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PERSPECTIVE

Daytime naps help to improve your memory and cut the risk of heart disease.

Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival to return on Nov 20-21

SHILLONG
The Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival will return on November 20 and 21 with a new permanent venue and a five-act international headline lineup, organisers announced on Tuesday.

The 2026 edition of the popular music festival will shift to the newly established New Shillong Highland Grounds, a dedicated venue developed by the Meghalaya government for large-scale festivals, concerts and other events.American R&B and pop singer Khalid, rapper Swae Lee and pop-punk band Boys Like Girls have been announced as the first three international headliners.

Khalid, known for hits such as Young Dumb & Broke, is a seven-time Grammy-nominated singer and one of the prominent contemporary voices in R&B and pop. Swae Lee, who rose to prominence as part of hip-hop duo Rae Sremmurd before pursuing a successful solo career, is also set to perform. His credits include Sunflower, recorded with Post Malone for the film Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.

Pop-punk band Boys Like Girls, formed in 2005, are known for songs including The Great Escape, Thunder and Love Drunk.Organisers said two more international headliners would be announced shortly, taking the total number of major international acts at this year's festival to five.The lineup announcement was delayed slightly due to preparations for the new venue, particularly artist logistics, production requirements and other festival arrangements, officials said.Located around 30 minutes from Shillong, the New Shillong Highland Grounds is expected to offer improved access to audiences travelling from across Meghalaya, Assam and neighbouring states, including visitors approaching from the Jowai side.

WHO SAID WHAT



India is the world's best location to set up data centres. A \$200 billion+ opportunity is waiting to be unlocked.

~ Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry

Assam Plans 20,000 More Police Recruits in Five Years, Targets Zero-Vacancy Force

GUWAHATI
The Assam government plans to recruit between 15,000 and 20,000 additional police personnel over the next five years as part of its larger target of providing government jobs to two lakh youths, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday. Addressing the passing-out parade at the Lachit Borpuhan Police Academy (LBPA) in Dergaon, Sarma said the proposed recruitment would help the state move towards a "zero-vacancy" Assam Police. "Under the Assam government's decision to ensure fresh recruitment of two lakh youths within the next five years, I am sure that we will be able to recruit 15,000 to 20,000 more police personnel within the earmarked timeline," he said. Sarma said around 21,000 police officers and constables had been recruited over the past five years through what he described as a fair and merit-based process. The recruitment, he said, had helped transform the Assam Police into a "youth-led force". "We are moving ahead to turn Assam Police into a zero-vacancy force, leaving no posts vacant for recruitment," the Chief Minister said. Crime rate, drug crackdown highlighted

IMPHAL

The eighth session of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly opened on Wednesday amid uproar over demands for implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the Census, even as two Kuki-Zo legislators returned to the House in person for the first time in more than three years.

The morning sitting was disrupted after senior Opposition leader and former Chief Minister O Ibobi Singh raised a point of order in connection with an adjournment motion. Opposition members subsequently pressed for a discussion on the demand to conduct the NRC before the Census exercise.

As the protests and disruptions continued, Speaker Th Satyabrata adjourned the House till 2 pm.

The session, however, witnessed a significant development when Saitu MLA Haokholet Kipgen and Saikul MLA Kinmeo Haokip Hangshing attended the Assembly in Imphal physically.

Their presence marked the first



time Kuki-Zo legislators have participated in Assembly proceedings in person in Imphal since ethnic violence broke out in May 2023. Kuki MLAs have largely been attending proceedings virtually since the conflict began.

Kipgen said he was happy to return to the Assembly after a prolonged gap.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh welcomed the return of the two legislators, describing it as a positive development and a sign of hope for the state.

"This is a good sign from people's

representatives, and it is a welcome step," Singh said.

The Chief Minister attributed the development to the state government's efforts to bridge the trust deficit between communities and reiterated his government's commitment to inclusive dialogue and reconciliation.

He expressed hope that collective efforts by political representatives and communities would help steer Manipur towards peace.

The return of the two Kuki-Zo MLAs came despite a call from the Kuki Inpi Manipur, the apex Kuki civil body, asking all 10 Kuki-Zo legislators to stay away from the Assembly session.The organisation had maintained that participation in the House could project an impression of normalcy despite the absence of a political settlement to address the community's concerns.

Apart from the NRC-related controversy, the session has a packed legislative agenda, with several Bills and resolutions scheduled to be taken up.

Under Calling Attention, MLA K Ranjit Singh is scheduled to raise concerns over a reported proposal for

a land-swap deal between India and Myanmar and its possible implications.MLA K Meghachandra Singh is slated to draw the House's attention to alleged atrocities during the past two years, including the abduction and subsequent killing of women and children in Jiribam, the Tronglaobi bomb attack that killed two children, the killing of three Kuki church leaders at Saheibung and the Imphal-Tamei road ambush in which four Naga civilians were killed.The Assembly will also consider the first batch of Demands for Supplementary Grants for 2026-27 and the 11th Report of the Business Advisory Committee.Among the key Bills listed for introduction are the Manipur Right to Business and Investment Facilitation Bill, 2026; the Manipur Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland (Third Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Manipur AYUSH Council Bill, 2026; and the Manipur Unified (Trade, Shop and Establishment Licensing) Bill, 2026.

Amendments to the state's Shops and Establishments and Town and Country Planning laws are also on the agenda.

Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen is scheduled to introduce the Manipur Panchayati Raj (Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2026, while Home Minister Konhoujam Govindas Singh will seek leave to introduce the Manipur Fire and Emergency Service Bill, 2026.The House is also scheduled to consider a resolution seeking withdrawal of the Factories (Manipur Amendment) Bill, 2022, and another proposing adoption of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Act, 2024.Two CAG reports covering the state's finances and its general, social, economic and revenue sectors are also scheduled to be taken up.The session will also include obituary references to four former legislators.

The Assembly session comes against the backdrop of renewed political debate over the NRC and the Centre's recent decision to defer the 2027 Census in Manipur. Chief Minister Singh has said the deferment was made in accordance with the wishes of the people and followed repeated demands for an NRC to be carried out before the Census.

‘Manipur is an active volcano’: Congress



IMPHAL

Manipur needs a government that is perceived as neutral by all communities and does not extend political protection to violence, Congress Legislature Party leader Keisham Meghachandra Singh said on Wednesday, as the state continues to grapple with the fallout of prolonged ethnic conflict.

Singh said the continuing crisis had deepened perceptions among communities that the political leadership was aligned with competing interests and armed-group narratives, undermining confidence in the government as a neutral authority.

Describing Manipur as an "active volcano", the Congress leader said such perceptions were making it in-

creasingly difficult for the administration to command the trust of all sections of society.

He argued that when those in power are seen as having partisan loyalties, administrative decisions are often viewed through a community lens rather than judged on their merits. Such perceptions, he said, could further complicate efforts to find a lasting political solution to the conflict.

Singh called for a clear state policy built around three principles - no political protection for violence, no selective justice and no legitimisation of armed intimidation.

He stressed that accountability must be applied equally to all, irrespective of community.

"Manipur needs a government that stands above all armed groups and above all community interests," Singh said, arguing that peace cannot be secured merely by indefinitely managing the conflict.

The Congress leader said restoring public confidence in the neutrality of the state machinery was critical to any meaningful peace process.

He also called for equal access to justice for victims from all communities, saying accountability and fairness must remain central to efforts to rebuild trust.

Singh's remarks come amid continuing tensions and sporadic incidents of violence in parts of Manipur, with competing claims by different groups continuing to shape public perceptions of the security and administrative response.

He maintained that a durable peace would require the government to move beyond community-based political calculations and establish itself as an impartial authority for all sections of the population.

Silchar Municipal Polls on October 3; 42 Wards to Vote



SILCHAR

The Assam State Election Commission on Wednesday announced the schedule for elections to the Silchar Municipal Corporation, with polling for all 42 wards to be held on October 3.

The election notification was issued by State Election Commissioner Ranjan Sharma, following which the Model Code of Conduct came into immediate effect across the entire municipal corporation area.As per the schedule, candidates can file their nomination papers till September 11. The scrutiny of nominations will be held on September 14, with the list of validly nominated candidates published the same day.Candidates wishing to withdraw their nominations can do so till September 17. The final list of contestants will be published thereafter.

Polling will be held from 7.30 am to 4 pm on October 3. In case a repoll is required, it will be conducted on October 5 during the same hours. Counting of votes will begin at 8 am on October 6 and continue until the completion of the process.

The Silchar Municipal Corporation was constituted with 42 wards through a state gazette notification issued in November 2024. The reservation of wards for Scheduled Caste and women candidates was finalised in December 2024.

The final photo electoral rolls for the municipal corporation elections were published on July 15, 2026.

Manipur Census Deferred, NRC to Be Considered Separately: Sambit Patra



IMPHAL

BJP's Northeast in-charge Sambit Patra on Wednesday welcomed the Centre's decision to defer the 2027 Census in Manipur, describing it as the fulfilment of a key demand raised by people in the state.

Patra arrived in Imphal on Wednesday to attend a high-level party meeting and was received by Rajya Sabha MP A Sharda and other BJP leaders, including K Sharat, P Premananda and Deben.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the meeting, Patra said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had taken note of the concerns expressed by people in Manipur and had acted on their demand for postponement of the census exercise.

"I would like to express my thankfulness to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for deferring the Census after the request from the people of the state," Patra said.

He said the decision followed discussions at a recent high-level meeting in New Delhi chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, which was attended by Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh and Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

Patra also credited Manipur MLAs and civil society organisations with raising the issue and pressing for the deferment of the census.

NRC demand to be considered separately

On the demand for updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur, Patra said the census deferment should be viewed as an important first step, while the NRC issue would be dealt with separately.

"The NRC process will be taken in due course of time," he said.

According to Patra, any decision on the NRC would be taken at the level of the Union Home Ministry.

The BJP leader urged people in Manipur to view the Centre's decision to defer the census as a significant development, saying it reflected the government's response to concerns raised by different sections of society.

The deferment of the 2027 Census has emerged as a major issue in Manipur, with sections of civil society and political leaders seeking postponement amid concerns over the state's demographic situation.



Highlighting the government's law- and-order record, Sarma claimed that

Assam's crime rate had declined from 379 cases per lakh population in 2021 to 116 per lakh in July 2024.

He said the number of registered cases had fallen from 1,33,239 to around 25,000, while the charge-sheet rate had increased to 86.85 per cent and the conviction rate had reached nearly 30 per cent.

On the state's anti-drug campaign, Sarma said police had seized narcotics worth Rs 3,254 crore and arrested 26,537 people during the past five years. The conviction rate in drug-related cases, he said, stood at 57 per cent.The Chief Minister said Assam's location and its international borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar meant the state would continue to face security challenges.He called for "zero tolerance" towards crimes against women and directed the police to intensify action against child marriage and polygamy.

Sarma also asked the force to step up anti-drug operations in Barak Valley and the districts of Golaghat, Sivasagar, Tinsukia and Dibrugarh.

403 personnel complete training
The passing-out parade marked the completion of training for 403 police personnel.

Among them were 32 Deputy Superintendents of Police, who underwent 52 weeks of foundational training. Their programme included a two-

week orientation at LBPA and two months of training at the North Eastern Police Academy in Meghalaya.

The trainees were trained in laws including the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, POCSO Act, Arms Act and NDPS Act. Their curriculum also covered cybercrime, forensic science and child safety.

They underwent practical training in arms handling and safety, horse riding, swimming, IED management and crowd control.

Sarma asked the Director General of Police to further raise training standards at LBPA, saying the academy should provide training comparable to that of the Indian Armed Forces and the Agniveer programme, apart from specialised commando training.

Two-day SSP conference

The Chief Minister will remain in Dergaon for a two-day conference of senior superintendents of police (SSPs) on Wednesday and Thursday.

Sarma said it would be the first such conference since the present government came to power.

"On Wednesday and Thursday, an SSP conference will be held. Over the two days, I will hold discussions with them on law and order, fresh recruitments, drugs, crimes against women, crimes against children and other issues," he said.



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TAMING SUGAR PRICES

The sudden surge in sugar prices in recent weeks is more than an ordinary market fluctuation. For households already struggling with a broader cost-of-living squeeze, a sharp rise in the price of an everyday essential is an unwelcome additional burden. A rise of two or three rupees may be absorbed as a routine market movement. A steep spike, particularly on the eve of the festive season, is another matter altogether. It demands scrutiny and decisive intervention.

The Government's decision to replace the monthly sugar allocation system with a fortnightly mechanism is therefore a welcome step. More importantly, the accompanying requirement that mills dispatch sugar within a stipulated period addresses a weakness that appears to have been exploited by some market players.

The problem was not necessarily a shortage of sugar. It was the manner in which available stocks were being released into the market.

Under the earlier system, sugar allocated to mills at the beginning of the month could remain unfilled for weeks, only to be released towards the end of the month. Such a system created an artificial impression of scarcity. Sugar could be physically available in warehouses while consumers and retailers faced tighter supplies and higher prices. In a market driven as much by expectations as by actual availability, that gap provided fertile ground for speculation and hoarding.

Physical verification undertaken by the Food Ministry reportedly found discrepancies between declared stocks and stocks actually available at some mills. If confirmed, such discrepancies cannot be dismissed as mere accounting irregularities. They point to a deeper problem in supply-chain monitoring and enforcement.

The timing makes the matter even more serious. Demand traditionally rises before major festivals. That predictable increase should be factored into procurement and distribution plans well in advance. Allowing supplies to remain locked up during such a period risks turning seasonal demand into an opportunity for profiteering.

The new fortnightly quota is designed to close that loophole. Requiring mills to sell at least 40 per cent of their allocation during the first week and the balance during the second leaves considerably less scope for withholding supplies. The directive that sugar should leave the mill within seven days of sale strengthens the measure further by ensuring that a transaction translates into actual market availability.

The decision to discourage bulk consumers from accumulating stocks beyond their genuine operational requirements is equally important. Hoarding does not begin and end at the mill gate. If inventories are unnecessarily accumulated at multiple points along the distribution chain, even adequate national stocks can fail to translate into affordable retail prices.

The Government has also moved on the supply side by permitting imports of 10 lakh tonnes of raw sugar by the end of October. This is a sensible precaution. With festive demand expected to rise, additional supplies can provide the market with a cushion and discourage traders from betting on further price increases.

There are already signs that the measures are having an effect. Ex-mill sugar prices have reportedly fallen by around a fifth, and retail prices should ease as the reduction works its way through the distribution chain. But this is precisely where the Government must remain vigilant. A fall at the mill gate is of little comfort to consumers if retailers continue selling at inflated prices.

The immediate challenge, therefore, is to ensure that the correction is transmitted all the way to the consumer. State authorities must monitor wholesale and retail markets, investigate unusual stock movements and act against deliberate withholding wherever evidence exists. Transparency in stock declarations and regular physical verification should become routine rather than an emergency response to a price spike.

Yet enforcement alone cannot be the long-term answer.

India needs a sugar market that is structurally less vulnerable to manipulation. That means expanding and modernising domestic processing capacity, improving sugarcane productivity, supporting farmers with better yields and technology, and encouraging diversified sourcing. Greater competition across the supply chain would also reduce the influence of individual large holders.

The larger lesson from the sugar episode is straightforward: availability on paper is not the same as availability in the market. A country may have sufficient stocks and still experience a price crisis if distribution is poorly timed, inventories are concealed or market expectations are manipulated.

The Government has acted after prices surged. The next task is to ensure that such intervention does not remain reactive. Sugar is a basic household commodity, and its price cannot be allowed to become a playground for speculation, particularly when festive demand is predictable.

The fortnightly allocation system, tighter dispatch rules and additional imports are useful short-term measures. But the real test will be whether they become part of a broader effort to make the sugar supply chain transparent, competitive and resilient.

Consumers must not have to pay the price for sugar that exists-but is deliberately kept out of reach.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Good friends are good for your health. - Irwin Sarason

V NANDAKUMAR

We live in an era when changing rainfall patterns, floods, landslides, heat waves and other extreme climatic events are no longer rare. As the devastation in Nepal—soon after deadly floods in Kerala and Assam—showed, we must urgently adapt to live with climate change.

Yet, an important distinction must be made: rain itself is not a disaster. Disaster results from the interaction of natural hazards with vulnerable landscapes, inappropriate land use, inadequate scientific understanding, weak early-warning systems and delayed decisions.

Kerala—where heavy monsoon rainfall is a natural feature—is particularly exposed as it is marked by densely-packed valleys and extensive development along slopes and floodplains. Intense, short rainfall can rapidly saturate the slopes, overwhelm drainage systems and transform streams into destructive torrents. Landslides occur when rainfall-induced saturation combines with geological structure, soil thickness, weathering, slope geometry, drainage and land-use conditions to destabilise slopes.

The problem is aggravated when wetlands are reclaimed, drainage channels obstructed, floodplains encroached upon and hill slopes modified for roads, buildings, plantations and infrastructure. Such interventions reduce the natural capacity of the landscape to absorb, store and safely convey water.

Kerala's 41 west-flowing rivers are generally short and steep, resulting in rapid hydrological responses during extreme rainfall. Flood risk, therefore, increases when river channels, floodplains and wetlands are prevented from performing their natural functions.

The devastating floods of 2018 had demonstrated the complex interaction between extreme rainfall, catchment conditions, reservoir storage and dam operations. Kerala should undertake independent scientific assessments of reservoir operations and flood management practices. Dam operating rules, reservoir storage, flood cushion and downstream risks must be reassessed under changing climatic conditions. Reservoir sedimentation also requires continuous assessment because loss of storage capacity can affect flood management.

Controlled desiltation may be appropriate in selected reservoirs after rigorous engineering and environmental assessment. However, indiscriminate dredging of natural rivers should be avoided. Groundwater deserves equal attention. Rivers are dynamic, physical, hydrogeological and ecological systems, not merely drainage channels. Scientific mapping of aquifer hydrodynamics, protection of recharge zones and conservation of riverbeds and wetlands should become integral components of water-resource management.

Kerala's highlands require stronger scientific understanding of slope stability. Rainfall is only one trigger among several interacting factors. Geological structure, soil properties, weathering, slope geometry, drainage, vegetation and land-use changes determine susceptibility.

The disasters at Kavalappara and Puthumala in 2019, Pettimudi in 2020, Kakkayar and Koottickal in 2021, and Mundakkai-Chooralmala in 2024 demonstrate the devastating consequences of slope instability.

Not just Kerala, several Indian states urgently need high-resolution landslide-hazard mapping, continuous slope monitoring, detailed geological investigations and scientifically-established rainfall thresholds. Research must directly influence land-use decisions, road construction, quarrying regulations, building permissions and evacuation plans.

Mountain soils require extremely long geological and

biological processes to form; their loss through erosion and landslides therefore cannot be quickly restored.

India's forecasting, Doppler radar, satellite observation, lightning detection, automated weather stations and numerical modelling capabilities have improved considerably. The real test begins after a warning is issued. An effective system must establish a clear chain: forecast followed by hazard assessment, decision-making, warning signal, evacuation, rescue and, finally, recovery.

A warning has little value if vulnerable families are not evacuated, dangerous roads remain open or downstream communities uninformed about rising reservoir levels. It must reach fishermen at sea, farmers, travellers, residents beneath unstable slopes and families living near rivers. Messages should be location-specific, simple and actionable.

Assam provides an important parallel. The state has repeatedly suffered devastating floods, riverbank erosion and landslides, causing substantial loss of life and property. Last month's severe events, which have claimed over 100 lives, illustrate its continuing vulnerability. The state's geological and geomorphological setting is fundamental to understanding this risk. The tectonically-active Himalayan region, the mighty Brahmaputra and its highly braided channel system create conditions conducive to recurrent flooding and erosion. The river transports enormous quantities of sand, silt and clay derived from the easily erodible tertiary formations of the young Himalaya.

Extreme rainfall and high-sediment loads can alter channel morphology, intensify bank erosion and reduce effective flood-carrying capacity across extensive floodplains. The 1950 earthquake, estimated at around 8.6 magnitude, further demonstrates the region's intense tectonic activity. It triggered numerous landslides and introduced enormous

ties that destabilise slopes and drainage systems must be strictly regulated. Large-scale ecological restoration and afforestation are particularly important in vulnerable catchments.

Both Kerala and Assam demonstrate that India needs disaster-risk management models tailored to regional, geological, geomorphological, hydrological and climatic conditions. Kerala requires a model suited to the Western Ghats, short rivers, densely-settled valleys, coastal environment and changing monsoon. Assam requires one that recognises the dynamic Brahmaputra system, enormous sediment loads, active tectonics, Himalayan catchments and extensively braided floodplains.

Both states should prioritise comprehensive district-level climate and disaster-risk mapping; scientific floodplain and landslide-hazard zoning; climate-responsive revision of dam and reservoir operating rules; continuous monitoring of reservoir sedimentation and storage capacity; real-time monitoring of rainfall, rivers, reservoirs and vulnerable slopes; state-wide landslide early-warning and slope-monitoring systems; effective coastal, lightning and seismic warning systems; protection of wetlands, river corridors and groundwater-recharge areas; integrated river-basin and sediment-management programmes; strict regulation of quarrying, deforestation and destabilising land-use practices; ecological restoration and afforestation of vulnerable catchments; and clear institutional responsibility for converting warnings into timely action.

Kerala cannot control the monsoon, cloudbursts or landslides. Assam cannot control the Brahmaputra, Himalayan sediment influx, extreme rainfall or tectonic processes. But both states can control how intelligently they prepare for them.

Rain is natural; flood disasters

scientific finding must influence policy. Every disaster must generate institutional learning.

Kerala and Assam represent different landscapes facing a common challenge. Yet both demonstrate the same fundamental truth: when natural hazards interact with poorly planned human intervention, vulnerability increases and disasters become more destructive.

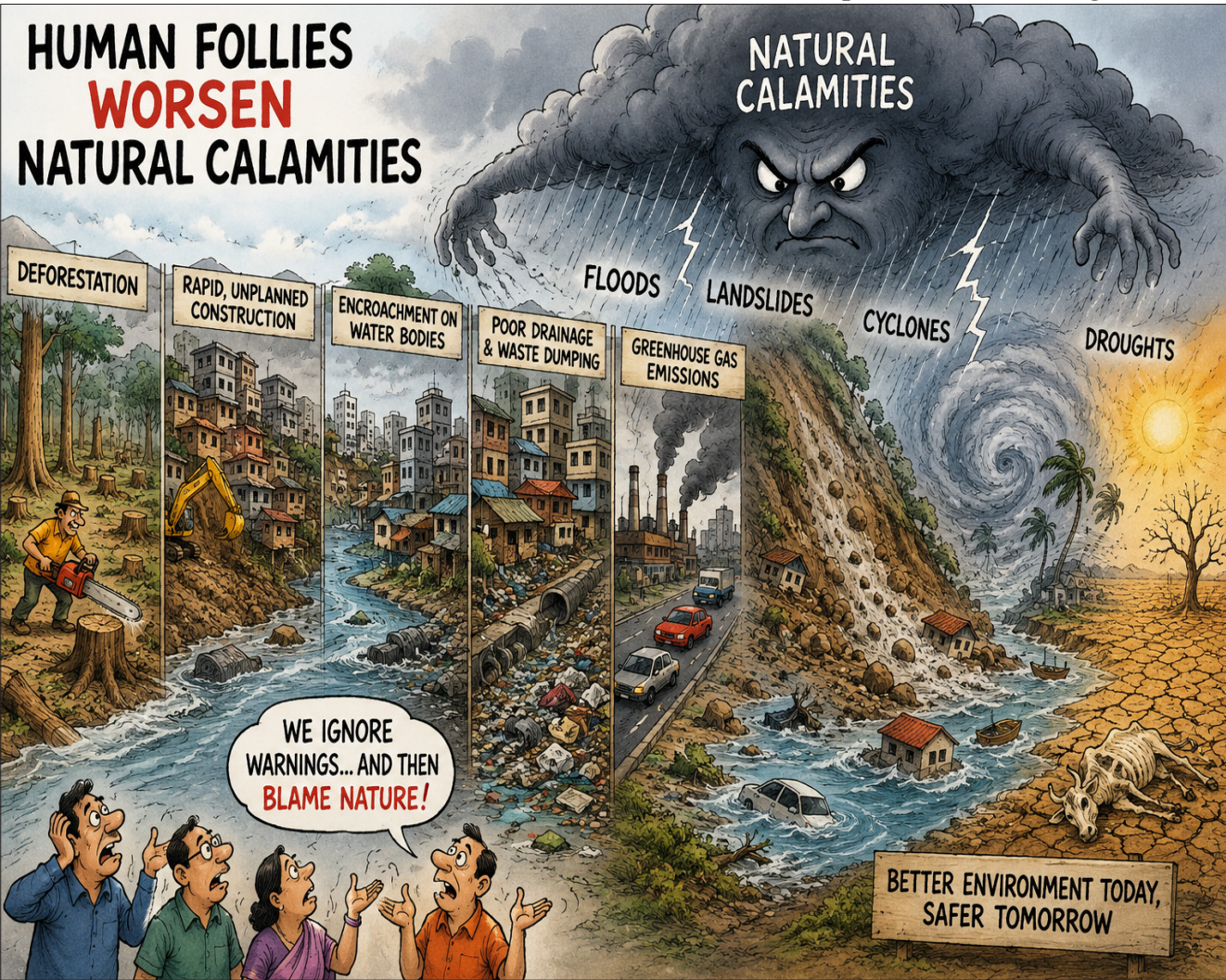
DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Assam's next big story won't catch your eye. It will catch your nose. Agarwood -one of our prized treasures - is opening up a full value chain, from plantations and processing to premium global markets. The scent of Assam is going places.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



India must, therefore, move decisively from a culture of disaster response to a culture of disaster prevention and management.



sediment quantities into river systems, producing long-term geomorphological changes.

Flood and landslide management in Assam, therefore, cannot depend primarily on emergency response and relief. It requires integrated river-basin management, sediment monitoring, floodplain regulation, landslide-risk assessment and improved early-warning systems. Quarrying, deforestation and other activi-

ties are not always. A landslide may be triggered by rainfall, but vulnerability can be created or intensified by human intervention. Scientific warnings save lives only when institutions act upon them in time.

The central challenge is therefore not to fight nature, but to understand and respect natural processes and regulate human activities accordingly. Every warning must lead to action. Every

Rain will continue to fall. Rivers will continue to flow. Mountains will continue to evolve. The real question is whether we understand these processes well enough—and act early enough—to protect people and ecosystems from avoidable disasters.

V Nandakumar | Retired Head, Natural Hazards Research Group and Director, National Centre for Earth Science Studies, Thiruvananthapuram

BJP central leaders visit Tripura ahead of Village Committee polls, Tipra Motha alliance talks continue

AGARTALA

BJP national leaders arrived in Tripura ahead of the upcoming Village Committee elections under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), with organisational preparations and a possible electoral alliance with the Tipra Motha Party dominating discussions.

BJP National General Secretary (Organisation) B L Santosh is on a two-day visit to the state. He is accompanied by the party's Northeast coordinator Sambit Patra and leaders Ravindra Raju and Rajdeep Roy.

A meeting of senior BJP leaders was held at the State Guest House in Agartala and attended



by Chief Minister Manik Saha, BJP state president Abhishek Debroy, state general secretaries Bipin Debbarma and Chandan Debnath, Rajya Sabha MP Rajib Bhattacharya and other senior leaders.

The visit comes amid several rounds of discussions between the BJP and Tipra Motha in New Delhi over a possible alliance for the Village Committee elections. However, the two parties have not yet announced a final decision.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Debroy said the visit of the central leaders was primarily linked to preparations for the upcoming polls and strengthening the party organisation.

“Our National General Secretary (Organisation), B L Santosh,

has arrived in Tripura today. We welcomed him here, and he chaired a meeting. Various organisational matters were discussed. The Chief Minister and the party's state in-charge were also present,” he said.

Debroy said the BJP was fully prepared for the elections, which are being held after a gap of nearly 10 years.

“We welcome the elections. After around 10 years, the Village Committee elections are going to be held, and the BJP is fully prepared. We are also organisationally ready for the polls,” he said.

On the possibility of an alliance with Tipra Motha, Debroy said negotiations were continuing and indicated that a decision would be announced soon.

“The alliance does not depend only on us. Discussions are still going on, and a decision will be declared soon,” he said.

The proposed alliance assumes significance as both parties seek to consolidate their organisational and electoral positions in the tribal areas ahead of the Village Committee polls.

The elections are also being closely watched in the context of the BJP's political relationship with Tipra Motha, which has a significant presence among tribal voters in the state.

With the polls being held after a decade-long gap, both parties are expected to focus on candidate selection, seat-sharing arrangements and grassroots mobilisation in the coming days.

Assam moves Supreme Court against HC verdict reducing Dr Deben Dutta murder sentence

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has moved the Supreme Court challenging the Gauhati High Court's July 30, 2025 judgment in the Dr Deben Dutta murder case, which altered the conviction from murder to culpable homicide not amounting to murder and reduced the death sentence to life imprisonment.

The Supreme Court has issued notices to the respondents on the state's Special Leave Petition (SLP) and condoned the delay in filing the petition, allowing the challenge to proceed. The respondents have been given four weeks to file their replies.

The state government has challenged the High Court's findings, maintaining that the circumstances surrounding Dutta's death pointed to a deliberate and coordinated assault rather than an accidental or sudden incident.

The Assam government has sought restoration of the conviction under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), instead of Section 304 Part II, and has challenged the reduction of the sentence from death to life imprisonment. A team of lawyers led by Senior Additional Advocate General Chinmoy Sharma appeared for the Assam government before the apex court and presented the state's arguments.

The case relates to the death of Dr Deben Dutta, a retired medical professional who had volunteered to serve at the hospital of the Teok Tea Estate in Jorhat. Dutta was attacked by plantation workers in August 2019 and subsequently died of his injuries. The incident triggered widespread protests across Assam and renewed concerns over violence against medical professionals.

Meghalaya records 38% rainfall deficit in August, Sohra and Mawsynram also affected

SHILLONG

Meghalaya recorded a 38 per cent rainfall deficit in August, with even Sohra and Mawsynram, among the world's wettest places, receiving below-normal rainfall during the month, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The state received 359.7 mm of rainfall in August against the normal 581.6 mm, resulting in a deficit of 38 per cent, the weather office said.

East Khasi Hills, home to Sohra and Mawsynram, recorded a 42 per cent rainfall deficit during the month. West Jaintia Hills recorded the highest rainfall deficit in the state at 75 per cent, followed by West Garo Hills at 72 per cent, West Khasi Hills at 60 per cent and North Garo Hills at 58 per cent.

East Garo Hills and Ri Bhoi recorded deficits of 22 per cent each, while East Jaintia Hills received 24 per cent less rainfall than normal. South Garo

Hills was close to normal, with a deficit of 9 per cent. In contrast, South West Khasi Hills recorded a large excess of 155 per cent, the highest among Meghalaya's districts during August. Rainfall data for South West Garo Hills was not available, the IMD said. The August shortfall came after Meghalaya recorded a 9 per cent rainfall deficit in July, while rainfall in June was near normal. In July, North Garo Hills recorded the highest deficit at 22 per cent, while South West Garo Hills received normal rainfall.

The rainfall situation deteriorated sharply in August, with eight of the state's 11 districts recording deficient rainfall. Only South West Khasi Hills recorded large excess rainfall during the month, according to IMD data.

The below-normal rainfall across much of Meghalaya in August is notable given the state's reputation for exceptionally high rainfall, particularly in the Sohra-Mawsynram region.

Dedicated Pass & Videography Cell set up for Silchar Municipal Corporation Election

SILCHAR

The Cachar district administration has constituted a dedicated Pass & Videography Cell for the Silchar Municipal Corporation Election 2026 to coordinate the preparation and distribution of identity cards and passes and to manage photography and videography requirements associated with the election process. Jagriti Kalwar, ACS, Additional District Commissioner, Cachar, Silchar has been designated as the Officer-in-Charge of the cell while Arunabh Choudhury, ACS, Assistant Commissioner, Cachar has been designated as the Assisting Officer.

The cell will be supported by officials and staff from the District Commissioner's Office and other government establishments as detailed by the district administration. Additional Grade-III and Grade-IV personnel already placed with the Personnel Cell for the Silchar Municipal Corporation Election 2026 will also assist

in carrying out the assigned responsibilities. The Pass & Videography Cell will identify the officials and personnel requiring identity cards in connection with election duty and will coordinate the preparation of their photographs. A photographer will be provided to the cell by the District Development Commissioner, Cachar-cum-Officer-in-Charge, General Cell, Silchar Municipal Corporation Election 2026, for capturing and printing photographs required for identity cards.

The cell will prepare all categories of identity cards and passes required for the election. Colour coded identity cards, constituency wise for councillors for the counting process will also be prepared to facilitate proper identification and access at counting venues.

The printing of identity cards and passes will be coordinated through a printing press to be identified by the District Development Commissioner, Cachar-cum-Officer-in-Charge, General Cell.

The press will supply blank identity cards, passes and other related materials to the cell as and when required. The cell will assess the requirement of identity cards and passes for contesting candidates, election agents, counting agents, officials and personnel engaged in different categories of election duty. Wherever necessary, the validity period of each identity card or pass will be clearly indicated.

Identity cards meant for polling personnel will be handed over to the Material Cell at the appropriate stage. Identity cards and passes for contesting candidates, election agents and other poll-related staff and authorised persons will be prepared and distributed from the Pass & Videography Cell in due course.

The cell will also assess the requirement of videographers in consultation with the officers-in-charge of various election cells. A detailed counting plan will be prepared in coordination with the General Cell, Silchar Municipal

Corporation Election 2026.

For videography arrangements, the cell will prepare a list of vendors by inviting expressions of interest in accordance with the rate approved by the District Commissioner, Cachar. Videographers will thereafter be detailed through the selected vendors based on the requirements received from different election cells from time to time.

The Pass & Videography Cell will function from the LA Branch, first floor, Unnayan Bhawan, and the Old Sadar Revenue Circle, ground floor, Unnayan Bhawan, District Commissioner's Office, Cachar, Silchar with immediate effect.

The dedicated cell is expected to provide a coordinated mechanism for managing election-related identity cards, passes, photography and videography requirements, thereby facilitating the smooth conduct of different stages of the Silchar Municipal Corporation Election 2026.

226 Assam jail inmates test HIV-positive in four months; CM orders probe

GUWAHATI

As many as 226 inmates across 31 jails in Assam have tested positive for HIV over the past four months, prompting Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to order a detailed examination into the circumstances surrounding reported infections among prisoners.

Sarma said the state government had taken the matter seriously and would examine how and under what circumstances at least one affected inmate contracted HIV while in jail. He also assured that those who have tested positive would receive appropriate medical care and treatment.

“I have also been informed that one person has been identified as HIV-positive. We have taken the matter seriously, and I believe the Gauhati High Court is also seized of the issue,” the chief minister said



when asked about reports of HIV-positive cases among inmates and whether additional testing would be conducted in prisons.

He said the circumstances surrounding the reported infection would be examined in detail.

The issue has also come into

focus at Sribhumi District Jail, where 11 inmates, including a woman prisoner, have tested positive for HIV. The facility currently houses 445 inmates against a sanctioned capacity of 187, highlighting severe overcrowding.

According to jail authorities,

most of the HIV-positive inmates are facing cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Members of the AIDS Control Committee regularly visit the jail to provide medical treatment and counselling to inmates who have tested positive. Anwesha Khersha, the magistrate in charge of Sribhumi District Jail, said HIV-positive undertrial prisoners are referred to Silchar Medical College for advanced treatment whenever necessary.

The reported cases have raised concerns over health screening, overcrowding and access to medical care in Assam's prisons. The government's proposed examination is expected to look into the circumstances surrounding the infections and measures required to strengthen health monitoring and treatment facilities for inmates.

Nagaland NPP MLA seeks pension overhaul, flags Rs 2,679 crore spending



KOHIMA

NPP MLA Tseilhoutuo Rhtuso on Tuesday called for a comprehensive overhaul of Nagaland's pension system, citing pension expenditure of Rs 2,679.12 crore in 2025-26 and raising concerns over possible irregularities in the disbursement of benefits.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour under Rule 49 in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly, Rhtuso said pension was a right and a reward for government service and genuine pensioners should receive their dues on time and with dignity.

According to figures presented by the MLA, 63,370 retired government employees and nominees were receiving pensions in the state. Of these, 31,714 beneficiaries received payments through the SBI Centralised Pension Processing Centre (SBI-CPPC), while 31,656 were paid through state treasuries.

Among the pension beneficiaries, 11,449 were aged 70 years or above, including 450 aged over 90 and 19 aged 100 years or above.

Rhtuso said pension expend-

iture had risen from Rs 2,429.56 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 2,679.12 crore in 2025-26. He said Rs 1,049.63 crore had already been spent during 2026-27 up to July.

The MLA flagged the possibility of payments reaching ineligible beneficiaries because of unverified credentials, delays in reporting deaths, claims for pension arrears after a beneficiary's death, inadequate verification of remarriage and possible duplication of payments between SBI-CPPC and state treasuries.

He also called for scrutiny of pensioners who had settled outside Nagaland and verification of allegedly fraudulent life and marriage certificates.

Rhtuso proposed time-bound physical and Aadhaar-linked biometric verification of pensioners, wider adoption of the Jeevan Pramaan digital life certificate system and the formation of a high-level committee headed by the Finance Department to conduct a detailed audit of the pension system.

GUWAHATI

Sivasagar MLA and Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi announced a fresh agitation in Assam over flood relief measures, including a mass protest outside the Chief Minister's Office on September 16, alleging that his recent meeting with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma failed to produce any concrete assurance on revising the state's disaster relief provisions.

Gogoi said he met Sarma on Monday and submitted a memorandum seeking changes to the existing Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) relief manual, arguing that the provisions did not adequately compensate flood-affected families for their losses.

He said the demand for revision of the relief provisions had not received a positive response from the government.

“The main issue has failed. Therefore, we have again announced a flood-centric movement,” Gogoi said.

As part of the programme, a public meeting will be held at Nazira on September 6. From September 7 to 16, members of Rajior Dal will tour flood-affected areas across the state, assess the situation and interact with affected residents. A large public gathering will subsequently be organised in Guwahati.

Gogoi said the agitation would culmi-

nate in a protest outside the Chief Minister's Office on September 16, with the principal demand being financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh for every flood-affected family.

Questioning the adequacy of the existing relief provisions, Gogoi cited the compensation of Rs 3 lakh for deaths in flood-related incidents. He said assistance for serious injuries, damaged houses, household belongings, agricultural land and ponds was also inadequate.

He said families losing clothes, bedding and other household materials were entitled to Rs 2,500, while another Rs 2,500 was provided for damaged utensils.

Gogoi also questioned the compensation for completely damaged pucca houses, saying the amount did not reflect prevailing construction costs. He said compensation for damaged agricultural land was similarly inadequate.

He further cited provisions for damaged ponds, claiming that a pond measuring 7.5 bighas could receive only Rs 7,000 under the existing system.

The Rajior Dal chief said the relief manual should be revised to ensure that compensation was proportionate to the actual losses suffered by disaster-affected families.

He also raised concerns over losses suffered by businesses during the floods, particularly in Sivasagar, claiming that several shops and establishments had suffered losses worth crores of rupees and that some did not have insurance coverage.

According to Gogoi, he raised the issue during his meeting with Sarma and sought changes to the relief provisions. He alleged that the chief minister told him that shops operating without insurance

were committing a “criminal offence”.

Gogoi also demanded greater compensation for vehicles damaged in floods and said the absence of any assurance on revising the relief manual had prompted him to intensify the agitation.

He criticised the state government's overall response to the flood situation and said his demand to declare the floods an “extreme disaster” or “national disaster” had not been accepted.

According to Gogoi, such a designation could enable Assam to seek greater assistance from the Centre. He alleged that the government had also declined to revise the existing disaster relief manual.

The Rajior Dal chief separately raised allegations concerning coal mining activities in Nagaland and named Dharmeswar Konwar, Sushanta Borthakurai and Mayur Borthakurai. He alleged that they were responsible for the situation and claimed that the chief minister was protecting them.

Gogoi also targeted the Congress and its leadership over their response to the flood crisis.

He alleged that Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi had failed to adequately raise Assam's flood situation in Delhi and Parliament and questioned his contribution to relief efforts. He further claimed that no funds available to the Congress MP had been spent on assisting flood-affected people.

Gogoi said he would write to the government seeking permission to use Rs 1.5 crore from his MLA Local Area Development Fund to provide Rs 25,000 each to flood-affected people in his constituency.

He claimed that Gaurav Gogoi had access to Rs 5 crore but had not spent any

amount on flood relief, and challenged the Congress MP and Sarma to contest an election against him from Sivasagar.

“I will resign as MLA, Gaurav Gogoi should leave his MP seat and Himanta Biswa Sarma should leave his seat. Let us contest from Sivasagar and see who wins,” he said.

Gogoi said Rajior Dal was working to establish itself as an alternative political force in Assam. He claimed the party would emerge as the principal opposition force in the 2031 Assembly elections, while acknowledging that it would not be in a position to form the government at that stage. He also alleged that several Congress MLAs were politically close to the BJP-led government and referred to the recent presidential election, claiming that 12 Congress MLAs had voted differently. He attributed the figure to Congress Legislature Party leader Debabrata Saikia.

Gogoi said Rajior Dal would not field a candidate in the upcoming Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election.

He questioned the role of Assam MPs in raising issues concerning the state and again criticised Gaurav Gogoi. He also criticised the political parties preparing for the Nagaon contest, alleging that the Congress had yet to finalise a strong candidate and the BJP was yet to identify a suitable contender.

Gogoi also criticised the possible return of AIUDF chief Badrudin Ajmal to electoral politics, saying voters in Assam had previously rejected him.

He questioned what Assam would gain from the outcome of the Nagaon contest and reiterated his criticism of the parties involved.

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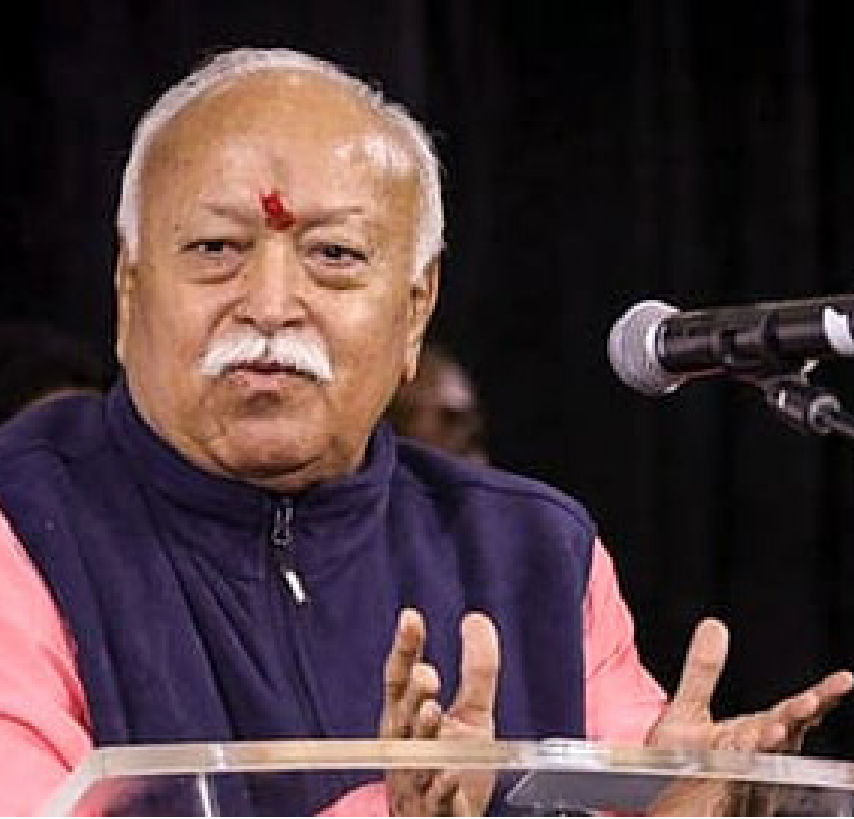
India has always believed humanity fundamentally united, says Bhagwat

NEW DELHI

RSS chief Dr Mohan Bhagwat, who arrived in Canada on Monday as part of his three-nation global outreach, said Indians travelling abroad had never sought to convert local populations but instead shared India's ancient traditions of the Vedas, Yoga and Ayurveda. Addressing more than 2,000 delegates from 175 host organisations at 'Hindu Vishwa Bandhu: Embrace the World in Friendship' in Toronto, Bhagwat said India's outlook was rooted in the belief that humanity is fundamentally united despite differences in physical appearance, complexion and other external characteristics. "The entire earth is one family and, in essence, we

are all one," he said, adding that those who are open-minded and knowledgeable embrace Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Bhagwat said serving others was a fundamental duty and said, "One may call Bharat a superpower, but it was not one. It served the world and, by its own character, became Vishwaguru, not Mahashakti." He said the ancestors of Indians who travelled across the world neither sought to conquer other peoples nor engaged in organised conversion. Instead, they shared India's knowledge, philosophy and traditions. "Our ancestors moved from Mexico to Siberia. They moved also and crossed Himalayas on foot, went to Southeast Asia through small boats but they

conquered no country. They gave knowledge, astronomy, Ayurveda, imparted civilisational values," he said. Bhagwat highlighted Bharat's tradition of helping others without discrimination, saying Muslims, Christians, Jews and Parsis had found peaceful refuge in the country without fear of persecution. Calling upon Hindus to share what the world needs without coercion, he said, "We have to create what the world needs, and then give it. But how do we give? We don't force. Our ancestors went abroad to every country. They never forced anything. We are the leaders who lead from within and lead by example."



SC defers hearing on Lokpal's plea in cash-for-query scam against TMC MP Mahua Moitra

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court deferred the hearing on two pleas filed by the Lokpal in the alleged cash-for-query scam against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the fact that the Centre, which was made a party to the petitions on July 24, was unrepresented during the hearing. "The Union of India is unrepresented. One more opportunity is granted to the UOI to file the counter affidavit (reply), if required. The matter is adjourned," the bench said. On July 24, the bench had made the Ministry of Home Affairs a party to the pleas. Prior to this, the top court had on March 13 stayed a part of the December 19, 2025 order of the Delhi High Court permitting the Lokpal to consider granting sanction to the CBI to file a charge sheet against Moitra in the alleged cash-for-query scam. It had issued notices to Moitra, the CBI and BJP MP and complainant Nishikant Dubey on the Lokpal's pleas against the high court's decision. The Lokpal had challenged the high court's judgement that had held that separate sanctions for the filing of a charge sheet and initiating prosecution are not contemplated by the Lokpal and Lok Ayuktas Act, 2013. On December 19 last year, the high court had set aside an order of the Lokpal granting sanction to the CBI to file a charge sheet against Moitra in the alleged cash-for-query scam. "The learned Lokpal is requested to accord its consideration for grant of sanction under Section 20 of the Lokpal Act, strictly in accordance with provisions thereof as construed hereinabove, within a period of one month from today," the high court had said in para 89 of that judgement.



The CJI-led bench had stayed the para 89 of the high court judgement while issuing notices on a batch of pleas related to power and procedures enumerated under section 20 of the Lokpal Act. The high court passed the verdict on a plea by Moitra challenging the November 12, 2025 order of the Lokpal granting sanction to the CBI to file the chargesheet against her in connection with the alleged scam. Holding that Section 20 of the Lokpal Act did not contemplate the separate grant of a sanction for filing of a chargesheet, and the sanction is granted only in a composite manner for prosecution, the high court had quashed the sanction granted by the Lokpal to the CBI to file a chargesheet against Moitra in the case. The ombudsman moved the apex court challenging the interpretation given by the high court. Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, appearing for the Lokpal, had submitted that the ombudsman was aggrieved with the interpretation given to the Lokpal Act by the high court, and was not concerned with

any particular individual. Solicitor General Mehta, appearing for the CBI, had said the probe agency supported the interpretation given by the high court. He also added that the respondent TMC MP needs to be investigated. The law officer said the question was whether two rounds of sanctions were contemplated, one for filing of the chargesheet and the second for initiating prosecution. "Solicitor, if you see the provisions (Section 20(7)(a) and 20(8)), apparently they overlap. But there are fine distinctions between the filing of a chargesheet and the conduct of prosecution. And when the conduct of prosecution comes into play, see the history of Lokpal Act. The Lokpal Act is to create public confidence in the enquiry into and prosecution of public servants who are highly placed, where there's a real or perceptible fear that he/she may disable the investigating and prosecution agencies from conducting their duties...", Justice Bagchi said. Justice Bagchi said Lokpal

may withhold the prosecution from the investigating agency and may direct prosecution through its agency. "Let's examine the interplay of the sections in light of BNSS and the Prevention of Corruption Act," she said. The high court, while setting aside the order of the Lokpal granting sanction to the CBI to file a chargesheet against Moitra, had said there was a "clear departure" from the procedure expressly mandated under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, and the Lokpal had erred in its understanding and interpretation of the provisions of the Act. The court asked the Lokpal to accord its consideration for grant of sanction under Section 20 of the Lokpal Act, strictly in accordance with the provisions within a month. The cash-for-query scam pertains to the allegation that Moitra asked questions in the Lok Sabha in exchange for cash and gifts from a businessman. The court passed the verdict on a plea by Moitra challenging the November 12 order of the Lokpal granting sanction to the CBI to file the charge sheet against her in connection with the alleged cash for query scam. The CBI in July last year submitted its report to the Lokpal in connection with the cash-for-query scam case involving Moitra and businessman Darshan Hiranandani. The agency registered its FIR on March 21, 2024, against the two under provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act on a reference from the Lokpal. It was alleged that Moitra indulged in corrupt practices, including but not limited to, taking bribes and other undue advantages from Hiranandani for "compromising her parliamentary privileges and causing national security threats by sharing her Lok Sabha login credentials".

INTERNATIONAL

US military completes latest strikes against Iran, while Trump vows more for Tehran's retaliation

WASHINGTON

The US military hit targets in Iran on Tuesday and Tehran fired missiles and drones at various sites across the region in response as hostilities flare once again in an intermittent war that has lasted more than six months. One US strike hit a home hosting a wedding, killing five people and wounding dozens, local officials said. U.S. Central Command said in a statement Tuesday evening that it had completed the latest barrage against Iranian military targets including air defense sites, radar systems and maritime assets. The US strikes followed others on Sunday that abruptly ended a month without military action and threatened to fully reignite a conflict that has spiked global oil prices and posed political problems for Republicans in November's midterm congressional elections. Late Tuesday, US President Donald Trump said he would not force Iran to the bargaining table. "I couldn't care less if they sign a worthless, to them, agreement. I like our position now much better, with almost total control of the Hormuz Strait, and their economy totally collapsing. They are just playing out the inevitable. When are the Iranian people going to rise up and fight?" Trump wrote on social media. Earlier, Trump had appeared to pivot toward trying to bend Iran to his will through economic sanctions. He warned that if Iran retaliated for the new strikes, "they will be hit again at a much harder and higher level." US Central Command said the latest attacks were in response to Tehran trying to hit commercial ships and American forces in the Middle East. The president offered an additional explanation, telling Fox News in a phone call that U.S. forces struck Iran's radars. "They tried to rebuild their radar because they can't see anything," Trump told Fox earlier in the day. "We waited until it was almost built and then we hit

it." After the U.S. attacks started, Iran launched ballistic missiles at Jordan. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard claimed to have targeted a U.S. base along Jordan's Gulf of Aqaba coast, according to Iran's state television. Jordan's military said it shot down 10 of the missiles and the three remaining landed in unpopulated areas. Explosions that appeared to be interceptions of incoming air attacks were seen over Aqaba. Iranian state media reported that the US had bombed civilian sites along Iran's southern coast and hit a civilian airport. A US strike hit a home where a wedding ceremony was being held in Kuhestak in southern Iran, killing five people, including a child, and wounding at least 68 others, Ahmad Nafisi, Hormozgan Province's deputy governor, told Iranian state television in a phone call. "Make no mistake; these crimes will not go unpunished," Ebrahim Azizi, chairperson of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said on X. US Central Command is aware of the reports of civilian casualties, said Capt. Tim Hawkins, a spokesperson. He noted that they "originated from Iranian state media." "The U.S. military never targets civilians, unlike the IRGC," Hawkins said. The Kuwaiti Army said on X that its air defenses intercepted drone attacks "following the criminal Iranian aggression." Iran also said it launched a drone attack at U.S. forces in Bahrain, but there was no immediate confirmation from that country. Iran's Armed Forces General Staff and its joint military command said the armed forces would deliver what they described as "crushing and devastating blows" against the United States. The state-run IRNA news agency cited a statement by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which warned that the attacks have only strengthened the

Islamic Republic's resolve and tightened Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil normally flows. Explosions were reported across several southern Iranian coastal areas, including the port city of Bandar Abbas that is home to naval and air force facilities as well as Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz. Witnesses in Bandar Abbas told The Associated Press that the explosions were stronger than those on Sunday and said they saw smoke rising from the eastern part of the city on the strait. Iranian state television said US strikes hit a fishmeal factory on Qeshm Island and several civilian sites in Hormozgan province. It said a fishing pier and a Ports and Maritime Organization tower in Sirik were among the locations struck. State TV also reported that the US military struck the civilian Jiroft Airport in central Iran's Kerman province, saying a projectile struck an area outside the runway and caused no casualties or damage to airport infrastructure. Iranian state television reported that Tavanir, Iran's electricity grid management company, said several parts of Hormozgan province's power network had been struck. It said authorities were working to restore resulting outages. The US and Iran are both seeking control over the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway off Iran's coast that is a vital oil shipping corridor. Tehran effectively closed it after the war began. Oil prices have moved sharply higher this week with renewed clashes between Iran and the United States. Crude, already up about 7% this week, continued to rise following the strikes on Tuesday. The price of crude has jumped more than 50% this year and dragged the cost of gasoline upward with it. The cost for a gallon of regular gasoline in the U.S. ticked higher again overnight to \$4.10, according to AAA. Last year at this time, a gallon cost \$3.19.

Before military action began again, the Trump administration had argued that hitting the right economic target in a campaign of financial isolation would get Tehran to its breaking point. Now, strikes are renewing even as U.S. stockpiles of advanced interceptors have been diminishing and the war has been unpopular among many Americans. A return to open conflict would be dangerous for the region, where Iran has targeted U.S. military bases and infrastructure in Gulf countries since the war began. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said earlier Tuesday before the latest strikes that the Islamic Republic is ready to return to the interim ceasefire deal reached with the U.S. in June if Washington does the same. "If the U.S. returns to its commitments in the memorandum of understanding, the Islamic Republic of Iran will immediately reciprocate," Iranian state media cited Pezeshkian as saying at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Kyrgyzstan. The June interim deal called for an immediate ceasefire and started a 60-day period for negotiations aimed at reaching a wider agreement, but crumbled soon afterward. In the previous strikes on Sunday, U.S. Central Command said its forces struck Iranian rocket launchers that would launch sea mines into the strait. Iran responded to Sunday's attacks by launching missiles at U.S. sites in Jordan, which were intercepted, while the United Arab Emirates said it stopped an Iranian drone over its waters. Trump acknowledged Monday that more strikes might be necessary. The American military in recent days has cast the renewed fighting as limited. Central Command reiterated Tuesday that its attacks followed Iranian aggression against commercial vessels and American troops in the region.

Nepal flood survivors fear loss of culture and community



KATHMANDU

In the days since Tsering Gelbu Lama's wife was swept away by devastating floods along the Nepal-Tibet border, he hasn't managed to tell his 4-year-old daughter that her mother is dead. Lama wiped away tears as he sat on the floor of a Buddhist monastery turned makeshift shelter for hundreds of others evacuated from remote villages to the capital, Kathmandu. "I don't know how I will pass on our culture to her," he said as he coaxed a spoonful of rice into her mouth. For Lama and a rising number of others displaced by the floods, the losses go beyond homes and belongings. Communities whose culture and practices, often tied to ancestral land, are eroding as young people leave for the city now worry if their sacred traditions can be preserved. "We've become homeless not only because we've lost our land — we've become homeless with our culture and tradition," said Tsering Sherpa, 36, from Rasuwa, as he sat on the monastery steps. Nepal is home to more than 120 ethnic groups, with many preserving distinct languages, rituals and festivals that have been passed down for generations. Rasuwa, a district in the Himalayas along the Nepal-Tibet border, is known for

its distinct Buddhist culture and Indigenous communities. The Tamang Heritage Trail has become a popular trekking route for tourists looking to see Tibetan Buddhist culture. Flood survivors now living in the monastery described their villages' forests as thick with trees and filled with bears, deer and butterflies. Others showed pictures of steep, green hills along a river. Survivors at the monastery also shared photos and videos of what life in their villages was like before the floods: Women chopping juniper together to make incense, making new decorations for a monastery being built, men and women wearing colorful traditional clothing and dancing during festivals. "Now all of it is finished," said Tenzin Dolma Ghale, a 20-year-old from Rasuwa. Survivors described to The Associated Press how they fled the surging river water by climbing to the top of hills, seeking refuge in monasteries they had built just a year earlier, after the older ones were destroyed by a 2015 earthquake. Many said they didn't have time to take anything from their homes and are now left with only the clothes they wore when being evacuated by helicopter. Others spoke of losing important heirlooms that are usually passed down from generation to generation. The loss came amid con-

cerns that community traditions were already in decline as young people moved to cities for better education and employment, said Alina Lama, 26, a shelter volunteer from Rasuwa. She said that they wanted to be "a little bit modern," she said. "There are many little details about our culture that I don't know, because I never got to spend time with my family." Several flood survivors sheltering in the monastery said that children who have become orphans during the floods are a particular concern. "We don't know who will teach them," Alina Lama said. Save the Children estimated that thousands of children need humanitarian assistance. No information is available on how many children have been orphaned during the floods. With local monasteries destroyed and monks with highly localized knowledge gone, Sherpa expressed that important Buddhist autumn festivals would be an example of further loss of cultural practices. "We used to celebrate these festivals in our monasteries. Right now we don't even have a monastery," he said. "Culture and tradition are passed generation to generation by practice. If I can't follow the tradition now, how can I pass it on to the next gen-

The Middle-Class Dream Is Dying The Problem Is Nobody Has Shown Us the Next One



NIBIR DEKA

Young people see attention as an economy. Here's why
(Excerpts taken from Nibir Deka, Social Media)

One of my favourite speeches from history is Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream." Sometimes a civilisation's most powerful dream is simply the promise that if you work hard enough, your children will live slightly better than you did.

America had one. Get a decent job. Marry. Buy a house somewhere in the suburbs. Send your children to the neighbourhood school. Save for college. Grow old on a lawn that you spent thirty years complaining about mowing.

The 2008 financial crisis did enormous damage to that imagination. Housing became increasingly difficult for younger Americans to afford. In 2024, only 4.06 million existing homes were sold in the United States, the lowest annual figure since 1995. The house with the white fence still exists. It is simply becoming harder to enter it.

We had our own version of this dream in India.

And if you grew up in a middle-class family in a Tier-2 or Tier-3 city like Guwahati, you probably know the script.

Your parents moved away from the joint family or eventually wanted to. They saved money. Bought a small piece of land somewhere that everyone complained was "too far from the city." Twenty years later, the city arrived there anyway.

They built a house. But their greatest investment was rarely the house. It was you.

Send the child to the best school we can afford. Tuition after school. Science if the marks permit it. Engineering, medicine or a Master's from a respectable university.

Then there were broadly two endings to the story. A government job through a competitive examination. Or an MNC job somewhere in Delhi, Bangalore, Gurgaon or Mumbai.

That was the Indian middle-class dream. Study well, and you will get a good job. The problem is that the sentence no longer ends so neatly.

Government employment remains one of the great aspirations of small-town India, but no government can possibly provide a government job to every graduate entering the labour market. The demographic dividend is simply too large.

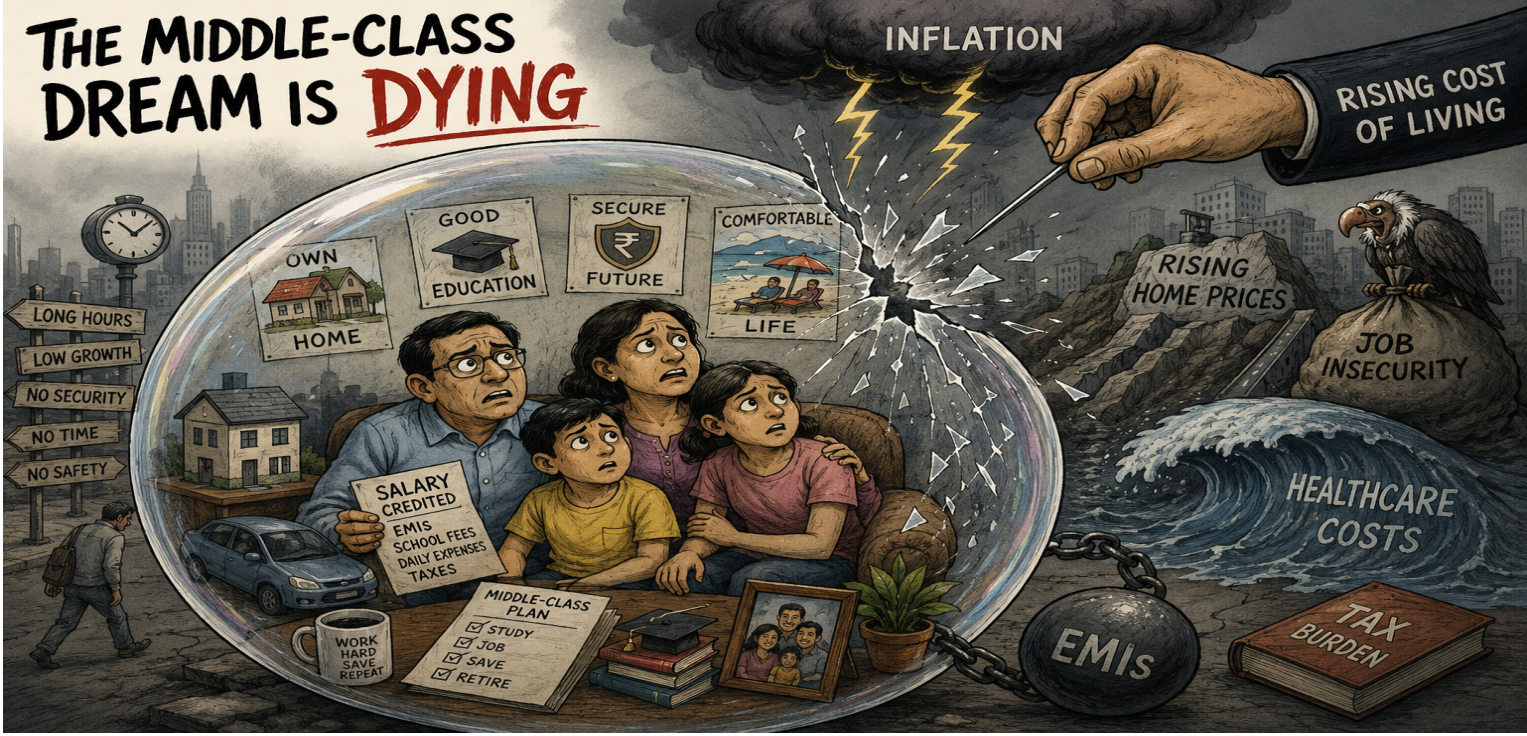
So thousands of young people spend their twenties preparing for competitive examinations where the vacancies are limited, and the applicants seem infinite.

Some eventually take Grade III jobs despite having Master's degrees from excellent universities. There is nothing undignified about those jobs. The tragedy lies elsewhere.

You were educated to expect that every additional degree would take you another floor upwards. Then one day you discover that the elevator isn't working.

The private-sector dream isn't looking particularly romantic either. Move to Bengaluru. Move to Gurgaon. Move to Mumbai. Get the corporate job.

Then spend half your salary on rent, another portion getting to the office, order dinner because you returned too exhausted to cook, and spend Sunday wondering



why exactly you moved 2,000 kilometres away from home.

COVID accelerated another change. People came back. And many discovered that they actually liked being back. The parents were here. Friends were here. The air was familiar. Life was cheaper. The fish tasted better.

Then Monday arrived. Where are the jobs?

India's startup economy has created extraordinary wealth and opportunity, but much of that ecosystem remains concentrated around a few metropolitan centres. What the digital economy has delivered very efficiently to many Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities is something else.

The gig economy.

A young man with a Bachelor's or Master's degree rides through Guwahati delivering food, groceries or passengers. After petrol, maintenance and platform economics, 500 can sometimes make it a good day.

There is dignity in every honest day's work. But we should stop using the language of dignity to avoid asking uncomfortable economic questions.

If someone spends eighteen or twenty years inside an education system and the economy's most readily available answer for him is to ride a motorcycle for twelve hours, perhaps the problem isn't the motorcycle.

Perhaps something between education and the economy has stopped speaking to each other. And that is why I find this generation fascinating.

They are frightened of sacrificing six years of their twenties preparing for a government examination they may never clear. They are equally unconvinced about spending those years in a metropolitan city on an entry-level salary that gives them neither savings nor a particularly enjoyable life.

Because their schools prepared them for a world that was already disappearing. Anyone who passed through school until fairly recently remembers the formula.

Study hard. Get good marks. Get a degree. Get a job.

The successful senior invited to school was usually the civil servant. Occasionally the doctor, engineer or corporate executive.

Nobody invited the 26-year-old who built a small logistics company.

Nobody explained how a local brand becomes profitable.

Nobody taught you how a freelancer finds clients in another country.

Nobody told you that one day somebody sitting in Guwahati could edit videos for a company in London without ever leaving his bedroom.

Then 4G arrived. And quietly, the phone offered young India an alternative economy.

Suddenly a student could become a YouTuber. Someone could build a small social-media agency. A photographer could find clients through Instagram. A teacher could sell classes online. A designer could freelance. Someone could make money through affiliate marketing, digital consulting, online tutoring or a thousand micro-businesses that our textbooks never prepared us to understand. Hence, you see a brand like Little Box with a founder from Guwahati and a gin from Cherrapunji telling a story like no other.

Even stock-market participation entered the vocabulary of families where "share market" was once spoken with roughly the same confidence as horse racing.

Then the parents joined. Mothers started cooking channels. Fathers started gardening pages. Small businessmen discovered reels.

The same family that once shouted, "Phone tu rakhal!" suddenly started asking why yesterday's video received fewer views.

There is something extraordinary about this democratisation. There is also something dangerous. Because the internet didn't merely tell young people that they could create value.

It told them that attention itself had value. And when somebody from a small town sees another person earning in one month what an entry-level job might pay in a year because one video went viral, the incentives begin changing.

So someone performs a stunt. Someone drives dangerously. Someone creates a fake controversy. Someone humiliates another person for a reaction video. Someone discovers that anger gets more views than intelligence. When the conventional economy isn't offering enough opportunities, and the attention economy tells you that stupidity can occasionally be monetised, stupidity becomes a business model. I don't blame the young person entirely. We gave him a smartphone, cheap internet and an algorithm capable of reaching fifty million people. We forgot to give him an economic imagination for what to do with it.

And this is where I think our education system has fallen dangerously behind. Content creation shouldn't merely mean teaching children how to become influencers. That would be an equally ridiculous destination. Content is becoming infrastructure for business. China seems to have understood this more aggressively. Its enormous livestream-commerce and short-video ecosystem increasingly connects creators, factories, local products and sellers. The person holding the camera isn't necessarily selling himself as the product. Very often, the content is constructing a story around the product, the

factory, the farm, the town or the business.

That distinction matters. A camera can create an influencer. But it can also create a market.

Imagine teaching a young person in Assam not merely how to make a reel, but how to use storytelling to sell Assam tea directly to customers. How to build a digital market around Muga. How to make a small furniture workshop discoverable nationally. How to turn a homestay into a brand. How to take a family business that has existed for forty years and give it customers in places its founder has never visited.

Then content creation stops being an escape from the economy. It becomes part of the productive economy.

Because converting millions of young people in India's smaller cities into delivery partners and self-employed content creators cannot be the final answer.

Perhaps that is what worries me most about the death of the old middle-class dream. Not that it died. Dreams always die when economies change.

The problem is that nobody has shown this generation another one. And we badly need another Martin Luther King to show us the road.

Note - Content is infrastructure for your business, and community will be the answer to acquire the next generation of people who will be interested in your business or personal brand. As such, we created The Visual Poets

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