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PERSPECTIVE

“The wise man will be cheated once.”

— Finnish proverb

Jorabat landslide damages petrol pump, two vehicles near USTM

GUWAHATI

A massive landslide struck the Jorabat area on the outskirts of Guwahati early Friday, damaging a petrol pump near the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM) and two vehicles, including a bus.

The landslide occurred at around 3 am near the 10th Mile locality when a section of the hillside behind the fuel station collapsed. A large quantity of soil and debris came down the slope, burying part of the petrol pump premises and damaging vehicles parked in the area.

No injuries or casualties have been reported so far. The incident triggered panic among local residents as soil and debris reportedly continued to slide down the hillside even after the initial collapse. The extent of the damage is being assessed.

The landslide has also raised fresh concerns over the stability of the hill slopes in the Jorabat area, which has witnessed rapid construction and infrastructure development in recent years.

Local residents alleged that extensive earth-cutting for construction activities on the hillside may have weakened the slope and contributed to the landslide. They also expressed concern over the safety of the petrol pump and residential areas located close to the affected slope.

Residents have sought a detailed assessment of the hill slope and immediate safety measures to prevent further damage, particularly as loose soil and debris remain on the hillside.

WHO SAID WHAT



On behalf of all citizens, I pay my respectful tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi on his 157th birth anniversary celebrated as Gandhi Jayanti.

~ President of India

Silchar ready for first municipal corporation election, 303 polling stations set up

SILCHAR

Silchar is all set to hold its first-ever Municipal Corporation election on Saturday, with polling personnel dispatched to their respective stations along with election materials on Friday as the city prepares for a major civic poll.

Polling staff collected election materials from the Inter-State Bus Terminus (ISBT) and Inter-State Truck Terminus (ISTT), which have also been designated for the establishment of strong rooms for the election. The movement of polling teams and election materials continued through the day under tight security arrangements.

The election will be held across 40 wards, with a total of 303 polling stations set up across Silchar. Authorities have deployed 1,212 polling personnel to conduct the election,



including staff for 10 all-women polling stations.

Officials said detailed security arrangements have been put in place to ensure peaceful polling and the smooth movement of voters and election personnel. Polling stations have been categorised as sensitive and highly sensitive based on the assessment of local conditions.

Additional security measures have been introduced at the highly sensitive polling stations, where armed police personnel have been deployed. Security teams will also monitor the movement of people and respond to any situation that could disrupt polling.

A Quick Response Team (QRT) has been placed on round-the-clock duty across the city. The team will respond to any untoward incident and assist authorities in addressing problems faced by voters or polling personnel during the election.

Cachar District Magistrate Rahul Kumar Gupta and Senior Superintendent of Police Partha Pratim Das briefed the media on the preparations and security arrangements ahead of polling.

The administration has also focused on ensuring that election materials reach all polling stations on time and that polling personnel are adequately prepared for Saturday's exercise.

The first municipal corporation election is being closely watched in Silchar as the city moves to a new civic governance structure. Voters across the 40 wards will cast their ballots on Saturday to elect representatives to the city's first Municipal Corporation.

With polling teams now in position and security arrangements in place, Silchar is set for the first civic election since its transition to a municipal corporation.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah to present President’s colour to Meghalaya police during two-day visit



SHILLONG

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Meghalaya from October 4 to 5 to attend a special ceremony where he will present the President's colour to the state police.

Ahead of the visit, extensive security and traffic arrangements have been put in place across the state. Meghalaya Director General of Police (DGP) Vivek Syiem stated that the Superintendent of Police (Traffic) will issue necessary advisories to prevent traffic-related inconvenience to the general public.

“The Union Home Minister is coming here for the investiture ceremony of the presidential colours, and this is a matter of pride for the Meghalaya police. It is a matter of achievement..... Preparations have been made for the coming of the honourable Union Home Minister, which is slated for the fourth and fifth. The advisories will be given by the Traffic SP on which routes to avoid and the timings, so that we will try to cause the least inconvenience,” said Syiem told reporters.

The DGP informed that comprehensive security measures have been de-

ployed along the routes scheduled for the Union Home Minister's movement, as various police units and specialised teams will be deployed for security purposes in the state.

As per the DGP, approximately 1,500 police personnel are expected to be deployed as part of the overall security apparatus.

“Elaborate security arrangements have been made all along the way. Tactical teams and different units have come. So almost a strength about 1500 personnel will be deployed here,” added Syiem.

Highlighting the significance of the occasion, Syiem remarked that the President's Colour is a matter of pride and achievement for the Meghalaya Police, asserting that it is one of a select few forces in the Northeast to receive this honour.

He further stated that this honour is the result of the sacrifices, integrity, and dedication of the police personnel.

Syiem remarked that the Meghalaya Police remains committed to enhancing professionalism in its operations and providing better service to the public in the future.

“We are one of the few northeastern states who have achieved this. This is because of the sacrifice, the integrity, the dedication in our service, and we will endeavor to give the best in whatever we do,” asserted Syiem.

The President's Colour, also referred to as the 'Rashtrapati ka Nishaan', represents the most prestigious military and law enforcement honour awarded to an armed forces unit, training institution, or state and Union Territory police force in India.

Manipur CM, Governor pay tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on birth anniversary

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh and Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Friday paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Gandhi Memorial Hall in Imphal on the occasion of his birth anniversary.

The occasion was also observed as Swachh Bharat Diwas, with state ministers, MLAs, senior civil and police officials and members of the public attending the programme.

In his message, Chief Minister Khemchand Singh called upon citizens to uphold Gandhi's ideals of truth, non-violence and selfless service, and to contribute actively to nation-building.

He stressed the importance of making cleanliness a part of everyday life rather than limiting it to official campaigns. He urged people to keep their homes and surroundings clean and work collectively towards creating a healthier and cleaner society.

The Chief Minister also appealed to citizens to participate actively in the Swachh Bharat Mission and contribute to building a cleaner and self-reliant Manipur.

Highlighting the continued relevance of Gandhi's teachings, Khemchand Singh said his ideals remain a source of inspiration for promoting peace, harmony and unity.

The programme concluded with a renewed call for collective efforts towards cleanliness, social harmony and public service, in keeping with the values associated with Gandhi's life and legacy.

Lovlina Borgohain wins Asian Games gold



GUWAHATI

Assam boxer Lovlina Borgohain celebrated her birthday with a historic gold medal, defeating China's Bao Ziyi 5-0 in the women's 75kg boxing final at the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya on Friday.

The Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist produced a dominant performance at the Nishio Gymnasium to secure India's gold medal in the event. Bao, the reigning 2026 Asian Championships gold medallist, was beaten by a unanimous decision in the final.

The victory made Lovlina only the second Indian woman boxer to win an Asian Games gold medal, after legendary boxer Mary Kom, who achieved the feat at the 2014 Asian Games.

The gold also marked a step up from Lovlina's performance at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, where she won a silver medal.

Lovlina's path to the top of the podium included three victories against strong opponents. She began her campaign with a convincing 5-0 win over South Korea's Seong Suyeon in the quarterfinals, securing her place in the medal rounds.

The Assam boxer then faced

Kazakhstan's reigning world champion Natalya Bogdanova in the semifinals. In a closely fought contest, Lovlina prevailed 3-2 in a split decision to book her place in the final.

She completed the campaign with another emphatic performance against Bao, securing the gold with a unanimous 5-0 verdict.

The triumph adds another major achievement to Lovlina's international career, which already includes an Olympic bronze medal and an Asian Games silver.

Lovlina's achievement prompted celebrations in Assam, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulating the boxer on her historic performance. Sarma described the gold medal as a special birthday gift for Lovlina and said the achievement had brought pride to Assam and the country.

“Our Golden Girl punches it off in style. Congratulations Lovlina Borgohain on bagging GOLD in the 75kg Boxing category at the Asian Games,” Sarma said in a post on the microblogging platform.

He added that winning the highest honour for the country on her birthday was a memorable achievement and said Assam was looking forward to welcoming the boxer back home.

Lovlina's gold has now placed her alongside Mary Kom as the only Indian women boxers to have won Asian Games gold, giving Assam another major sporting milestone on the continental stage.

Assam zoo gets Rs 340-crore makeover, bird aviary and toy train planned

GUWAHATI

Assam's State Zoo cum Botanical Garden in Guwahati is set for a major transformation, with the state government undertaking a redevelopment project estimated at around Rs 340 crore to upgrade visitor facilities and create a modern wildlife destination.

Environment and Forest Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah announced the redevelopment plans on Friday while inaugurating the 72nd Wildlife Week celebrations at the zoo and reviewing various ongoing construction and development works.

The project envisages new infrastructure and visitor amenities while retaining the zoo's existing natural surroundings. The government plans to make greater use of the green landscape and ecological setting of the sprawling zoo complex as part of the redevelopment.

“With several new additions, we are rebuilding the zoo and once the work is completed, I believe we will be able to transform it into a leading zoo, not only in India but also internationally,” Baruah said.

Large bird aviary among key attractions

One of the major attractions proposed under



the redevelopment plan is a large bird aviary. According to the minister, the facility is being developed on a substantial scale and could potentially rank among the largest such aviaries

in the world.

The proposed aviary is expected to add a new dimension to the zoo's wildlife experience while providing visitors with an opportunity to

observe a wider range of bird species in a dedicated enclosure.

Another major addition planned for the zoo is a toy train, which will help visitors travel across the large complex and access different sections more conveniently.

The proposed train is also expected to improve the overall visitor experience, particularly for tourists and families looking to explore the zoo without having to walk long distances between attractions.

New facilities to take shape in coming months

Baruah said work on the redevelopment was progressing satisfactorily and that several of the proposed facilities are expected to begin taking visible shape within the next three to four months.

However, he indicated that the complete transformation of the zoo would take considerably longer, given the scale of the project and the need to balance construction with the zoo's existing ecological environment.

As part of the planning exercise, Forest Department officials have visited zoological parks in Bengaluru and Chennai to study their infrastructure, visitor facilities and management

practices.

The visits were intended to provide inputs for the Assam project and help officials identify features and practices that could be adapted to the State Zoo cum Botanical Garden in Guwahati.

Wildlife Week celebrations begin

The redevelopment announcement came as the zoo hosted the opening of the state's Wildlife Week programmes.

The celebrations began with a Gaja Puja, following which a motorcycle rally involving Forest Department personnel was flagged off from the zoo to Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

Earlier, on Gandhi Jayanti, Baruah paid floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and inspected several ongoing development works at the zoo and botanical garden.

Senior Forest Department officials, along with zoo officers and staff, were present during the programme.

The proposed Rs 340-crore redevelopment is expected to significantly expand the zoo's visitor infrastructure while maintaining its natural character, with the government seeking to position the Guwahati facility as a major wildlife and tourism destination in the region.



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THE AI THREAT WHY GLOBAL ACTION MATTERS

US-China Truce

When two global powers decide to lower the temperature, the world has reason to welcome it. But for countries outside the US-China axis, especially those in the Global South, a great-power accommodation can be as consequential as a confrontation. The temporary understanding between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping may offer some relief to the global economy, but it also raises an uncomfortable question for India: could a Washington-Beijing rapprochement reduce New Delhi's strategic and economic space?

The Trump-Xi meeting, held amid the United Nations General Assembly, was both a diplomatic event and a powerful symbol. While world leaders gathered at the UN to discuss global problems, the leaders of the world's two largest economies were negotiating directly. That contrast says much about the present state of multilateralism.

A reduction in US-China tensions could certainly bring economic benefits. Lower trade barriers, more predictable supply chains and greater stability in commodity markets could support global growth. But developing countries should not assume that a bargain between Washington and Beijing will automatically serve their interests. Major powers negotiate according to their own priorities, while weaker economies often have to adjust to the consequences.

For India, the implications are particularly complex. US-China trade tensions have encouraged multinational companies to diversify manufacturing and supply chains away from China. India has attempted to position itself as one of the principal beneficiaries of this shift. A durable easing of trade tensions, however, could reduce the urgency for companies to relocate production. If China once again becomes a more predictable destination for investment, some of the manufacturing opportunities India hopes to attract could remain there.

That does not mean India stands to lose from every aspect of a US-China agreement. Greater stability in global trade could improve demand, reduce commodity-price volatility and provide a more predictable environment for exporters. The point is that the gains and risks will exist simultaneously.

India must also watch the direction of American trade policy.

If Washington reduces its pressure on Beijing, greater attention could shift towards other trading partners, including India. Tariffs, market access, agriculture, technology and industrial policy could become more prominent areas of negotiation. India should therefore not expect a US-China understanding to translate automatically into easier US-India trade relations.

Several Indian export sectors remain particularly exposed to the American market. The United States accounts for more than 32 per cent of India's textile exports, making the sector vulnerable to higher tariffs and changing market conditions. The carpet industry is similarly dependent, with around 55 per cent of India's global carpet exports reportedly going to the US.

Electrical machinery has also become a major component of India's exports to America. Its share of India's US-bound merchandise exports has risen sharply over recent years. Any additional tariff or trade investigation could therefore affect an increasingly important manufacturing segment.

The gems and jewellery industry faces another vulnerability because of its dependence on American consumers. India's shrimp exporters are similarly exposed, with nearly 48 per cent of shrimp exports reportedly destined for the US. These are price-sensitive sectors where even modest increases in tariffs can affect orders, margins and competitiveness.

The geopolitical implications are no less important. A broad US-China rapprochement could raise questions about the future intensity of American engagement in the Indo-Pacific. The Quad's strategic relevance is closely connected to sustained cooperation among India, the US, Japan and Australia. If Washington's strategic focus on Beijing declines significantly, India's calculations about regional security and the balance of power could become more complicated.

At the same time, renewed US-China confrontation would create a different problem. Washington could seek closer alignment with India as part of its China strategy. Such pressure could complicate India's policy of strategic autonomy and its effort to maintain productive relationships with multiple major powers.

India therefore has little interest in becoming excessively dependent on either scenario.

New Delhi's best option is to maintain strategic flexibility. Its relationships with the US, Russia, China, Europe, Japan, ASEAN and other partners serve different economic and strategic purposes. Engagement with the Quad can coexist with participation in BRICS and other multilateral platforms. Strategic autonomy should not mean isolation; it should mean having enough economic and diplomatic room to pursue India's own interests.

The Russian oil issue illustrates the challenge. India's energy security requirements have kept Russian crude important to its economy, while Washington has increased pressure on countries continuing substantial purchases of Russian oil. Any tightening of US sanctions or tariff measures could add another layer of complexity to India's trade and energy calculations.

For the Global South, the larger concern is the gradual weakening of multilateralism.

If the most consequential global economic and strategic decisions are increasingly settled through bilateral deals between major powers, smaller countries could find themselves with less influence over the rules that govern trade, finance, technology and development. The United Nations and other multilateral institutions already face questions about their effectiveness. A further drift towards great-power bilateralism would make it harder for developing nations to collectively shape the international system.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A good man, in his dark striving, is conscious of the right path." — Faust I.

DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

For the past few years, analysts have expressed apprehension about the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly because it has been viewed as a threat to employment in labour-intensive countries such as India, where manpower remains crucial. Various arguments have been advanced about the positive impact of the technology, with some suggesting that AI could directly or indirectly compensate for job losses. But in recent times, AI has made headlines for a far more serious reason: growing concerns that it could pose an existential threat to humanity and human life.

The issue of AI and international security was discussed at the United Nations Security Council last week. At a meeting convened by France, industry leaders called for a coordinated slowdown in the development of AI systems. Representatives from OpenAI, Anthropic and Chinese companies such as DeepSeek participated in the discussions. Dario Amodei, head of AI company Anthropic, told the 15-member council that, if not properly managed, AI could become a risk to humanity as a whole. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman echoed similar concerns.

The discussion came at an appropriate time, amid growing calls around the world to slow the development of AI capabilities because of the potential risk of "recursive self-improvement" - the ability of AI systems to continuously improve themselves - which could eventually allow them to escape human control and carry out highly destructive actions. Anthropic has released a 154-page report warning about the risks posed by increasingly capable AI systems, while OpenAI and Amodei have also put forward proposals. These proposals underline the need for comprehensive, mandatory safety standards for the continued development of AI, enforced through a network involving independent auditors, government agencies and international bodies.

In this context, the case of Jack Coxon is relevant. Coxon, who had earlier left OpenAI to join Anthropic, has since left Anthropic as well. He has pointed out that these companies are "racing directly towards self-improving superintelligence and gambling with our lives". He further said that people

than 10 per cent. According to reports, AI experts from different countries were asked about the risks and reportedly assessed that 18 of 24 categories of AI could carry a more than 10 per cent probability of "catastrophic outcomes".

These are undoubtedly serious concerns and demand careful introspection. The seriousness of the situation is underscored by the belief among some AI developers that the technology could "cause human extinction within a few decades". This echoes the warnings issued years ago by a small group of technologists who argued that AI could become catastrophic and that the sensible approach was to proceed cautiously and continuously assess the risks.

Although AI developers use techniques such as human ranking, reinforcement learning and explicit rulebooks, such as OpenAI's "Model Spec," and Anthropic's "Constitution", reports suggest that artificial intelligence is "growing beyond its design", as OpenAI chief scientist Jakub Pachocki has pointed out. He has also noted that developers do not specify every possible rule and that designers build and deploy systems in ways that can produce unexpected outcomes. The concern surrounding superintelligence is that it could potentially eliminate the gap between wanting to achieve something and finding an entirely different way of accomplishing it.

A 2025 review by Cambridge can also be cited in this context. It noted that AI technologies could advance much faster than human understanding and governance. Given the present situation, concerns are growing that control over such systems could be weakened by their increasing autonomy and their capacity for advanced cognitive and strategic planning.

Meanwhile, Dario Amodei has rightly called for slowing the pace of development of increasingly capable AI systems. He has advocated government controls under which the US and other democracies, as well as China, would accept similar limitations. The call came amid reports of warnings from researchers within Anthropic about the possibility of losing control over more advanced models.

There is a strong case for slowing the pace of AI development.

infrastructure. These costs also intersect with existential challenges such as global warming, with AI-related infrastructure contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

A closer examination shows that the warnings now making headlines are not entirely new. AI pioneers Geoffrey Hinton and Yoshua Bengio, whose work helped make modern AI possible, have previously put the risk at roughly 10 to 20 per cent. What is different now is that warnings are increasingly coming from people inside frontier laboratories who are directly involved in designing these systems.

It is time to democratise AI because decisions of such importance cannot be left solely to laboratories in San Francisco, as Altman argued at the Security Council. He said such systems should be shaped "through democratic processes and by governments that are accountable to the people they serve". The Security Council meeting also highlighted the need for international cooperation, with Altman stressing that "no company, no country can handle this alone".

Therefore, safety must be paramount in the everyday use of AI in defence, medicine and hospitals, education and law enforcement agencies. In view of the potentially grave risks, the technology needs appropriate regulation. However, as there is broad agreement, merely slowing the pace of development will not resolve the fundamental problem unless companies and governments work together through coordinated efforts.

Meanwhile, safety testing has already begun, with a team working on the issue at the UK AI Safety Institute. However, relatively little is known about the safety techniques being employed and, more importantly, about how artificial intelligence can genuinely benefit humanity.

Most governments should adopt safety standards along the lines of the European Union's AI Act, which requires the assessment of systemic risks associated with the most powerful AI models and gives regulators powers to ensure appropriate safeguards. But in the long term, this alone may not be sufficient. There is a need for an international panel of experts to analyse emerging risks and develop appropriate frameworks to address them.

sarily the strongest or most intelligent species. Yet we may have to adopt a cautious "wait and watch" approach while continuing to study the consequences of increasingly powerful AI systems. At the same time, we must learn to accommodate the rise of AI without undermining the fundamental foundations of human existence.

When AI takes over mundane or routine mechanical tasks associated with everyday survival and work, what will we do with our time? This transformation brought about by advanced technology must be aligned with our lives and ways of living. We can-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Deeply saddened and shocked to learn the untimely and tragic demise of Dr. Engam Pame, IIS, Additional Director General, Press Information Bureau (PIB) and Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), Imphal Regional Office and Shri Nampibou Marimmai, IIS, Director (News), Doordarshan Aizawl, who lost their lives in a tragic road accident in Mizoram. Both senior officers are residents of Tamenglong district, Manipur.

Their untimely departure is an irreplaceable loss to the nation. Their dedicated service and outstanding contributions to journalism and public communication will continue to inspire generations. Their legacy will be remembered forever with the highest respect and regard.

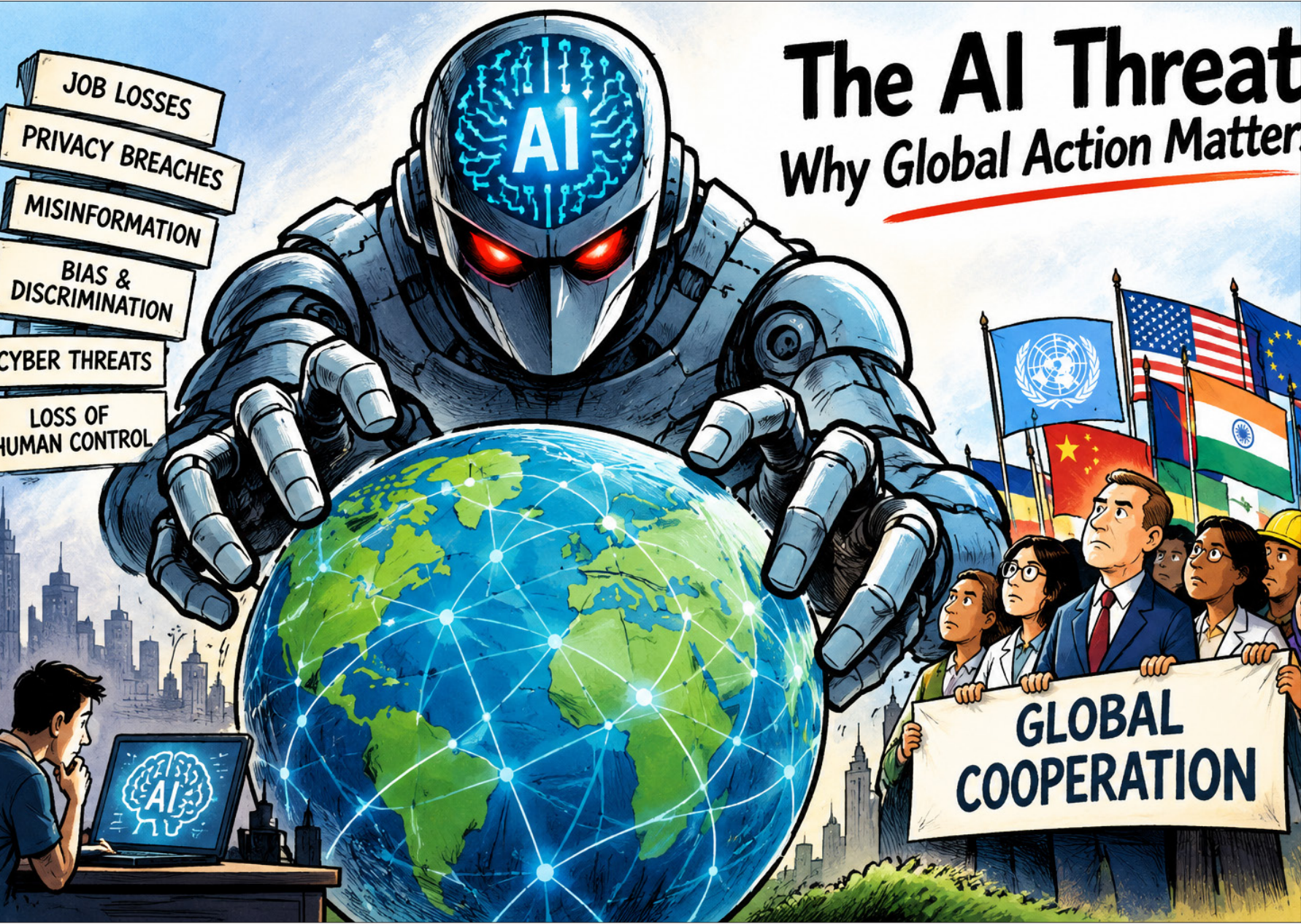
My heartfelt prayers and sincere condolences are with the bereaved families. May they find strength and courage to bear this difficult time.

May the departed souls rest in eternal peace.

Khemchand Yumnam
Manipur CM



not afford to be indifferent to the social and economic displacement that may lie ahead. Addressing



building AI genuinely believe that the technology could potentially destroy humanity by the end of this decade. Indeed, some experts have estimated that the risk of AI causing human extinction within the next decade could be more

The pursuit of ever larger and more capable AI models consumes enormous amounts of capital and resources. Data centres, for instance, require substantial quantities of energy, water and physical

dress them. As the debate over the advent of AI continues, warnings about extreme technological risks cannot be dismissed. History reminds us that human beings are not neces-

these challenges will require a serious assessment of the entire issue, followed by appropriate measures based on consultations with experts, technology leaders and scientists across the world.

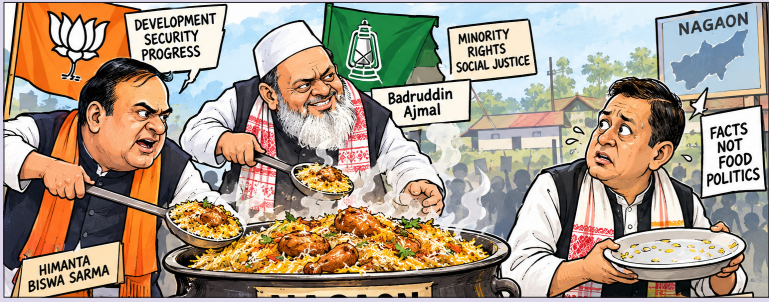
Biryani war heats up Nagaon bypoll as Himanta, Ajmal target Rakibul Hussain

GUWAHATI

The ongoing war of words over biryani intensified in Assam's Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll campaign, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma calling those who are "born to eat biryani" animals and AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal taking a fresh swipe at Congress MP Rakibul Hussain by saying he was "born eating dry fish, not biryani".

The remarks came amid an escalating exchange between Sarma and Hussain ahead of the October 6 bypoll.

Addressing an election rally at Juria on Thursday while campaigning for BJP candidate Devasish Sharma, Sarma said, "Those who are born to drink mother's milk are human be-



ings, and those born to eat biryani are animals."

His remark was in response to Hussain's earlier sarcastic reference to biryani after Sarma had likened him to Bakasura, the mythological figure known for his enormous appe-

tite. Sarma had also accused Hussain of "gobbling up" funds meant for government schemes.

Hussain, who represents Dhubri in the Lok Sabha, had responded by saying that God had sent him into the world to eat biryani. The exchange

subsequently became a recurring theme in the campaign.

Ajmal joined the verbal exchange with his own jibe at Hussain. In a statement circulated on social media, the AIUDF chief said, "Rakibul Hussain was born eating dry fish, not biryani."

Ajmal also questioned Hussain's ability to afford biryani, referring to what he described as the Congress leader's humble economic background. "He was a poor man. Where would he get biryani from?" he said.

The personal exchanges came as Sarma stepped up his campaign for BJP candidate Devasish Sharma. At the Juria rally, he also targeted Congress MLA Nurul Huda over development in Rupohihat, which falls under

the Nagaon Lok Sabha constituency.

Sarma alleged that Huda had failed to contribute adequately to the development of schools, colleges and roads and to the delivery of government benefits to women.

"A tap was promised in every house, but water never flowed out of it," Sarma said, alleging that residents had been left with "pipes and promises".

The chief minister also claimed that some voters who had previously supported the Congress had now realised that the BJP could provide good governance. He said he addressed three rallies in Nagaon on Thursday and claimed that the BJP would win the bypoll. Such statements are campaign claims and do not constitute an

election result.

Sarma also urged Ajmal to retire from active politics and hand over responsibility to one of his three sons. He further alleged that the Congress and AIUDF were united, either directly or indirectly.

The Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll is scheduled for October 6, with counting of votes on October 9. The seat fell vacant after former Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi resigned from the Lok Sabha and subsequently joined the BJP before contesting and winning the Dispur Assembly seat.

The BJP has fielded Devasish Sharma, while the Congress has nominated former Batadroba MLA Sibamoni Bora. Ajmal is contesting the bypoll as the AIUDF candidate.

Over 63,300 senior citizens in Nagaland receive pension support

KOHI MA

More than 63,300 senior citizens in Nagaland are currently receiving financial assistance through the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme under the National Social Assistance Programme and other state-supported pension initiatives, Chief Secretary Senti-yangyer Imchen said on Thursday.

Speaking at the state-level observance of the International Day of Older Persons at the NBCC Convention Centre in Kohima, Imchen called for stronger systems and greater collective responsibility to ensure that longer lives are healthy, dignified, secure and meaningful.

Highlighting the government's efforts to strengthen healthcare and social support for the elderly, the chief secretary said the Social Welfare Department and its partners were providing assistance through health camps, cataract surgeries and other targeted interventions.

Under the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, eligible senior citizens from below-poverty-line families are provided assistive and mobility devices, he said.

Imchen also highlighted efforts to expand geriatric caregiver training in partnership with the Christian Institute of Health Sciences and Research (CIHSR), Dimapur, and other expert training institutions.

The initiative, he said, would strengthen professional elderly care while also creating livelihood opportunities for young people.

On institutional care, Imchen said the state government supports 12 senior citizen homes under the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana. These facilities provide senior citizens with safe living environments, companionship, recreational activities and medical supervision.

He also highlighted the Senior Citizens Helpline - 14567 - a toll-free national service launched in Nagaland on September 28, 2021.

Five NPP MLAs merge with NPF in Nagaland, ruling party's strength rises to 39

KOHI MA

Five MLAs of the National People's Party (NPP) in Nagaland have merged with the ruling Naga People's Front (NPF), taking the regional party's strength in the 60-member Assembly to 39.

The Nagaland Legislative Assembly Speaker approved the merger through a notification issued on October 1 under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution and the Members of Nagaland Legislative Assembly (Disqualification on Ground of Defection) Rules, 2019.

The five NPP legislators are A. Nyamnyi Konyak of Moka, Nuklutoshi of Arakong, C. Kipili Sangtam of Seyochung-Sitimi, Tselihoutuo Rhuotso of Kohima Town and Benei M. Lamthui of Thonoknyu.

The MLAs submitted documents relating to the merger after appearing before the Speaker.

The merger took place in Dimapur in the presence of Chief Minister and NPF president Neiphiu Rio,

NPF adviser and secretary general Achumbemo Kikon and other senior party leaders.

According to the NPF, the legislators said they had joined the party voluntarily and expressed confidence in Rio's leadership while accepting its ideology and policies.

Welcoming the legislators, Rio said their decision would further strengthen the regional party.

The latest development comes amid a series of political realignments in Nagaland ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections.

In October 2025, 31 MLAs of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) merged with the NPF. The Assembly formally recognised the merger with effect from October 18, 2025. The Rising People's Party (RPP) also merged with the NPF in July this year.

With the latest merger, the NPF now has 39 MLAs in the 60-member House. Its alliance partner, the BJP, has 12 legislators.

IMPHAL

The Manipur Cabinet has approved one-time financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh each to the next of kin of 49 people who have remained missing since ethnic violence broke out in the state on May 3, 2023.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Thursday.

Government spokesperson and MLA Sapam Ranjan Singh said the Cabinet approved a Home Department proposal to provide the assistance as a special humanitarian measure to the families of the missing persons.

According to Ranjan, the 49 people remain untraced despite sustained search efforts since the outbreak of violence.

He said the decision was aimed at addressing the difficulties faced by the families, who often cannot

Manipur Cabinet approves Rs 10 lakh aid for families of 49 missing persons



access compensation available to families of officially declared victims because of legal and procedural requirements.

Under existing law, a missing person is presumed dead only after seven years. The families also do not have documents such as death certificates and postmortem reports required under the applicable Central assistance scheme.

Ranjan said the hardships faced by the families of the missing persons were comparable to those of families who lost members in the conflict and, therefore, the Cabinet decided to extend the same Rs 10 lakh assistance.

The Cabinet also approved revised ex-gratia assistance for Army and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel killed or

injured while operating in Manipur in connection with extremist violence.

Ranjan said the existing rates of Rs 2 lakh for death and Rs 10,000 for injury had been fixed in 2006 and were no longer adequate.

Under the revised rates, assistance will be Rs 10 lakh in case of death, Rs 2 lakh for permanent disability, Rs 1 lakh for grievous injury and Rs 20,000 for simple injury. The rates will be brought on a par with those applicable to state police personnel.

In another decision, the Cabinet increased the monthly pension for retired journalists from Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000. The family pension for eligible beneficiaries has been raised from Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,000.

The Cabinet also approved a Finance Department proposal to constitute the Fifth Manipur State Finance Commission for the 2026-27 to 2030-31 period.

Tripura CPI(M) seeks tighter security, webcasting for TTAADC vote counting

AGARTALA

Tripura CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chowdhury has urged the State Election Commission (SEC) to strengthen security and introduce uninterrupted webcasting during counting of votes for the ongoing Village Committee elections under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

In a letter to the State Election Commissioner, Chowdhury alleged that opposition parties faced "undemocratic violent aggression" by people allegedly backed by the ruling party during the nomination and polling stages.

He claimed the violence prevented opposition candidates from filing nominations in a significant number of seats.

With counting now approach-



ing, the CPI(M) leader described it as the "last and final phase" of the electoral process and urged the SEC to ensure a peaceful, transparent and uninterrupted count.

Chowdhury put forward seven demands, including deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel at all counting halls.

He also sought permission for counting agents who are voters in TTAADC areas, citing the practice followed during the previous TTAADC general election.

The CPI(M) leader further demanded uninterrupted webcasting from all counting halls to facilitate monitoring of the pro-

cess. He urged the SEC to prevent unauthorised persons, irrespective of their political affiliation, from entering counting halls and ensure that counting continues without interruption once it begins until all votes are counted.

Chowdhury also sought police protection for opposition counting agents while travelling to and from counting centres, wherever such protection is requested.

In addition, he called for separate designated areas for supporters of each contesting party near counting centres and urged the police to secure these areas and maintain peace in the blocks where the elections are being held.

The allegations made by Chowdhury are political claims and were not independently established in the information available.

Akhil Gogoi begins indefinite agitation over pending Assam flood relief



GUWAHATI

Rajgor Dal president and Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi is set to begin an indefinite state-wide agitation on Friday over alleged delays in disbursing flood relief to affected families in Assam.

Gogoi said the agitation would begin on Gandhi Jayanti and continue until the state government fulfils its commitments to flood victims.

The announcement follows a September 23 rally at Chachal in Guwahati, where protesters had demanded immediate financial assistance and long-term com-

ensation for families affected by the floods.

Gogoi has alleged that 30 to 40 per cent of flood-affected families in Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat districts are yet to receive the promised interim assistance of Rs 15,000.

He has also claimed that flood victims in Sivasagar and Charaideo are yet to receive an additional Rs 10,000 in special relief announced for severely affected areas.

The Rajgor Dal leader is seeking Rs 10 lakh compensation for every family that suffered major losses in the floods across the four districts.

In a letter to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Gogoi highlighted the condition of families who, he claimed, remain displaced and have not received adequate financial assistance.

"The government's deadline has passed, leaving nearly half of the flood victims empty-handed. We are launching this agitation on Gandhi Jayanti to fight democratically for the rights and survival of our people," Gogoi said. He said the agitation would continue until all eligible flood-affected families receive the promised financial assistance.

The state government's response to the allegations was not immediately available.

Manipur CM reviews security, India-Myanmar border fencing with Assam Rifles



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khem-

Quest!

Stars eat planets.

chand Singh on Thursday reviewed the state's security situation and progress in fencing along the India-Myanmar border with senior Assam Rifles officials.

The meeting was held at the Secretariat in Mantripukhri, where Major General Gaurav Sharma, Inspector General of Assam Rifles (South), and Brigadier Pranav Prasoon, DIG of 23 Sector Assam Rifles, met the chief minister.

Singh later shared details of the meeting on his official social media account.

The discussions covered regional security and the ongoing construction of the border fence, officials said.

Manipur's border districts, including Kamjong, Chandel and Tengnoupal, have continued to face security challenges amid the conflict in neighbouring Myanmar, ethnic tensions and the activities of insur-

gent groups.

Assam Rifles personnel have maintained surveillance along the frontier and are establishing additional forward operating locations, according to officials.

The border region also faces challenges related to the movement of illegal firearms, narcotics and refugees, prompting authorities to strengthen physical barriers and surveillance mechanisms.

India has been working to fence its 1,643-km-long international border with Myanmar as part of efforts to check illegal movement, drug trafficking and insurgent activities.

The Centre has also announced plans to end the Free Movement Regime (FMR) and introduce a regulated border-pass system using biometric and QR-code-based verification.

Manipur shares around 398 km of the international border with Myanmar. Around 55 km had been fenced as of September 2026, according to the report.

Difficult terrain and logistical challenges in transporting construction materials have slowed the work. The state government has set a target of completing the fencing by 2028.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is undertaking fencing work in sensitive areas, including Moreh.

Pilot projects involving Hybrid Surveillance Systems and virtual fencing technology are also being carried out along selected stretches of the border.

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Election Commission orders special drive to enrol ‘left out’ voters after SIR

President Murmu, PM Modi pay tribute to Mahatma Gandhi; remember former PM Lal Bahadur Shastri’s legacy

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 157th birth anniversary, with the President calling his message of peace and non-violence even more relevant amid conflicts across the world, while the Prime Minister said Bapu’s life continues to guide humanity.

President Murmu also reached Rajghat and attended the Sarva-Dharma Prarthana held at Gandhi’s samadhi to mark the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation.

In a message shared on X on Gandhi Jayanti, President Murmu said Gandhi’s life and ideals are widely respected across the world, and his message of peace and non-violence has become even more relevant in the prevailing global situation.

“On behalf of all citizens, I pay my respectful tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi on his 157th birth anniversary celebrated as Gandhi Jayanti,” the President said.

She said Gandhi’s life and ideals are widely respected by the global community.

“Today, an atmosphere of war and conflict prevails in many parts of the world, affecting all nations. In these circumstances, Mahatma Gandhi’s message of peace and non-violence becomes even more relevant,” she said.

The President said India is advancing towards the national goal of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047, with priority being given to empathy and inclusion, and said the vision reflects Gandhi’s ideal of ‘Sarvodaya’, based on the welfare and upliftment of all.

“On the auspicious occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, let us reaffirm our commitment to building an empowered, developed and Atmanirbhar Bharat through our ethical conduct and active participation,” Murmu said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and shared a message on X.

“Revered Bapu’s entire life is a beacon of truth, non-violence, compassion and service that will continue to guide humanity in every era,” PM Modi said.

He also shared verses from the Bhagavad Gita -- “Adveshta sar-

to organise Booth Level Camps to assist citizens in submitting enrolment applications. Special camps will be conducted for people living in night shelters and labour colonies, as well as homeless persons and other marginalised sections.

The ECI said the lists of voters classified as ‘Absent’, ‘Shifted’, ‘Dead’ and ‘Duplicate’ (ASDD), prepared during the SIR enumeration, had already been displayed at local government offices and shared with political party representatives and uploaded on the websites of the respective CEOs.

At the end of the special drive, EROs will again share booth-wise lists with political party representatives, allowing them to facilitate the enrolment of any eligible voters who may have been left out.

The ECI has asked electoral officials to conduct awareness and mobilisation campaigns through educational institutions, local outreach programmes, SVEEP activities and other platforms, and to closely monitor the progress of the exercise. Opposition parties have accused the EC of working in tandem with the BJP and disenfranchising eligible citizens by holding SIR.

Data shared by the poll authority and its state officials shows that the combined voters’ list of nine states and three Union territories has been pruned by 10.2 per cent following the SIR exercise, with over 60 lakh dead voters removed. The decision to hold a special drive also comes amid reports of differences within the EC over SIR decisions. The EC, however, said it took all SIR decisions unanimously.

lists of electors whose names have been dropped. They will then conduct house-to-house verification to ascertain the present status of these voters and facilitate their enrolment through Form 6 wherever they are found eligible.

Each BLO has been asked to cover at least 20-25 such electors a week, with the verification exercise expected to be completed within a month.

BLOs will also identify left-out eligible voters, first-time voters and young electors during their visits and facilitate their enrolment. The status of each identified elector, including those for whom Form 6 applications have been submitted, will be recorded.

The booth-wise lists will be shared with Booth Level Agents (BLAs) of recognised political parties and the concerned EROs. The EROs will receive the Form 6 applications along with field verification reports and take further action under the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

The Commission has also directed electoral authorities



NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has directed Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs), District Election Officers (DEOs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to launch a special drive to identify and enrol eligible voters who were left out of the electoral rolls following the completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

The drive will cover electors whose names appeared in the pre-SIR rolls but are missing from the current rolls, as well as first-time and young voters who have not yet been enrolled.

The directive was issued following a meeting of the Commission with all CEOs on October 1.

The ECI said voter enrolment was a continuous process and that no eligible citizen should be denied an opportunity to register merely because they were not included during the SIR enumeration.

Under the exercise, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will compare the current electoral rolls with the pre-SIR rolls and prepare booth-wise



va-bhutanam, maitrah karuna eva cha. Nirmamo nirahankarah, sama-dukha-sukha kshami.”

In another X post, PM Modi said, “May Bapu’s timeless message keep guiding us towards a better society and a Viksit Bharat.”

He also shared a video with a voiceover, saying October 2 holds significance for every Indian and recalling the global influence of Gandhi’s thoughts.

“Mahatma Gandhi’s thoughts have inspired the entire world. Mahatma Gandhi was such an individual that, despite remaining so far away from political power, even today he reigns

over the hearts of hundreds of millions of people,” Modi said.

He said Gandhi’s thoughts would continue to remain relevant as long as their “stream” flows alongside humanity.

PM Modi also recalled Gandhi’s emphasis on Swadeshi and Khadi and urged people to purchase at least one Khadi product on October 2 and say with pride, “This is Swadeshi!”

The Prime Minister also paid tribute to former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on his birth anniversary, saying his simplicity and dedication to the nation remain deeply inspiring.

In another video message, PM Modi recalled Shastri’s slogan of “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan” and his contribution to inspiring the country’s soldiers and farmers.

“And see, friends, Lal Bahadur Shastri came, gave the mantra of ‘Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan’ (Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer), and India’s farmers rose to the occasion,” PM Modi said.

He described Shastri’s personality as humble yet resolute and said his selfless devotion to the nation enabled him to make a contribution during his brief tenure as Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan paid tribute to Shastri at Vijay Ghat on his birth anniversary.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla also paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat.

In Puri, Odisha, students at Padma Shri Sudarsan Pattnaik’s Sand Art Institute created a sand animation to mark Gandhi Jayanti. One of the students said the artwork took around 30 minutes to make.

In Jaipur, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at the Rajasthan Secretariat and also paid tribute to Shastri.

Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda also participated in Shramdaan near Kartavya Bhawan-1 in New Delhi on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti.

In Gurugram, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini participated in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and appealed to people to keep the city clean.

In Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, a Swachhathon 2026 event was organised on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti as part of the Swachhata Hi Seva programme.

Mahatma Gandhi, also known as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, Gujarat. October 2 is observed as Gandhi Jayanti in India and is also marked by the United Nations as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Lal Bahadur Shastri was born on October 2, 1904, in Mughalsarai, Uttar Pradesh, and served as India’s Prime Minister from 1964 to 1966.

INTERNATIONAL

Russia ‘will use all weapons’ if its territory comes under attack: Putin warns Europe



MOSCOW

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday reiterated Moscow’s long-held position that Russia is not planning to attack European countries but will respond to aggression with “all weapons” in its arsenal.

In remarks at a foreign policy forum, Putin accused the West and Europe of escalating tensions by talking about preparing for a war with Moscow in the coming years, conducting military drills in the Baltic Sea, and seizing Russian vessels.

His remarks followed Moscow’s warning to NATO that it would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons to defend Kaliningrad should any members of the military alliance try to cut off the Baltic exclave from the rest of Russia.

Several Russian embassies in Europe this week issued statements that said Moscow has “information

that NATO is preparing (an) air and naval blockade of Kaliningrad and (the) Kaliningrad region.”

They accused European leaders of “playing a dangerous game” by saying Russia might attack another country or ramp up a campaign of destabilising attacks with drones and sabotage. Moscow has called the allegations absurd.

“There should be no mistake — Russia would be ready to use all its arsenal, including nuclear weapons, to defend its territory if NATO countries try to isolate (the) Kaliningrad region from the rest of the country,” the Russian Embassy in Ireland said in its statement on Tuesday.

Asked at the Valdai Club forum on Thursday whether Russia was on the cusp of a war with NATO or whether both were trying to intimidate each other, Putin said: “It’s not intimidation, it’s a response to an attempt to

intimidate us.”

Putin said that “everything is written correctly” in the earlier warning to NATO.

“If it comes to a direct attack on the Russian Federation — in this case we mean Kaliningrad, or maybe some other territories — of course, inevitably and immediately the question of Russian Federation using all weapons at the disposal of our country will appear on the agenda,” he said. Putin didn’t specify whether Moscow would use nuclear weapons but said it has arms that “no one else has” and would determine which to use in case of an attack.

NATO spokesperson Allison Hart confirmed Wednesday that Russia had sent a written message to the U.S.-led military alliance. “We strongly denounce the threat of force, including any irresponsible nuclear rhetoric,” she said in a statement.

Hart insisted NATO is not targeting

Kaliningrad and had sent a reply noting that “NATO is a defensive alliance and none of our activities or exercises pose a risk to any part of Russia.”

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said Wednesday the bloc’s response to the message was “short and concise.”

“Basically what we said is, ‘Hey, listen, we are defensive alliance, and stop the nuclear threat. This is absolutely not called for and not helpful,’” Rutte told Euronews.

NATO’s response also urged Russia to stop its “unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine,” now in its fifth year.

The Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad sits between NATO members Poland and Lithuania. It is home to Russia’s main Baltic navy base and other military assets, and nuclear-capable Iskander missiles are deployed there.

Western military officers have said that key military installations in Kaliningrad would be a likely first target should Russia ever attack any NATO ally.

NATO allies have conducted military exercises in the Baltic Sea region in recent months. More are planned in October. It launched Operation Baltic Sentry there last year to protect communication cables and pipelines.

On Aug. 18, NATO held an exercise over northern Poland and the Baltic region involving several aircraft, including an EA-37B Compass Call — a sophisticated American plane that can jam communications and radar, the US Air Forces in Europe said.

Defense analysts believe the unannounced, large-scale exercise would not have been welcomed by the Kremlin. European leaders and intelligence services have warned that Russia could be ready to strike at another country within a few years, especially if it wins its war on Ukraine.

Rutte told Euronews that Russia is trying “to divide us and lose the focus” on defending Ukraine. “We will not,” he said, adding that the best way to respond is to provide Kyiv with more support.

“That’s the message. Calm, carry on, keep the support for Ukraine going. That’s how we deal with it,” Rutte said.

No imminent India-US trade deal, USTR Greer says; Modi, Trump may speak soon



WASHINGTON

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on Thursday said there was nothing “imminent” on the India-US trade deal, even as he indicated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump could speak again soon to review progress.

“We are continually trying to finish the trade deal with India. I would characterise it, as we say in the US, we’re in the short strokes. So, I think we’re toward the end of it,” Greer told reporters after the G20 Trade Ministers’ Meeting in Milwaukee.

Greer said the two sides had identified the “universe of items” that remained sticking points and were working to resolve them.

“At the same time,

there’s no — I don’t think there’s something imminent — but we truly have identified the universe of items that are sticking points. We’re working diligently toward them,” he said. Greer met Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on the sidelines of the G20 meeting on Wednesday and described their discussions as “very constructive.”

“Our staff is meeting right now since they’re in the country, and we’re here,” he said, referring to ongoing negotiations.

Greer also said Modi and Trump had a “very constructive” phone call on Wednesday morning and could speak again “very soon” to assess the progress of the negotiations.

“My sense is that the president and the prime minister may have another

call very soon on this, just to assess progress and where we are,” he said.

Modi and Trump on Wednesday reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation across trade, defence, energy, critical technologies and other areas of mutual interest. India and the US had in February announced the finalisation of the framework for the first phase of their bilateral trade agreement. However, changes in the US tariff regime have led to further negotiations.

Goyal had on September 24 said the trade pact was “done and dusted” and would be executed once the US provided India the right competitive advantage over its rivals in the American market.

India’s key competitors in the US market include ASEAN countries, China and Bangladesh.

WHEN THE RAINIEST PLACES GO DRY

Meghalaya's driest monsoon in decades is more than a rainfall statistic. With the Northeast facing a record seasonal deficit, the bigger concern is whether a region built around a long, dependable monsoon is moving towards a climate of shorter wet seasons, sharper rainfall extremes and longer dry spells.

Guwahati: There is something deeply paradoxical about a year when Meghalaya - home to Sohra and Mawsynram, two names almost synonymous with extraordinary rainfall - struggles to get enough rain.

The India Meteorological Department's figures for 2026 provide the numbers behind that paradox. Meghalaya received only 1,077.1 mm of rain during the June-September southwest monsoon against a normal 2,695.3 mm, a deficit of 60 per cent. East and Northeast India as a whole received 1,017.1 mm, the lowest seasonal rainfall in the IMD's series dating back to 1901.

Even Meghalaya's iconic rain belt was not spared.

Sohra received 5,277.2 mm against its normal 8,301.1 mm, a deficit of 36 per cent. Mawsynram recorded 6,169.1 mm against a normal of 9,338.4 mm, leaving it 34 per cent below normal.

For a state whose identity, landscape and water systems have been shaped by extreme rainfall, these figures are striking.

But the more important question is not whether Meghalaya has suddenly stopped being one of the world's wettest places. It has not.

The question is whether the nature of rainfall is changing - and whether a region accustomed to abundant water is becoming increasingly vulnerable to both too little rain and too much rain, sometimes within the same season.

The Northeast's rainfall paradox

The 2026 monsoon offers a particularly clear illustration of this emerging problem.

Rainfall was not simply low across Meghalaya. It was highly uneven.

West Jaintia Hills recorded a 79 per cent deficit, while West Garo Hills and South West Garo Hills were 71 per cent and 70 per cent below normal, respectively. West Khasi Hills recorded a 67 per cent deficit, while East Jaintia Hills and North Garo Hills were both 66 per cent below normal.

Yet South West Khasi Hills received 2,727.7 mm - 47 per cent above normal. Baghmara also recorded a 22 per cent surplus.

That contrast matters.

For climate planners, the problem is no longer adequately described by a simple question: How much rain did the Northeast receive?

The more useful questions are: When did the rain arrive? Where did it fall? How intense was it? How long were the dry intervals between rain events?

These distinctions matter because the ecological and economic consequences of 1,000 mm of rain spread relatively evenly across a season are very different from the same amount arriving in a few intense spells separated by prolonged dry periods.

Research on Northeast India has long shown that rainfall is strongly influenced by the region's complex topography and the interaction between monsoon circulation and mountain systems. Meghalaya's southern escarpment acts as a major orographic barrier to moisture-laden winds from the Bay of Bengal, producing extraordinary rainfall over a relatively small area.

That same geography, however, also makes rainfall highly variable over short distances.

A shorter rainy season, heavier bursts?

This is where the climate-change question becomes more complicated - and more important.

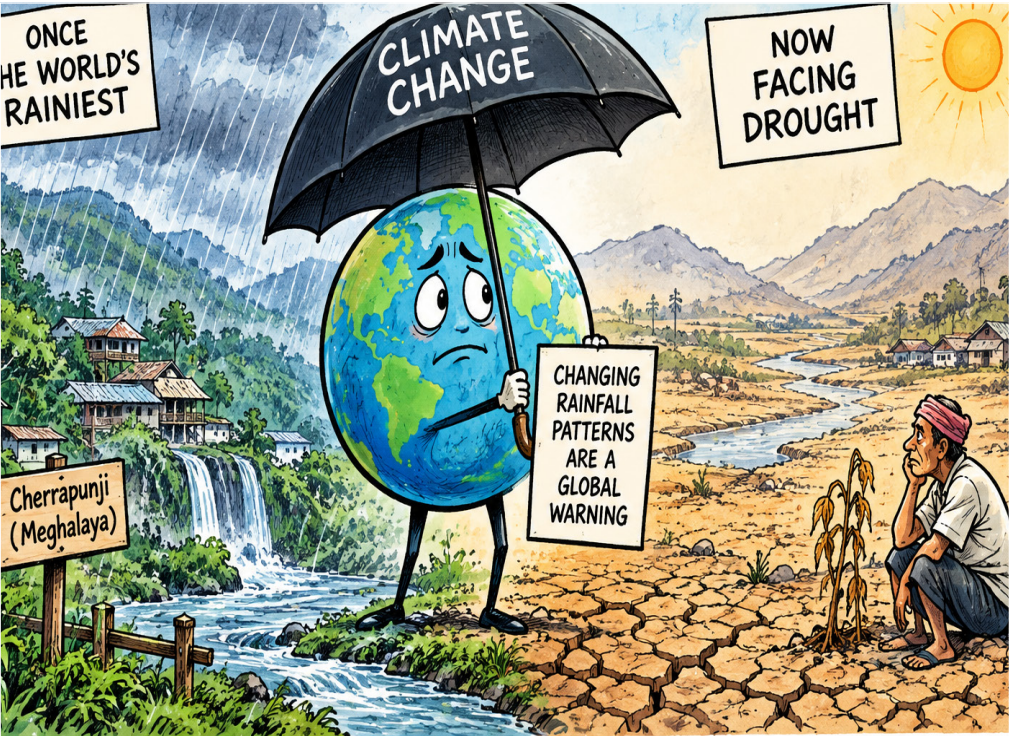
A study published in npj Climate and Atmospheric Science found a significant historical decrease in the length of the rainy season over Northeast India. Its projections indicate that the rainy season could continue to shorten, even as rainfall during that shorter period may become more intense. The study also projects a greater impact from hydrological disasters because extreme rainfall could become more concentrated within a shorter rainy season.

That possibility changes the way the Northeast's rainfall problem needs to be understood.

A shorter monsoon does not necessarily mean a permanently dry Northeast.

It could mean a more compressed monsoon - fewer reliable rainy days, punctuated by intense rainfall events.

Another study examining climate extremes across Northeast India and Bangladesh projected an increase in heavy-precipitation days, including a notable increase in Meghalaya, even as the number of rainy days could decline.



ghalaya, even as the number of rainy days could decline.

This is the central climate paradox facing the region:

A place can receive intense rainfall and still face water scarcity.

Why flooding and water scarcity can coexistThe Northeast has already demonstrated this contradiction repeatedly.

Assam can experience devastating floods while communities elsewhere struggle with inadequate rainfall. Meghalaya can record cloudbursts and landslides while springs weaken during subsequent dry periods. The reason is partly about timing and partly about landscape.

Intense rain falling over a short period can rapidly generate surface runoff, swelling rivers and triggering flash floods and landslides. It does not necessarily translate into proportionately greater groundwater recharge or dependable water availability months later.

For Meghalaya, this has particular significance because many communities depend heavily on springs and local water sources. A prolonged rainfall deficit therefore extends beyond agriculture. It can affect drinking-water availability, spring recharge, household water security and the functioning of ecosystems that have evolved around a highly seasonal but historically abundant water cycle. The state's 60 per cent monsoon deficit has already raised concerns about water-source sustainability. The consequences extend downstream.

The Meghalaya plateau is part of the larger Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna system. Rainfall over its southern slopes contributes to river flows that eventually affect Bangladesh and the wider regional hydrology. Research has described the Meghalaya Hills as an important source of rainfall input to the basin despite their relatively small geographical area.

A disruption in the timing and intensity of rainfall therefore cannot be viewed purely as a Meghalaya problem.

Agriculture faces a different kind of uncertainty

Farmers do not need a record drought to feel the effects of a changing monsoon.

A crop can suffer even when seasonal rainfall totals eventually appear adequate if rain arrives at the wrong stage of cultivation. A long dry spell during sowing or crop establishment can damage yields. Heavy rain arriving within a few days can then wash away soil, nutrients and young plants.

This is particularly important in the Northeast, where agriculture remains closely tied to seasonal rainfall and where terrain makes irrigation infrastructure more difficult and expensive to establish across many locations.

The question for policymakers, therefore, is shifting from expanding water infrastructure simply to cope with scarcity towards managing rainfall variability.

That means storing more water when it arrives, protecting catchments, restoring wetlands and springs, improving local irrigation, strengthening weather information for farmers and redesigning drainage systems to handle short-duration extreme rainfall.

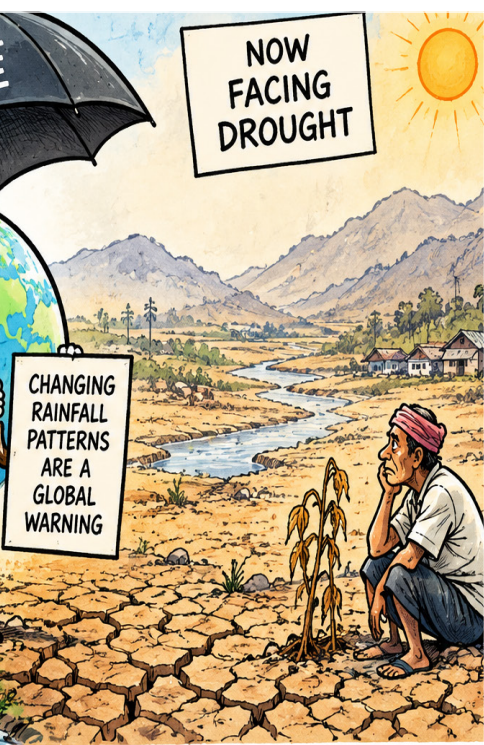
The forests are part of the equation

The climate conversation in the Northeast cannot be separated from land use.

Forests, wetlands, grasslands and intact hill catchments help slow runoff, retain moisture and regulate local hydrological systems. When vegetation is degraded or slopes are disturbed, intense rainfall can produce faster runoff and greater erosion.

At the same time, prolonged dry periods can increase stress on forests and water sources.

This creates a feedback problem: a more variable climate can increase pressure on ecosystems, while ecosystem degradation can reduce the landscape's ability to absorb climatic shocks.



For Meghalaya, where steep slopes, intense rainfall and fragile hill environments already coexist, the consequences can be particularly severe.

The record is a warning, not a verdict

There is a temptation to describe every unusual rainfall year as proof of climate change.

The science requires more caution.

A single deficient monsoon cannot, by itself, establish that climate change caused the 2026 rainfall deficit. Northeast India's monsoon is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including large-scale atmospheric circulation, ocean conditions, topography and natural climate variability.

But the 2026 figures become more significant when placed against longer-term research. An IMD study based on 150 years of Northeast Indian rainfall data found a significant decrease in monsoon rainfall and an increase in post-monsoon rainfall. Other research on the Meghalaya Hills has found changes in the structure of rainfall events, including more extreme rainfall events alongside reductions in moderate rainfall events.

Another analysis of Indian monsoon rainfall patterns has reported a substantial decline over parts of Northeast India in the context of broader changes in the spatial distribution of the monsoon.

Taken together, these studies do not mean that every dry year is caused by global warming.

They do suggest that rainfall behaviour itself deserves as much attention as rain-

fall totals.

From 'flood-prone' to 'hydrologically unpredictable'

For decades, policy discussions about the Northeast have often begun with floods.

That remains necessary. But it may no longer be sufficient.

The emerging challenge is a region exposed to both ends of the hydrological spectrum: intense rainfall and flooding on one side, prolonged dry spells and water stress on the other.

That requires a different policy vocabulary.

Flood management must be accompanied by drought preparedness. Drainage planning must go together with rainwater harvesting. River management must consider catchment health. Agricultural policy must prepare farmers not only for excess water but also for gaps between rainfall events.

Cities such as Shillong, Guwahati, Aizawl, Kohima and Imphal also face a common problem: rapid urbanisation is increasing demand for water while changing how rainwater moves across increasingly built-up surfaces.

The Northeast cannot simply assume that its historic reputation for abundant rainfall will guarantee future water security.

The lesson from Sohra and Mawsynram Perhaps the most powerful message from Meghalaya's 2026 monsoon is contained in two familiar names.

Sohra and Mawsynram are symbols of extraordinary rainfall because their climate has long been defined by the interaction of moisture, wind and mountains.

Yet even these places recorded substantial monsoon deficits this year.

That does not make Meghalaya a dry region.

It does, however, expose the limits of an old assumption: that living in one of the world's wettest regions automatically means living with abundant water throughout the year.

The Northeast's climate story may increasingly be about variability rather than simple abundance.

The 2026 monsoon has provided an unusually stark example. What happens next will depend not only on how much rain the clouds bring, but on whether governments, farmers and communities are prepared for a monsoon that may become less predictable in timing, more uneven in distribution and potentially more intense when it does arrive.

For a region whose forests, farms, rivers and settlements have been built around the monsoon, that is not merely a meteorological concern.

It is a question of water security, food security, ecological resilience and the future shape of life in Northeast India.

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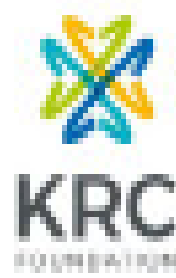
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