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PERSPECTIVE

Clothes – What we wear affects how we behave.

Manipur prison department marks first Raising Day, CM stresses rehabilitation

IMPHAL
Manipur on Monday observed the first Raising Day of its Prisons and Correctional Services Department, marking 134 years since its establishment, with Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh calling for a greater focus on correction, reformation and rehabilitation of inmates.Addressing the event at Manipur Central Prison in Imphal, Khemchand said a person in custody should not be treated as a convict unless proven guilty under law. He said prisons should go beyond confinement and provide inmates opportunities for moral correction, reformation and rehabilitation.

The Chief Minister also flagged manpower shortages in the department and suggested filling vacant posts through the Die-in-Harness Scheme or direct recruitment, depending on the requirement. He assured the department of government support for upgrading and modernising prison infrastructure in line with current needs.Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam described the first Raising Day as a significant milestone for the department. He said the occasion had not been observed earlier because the department had not received due recognition. Konhoujam said every government department has a role in public service and the functioning of the state administration. He added that the government was taking steps to improve prison conditions and appreciated the officers and staff for their service.During the programme, Khemchand presented a medal to S.K. Bhadraka, Superintendent of Manipur Central Jail, Imphal, for exemplary service. Bhadraka had received the President's Correctional Service Medal for Distinguished Service on Independence Day in 2024.

WHO SAID WHAT

Nagaon has decided to help Sharma win. Initially, I thought the seat would be difficult for us to win, but as the days progress towards the voting day, I am seeing our journey has been very encouraging

Pijush Hazarika
Cabinet minister, Assam

Nagaland-set ‘Angh’ wins TIFF Platform prize, earns 2027 Oscars pathway

KOHIMA
Nagaland-set feature film Angh, the directorial debut of Theja Rio, has won the Platform Competition at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) 2026, giving the film an automatic pathway to consideration in the International Feature Film category at the 2027 Academy Awards.

The film, the only Indian entry in this year's Platform Competition, received the top prize at the festival on Sunday. The Platform section is one of TIFF's key competitive programmes and focuses on distinctive filmmaking and strong directorial voices.

From this year, the winner of the Platform Competition receives automatic qualification for consideration in the International Feature Film category at the Oscars.

Set in 1960s Nagaland, Angh follows an ageing Konyak village chief and his son as they confront sweeping changes that threaten their ancestral faith, traditions

and way of life.

Rio developed the feature from his 2021 short film of the same name. Shot on 16mm, the film features an Indigenous Naga cast alongside BAFTA-winning actor Douglas Henshall. It explores themes of tradition, faith, family, memory, home and cultural transformation.

The film is produced by Nancy Nisa Beso and Rio. Jungle Book Studio, which acquired its international sales rights ahead of its TIFF world premiere, is handling its international and domestic distribution.

Rio, 31, said the award was a significant moment for the film and its team, describing Angh as a story rooted in his place, people

KRC TIMES
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NRFM bandh disrupts normal life in Manipur valley over 1949 merger agreement

IMPHAL
Normal life was disrupted across Manipur's valley districts on Monday as a 24-hour bandh called by proscribed outfit National Revolutionary Front Manipur (NRFM) over the 1949 Manipur Merger Agreement kept schools, colleges, markets and offices shut.Public transport remained off the roads in Imphal till around 11.40 am, while some private vehicles continued to operate in the main areas of the state capital.The shutdown coincided with the 77th anniversary of the signing of the Manipur Merger Agreement on September 21, 1949.

The NRFM said the bandh was intended to highlight what it described as unresolved historical, constitutional and political issues surrounding Manipur's merger with India.

The outfit also opposed the celebration of January 21, 1972, as the day of Manipur's creation, arguing that the state had established political and constitutional institutions before attaining full statehood.

In a statement, the NRFM urged



people to stay away from celebrations that, according to the outfit, portray Manipur as having been created as a new Indian state on January 21, 1972.

The banned group cited the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947, and the elected representative institu-

tions that existed before the merger to argue that Manipur had an established constitutional system.

It also questioned the circumstances surrounding the signing of the Merger Agreement by Maharaja Bodhchandra Singh, claiming that the document was not ratified by the

elected Manipur Legislative Assembly.The outfit referred to the National Convention on Manipur Merger Issue held in Imphal in October 1993, which it said had raised questions over the legality and constitutional validity of the agreement.

The NRFM also invoked provi-

sions of the United Nations Charter concerning self-determination, political independence and decolonisation. It called for Manipur's political status to be examined under international law and sought consideration of the state as a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the UN framework. Manipur, however, is not currently on the UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The bandh came days after authorities arrested two alleged active members of the banned outfit in connection with firing on a CRPF convoy in Imphal West. The arrests were made on September 16.

The NRFM, earlier known as the United Revolutionary Front, was formed on September 11, 2011, by cadres from three factions of the Kangleipak Communist Party, according to security agencies.

Security agencies have alleged that senior NRFM leaders have operated from bases in a neighbouring country and that the outfit has been involved in violence and extortion in parts of the Manipur Valley.

Arakan Army detains seven boatmen over violence at Mizoram-Myanmar trade point



AIZAWL
Seven boatmen have been detained by the Myanmar-based Arakan Army in connection with alleged violence and vandalism at a trading point in Khaikhy village of Mizoram's Siaha district, sources said.

The incident occurred on September 14 at Khaikhy jetty, a key centre of informal trade between southern Mizoram and Myanmar's Rakhine and southern Chin regions.

U Khaing Thukha, spokesperson for the United League of Arakan (ULA), the political wing of the Arakan Army, said the organisation's Department of Law Enforcement and Public Security had identified Ko Zaw Naing Linn, 25, and six others as being responsible for instigating the violence.

The seven boatmen have been de-

tained and censured, Thukha said. The ULA added that they would face legal action under laws enforced by the organisation.

According to Thukha, the incident began with an argument after the boatmen, who were allegedly under the influence of alcohol, objected to the handling of boats waiting at the jetty. They allegedly claimed that preference was being given to boats arriving from the Indian side.

The dispute later escalated, with Zaw Naing Linn allegedly gathering around 30 people who stormed the duty post of the Mara Thyutlia Py, a youth organisation operating in Siaha district. The group allegedly vandalised the post and attempted to set it on fire.Following the incident, the Mara Thyutlia Py suspended trading activities with Myanmar's Rakhine and southern Chin regions indefinitely.

Its general secretary, N Solomon Beihlotha, said the suspension came into force from 7 pm on Wednesday after the organisation's Phura sub-headquarters conducted an on-the-spot assessment of the incident.Khaikhy, located along the Salalui river on the Mizoram-Myanmar border, is an important centre for cross-border trade. More than 100 pickup trucks reportedly transport goods to Khaikhy daily, while a similar number of boats carry consignments along the Salalui towards Paletwa and other parts of southern Chin and Rakhine.

The suspension could affect supplies to parts of Rakhine and southern Chin, where connectivity with other parts of Myanmar has been severely disrupted since the military coup.

Southern Mizoram has emerged as an important supply route for essential commodities, including fuel, to the neighbouring regions.

Nagaland's draft electoral roll after SIR retains 11.99 lakh voters, excludes 1.59 lakh

KOHIMA
Nagaland's draft electoral roll was published on Sunday with nearly 1.59 lakh of the 13.57 lakh voters excluded from the pre-SIR list.

The Chief Electoral Officer's (CEO's) office said the draft roll has 11.99 lakh names, with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise finding 29,944 electors from the previous list deceased, 1.23 lakh absent or permanently shifted, and 5,059 enrolled at multiple places.

The enumeration phase of the SIR of electoral rolls was held in the state from August 16 to September 14.

The CEO office said the absent/shifted/other category includes electors who became voters in other states or Union Territories, could not be found, did not submit their forms by September 14, or were unwilling to register.

The claims and objections to the deletion of names from the electoral list can be submitted till October 20, it said.

The final electoral roll is scheduled for publication on November 22, while the notice phase and disposal of claims and objections will continue until November 18.



Rs 48,000 crore Assam power project to become Northeast's largest: Jeet Adani



GUWAHATI
Adani Defence and Aerospace Director Jeet Adani on Sunday said the proposed 3,200 MW ultra-supercritical thermal power project in Assam's Dhubri district will become the Northeast's largest power generation asset once operational.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma laid the foundation stone for the Adani Power Limited project at Chapar in Dhubri district on Sunday.

Addressing the ceremony, Adani said the project involves an investment of Rs 48,000 crore and would help create a new investment environment in Assam while generating employment opportunities.

"More than pride, it is a huge responsibility that we

are bringing such a big project to Assam," Adani said, adding that the group was committed to contributing to the state's development.

He said the project would provide additional power generation capacity to support industries and enable businesses to expand.

The construction phase is expected to engage thousands of workers, engineers, technicians, contractors and suppliers, while generating economic activity for businesses in the surrounding areas, Adani said.

He added that the project would create employment opportunities for local youth and bring communities around the plant into the development process.Adani also outlined the group's other planned investments in Assam, including an Aero City near the new Guwahati airport terminal.

"Then our Thermal Power Project is coming up," he said, adding that two cement projects and a maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) project were also planned in the state.

The Chapar plant is being developed as an ultra-supercritical thermal power facility with a planned capacity of 3,200 MW.

The project is expected to strengthen Assam's power-generation capacity and support industrial development in the state and the wider Northeast.

Assam marks Sankardev's 578th Abirbhav Tithi with prayer, naam and tradition

GUWAHATI
Assam on Monday observed the 578th Abirbhav Tithi of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev with religious and cultural programmes at satras and naamghars across the state, highlighting the enduring influence of the Vaishnavite saint on Assam's spiritual and cultural life.

The celebrations featured naam-kirtan, naam-prasanga, Bhagavat processions, gayan-bayan, bhaona and other traditional programmes, drawing devotees to major religious institutions.In Guwahati, members of the Bamunimaidam Jyotinagar Naamghar took out a religious procession as part of the observance. Naam-kirtan programmes were held through the day, followed by a bhaona performance in the evening.At Batadrava Than in Nagaon district, Sankardev's birthplace, a three-day celebration began on Sunday with a series of religious and cultural programmes.

The two-day Abirbhav Ma-

hotsav at Barpeta Satra also began on Monday with traditional Satriya rituals. Bura Satriya Dr Babul Chandra said the occasion has been observed annually at the Satra since its establishment.The first day featured a Bhagavat Subha Jatra, during which a sacred image was taken through the town, followed by a gayan-bayan performance at night.More than 1,000 women are scheduled to participate in a goxa singing programme on Tuesday. The Bura Satriya will later conclude the spiritual observance with a prayer.

At Khatara Satra in Darang, the celebrations began with women performing diha naam, along with public prayers and khol performances. Devotees participated in programmes throughout the day.

In Majuli, the three-day observance at Raonapar Bor-namghar Satra began with a Bhagavat Jatra, followed by naam-kirtan and an open-air programme featuring speeches and traditional dance performances.



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Semiconductor
Ambition to
Industrial Capability

India’s semiconductor story has reached an important, if still tentative, turning point. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi told delegates at SEMICON India 2026 that chips produced in Indian plants had begun reaching customers in India and abroad, he was pointing to something more consequential than another policy milestone. For the first time, the country’s semiconductor ambitions are beginning to move from announcements and investment proposals to actual commercial production.

That distinction matters. Since the launch of the India Semiconductor Mission in 2022, the language surrounding the sector has often been grander than the industrial reality. India has been a global technology power in software and services while remaining heavily dependent on imported electronic hardware. The emergence of commercial production at facilities in Mohali and Surat, following Micron’s assembly and testing facility at Sandanand, does not erase that dependence. But it does establish an industrial foothold that India did not possess a few years ago.

It would nevertheless be premature to describe India as a semiconductor power. The most advanced fabrication technologies, particularly those underpinning cutting-edge artificial intelligence and high-performance computing, remain concentrated in a handful of economies led by Taiwan, South Korea and the United States. Building a competitive semiconductor industry is not simply a question of announcing incentives or attracting capital. It requires decades of technological accumulation, specialised talent, reliable infrastructure and an ecosystem of suppliers.

India’s more immediate opportunity lies elsewhere. Mature-node chips may lack the glamour associated with the smallest and most advanced process technologies, but they are indispensable to modern industry. Cars, appliances, industrial equipment, communications systems and countless everyday devices depend on them. Building capacity in this segment is therefore neither a consolation prize nor a shortcut. It is a pragmatic starting point for creating the manufacturing ecosystem on which more sophisticated capabilities can eventually be built.

The progress so far is significant. Sanand provided India’s first major foothold in semiconductor assembly, testing, marking and packaging, while Mohali and Surat have taken the country another step towards commercial output. The development of human capital is equally important. Around 70,000 engineering students have reportedly been trained in chip design against a target of 100,000. A factory can be expanded, relocated or replaced; a skilled workforce is a more durable national asset.

The Government’s financial commitment also suggests that the semiconductor push is intended to be a long-term industrial strategy rather than a one-time investment drive. The approval of the Rs 1,275 lakh crore Semicon 2.0 programme, alongside a Rs 62,500 crore mobile manufacturing scheme, broadens the ambition beyond individual factories. Technology-transfer arrangements involving global equipment manufacturers are another crucial, though less visible, component. Semiconductor capability is built not merely by purchasing machines but by learning how to operate, adapt and eventually improve the technologies embedded in them.

The real test, however, lies ahead. India’s first fabrication unit is expected to become operational by 2028. That will be a more meaningful test of the country’s ambitions because fabrication represents a substantially different technological challenge from assembly and packaging. If India can make that transition successfully, it will have moved from participating in the semiconductor value chain to acquiring a deeper manufacturing capability.

But even a functioning fab will not be enough. The larger challenge is building an ecosystem around it. India remains short of globally competitive fabless semiconductor companies and domestically generated intellectual property. Much of the country’s electronics manufacturing continues to depend on imported designs, components and technologies. Incentives can attract investment, but they cannot by themselves create technological leadership.

This is where universities and research institutions must enter the picture in a much more meaningful way. Engineering colleges cannot be treated merely as training centres producing graduates for industry. They need to become partners in research and innovation, with industry-funded laboratories, long-term projects and stronger links between academic research and commercial application. Likewise, persuading Indian researchers working abroad to return will require more than appeals to patriotism. Competitive fellowships, world-class laboratories, research autonomy and credible career paths are essential if the return of talent is to become a sustained trend.

Then there is the less visible infrastructure of semiconductor manufacturing: specialty chemicals, industrial gases, precision equipment, wafers and advanced materials. A fab cannot operate as an island. If these inputs remain overwhelmingly dependent on imports, India’s semiconductor resilience will remain incomplete. Building domestic suppliers may be slower and less politically visible than inaugurating a new plant, but it is arguably more important for long-term industrial depth.

The experience of India’s aerospace and automobile industries offers a useful lesson. Neither Hindustan Aeronautics nor Tata Motors acquired genuine technological capability overnight. Their progress involved years of learning, adaptation, collaboration and gradual movement towards indigenous design and innovation. Semiconductor manufacturing will demand the same patience.

India therefore needs to resist two opposite temptations: declaring victory too early and dismissing the progress because the country has not yet reached the technological frontier. Both would obscure the real picture. The semiconductor programme has produced something tangible: factories, shipments, trained engineers and a larger investment pipeline. The achievement is real, but so is the distance still to be travelled.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” - Leo Buscaglia

INDIA’S NEW GRAMMAR
OF GLOBAL BALANCING

R. S. PATHANIA

Long, long before the dogma of ‘nation-states’ came into being and states assumed boundaries, India had a civilisational, historiographical geography - Bharatvarsha-an idea extending, in the imagination of its people, from the Himalayas to the seas and through the great cultural corridors stretching towards Central Asia. It is not an argument for redrawing a modern map. It is an argument for remembering an ancient, traditional, ideological diplomatic instinct: India has historically sought engagement across civilisations rather than domination over them.

The philosophical roots of that instinct delve deep.

The Vedas spoke of the world as one family; the Upanishadic tradition celebrated the underlying unity of eternal existence. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam-the world is one family-was not merely a slogan but a civilisational perspective and proposition. The idea of coexistence was complemented by the extraordinary Indian tradition of accepting plurality without pushing for uniformity.

Let us take cue from Ramayana. The powerful, propitious king, Lord Rama with ‘RamRajya’ as its essence and contribution never went for expansionism. His better half, was kidnapped by Ravana and he repeatedly vowed for truce before war.

Ashoka, exquisite mould of a ‘philosopher-king’ transformed this ‘idea of India’ into a viable statecraft. After Kalinga, the Mauryan emperor’s message was not revenge but restraint, not conquest but Dhamma. He advocated respect for different faiths and traditions, recognising that honouring another’s belief strengthened one’s own.

Centuries later, India’s saints, philosophers and Gurus carried the same instinct forward in different languages. India repeatedly demonstrated that disagreement need not become hostility and difference need not become division.

Then came Mahatma Gandhi, who converted Ahimsa from an ethical principle into a formidable instrument of direct political action. His India was an India in

ple: humanity may approach truth through different paths, and those paths need not destroy one another. All may be true.

This is the Bharat that has now expanded its footprints at the 18th BRICS Summit.

The New Delhi Declaration should therefore not be read merely as another diplomatic communiqué. It should be read in the backdrop of this civilisational background.

India is not attempting to create another geopolitical bloc. It is attempting to create balance in a world-order that is becoming dangerously ruffled.

The most consequential development for India was the BRICS condemnation of the Pahalgam terror attack and its reaffirmation of zero tolerance towards terrorism. This gives new teeth and a pedestal to India’s fight against terror. For New Delhi, this is diplomatically significant: terrorism increasingly finds itself being addressed as a collective international challenge rather than merely an Indian security concern.

Equally important was the wider message against unilateralism-tariffs, coercive economic measures and sanctions being used as instruments of international pressure. The message was not anti-Western.

It was essentially and fundamentally, anti-unilateralism.

And that distinction is quintessentially Bharatiya.

India does not want a world dominated by Washington, Beijing or Moscow. It wants a world in which power is balanced, institutions are representative and disagreements are negotiated through ‘dialogue and diplomacy’. Today’s era is not an era of war’, time and again, said by Indian PM, Narendra Modi.

That is why the economic dimension of BRICS matters enormously.

India-Russia trade is being targeted towards \$100 billion by 2030. India-China trade, despite profound strategic differences, remains enormous and creates its own logic of economic engagement. The emerging architecture of local currencies, payment mechanisms, connectivity, energy and supply chains could gradually reduce the

UN Security Council reflects another central Indian proposition: global governance cannot remain frozen in the geopolitical realities of 1945 while the economic and demographic realities of 2026 belong to another world and a new global order.

The same principle runs through BRICS’ position on Palestine, Lebanon and West Asia: respect for sovereignty, international law, humanitarian concerns and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

And perhaps most significantly, India and China are attempting to keep the door open for a peaceful resolution of their boundary differences.

That is not surrender. It is not appeasement. It is strategic maturity and rather a new diplomatic crest.

Two countries can have unresolved disputes, compete economically and strategically, and yet recognise that permanent confrontation is in nobody’s interest.

This is where India’s BRICS moment becomes larger than BRICS.

The expanded BRICS represents nearly half of world-population and around 40 per cent of global GDP. But India’s importance within this grouping comes not merely from its size. It comes from its ability to speak simultaneously to different worlds.

India speaks to Russia without becoming Russia’s camp.

It speaks to America without becoming America’s ‘vassal-State’.

It engages China without subservient to China’s.

It works with Israel while retaining its historic commitment to Palestinian statehood.

It engages Iran and the Gulf simultaneously.

This is not neutrality. It is strategic autonomy with a civilisational connect.

India’s extraordinary economic momentum-around 7.8 per cent growth-gives that diplomacy additional weight. Economic strength, technological capability, demographic scale, military capacity and diplomatic credibility are beginning to converge.

And therefore, perhaps, the old phrase Vishwaguru needs to be understood differently.

in a very modern form, from New Delhi to the negotiating tables of the world.

India’s civilisational message has never been that there is only one way to truth.

It has been that there may be many ways-and humanity must learn to tread them, harmoniously, without trampling upon another.

That may be India’s most important contribution to the emerging world order.

Not the creation of another camp.

Not the defeat of another power. But the creation of space for dialogue between competing powers.

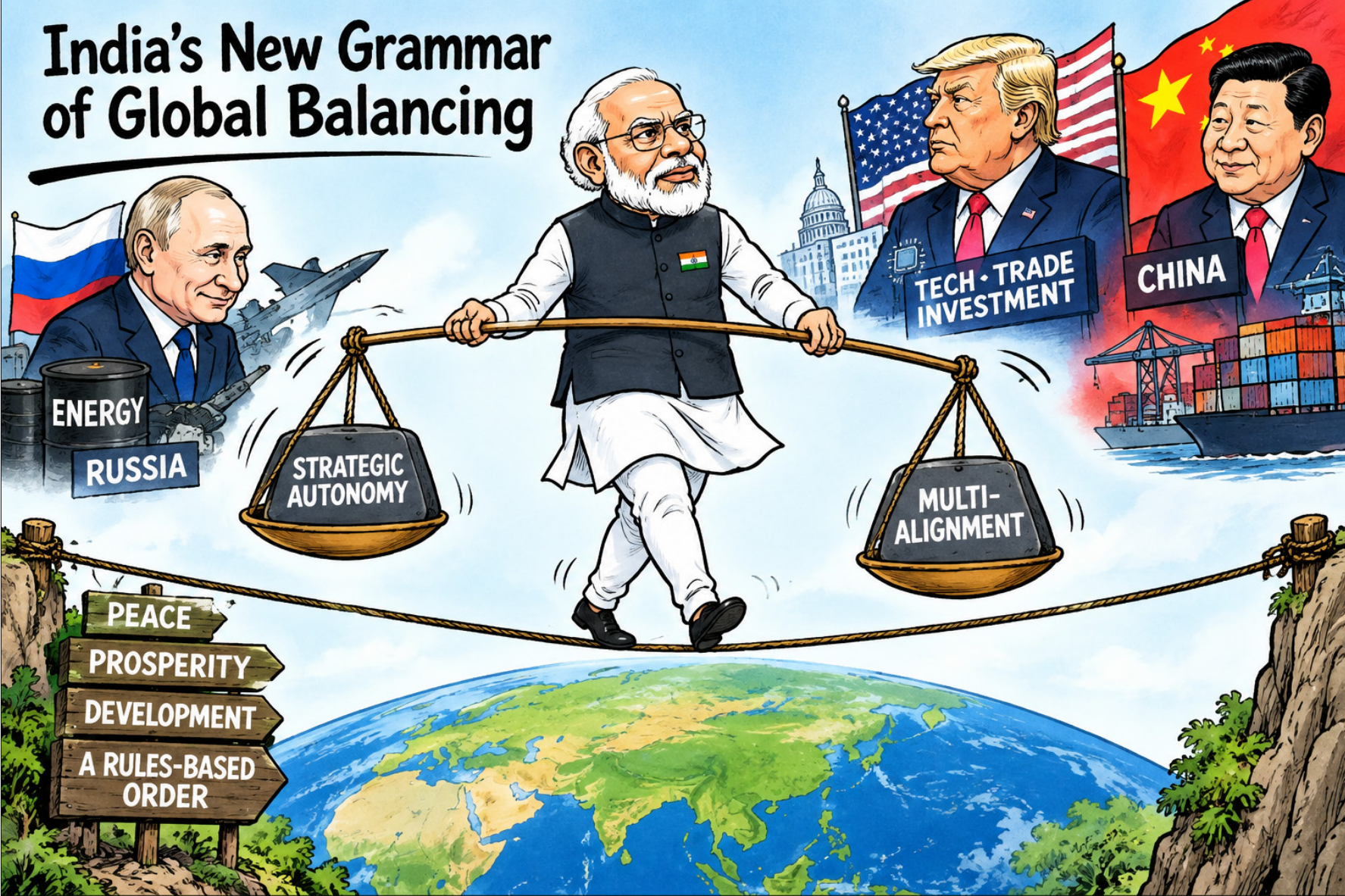
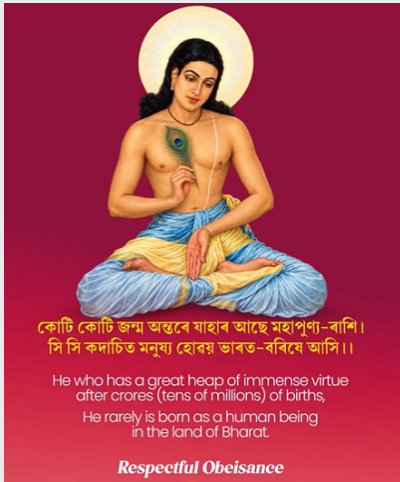
From Bharatvarsha to modern India, the map may have changed.

The diplomatic instinct has not. And at BRICS 2026, that instinct

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Today, on the auspicious occasion of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev’s Janmotsav, I pay my obeisances to our revered Gurujona, the guiding light of Assamese society.

His teachings always show us the path in our efforts to build a vibrant Assam and Viksit Bharat. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



which “Ishwar Allah Tero Naam” could become a declaration of co-existence rather than a contradiction.

And before Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda gave this civilisational idea a global vocabulary. At Chicago, he spoke from a tradition that did not merely tolerate other faiths but embraced their legitimacy. The essential Indian proposition was beautifully sim-

vulnerability of global trade to unilateral disruptions.

The diplomatic symbolism is equally striking.

Iran and the UAE-countries carrying their own complex regional equations-were part of the same conversation about the future of global trade and governance. If diplomacy means keeping difficult countries at the same table, Delhi demonstrated precisely that.

The demand for reform of the

A Vishwaguru is not a country that lectures the world.

Nor is it a country that seeks to command the world.

It is a country capable of reminding a bitterly-divided world that coexistence is not weakness, dialogue is not surrender and diplomacy is not disorder.

That idea runs from the Vedas to the Upanishads, from Ashoka to the saints and gurus, from Vivekananda to Gandhi-and now,

found perhaps its most consequential expression yet.

India is no longer merely seeking a place at the global table. It is increasingly helping decide how that table should be arranged.

This is the real story and the globally-viral reel of September 2026.

(The columnist practices law at the J & K, High Court of Judicature. He is member of Legislative Assembly of J&K)

‘Himanta Da’s energy is Gen Z’: Jeet Adani praises Assam CM at power project event



GUWAHATI
Adani Group Director Jeet Adani on Sunday praised Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's approach to executing development projects, describing his "energy and speed" as

initial engagement with Assam was aimed at contributing to the state's development but later opened up opportunities for larger investments.

He said Sarma's emphasis on timely execution and monitoring of projects had encouraged the group to expand its engagement with the state.

"He doesn't want to see development just sitting on paper, files, or presentations - he wants to see it on the ground, as fast as possible," Adani said.

Describing the chief minister's working style, he said Sarma placed emphasis on quick decision-making, implementation and openness to new ideas.

"Let me put it differently - Himanta Da's energy and speed are completely Gen Z!" Adani said, adding that al-

though Sarma was the chief minister, his approach resembled that of a CEO monitoring project timelines and delivery.

Adani also highlighted Assam's investment potential and said economic growth could be pursued alongside social development and environmental considerations.

The remarks came as Sarma performed the Bhumi Pujan for the proposed 3,200 MW Ultra Super Critical Thermal Power Project at Chapar.

Sarma said the project would be developed in phases, with the first 800 MW capacity planned initially. A further 800 MW is targeted by 2031, taking the capacity to 1,600 MW, while the full 3,200 MW capacity is expected to be achieved by 2035.

The project is expected to involve an investment of around Rs 50,000 crore, according to the chief minister. Adani Power had earlier announced an investment of around Rs 48,000 crore for the greenfield project, which will comprise four 800 MW units.

Sarma said the project would strengthen Assam's power-generation capacity and reduce the state's dependence on electricity purchased from outside. Around 25,000 people are expected to be engaged during the construction phase, while about 5,000 jobs are projected during regular operations, he said.

The chief minister said reliable power availability would also help Assam attract industries and new investments. He noted that prospective in-

vestors had previously raised concerns over the availability of electricity for large projects.

The project will require supporting transmission infrastructure to evacuate the generated power. The Assam Electricity Grid Corporation Limited has initiated work on infrastructure including a 400-kV Chapar-Rangia transmission line and associated substations. Sarma also referred to the state government's proposed one-lakh-bigha land bank, saying it would help ensure that land availability did not become a constraint for future investments.

He said the combination of power generation, transmission infrastructure and land availability would support industrial expansion and employment generation in the state.

Assam board exams likely to be delayed as floods disrupt academic calendar

GUWAHATI

The HSLC and Higher Secondary final examinations in Assam are likely to be held later than their usual schedule after floods disrupted classroom teaching, Education Minister Ranaj Pegu said on Sunday.

Pegu said the examination calendar would have to be adjusted to ensure students get adequate classroom time to complete their syllabus before appearing for the board examinations.

The minister made the remarks during a visit to Deomarnai in Darrang district, where he inaugurated a newly constructed academic building at Deomarnai Higher Secondary School. He also visited four other educational institutions in the area and interacted with students and teachers.

The Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB), Division-I, has already extended the teaching period for Class X students up to February 22, 2027. Classes for Class XII students will continue until March 8, 2027.

The extension has been necessitated by disruptions caused by the recent floods as well as ongoing Census-related activities, officials said.

With the academic calendar extended, the HSLC and Higher Secondary final examinations are expected to be rescheduled accordingly. The board has indicated that examination dates will be fixed after taking into account the revised teaching schedule.

Assam orders release of teachers cleared for mutual transfer

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has directed the immediate release of school teachers whose mutual transfer applications have been approved, following the completion of the first phase of Census 2026-27, the School Education Department said on Sunday.

The directive comes after teachers deployed temporarily for Census-related duties returned to their respective workplaces. The department has asked officials to expedite the pending transfer process to enable the affected teachers to join their new places of posting without further delay. Education Minister Ranaj Pegu shared the department's order on social media, saying teachers whose mutual transfers had been approved should be released so they can join their new schools.

The department has instructed the concerned authorities to initiate steps to release teachers whose mutual transfer applications have

been approved under both directorates. It has also directed the directors concerned to issue necessary instructions to all inspectors of schools and district elementary education officers (DEEOs) for completing the transfer process at the earliest. However, the order makes an exception for districts where the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is currently in force in view of elections or bypolls.

"In the districts where MCC is in place, the teachers should be released after MCC is over," the order said. Teachers posted in such districts will therefore have to wait until the MCC is lifted before they are formally released and allowed to join their new schools.

The latest directive is aimed at clearing pending mutual transfers after teachers returned from their temporary Census assignments, while ensuring that the process complies with election-related restrictions in districts where the MCC remains in force.

Gogoi alleges BJP-AIUDF understanding ahead of Nagaon bypoll



GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on Sunday alleged a "secret alliance" between the BJP and the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), claiming that AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal's candidature in the Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll would

benefit the ruling party.

Addressing a Congress campaign rally at Dhing in support of party candidate Sibamoni Bora, Gogoi described Ajmal as "Himanta Biswa Sarma's 108", referring to the emergency ambulance service.

Gogoi alleged that Ajmal's entry into the contest was intended

and AIUDF, though he did not provide evidence to substantiate the claim.

Gogoi also criticised the BJP's campaign in minority-dominated areas, claiming that increased campaigning by the ruling party in such constituencies would not necessarily translate into electoral gains.

Referring to previous Assam Assembly elections, he alleged that the BJP had mounted extensive campaigns in minority-dominated constituencies but failed to achieve the outcome it had sought.

The Nagaon bypoll has emerged as a key contest, with the BJP, Congress and AIUDF among the principal parties campaigning in the constituency.

The by-election was necessitated by the resignation of former Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi from the Lok Sabha. Voting is scheduled for October 6, while counting will take place on October 9.

Manipur MP Akoijam denies 11-student gathering at JNU residence



IMPHAL

Congress MP and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) professor Angomcha Bimol Akoijam on Sunday denied reports that 11 students had attended a private gathering at his residence, as allegations of sexual harassment against him remain under

inquiry by the university.

Responding to reports aired by two national news channels, Akoijam said only two students from his home region, who were part of the last batch he taught, had visited his residence to help him with some work.

He said the students later had dinner with him, his wife

and staff, and maintained that neither of the two had made any complaint against him.

"These two are decent, sincere and gentle students, and I know them well," Akoijam said.

The MP has previously rejected the allegations and criticised media coverage of the matter, objecting to what he described as a "media trial" based on unverified claims.

Asked about the allegations and the ongoing proceedings, Akoijam said the facts would ultimately be established through due legal process.

"Court will find out. Just wait and watch," he said.

The controversy follows complaints reportedly submitted by 11 JNU students against Akoijam. The allegations, which have not been established, reportedly relate to alleged inap-

propriate conduct and remarks during academic interactions, including viva examinations, as well as other interactions involving students.

The complaints have prompted an inquiry by JNU's Internal Complaints Committee (ICC). Student groups have also called for a time-bound inquiry and raised questions over the handling of the proceedings.

The Delhi Commission for Women has sought details from JNU regarding the complaints and the action taken on them.

JNU has maintained that the matter would be dealt with in accordance with applicable rules and statutory procedures, with the ICC conducting the inquiry.

The allegations remain subject to the ongoing institutional and legal processes.

Tripura police step up security ahead of TTAADC village committee polls



AGARTALA

Tripura Inspector General (Law and Order) Ipper Manchak on Sunday reviewed security arrangements in South Tripura ahead of the 2026 TTAADC Village Committee elections and directed police and security forces to take strict action against criminal activities.

Manchak chaired a meeting with the South Tripura Superintendent of Police, Additional SP, SDPOs and Company Commanders of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) to assess election preparedness and the overall security situation in the district.

Officials discussed measures to ensure the smooth conduct of the polls, with particular focus

on preventing criminal activities and maintaining peace and public order during the election process.

The IG directed police and security personnel to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards activities that could disrupt public order or interfere with the electoral process.

He also stressed the need to strengthen security arrangements in sensitive areas and undertake preventive measures to instil confidence among voters.

Police and CAPF personnel were instructed to maintain close coordination and remain vigilant throughout the election period to ensure that the polls are conducted in a free, fair and peaceful manner.

The meeting also reviewed the preparedness of security agencies to respond to potential challenges during the election period, including coordinated deployment and effective maintenance of law and order.

Authorities said the security review was aimed at ensuring adequate preparedness across sensitive areas and facilitating a peaceful polling environment.

Gauhati HC to hear Assam EVM PIL on chip

GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has fixed November 4 for further hearing on a PIL questioning the technical and legal aspects of electronic voting machines used in the 2026 Assam Assembly elections.

The petition, filed by Assam Jatiya Parishad leader Ziaur Rahman along with Congress leaders Guptamani Sharma and Ripun Bora, raises questions about the semiconductor components and microchips used in EVMs, their programming and the accessibility of their source code.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar heard arguments on the maintainability of the PIL on September 18. Lawyers appearing for the petitioners and the Election Commission of India presented their submissions, following which the court listed the matter for further arguments on November 4.

The petitioners have argued that their case is distinct from earlier challenges to EVMs as it focuses specifically on



the technology inside the machines and whether their programming can be independently examined.

Rahman has also claimed that the Election Commission has not made the relevant source code available for public

scrutiny. He has referred to an RTI response which, according to him, treated the source code as information related to national security. These claims form part of the petitioners' submissions and have not been adjudicated by the court.

Another aspect of the PIL concerns an alleged link between Japanese semiconductor company Renesas Electronics and Assam's semiconductor investment initiatives. Rahman has claimed that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma met company representatives during his Japan visit in January 2025.

The petitioners have also questioned the timing of the visit and raised it in the context of the EVM-related issues. However, the court has not made any finding linking the visit to the functioning, security or programming of EVMs.

The PIL further refers to what the petitioners describe as identical polling figures recorded across several constituencies during a particular two-hour period on polling day.

They have sought judicial scrutiny of the alleged pattern.

The Election Commission has opposed the petitioners' submissions, while the Assam government is expected to present its position during the subsequent proceedings. Renesas Electronics has also been made a party to the case.

The High Court has so far not examined the substantive allegations concerning EVM technology, source code, polling patterns or the alleged Japan connection. The November 4 hearing will primarily deal with the maintainability of the PIL and whether the matter can proceed before the court.

Quest!

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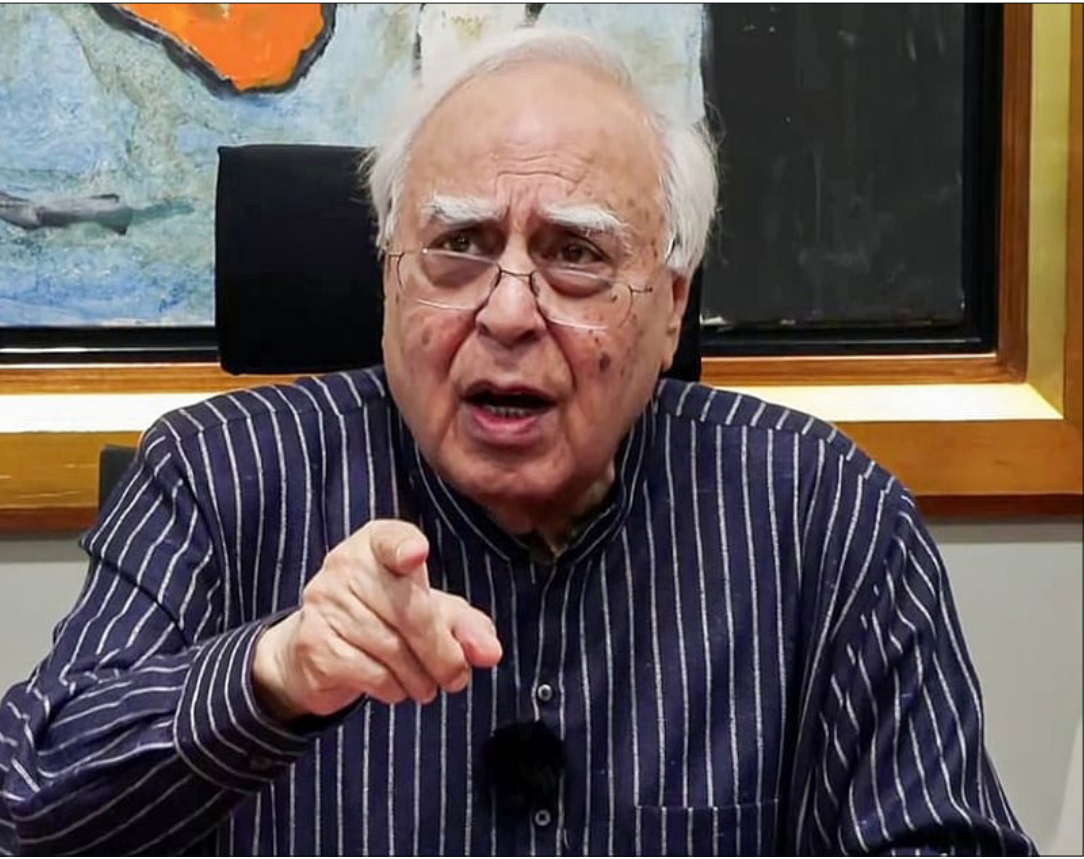
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IIT-Bombay students press for 18 demands after Dalit student's suicide

'Special intensive deletion' of valid votes: Sibal slams SIR after EC notice



NEW DELHI

Senior advocate and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Sunday criticised the Election Commission over the ongoing revision of electoral rolls, saying it amounted to special intensive deletion of valid votes and special intensive addition of invalid votes. He questioned the purpose of elections if the poll body's intention was to keep the BJP in power. Sibal's remarks came after he and his wife were issued notices under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls under the "unmapped with last SIR" category. The former Union minister said

that if this happened to people like him, one could imagine what ordinary voters would face and how they would cope with the process. Addressing a press conference here, Sibal said, "And why is this man (Chief Election Commissioner) Gyanesh Kumar sitting on that chair? On what basis is he doing this, and why is he being allowed to do this?" Sibal said he was shocked to learn that although his name was in the draft electoral roll, he had been sent a notice. He said the notice claimed a mismatch between the names of his father/self as given in the current electoral roll and those in the

electoral rolls prepared during the previous SIR. "This is the level at which the Election Commission is operating -- without application of mind as to who should be sent a notice, who should not be sent a notice. And if this happens to people like us, who are hopefully public figures, then what happens to the ordinary man? How will he ever cope with all this?" the Independent Rajya Sabha MP said. "Till date, I have not got a physical copy of the notice sent to me. I don't have a copy; it has not been served here, it's not in my office. Had I not known about this, they would have sent similar notices and

deleted my name unless then I go and file a petition in the Supreme Court and say 'No, please don't delete my name.' What's going on in this country?" Sibal said. "What kind of special intensive revision is it? Special intensive deletion and special intensive addition, delete valid votes and add invalid votes. That is what this is all about," he said. "If you want to install the BJP in government then what is the point of conducting elections," Sibal said. Sibal alleged that a "special intensive addition" was also under way, under which fabricated voters were being added and valid voters deleted. "That's called the special intensive revision. And then we have to go to the Supreme Court and file petitions... and of the 38 lakhs who have been deleted, only 1 lakh in West Bengal have been decided," he said. "We might as well not have the election. Forget about elections! If the Election Commission wants the BJP to always be in power, let's get rid of this. Let's be honest about it... You can go to court, you can do what you like, and if the court is willing to accept this procedure, God help this country," Sibal said. Sibal alleged that a "mala fide, dishonest" exercise was under way to prepare a voters list for the 2029 election. Several prominent voters, including Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and Sibal, have been issued notices over "discrepancies" in the details of their enumeration forms submitted under the ongoing SIR exercise, officials said on Saturday. The entry for Gupta, however, has been "validated", and her name will be included in the final electoral roll of the Shalimar Bagh constituency, scheduled to be published on November 4, the CEO's office said in a statement.

MUMBAI

In the case involving the suicide of a Dalit student, the Board of Governors of IIT-Bombay will meet on Monday to discuss the issue, amid protests by students who are pressing for 18 demands. An open house with students is also expected to be held. In a late-night meeting on Sunday, institute director Shireesh Kedare held discussions with the protesting students. Sahil Wakode, 20, a student at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, died by suicide in his hostel room after he was allegedly caught using his mobile phone dur-

ing an examination on Friday (September 18). The students accused Professor Sooryanarayana Doola, who was an invigilator in the exam hall where Sahil was taking his mid-term examination on Friday, of pushing him to take the extreme step. Sahil's parents filed an FIR against Doola and other institute officials, accusing them of abetment and harassment over the past three months. The students have demanded Doola's suspension. They have also demanded a public apology for allegedly "defaming" Sahil and an open house with all stakeholders before September 22,

according to a report. Meanwhile, the IIT Bombay Faculty Forum has expressed solidarity with exam invigilator Suryanarayana Doola, saying that he was following institutional protocol after discovering that the student was in "unauthorised possession and use of a smartphone." Sahil's is the third reported case of suicide at the IIT Bombay campus in Powai in seven months. In February, a second-year student died by suicide in a hostel. In July 2026, at the beginning of the new semester, a 20-year-old second-year BTech student also died by suicide.



INTERNATIONAL

Trump decries Democrats as 'communists,' even as he looks to impress China's communist leader

WASHINGTON

Communism, President Donald Trump says, is the greatest threat the U.S. has ever faced. This summer, citing similarly grave concerns, he took the rare step of delivering a primetime address to the nation, accusing China of "sinister election meddling" in 2020 and reviving his yearslong push to dispute his loss in that year's election. Even as Trump seeks to decry Democrats as communists ahead of November's midterm elections, he is rolling out the red carpet this week for Chinese President Xi Jinping, the leader of the world's most powerful communist country. The state visit comes as the president himself has increasingly directed his administration to take large stakes in private companies to try to stimulate the economy -- something even some Republicans decry as corporate socialism. The contradictions between Trump's words and actions risk muddying Republican attack lines on Democrats. "I do think that we're not offering a clear contrast," said Marc Short, who was chief of staff to former Vice President Mike Pence and worked in Trump's White House in his first term. During the recent Republican mid-term convention in Dallas, the president repeatedly branded Democrats as communists, even proclaiming, "It's going to be a communist country if they win." "In state after state, the Democrat establishment has been overthrown and replaced by crazed lunatics and radicals," he said, adding, "America has beaten communism before, and we will beat it again." That's a reference to candidates aligned with democratic socialists who won Democratic primaries in Michigan, Colorado, New York, Florida and Pennsylvania. Trump and other Republicans argue it shows the party is too extreme, although they exaggerate many of the political real-

ities. It is a way to shift the narrative in the face of a series of drags on the popularity of Trump and his party with Election Day looming. Those include an increasingly unpopular war in Iran, concerns about inflation remaining high and Trump's approval ratings retreating to near historic lows. Meanwhile, Trump has taken government stakes in private companies. The White House secured agreements giving the federal government stakes in more than 30 companies -- including nuclear power producer Westinghouse, metals and element concerns and chipmaker Intel. It has ignored the criticism that this strategy aligns it more with centrally planned economies than capitalist ones. "If socialism is government owning the means of production, wouldn't the government owning part of Intel be a step toward socialism?" Sen. Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican and frequent Trump antagonist, wrote on X. During a recent House committee hearing, Connecticut Democratic Rep. Jim Himes told Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, "I can think of no administration in the last 50 years that is quite as communist as the Trump administration." The president insists more such agreements are coming. "I will make deals like that for our Country all day long," he posted. The White House didn't answer questions on whether it saw discrepancies between Trump talking about denouncing Democrats as communists while expressing fondness for Xi and having the government take large stakes in private companies. Short, the former Pence aide who is now chairman of the conservative advocacy group Advancing American Freedom, said he thinks Republicans are taking "very legitimate attack lines" by painting Democrats as being too far left. But he said the administration risks "picking winners and losers in

the economy" with its private company stakes, as well as with Trump's proposal to send \$5,000 to every adult American if the GOP retains control of Congress after November, and his push for price controls on goods such as pharmaceuticals. "I think those policies, you know, lead to enormous, enormous intervention from the government into the economy," Short said. But he made it clear that he believes the measures don't come close to making the U.S. into a socialist economy like China. Even as he criticizes Democrats for cozying up to communists, Trump has bragged about his close relationship with China's leader, his chief global rival. When he was in Beijing in May, the president talked effusively about what "an amazing time" he had. He's not been shy about underscoring that he was building a helicopter landing pad he calls a "work of art" on the south lawn of the White House to impress Xi, while lamenting that his White House ballroom wouldn't be completed in time. "I can tell you this: It's too bad we don't have the ballroom open," Trump said Friday. The president also has recalled visiting the Great Hall of the People while in China, and suggested the ballroom might become the "Great Hall of the United States." Trump's admiration for Xi is part of his fascination with strongmen, said Marc Selverstone, director of presidential studies at the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs. Trump has also boasted about his warm relationships with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, Viktor Orban in Hungary and Russian President Vladimir Putin. "His interest in strongmen who are communist and strongmen who are not communists," Selverstone said. "That's constant, and playing to them is not unfamiliar to Trump." There is often some disconnect between the high and delicate diplo-

matic stakes of a summit during an election season -- as evidenced by Trump himself the last time Xi came to Washington for a state visit. In 2015, as then-President Barack Obama was preparing to host Xi, Trump -- in the midst of his first run for president -- criticized the pomp. "Just take them to McDonald's and go back to the negotiating table," Trump said then, during a rally in South Carolina. He later conceded on Fox News Channel that Xi might at least be worthy of getting "probably a double-size Big Mac." After he won the presidency, though, Trump's tone has shifted. By 2018, he was even marveling at Xi's position in communist China, remarking that "He's now president for life," during a GOP fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago. Trump briefly appeared to buck his soft spot for Xi in July during his national address when he announced the declassification of documents he said showed a pattern of China interfering in U.S. elections. "Our elections were left vulnerable to being rigged and stolen," Trump said, without criticizing Xi or calling for penalties against China. The documents ultimately didn't reveal much new information, or support Trump's claims. And the president has since tried to downplay the alleged election meddling. "It took place a long time ago. I think China is maybe a little bit different today than it was then," Trump said days after the speech. Senior administration officials declined to comment on whether accusations of Chinese meddling in the 2020 election would come up during Trump's discussions with Xi. But it's unlikely that the politics of the midterms will have much impact on the summit, said Ali Wyne, a senior research and advocacy adviser on U.S.-China relations at the International Crisis Group.

'I live in fear': 1.5 million Pakistani children sexually exploited online



ISLAMABAD

Pakistani teenager Zara Shah was targeted by a stranger while playing a computer game, drawn into a conversation that would expose her to terrifying online sexual exploitation. Zara, whose name has been changed by AFP for safety reasons, is one of an estimated 1.5 million children in Pakistan who experienced online sexual abuse in one year, according to a report published by the UN children's agency this month. "We started chatting while playing an online game, and he began acting like a friend. Later, he wanted to meet and, after, started asking me for nudes," 17-year-old Shah said. "When I refused, he threatened to find my family online and tell them that we had been talking," she added. According to the UNICEF report, around 85 percent of perpetrators were known to the victims, aged between 12 and 17. "The abuse may start with a friendly conversation, a gaming interaction, a promise of gifts, money or romance," Daniel Kardefelt, lead author of the global UNICEF report,

told. "Perpetrators may spend months building trust using information that they find on social media," Kardefelt said. In Muslim-majority Pakistan, 71 percent of victims did not tell anyone, according to the UNICEF report, while no child surveyed reported the abuse through formal channels -- including police, helplines or social workers. Their silence was mostly because of stigma, shame and fears over how their families or society may react. "Around 44 percent of reported abuse was entirely online, with Snapchat and WhatsApp among the most common settings," said Mehek Naem, director of PAHCHAAN, a children's rights organisation based in the eastern city of Lahore. Girls can face heightened risks of sexual extortion in the conservative society, which can lead to restrictions on their mobility or withdrawal from school. For Zara, the threat of being exposed to her family was enough to keep her silent. "I could have been stopped from going to school or leaving

the house altogether," she said. "Staying quiet felt like the better option than speaking up. But anxiety kills me every day." With around 74 percent of children aged 12 to 17 in Pakistan estimated by UNICEF to be internet users, concerns over online safety are growing as their access to digital platforms expands. Echoing other policies around the world, the provincial government in Punjab this month passed a resolution to bar children under 16 from using social media. However, it has faced opposition. "I disagree with the ban," said Usama Khilji, a digital rights activist. "It will be a challenge to implement, and children can circumvent the ban through VPNs. Children have the right of freedom of expression, and a ban takes that away," he said. Pakistan has a legal framework addressing tech-facilitated offences against children, but "there is no implementation", said Tahira Afrasiyab, a spokesperson for non-profit organisation Muslim Hands. And, according to experts, there are loopholes in existing laws. Human rights lawyer Salman Afridi said this issue shows how "economic vulnerability can be weaponised" for amounts as small as 10,000 Pakistani rupees (\$36) in exchange for the production of sexual content. "What we are seeing is the use of technology to facilitate an entire chain of grooming, inducement, coercion, blackmail, production, distribution and commercialisation," he said. "There is a strong basis for describing this as a commercial ecosystem of exploitation," Afridi added. For Zara and many others like her, the consequences of an encounter that began with an online game remain difficult to escape. "I was, and am, scared," she said. "I live in fear."

Bengal's Opposition Space Up for Grabs as Nandigram, Rejinagar Go to Bypolls

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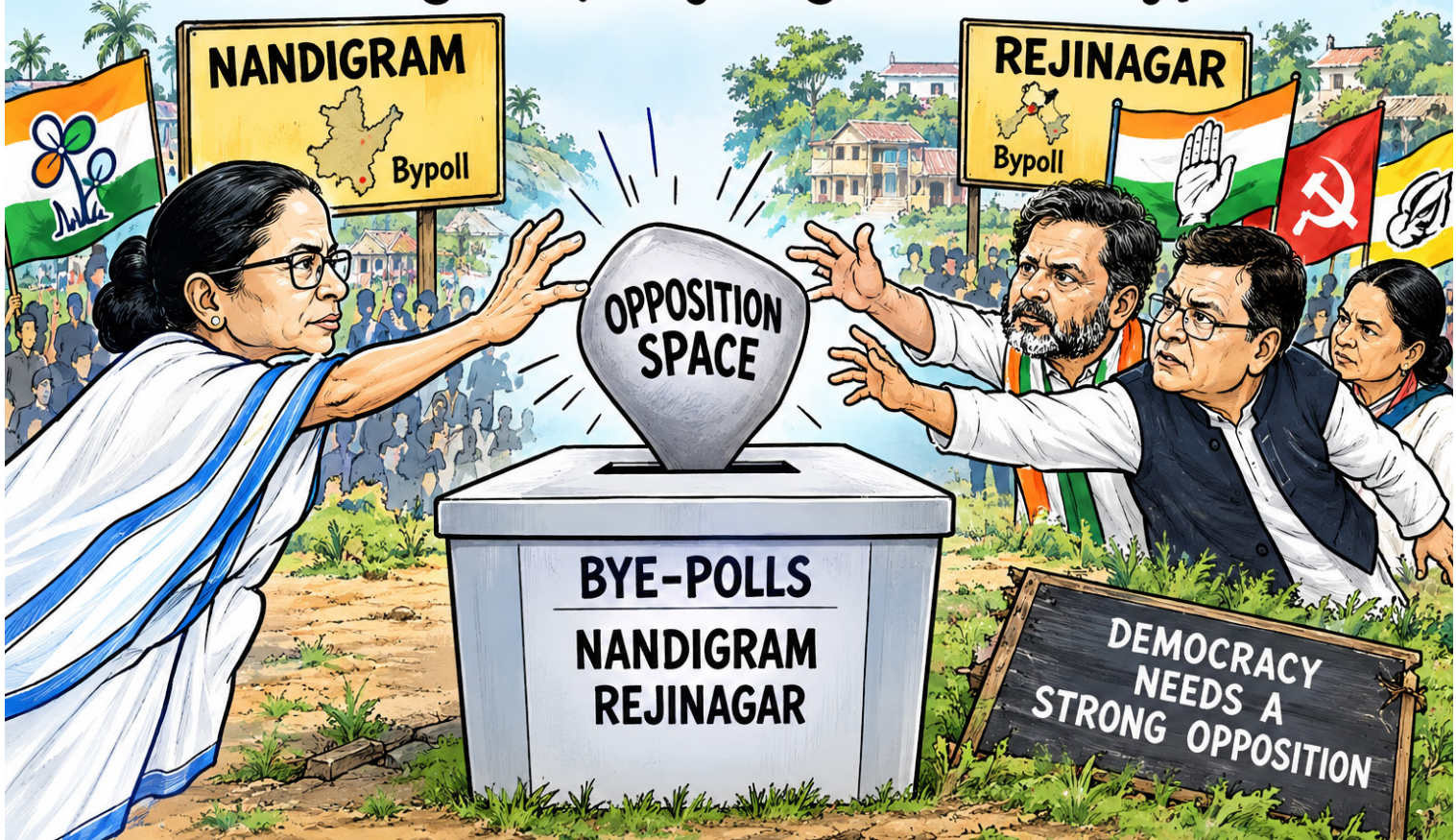
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Bengal's Opposition Space Up for Grabs as Nandigram, Rejinagar Go to Bypolls



RAJ MEHTA

West Bengal's upcoming bypolls in Nandigram and Rejinagar are shaping up as more than routine electoral contests. The two constituencies are set to test how votes traditionally associated with the Trinamool Congress behave at a time when the party is facing internal divisions and the Congress and Left are seeking to rebuild their organisational presence.

The October 6 contests will take place against the backdrop of a dramatically altered political landscape following the 2026 Assembly election. The Bharatiya Janata Party's return to power has changed the balance of forces in the state, while the Trinamool Congress, despite retaining a substantial vote base, is grappling with competing factions and a search for a clearly defined political role.

That has created an unusual situation in Bengal: the principal question for the opposition is no longer simply how to challenge the ruling party, but who can occupy the political space left open by a weakened and divided TMC.

Nandigram and Rejinagar offer two very different versions of that contest.

Nandigram: a test of where TMC's votes go Nandigram carries an obvious political significance because of its history as one of the defining constituencies of Bengal's recent politics. It also became vacant after Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, who had contested from both Nandigram and Bhabanipur, retained the latter seat.

The BJP enters the bypoll with a substantial advantage based on the recent Assembly election. It secured around half of the votes in Nandigram, while TMC candidate Pabitra Kar polled roughly 46 per cent.

But the bypoll presents a fundamentally different contest because the TMC's familiar electoral symbol will not appear on the ballot after the party's candidate withdrew.

The Democratic Trinamool Congress, representing the rebel faction, remains in the contest. Congress has fielded Milan Pradhan, while the Communist Party of India has nominated Shanti Gopal Giri.

The withdrawal of the candidate backed by Mamata Banerjee has added another layer to the contest, with the TMC leadership supporting the Congress nominee.

This makes the bypoll particularly relevant for understanding the behaviour of the TMC's traditional support base. Nandigram has a sizeable Muslim electorate, concentrated largely in Nandigram Block I, and that community has generally backed the TMC in recent elections.

The absence of the party's symbol raises a straightforward electoral question: will those voters transfer their support to Congress, divide among several candidates, or choose a different political option?

The answer could have consequences beyond the constituency because it would offer an indication of whether the TMC's vote can be transferred to another opposition party when the party itself is not

directly represented on the ballot.

For Congress, Nandigram consequently represents an opportunity to demonstrate that it can absorb a section of the anti-BJP vote. For the Left, the contest is another chance to test whether its organisation can convert its recent activity into electoral support.

The Democratic Trinamool Congress, meanwhile, is attempting to establish itself as a separate political force.

The result may therefore say as much about the fragmentation of the opposition vote as about the strength of any single candidate.

Rejinagar: a crowded contest

Rejinagar presents a different electoral equation.

Located in Murshidabad, the constituency has a large Muslim electorate, estimated at around 70 per cent. In the previous Assembly election, Humayun Kabir won the seat with around 51 per cent of the vote and a margin of approximately 58,000 votes.

Kabir, who had contested from both Naoda and Rejinagar, subsequently vacated Rejinagar, creating the vacancy.

His decision has turned the bypoll into a political test for his family and political organisation. His son, Golam Nabi Azad, is now contesting from the seat.

The contest, however, is far from a simple succession battle.

Congress has fielded district party president Mohammad Kafi, who is associated with former Union minister and long-time Murshidabad Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. The CPI has nominated Syed Asad Ali.

The TMC faction led by Mamata Banerjee has fielded former MLA Rabiul Alam Chowdhury. The rebel TMC faction and Revolutionary Socialist Party are also in the contest.

The number of candidates makes vote division a central feature of the election.

The BJP, which has consolidated much of the Hindu vote in several parts of Bengal, will be seeking to translate that support into a breakthrough in a Muslim-majority constituency. The party's performance in the recent Assembly election, including its victory in neighbouring Beldanga amid a division of Muslim votes among several parties, provides the immediate electoral context.

But Rejinagar also presents Congress with a different opportunity from Nandigram.

Murshidabad has traditionally been an important area for the Congress, and reclaiming electoral ground here would provide evidence that the party's organisational revival is extending beyond isolated defections and local-level activity.

The Left faces a similar test. Its return to a significant role in the constituency would strengthen the argument that its recent mobilisation is beginning to translate into votes.

The larger contest is not simply BJP versus TMC

The two bypolls are consequently difficult to read through the conventional BJP-versus-TMC framework.

The BJP is the ruling party and has the advantage of incumbency and organisational resources. But the opposition field is divided, and the TMC itself is no longer operating as a single political unit.

Congress and the Left are attempting to recover territory lost over successive elections. Rebel TMC leaders are trying to build an alternative platform. Other regional players are also attempting to retain influence.

That fragmentation means that even a relatively small shift in one section of the electorate can significantly alter the final result.

For Congress, the immediate objective is to determine whether its organisational expansion can be converted into electoral support. Several former TMC leaders and local representatives have joined the party in recent months, particularly in districts such as Malda and Murshidabad.

The Left, meanwhile, has sought to rebuild through street-level mobilisation, local protests and organisational activity. Its performance in the Falta repoll, where it secured close to 20 per cent of the vote, has given the party an additional reference point. Yet neither organisational expansion nor electoral performance in another constituency automatically establishes a new opposition order. Nandigram and Rejinagar will provide two separate tests in two very different

political environments.

What the bypolls can reveal The significance of October 6 may therefore lie less in the immediate number of seats won and more in the movement of votes between political formations.

In Nandigram, the absence of the TMC candidate and the subsequent support extended to Congress create an unusual experiment in vote transfer.

In Rejinagar, the contest is more fragmented, with Congress, Left, TMC, the rebel faction, BJP and Humayun Kabir's political camp competing for influence.

The two constituencies also bring different demographic and political equations into play. Nandigram's recent electoral history gives the BJP a strong base, while Rejinagar's Muslim-majority electorate and the fragmentation of opposition forces create a more complicated contest.

For the BJP, the bypolls are an opportunity to consolidate its position after taking power in Bengal.

For Congress and the Left, they offer a chance to demonstrate that the opposition space can be rebuilt through organisation rather than merely through defections from the TMC. For the competing TMC factions, the elections are a test of whether the party's established support base remains transferable to competing organisational structures. And for voters who have historically supported the TMC, the bypolls provide perhaps the clearest indication yet of how that support behaves when the party is divided or absent from the ballot.

A new phase in Bengal politics

West Bengal's political competition has traditionally been defined by powerful, state-wide formations. The current situation is less settled.

The BJP now controls the government. The TMC retains a significant electoral constituency but is dealing with internal divisions. Congress is attempting to rebuild in areas where it once had a strong base, while the Left is trying to turn organisational activity into sustained electoral relevance.

Nandigram and Rejinagar sit at the intersection of these changes.

Neither bypoll alone can determine the future shape of Bengal's opposition politics. But together, they can provide useful evidence about whether the state's political contest is moving towards another bipolar phase or entering a period of greater fragmentation. The central question on October 6 will consequently extend beyond who wins either constituency. It will be whether voters who once formed a relatively stable bloc behind the TMC begin distributing their support among Congress, the Left, rival TMC formations and other political forces—and whether any of those parties can turn that redistribution into a durable organisational base. That is the larger political story unfolding behind the two bypolls.

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

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