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PERSPECTIVE
ONE FLOWER DOES NOT MAKE A GARLAND

‘We did not create the crisis’: Khemchand

IMPHAL
Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Monday said the BJP was working to restore peace, reconciliation and free movement in the violence-hit state, while acknowledging that public anger had been directed at the party over the prolonged crisis.

Addressing BJP workers, Singh described the violence that began on May 3, 2023, as “most unfortunate” and said the conflict had overshadowed the work undertaken by the BJP government.

“While we did not create this crisis, it is natural for the people to blame us for it,” Singh said, asserting that the party was pursuing reconciliation and dialogue between communities.

He said the government’s stated objective was to protect all 36 communities in Manipur and restore normal movement across the state.

Referring to earlier periods of unrest, including the prolonged agitation over the Inner Line Permit (ILP), Singh said the BJP government eventually introduced the system in the state to safeguard the interests of indigenous people. On the demand for implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the chief minister said it was part of the BJP’s election manifesto. He also recalled that the Manipur Assembly, during the tenure of former chief minister N Biren Singh, had passed a resolution in August 2022 seeking implementation of the NRC in the state.

Singh urged BJP workers to communicate the government’s work more effectively, saying the on-going conflict had largely eclipsed its achievements.

He particularly called on party workers to reach out to young people and explain the government’s initiatives, while stressing the need to rebuild confidence and support efforts towards peace and normalcy.

WHO SAID WHAT



From the freedom struggle to nation-building, Hindi has played the role of binding the country together. ~ Amit Shah, Union Home Minister



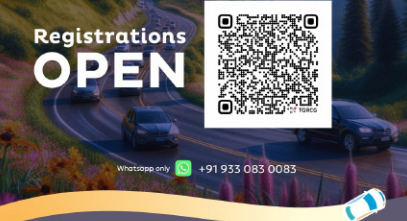
AIZAWL

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Northeast records 77% decline in violence in 2025: Defence Ministry report

NEW DELHI

The Northeast recorded a 77 per cent decline in violence-related incidents in 2025, with security forces intensifying counter-insurgency operations, border infrastructure development and logistical preparedness along the China and Myanmar frontiers, according to the Defence Ministry’s annual report.

The report said security forces neutralised 33 terrorists, apprehended 1,066 insurgents and facilitated the surrender of 117 insurgents during the year. A total of 4,336 weapons were also recovered across the region.

The security establishment has attributed the decline to sustained intelligence-based operations aimed at disrupting insurgent networks and denying militant groups operational space.

The improved security environment, according to the report, has also created conditions more conducive to development and economic activity in the strategically important



region.

Security preparedness in the Northeast has assumed added significance amid India’s wider national security concerns along the Arunachal Pradesh-China border and the India-Myanmar frontier. The region is also central to India’s Act East policy and its efforts to strengthen connectivity with Southeast Asia.

Focus on Arunachal border infrastructure

Along the Arunachal Pradesh frontier, the emphasis has been on improving mobility and logistics and enabling the rapid movement of troops and equipment to forward areas.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) completed 123 bridges during

2025, marking a significant expansion of connectivity in strategically important border sectors.

Among the key projects was the 135-metre multi-span Balanced Cantilever Pinjoli Bridge on the Balipara-Charduar-Tawang Road. The bridge has improved connectivity in the Tenga Valley and strengthened the Tenga-Bomdila-Tawang axis, facilitating movement towards Tawang and other forward areas along the Line of Actual Control.

The BRO has also upgraded aviation infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh. A 75-metre by 50-metre PQC helipad was completed at Anini, replacing the earlier 25-metre by 25-metre landing ground.

The upgraded facility can accommodate heavier helicopters and is expected to improve the movement of personnel, supplies and equipment, besides strengthening emergency response capabilities during natural disasters.

The government has also stepped up financial support for the BRO. Af-

ter recording expenditure of Rs 16,690 crore in 2024-25, the organisation has been given an enhanced expenditure target of Rs 18,700 crore for 2025-26.

India-Myanmar border remains sensitive

The India-Myanmar border, meanwhile, continues to remain a security concern amid the ongoing conflict between the Myanmar military and resistance forces.

India has sought to tighten regulation of cross-border movement while maintaining engagement with Myanmar. According to the report, 20 border crossing points have been established under the Free Movement Regime to regulate local movement. A total of 12,590 metres of fencing was constructed along the India-Myanmar border during 2025.

The measures form part of a broader effort to strengthen border management while addressing security challenges arising from instability in Myanmar and the movement of people and armed groups across the frontier.

Four Kuki-Zo civilians killed in twin attacks in Manipur

IMPHAL

Four persons from the Kuki-Zo community were killed in two suspected militant attacks in Manipur on Sunday, Kuki-Zo organisations said.

The state government did not immediately react to the incidents. Officials confirmed the incidents but could not share further details.

The Kuki-Zo organisations said the first attack was carried out at dawn at the Tollen village in Tamenglong district, in which one Seineh Kinsit and his wife Lhingzangai were killed and their six-year-old son was injured. A bullet is reportedly still lodged inside the minor’s body.

The woman died on the spot, while her husband succumbed to his injuries at a hospital.

According to the Kuki-Zo organisations, three persons transporting rice were ambushed at Longpi village in Noney district in the second attack carried out hours later.

Two of them, identified as Julie Gangte and Thangroel Gangte, were killed on the spot. Another woman from the same group was feared to have been abducted and remained missing.

The Kuki-Zo organisations alleged that the attacks were perpetrated by the members of Naga insurgent groups.

The Kuki Inpi (Jiribam, Tamenglong and Noney districts) or Kuki Inpi JTN condemned the first attack and alleged that it was carried out by suspected Naga insurgents.

“This inhuman act is not merely an attack on one family; it is an affront to humanity itself. Kuki Inpi JTN stands in solidarity with the bereaved family and calls for justice to be delivered

without delay,” the Kuki Inpi JTN said in a statement.

The organisation further said it was deeply concerning that the attack occurred only a few hundred metres from security forces stationed in the area.

“While Kuki Inpi JTN does not question the capabilities of the central security forces, the circumstances raise serious concerns regarding how such an attack could occur in such close proximity to their deployment,” the statement said.

The Western Village Volunteer (Jiribam, Tamenglong and Noney) alleged that the second attack was carried out by rebel groups National Socialist Council of Nagalim or NSCN-IM and Zeliangrong United Front (Kamson).

The organisation condemned the violence against civilians and demanded that the perpetrators be identified, apprehended, and brought to justice within 24 hours. It warned that failing to ensure timely justice would compel it to “unleash all its anger against the perpetrators.”

The violence in Manipur has continued despite repeated appeals by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh to exercise restraint. As part of the government’s efforts to restore peace in the restive state, Singh undertook a series of visits to different districts in recent months and met Kuki-Zo and Naga leaders.

Meanwhile, the state government on called upon protestors, demanding the closure of government offices over the updating of the National Register of Citizens, not to add to the hardships faced by the public.

Ramanuj Goswami death: Father questions police account, seeks clarity on circumstances

GUWAHATI

The family of Ramanuj Goswami, who died after sustaining critical injuries while in police custody, has questioned the circumstances surrounding his death and sought clarity over the sequence of events. Goswami’s father said the family was initially informed by the officer-in-charge of Hatigaon Police Station, Brahma, that Ramanuj had died after falling from the roof of Guwahati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH).

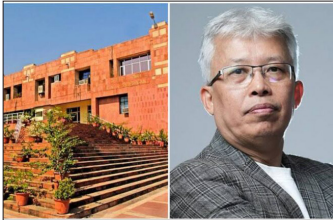
The statement differs from the account given by police earlier. According to police, Goswami, who was in custody in connection with the alleged murder of his wife, jumped from a moving police vehicle while being taken to GMCH for a medical examination. He suffered severe injuries and was later declared dead at the hospital.

Goswami’s father said he found the circumstances difficult to believe, particularly because his son had surrendered before the authorities. He questioned why Ramanuj would have taken such a step while being taken for a medical examination.

The family has also raised questions about the nature of the injuries. His father said he wanted the body to be examined for any marks that could indicate a gunshot injury. He further said Ramanuj had previously been reported to be in a poor mental state and recalled that he had approached a media organisation earlier over concerns about his son being taken into custody.

The family said it would take possession of the body after the necessary legal and post-mortem formalities are completed.

Manipur MP Bimol Akoijam denies sexual harassment allegations, questions media reports



IMPHAL

Manipur Lok Sabha MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam has denied allegations of sexual harassment reportedly made by women students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), calling the media reports “unverified, intentional, unethical and illegal”.

Akoijam made the remarks during a visit to Dhanamanjuri University on the night of September 13, where he met students staging an indefinite hunger strike over pending stipend payments.

Asked about reports alleging sexual harassment complaints against him, Akoijam said the matter would be addressed through legal proceedings and that the truth would ultimately be established by the court.

He also criticised what he described as a “media trial”, arguing that such reporting was unacceptable even when allegations were backed by formally registered criminal complaints.

“Media trial is condemned by everybody, even in criminal cases or registered cases. However, now

it is thriving on it,” he said.

Akoijam further alleged that the coverage reflected racial discrimination and questioned whether the response would have been different if similar allegations had been made against a person from Bihar or Uttar Pradesh.

Referring to himself as a “Chingki professor” and a parliamentarian who has spoken out against attempts to silence Manipur, he questioned the limited public reaction to what he termed a media trial against him.

The MP also questioned the media organisations carrying what he described as “propaganda” against him, while maintaining that he had nothing to hide.

“I have nothing to hide. The truth will come on my side,” he said.

Reports circulating in recent days have alleged that 11 women students of JNU have filed sexual harassment complaints against Akoijam. The complaints are reportedly before the university’s Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), with reports claiming that the matter has remained unresolved for nearly four months.

Akoijam has denied the allegations and indicated that he would pursue legal remedies over the reports.

The allegations have not been established. Any finding on the matter will depend on the proceedings before the competent authorities and, if applicable, the courts.

Bairabi-Sairang railway completes one year, opens new economic lifelines for Mizoram



AIZAWL

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The 51.38-km line and Sairang railway station were inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 13, 2025, bringing the national railway network to the doorstep of Aizawl after decades of heavy dependence on

road transport.

Built across Mizoram’s difficult hill terrain, the corridor includes 153 bridges, 45 tunnels stretching nearly 16 km and six bridges rising more than 70 metres, with the tallest reaching 114 metres. It connects Bairabi in Assam with Hortoki, Kawnpui, Mualkhang and Sairang.

More than 15 lakh passengers in a year

The line has significantly expanded Mizoram’s rail connectivity, with services now linking Sairang with Guwahati, Kolkata and Delhi. The Sairang-Anand Vihar Rajdhani Express has provided the state with its first direct premium train service to the national capital.

The Sairang-Silchar passenger service, inaugurated by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in January 2026, has also established a regular link with Assam’s Barak Valley.

More than 1,100 train trips have been completed during the first year, carrying over 15 lakh passengers. Railway officials said demand has remained strong, with services operating at more than 100 per cent occupancy on average.

The Sairang-Kolkata service has recorded average occupancy of more than 140 per cent, while the daily Sairang-Guwahati service has remained above 110 per cent. The Rajdhani Express has recorded average occupancy of over 145 per cent. Passenger services generated

about Rs 54 crore in ticket revenue during the year. Sairang station alone handled more than 5.54 lakh passenger movements, with average daily footfall of around 3,300.

The impact has extended beyond passenger movement. The railway has created an alternative channel for transporting cement, construction materials, foodgrains, fertilisers and automobiles to Mizoram.

The first freight train reached Sairang on September 14, 2025, carrying more than 26,000 bags of cement from the Star Cement siding at Tetelia near Guwahati. The arrival demonstrated the potential of rail transport to reduce freight costs and improve the availability of essential construction material in Aizawl.

In December 2025, the first automobile consignment reached Sairang, carrying 119 Maruti cars from Changsari near Guwahati.

More than 2,500 freight wagons have been delivered at Sairang during the first year, with around 70 per cent carrying construction materials such as cement, stone and sand.

The freight movement has also included rice and fertilisers, while 156 wagons have been used for automobile transportation. The shift of bulk cargo from long road journeys to rail has created a higher-capacity supply route for es-

The new rail link has also made Mizoram more

accessible to travellers from Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati and Silchar.

The availability of an affordable rail option is expected to support hotels, homestays, restaurants, taxis, tour operators, guides and local markets. It has also made it easier for the state to host educational, sporting, cultural and official events involving participants from outside Mizoram. For students, direct rail services have improved access to universities, professional institutions, coaching centres, examinations and academic events in other parts of the country. According to the information provided by railway authorities, tourism in Mizoram has increased by more than 86 per cent since the introduction of rail connectivity.

Local products find a route to national markets

The railway has also opened new possibilities for local enterprises, particularly in handloom, bamboo, cane, handicrafts and agricultural products.

The first parcel consignment from Sairang was booked on September 19, 2025, carrying Anthurium flowers to Delhi through the parcel van of the Sairang-Anand Vihar Rajdhani Express. The service offers local producers a direct route for transporting high-value and time-sensitive products to markets outside the state.



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The Future Will Judge Our Civilisation

There is something profoundly perverse in contemporary politics: those who shout loudest about defending civilisation and culture are those whose conduct is most conspicuously divorced from both. The phenomenon is not confined to India. Islamists invoke an imagined purity of Islamic civilisation while practicing violent intolerance. Christianity has a long history of projecting a ‘superior’ Christian civilisation, while engineering atrocities across the world. In India, the contradiction is increasingly visible in the political appropriation of Hindu identity: the kanwadias, for example, have become a spectacle of religious assertion and of coercive and obscene public behaviour, while the vocabulary of Hindutva, Sanatan, and civilisational greatness is used to legitimise an aggressive repudiation of civility.

The fundamental confusion is between cultural and civilisational history, on the one hand, and living culture and civilisation, on the other.

India possesses an extraordinary civilisational inheritance. Its achievements in mathematics, philosophy, linguistics, literature, architecture, medicine, and the arts are indisputable. Its ancient traditions of argument, scepticism, dissent, and intellectual contestation are extraordinary.

But the achievements of people who lived centuries or millennia ago are not the achievements of those who merely occupy the same geographical space today.

We cannot claim Aryabhata’s mathematics, Kalidasa’s genius or the intellectual achievements of ancient India simply because we were born here. Civilisation is not hereditary property.

A civilisation survives not because its ancestors were great, but because its descendants are capable of greatness.

Contemporary India is increasingly substituting ancestral pride for contemporary achievement. We celebrate Nalanda while engineering a collapse of educational standards; invoke ancient philosophical traditions while public discourse rewards abuse; boast of vasudhaiva kutumbakam while cultivating hostility towards specific ‘outgroups’; invoke a tradition of debate while treating disagreement as betrayal.

The past has simply become an instrument for avoiding responsibility for the present.

Culture, meanwhile, is reduced to symbols—dress, food, ritual, festivals, monuments, and slogans. But the essence of culture is reflected in whether disagreement produces argument or assault; whether public spaces belong equally to everyone; whether citizens can live differently without becoming objects of hatred.

The kanwadia who believes religious devotion entitles him to intimidate another citizen, the Islamist who believes faith entitles him to suppress unbelief, and Christian extremists who believe righteousness entitles them to impose their dominance over others, are separated by theology and history; but they share a deep pathology: the conversion of a complex civilisation into a closed political identity.

The scheme behind this is Orwellian. Political control increasingly depends not merely on coercion, but on controlling language and historical memory. Nationalism is obedience; patriotism is the absence of dissent; culture is conformity; history is grievance; and dissent is anti-national. Through these, authoritarian proclivities are socialised: vocal sets of citizens dictate what others should or should not eat; who they should or should not marry, how they should practice their faith; what they should read; and what particular opinions they must hold.

But a confident civilisation does not fear difference; an insecure ideology does.

India’s civilisational history provides powerful resources against this insecurity. It is a history of encounters, migrations, arguments, accommodations, and transformations. India’s strength was not uniformity, but its capacity to absorb and transform differences through intellect.

The question for Indians today is not what our ancestors achieved, but what we are doing.

Will future generations admire our universities, literature, science, institutions, and public culture? Or will they see a technologically capable society that squandered its energies in manufactured cultural antagonisms?

There is nothing wrong with pride in India’s past. But if we admire intellectual achievement, we must produce it. If we admire philosophical argument, we must promote free discourse. If we admire pluralism, we must practice it. If we admire civilisation, we must behave civilly.

The truly civilised society does not need to proclaim its civilisation. Its character is visible in its institutions, intellectual life, public conduct and, above all, in the space it permits for those who disagree with it.

Inheritance is not achievement. Towering civilisations in history have collapsed into disorder and ignominy. The only civilisation that ultimately matters, is the one we ourselves create.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You can, you should, and if you’re brave enough to start, you will. -

Stephen King

BRICS: INDIA’S NEW ROAR
A NEW PLATFORM OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR INDIA



DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

Today, BRICS is not just an economic grouping of emerging economies, but has also become an important platform for amplifying the voice of the global South in the changing world order. Originally composed of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, BRICS was renamed BRICS after South Africa joined in 2011. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates became full members in 2024, and Indonesia also joined as a full member in January 2025. With this expansion, BRICS now comprises 11 major emerging economies. The year 2026 holds special significance for India, as it assumes the BRICS Chairmanship from January 1, 2026, and New Delhi is scheduled to host the 18th BRICS Summit. The central vision of India’s Chairmanship is focused on resilience, innovation, cooperation, and sustainable development. This Chairmanship not only gives India the role of a convener, but also provides an opportunity to influence the group’s priorities and future direction.

The greatest significance of BRICS lies in strengthening India’s strategic autonomy. India has long advocated a foreign policy that builds relationships with diverse countries and forums in accordance with its national interests, rather than relying solely on a single power bloc. While India’s partnerships with countries like China and Russia are part of BRICS, India also cooperates with the United States, Europe, Japan, and other powers in parallel. BRICS thus provides a practical basis for India’s multi-alignment foreign policy.

Another important aspect of BRICS is strengthening the voice of the Global South. Even today, many decisions in international institutions are made within structures where the representation of developing countries is not commensurate with their economic and demographic roles. India has consistently raised the need for reform of institutions such as the United Nations Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Through BRICS, developing countries can collectively strengthen their demand for a more representative and equitable global governance system.

BRICS is also important for India from an economic perspective. Expanded membership means new opportunities for cooperation in larger markets, investment, energy, trade, technology, and supply chains. This opportunity is particularly significant for India as the global economy is facing increasing trends of protectionism, trade tensions, and supply chain restructuring. Cooperation within BRICS to reduce trade barriers and facilitate payment systems can benefit India’s economic interests. The possibilities of cooperation on trade in local currencies and cross-border payment systems are also important in this direction.

The New Development Bank is a significant achievement of BRICS in the field of development finance. Its objective is to provide financing for infrastructure and sustainable development projects. Such institutions are important for developing countries because they can serve as both an

alternative and a complement to traditional global financial institutions. For India, this offers vast potential for cooperation in projects related to transport, energy, urban development, climate, and green infrastructure.

But BRICS faces challenges. The most significant challenge is the diverse and sometimes conflicting strategic interests of its member states. Border disputes and broader strategic competition between India and China could impact any deeper political or security cooperation. Global developments such as the Russia-West conflict, the situation in West Asia, and the US-China rivalry could also create divisions within BRICS. The second challenge is the complexity of coordination after expansion. When the group was smaller, building a common approach was relatively easy. Now, with 11 full members and partner countries of varying levels, decision-making has become more complex. Each country has a different economic structure, political priorities, and foreign policy. Therefore, simply increasing its numbers is not enough; a common agenda and effective institutional mechanisms are

also essential.

Another serious challenge is the growing tendency to view BRICS as an anti-Western alliance. If the grouping is presented solely as an alternative or rival to the US and the West, its developmental and economic objectives could be harmed. It would be in India’s interest to develop BRICS as a multipolar and inclusive cooperation platform rather than a bloc pitted against anyone.

India’s 2026 presidency is a significant opportunity in this regard. India should move beyond mere announcements and focus on practical results. Concrete projects can be launched in areas such as trade and investment, digital public infrastructure, artificial intelligence, health, agriculture, energy, climate change, disaster management, and sustainable development. Strengthening the New Development Bank’s functionality and project finance capacity should also be a priority.

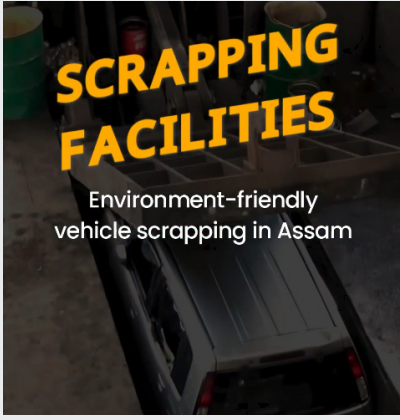
Ultimately, the success of BRICS will be determined by how influential its statements are in global politics; more importantly, by how much practical cooperation it generates. For India, BRICS is an important platform

for strategic autonomy, economic opportunities, the collective power of the global South, and a more representative world order. Its diversity is certainly a challenge, but it can also be its strength. During its presidency, India should center consensus, dialogue, and development, making BRICS a platform that stands not against any power, but in favor of equality, cooperation, and a balanced multipolar world order.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Assam is strengthening its vehicle scrapping ecosystem.

Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities will now be brought within the State’s eligible industrial framework, making the retirement of old vehicles cleaner, safer and more organised. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



BRICS is not just a diplomatic platform for India, but an opportunity to shape its independent and influential role in the changing world order. If India succeeds in combining its presidency with practical cooperation, solidarity with the global South, and balanced diplomacy, it could play a decisive role in shaping BRICS’s new direction.



Nagaland Christian forum protests FCRA changes, reported move on Vande Mataram

KOHIMA

The Nagaland Joint Christian Forum (NJCF) held a protest in Nagaland against proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and the reported move to make the singing of 'Vande Mataram' compulsory at official events.

The protesters called for the protection of religious freedom, constitutional rights and India's secular character, stressing that patriotism should not come at the cost of religious identity or freedom of conscience.

Addressing the rally, NJCF president N Paphino said the demonstration was not directed against India, the Constitution or the state, but was a peaceful expression of concerns



over faith, identity, religious liberty and democratic values.

"Nationalism does not mean the destruction of identity. Patriotism does not mean the surrender of conscience," Paphino said. He said India's strength lay in its diversity and argued that national unity should not be equated with uniformity.

On the reported move to make the singing of 'Vande Mataram' compulsory, Paphino said people whose religious beliefs prevented them from participating should not be forced to sing it.

He described the issue as one of freedom of conscience rather than patriotism and urged the government to ensure that people were not harassed for choosing not to participate. Following the rally, the NJCF sub-

mitted a memorandum addressed to the President through Lok Bhavan.

The memorandum raised concerns over the proposed FCRA amendments, religious freedom and compulsory singing of 'Vande Mataram'. It also sought an end to the continued enforcement of the Protected Area Permit (PAP) regime and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in the Northeast.

On the proposed FCRA changes, the forum said Christian organisations should not be selectively targeted and rejected allegations that foreign contributions received by Christian institutions were linked to forced conversions.

The NJCF maintained that such funds were used by Christian organisations for charitable and social-wel-

fare activities, particularly for marginalised communities.

At the same time, the forum said it was not opposed to strict enforcement of the FCRA and that organisations found violating the law should face penalties, including cancellation of licences where warranted.

It also urged the Joint Parliamentary Committee examining the proposed amendments to consult a broad range of stakeholders, including grassroots beneficiaries, and visit remote areas to assess the potential impact of the proposed changes.

The protest comes amid a wider debate over religious freedom, regulation of foreign contributions and the balance between national symbols and individual freedom of conscience.

Nagaland police alert after 9 deaths in Tuensang, spurious liquor suspected

KOHIMA

At least nine people have reportedly died at Civil Hospital in Nagaland's Tuensang amid suspected consumption of spurious liquor, according to an alert attributed to the Nagaland Police.

The deaths are suspected to be linked to consumption of illicit or contaminated liquor, with "MC Rum" among the products under investigation, the alert said.

Nagaland Police have ad-



vised people across the state to refrain from consuming liquor as a precautionary measure, particularly in Mon, Mokochung, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Shamator and Noklak districts.

Residents in other parts of Nagaland have also been urged to avoid liquor until further information is available.

The alert was issued in the name of Nagaland Director General of Police Rupin Sharma. Police said an investigation into the suspected liquor-related deaths is underway.

Authorities are yet to establish the exact cause of the deaths or confirm whether all the cases are linked to consumption of the suspected spurious liquor.

The situation remains under investigation.

Assam sets Rs 250 daily penalty for unjustified pension delays



GUWAHATI

The Assam government has introduced a penalty of Rs 250 per day for officials responsible for unjustified delays in processing pension cases, with the maximum penalty capped at Rs 5,000.

The move is aimed at strengthening accountability in the pension process and ensuring that retired government employees receive their dues within the stipulated timeframe.

Under the new provision, officials found responsible for undue

delays will face a daily penalty, which can be recovered directly from their salaries. The measure is intended to discourage unnecessary administrative delays and improve transparency in pension processing.

The government has reiterated that timely pension payment is a rightful entitlement of retired employees and not a discretionary benefit.

The initiative, announced under the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government, seeks to make officials more accountable while reducing the financial and administrative hardships faced by pensioners awaiting their legitimate dues.

The government has emphasised the principle that "Pension is a right, not a favour", linking the penalty mechanism to efforts to improve administrative efficiency and timely delivery of retirement benefits.

Assam BJP rebuffs Baghel's flood, price-rise criticism, questions Congress record

GUWAHATI

The Assam Pradesh BJP hit back at Congress leader and former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel over his criticism of the state government's handling of floods and rising prices, describing his remarks as "laughable" and questioning his record in office.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters in Guwahati, party spokesperson Brojen Mahanta said Baghel was not in a position to advise Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on governance, citing the Congress' defeat in the 2023 Chhattisgarh Assembly elections and allegations of irregularities during the previous Congress government.

Mahanta pointed out that the Congress had won 68 of Chhattisgarh's 90 Assembly seats in 2018 and formed the government, but was voted out five years later as the BJP returned to power.

The BJP spokesperson re-



ferred to several allegations against the former Chhattisgarh government, including an alleged liquor scam estimated at around Rs 3,000 crore, an alleged excise syndicate, the Mahadev betting app case, alleged protection-money collections, a coal levy case involving around Rs 500 crore and alleged irregularities in the 2021 Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission recruitment process and custom billing.

Mahanta also responded to Baghel's criticism of what the Congress leader described as the BJP's "anti-democratic" activities, invoking the Emergency imposed by the Indira Gandhi government in 1975.

He said several Assam political leaders, including former Chief Minister Golap Borbora and Dulal Baruah, were arrested during the Emergency and argued that Congress leaders should consider that

history before making allegations concerning democracy.

The BJP spokesperson further attacked the Congress over the issue of defining Assam's indigenous population, alleging that the party had provided political patronage and preferential treatment to people who had illegally entered the state from Bangladesh for electoral gains.

"The conscious people of Assam have not forgotten how the Congress, for the sake of its vote-bank politics, sought to provide political protection and privileges to those who had illegally entered Assam from Bangladesh," Mahanta said.

The BJP's response came a day after Baghel, who is the Congress' Assam in-charge, addressed a press conference in Guwahati and raised issues including the state's flood situation and rising prices.

BJP spokesperson Pranjal Kalita and media panellist Amal Narayan Patowary were also present at Sunday's press conference.

'Doomsayers proved wrong' as Modi steers BRICS towards consensus: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the outcome of the BRICS summit had disproved predictions of a deadlock, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi with helping the grouping reach consensus despite deep geopolitical differences.

Reacting to international media coverage of the summit, Sarma said it was "heartening" to see recognition of Modi's role in bringing BRICS members together.

"This morning, as I scanned the headlines of leading newspapers across the world, it was heartening to see the widespread recognition of Modi's role in forging consensus, Sarma said in a post on X.

The Assam chief minister said the summit was held against the backdrop of a complex geopolitical



environment, with member countries divided on several major international issues.

"In today's complex geopolitical climate, the doomsayers were out in full force, certain the summit would

collapse into empty statements," Sarma said.

He added that the outcome demonstrated that consensus and practical solutions remained possible under difficult circumstances.

"Yet the outcome speaks for itself: with the right leadership, consensus and solutions can be forged even in the most difficult circumstances," he said.

Sarma's remarks came after the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration at the 18th BRICS Summit. He had earlier described the declaration as reflecting India's "pragmatic, inclusive and forward-looking leadership" and credited Modi with helping member countries arrive at an agreement.

The Assam chief minister also welcomed the declaration's reference to the Guwahati Declaration on combating narcotics, adopted at the BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies meeting held in Guwahati in July.

Sarma said the reference was significant for Assam, which he described as being located along a critical narcotics corridor.

Manipur Lok Adalat settles 404 cases, Rs 5.20 crore awarded



IMPHAL

The third National Lok Adalat of 2026 in Manipur settled 404 cases and facilitated agreements involving Rs 5,20,51,973 across the state's nine judicial districts and the High Court on Saturday.

The one-day exercise was organised by the Manipur State Legal Services Authority (MASLSA) in collaboration with the High Court Legal Services Committee and District Legal Services Authorities.

The Lok Adalat took up both pre-litigation disputes and cases pending before courts, including civil suits, money recovery claims, matrimonial disputes, Motor Accident Claims Tribunal cases and bank recovery matters.

Chief Justice of the High Court of Manipur and MASLSA Patron-in-Chief Justice M Sundar visited the proceedings at the Lamphel Court Complex along with HCLSC Chairman Justice A Guneshwar Sharma. They interacted with judicial officers,

lawyers and litigants and presented Lok Adalat awards to parties who reached settlements.

Speaking to the media, Justice Sundar highlighted the role of Lok Adalats in providing speedy and mutually acceptable dispute resolution without prolonged litigation.

He said Saturday's session was the third National Lok Adalat held in Manipur this year, following sessions in March and May. Justice Sundar also highlighted the settlement of financial disputes, saying participating bank officials were authorised to offer substantial concessions to borrowers. In some cases, concessions included waivers of more than 50 per cent of the principal amount, while interest was fully waived in deserving cases.

He urged litigants to make greater use of Lok Adalats and other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve disputes amicably.

The fourth National Lok Adalat of 2026 will be held on December 12, Justice Sundar said, urging litigants to participate in large numbers.

Restoring peace in Manipur like 'threading a needle through torn cloth': CM Khemchand



GUWAHATI

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on September 13 said restoring peace and normalcy in the state remains a top priority for his government, describing the process as akin to "threading a needle through a torn cloth".

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 3rd Singamei Constituency MLA Trophy State Level Open Chess Tournament 2026 at the Service Recreation and Organisation of Youths (SROY) campus in Singamei Thongam Leikai, Imphal, Singh said the government assumed office when Manipur was facing a severe crisis. He said efforts to rebuild peace required pa-

tience, sensitivity and sustained engagement among communities and stakeholders. The Chief Minister also highlighted recent efforts to restore road connectivity between Imphal and Guwahati through Dimapur, a route that had remained disrupted for more than three years.

Singh said he had held discussions with civil society organisations and other stakeholders to facilitate the reopening of the route. He described the restoration of road transport as more than a connectivity initiative, saying it represented a step towards rebuilding normalcy and trust in the state.

"We are all Manipuris. We have 36 communities, and we should never be apart," Singh said, calling for unity, mutual understanding and continued dialogue among the state's communities. He said the progress towards reopening the road was the result of sustained engagement and cooperation among stakeholders. The programme also featured the presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indian Arm-Wrestling Federation to Laitonjam Ranabir Singh. SROY vice-president Th. Kanto Singh, Imphal Municipal Corporation Mayor L. Lokeswar Singh, Ward 15 Corporator Th. Bankimchandra and Ward 16 Corporator Th. Eliza Devi attended the programme. Earlier in the day, Singh inaugurated the 1st Singamei Super League at Pishum Ground, organised by the Chingamathak Young Learners Club (CYCL). The event included cultural performances before the Chief Minister formally kicked off the tournament. In the opening match, CYCL defeated Chongtham Leikai Social Welfare Organisation (CLSWO) 5-1.

Art and Culture and Tourism Minister Khurairajam Loken Singh, Keirao MLA Rameshwar Meitei, Sekmai MLA Heikham Dingo, government officials, players, family members and spectators were also present.

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Second batch of 97 Tejas Mk1As to start arriving next year: MoD report



NEW DELHI

The defence ministry’s annual report has set out the induction timeline for the Indian Air Force’s second tranche of indigenous Tejas fighters, with deliveries of 97 LCA Mk1A aircraft scheduled between September 2027 and September 2033, even as not a single jet from the first order placed five years ago has been handed over.

The Rs 62,370-crore contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), signed in September last year, covers 68 single-seat fighters and 29 twin-seaters.

That schedule rests on a programme that has slipped repeatedly. HAL is yet to deliver any of the 83 Tejas Mk1A fighters ordered under a Rs 48,000-crore contract signed in February 2021, deliveries of which were to have begun in March 2024. Supply disruptions at General Electric held up the F404 IN20 engines, and

software validation and radar trial problems caused a further slip. Completion of the 83-jet order has since been pushed to 2031.

HAL chairman Ravi Kota told the company’s Q4 FY26 earnings call that handovers would begin between August and September 2026, once engine supply stabilised.

The delay matters for an air force that is down to 29 fighter squadrons, its lowest in six decades, against a sanctioned strength of 42.5. The last two MiG 21 Bison squadrons retired in September last year. The Mk1A programme is central to arresting that shortfall. The annual report also revisits the state of military integration, it says 29 per cent of jointness and integration deliverables have been accomplished and 35 per cent of planned joint doctrines completed.

It points to Operation Sindoor as having “aptly highlighted that jointness

is the need of the hour”, and calls theatre-isation imperative to meet future security challenges. An integrated roadmap for the remaining reforms has been prepared and presented to Rajnath Singh, covering operational readiness, capability development, maintenance, administration, human resource management and the legal aspects of integration.

The blueprint for Integrated Theatre Commands is meanwhile moving through the ministry ahead of a Cabinet Committee on Security decision, with three sets of recommendations sent for vetting, as reported earlier. The proposed structure looks at three commands focused on China, Pakistan and the maritime domain, with the Northern Theatre headed by an Army officer, the Western Theatre by an IAF officer and the Maritime Theatre by a Navy officer.

India, Vietnam step up defence tech, industrial ties after BrahMos deal

NEW DELHI

India and Vietnam are set to accelerate technology sharing and defence-industrial collaboration, with the two sides agreeing to push ahead with joint initiatives as their strategic partnership acquires a stronger military-industrial dimension, according to the defence ministry statement on Sunday.

The decision was taken at a meeting between Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and Vietnam’s Deputy Minister of National Defence, Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Truong Thang, in the capital. The meeting followed a bilateral between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Vietnamese counterpart on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit and focused on advancing the Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The two sides agreed on “accelerating joint initiatives, technology sharing and defence industrial collaboration” and reaffirmed their “shared commitment to expanding maritime and defence ties” for a “peaceful, stable, and rule-based regional security architecture”, according to the statement.

The latest push comes months after India and Vietnam signed a roughly \$829 million contract for BrahMos coastal-defence systems, marking a significant expansion of defence-equipment ties between the two countries. The deal is expected to provide a foundation for wider engagement in defence technology and industry.

India and Vietnam also stressed closer coordination through multilateral mechanisms, particularly the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), amid what they described as “complex security dynamics”.

They highlighted the role of ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Groups in promoting regional stability and agreed that the next Defence Policy Dialogue would be hosted by India on the sidelines of Aero India 2027.

The reference to a “rule-based regional security architecture” comes against the backdrop of tensions in the



South China Sea, where Vietnam has had repeated disputes with China over activities in waters claimed by Hanoi.

The engagement also came as India hosted Chinese President Xi Jinping for the BRICS Summit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Xi on Saturday, with the two sides seeking to consolidate the recent improvement in bilateral relations while differences over the boundary question remain.

India-Vietnam ties were upgraded to an Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during Vietnamese President To Lam’s state visit to India in May. The two countries also announced

a 2+2 dialogue involving their foreign and defence ministers.

The BrahMos contract, signed in March and publicly confirmed by Singh at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in May, includes training, technical assistance and logistics support. Vietnam will become the second ASEAN country to operate the supersonic cruise missile after the Philippines, which signed a \$375 million contract in 2022.

The deal has also raised the possibility of wider technology and industrial linkages between the two countries. The immediate focus will be on implementa-

tion, including delivery timelines and potential follow-on orders.

Defence ties have expanded steadily since 2022, when India and Vietnam signed the Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership Towards 2030 and a memorandum of understanding on mutual logistics support. The logistics pact was the first such agreement Vietnam had concluded with another country.

The 15th Defence Policy Dialogue was held in Vietnam in November 2025, while the proposed 2+2 mechanism is expected to add a political layer to the expanding defence relationship.

INTERNATIONAL

‘Might makes right’ has no place, says China’s Xi Jinping; calls for stronger BRICS unity with Global South



NEW DELHI

The logic that “might makes right” should have been discarded long ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Sunday, as he called on BRICS nations to jointly strengthen ties with emerging markets and the Global South.

Xi also proposed a five-point initiative aimed at strengthening cooperation in trade, manufacturing, investment and technology.

Addressing the concluding session of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi, Xi said the world was undergoing “changes unseen in a century” as the collective rise of the Global

South accelerated the shift towards a multipolar order. He urged BRICS to “seize the historical initiative” and become “an active, stabilising and positive force in international affairs”.

“A world without rules is like a crossroads without traffic lights, where chaos and disorder are all but guaranteed. Fairness and justice is a universal aspiration, and international rules must be written by all countries,” he said.

Xi said the Global South countries should jointly “defend the rule of law in international affairs, safeguard the basic norms of international relations including sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, and ensure that international law and international rules are applied to all.”

In this context, he underlined the need to shun “double standards”, remarks seen as directed at the Western powers “All countries, regardless of their size, strength or wealth, are equal members of the international community,” Xi said.

“Global South countries should hold high the banner of multilateralism, uphold the authority and role of the United Nations, support multilateral institutions in advancing reform and increasing efficiency, and ensure the equal participation of all countries in international affairs,” he said. Xi called for reform of the international financial architecture to increase the representation and voice of developing economies, and urged BRICS to support reform of the World Trade Organization and the continued development of the New Development Bank. Xi’s five-point initiative to enhance BRICS cooperation focuses on establishing an inclusive artificial intelligence framework, facilitating trade and investment, deepening digital indus-

try ties, advancing “intelligent manufacturing,” and launching a joint science and technology development initiative.

China will be a pioneer in establishing a BRICS-AI open source community to support the cooperation in developing and applying large language models, hold specialised AI seminars and training courses, and build an open AI ecosystem, he said, about the first initiative.

On the trade and investment facilitation initiative, Xi said China proposes to establish a BRICS special economic zone partnership, under which countries can set up an intelligent portal, coordinate policies, and build a new frontier for open development.

The third initiative, he said, will be in the domain of the digital industry.

“China will push for establishing a BRICS digital ecosystem cloud platform, and conduct digital skills training, technological exchange and industrial alignment, so as to jointly enable the development of the digital economy,” he said.

The fourth one, Xi said, will be to have expanded cooperation in “intelligent manufacturing”.

“China stands ready to assist fellow BRICS countries in building smart factories and developing standards and norms, and jointly promote manufacturing transformation and upgrading,” he said.

The fifth initiative will be in the science and technology domain.

“China proposes to set up a BRICS engineer cultivation alliance for joint development of engineers and mutual recognition of competency standards. China will launch a BRICS youth exchange programme for scientific and technological innovation, so as to cultivate more high-calibre talent,” he said.

Bangladesh seeks to ‘reset’ ties with India, says relationship must be based on mutual interests



DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday said it wants to “reset” its relationship with India and build a new bilateral engagement based on mutual interests, while describing ties during the tenure of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina as “uncomfortable”.

The remarks by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Humaiun Kobir came two days after Bangladesh said Prime Minister Tarique Rahman would not participate in the BRICS Summit hosted by India as he was not “properly invited” to the event, with the invitation instead extended to the BIMSTEC chair.

The two-day BRICS Summit concluded on Sunday. India had invited Rahman to attend the summit as chairman of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

(BIMSTEC), while a separate bilateral invitation had been in place since February.

“Bangladesh wants to ‘reset’ its bilateral relationship with India,” Kobir told reporters.

“We want to move towards a new relationship, which should be done through bilateral discussions, not through a multilateral forum,” he said.

India-Bangladesh ties have been strained over New Delhi providing refuge to Hasina, who fled to India following her ouster in a youth-led agitation in August 2024. Kobir said Bangladesh needs to move beyond what he described as an “excessive preoccupation” with India and approach its relationship with New Delhi in a balanced manner, focusing on mutual interests and treating it as part of its broader engagement with other countries.

“We have to get out of the India fascination. India is just another country, and

Bangladesh wants good bilateral relations with it,” he said.

Responding to a question, the minister said, “Breakfast in India, lunch in India, dinner in India – then when will you eat your own food?”

Kobir also said Prime Minister Rahman is scheduled to leave for New York on September 21 to attend the 81st session of the UN General Assembly and stay there until September 26.

Asked about the possibility of a meeting between Rahman and US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the UNGA, he said such meetings are often decided at the last moment during major international conferences.

“The primary focus of the Prime Minister’s visit is to address the UN General Assembly,” Kobir said, adding that details of the sideline meetings would be known in due course.

Manipur’s Census Dilemma: Can a Data Vacuum Solve a Citizenship Crisis?

As demands for an NRC grow louder in Manipur, the opposition to Census 2027 risks creating a second problem for a state already struggling with displacement, demographic uncertainty and fractured governance.

Manipur is facing a difficult choice over two exercises that serve very different purposes but could have a major bearing on the state's future: the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Census 2027.

Across the Imphal Valley, the slogan “No NRC, No Census” has become increasingly visible. The demand reflects a deep concern among sections of the Meitei community over illegal migration, demographic change and the absence of a credible mechanism to distinguish Indian citizens from those who may have entered the state illegally after Independence.

But there is a fundamental distinction that needs to be kept in view.

An NRC determines citizenship. A Census counts the population.

Treating the two as inseparable could leave Manipur without either a credible citizenship register or the basic demographic data required to govern a state emerging from one of India’s most serious internal conflicts.

A state already suffering from a data crisis

The political debate over the Census cannot be separated from Manipur’s wider crisis.

The ethnic conflict that erupted in May 2023 has displaced large sections of the population, disrupted livelihoods, altered settlement patterns and created a prolonged humanitarian challenge. Thousands of people remain dependent on relief and rehabilitation measures, while many families continue to live away from their original homes.

Under such circumstances, accurate population data becomes even more important.

How many people are living in each district? How many have been displaced? Which villages have lost population? Which areas have witnessed sudden population growth? How many people have returned to their original homes? Where are schools, health centres, roads and other public services most urgently required?

These are questions that cannot be answered through political claims or administrative estimates alone.

They require reliable data.

That is why postponing a population count until the completion of an NRC could create an entirely new governance problem.

NRC and Census are not substitutes

The central argument in the current debate appears to be that Manipur should first establish who belongs to the state before counting its population.

The concern is understandable, particularly given the state’s porous international border with Myanmar and the long-standing debate over undocumented migration.

But a Census does not confer citizenship.

It records the population present at a particular point in time and generates demographic information needed for administration, planning and public policy. Citizens and non-citizens may both be counted, while citizenship is determined through a separate legal and administrative framework.

This distinction matters.

A census can tell the government where people are living and how populations are changing. An NRC, if undertaken, would seek to determine who qualifies as a citizen under the applicable legal framework.

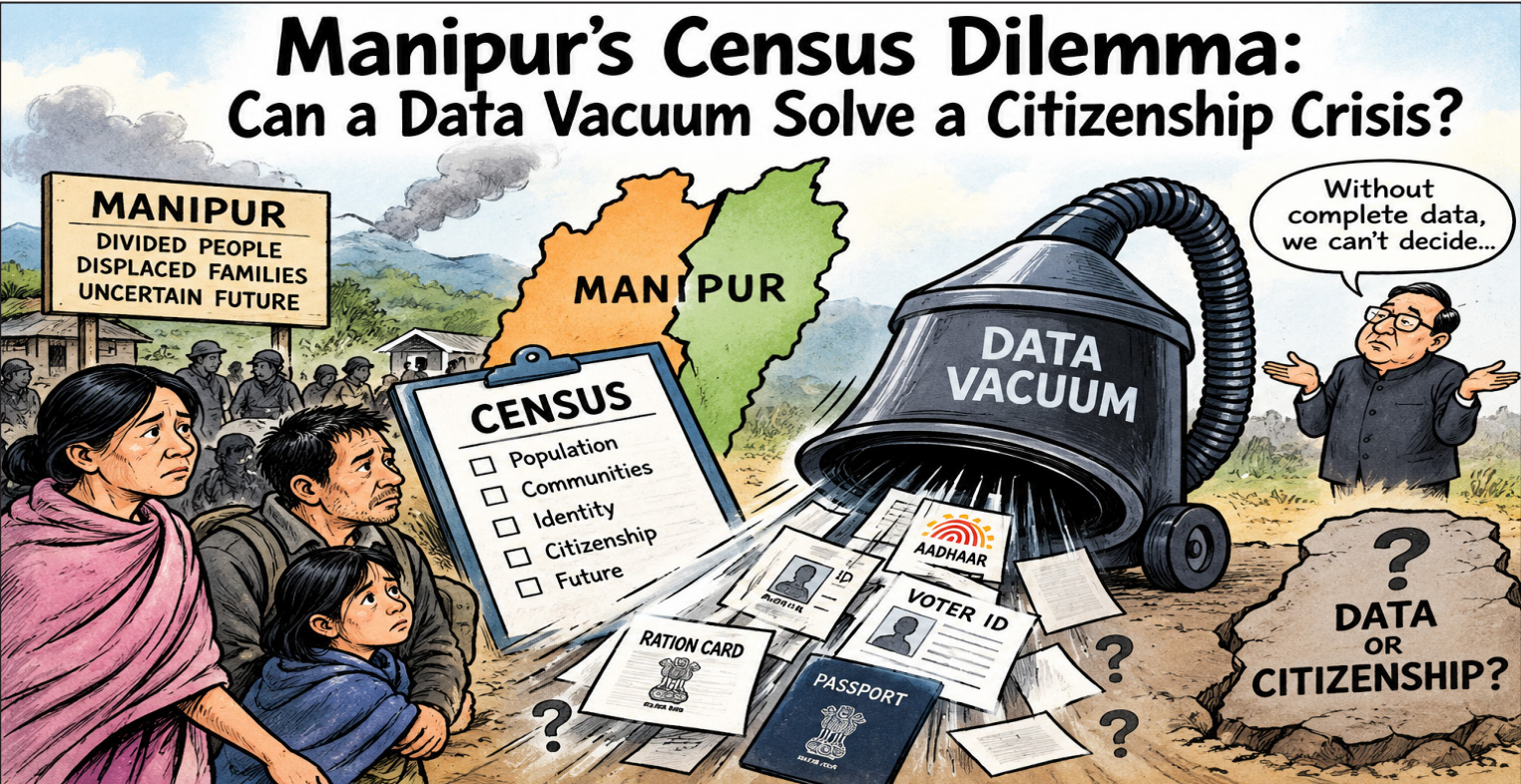
One cannot simply replace the other.

Indeed, a reliable census could provide valuable demographic evidence for future policy decisions, while an NRC would address the separate question of citizenship.

The Assam experience offers a warning

Manipur’s demand for an NRC is also shaped by the experience of neighbouring Assam.

Assam’s NRC exercise demonstrated how difficult it is to construct a citizenship register in a complex demographic environment. The process involved enormous administrative resources,



extensive documentation and multiple rounds of scrutiny and verification.

The exercise also exposed the dangers of weak documentation, inconsistent records, verification problems and prolonged litigation.

Most importantly, it showed that an NRC cannot be treated as a quick administrative exercise.

If Manipur eventually undertakes an NRC, it will require a clearly defined legal framework, transparent eligibility criteria, reliable archival records, extensive verification and safeguards against both wrongful inclusion and wrongful exclusion.

That process could take years.

The question, therefore, is whether Manipur should keep its demographic administration effectively frozen while waiting for such an exercise to be completed.

That would be a risky proposition.

What happens if Census 2027 is missed?

The consequences of missing a Census are less dramatic politically than those associated with migration or citizenship, but they can be far more extensive administratively.

India’s last full Census was conducted in 2011. The 2021 Census was postponed, leaving the country facing a prolonged gap in population data.

For Manipur, another delay would be particularly consequential.

Population figures influence the planning of schools, hospitals, housing, transport networks, welfare programmes and other public services. They also provide an important statistical foundation for resource allocation and policy design.

In a state where large-scale displacement has already changed settlement patterns, relying on population data that is more than a decade old would make planning increasingly difficult.

The problem would extend beyond government departments.

Large national surveys require scientifically designed sampling frameworks. Updated population data is essential for generating credible estimates on health, nutrition, employment, ageing and other social indicators.

Without fresh demographic information, the statistical picture of Manipur could become progressively less reliable.

The conflict makes counting more important, not less

There is another reason why Manipur should be cautious about postponing the Census.

Conflict has already produced competing narratives about population, land and migration.

When reliable data is absent, competing claims can acquire the status of fact.

A transparent population count cannot settle every political dispute. Nor can it determine the citizenship status of individuals. But it can establish an evidence-based demographic baseline.

That baseline would be particularly valuable in a state where demographic questions have become deeply politicised.

A credible Census could help answer questions about population distribution, age structure, urbanisation, household composition and migration patterns. It could also assist the government in designing rehabilitation and development policies based on actual population needs rather than assumptions.

In other words, better data may not resolve Manipur’s political conflict, but

the absence of data can make that conflict harder to manage.

The real challenge is sequencing

The debate should therefore not be framed as a choice between the NRC and the Census.

The more productive question is how the two processes can be legally and administratively separated while ensuring that one does not undermine the other.

If the government decides that an NRC is necessary in Manipur, it should establish a clear roadmap, legal framework, documentary standards and verification mechanism. The process should be transparent and subject to appropriate judicial and administrative safeguards.

At the same time, Census 2027 should proceed according to the national schedule, with adequate arrangements for conflict-affected districts, displaced populations and areas where access remains difficult.

The two exercises can operate on different tracks.

A Census can establish the demographic baseline. An NRC can subsequently address citizenship questions through a separate legal process.

Trying to complete the second before allowing the first could leave Manipur waiting indefinitely for data it urgently needs.

Manipur cannot afford another information vacuum

The state is already dealing with the

consequences of displacement, fractured communities, disrupted administration and uncertainty over rehabilitation.

Adding a prolonged demographic information vacuum to that list would serve little purpose.

The demand for an NRC deserves serious consideration because concerns over illegal migration and citizenship cannot simply be dismissed. But the answer to those concerns cannot be to abandon the population count altogether.

A modern state needs both demographic information and a functioning citizenship framework.

For Manipur, the immediate priority should therefore be to ensure that Census 2027 is conducted fairly, securely and transparently, while simultaneously developing a credible roadmap for an NRC if the Centre and the state conclude that such an exercise is legally and administratively warranted.

The choice should not be NRC or Census.

For a state struggling to rebuild after years of conflict, it should be NRC and Census — each doing the job it was designed to do.

Manipur does not need less information at this critical juncture. It needs more reliable information, stronger institutions and a clear distinction between counting people and determining citizenship.

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