key demands before the government led by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh.

Her first demand was for the establishment of a Central government recruitment examination centre at the Kangpokpi district headquarters.

Hangshing said security concerns and difficulties in travelling through conflict-affected

areas had prevented many local youths from appearing for competitive examinations. She said candidates were being forced to travel to distant locations, including Ukhrul, to take examinations. She argued that setting up an examination centre in Kangpokpi would reduce travel-related risks and improve access to government recruitment opportunities for young people from the district.

Hangshing also called for uninterrupted supplies of food, fuel and essential medicines in Saikul.

She said residents had faced shortages of basic commodities for more than three and a half months due to economic blockades and restrictions linked to the ongoing conflict.

The MLA urged the government to ensure regular supply lines so that civilians in affected areas do not face further hardship because of disruptions to the movement of essential goods.

Manipur NRC: Biren Singh Says 2019 Cabinet Move Sought Centre's Approval

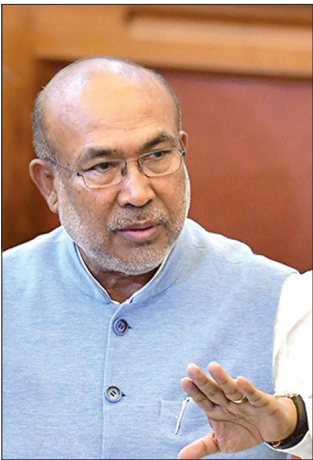
IMPHAL

Former Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Thursday reiterated that his government had formally pushed for a National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in the state in 2019, saying the initiative required sustained political follow-up to reach its logical conclusion.

Singh said his position on the need for an NRC had been clear since he assumed office in March 2017. He claimed his government had recognised the need to address what it described as unchecked illegal immigration and had acted on longstanding demands raised by civil society organisations.

According to Singh, groups including the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) and the All Manipur Students' Coordinating Committee (AMSCOC) had been raising the issue since the 1980s.

"Despite these repeated demands over the years, no previous



government had taken the matter forward to its logical conclusion," Singh said in a post on X.

He said the state Cabinet subsequently passed a resolution seeking an NRC exercise in Manipur. Following the decision, Singh said he wrote to then Union Home

Minister Rajnath Singh on February 10, 2019, formally requesting the Centre to initiate the process in the state.

The former chief minister maintained that both the Cabinet resolution and his letter to the Centre were part of the official record.

Singh stressed that an issue as significant as the NRC could not be advanced through isolated decisions and required sustained political will, continuous follow-up and coordinated efforts between the state and Centre.

His remarks come amid renewed political and public debate in Manipur over migration, citizenship and demographic concerns, particularly in the context of the ethnic conflict that has affected the state since May 2023.

Singh also sought to underline that the demand for an NRC in Manipur predates the current crisis, pointing to civil society campaigns that have continued

for decades.

The NRC issue has remained politically sensitive in the Northeast, with Assam having undertaken the country's most prominent NRC exercise. The process in Assam was conducted under the supervision of the Supreme Court and culminated in the publication of a final list in 2019.

In Manipur, however, Singh's latest remarks focus on the earlier state-level initiative and his government's request to the Centre for a similar exercise.

The former chief minister said the records of the 2019 Cabinet decision and his communication to the Union Home Ministry demonstrated that his government had taken concrete steps on the matter.

He argued that the effectiveness of such initiatives ultimately depends on consistent follow-up and the willingness of successive governments to carry them forward.

Assam Congress Ends Alliance With Akhil Gogoi-Led Rajior Dal

GUWAHATI

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on September 3 formally ended its political alliance with the Akhil Gogoi-led Rajior Dal, accusing the regional party of repeatedly violating the norms and principles of the opposition grouping.

The decision, effective immediately, was taken on the direction of APCC president and Lok Sabha Deputy Leader of Opposition Gaurav Gogoi. APCC General Secretary (Organisation) Ramanna Baruah subsequently issued an organisational circular announcing the termination of the alliance.

The Congress said the alliance had been formed ahead of the previous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections with the objective of bringing regional and Left parties together

to build a united opposition against the BJP-led government.

However, the party alleged that Rajior Dal leaders had repeatedly targeted Congress leaders with criticism and personal attacks despite being part of the same opposition alliance.

The Congress also accused the regional party of making what it described as "baseless, unwarranted and derogatory" remarks against leaders of other parties within the opposition grouping.

According to the Congress, the repeated incidents had weakened the basis of the alliance and made it untenable for the party to continue its political association with Rajior Dal.

The decision comes amid a fresh escalation in differences between the two parties in recent days.

The APCC had earlier criticised

remarks made by Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi, accusing him of disregarding the norms of the opposition alliance.

At a joint press conference, Assam Pradesh Mahila Congress president Mira Borthakur and APCC Media and Communication Department chairman Bedabrat Bora questioned Gogoi's political conduct and accused him of allegedly acting as a "government agent".

Bora also defended Gaurav Gogoi and former Assam Leader of Opposition Debabrata Saikia, citing their participation in flood relief and rehabilitation efforts across the state.

The Congress leader further claimed that Gogoi's victory from the Sivasagar Assembly constituency had been aided by Congress support and argued that he would not have won the seat without the

party's backing.

Despite severing ties with Rajior Dal, the Congress said it would continue to act as an opposition force and raise public issues while scrutinising the BJP-led government over what it termed anti-people policies, injustice and administrative failures.

The political realignment comes months after the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, in which the BJP emerged as the largest party in the 126-member House with 82 seats.

The Congress won 19 seats, while the Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) secured 10 seats each. The All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and Rajior Dal won two seats apiece, while the All India Trinamool Congress secured one seat.

Tripura Launches App-Based Cabs, Autos and Metaverse Tourism Services at Key Entry Points



AGARTALA

Tripura on Thursday rolled out app-based cab and auto-rickshaw services at major passenger entry points in Agartala, along with a Tourism Information Centre and a metaverse-based tourism initiative aimed at improving visitor experience and boosting tourism.

Transport, Food and Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury formally inaugurated the services at Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport. The app-based transport facility was also launched virtually at Agartala and Jogendranagar railway stations.

The new initiatives are aimed at strengthening last-mile connectivity for passengers and tourists arriving in the state by air and rail.

Speaking at the launch, Chowdhury said technology-driven

transport and tourism services were increasingly important to attracting visitors from across the country.

He said Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport had modern infrastructure, but the absence of equally convenient transport facilities outside the airport could affect the overall experience of visitors.

"Keeping passenger convenience in mind, app-based cab and auto services have been introduced," the minister said, adding that passengers would be able to choose between prepaid auto services and online cabs.

The state government, he said, would gradually modernise Tripura's transport system in response to public demand and developments in other states.

Focus on tourist experience

Chowdhury also stressed that transport was only one component of creating a favourable experience for visitors.

He highlighted the importance of hospitality, connectivity, accommodation and food services in strengthening Tripura's tourism sector.

A seamless experience, he said, could encourage tourists to return to the state and help improve Tripura's image among visitors from across India and abroad.

MLA Raises Oil Drilling Concern in Border Belt, DyCM Says Situation Under Control

KOHIRA

Nagaland MLA Achumbemo Kikon raised concerns in the state Assembly over alleged oil exploration and drilling activities in the Disputed Area Belt (DAB) along the Nagaland-Assam border, while Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton said the situation in the area was now under control.

Raising the matter under Rule 54, Kikon said he had received a representation from the Yammhon Area Public Organisation opposing alleged oil drilling activities by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) near Lio Woka Oil, close to Haiyivan village under Bhandari subdivision in Wokha district.

Kikon said the location falls within his constituency and sought clarification on whether the activity had received approval from the Nagaland government.

He urged the government to have the site verified by the competent authority and sought suspension of the ongoing work until the matter is resolved in accordance with the tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Nagaland, Assam and the Centre governing the survey, exploitation and extraction of crude oil and other minerals in the disputed belt.

The MLA said the alleged drilling site



is around 500 metres from Lio Woka village. He claimed that ONGC and other oil companies had conducted surveys and were identifying potential drilling points in the area.

Kikon expressed concern that continued exploration could eventually lead to extraction of oil deposits in territory claimed by Nagaland.

Rubber sapling row raised in Assembly

Kikon also brought up the August 25 incident at Mekirang/Negheribil, where villagers from Longayim travelling with rubber saplings supplied by the Rubber Board of India were allegedly stopped at a barricade erected by the Assam Forest Department.

He said the incident reflected the difficulties faced by residents of border villages in accessing the area and alleged that movement and right of way were being restricted.

The MLA also questioned the deployment of security and forest personnel in the DAB and asked whether the Naga-

land Forest Department was taking steps to deploy its own personnel in the disputed area.

Responding to the concerns, Patton said a vehicle carrying rubber saplings to Longayim was stopped at an Assam Forest Department barricade on August 25. A scuffle broke out after people from the Assam side gathered at the spot, he said.

Border magistrates from Nagaland and Assam subsequently reached the location and allowed the vehicle to proceed after verifying that the saplings were intended for plantation at Longayim village and not at the evicted site, Patton said.

The deputy chief minister said another confrontation took place on August 26 when people living near the evicted site gathered at the barricade.

Two Naga village leaders were allegedly assaulted after being accused of being responsible for the previous day's confrontation, while an office-bearer of the Lotha Lower Range Public Organisation was also allegedly attacked, Patton said.

The alleged victims were advised to lodge an FIR, following which a case was registered at Bhandari Police Station on August 27, he said.

Border peace mechanism activated

Patton said the deputy commissioners of Wokha and Golaghat later held a joint meeting to address the situation.

During the meeting, Nagaland conveyed that the movement of Naga villagers and the general public should not be obstructed, as the road serves as a vital lifeline for villages along the border.

The two administrations agreed to activate the Border Level Peace Commit-

tee to strengthen coordination, maintain peace and prevent further confrontations.

"The situation is now under control," Patton told the Assembly.

Giving the background to the dispute, the deputy chief minister said a joint eviction drive was carried out at Negheribil/Mekirang on August 8, 2025.

During the drive, 205 households were served eviction notices, while 146 households were evicted. The eviction of the remaining 59 households was subsequently kept in abeyance following a court order.

Patton said the Golaghat district administration and Assam Forest Department later issued fresh eviction notices to the remaining 59 households.

However, the Gauhati High Court, in an order dated August 18, 2026, granted a further 60-day extension to the affected households, he said.

Patton said the Nagaland government was closely monitoring developments in the disputed belt and maintaining coordination with Assam authorities to prevent further incidents.

He also said mechanisms were being put in place to ensure that future eviction or plantation activities in the disputed area were not carried out unilaterally, but only through coordination between the authorities of Nagaland and Assam.

The latest developments highlight the continuing sensitivity of the Nagaland-Assam border, where competing territorial claims, access to roads and land, and administrative activities have periodically triggered tensions between communities and the two states.

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ISRO successfully launches Earth observation satellite EOS-05

BENGALURU

The G S L V - F 1 7 (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle) carrying EOS-05 executed a textbook launch at 2.55 am on Friday. After setbacks during previous missions, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) teams worked continuously to ensure the mission's success, with the GSVL-F17 placing the EOS-05 satellite into a Sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit at 3.14 am.

Friday's launch marked the space agency's maiden success for the year 2026.

The EOS-05 is India's first ever imaging satellite to monitor from Geosynchronous orbit about 36,000 km above the Earth.

ISRO teams noted that this is the heaviest satellite ever launched into a geosynchronous orbit, with a lift-off mass of 420.5 tonnes. The 51.7-metre-tall vehicle was launched from the sec-

ond launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota amid light rain.

A beaming ISRO chief V Narayanan said, "I am very happy to announce that the GSVL F-17 vehicle has successfully and precisely injected the advanced EOS-05 geo imaging satellite in the intended and required orbit."

"This is the 107th launch from Sriharikota and the 19th mission of GSVL," he said soon after the launch.

Narayanan added that this was the second launch of the financial year and the first for ISRO.

Six more launches have been targeted for this financial year, including NVS-03. The teams are also working on the Gaganyaan mission, with the first uncrewed mission under the programme scheduled for launch during this financial year, he said.

Former ISRO directors Dr K Radhakrishnan, K Kiran Kumar and S Somanath were

also present at the launch site, along with teams from the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy.

The GSVL-F17 launch comprised three stages, solid, liquid propulsion and cryogenic. Loud cheers erupted in the launch room when the successful completion of the cryogenic stage was announced by the directors 15 minutes after the launch, overcoming the earlier hiccups faced during the cryogenic stages of previous missions.

The GSVL-F17 has an S139 solid core and four L40H liquid strap-ons. The normal perigee is 172 km and apogee is 29,000 km, but ISRO achieved a 171-km perigee and an apogee of 31,260 km, Narayanan announced on the occasion.

The inclination of the satellite is 19.28 degrees, while the payload mass is 2,367 kg, making it the heaviest satellite launched by India so far, he said.

India's growth story becoming source of confidence, new opportunities for world: Modi



NEWDELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday highlighted India's 7.8 per cent economic growth in the latest quarter, saying the country's growth story was becoming a source of confidence and new opportunities for the world, as he held wide-ranging talks with Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever.

Speaking after his meeting with De Wever, Modi said India's economy had maintained its momentum despite global uncertainty, conflicts and disruptions to food, fuel and supply chains.

"Today, the world is going through a period of great upheaval. Conflicts continue to persist in many parts of the world. Whether it is food, fuel, or supply chains, every sector is being impacted

by uncertainty," Modi said.

"In this challenging environment, India's economy has maintained its momentum. We recorded 7.8 per cent growth in the last quarter. Today, India's growth story is becoming a source of confidence and new opportunities for the world," he added.

The latest GDP figures showed India's economy grew 7.8 per cent in the April-June quarter of 2026-27, exceeding expectations and retaining India among the world's fastest-growing major economies.

Modi's remarks came as India and Belgium agreed to expand cooperation across trade, defence, critical minerals, clean energy and emerging technologies.

The prime minister described

defence and security cooperation as a "key pillar" of bilateral ties and said the two countries had agreed to enhance military exchanges and training. Agreements between the governments and defence industries, he said, would create opportunities for defence co-development and co-production.

India and Belgium will also strengthen intelligence sharing and cooperation between their agencies to combat crime, Modi said.

Highlighting economic and technological cooperation, Modi said both sides had agreed to increase collaboration in critical minerals, including processing and recycling, while Belgium's semiconductor expertise and India's scale could complement each other.

The two countries also signed an agreement on renewable energy, which Modi said would provide fresh momentum to cooperation on clean energy and sustainability.

People-to-people ties would remain the "greatest strength" of the relationship, Modi said, adding that the two sides would strengthen links between start-ups, expand university and research cooperation and enhance capacity building in the maritime sector.

India and Belgium are also expected to conclude a Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement to facilitate talent mobility between the two countries.

On international conflicts, Modi said India and Belgium shared a commitment to the rule of law, dialogue and diplomacy.

"Be it Ukraine or West Asia, we support all efforts for the early end of conflicts and for peace," he said.

He also said the two countries were committed to eradicating every form of terrorism.

De Wever described the conclusion of the India-European Union free trade agreement as a major milestone and said the relationship between Brussels and New Delhi was becoming broader and more strategic.

Belgium is an important economic partner for India in Europe, with bilateral trade reaching USD 13.01 billion in 2025-26. Diamond trade remains a significant component of the relationship, with Antwerp being a major global diamond hub.

The two countries have also strengthened their political engagement with the establishment of a ministerial-level strategic dialogue. The inaugural Belgium-India Strategic Dialogue was held in Brussels on July 15 and was co-chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Maxime Prevot.

The latest talks come amid efforts by both countries to broaden their relationship beyond traditional economic ties into defence, technology, clean energy, critical minerals and supply-chain cooperation.

INTERNATIONAL

Italy weighs the results as Giorgia Meloni's government sets a longevity record

ROME

In a country where governments are famously short-lived, the perceived success of Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni has often been attributed to her survival skills rather than her accomplishments.

On Thursday, after 1,413 days — nearly four years — Meloni's conservative administration became Italy's longest-serving uninterrupted government since World War II, surpassing the record set by the late Silvio Berlusconi between 2001 and 2005.

None of Italy's 68 governments in the country's 80 years as a republic has yet to complete a five-year term without interruption. Berlusconi came closest, but a government crisis forced him to resign briefly in 2005 before forming a new Cabinet.

Meloni and her party will celebrate their feat on Friday with a large pre-election rally in the southern city of Bari.

Meloni, straightforward and pragmatic, has managed to stave off the crises and defections that have toppled past governments. The results — or lack of results — from this uncharacteristic period of stability may ultimately define Meloni's legacy and her odds of winning another term.

"If you have five years in office and not much to show when you go back to voters, it can weigh against you," said Nathalie Tocci, an international relations expert and professor at Johns Hopkins University.

When Meloni took office in October 2022, she was Italy's first female prime minister. Her government was also the first led by a party with neo-fascist roots, and European allies and financial markets viewed her with unease.

But Meloni has largely governed pragmatically. She maintained steadfast support for Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion, worked within European institutions and embraced fiscal discipline.

Her relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump became one of her most notable foreign policy assets — at least initially.

While political instability has reshaped governments elsewhere in Europe — including the United Kingdom



and France — Meloni has kept the same coalition in place since taking office, a rarity in modern Italian politics and a central pillar of her reelection bid.

"Meloni has reaped a part of what she sowed, because I know few people so determined, so hardworking, so precise, so meticulous, who have sacrificed both their human and private spheres in order to serve the institutions," Defense Minister Guido Crosetto told The Associated Press in an interview on Wednesday.

"For this she is now reaping exactly what she deserves in terms of international credibility," he said, speaking in a room in the ministry filled with photos of his predecessors. "She is not reaping the same on the Italian level."

Heading toward the next election, due by the end of 2027, there is no longer any debate that Meloni can govern. The question is whether voters believe her government delivered enough to deserve another term.

Supporters point to tighter public finances, the rollback of costly measures, more than 1 million additional jobs, unemployment below 6% and youth unemployment at new lows. They also cite a sharp decline in the arrival of migrants.

"Duration is not synonymous with results," Crosetto said, referring to the government's record, "but these are important ones."

Meloni says those gains resulted from policies supporting businesses and job creators.

"The government's strategy has focused on supporting those who create wealth and jobs," Meloni said at a recent labor event. "We have reached a record high in employment."

While she and her supporters point to jobs, fiscal discipline and political durability, her critics counter that many of Italy's persistent problems remain. Weak productivity, demographic decline and long-standing inefficiencies in health-care, education and public administration remain largely unaddressed.

"The Meloni government has been certainly stable and long-running, but it hasn't achieved much in terms of structural reforms," political analyst and pollster Lorenzo Pregliasco said.

Opposition leaders say Meloni's government has yet to find concrete ways to stimulate long-term economic growth beyond just controlling public debt and state deficits.

Former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, leader of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement and a possible rival at the polls, pointed to the higher cost of living.

"The government is celebrating, but Italians are not," Conte said in a recent speech outside parliament.

Meloni's transformation from nationalist outsider to establishment figure

has reassured investors and European leaders.

"Italy has somewhat lost its role as Europe's black sheep," said Stefano Manzocchi, an international economics expert and professor at Rome's LUISS University.

Her knack for the balancing act was highlighted during recent tensions with Trump.

After Trump claimed that she had "begged" him for a photo at a Group of Seven summit in France, Meloni shot back: "Italy doesn't beg." It won her points with Italians who saw it as evidence that she could maintain relations with Washington while publicly defending Italy and Europe.

"I like Meloni, I like her character because she is authoritative and doesn't let anyone walk on her," said David Del Sarto, a 52-year-old taxi driver in Rome.

Tocci, the Johns Hopkins professor, noted that by pairing nationalist positions on migration and identity with tactical ability, Meloni helped accelerate the mainstreaming of Europe's hard right. Once viewed with suspicion by much of the political establishment, nationalist parties have increasingly gained influence within governments and European institutions.

Meloni's supporters see her evolution as proof that nationalist conservatives can govern responsibly while remaining committed to democratic institutions and Western alliances.

But Meloni's willingness to become more moderate has also been viewed as a weakness by some — and it has opened room for more conservative challengers.

Retired army Gen. Roberto Vannacci — known for hard-line positions on immigration and national identity — has emerged as a prominent voice on Italy's far right, threatening Meloni by launching his own political party. He argues that Meloni has abandoned many of the combative promises that energized her political base, choosing instead to project an institution-friendly image to European and U.S. allies.

He may succeed in siphoning off conservative voters and lawmakers who feel Meloni moderated too much in her pursuit of stability.

Symbolic funerals held in Nepal for those feared lost as some missing tourists make contact



KATHMANDU

Tourists previously reported missing in Nepal have made contact with authorities, officials said Wednesday, as families of locals still unaccounted for after last week's catastrophic floods held symbolic funerals for their loved ones.

Nepal's Foreign Ministry said 324 foreign nationals have been rescued, while another 590 from 39 countries remain missing following the Aug. 26 floods. At least 1,252 people have been killed and more than 4,200 are missing, according to the country's disaster management agency.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Wednesday that the number of Australians missing in the disaster had fallen from 43 to 38 after five were confirmed safe overnight.

"Amidst all of this tragedy, we are seeing some positive news. Today, another five Australians have been confirmed safe," Albanese told reporters in Palau, where he is attending a regional summit.

"We hope, of course, for positive news further, and we're doing everything we can to work with authorities," Albanese added.

On Thursday, the Australian government said it would send a team of drone operators to Nepal within days to assist search and rescue efforts.

Sunil Sharma, a spokesperson for the Nepal Tourism Board, said at least five other tourists who were previously

reported missing had contacted authorities by email or telephone in recent days.

It is thought the disaster happened when a glacial collapse in the Himalayas sent rock, ice and meltwater into valleys below, triggering powerful floods downstream. The surge entered rivers flowing through Tibet and Nepal, causing them to rise rapidly. Floodwaters swept away homes, buildings, roads and bridges, carrying mud and rocks downstream.

People whose relatives remain missing following flash floods perform rituals after symbolic funeral rites on the banks of the swollen Trishuli River in Nepal's Nuwakot district, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2026.

Some families in Nuwakot, one of Nepal's worst-affected districts, have held symbolic funerals for relatives still missing, hoping to free their souls after they were presumed dead.

In Hindu tradition, cremation is an important final rite, and for some families, performing the ceremony even without the bodies of their loved ones provides a sense of spiritual release.

Mukunda Rijal said his cousins and their daughters had not been found, prompting the family to perform a symbolic funeral for them.

Along the banks of the Trishuli River, a priest placed straw effigies representing the missing family members and covered them with small piles of wood before setting them alight. The symbolic funeral

pyres were surrounded by offerings to Hindu deities as relatives gathered to perform the final rites.

Authorities in Nepal have also been burying recovered bodies in temporary graves until they can be identified. They are preserving DNA samples, photographing distinguishing facial features and recording other identifying details to help match the remains with missing people and eventually return them to their families.

On the Chinese side, rescue crews completed a makeshift road to the disaster site at Gyirong Port on the Nepal border, state broadcaster CCTV reported on Wednesday.

Crews have been clearing access for heavy machinery to be used in the search at the border crossing complex, which was washed away by the floods. The road leading to the crossing was destroyed and buried under water, mud and rocks.

At least 21 people have been killed and 541 remain missing in China, according to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

Some flood survivors are fleeing the devastation to seek shelter in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu.

Around 400 survivors, mostly from the town of Timure, about 110 kilometers (65 miles) west of Kathmandu, have been staying at the Yellow Gumba monastery. The shelter is being organized by locals and relatives, with relief supplies donated by individuals and charity organizations.

Riya Tamang, 21, who fled with her 10-month-old baby as the floodwaters approached, is among those taking shelter at the monastery. She lost her grandparents in the disaster.

"I was the last one to leave the house. It was so difficult to escape," she said.

Her husband, who works as a cook in Gyirong town on the Chinese side of the border, also survived, and the couple now stays in touch through video calls.

MANIPUR NEEDS PEACE,
NOT ARMED POWER

Manipur's search for peace has often been measured by a deceptively simple question: have the killings stopped? That is an important question, but it is not enough. A society can experience fewer attacks and still remain deeply trapped in conflict. A ceasefire can reduce violence without removing the structures that make violence possible. A political agreement can create temporary calm while leaving armed cadres, weapons, territorial influence and competing chains of authority intact. For Manipur, the real test of peace is therefore much larger. It is whether ordinary citizens can eventually live without fear of armed organisations, whether political disagreements can be settled without coercion, and whether the authority of the elected government and the law can be restored uniformly across the state.

That requires confronting an uncomfortable reality: lasting peace cannot coexist indefinitely with armed political power. Manipur has lived with insurgency, militancy and competing armed movements for decades. More than 50 armed groups have operated in and around the state at different points, pursuing different political, ethnic and territorial objectives. The result has been a prolonged environment in which civilian life is repeatedly caught between competing claims of authority.

The latest incidents of violence, including the killing of four Naga civilians on August 27 allegedly by suspected Kukli militants operating under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) framework, underline the continuing danger.

Whatever the immediate circumstances of individual incidents, the larger question remains: how long can a peace process remain sustainable if armed organisations continue to retain weapons, cadres and organisational structures capable of influencing events on the ground?

The Difference Between a Ceasefire and Peace A ceasefire is valuable because it can stop immediate bloodshed. But it is not necessarily a settlement. The distinction matters greatly in Manipur.

Suspension of Operations agreements and other ceasefire mechanisms are generally intended to create conditions in which political negotiations can take place. They can provide space for dialogue, reduce confrontation with security forces and create opportunities for political engagement.

But such arrangements become problematic when temporary security mechanisms begin to resemble permanent political structures.

If armed organisations continue to retain cadres, command systems and weapons for years, the fundamental question of who exercises legitimate authority remains unresolved.

A ceasefire can silence weapons for a period. It cannot, by itself, answer who controls territory, who protects civilians, who resolves disputes, who enforces the law and who determines political choices.

Those questions ultimately have to be answered by constitutional institutions.

Peace, therefore, should not be defined simply as the absence of shooting. It should mean the restoration of normal civic life.

A farmer should be able to cultivate land without negotiating with armed actors. A trader should be able to move goods without paying unauthorised levies. A student should be able to travel without passing through competing zones of influence. A citizen should be able to vote without intimidation.

That is what normalcy means. When Armed Organisations Become Political Actors

The greatest danger emerges when armed groups begin to operate not merely as security threats but as political actors.

Once an organisation possesses weapons and simultaneously seeks to influence political decisions, community leadership, elections, social institutions or questions of identity, the balance between civilian society and armed authority becomes distorted. Democracy depends on the ability of citizens to disagree.

An armed organisation, by contrast, possesses the capacity to make disagreement costly. That creates a fundamental contradiction.

Political aspirations are legitimate. Communities have the right to demand constitutional safeguards, cultural protection, political representation, land rights and recognition of their identities. Such demands can and should be debated. But the means matter.

A political demand pursued through elections, legislation, public debate and constitutional negotiation is fundamentally different from a political demand backed by armed coercion. Manipur cannot permanently resolve its political disputes unless that distinction is maintained.

The State Cannot Have Two Systems of Authority One of the central challenges facing Manipur is the restoration of a single, credible framework of civilian authority.

A democratic state cannot function effectively if armed organisations exercise informal authority alongside elected institutions. Citizens must know which law applies to them, which authority protects them and which institution they can approach when their rights are violated.

This becomes especially important for communities that do not have armed organisations representing or claiming to defend them. An unarmed community cannot be expected to compete indefinitely with organised armed formations.

If civilians believe that their safety depends upon creating their own armed protection, militarisation becomes self-perpetuating. One group's weapons become another group's justification for acquiring weapons. Fear produces mobilisation; mobilisation produces counter-mobilisation; and counter-mobilisation produces



further fear. This is how conflicts become entrenched. The responsibility for breaking that cycle cannot be transferred to civilians. The state exists precisely to ensure that citizens do not have to become combatants to feel secure. The SoO Framework Needs a Harder Test

The Suspension of Operations arrangement involving Kukli armed groups has been in place since 2008. Its stated purpose has been to create conditions for dialogue and a political settlement. But any peace mechanism must ultimately be judged by its results.

The relevant questions are straightforward. Does the arrangement reduce violence? Does it prevent armed groups from intimidating civilians?

Does it protect democratic institutions? Does it prevent extortion and unauthorised taxation? Does it stop armed organisations from interfering in elections and civilian administration?

Does it protect the rights of communities and individuals who may disagree with the groups concerned? And most importantly, does it create a credible route towards disarmament and political normalisation?

If violations occur repeatedly without meaningful consequences, public confidence in the mechanism inevitably declines.

A ceasefire framework cannot become an arrangement under which armed groups enjoy indefinite political space while accountability remains uncertain. The Central and Manipur governments therefore face an important policy challenge: peace mechanisms must be reviewed not merely according to whether armed groups attack security forces, but according to their impact on civilians and constitutional governance.

The Unarmed Citizen Must Be at the Centre For too long, conflict-resolution debates can become dominated by organisations claiming to speak for communities.

That creates another danger. Communities are not monolithic. Within every ethnic and social group there are differences of opinion, political preferences and competing interests. Civil society organisations may represent important constituencies, but they cannot automatically be treated as substitutes for the individual citizen.

The voice of an armed organisation cannot be assumed to represent every member of the community from which it claims legitimacy.

This is particularly important for smaller or vulnerable communities that may find themselves caught between larger political and armed formations.

The state's responsibility is not to choose which community has the stronger armed representation.

Its responsibility is to protect citizens equally. That principle should apply to Meitei, Kukli, Naga, Thadou and every other community living in Manipur. Political Rights Cannot Depend on Firepower Elections provide perhaps the clearest test of whether democracy is functioning.

A vote is meaningful only when it is freely cast. If armed organisations can influence candidates, intimidate voters, dictate political positions or pressure communities to support particular interests, elections become vulnerable to coercion.

That is unacceptable regardless of which party benefits.

No political party should regard armed organisations as electoral instruments. No government should permit armed groups to become informal political intermediaries. And no citizen should have to calculate whether exercising a political preference could invite retaliation.

The authority to govern must come from the ballot box, not from the capacity to mobilise armed men.

This principle cannot be selectively applied.

If one armed organisation is prohibited from influencing politics through force, the same standard must apply to every other armed organisation.

Consistency is essential to public confidence. Kashmir and the Larger Indian Experience India's experience with insurgency in different regions demonstrates that armed movements do not have to remain permanent features of political life.

The country has confronted insurgencies through combinations of security operations, political dialogue, ceasefire arrangements, rehabilitation, development and negotiations.

The circumstances of Kashmir, the Northeast and other conflict-affected regions are different and should not be treated as identical. Yet there is a broader lesson. Peace processes ultimately have to move from armed confrontation towards political normalisation.

If armed organisations remain permanently embedded in civilian and political life, the conflict may change its appearance without truly ending.

That is the question Manipur must now confront. Why should a temporary arrangement designed to facilitate negotiations become an indefinite substitute

responsible merely because of their identity. Likewise, victims should not be expected to forget what happened in the name of reconciliation.

Truth, justice, compensation, rehabilitation and reconciliation must form part of the same broader process.

Return, Recovery and Reconstruction

Peace will remain incomplete as long as thousands of people remain displaced or unable to return safely to their homes.

The restoration of homes and livelihoods is therefore not simply a humanitarian task. It is part of conflict resolution.

People need confidence that they can return without fear, that their property will be protected, that schools and markets will function, and that security will not depend upon ethnic control of territory.

This is where civilian administration becomes crucial.

A functioning government should be capable of delivering services across communities without discrimination.

Roads, schools, hospitals, markets and administrative institutions can become practical symbols of a return to normal life.

The rebuilding of Manipur cannot therefore be separated from the rebuilding of public trust.

What Should the Endgame Look Like? Manipur needs to move beyond the language of perpetual crisis management.

The endgame should be clear. Armed groups should transition towards civilian political participation.

Weapons should ultimately be removed from political competition. Cadres should be demobilised and rehabilitated through credible programmes.

Civilians should be protected by state institutions rather than competing armed organisations. Political demands should be addressed through constitutional dialogue.

Victims should receive justice and support. Displaced people should be able to return safely and with dignity.

And the law should apply equally, irrespective of ethnic identity or political affiliation.

None of these objectives can be achieved overnight.

Nor can they be accomplished through security operations alone. Political negotiation remains indispensable. So are development, reconciliation, institutional reform and community dialogue.

But none of these efforts can produce lasting results if armed coercion remains an accepted instrument of political bargaining.

The Choice Is Between Armed Competition and Democratic Competition

The fundamental choice facing Manipur is not between one community and another.

It is between two models of politics. The first is a system in which competing communities and organisations depend on armed strength to secure their interests.

The second is a system in which political strength comes from public support, constitutional rights, democratic institutions and lawful negotiation.

The first model inevitably rewards those with greater capacity for coercion. The second gives ordinary citizens a meaningful role.

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