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PERSPECTIVE

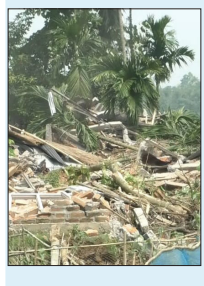
Possession is the eleven point in the law

Centre to strengthen nodal officer mechanism for Northeast people in metros

NEW DELHI
The Centre has decided to strengthen the institutional mechanism for addressing grievances of people from the Northeast living in metropolitan cities, with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) set to ask states to appoint nodal officers in cities with a sizeable population from the region. The MHA will write to the chief secretaries and directors general of police of all states, seeking the appointment of nodal officers in metropolitan cities as dedicated points of contact for people from the Northeast facing discrimination, harassment, violence and other grievances. The decision was taken at a meeting of the MHA monitoring committee on issues concerning people from the Northeast, two days after Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh died following an alleged assault in southeast Delhi. Joram Maivio, special invitee to the monitoring committee, said the appointment of nodal officers would initially be prioritised in metropolitan cities where the presence of people from the Northeast is relatively high. The proposed mechanism is aimed at ensuring that complaints are addressed through dedicated administrative and police channels and improving coordination among nodal officers and other agencies. Several major cities, including Delhi, Gurugram, Bengaluru, Ghaziabad and Noida, already have nodal officers for people from the Northeast. However, the monitoring committee felt that the existing mechanism needed to be strengthened and made more cohesive.

“Despite having such nodal officers for North Eastern people in some prominent metros, incidents keep happening. So we have reviewed the situation and decided on cohesive steps by the nodal officers so that such incidents can be stopped from happening,” Maivio said.

WHO SAID WHAT



Assam has a ZERO TOLERANCE policy towards encroachments- 28 families in Goalpara got that message LOUD and CLEAR! Our agricultural fields are for our indigenous people- encroachers will not be allowed to act as Land Mafias. 64 houses cleared, agricultural area expanded.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



KRC TIMES

STAY ENRICHED

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 870 | SILCHAR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

Manipur sanctions Rs 1,556 crore for relief, rehabilitation of displaced people



IMPHAL
The Centre and Manipur government have sanctioned a combined Rs 1,556.53 crore for relief, housing and rehabilitation of people displaced by the violence that erupted in the state in May 2023.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh recently said around 60,000 people were displaced by the conflict. Of them, nearly 36,000 have returned home or been resettled, while about 24,000 continue to live in

relief camps.

The government is also providing monthly financial assistance to nearly 59,000 displaced people, including those who have returned home but continue to face severe livelihood challenges.

According to the Home Department, the overall funding comprises Rs 789.72 crore sanctioned by the Centre and Rs 768.81 crore released by the state government.

The Centre issued its sanction orders between August 9, 2023, and March 27, 2026. The funds have been used for running relief camps, temporary shelters, permanent housing and other rehabilitation measures.

More than Rs 111 crore was sanctioned for relief camp operations, including expenditure on supplementary nutrition, personal hygiene items and television sets.

The Centre also sanctioned Rs 122.17 crore in three instalments for constructing 3,000 temporary shelters. Another Rs 119 crore was ap-

proved in two instalments for permanent housing, while Rs 217.14 crore was allocated for broader relief and rehabilitation measures.

For families that lost household belongings during the violence, Rs 70 crore was sanctioned as initial compensation for 7,000 families. The assistance was divided between families whose houses were completely destroyed and those whose homes were partially burnt.

State releases Rs 768 crore

The Manipur government issued 129 sanction orders amounting to Rs 768.81 crore between September 9, 2023, and May 5, 2026. The funds were transferred directly to district authorities for relief and rehabilitation activities.

In seven phases, Rs 48.01 crore was released to deputy commissioners of 11 affected districts, including Imphal West, Imphal East, Churachandpur and Kangpokpi.

The state also sanctioned Rs 3.33 crore across 10 districts for purchas-

ing television sets for relief camps. Churachandpur received the largest allocation at Rs 1.17 crore.

Assistance for farmers

The state government has also provided compensation to farmers who were unable to cultivate paddy because of the conflict.

In the first phase, Rs 18.37 crore was released to 3,480 farmers in February 2024. A further Rs 13.30 crore crop assistance package was distributed to deputy commissioners of 10 districts in October 2024.

Chandel district received an additional Rs 32.95 lakh under the crop assistance programme.

Sources said some expenditure incurred by the state on housing and financial assistance has subsequently been reimbursed by the Centre.

The latest funding figures underline the scale of the government's ongoing relief and rehabilitation efforts more than three years after the violence displaced thousands of people across Manipur.

Khandu hits out at UN map showing Arunachal Pradesh separately from India



ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has strongly condemned a recently published United Nations map that depicts Arunachal Pradesh separately from India, asserting that the state is an “integral and inseparable” part of the country.

Reacting to the map, Khandu said he condemned the depiction on behalf of the people of Arunachal Pradesh and reiterated the state's territorial status within India.

The controversy erupted after a UN map reportedly showed Arunachal Pradesh as a separate region between Indian and Chinese territorial claims. The map also depicted Aksai Chin separately and appeared to alter Arunachal Pradesh's border with Nagaland.

India has raised the issue with the concerned UN authorities, flagging what it described as “anomalies” in the cartographic representation.

The Centre has also clarified that India's support for a UN General Assembly resolution seeking more accurate and equitable representation on maps should not be construed as approval of any particular map.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India had taken up the discrepancies with the concerned authorities.

The map was reportedly first published on July 1 and showed Arunachal Pradesh as a separate entity bordering Assam and China, while removing its boundary with Nagaland. It also depicted Aksai Chin as a separate region. The UN has not publicly clarified the changes highlighted in the report.

Khandu's remarks come amid renewed scrutiny over the depiction of Arunachal Pradesh on international maps and India's longstanding position that the northeastern state is an integral part of the country.

Dipayan Chakraborty dismisses reports of quitting BJP as ‘baseless’



SILCHAR

Former Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty dismissed reports that he was planning to quit the BJP, describing the speculation as “completely baseless” and asserting that he continues to have faith in the party leadership.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with party in-charges, Chakraborty, accompanied by Assam minister Krishnendu Paul, said there was no question of him leaving the BJP.

Chakraborty said he remained with the party and had full confidence in its leadership. He also warned of legal action against several media organisations for allegedly publishing false and misleading reports about his purported decision to leave the BJP.

The clarification comes amid speculation within the BJP over ticket distribution and candidate selection for the upcoming Silchar Municipal Corporation election.

Chakraborty's statement comes as the party discusses potential candidates for the civic polls.

Manipur Police rejects NSCN-IM arrest claim as ‘fake and misleading’



IMPHAL

Manipur Police on Thursday dismissed as “fake and misleading” a social media claim that CRPF personnel had arrested Tangkhul cadres allegedly linked to the NSCN-IM for carrying out illegal extortion along National Highway 37.

In a post on X, the police said the person referred to in the claim was arrested with a pistol, cash and a communication set. The accused was subsequently remanded to police custody after an FIR was registered, it said.

The clarification came after an X account, The Proud Indian, claimed that CRPF personnel had apprehended Tangkhul cadres associated with the NSCN-IM while they were allegedly involved in extortion and unauthorised collection of money along the Jiribam-Imphal stretch of NH-37.

The post further alleged that the security personnel were later

forced to release the individual after a large gathering of women confronted them, with some allegedly attempting to assault the personnel and obstruct their duties.

Manipur Police rejected the allegations, calling the social media post “fake and misleading”.

The police also warned that legal action would be taken against individuals and social media handles found deliberately spreading false or misleading information with the intent of creating public unrest.

The police statement did not disclose the identity of the arrested person or provide further details about the circumstances leading to the arrest.

The development comes amid heightened security concerns along NH-37, a key road corridor linking Imphal with Jiribam and the wider Barak Valley, with allegations of extortion and unauthorised collections remaining a sensitive issue in the region.

Manipuri musician Vikram Singh laid to rest; family seeks justice

IMPHAL

The mortal remains of Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh, who died two days ago after allegedly being assaulted in New Delhi, were brought to Imphal on Wednesday, with a large number of relatives, friends and members of the artist community gathering to pay their last respects.

Singh's remains were taken to his residence at Thangmeiband in Imphal West, where artists, musicians and members of the Manipur film fraternity gathered before his last rites were performed at Khoyathong in Imphal East.

After the funeral, Singh's younger brother, Chongtham Vivek, said the family was awaiting justice while respecting the ongoing investigation into the alleged assault.

“We respect the due course of investigation. However, the family is waiting for justice. Neither do we want to politicise the matter. Let this be the last such incident,” Vivek told reporters.



The death has triggered concern among artists and members of the Northeast community over the safety and treatment of people from the region living outside the Northeast.

Popular Manipuri singer H Sadananda, who paid tribute to Singh, demanded stringent action against those responsible for the alleged assault.

“We can never forget how he died.

People respect us only when we win medals for the country. People from the Northeast need to be united,” Sadananda said. Artists, musicians and members of Manipur's film fraternity also gathered at Singh's residence to offer floral tributes and express solidarity with his family. Singh, 54, was a prominent figure in Manipur's rock music movement and had been associated with bands such as Phoenix and Eastern Dark. He later moved to Delhi, where he worked as a music teacher. His death has deeply affected Manipur's artistic community, with fellow musicians remembering him for his contribution to the growth of contemporary music in the state.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police investigation into the case is continuing. Seven people have been arrested in connection with the alleged assault, while a minor has also been apprehended.

The incident has also intensified calls for stronger measures to ensure the safety of people from the Northeast in metropolitan cities.

Guwahati makes driving licence, permits mandatory for EV autos

GUWAHATI
Electric auto-rickshaw drivers in Guwahati will be required to possess valid driving licences and permits, with document verification beginning Thursday, officials said.

The decision was taken at a meeting between representatives of EV auto and cab drivers and Assam Transport Minister Charan Boro in Dispur on Wednesday evening. Officials from the Transport Department and District Transport Office also attended the meeting.

The licence and permit requirement was among several issues discussed during the meeting, with drivers raising concerns over documentation, fares and other operational difficulties. A representative of the drivers' association said many EV auto drivers currently do not possess valid licences and claimed they were assured that their concerns would be addressed. “Many drivers do not have licences, and we have been assured that these issues will be resolved,” the representative said after the meeting.

He said possession of a valid driving licence would be mandatory and verification would begin from Thursday.

The association also said EV auto fares had been reduced and that the government had assured drivers that their concerns, as well as those of cab operators, would be addressed. The move comes amid continuing concerns over regulatory compliance among app-based cab and auto operators in Guwahati. App-based cab and auto services in the city had gone on an indefinite strike from September 1, with drivers and vehicle owners demanding higher fares and action on issues including alleged arbitrary commission structures and low base fares.

The strike was called off on September 3 after the state government issued show-cause notices to major app-based cab aggregators and the Online Cab Drivers' Community of Guwahati over inconvenience caused to commuters.

The administration subsequently began intervening in the drivers' long-standing grievances.



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Delimiting Bengal,
Limiting Democracy

The Bharatiya Janata Party government in West Bengal appears to be in a hurry. Barely 100 days after taking office, the Suvendu Adhikari government has moved swiftly to redraw municipal constituencies in Kolkata and Howrah. The urgency is striking because the exercise is being undertaken on the basis of an electoral roll that remains contested, even as the first phase of house-listing for the long-delayed Census is finally under way.

There is a legitimate administrative case for revisiting municipal boundaries. Kolkata and Howrah have changed substantially since the last delimitation. Population has shifted from densely packed neighbourhoods towards areas that were once considered peripheral. Electoral maps cannot remain frozen while cities change around them.

But the question is not whether delimitation is necessary. It is whether it is being undertaken on credible and complete data.

That is where the West Bengal government's decision to rely on the post-Special Intensive Revision (SIR) electoral roll becomes deeply problematic.

The first contradiction is obvious. West Bengal went to the Assembly polls in April using the existing delimitation, based on boundaries last revised in 2006. If that electoral framework was considered adequate for electing a state government, why should Kolkata and Howrah suddenly require a separate and hurried delimitation based on a radically revised voters' list?

The second problem is even more serious. The post-SIR electoral rolls are not settled documents. Thousands of voters whose names were deleted have challenged their exclusion before tribunals established under the Supreme Court's supervision. Using a disputed and potentially incomplete electoral database to redraw the very constituencies in which those voters will exercise their franchise is difficult to defend either administratively or democratically.

The Election Commission's own figures underline the scale of the problem. Nearly 29.6 per cent of voters were struck off the rolls in north Kolkata and 27.5 per cent in south Kolkata among the highest deletion rates in the state. At the same time, around 38 lakh cases remained pending before 19 adjudication tribunals.

What is more revealing is the outcome of the appeals already decided. Of roughly 83,000 cases disposed of, the tribunals reportedly ruled in favour of the appellants in around 75,000 cases, restoring more than 90 per cent of those who had challenged their exclusion. Many of these voters had consequently been unable to participate in the Assembly election.

That record alone should have prompted caution before the same electoral roll was used for municipal delimitation.

A voters' list that is still being corrected cannot logically be treated as a definitive map of the electorate. If thousands of people are being restored to the rolls after successful appeals, then the numerical composition of individual wards can change. Redrawing boundaries before the electoral database is settled risks producing constituencies that are inaccurate from the outset.

There is also a larger political concern. A central feature of the SIR exercise in West Bengal was the identification of allegedly ineligible voters, including those described as ghuspathiyas or illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. That political framing has already made the electoral roll revision deeply contentious. When the same disputed database is then used to redraw constituencies, concerns about the political consequences of the exercise become unavoidable.

The BJP's impatience with delimitation is not confined to West Bengal. The party has sought to advance constitutional and legislative changes relating to delimitation at the national level as well. But in the case of Kolkata and Howrah, the immediate responsibility lies with the state government. It must explain why the number of municipal wards needed to be changed in the first place, and why the resulting redistribution of voters and territorial boundaries could not wait until a more reliable electoral database was available.

The dissolution of the elected Kolkata Municipal Corporation and the resolution of legal complications surrounding the Howrah Municipal Corporation have created a legitimate need to hold elections. But an electoral timetable cannot become a justification for compromising the integrity of the process.

The opposition parties have alleged that the redrawing of ward boundaries serves a political purpose, particularly by dispersing concentrated Muslim votes and giving the ruling party an electoral advantage. Such allegations cannot simply be dismissed as partisan rhetoric. They must be tested against transparent criteria: population data, ward-wise elector numbers, geographical contiguity, administrative convenience and clearly stated delimitation principles.

Reports that some wards could have as few as 7,000-8,000 voters while others may contain 15,000-25,000 voters make the issue even more difficult to ignore. If such disparities are deliberate rather than the result of unavoidable geographical or administrative considerations, the government owes voters an explanation.

Delimitation is not merely a technical exercise in drawing lines on a map. It determines whose votes are grouped together, how communities are represented and how political power is distributed. When boundaries are altered by those who stand to benefit from the resulting electoral arithmetic, the process requires an exceptionally high degree of transparency and institutional independence.

Otherwise, delimitation begins to resemble gerrymandering—the manipulation of electoral boundaries to advantage one political formation over another.

India has already seen contentious delimitation exercises. The post-Article 370 delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir and the 2023 exercise in Assam, based on the 2001 Census, generated intense political and legal debate. West Bengal should not become another example where the legitimacy of electoral boundaries is questioned because the process appeared to be politically expedient.

There is an even bigger danger if the West Bengal model becomes a precedent.

If electoral rolls produced through intensive revision are subsequently used as the basis for delimitation before challenges to voter exclusions have been resolved, the consequences could extend far beyond municipal elections. Any large-scale deletion of eligible voters followed by boundary changes based on the reduced electorate would create a double distortion: first in determining who can vote, and then in determining how those voters are represented.

That is why the issue cannot be reduced to a BJP versus Opposition confrontation.

Every political party has a stake in ensuring that electoral rolls are accurate and that constituency boundaries are drawn fairly. Today, one party may benefit from a particular delimitation. Tomorrow, another may. But once the principle that electoral geography can be shaped using incomplete or contested voter data is normalised, no party can be certain that it will not eventually be the victim.

The Election Commission's explanation for deletions—ranging from misspelt names to inconsistencies in ages and family details—also deserves greater scrutiny. Administrative discrepancies can and should be investigated. But an error in documentation cannot automatically become evidence of voter ineligibility. Nor should an unresolved discrepancy result in a citizen losing the right to vote.

The fundamental principle is simple: a voter should not have to prove his or her citizenship repeatedly merely because government databases contain inconsistencies.

The credibility of an election does not depend only on the efficiency of polling day. It begins much earlier—with an accurate electoral roll, transparent delimitation and equal political representation.

GDP GROWTH AT 7.8% - BUT
WHERE IS THE PROSPERITY?

POONAM I KAUSHISH

India now has a new magic number: 7.8%. The country's economy grew at an annual rate of 7.8% in the first quarter of fiscal year 2026-27, giving the government ample reason to celebrate. But amid the drums and applause, one question urgently needs an answer: where is this economic growth visible in the life of the average Indian?

The question is not what is recorded in a GDP spreadsheet, but what is happening to the household budget. GDP may be soaring, but are employment opportunities increasing? Are wages rising? Are household purchasing power and disposable incomes improving? Is poverty declining, and is the middle class finally getting some relief? If the economy is in such strong shape, why does economic security remain so elusive for ordinary citizens? And, most importantly, are Indians better off than they were before?

The issue is not whether the 7.8% figure is genuine. The Union government has defended the new methodology used to calculate GDP, while critics have questioned whether the revised numbers accurately reflect ground realities. Both sides have their arguments. But reducing the debate to whether the numbers are "right" or "wrong", or to a simplistic "celebration versus criticism" contest, risks missing the real issue. The real question is how much this growth is translating into jobs, higher wages and greater household prosperity. Can an economic statistic be treated as a political certificate of good governance?

The gap between statistics and reality is perhaps most visible among India's middle class. GDP measures the total output of an economy; it is not a measure of human welfare or living standards. A country can manufacture more cars, build more roads, expand financial services and achieve record industrial

fear that a medical emergency could wipe out their lifetime savings. Millions remain anxious about unemployment, healthcare, insurance, housing and rising electricity bills. GDP does not measure the sleepless nights and anxieties of ordinary citizens.

The irony is that the middle class is the real engine of India's economy, yet it often appears politically abandoned. It earns, spends and dutifully pays taxes-income tax on earnings, GST on consumption, road taxes and a host of other levies-while also paying out of pocket for private security, school fees and healthcare.

In return, it receives limited subsidies and often has to make do with poor public services-rising bills, broken roads, potholes, waterlogging and corruption. It is expected to applaud economic growth, absorb inflation, comply with every new digital regulation and keep spending to drive the economy. At the same time, it is strangely expected to pay privately for basic services that state governments are supposed to provide.

It is therefore natural for the middle class to feel increasingly frustrated, particularly as Indian politics has become heavily centred on vote-bank calculations. Every caste is counted, courted and offered targeted relief. The poor have welfare schemes, farmers have organised pressure groups, caste-based communities have political leverage, and wealthy groups have influence of their own. Political leaders can often calculate precisely how many votes they need from a particular caste or community.

But when it comes to the middle class, this political arithmetic seems to break down. The middle class is neither poor enough to be a direct beneficiary of welfare schemes nor powerful enough to dictate terms. Yet it remains firmly within the gaze of the tax authorities. The result is that many in the mid-

overlooked? If government tax revenues are reaching record levels, why is there so little visible improvement in public services?

Why should national success be measured primarily through production, consumption and investment, while citizens' well-being is treated as a secondary concern? The World Happiness Report does not dismiss GDP altogether. It recognises that income is only one component of a better life. Social security, health, freedom and the ability to lead a meaningful life matter just as much.

If growth is indeed at 7.8%, this should not merely be an occasion for government celebration. It should be an opportunity to convert strong growth into investment, employment and higher incomes, thereby creating a financially secure middle class.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly described the middle class as central to nation-building and has spoken of tax relief and improving the "ease of living". But if the middle class is truly so important, why does its political voice remain so weak?

The real test of economic growth is not how much an economy produces, but what that production changes in people's lives. How many new jobs have been created? What has happened to household purchasing power? Are the gains from higher productivity reaching ordinary citizens in the form of better wages, social security, greater confidence and improved opportunities?

India's ambition to become a developed nation by 2047 should not be reduced to becoming a large economy. Development is not simply about becoming richer; it is about delivering a genuine improvement in people's quality of life.

That means jobs that provide decent and dignified wages, rather than merely appearing in employment statistics. It means

bate is whether India's middle class has grown alongside it. An economy may look richer on paper while its citizens remain poor in terms of opportunity, security and hope. Sooner or later, the GDP figure must move beyond government files and reach the citizen's kitchen, classroom, workplace and wallet.

The government sees GDP. The citizen sees the EMI.

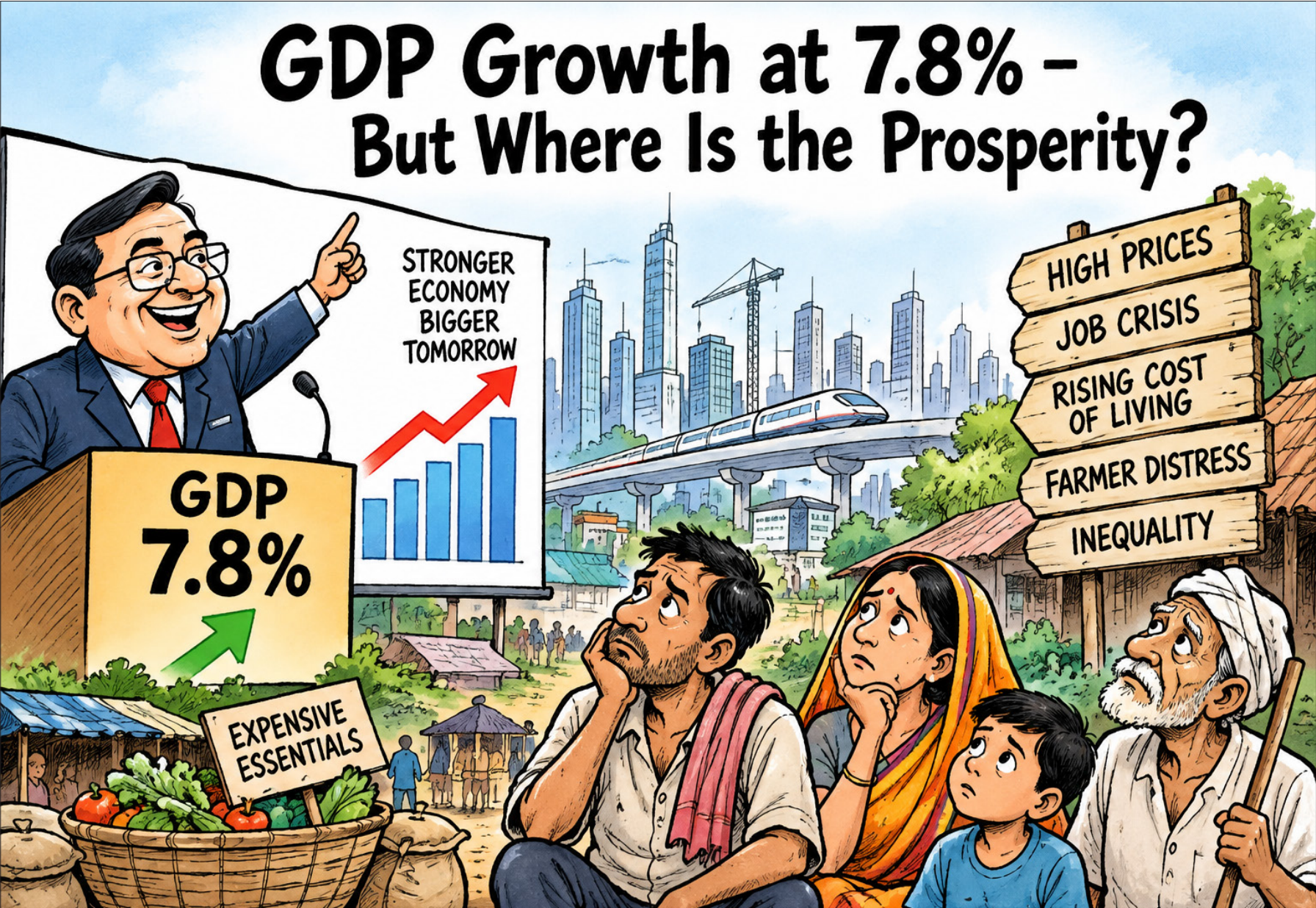
The government sees consumption figures. The citizen sees the grocery bill.

The government sees digital transactions. The citizen sees the shrinking balance in the bank account.

The government sees growth. The citizen asks: "What has

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Education is a fundamental human right. But exercising that right is becoming increasingly dangerous. In the past two years, more than 8,500 attacks targeted schools, students & teachers. All countries must ensure the right to education for every child & protect schools & places of learning.
~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it."

- George Orwell

output, but that does not necessarily mean every household is financially secure-especially when a young graduate is struggling to find a decent job.

The savings of salaried families are being drained by exorbitant school fees, while elderly pensioners live with the

dle class increasingly feel like nothing more than the "ATM" of the republic.

Do our political leaders care about the rising cost of living faced by this bill-paying middle class? Has politics become so focused on redistribution that the tax-paying middle class is being

a serious illness should not financially destroy a family. It means parents should not have to spend their lifetime savings on expensive private education for their children.

The real debate, therefore, is not simply whether India's GDP grew by 7.8%. The real de-

grown for me?"

The real story of India's development lies somewhere between these two perspectives. Until that gap is bridged, 7.8% may be an impressive economic statistic-but it cannot, by itself, represent the country's real mood.

BJP's Assam poll spending tops Rs 96 crore, over four times Congress expenditure

NEW DELHI,

The BJP spent Rs 96.27 crore on its election campaign in Assam during the 2026 Assembly polls, more than four times the Rs 22.62 crore spent by the Congress on general party propaganda in the state, according to expenditure statements filed with the Election Commission.

Assam accounted for the largest share of the BJP's reported poll expenditure among the three states for which its detailed statements have been made public.

Of the BJP's total Assam expenditure, Rs 76.73 crore was spent on general party propaganda, while Rs 19.54 crore went towards candidates and related expenses.

Advertising accounted for around Rs 37 crore of the party's general prop-



aganda expenditure in Assam, while nearly Rs 27.3 crore was spent on travel by star campaigners.

The Congress, meanwhile, reported Rs 22.62 crore in general party propaganda expenditure in Assam. Its Assam

spending was the second-highest among the states where its figures have been disclosed, after Kerala, where the party spent Rs 59.28 crore on general propaganda. The expenditure figures highlight the significant difference in the financial resources available to the BJP and Congress during the five-state Assembly elections.

The BJP received nearly Rs 1,473 crore at its central headquarters between March 15 and May 6, the election period covered by the statements. The Congress, in comparison, reported net receipts of Rs 207.17 crore across its central and state units.

The Congress reported consolidated expenditure of Rs 248.55 crore across Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry during the election period.

The BJP's reported receipts of Rs

1,472.8 crore relate to its central headquarters alone. Its expenditure statements for Kerala and West Bengal had not been made public, meaning its overall receipts and expenditure across the five states could be higher.

The BJP also recorded a substantial increase in its central headquarters' closing balance during the election period. Its balance rose from Rs 6,722.6 crore on March 15 to Rs 7,627.2 crore on May 6, an increase of Rs 904.6 crore.

The Congress reported a decline in its available funds over the same period.

Across its central headquarters and five state units, the party began the election period with around Rs 169.06 crore, comprising Rs 22.9 crore in cash and Rs 146.1 crore in bank balances. By May 6, its available funds had fallen to around Rs 103.2 crore, a decline of Rs 65.86 crore. Beyond Assam, the BJP's available

expenditure statements show that it spent around Rs 159.7 crore across Assam, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Of this, approximately Rs 130.4 crore went towards general party propaganda, with the remainder spent on candidates and related expenses. The Congress reported Rs 143 crore in general party propaganda expenditure across the five states and Rs 105.55 crore on candidates, taking its total election expenditure to Rs 248.55 crore.

Of the Congress' propaganda expenditure, its central headquarters accounted for Rs 40.52 crore, while state and local units spent another Rs 102.49 crore. The Assam figures underline the scale of campaign spending in the state, with the BJP's reported expenditure of Rs 96.27 crore significantly exceeding the Congress' Rs 22.62 crore expenditure on general party propaganda.

Himanta, Conrad Sangma seek fresh push for externally aided projects in Northeast

NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and sought a fresh push for Externally Aided Projects (EAPs) in their respective states.

Sarma said the meeting focused on increasing capital expenditure in the Northeast and creating new investment avenues for physical and social infrastructure.

In a post on X, Sarma said the two chief ministers made a strong case for accelerating the implementation of EAPs in Assam and Meghalaya.

"We made a strong case to bring a new impetus to the pace of Externally Aided Projects in both of our states, which will open new investment channels for physical and social infrastructure," Sarma said. According to Sarma, Sitharaman responded positively to the proposal and assured the chief ministers of a renewed push from the Centre to advance development initiatives in the region.

EAPs provide states with access to external financial assistance for development projects, including investments in infrastructure and social sectors.

The meeting comes as Assam and Meghalaya seek to accelerate infrastructure development and expand capital investment with the support of externally assisted programmes.

The discussions also highlighted the need to maintain momentum in development spending across the Northeast, with greater investment in physical infrastructure and social development identified as key priorities.

23,000 Yaba tablets seized from truck in Assam's Cachar, one held

GUWAHATI

Assam Police seized around 23,000 suspected Yaba tablets weighing approximately 25 kg of methamphetamine from a truck in Cachar district and arrested one person, officials said. Acting on specific intelligence, Cachar district police launched an anti-narcotics operation at Shivpur under Lakhimpur police station on Tuesday evening and intercepted a truck bearing registration number AS-26AC-1763. According to Cachar Senior Superintendent of Police Partha Protim Das, the suspected contraband was found concealed in a specially created chamber inside the vehicle.

"During the operation, the truck was intercepted and 23,000 Yaba tablets, weighing around 25 kg of methamphetamine, were recovered from a concealed chamber," Das said. The arrested person was

identified as Sahir Hussain Choudhary, a resident of Gobindapur Part-II in Cachar district.

Police have initiated legal proceedings in connection with the seizure and launched a further investigation into the case.

Investigators are also examining the alleged forward and backward linkages of the drug network to determine the source of the consignment and its intended destination, officials said.

The seizure comes amid continued efforts by Assam Police to curb the movement of synthetic drugs through the state, which shares an international border with Bangladesh and is strategically located along routes connecting the Northeast with other parts of the country.

Further details about the origin and destination of the seized consignment are awaited as the investigation progresses.

Nagaon bypoll: Congress says BJP faces challenge in winning Muslim votes

GUWAHATI

Assam Leader of Opposition Wazed Ali Choudhury on Wednesday said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's recent remarks on the Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election indicated that the BJP remained uncertain about its prospects in the constituency.

Choudhury said the Congress's successive victories in Nagaon and the constituency's demographic profile posed a challenge for the ruling party ahead of the October 6 bypoll.

"The CM spoke about this. He had previously stated that winning the Nagaon constituency would not be easy for the BJP. This is because the Congress had won there in two consecutive elections, and also the demographic composition of the population does not favour the BJP," Choudhury said. He claimed that the BJP was making efforts to reach



out to Muslim voters despite traditionally depending on a predominantly Hindu support base.

"The BJP is a communal party. It focuses solely on its own vote bank, believing that

its support base consists only of Hindus. They are trying hard to secure Muslim votes this time. Yet, there is uncertainty about whether Muslims will actually vote for them," he alleged. According to Choudhury,

this uncertainty was reflected in Sarma's assessment that the Nagaon seat would be difficult for the BJP to win.

Sarma had on September 7 said Nagaon was not traditionally a BJP stronghold and that the party would focus on improving its performance across the constituency's seven Assembly segments rather than predicting victory.

The chief minister had also pointed out that the BJP lost the 2024 Lok Sabha election in Nagaon by around 2.5 lakh votes.

The Nagaon Lok Sabha seat fell vacant after former Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi joined the BJP and subsequently won the Dispur Assembly seat.

The by-election is scheduled to be held on October 6, with both the BJP and Congress expected to intensify their campaign in the constituency in the coming weeks.

Assam to fast-track Barak Valley road, infrastructure projects ahead of Puja



SILCHAR

The Assam government will expedite road and infrastructure projects across Barak Valley, with Barak Valley Development Minister Krishnendu Paul directing officials to complete repairs of key roads ahead of Durga Puja and Kali Puja.

A high-level meeting was held at the Assam Secretariat on Wednesday to review the progress of ongoing road and infrastructure projects in the three districts of Barak Valley and identify

bottlenecks affecting their implementation.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State Kaushik Rai, Paul, senior officials, district administrations and representatives of various construction agencies.

Projects reviewed included the Shillong-Barni Expressway, Bharatmala road projects across the three Barak Valley districts, Assam Mala project, a proposed flyover in Shillong city and the road connecting

Birbal Bazar with the Medical College.

Paul said the condition of roads across the region had been reviewed following directions from Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and that a roadmap had been prepared to accelerate repair and construction work.

"The condition of roads in all three districts was reviewed in detail along with officials of the Public Works Department, district administrations and the National Highways authorities," Paul said.

The review also covered bottlenecks affecting construction, the progress of four-laning works and the implementation of projects under the Assam Mala programme.

Paul said priority would be given to repairing major roads before Durga Puja, when traffic and public movement are expected to rise significantly.

The minister said the condition of the Shillong-Churaibari road would

also be brought to the chief minister's attention. He also reviewed the ongoing construction of a bridge over the Barak river at Madarpur.

The government has directed the departments concerned and construction agencies to accelerate work on key projects and minimise delays in implementation.

Several legislators attended the meeting, including Vijay Malakar, Rajdeep Gaula, Amiya Kanti Das, Aminul Haque Laskar, Zuber Enam and Aminul Rashid Chowdhury.

District Commissioners Rahul Gupta, Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi and Joy Bikash, Additional Secretary Aditya Vikram Yadav, Public Works Commissioner and Special Secretary Sanjib Shyam, and NHIDCL Executive Director Nirman Kishan Jambhulkar were also present, along with officials from the Power and Forest departments.

NESO condemns killing of Manipuri musician in Delhi, demands swift justice



NEW DELHI

The North Eastern Students' Organisation (NESO) on Wednesday condemned the killing of 54-year-old Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh in Southeast Delhi and called for a swift, impartial and transparent investigation into the case.

Singh was allegedly beaten to death by a group of delivery workers and dhaba staff outside his apartment in Kilokari village early Monday after he objected to them allegedly shouting and consuming alcohol in the area.

NESO chairman Samuel B Jyrwa said it was "deeply disturbing" that Singh allegedly lost his life after objecting to a disturbance outside his residence.

Jyrwa demanded a transparent investigation and exemplary punishment for all those found

responsible for the musician's death.

The organisation also raised concerns over what it described as instances of harassment, racial discrimination, stereotyping and violence faced by people from the Northeast in different parts of the country.

"For years, Northeastern citizens living, studying and working outside the region have repeatedly reported being subjected to racial slurs, verbal abuse, physical attacks, social discrimination and other forms of humiliation because of their appearance, identity and place of origin," Jyrwa alleged. NESO urged authorities to treat the case with the utmost seriousness and ensure that all those responsible are held accountable.

The organisation also called for stronger preventive measures, effective law enforcement and greater sensitisation of police and public institutions towards the safety and dignity of people from the Northeast.

Jyrwa said Singh's death was not only a tragedy for his family but also a matter of concern for the wider Northeastern community.

NESO expressed solidarity with Singh's family and the people of Manipur and reiterated its demand for justice and accountability in the case.

Tripura reports zero primary-level dropout rate in 2025-26: CM Manik Saha



AGARTALA

Tripura recorded a zero per cent dropout rate at the primary level during the 2025-26 academic year, while the dropout rate

foundational literacy in schools," Saha said. The Chief Minister said the state had also made progress in secondary education. The dropout rate for Classes 9 and 10, which stood at 25.51 per cent in 2013-14, declined to 10.40 per cent in 2025-26. Saha said the government aims to bring the secondary-level dropout rate down further over the next three to four years and improve the transition rate across the school education system.

Residential schools planned for low-enrolment areas. To address low enrolment in government schools in remote and rural areas, the Tripura government plans to establish modern residential schools by merging or clustering schools with very low enrolment.

The proposed institutions will be developed along the lines of Eklavya Model Schools, Saha said.

The government is also focusing on improving school infrastructure, digital education, skill development, girls' education and inclusive education, besides raising the overall quality of schooling.

Balvatika in all primary schools. Saha said Tripura will introduce Balvatika, a one-year pre-school programme for children aged five to six years, in all 2,048 primary schools in the state within the next two years.

The initiative is being implemented in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with the objective of ensuring that children acquire basic learning competencies before entering Class 1.

The state government has also approved the establishment of a Board of Open Schooling and Examination in Tripura, as mandated under the NEP frame-

work.

To strengthen education in remote and rural areas, district magistrates and collectors have been entrusted with responsibilities related to improving educational outcomes in their respective districts, Saha said.

Focus on adult literacy under ULLAS. Saha also highlighted Tripura's implementation of ULLAS - Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society, the Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram, which has been operational in the state since May 2022.

He said several innovative initiatives were undertaken during 2026 for neo-learners, including financial literacy programmes that familiarise learners with cheque books, deposit forms and banking services.

The state has also introduced experiential market learning, using everyday activities such as buying, selling and price comparison to strengthen literacy and numeracy.

Health and hygiene awareness programmes, including practical demonstrations on handwashing, sanitation and personal cleanliness, are also being conducted among neo-learners and the wider community.

Saha said literacy should not be viewed merely as the ability to read and write but as a means of empowerment, dignity, confidence and social transformation.

The Chief Minister said the state would continue working to improve learning outcomes, strengthen school infrastructure and ensure greater access to quality education, particularly in rural and remote areas.

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India opens market to Uzbek chilli, pomegranate after Modi visit, with strict plant-health curbs



NEW DELHI

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s state visit to Uzbekistan on August 29-30, India has allowed the import of Uzbek chilli and pomegranate, subject to phytosanitary safeguards. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare issued a notification on August 31 permitting imports of fresh chilli and pomegranate from Uzbekistan under a phytosanitary risk-management system.

Under the prescribed conditions, Uzbek fresh chilli must be free from *Aculops lycopersici*, commonly known as the tomato russet mite, as well as Tomato brown rugose fruit virus.

The consignments must also be free of plant debris and soil. Pomegranate consignments from Uzbekistan must be free of plant debris, weed seeds and soil. They must also be certified as free from *Euzophera bigella*, or quince moth; *Lobesia botrana*, also known as the European grapevine moth; *Pseudococcus comstocki*, or Comstock mealybug; and *Botrytis cinerea*, commonly known as grey mold. The move is aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation in agriculture and food security, while promoting agricultural value chains, export capabilities and trade between India and Uzbekistan.

Uzbek chilli is expected to remain a niche product

in the Indian market, while the opening of the market to Uzbek pomegranates could increase competition for domestic producers in major growing states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

India is the world’s largest producer, consumer and exporter of chilli. Around 70 per cent of the country’s chilli production is consumed domestically, while the remaining production is exported. Chilli accounts for around 31 per cent of India’s spice exports. The import permissions come shortly after Modi’s visit to Uzbekistan, during which the two countries sought to strengthen bilateral economic and agricultural ties.

India sends 35 tonnes of relief material, equipment to flood-hit Nepal aboard C-17



NEW DELHI

India sent 35 tonnes of humanitarian aid and specialised equipment to flood-ravaged Nepal aboard an Indian Air Force C-17 transport aircraft, as rescue teams continued to search for thousands of people missing in the devastating flash floods.

The latest consignment is part of India’s ongoing humanitarian assistance to Nepal following the floods that struck the Himalayan nation on August 26.

The Ministry of External Affairs

(MEA) said India has expedited the delivery of relief supplies, equipment and expert personnel to Nepal through eight special flights since August 26.

“An eighth Indian Air Force flight carrying humanitarian assistance reached Kathmandu today,” the MEA said.

A senior defence official said earlier in the day, “In continuance of the efforts from India for helping Nepal in HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) work, a C-17 trans-

port aircraft of the IAF departed today, carrying 35 tonnes of relief material and equipment.”

India has so far sent more than 130 tonnes of relief material and deployed 54 experts to support Nepal’s rescue, relief and forensic operations, the MEA said.

The assistance includes temporary shelters, blankets, hygiene kits, solar lamps and medicines, besides specialised tunnel and mud rescue equipment, DNA kits and reagents, portable generators, lighting towers and dewatering

pumps.

India has also deployed a specialised tunnel rescue team, which is working with the Nepal Army, and a forensic team assisting in the identification of victims through DNA profiling.

The tunnel rescue team initially operated at Chilime and Langtang. The ongoing search is now focused on Chilime, where difficult terrain, limited access and the slope of the tunnel have posed challenges.

The MEA said the team has made progress through manual efforts and innovative techniques. A makeshift track is also being constructed to allow heavy machinery, including an excavator, to reach the tunnel. The track is expected to be completed in another two to three days.

Meanwhile, rescue teams were searching for 5,326 missing people, including at least 589 foreign nationals, according to a Nepal Police bulletin.

The death toll from the floods rose to 1,365 on Wednesday as more bodies were recovered from affected areas.

India’s first tranche of relief material was sent within hours of Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking to his Nepalese counterpart Balendra Shah on August 26, the day the flash floods struck.

The MEA said the Indian forensic team is working at two laboratories in Kathmandu with Nepalese authorities to examine and analyse DNA samples.

“The forensic laboratory equipment, DNA kits and reagents being provided by India will support the ongoing efforts,” MEA officials said.

“India remains committed to providing all possible assistance to the people and the Government of Nepal and will continue to support rescue, relief and recovery efforts in the country,” the MEA said.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran strikes ships, expands no-go zone outside Hormuz strait



TEHRAN

Iran said it attacked more than a dozen vessels trying to pass through the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, as it announced an expansion of a no-go zone outside the strategic waterway it has blockaded for months.

The fresh attacks and fighting with the United States sent oil prices above \$100 per barrel again as Tehran chokes off the strait and Washington presses a counter-blockade of Iranian ports. Brent oil closed at \$101.21.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said on Wednesday they attacked two US vessels, eight oil tankers, and 10 “non-compliant vessels” that were trying to pass through the route crucial for oil and gas trade, Iranian state media reported.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said “several” vessels in the Gulf of Oman and the Gulf were “subject to disabling fire as part of ongoing military activity in the region”.

The Gulf of Oman lies on the Indian Ocean side of the narrow Hormuz strait, a vital energy conduit that normally carries around a fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas.

Iran’s Guards also for the first time added parts of the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea to a new “prohibited zone” on Wednesday, saying exact coordinates will be announced later.

“If a vessel enters that area without coordination, it will be subject to our sanctions,” Guards spokesman Hossein Mohebi told state television.

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said on Wednesday they attacked two US vessels, eight oil tankers, and 10 “non-compliant vessels” that were trying to pass through the route crucial for oil and gas trade, Iranian state media reported.

The Guards also said they struck a US military base in Jordan in response to US forces destroying five Iranian oil tankers a day earlier.

Jordan’s army shot down 18 missiles fired at the kingdom, it said.

Iran’s foreign ministry condemned the attack on its oil tankers as “an overt threat to regional and international peace and security,” saying the strikes “increase the dangers of tensions in the region”.

It said the targeting of US military facilities in the region was “self-defence”.

The US military for its part had said it was responding to an Iranian attack targeting an American warship, the second such incident in less than a week. Iran’s Guards, the ideological arm of the military, said the war could be brought to an end if Washington met its conditions, which included demands on the wars in Lebanon and Yemen.

“It must... refrain from renewed threats, withdraw the Israeli regime’s army from Lebanon, end the blockade of Yemen, release \$24 billion in Iran’s frozen assets and refrain from any interference in the country’s nuclear and missile capabilities,” Mohebi said, according to Fars news agency.

Donald Trump, an unpopular president eager to end an unpopular war, asserted Wednesday the conflict will conclude right after the mid-term US elections in November. Polls show his Republican Party could face a drubbing and lose control of one or both houses of Congress.

“I think the war will end immediately after the election” because Iran “can’t hold out any longer,” Trump told journalists, accusing Tehran of being “desperate to try and affect” the vote.

However, the Wall Street Journal quoted US officials saying that Trump’s top advisers are privately warning

that the war could drag on through the remaining two years of his term.

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As Washington tries to choke off Iran economically, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors on Wednesday voted to refer Iran to the UN Security Council over its nuclear “non-compliance”, in a diplomatic move that piles pressure on Tehran.

The resolution seen by AFP was adopted by a 23-3 vote with eight abstentions, they said. Russia, China and Niger voted against it.

Iran’s representative to the UN nuclear watchdog said the resolution was passed under US pressure, saying it “has no basis and will not bring any results”. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated his claim Iran was about to collapse. “The main task is to bring down the terror regime in Iran. We are very close to that,” he said Wednesday on a troop visit in southern Syria, where Israel has occupied what it calls a “security zone”.

The latest round of US-Iran fighting was triggered after American forces destroyed five Iranian oil tankers Tuesday, with the US military saying it “directed the crews to abandon ship” before hitting the vessels.

“Iran continues to try to hit US naval ships, and for every time they do that or try to do that, they’re going to lose tankers, and I think you’ll see that again today,” US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters Tuesday on a visit to Colombia.

Iran has asserted control of the Strait of Hormuz since US-Israeli strikes began the war in February, with traffic through the waterway virtually paralysed.

Tehran requires vessels to obtain permission and pay transit fees before using the strait.

Trump says oil prices that spiked because of Iran war likely won’t come down until after midterms



WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said Wednesday that oil prices that have surged because of the Iran war likely won’t come down until after U.S. midterm elections.

Oil prices on Wednesday jumped more than 3%, pushing international Brent crude past the \$100 threshold for the first time since July as salvos between the U.S. and Iran escalated.

“Right after the election, oil prices are going to be tumbling downward,” Trump said. “I think it’s going to take a little bit longer than the midterm.” The comments were a striking acknowledgment from Trump about the conflict as his Republican administration faces mounting pressure to address high gas prices as the war in Iran grinds on with no conclusion in sight.

Trump last week downplayed the conflict as “small potatoes” even as Republicans expressed concern the war will loom large with voters left navigating elevated gas prices and higher inflation.

The U.S. has tapped its strategic petroleum reserves, which in early August fell below 300 million barrels, down by more than 100 million barrels since the start of 2026.

Trump’s prediction that the war won’t be wrapped up until after Nov. 3 comes after Vice President JD Vance last week steered clear of predicting that the conflict would be over by the midterm elections, in which Republicans are trying to hang on to

to Dallas for the midterm Republican convention.

India faces higher oil import costs as crude prices surge on West Asia supply risks. The president at the outset of the war said it would last a matter of weeks. The conflict is now in its seventh month. The U.S.-Israel war against Iran has led to a dramatic slowdown of Gulf oil moving through the Strait of Hormuz, which about 20% of the world’s petroleum passed through prior to the conflict.

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their narrow majorities in Congress.

Vance told reporters he didn’t want to set “artificial timelines” for the war’s end.

“But when you ask, ‘When will this end?’ You’re asking me a question like, ‘When will the Iranians stop shooting at ships?’” Vance said. “I think the reality is, I don’t know the answer to that question. You would have to ask the Iranians.”

U.S. benchmark crude on Wednesday stood at around \$96 a barrel, and U.S. gasoline prices rose sharply overnight. The average price for a gallon of regular gasoline ticked up 7 cents overnight to hit \$4.22, now more than a dollar above what it cost at this point last year, according to AAA. Diesel prices, which can have an outsized impact on consumers because it is used in shipping and production, hit an all-time high Friday and have continued to climb since. The average price per gallon rose to \$5.94 overnight, up 9 cents from Friday.

Jet fuel has become so expensive that U.S. and international carriers have cut flights while raising fares and fees.

The latest market gyrations come after the U.S. military reported striking five Iranian tankers in response to attempted missile attacks on a Navy warship and after attacks by an Iranian-backed Houthi rebel group ignited fires at oil facilities in Saudi Arabia.

National Conference on Natural Farming Begins at CAU's Umiam Campus



BISWADEEP GUPTA

A three-day National Conference on “Natural Farming: Pathways to Self-reliant Farming and Rural Prosperity” (NCNF 2026) began on Wednesday at the College of Post Graduate Studies in Agricultural Sciences (CPGSAS), Central Agricultural University (CAU), Umiam, in Meghalaya’s Ri-Bhoi district.

The inaugural session was attended by Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya as the chief guest, along with NITI Aayog Member Dr Joram Aniya, vice-chancellors of several agricultural universities, agricultural experts, policymakers, farmers and representatives of farming organisations.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Acharya stressed the importance of reviving India’s traditional agricultural knowledge and reducing farmers’ dependence on external inputs. Citing Sikkim’s experience in organic farming, he said the biodiversity-rich Northeast has strong potential to emerge as a major hub for natural farming.

He also called for stronger value chains covering production, processing, packaging, branding and marketing to improve farmers’ incomes. He said scientific research and indigenous knowledge must work together to make natural farming a people’s movement.

Dr Joram Aniya stressed the link between healthy soil, safe food and human well-being. She urged students and researchers to apply scientific knowledge to agriculture and reduce excessive dependence on chemical inputs.

Other speakers highlighted the need for scientific research, region-specific farming practices, natural farming education and better market linkages. They also stressed the Northeast’s potential for natural and organic farming due to its biodiversity, water resources and agro-diversity.

During the inaugural programme, Governor Acharya released several publications on natural farming, including the Abstract Compendium, Poster Book and Media Chronicle.

The conference is being held under the patronage of CAU Vice-Chancellor Dr Anupam Mishra and the guidance of Prof Dwipendra Thakuria, Dean, CPGSAS and Organising Secretary of NCNF 2026.

Around 500 participants are attending the three-day conference, which includes keynote lectures, technical sessions, oral and poster presentations, panel discussions, stakeholder consultations, exhibitions and interactions among farmers, practitioners, traders, researchers and industry representatives.

The conference is being organised in collaboration with ICAR, DST-NECTAR, Rani Lakshmi Bai Central Agricultural University, Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University and Gujarat Natural Farming Science University.

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