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PERSPECTIVE

Silence is often better than unnecessary drama.

Congress won't return to power in Assam for 20 years, says Himanta

GUWAHATI
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed that the Congress would remain out of power in the state for the next 20 years, saying the party had been politically weakened after the BJP-led alliance's victory in the 2026 Assembly elections.

"There is no Congress party in Assam today," Sarma said.The Chief Minister said the Congress had little prospect of returning to power after the BJP-led alliance won 102 of the 126 seats in the Assam Assembly.Sarma also said it was natural for Congress leaders and workers disappointed with the party's electoral prospects to join the BJP."Many in the Congress joining the BJP due to frustration is natural," he said.On the upcoming Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll, Sarma acknowledged that the constituency was not traditionally a BJP stronghold but said the party was preparing for a strong contest."Nagaon Lok Sabha constituency is not a traditional constituency of the BJP," he said.Sarma, however, claimed that the BJP had received an "unprecedented response" from minority voters in the constituency in recent days."In the last few days, minority people in the Lok Sabha constituency have given an unprecedented response to the BJP," he said.The Chief Minister said the BJP would contest the bypoll with determination and seek to strengthen its position in the constituency.

The Nagaon bypoll is expected to be a key political contest, with the BJP seeking to expand its support base in a constituency where the Congress and its allies have traditionally posed a strong challenge.

The contest also comes against the backdrop of the BJP-led alliance's strong performance in the 2026 Assembly elections and its efforts to consolidate support among different sections of voters.

WHO SAID WHAT



Presented President Putin with a Russian translation of the Thirukkural, which carries the eternal wisdom of the great Thiruvalluvar across languages and borders.
~ Narendra Modi, PM, India

US envoy Sergio Gor meets Manipur CM, discusses tourism and development



IMPHAL
US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor met Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Mantripukhri on Friday and discussed tourism, development and ways to enhance the state's visibility.

Gor described Manipur as a "stunning place" and highlighted its natural beauty during the interaction. He also welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on the development of the Northeast, saying greater attention to the region was important for India's diversity.The US envoy enquired about tourist arrivals in Manipur and discussed the state's potential to expand tourism and related sectors.

Gor also spoke about the relationship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, describing it as a special bond that goes beyond a conventional relationship between two heads of government. He said Trump personally valued the relationship.

Khemchand invited Gor to attend the Manipur Sangai Festival 2026, the state's flagship tourism and cultural event.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister described India as a "mini world" and Manipur as a "mini India", referring to the state's 36 communities and its cultural diversity.

Khemchand said tourism and allied sectors offered significant opportunities for economic development in Manipur.Gor was accompanied by US Consul General in Kolkata Kathy Giles-Diaz.The Chief Minister was accompanied by senior state officials led by Chief Secretary Rajeev Singh Thakur.

Rio urges Centre to withdraw Protected Area Permit regime from Nagaland



KOHIMA
Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has urged the Centre to withdraw the Protected Area Permit (PAP) regime from the state, saying its continuation is affecting Nagaland's development prospects and efforts to expand economic and cultural engagement with the rest of India and the world.

In a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday, Rio said the Nagaland Legislative Assembly had extensively deliberated on the issue during its recently concluded session and unanimously adopted a resolution seeking withdrawal of the PAP regime.

The Chief Minister said the resolution reflected the collective position of elected representatives across the Assembly.

Rio highlighted the state's peaceful environment, saying the ceasefire and ongoing peace process had contributed significantly to maintaining peace, stability and tranquillity in Nagaland over the years.

He also pointed to tourism as an important pillar of the state's economy and a major source of livelihood and employment, particularly for young people.

However, Rio said the continuation of the PAP regime had complicated the state government's efforts to organise international festivals, investment meetings, cultural exchanges, sporting events and other programmes involving overseas participants.

He urged Shah to intervene and consider the immediate and complete withdrawal of the PAP regime from Nagaland.Rio assured the Centre that the state government would work closely with the Ministry of Home Affairs and other agencies to establish an appropriate monitoring and security mechanism.

He said legitimate national security concerns would be fully safeguarded while facilitating greater engagement and development opportunities for the state.

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Mhayibeni Gifty Jami becomes first Naga to represent India at World Nomad Games

KOHIMA
Mhayibeni Gifty Jami has become the first Naga to represent India in the Intellectual Strategy Games at the sixth World Nomad Games.

Jami is competing in Toguz Korgool, a traditional strategy board game, alongside participants from several countries. Her participation marks a significant milestone for Nagaland and adds another achievement to the state's sporting journey.

Congratulating Jami on the accomplishment, Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton praised her dedication, discipline and skills.

Patton said Jami's achievement could inspire more young people from Nagaland to pursue their talents and compete at national and international platforms.

He wished Jami continued success and hoped she would achieve greater milestones in the years ahead.





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Petrol bombs attack Shillong police station, no injuries reported



SHILLONG
Two unidentified men allegedly hurled petrol bombs at Laban police station in Shillong in the early hours of Saturday, triggering a fire on the police premises, officials said.

The attackers, travelling on a two-wheeler, reportedly threw

two petrol bombs at around 2.30 am before fleeing the spot. No police personnel were injured in the incident, Superintendent of Police Vivek Syiem said.

The attack was captured on CCTV cameras installed at the police station. Police are examining the footage to identify the suspects and establish their movements before and after the incident.The petrol bombs caused a fire inside the police premises, but police personnel managed to extinguish the flames before they could cause further damage.No arrests have been made so far, Syiem said, adding that an investigation is underway. Police are also examining evidence collected from the scene.

The motive behind the attack has not yet been established. Investigators have not ruled out the possible involvement of groups supporting the demand for implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) in Meghalaya.

Manipur truckers' union condemns attacks on drivers amid highway blockade



IMPHAL
The Sadar Hills Inland Transporters and Drivers Union (SHITDU) has condemned alleged attacks on truck drivers during the ongoing economic blockade on Manipur's highways, warning that violence against vehicles carrying essential commodities could endanger lives and further disrupt supplies.

SHITDU president Samson Kipgen said drivers were continuing to operate on the highways despite disruptions and security concerns to ensure the movement of essential goods across the state.

"The pelting of large stones and bricks at drivers is a serious threat to their safety and a challenge to the Constitution of India and the authority of the Government," Kipgen said in a statement.

The union urged the government and law-enforcement agencies to take immediate action against those allegedly involved in the attacks. It called for the identification and arrest of the perpetrators and appropriate legal proceedings against them.

SHITDU also expressed solidarity with drivers who continue to transport essential commodities despite the prevailing situation, stressing that their safety must be treated as a priority.

The union warned that failure to act against those responsible could expose drivers and other transport workers to further risks and hamper the movement of essential commodities in Manipur.The statement comes amid an economic blockade called by the United Naga Council (UNC) on highways in the state. The blockade has affected the movement of goods and has been accompanied by allegations of attacks on vehicles.

Gorillaz to make Northeast debut with Guwahati concert on January 31

GUWAHATI
British virtual band Gorillaz will perform in Guwahati on January 31, 2027, as part of their debut India tour, bringing their live show to the Northeast for the first time.

The concert at the Sarusajai Sports Complex, Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium, will be the third stop on the India leg of the band's The Mountain Tour, following performances in Bengaluru and Mumbai.

The Guwahati date was announced by District, the tour's producer and exclusive ticketing partner, in association with Assam Tourism.

The India tour is closely linked to The Mountain, Gorillaz's ninth studio album, which draws on Indian musical influences and collaborations. Among the Indian musicians associated with the album are sarod players Amaan Ali Bangash and Ayaan Ali Bangash, sons of renowned sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan.

Gorillaz was created by musician Damon Albarn and artist Jamie Hewlett. The band's animated members - 2D, Murdoc Niccals, Noodle and Russel Hobbs - are central to its identity, while the India



tour will bring the concept to the stage in a live format for Indian audiences for the first time.

Albarn will perform with the Gorillaz live band alongside guest performers during the India tour.

Albarn and Hewlett said the India shows would mark a return to a country that influenced the making of The Mountain. They also recalled their musical collaborations and experiences in India and said they were looking forward to performing in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Guwahati.

Assam Tourism Development Corporation Managing Director Kumar Padmapani Bora said the state was pleased to host Gorillaz and expressed hope that

the concert would boost cultural activities and create opportunities for tourism, local businesses and the wider economy.

District CEO Rahul Ganjoo said bringing the tour to Guwahati was part of the company's effort to expand international live entertainment in India.

He also highlighted the Northeast's strong music culture and said the company was looking forward to bringing Gorillaz's first live performance in the region to Guwahati.

The India tour will begin in Bengaluru on January 23 at District Arena, Terraform. The band will perform in Mumbai on January 27 at Jio World Garden in BKC before concluding the announced India leg in Guwahati on January 31.

Ticket sales will begin with a Mastercard cardholder pre-sale through the District app.

The first pre-sale, offering a 10% Mastercard discount, will run from noon on September 15 to noon on September 17. A second Mastercard-access pre-sale will begin at noon on September 17 and continue until noon on September 20.

General ticket sales will open at 1 pm on September 20 through the District app.

9,820 candidates in fray for Tripura Village Committee polls

AGARTALA
A total of 9,820 candidates will contest the upcoming Tripura Village Committee elections after 1,069 candidates withdrew their nominations on the final day of withdrawal, according to data released by the State Election Commission (SEC). The Tipra Motha Party (TMP) has the highest number of candidates in the final list with 4,279, followed by the BJP with 1,853 and the Congress with 254. The CPI(M) has 151 candidates, while 56 candidates are from the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT).The CPI has fielded three candidates, while 753 candidates are contesting on tickets of other parties or as independents.The SEC said 1,069 candidates withdrew their nominations on September 11. Of them, 302 were from the CPI(M), 105 from the BJP, 80 from the TMP, 39 from the Congress, 12 from the IPFT and one from the CPI. Another 414 candidates belonged to other parties or were independents.

Polling for the Village Committee elections will be held on September 28, with counting scheduled for October 5.The elections will cover 587 Village Committees, comprising 2,634 constituencies and 4,597 seats.

The nomination process began on September 1, while September 8 was the last date for filing nominations. Scrutiny was held on September 9, followed by the withdrawal process, which concluded on September 11.The SEC had received 10,958 nomination papers from 10,936 candidates. Following scrutiny, 10,889 nominations filed by 10,889 candidates were declared valid.Before the withdrawal deadline, the BJP had 1,971 valid candidates, followed by the CPI(M) with 2,456, TMP with 4,361, Congress with 465 and IPFT with 483. The CPI had four candidates, while 1,149 candidates were listed under other parties and independents.

After 1,069 withdrawals, the final number of candidates has come down to 9,820.

The Village Committee polls are being viewed as an important grassroots contest in Tripura, with major political parties and regional forces seeking to consolidate their organisational presence in the state's rural and tribal areas.

BRICS 2026: INDIA'S BIG DIPLOMATIC TEST BEGINS IN NEW DELHI

NEW DELHI

New Delhi is poised to become the diplomatic centre of gravity of the Global South on September 12 and 13 as India hosts the 18th BRICS Summit at Bharat Mandapam, bringing together the leaders of an expanded grouping at a moment when geopolitical rivalries, trade wars, armed conflicts and uncertainty over the future of the global economic order are redrawing the map of international relations.

For Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian government, however, BRICS 2026 is about far more than the ceremonial culmination of a year-long presidency. It is a test of whether India's carefully calibrated foreign-policy propositions - strategic autonomy, a stronger voice for the Global South and practical multilateralism - can be converted into tangible diplomatic, economic and technological gains. India assumed the BRICS chairmanship on January 1 for the fourth time, following its presidencies in 2012, 2016 and 2021.

The timing is symbolically significant: the summit comes two decades after BRICS emerged as a platform for major emerging economies. But the organisation that arrives in New Delhi in 2026 bears little resemblance to the original Brazil-Russia-India-China grouping. South Africa joined in 2010, while Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia subsequently widened the bloc's geographical and economic reach. With 11 full members and a broader circle of partner countries, BRICS now spans Asia, Africa, the Gulf, Latin America and Eurasia. Its enlarged footprint has increased its economic and political weight - but has also made consensus considerably harder. India's response to that complexity has been to put "Humanity First" at the heart of its presidency, under the overarching theme of "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability".

The formulation reflects New Delhi's attempt to prevent BRICS from being reduced to a geopolitical counterweight to the West and instead position it as a platform capable of delivering practical solutions to the developmental challenges confronting emerging economies. The distinction is central to India's BRICS diplomacy. Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar have repeatedly advocated a more representative and inclusive international order in which developing countries have a greater say in institutions that continue to reflect the power equations of an earlier era. For India, that means pushing for reform of the United Nations and international financial institutions, strengthening development finance, widening access to technology and healthcare, improving food and energy security and giving the Global South a greater role in shaping the rules of the global economy. India's approach is also deliberately different from the more confrontational interpretation of BRICS advanced by some of its members.

New Delhi has little interest in turning the grouping into an explicitly anti-Western alliance or a substitute for the existing international system. It maintains deepening strategic and economic partnerships with the United States and Europe while simultaneously strengthening relations with Russia, China, the Gulf and the wider developing world. For India, therefore, strategic autonomy is less about choosing one camp than preserving the freedom to engage multiple centres of power in pursuit of its national interests.

The arrival of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping in New Delhi will give that balancing act its most visible expression. Modi is scheduled to hold full-format bilateral talks with Putin on September 11, with trade, defence and energy expected to figure prominently. Modi and Xi are scheduled to meet on September 12 on the sidelines of the summit, making their interaction particularly significant against the backdrop of continuing strategic competition between India and China. India is also seeking to maintain engagement with Iran. Modi is scheduled to meet Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on September 11, adding another dimension to New Delhi's diplomacy in a region where India's interests encompass energy security, connectivity and strategic access.

The juxtaposition of these meetings captures the essence of India's BRICS diplomacy: engage partners, competitors and adversaries simultaneously, without allowing membership of one grouping to dictate the entirety of India's external relationships. But if the diplomatic theatre will be closely watched, the economic outcomes could ultimately determine how India's presidency is judged. BRICS economies account for around 26 per cent of global trade, according to estimates cited by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations. For India, the potential spans engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, textiles, automobiles and



components, electronics, food and agriculture, renewable energy, healthcare and digital services.

FIEO President S C Ralhan has argued that BRICS must "move beyond strategic dialogue to measurable commercial outcomes", with greater emphasis on market access, investment, technology partnerships, resilient supply chains and efficient payment mechanisms. That demand fits neatly into India's larger ambition to emerge as a major manufacturing and sourcing hub as geopolitical tensions force global companies to diversify production and reduce excessive dependence on concentrated supply chains.

For New Delhi, BRICS can become a platform linking India's manufacturing capabilities, skilled workforce and digital infrastructure with the capital, resources, technology and markets of fellow emerging economies. "Trade and investment must move together," Ralhan has argued, advocating co-production, joint ventures and technology transfer rather than a relationship restricted to conventional exports. For Indian manufacturers, exporters and MSMEs, such an approach could prove more valuable than another broad political declaration. Faster customs procedures, fewer non-tariff barriers, regulatory transparency, mutual recognition of standards, digital trade documentation and predictable payment systems could create a more durable economic relationship among BRICS countries.

Payments are consequently emerging as one of the most practical areas of potential cooperation. India enters the debate with considerable diplomatic capital from its experience with digital public infrastructure, particularly the Unified Payments Interface. New Delhi is expected to encourage cooperation on digital payments, fintech, central bank digital currencies and alternative payment mechanisms. For businesses, the issue is not simply about challenging the dominance of the US dollar. It is about reducing transaction costs, payment risks and uncertainty.

"Payment uncertainty can itself become a trade barrier," Ralhan has said, making the case for transparent and efficient payment arrangements that could encourage smaller businesses to enter BRICS markets. The question of local currencies, however, remains politically and economically sensitive. BRICS members operate under vastly different monetary systems and have varying degrees of exposure to Western financial markets. India is therefore more likely to favour greater use of national currencies and payment interoperability where commercially viable than support a premature common BRICS currency. The New Development Bank provides another avenue for turning declarations into delivery. India is pushing for progress reports on the BRICS Multilateral Guarantees pilot, an initiative intended to mobilise private investment across member economies without requiring additional capital contributions. If implemented effectively, such mechanisms could help finance infrastructure and sustainable development while lowering risk for private investors. Energy security will form another crucial pillar of India's BRICS agenda. India is simultaneously pursuing an ambitious renewable-energy transition and seeking dependable and affordable energy to sustain rapid economic growth.

Cooperation on energy technology, critical minerals, smart grids, storage and diversified supply chains therefore has a direct bearing on India's development strategy. A BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage launched by India, along with discussions at the BRICS Energy Ministers' meeting in Gurugram in June, underlines New Delhi's attempt to move the energy agenda beyond political declarations towards practical cooperation. Technology offers an equally significant opportunity.

Digital public infrastructure, artificial intelligence, cross-border payments, data governance, cybersecurity and emerging technologies are areas in which countries with sharply different political systems can nevertheless find common ground. India's experience with large-scale digital public infrastructure gives New Delhi an opportu-

nity to project its technological capabilities internationally while building partnerships in markets where demand for affordable digital solutions is expanding rapidly. Agriculture, food security, global health infrastructure, disaster-risk reduction and supply-chain resilience form the other side of India's "Humanity First" approach. These are issues that allow New Delhi to connect BRICS diplomacy directly to the everyday concerns of developing societies rather than allowing the grouping to become consumed by great-power rivalry.

India has sought to reinforce that developmental character through a year-long programme involving more than 350 meetings and high-level engagements across more than 25 Indian cities, covering security, trade, finance, technology, energy and cultural cooperation. Yet the New Delhi summit will confront the fundamental contradiction at the heart of an expanded BRICS: the grouping has become more influential precisely as it has become more difficult to manage. Its members do not share a common foreign-policy outlook. Russia and Iran have deeply adversarial relationships with the West, while India maintains expanding strategic and economic partnerships with Washington and European capitals.

China and India remain strategic competitors even as both recognise the value of keeping BRICS relevant. The Gulf members have their own calculations, while Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia and other members bring distinctive economic and diplomatic priorities. The divisions were starkly exposed at the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi in May, when disagreements linked to Iran and the UAE prevented the adoption of a joint communique. India instead issued a chair's statement acknowledging the differences. For New Delhi, that episode offered a useful lesson ahead of the leaders' summit: India cannot eliminate strategic rivalries from BRICS, but it can attempt to prevent those rivalries from paralysing the organisation. That will be particularly important because India's own interests require productive relationships with countries that may find themselves on opposite sides of regional disputes.

The success of the summit may therefore depend less on producing the strongest possible rhetoric than on identifying areas where consensus can survive geopolitical disagreement. Supply chains, critical minerals, food security, energy, digital payments, healthcare, disaster resilience, development finance and technology are precisely the areas where practical cooperation can advance even when members disagree on larger strategic questions. Business groups are pressing for such an outcome.

FIEO has called for stronger business-to-business engagement through buyer-seller meetings, investment matchmaking, technology partnerships, joint ventures and regular business delegations. "The real test of BRICS will be whether its benefits reach manufacturers, exporters, startups and MSMEs," Ralhan has said. "Political goodwill has to travel from summit tables to shop floors." That could prove the most revealing measure of India's presidency. If the New Delhi summit produces mechanisms that make trade easier, investment more predictable, payments more efficient, supply chains more resilient and technology partnerships more accessible, India will have demonstrated that its version of strategic autonomy can generate tangible economic value. If it produces little beyond another declaration of solidarity, the enormous diplomatic spectacle could struggle to match the expectations generated by India's ambitious presidency.

The summit will also serve as a demonstration of India's growing capacity to host complex international gatherings. Bharat Mandapam, which hosted the 2023 G20 Leaders' Summit, will once again become the focal point of global diplomacy. The capital has been placed under an extensive security and traffic-management regime, with more than 15,000 police personnel and 200 paramilitary companies deployed at strategic locations, around 500 additional CCTV cameras installed in the New Delhi district, and extensive traffic

restrictions and diversions introduced around key routes and diplomatic locations. Government offices and schools in Delhi have been closed on September 11 as part of the security preparations, while essential services, banks, transit hubs and the Delhi Metro continue to operate.

The logistical exercise is more than a backdrop to the summit. It is part of India's wider effort to present itself as a capable host of major multilateral diplomacy and as a country increasingly prepared to shape, rather than merely participate in, international rule-making. Two years after the G20 summit placed New Delhi at the centre of global diplomacy, BRICS offers India another platform to articulate its vision

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev was one of the great Vaishnavite saints of Bharat, whose spiritual vision strengthened the civilisational and cultural unity of our nation.

Through his profound teachings, art and literature, Gurujona enriched Assamese society while carrying the timeless values of Sanatan Dharma to generations.

On his sacred Tirobhav Tithi, I offer my tributes at the holy feet of Gurujona.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



of a multipolar world. But the stakes are different. The G20 brought together advanced and emerging economies within a broad framework. BRICS is a more politically charged grouping, with its members seeking greater representation for the developing world while disagreeing sharply over what the next international order should look like. India's challenge is to occupy the space between those competing visions.

New Delhi does not seek to preserve the Western-led order unchanged. Nor does it appear interested in transforming BRICS into a geopolitical bloc defined primarily by opposition to the West. Its proposition is more nuanced: reform global institutions, democratise international decision-making, strengthen the Global South, expand economic cooperation and preserve the strategic freedom of individual countries. It is a difficult balancing act, but it is also where India's particular diplomatic value lies. The presence of Putin and Xi in New Delhi, alongside leaders from Africa, the Gulf, Asia and Latin America, will give Modi an unusually broad diplomatic stage. The bilateral conversations surrounding the summit could prove as consequential for India's interests as the formal BRICS agenda itself, particularly on energy, defence, trade, connectivity and regional security.

The larger question, however, extends beyond the two days at Bharat Mandapam. Twenty years after BRICS first emerged and at a time when the grouping has expanded dramatically, India is attempting to demonstrate that a diverse coalition of emerging powers can remain useful without becoming ideologically uniform; that the Global South can demand a greater voice without turning multilateralism into confrontation; and that strategic autonomy can be converted into economic opportunity.

For India, therefore, BRICS 2026 is not simply a summit to be hosted. It is a test of statecraft. The measure of New Delhi's success will not ultimately be the grandeur of Bharat Mandapam, the number of leaders in the summit photograph or even the strength of the final declaration. It will be whether India's year at the helm leaves behind stronger trade and investment links, more resilient supply chains, deeper technology cooperation, greater development finance and a more credible voice for the Global South. In that sense, the real BRICS summit may begin only after the leaders leave New Delhi.



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Trump's Capital War Could Cost the World Dearly



Donald Trump's trade war may be giving way to something potentially far more disruptive: a battle over capital. Tariffs were supposed to narrow America's trade deficit, revive domestic industry and generate enough revenue to support tax cuts and government spending. Instead, the US trade deficit remains stubbornly high, while the cost of tariffs has fallen overwhelmingly on American importers and consumers. The next target, therefore, appears to be foreign capital.

The numbers explain the urgency. The US government is carrying debt of nearly \$40 trillion, equivalent to about 130 per cent of GDP, while the federal budget deficit is estimated at around \$1.9 trillion in 2026. Tariff revenues, even if they exceed \$180 billion, would cover only a fraction of that gap. Over the coming decade, further borrowing is likely to add several trillion dollars to the debt burden, even as debt-servicing costs rise sharply.

This leaves Washington confronting a basic problem: how to finance increasingly large deficits without allowing borrowing costs to spiral. Foreign investors remain central to that equation. Overseas investors hold trillions of dollars in US equities and Treasury securities. Their continued willingness to hold American assets has helped sustain the dollar's international role and enabled Washington to borrow on a scale few other countries could contemplate.

That dependence could encourage the Trump administration to turn its attention from trade restrictions to financial restrictions. Foreign companies and investors could face higher taxes, additional fees, changes in the treatment of sovereign wealth funds and restrictions on the movement of capital. More radical proposals have included restructuring the terms of Treasury securities, effectively extending maturities or imposing costs on foreign holders.

Such measures would amount to financial repression. Instead of confronting the underlying causes of America's fiscal imbalance-tax cuts, rising defence spending, demographic pressures and structurally high expenditure-Washington would seek to make creditors bear a larger share of the adjustment.

The danger is that financial markets are far less forgiving than trade flows. Tariffs can disrupt supply chains and raise prices; a capital war could destabilise the very financial architecture on which the US economy and the global economy depend. The dollar remains the dominant reserve currency, while US Treasury securities are treated as the world's benchmark safe asset. Any attempt to undermine foreign investors' confidence in either could trigger violent movements in currencies, bond yields and equity markets.

Foreign investors are also caught in a difficult position. Countries such as Japan, China and several European economies hold vast quantities of US assets. A sudden large-scale sell-off could depress the value of the dollar and American securities, inflicting heavy losses on the very investors seeking to reduce their exposure. Continuing to hold those assets, meanwhile, could leave them vulnerable to inflation, currency depreciation or policy changes imposed by Washington.

This is the paradox of America's financial dominance. The United States possesses enormous leverage because the dollar and Treasury market remain indispensable. But using that leverage recklessly could eventually weaken the foundations of that dominance.

Other countries have begun exploring alternatives to excessive dependence on the dollar, including new payment mechanisms, greater use of local currencies and diversification of foreign-exchange reserves. Yet building a credible alternative to the US financial system will take years. In the meantime, the world remains deeply exposed to decisions made in Washington.

The lesson is not that America has no right to protect its economic interests. It is that fiscal problems cannot be permanently solved by shifting their cost onto trading partners and foreign creditors. Tariffs cannot substitute for fiscal discipline, and financial repression cannot substitute for structural reform.

A capital war may initially give Washington more bargaining power. But if pursued with the same unpredictability that has characterised Trump's tariff policies, it could turn America's greatest economic advantage-the global primacy of the dollar-into a source of systemic vulnerability.

The United States may hold many of the cards. It should be careful not to play them all at once.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Difficulties strengthen the mind, as labor does the body.”

- Seneca

Nagaon bypoll: BJP names former DC Devasish Sharma as candidate

GUWAHATI

The BJP named former Nagaon Deputy Commissioner Devasish Sharma as its candidate for the Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election, ending days of speculation and setting up a four-cornered contest for the seat.

The party announced Sharma's candidature through a statement issued by its Central Election Committee. The decision was communicated from the BJP headquarters in New Delhi and signed by national headquarters in-charge Tarun Chugh.

Sharma, who joined the BJP on September 9 after ending his career as a civil servant, said he was confident of receiving public support based on his long association with the people of Nagaon.

"As a candidate I am confident and sure that I will garner love from all.



The relationship between people of this constituency and me is not just for the sake of elections, but has been there for long," he said.

Sharma said voters were looking

for transformation and development and claimed the BJP was best placed to deliver on those expectations, with the party in power at both the Centre and in Assam.

He said his campaign would focus particularly on the younger generation and their role in leadership and nation-building. "Construction of roads, schools and others will be there but our primary focus must be over the young generation on how they can take up leadership and nation-building," Sharma said.

On Nagaon's sizeable minority population, Sharma said members of the community were also seeking opportunities and had expressed optimism about the changes brought by the BJP-led government.

"There was no politics when I was working in Nagaon for 25 years," he said, referring to his long association with the district as a government official.

Sharma said preparations for filing

his nomination were underway and the necessary paperwork was being completed. The deadline for filing nominations is September 16.

Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia congratulated Sharma and expressed confidence that the party would secure a decisive victory in the bypoll.

BJP MP from Guwahati Bijulee Kalita Medhi said the party's preparations were almost complete and expressed optimism about its prospects, including among minority voters.

The announcement came as the extended state executive meeting of the Assam BJP was being held in Guwahati, where senior leaders discussed the Nagaon bypoll and other organisational issues.

Assam Minister Ashok Singhal said the bypoll, the Silchar Municipal Corpo-

ration election and the party's month-long 'Seva Hi Seva Sankalp' programme were among the issues being discussed at the meeting.

The Congress is yet to announce its candidate, while the Trinamool Congress and AIUDF have already entered the contest, making the Nagaon bypoll a closely watched multi-cornered battle.

Former Congress Nagaon MP and Dispur MLA Pradyut Bordoloi said voters would decide the outcome irrespective of the constituency's demographic composition.

The bypoll will be Sharma's first electoral test after his entry into active politics. His candidature also marks a shift from a 25-year administrative career in Nagaon to electoral politics.

The election is scheduled for October 6, with counting set for October 9.

Tripura, Mizoram begin talks to resolve long-pending boundary dispute

AGARTALA

Tripura and Mizoram have initiated fresh efforts to resolve their long-standing boundary dispute, with the chief secretaries of the two states holding their first round of discussions in Agartala, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said on Friday.

The meeting was held at the state guest house on Thursday as part of efforts to find an amicable solution to the dispute, which centres on Phuldungei, a remote hill village claimed by both states. Tripura and Mizoram share an inter-state boundary of around 109 km, with Phuldungei emerging as the key point of contention.

Saha said he was hopeful that the issue could be resolved through dialogue. He added that he had recently raised the boundary dispute with Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, who agreed to work towards an amicable settlement. "Yesterday's meeting was follow-up action to address the problem," Saha said.

The latest talks mark an effort by the two states to address the boundary issue through institutional dialogue and avoid further disputes along the inter-state border. Meanwhile, Saha expressed confidence that the NDA would secure a decisive victory in the upcoming village committee elections under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

He said the BJP, Tipra Motha Party (TMP) and Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) would contest the elections together as NDA constituents. According to Saha, the three parties could not reach a seat-sharing agreement for the TTAADC elections held in April because of differences among them. "We are confident of winning the VC elections massively," he said.

Elections to 587 village committees in areas covered by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution are scheduled to be held on September 28.

Nagaland Governor urges departments to adopt outcome-based approach

DIMAPUR

Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav on Thursday called on government departments to move from a scheme-based approach to an outcome-based system, with clear targets, timelines and measurable results.

Yadav made the remarks during a high-level meeting at the Deputy Commissioner's office in Mokokchung, where he reviewed major development schemes and projects being implemented by various departments in the district. The Governor also interacted with civil society organisations and beneficiaries of government schemes. The meeting was attended by legislators, the Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police and heads of departments.

Yadav stressed the need for greater accountability and convergence among departments, while identifying youth and skill development, agriculture and the local economy, and sustainable tourism as key areas of focus.

He urged officials to assess their work by answering three questions: "What have we achieved? What remains pending? And what specific action should be taken?"

The Governor also called for realistic targets backed by clear timelines to ensure that government schemes translate into tangible benefits for people.

Referring to Mokokchung as the "Land of Pioneers", Yadav highlighted the district's legacy in education, public service, institution-building and community leadership since its establishment in 1889. He said the legacy placed a responsibility on the administration to ensure effective and efficient governance.

Yadav expressed confidence that coordinated efforts could create greater opportunities for young people, improve returns for farmers and ensure access to essential services in villages while preserving Mokokchung's cultural and natural heritage.

IMPHAL

Manipur's outstanding public debt rose to Rs 16,193.78 crore at the end of 2024-25, with the state's fiscal deficit reaching 4.16% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), exceeding the 3% limit prescribed under the state's Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has said.

Of the total outstanding debt, Rs 10,638.89 crore is due for repayment over the next 10 years, highlighting the pressure on the state's finances, according to the CAG report.

The audit also found that the government overstated its revenue surplus and understated the fiscal deficit by Rs 0.61 crore after revenue expenditure was incorrectly classified as capital expenditure.

In another instance, the state incurred an unbudgeted expend-



iture of Rs 96.69 crore towards repayment of loans and interest liabilities of the Planning and Development Authority and the Manipur Police Housing Corporation.

The CAG flagged major shortcomings in the accounting and monitoring of government funds. As of March 31, 2025, 7,729 utilisation certificates involving Rs 12,390.48 crore were pending, with some dating back to 2003-04.

A total of 2,282 Detailed Countersigned Contingent bills involving Rs 9,448.82 crore were also outstanding. Eight autonomous bodies and authorities had not submitted 27 annual accounts for the period from 2019-20 to 2024-25.

Manipur debt rises to Rs 16,194 crore, CAG flags fiscal deficit breach

The audit also highlighted delays in implementing infrastructure projects. As of March 2025, 138 projects remained incomplete, with Rs 473.53 crore locked up against a combined estimated project cost of Rs 946.11 crore.

The CAG cautioned that prolonged delays could lead to cost escalation and deprive people of the intended benefits of the projects.

Salaries and wages remained a major component of the state's revenue expenditure, accounting for Rs 5,913.18 crore, or 37.75% of total revenue expenditure.

Interest payments also increased by 4.67%, from Rs 976.58 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 1,022.23 crore in 2024-25.

Despite the fiscal pressures, Manipur recorded growth in revenue receipts during 2024-25. Total revenue receipts increased to Rs 16,775.60 crore, while own tax revenue stood at Rs 1,611.74 crore and non-tax revenue at Rs 476.51 crore. Central transfers also in-

creased during the year. Grants-in-aid from the Centre rose by 5.54%, while the state's share of Union taxes and duties increased by 13.94%.

The CAG recommended a disciplined borrowing strategy, with borrowings focused on asset creation and developmental needs. It also called for rationalisation of committed liabilities, tighter control over interest payments and better targeting of subsidies to create fiscal space for development expenditure.

The auditor further stressed the need for strict compliance with FRBM targets and stronger revenue mobilisation.

It also recommended time-bound action plans to ensure that government departments, autonomous district councils and implementing agencies submit pending utilisation certificates, Detailed Countersigned Contingent bills and annual accounts without further delay.

BJP, TIPRA Motha resume seat-sharing talks ahead of TTAADC polls

AGARTALA

The BJP and TIPRA Motha on Thursday resumed seat-sharing talks ahead of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) Village Committee elections, with the two allies seeking to resolve differences over candidate adjustments and withdrawal of nominations.

The second round of discussions was held at the State Guest House and chaired by senior BJP leader and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ratan Lal Nath. The talks followed an inconclusive first meeting between the two parties. The discussions focused mainly on adjustments among candidates and possible withdrawal of nominations, particularly by TIPRA Motha, which has the highest number of valid nominations among the parties contesting the elections. BJP leaders Sushanta Chowdhury and Bipin Debbarma, along with MLA Pramod Reang, attended the meeting.

TIPRA Motha was represented by Minister of State Brisaketu Debbarma, MLAs Ranjit Debbarma, Biswajit Kalo and Philip Reang, and TTAADC Chief Executive Member Runiel Debbarma.

The Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), another NDA ally, was absent from the meeting. Its general secretary Swapan Debbarma was allegedly attacked by

miscreants linked to TIPRA Motha two days earlier, following which the party raised concerns over the law-and-order situation in the state.

According to the Tripura State Election Commission (SEC), a total of 10,958 nomination papers were filed by 10,936 candidates for 4,597 Village Committees. After scrutiny, 10,889 nominations were found valid. TIPRA Motha leads the list with 4,361 valid nominations, followed by the CPI(M) with 2,456 and the BJP with 1,971. The IPFT has 483 valid nominations, Congress 465 and the CPI four. Independents, minor parties and other unrecognised groups account for 1,149 valid nominations.

The deadline for withdrawal of candidature is September 11, after which the final contest is expected to become clearer. The Village Committee elections will be held on September 28 across 587 committees under the TTAADC. The nomination process began on September 1, with September 8 being the last date for filing papers. Scrutiny was conducted on September 9. SEC Secretary Anurag Sen said. Security arrangements have also been stepped up for the elections. The Centre has sanctioned 74 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), of which 24 have already arrived in Tripura. The remaining personnel are expected to reach the state shortly.

Arunachal's 32 high-risk glacial lakes raise GLOF threat to downstream rivers

GUWAHATI

Arunachal Pradesh has 197 expanding glacial lakes, including 32 classified as high-risk and requiring active mitigation, raising concerns over possible glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) in downstream river systems, internationally acclaimed river expert Prof Nayan Sarma has said.

Speaking to The Assam Tribune, Sarma said Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan, located in the highly vulnerable Eastern Himalayas, were witnessing rapid glacier melt and the formation and expansion of unstable proglacial lakes.

Several major river systems are potentially exposed to GLOF risks, including the Tawang Chu and Dibang in Arunachal Pradesh and the Punatsang Chhu and Kuri Chu in Bhutan.

The Kameng Chu, also known as the Mago Chu in its upper reaches and the Jia Bharali in Assam, is particularly vulnerable to GLOF events originating from the rapidly melting Khangri glacier in Tawang district.

Scientists have identified unstable proglacial lakes at an altitude of around 16,500 feet near the Khangri glacier. High-risk lakes in the Mago Chu basin have expanded significantly over the past decade, with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) identifying them as potentially dangerous.

Sarma said a 2026 satellite analysis showed



that the high-altitude Sanhapo Glacial Lake in the Mago Chu basin had expanded from 56 hectares in 2016 to 89 hectares, heightening concerns over a possible GLOF.

The threat extends beyond Arunachal Pradesh into Bhutan and Assam. The Punatsang Chhu basin has previously witnessed major outburst events, including the 1994 Luge Tsho disaster, while Thorthormi Tsho remains among the high-hazard glacial lakes in Bhutan.

The Punatsang Chhu, which has two hydropower projects, is known as the Sankosh in Assam.

Glaciers in northern Bhutan feed seven major river systems - the Amo Chu, Wang Chu, Punatsang Chhu, Mande Chu, Chamkhar Chu, Kuri Chu and Drangme Chu. Hydropower generated from these river systems contrib-



utes significantly to Bhutan's economy, with much of the electricity exported to India.

Sarma said the interconnected nature of the river systems meant that a major GLOF in the upper reaches could have consequences far downstream.

The Kuri Chu and Drangme Chu from Bhutan, along with the Tawang Chu from Arunachal Pradesh, eventually join the Manas river system in Assam. Any major GLOF propagating through these high-altitude rivers could therefore pose a significant threat to downstream areas in Assam.

He stressed the need for an integrated system combining real-time satellite monitoring, field-based sensors and structural engineering measures to assess and mitigate GLOF risks.

High-resolution satellite imagery and Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR)

should be used to monitor changes in glacial lakes and detect potential instability in moraine dams, he said.

Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) is particularly useful because it can monitor glacial deformation through cloud cover and darkness, allowing observations even during storms and prolonged winter conditions.

Sarma also suggested deploying solar-powered Automated Weather Stations near high-risk lakes to continuously monitor temperature changes, weather conditions and fluctuations in water levels.

With glacial lakes expanding across the Eastern Himalayas, he said sustained monitoring and advance mitigation would be crucial to protect downstream communities, infrastructure and river systems in Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan and Assam.

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Big PM push for BRICS trade integration

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday called for a three-pillar strategy to deepen trade within the expanded BRICS grouping, while stressing that stronger economic integration would depend on secure sea lanes, open supply routes and the safety of seafarers as geopolitical conflicts increasingly disrupt global commerce.

Addressing the BRICS Business Forum here, Modi urged the BRICS Business Council to identify and remove the bloc's top 10 trade barriers, support 100 startups every year to expand into other BRICS markets and create 1,000 new business partnerships annually, with progress reviewed every year.

"As BRICS enters its third decade, I would like to urge the BRICS Business Council: Can you prepare a report on removing the top 10 trade barriers among BRICS nations? Can we support 100 BRICS startups annually to scale up in other BRICS markets? Can we forge a thousand new partnerships among our businesses? We should

review our progress on these three parameters every year," Modi said.

At the same time, Modi placed maritime security at the heart of his vision for expanding global trade, warning that economic growth and supply-chain resilience could not be separated from the security of shipping routes. This carries significance as conflicts in West Asia and the Black Sea have disrupted shipping routes, raised freight and insurance costs and exposed the vulnerability of global supply chains.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (L), Russia's President Vladimir Putin (2L), India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (C), South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira attending a session of the BRICS Business Forum 2026 in New Delhi.

Modi's proposals came against a broader backdrop of rising protectionism, sanctions and geopolitical fragmentation, with emerging economies seeking to build more resilient trade and investment links within the Global South. His pitch was to move BRICS

towards measurable economic integration.

"The economic strength of BRICS has grown at nearly twice the pace of the rest of the world," Modi said, describing BRICS nations as emerging hubs for innovation and solutions.

The economic agenda unfolded alongside a sharper geopolitical message from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who criticised sanctions and what he described as coercive economic pressure. Putin also sought to highlight BRICS' growing economic weight relative to the Western-led G7. "Over the last five years, more than 40% of the world GDP has been produced by the BRICS countries, whereas the contribution of the so-called G7, the Group of Seven—I don't know why they call that the Group of Seven—stands at only 29%," he said.

Putin stressed that Russia is not working against anyone. "What we are doing is not against anyone. We are in favour of our interests," he said while calling for greater cooperation in infrastructure, logistics, finance and technology.

Ahead of Modi-Xi talks, Beijing says China, India should 'handle differences properly'



NEW DELHI

Ahead of President Xi Jinping's visit to India for the BRICS summit and bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, China on Friday said both countries should handle differences properly and view their ties from a strategic and long-term perspective.

Xi will arrive in New Delhi on Saturday to attend the BRICS summit, his first visit to India in nearly seven years. He is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with Modi on the sidelines of the summit on Saturday.

Asked how China viewed the Modi-Xi meeting, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing that this would be the third year in a row for the two leaders to meet, following their meetings in Kazan and Tianjin.

"China will work with India to act on the strategic guidance of the two leaders, handle the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term

perspective, step up communication, enhance cooperation, properly handle differences, and be friends enjoying good-neighbourliness and partners helping each other succeed," she said.

On the BRICS summit, Mao said it is a key platform for solidarity and cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries.

"President Xi will attend and address the upcoming summit, have in-depth exchanges with other leaders on major issues including the current international situation, the development of BRICS mechanisms, and deepening practical cooperation, and put forward China's important initiatives and propositions, charting the course for the high-quality development of greater BRICS cooperation," she said.

She said China is ready to work with fellow BRICS countries for steady and sustained progress in greater BRICS cooperation to contribute to building a community with a shared future for

humanity.

In photograph taken on August 31, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi (L) and China's President Xi Jinping shake hands during the welcome ceremony of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Tianjin.

On the significance of New Delhi summit, which is taking place amid the Iran-US war and the Ukraine-Russia war, Mao said China advocates a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable approach to security.

"We are committed to promoting the political settlement of hotspot issues through dialogue. We look forward to working with fellow BRICS countries to promote dialogue and negotiation to resolve differences and jointly safeguard regional and global peace and stability," she said.

Xi's visit is expected to be a high-profile diplomatic engagement with implications for efforts to stabilise bilateral ties between the two Asian powers and

for BRICS cooperation amid a volatile global situation.

As the current chair of the influential grouping, India will host the 18th BRICS Summit on September 12 and 13 in New Delhi.

Xi last visited India in 2019 for an informal summit with Modi in Mamallapuram near Chennai.

He had earlier visited Goa in 2016 to attend the BRICS summit and made his first visit to India in September 2014, when he held extensive talks with Modi. The 2014 visit came during the first terms in office of both leaders.

Xi's forthcoming visit is significant as it comes amid efforts by India and China to normalise relations after a prolonged freeze following the 2020 Eastern Ladakh standoff.

Ahead of Xi's visit, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held extensive talks in Beijing last month on the boundary issue, maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border and steps to improve bilateral relations. During the 25th round of Special Representatives' talks held in Beijing on August 25, the two sides reached an eight-point consensus and agreed to advance discussions on an Early and Substantial Harvest of boundary delimitation and border management. Against the backdrop of these substantive discussions on the boundary and wider bilateral issues, a Modi-Xi meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit is expected to be closely watched for indications of the future course of India-China relations. BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, with Indonesia joining in 2025.

Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam became BRICS partner countries last year. India is a founding member of BRICS and has previously held its chairmanship three times, in 2012, 2016 and 2021.

India assumed its fourth BRICS chairship on January 1. The year 2026 also marks a milestone as BRICS completes 20 years since its establishment.



INTERNATIONAL

China and Nepal are battling flood rumours online



HONG KONG

China and Nepal have taken different approaches to information after a Himalayan flood, shaping what the public saw of a disaster that killed more than 1,400 people.

The August 26 tsunami-like surge of water, mud and debris from a glacial mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border left more than 5,650 missing, including hundreds of foreigners.

Both China and Nepal have gone after fabricated posts on the flood.

But Beijing has gone further to suppress eyewitness video footage and punish people challenging official figures, in an information crackdown that rights groups say follows a familiar pattern.

Information transmitted by Chinese state media on the flood gave little voice to the missing people's relatives and focused on emergency workers' recovery efforts in Tibet, where foreign journalists do not enjoy unfettered access.

Nepal has pressured social media platforms and news outlets to remove fabricated visuals – including some debunked by AFP fact-checkers – but Kathmandu offers regular updates of death tolls via social media. Direct commentary from families of victims

is readily available on and offline.

Umesh Shrestha, chair of the independent regulatory body Press Council Nepal, said it had asked more than 100 social media accounts to remove content. Most obeyed.

Damaged houses stand precariously near the swollen, debris-choked banks of the Trishuli River after flash floods in Nepal's Nuwakot district.

Nepal floods death toll rises to 1,377, over 5,000 still missing

Nepali police arrested one man who allegedly shared a fabricated donation to a relief fund to promote his personal account.

The disaster came just ahead of the one-year anniversary of anti-corruption protests that toppled the previous government, triggered by a social media ban.

China penalised 10 people accused of spreading falsehoods online, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

They include some who allegedly suggested the actual death toll was higher than official figures.

Beijing's foreign ministry insists the release of information has been "open, transparent and timely", and criticised what it has called "malicious smearing and sensationalism".

It also organised a trip for a small number of foreign media to the Tibetan

epicentre of the disaster.

AFP fact-checkers have debunked dozens of claims about the floods in multiple languages.

One video that falsely claimed to show the glacial and mountain collapse that caused the flooding – posted on Facebook and X – was filmed in Alaska's Columbia Glacier days beforehand.

Other footage created using Google's AI tools showed water breaching a riverbank and flooding streets and amassed tens of thousands of interactions.

"During disasters, public panic is high," said Nepali investigative journalist Rabi Raj Baral, who is also a member of the Press Council Nepal.

But both Nepal and China have not only gone after fabrications, but have also targeted posts including some sharing genuine footage.

Nepali authorities have held talks with Meta and TikTok to speed up the removal of AI content, graphic images and fraudulent aid schemes.

Both platforms pay AFP to fact-check posts with potentially false information.

Video verified by AFP as showing the deluge engulfing Gyirong Port – the border post with Nepal – and other eyewitness content have largely dis-

appeared from the Chinese internet.

Social media sites such as Douyin and Weibo have instead featured extensive state media coverage of search operations, without naming the missing or showing much footage of families' reactions.

- 'Atmosphere of mistrust' -

AFP fact-checkers found flood-related misinformation is mostly absent from Chinese platforms, although conspiracy theories have blossomed abroad.

Posts shared from Canada to South Korea allege China lied about the death toll, and that its dam construction projects caused the disaster – even though scientists say a glacial collapse in Nepal was to blame.

Online critics also point to the fact that the vast bulk of the dead and missing reported by the two governments are in Nepal.

In Nepal, rescuers have retrieved 1,369 bodies, while around 5,132 people are missing, according to the disaster agency Thursday. In China, the toll is 43 dead and 519 missing, according to state media.

The stark difference, however, may be a reflection of the disaster's geography and scale.

The glacial mountain collapse occurred in downstream Nepal, sending a wave of debris so powerful it smashed China's high-altitude border post in tightly restricted Tibet, before carving a path of destruction across Nepal.

Bodies on the Chinese side may have washed downstream too, but because of the geography, they could be buried in a thick layer of mud and debris that makes recovery impossible.

Aleksandra Bielakowska, a Taipei-based advocacy manager for Reporters Without Borders (RSF), said that Beijing's restrictions had created an "atmosphere of mistrust".

In contrast, Celia Mercier, head of RSF's South Asia Desk, said Nepal had "largely treated misinformation as a problem within an otherwise relatively open information environment".

BRICS 2026: Putin warns European troops in Ukraine would mean 'war with Russia'



NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday warned European countries against sending troops to Ukraine, saying any such deployment would amount to "war with Russia", while asserting that Moscow does not pose a threat to Europe.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi on the sidelines of the 18th BRICS Summit, Putin said Russia had no reason to enter into a conflict with European countries and was not seeking to threaten them.

"There is no such threat, and there has never been. We are not threatening European countries, nor are we going to threaten them. Why would we? No one seems to even consider that we have no grounds for any conflict with Europe," Putin said.

He said the issues arising from the Second World War had been settled and that developments follow-

ing the collapse of the Soviet Union had taken place with the consent of Russia, as its successor state.

"Everything that runs counter to those arrangements runs counter to our interests and does not comply with the fundamental principles of international law and the UN Charter," he said.

Putin was responding to questions about discussions among European countries over the possibility of deploying troops to Ukraine amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"Now they are talking about how they are thinking about bringing troops to the territory of Ukraine. This means war with Russia," the Russian president said.

The Russia-Ukraine war, which began in February 2022, has entered its fifth year. Several European countries have continued to support Ukraine, while the US has sought to play a mediating role and held talks

involving both sides.

Earlier this month, US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, son-in-law of US President Donald Trump, met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy following their visit to Moscow.

Putin is in India to attend the 18th BRICS Summit. On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with Putin in New Delhi ahead of the formal opening of the summit.

The two leaders discussed strengthening bilateral trade ties, including the implementation of the Programme for Economic Cooperation 2030, as well as cooperation in infrastructure, energy, technology, defence and culture.

The meeting was the second between Modi and Putin in less than two weeks, following their meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Bishkek on August 31.

When the media monopoly ends: The audience takes control

Digital platforms have not simply created new competitors for mainstream media. They have fundamentally changed who controls attention, challenges narratives and shapes public opinion.

For decades, the power of mainstream media rested on a simple advantage: scarcity.

There were only so many newspapers people could buy, only a limited number of television channels they could watch and only a handful of broadcasters capable of reaching millions. The organisations that controlled these platforms enjoyed enormous influence over what people knew, discussed and, often, considered important.

That era is over. The most significant transformation in the media industry today is not merely the decline of newspapers or the rise of social media. It is the collapse of the old monopoly over public attention. News organisations are no longer the unquestioned gatekeepers of information. They are now participants in a vast and fiercely competitive ecosystem in which a newspaper report, a television debate, a YouTube video, an Instagram post, a podcast and a citizen's mobile-phone recording can all compete for attention.

The audience, armed with unprecedented choice, has become more powerful than ever before.

This change raises a fundamental question: what exactly constitutes mainstream media today?

Traditionally, the term referred to established, professionally run media organisations with large public reach — national and regional newspapers, magazines, radio networks and television channels. Their influence flowed from their ability to gather information, decide what deserved publication and distribute it to a mass audience.

But the digital revolution has dramatically expanded that definition.

Today, major digital news platforms, YouTube channels, podcasters, independent journalists and even individual creators can command audiences comparable to, and sometimes larger than, those of established media houses. Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube have changed not only how people receive information but also who gets to distribute it.

Legacy media organisations have recognised the shift. Newspapers have built digital editions, television channels have expanded into round-the-clock online operations, and virtually every major media organisation now competes across multiple platforms.

Yet entering the digital arena has not solved their biggest problem: attention itself has become fragmented.

Former Time editor-in-chief Nancy Gibbs warned earlier this year that the world could be moving towards an "information wasteland", where the fragmentation of attention makes meaningful communication increasingly difficult. In an environment where almost everything is presented as "breaking news", the race is no longer simply to report first. It is to prevent the audience from scrolling away.

That has altered journalism at a fundamental level.

Pew Research Center data have shown a decline since 2019 in news consumption across age groups, with social media becoming an increasingly important source of information. Independent creators, influencers, podcasters, YouTubers and subject specialists have filled part of the space once dominated almost exclusively by established news organisations.

The consequences go beyond business and technology.

In the past, a government announcement, a political speech or a major national event would usually pass through relatively few media filters before reaching the public. Today, the same event is interpreted simultaneously by television channels, newspapers, digital platforms, political commentators, independent journalists and ordinary citizens.

Every narrative can now face an immediate counter-narrative.

Every mistake can be challenged within minutes.

Every



omission can become a story in itself.

This has weakened the ability of any single organisation, or even a group of dominant organisations, to monopolise public opinion.

But it has also created a serious crisis of credibility.

The competition for ratings and attention has encouraged sensationalism, dramatic presentation and an endless breaking-news culture. In India, a section of major television networks has faced persistent criticism over perceived political bias, confrontational prime-time debates and the blurring of the distinction between reporting and opinion.

Audiences may differ sharply in their assessment of individual channels, but the broader trend is difficult to ignore: trust has become increasingly conditional. Viewers no longer necessarily accept a report because it appears on a major network. They compare it with other sources, search for alternative accounts and, increasingly, turn to digital platforms.

The problem is not confined to traditional media. The digital ecosystem has its own dangers — misinformation, manipulated content, anonymous propaganda and viral falsehoods. The decline of the old gatekeepers has democratised information, but it has also removed some of the barriers that once slowed the spread of unverified claims.

The challenge, therefore, is not a simple battle between old media and new media. It is a battle over credibility.

Several episodes have contributed to this changing relationship between the media and its audience. The criticism of television coverage during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks triggered a major debate about responsibility and the risks of broadcasting sensitive operational information.

More recently, the 2024 parliamentary elections demonstrated the growing influence of digital media, with online platforms providing space for perspectives that were often absent or less visible on some major television networks.

The conflict between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack in May 2025 further exposed the dangers of the competition for attention. A section of television coverage was criticised for sensational and unverified claims, reinforcing concerns about the pressure to produce dramatic content during fast-moving events.

Such episodes carry a heavy cost.

When one platform loses credibility, the audience does not necessarily stop consuming news. It simply moves elsewhere.

This is perhaps the most important change confronting mainstream media. The public has not lost its appetite for information. It has gained more places from which to obtain it.

The shift was visible globally as early as the Arab Spring of 2011, when social media emerged as a powerful instrument for organising protests and bypassing traditional channels. Since then, digital platforms have steadily

When the Media Monopoly Ends:
The Audience Takes Control

eo.

A live stream.

A podcast.

An independent reporter.

A local citizen with a mobile phone.

And, ultimately, the next swipe of a finger.

At the same time, established newspapers have retained an important advantage: depth, verification and institutional accountability. In recent controversies and major public events, leading newspapers have continued to report, investigate and publish editorial opinion while attempting to preserve the distinction between news and commentary.

That distinction may become one of journalism's most valuable assets in the years ahead.

The changing media landscape is also evident closer home. During Assam's recurring flood crises, traditional newspapers and television channels now operate alongside social media users, local digital platforms and independent reporters. Videos from affected villages can reach the public before a television crew arrives. Citizens can document gaps in relief distribution, highlight administrative failures and challenge official claims in real time.

Young people, too, have increasingly used digital platforms to expose hate speech and counter communal propaganda.

None of this means that traditional media has become irrelevant. Far from it.

The role of professional journalism may actually become more important in an information environment flooded with competing claims. But relevance can no longer be assumed because of a famous brand name, a large newsroom or a prime-time slot.

It has to be earned repeatedly.

The media's old power came from controlling access to information. Its future power will depend on something far more difficult to retain: public trust.

The audience now has alternatives, and it knows it.

That is the real revolution in the media landscape. The gates have opened, the monopoly has disappeared and the consumer of news has become an active participant in deciding whose version of reality deserves attention.

For mainstream media, the message is unmistakable. The battle is no longer about who has the loudest voice.

It is about who remains credible when everyone can speak.

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KRC TIMES E-COPY

Daily NE Edition



ABOUT US

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

KRC TIMES E-COPY NE India Edition

- 5 Page e-copy published every evening
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Why e-paper

Get the most of the day's news, information, insights, etc. that can be processed quickly every evening

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For Whom

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Presents



OPEN TO ALL FOR
| 5 CATEGORY | 8 NE STATES |
| 5 BROAD TOPICS |

Writing Star Contest

MAY-NOV 2026

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

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

TOPICS

- INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NER (ROADS, RAILS, AVIATION, HYDROPOWER & SECURITY)
- PROMOTING TOURISM, MSME, AGRO & HORTICULTURE, ACT EAST DIPLOMACY
- DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ADVENTURE SPORTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
- 5E FOR SUCCESS- PROMOTING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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

Each entry will receive a digital participation certificate

There is NO fee for participation

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

email articles: info@krcfoundation.org

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

FOR RULES AND DETAILS, PLEASE VISIT

www.krcfoundation.org

<https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest>

e-mail articles at: info@krcfoundation.org

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FAVOURITE
TEACHER



YOUR VOICE. YOUR VOTE.

Celebrating and Honouring the Educators
who Inspire, Empower and Transform

Nominations are open for

North East Integration Rally
Teacher Excellence Award

2026-27



Who Can Nominate?

Students | Schools | Parents | Citizen | Self Nominate

Scan the QR & Fill the Google form

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