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PERSPECTIVE

The truth does not mind being questioned. A lie does not like being challenged.

Nagaland woman allegedly molested at Kolkata five-star hotel, man arrested

KOLKATA

A man was arrested after a woman from Nagaland allegedly complained of molestation at a five-star hotel on Kolkata's EM Bypass, police said.

The incident reportedly took place in the early hours of Sunday when the woman, a resident of Dimapur, was at the hotel to welcome members of the Brazilian football team, which was visiting Kolkata for a match.

Following her complaint at the Pragati Maidan police station, police registered an FIR under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Investigators examined CCTV footage from the hotel as part of the probe. The woman subsequently identified the alleged accused, following which police arrested him from a room inside the hotel.

Police said the accused is a resident of Noida in Uttar Pradesh.

The investigation is underway, and police are examining the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident.



WHO SAID WHAT



“Except for death, a voter’s name cannot be deleted from the voter list without notice and a hearing. Yours Whataboutery, cannot justify disenfranchising millions.”

~ Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, Supreme Court

Manipur’s daughters and Indian Gold medallist get emotional reception at Imphal

BISWADEEP GUPTA

Indian women’s field hockey stars Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam and goalkeeper Bichu Devi Kharibam arrived in Imphal to a warm reception following their gold medal triumph at the Asian Games.

Both players were felicitated by local sports officials, fans, and community members upon landing in Imphal.

Sushila Chanu highlighted the need for more dedicated hockey grounds and facilities across Manipur to nurture grassroots talent.

Bichu Devi credited months of intense preparation for their campaign, with both athletes setting their sights on the upcoming Olympic qualifiers and LA 2028.

Both plyers who represented Indian Hockey team in Asian Games in Japan quenching gold medal after 44 years touched down at Bir Tikendrajit International Airport, Imphal, on Monday where they were welcomed by emotional family members, youth hockey players, representatives of Manipur Hockey, and sports enthusiasts with traditional Meitei stoles, flower garlands, and local cheers.

Bichu Devi mentioned that the contingent endured an exhausting return route from Japan via Hong Kong and Bengaluru before reaching Imphal with little to no rest.

Drawing on her long international career and multiple knee injuries, Sushila urged aspiring young players across Manipur never to lose heart:

“Life mein give up mat karna. Teen-



teen surgery hone ke baad bhi main abhi khel rahi hoon.” (Never give up in life. Even after undergoing three surgeries, I am still playing).

Addressing the early qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, she emphasised that continental gold does not

guarantee an automatic individual squad selection, stating that every player must continue grinding in domestic circuits and national camps to earn their spot on the flight to LA.Bichu Devi noted that wherever she travels on the international circuit, she speaks proudly of Manipur. When asked about the ongoing challenges in the state, she expressed hope for lasting peace and appealed for collective support to rebuild normalcy and foster youth engagement through sports.

Sushila also echoed that through social media posts of her she wants to motivate youngsters and she likes being in touch with the world and wholeheartedly enjoys it. She also sincerely believes that peace should return to Manipur.With a three-week break, the players are going to re-energise in their home town and practice hard for the road ahead, said the tired players.

It is to be noted that the sports enthusiasm, pride and passion of people of Manipur towards the sports ecosystem and sports in general is something to cherish and be part of the national psyche.

Speaking to Sushila’s father, echoed that after forty four year Indian team has won gold, which makes Manipur and his family proud of the Manipur’s daughters.

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the CBI and the trial court to ensure that two key victim-witnesses in a sexual violence case linked to the 2023 Manipur ethnic clashes appear and testify without further delay.

A bench headed by Justice Surya Kant and comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana issued the direction while hearing CBI pleas challenging the bail granted to two accused in the case.

The court directed the CBI to ensure the presence of the two victim-witnesses before the trial court on October 7, 9 and 28, when their statements are scheduled to be recorded. It also directed the trial court to comply with the order and asked all parties to cooperate with the proceedings.

The CBI opposed the release of the accused on bail, arguing that their presence outside jail could discourage the survivors from appearing before the court.

Additional Solicitor General



D.P. Singh, appearing for the CBI, told the bench that the victims had allegedly been subjected to sexual assault, paraded and filmed during the violence. He argued that the trial had already commenced and that securing their testimony was crucial.

“In cases of this nature, if the accused are out, nobody will depose,” Singh submitted.

The bench, however, emphasised

that protecting witnesses was the responsibility of the authorities.

“It’s your obligation... witness protection,” the court said, adding that it could reconsider the bail granted to the accused if it found that the concession was being mis-used.

The court indicated that it would consider the bail challenge after the two victim-witnesses had been examined.

Assam CMO flags AI-generated fake image of Himanta Biswa Sarma, case registered

GUWAHATI

The Assam Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) has flagged the circulation of an allegedly morphed and AI-generated image of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on social media, saying the fabricated content was created to mislead people and damage his public image.

In a statement, the CMO said the image has no basis in reality and was artificially generated using artificial intelligence before being circulated on social media.

The office said a case has been registered in connection with the creation and dissemination of the image and that those allegedly involved have been identified.

The CMO termed the circulation of fabricated content a misuse of social media and warned that strict legal action would be taken against all persons found to be involved.

It also urged social media users to exercise caution before sharing or reposting unverified material.

The CMO appealed to those who may have already shared the image to verify its authenticity and avoid further circulation of the allegedly fake content.

The development comes amid growing concerns over the use of AI-generated and digitally manipulated content on social media, particularly content involving public figures and political personalities.



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SC directs CBI to ensure Manipur sexual violence survivors testify before bail pleas are considered

Senior advocate Shadan Farasat, appearing for one of the accused, argued that the CBI had not proceeded with the trial as quickly as required. He pointed out that around 30 witnesses were involved and that the proceedings were currently at the second stage.

Justice Bagchi questioned why the two victims had not yet been examined.

Advocate Nizam Pasha, appearing for the complainant, told the court that the previous date fixed for recording evidence had fallen on a public holiday, when the centres where the victims were scheduled to depose were closed. The court was also informed that one of the victims was suffering from dengue.

The bench observed that victims could not be expected to appear if their examination was scheduled on a public holiday, but directed the authorities to ensure that at least one of the witnesses appears on the next date.

The latest proceedings form part of the Supreme Court’s continuing

monitoring of cases arising from the Manipur violence.

The court has previously expressed concern over deaths in relief camps housing people displaced by the violence and sought details from the Manipur chief secretary on investigations, criminal proceedings and the safety of camp residents.

The Supreme Court has also asked the Manipur and Assam governments and other authorities to consider setting up two special trial courts to exclusively hear cases investigated by the CBI and the National Investigation Agency in connection with the 2023 violence.

The Manipur violence began on May 3, 2023, following a tribal solidarity march in the hill districts over the demand for Scheduled Tribe status for the majority Meitei community. The clashes resulted in deaths, injuries and large-scale displacement.

The court’s latest order seeks to ensure that the two victim-witnesses’ statements are recorded before it takes up the CBI’s challenge to the bail granted to the accused.

Assam sends first 540-tonne methanol cargo to Bangladesh via Brahmaputra

GUWAHATI

Assam on Monday began its first international inland waterway cargo movement from Upper Assam, with 540 tonnes of methanol dispatched from Bogibeel Terminal for Pangaon Port in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Produced by Assam Petro-Chemicals Ltd (APCL) at Namrup, the consignment is being transported in 27 ISO tanks aboard the vessel DLB Patkai, accompanied by the pusher tug Kushal Konwer.

The vessel will travel more than 1,100 km through National Waterway-2 along the Brahmaputra before entering the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route for onward movement to Dhaka.

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal flagged off the voyage from Bogibeel, while Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma joined the programme virtually.

Sonowal highlighted the cost advantage of inland waterways and said greater utilisation of the Brahmaputra could strengthen Assam’s economic connectivity and logistics network.

Sarma said the new route would create additional export opportunities for Assam while reducing the logistical challenges and costs involved in transporting methanol to Bangladesh by road.

According to the Chief Minister, APCL had earlier exported

methanol to Bangladesh through the Dawki-Tamabil land route, but transportation involved higher costs and difficult terrain.

Sarma said a single waterway voyage carrying 540 tonnes of methanol is equivalent to around 18 tanker trips by road. He described Monday’s movement as the first international cargo movement from Dibrugarh since Independence.

The Chief Minister said APCL had already established a market for methanol in Bangladesh and that exports had risen from 292 tonnes to 7,500 tonnes during the first six months of 2023-24.He said improved waterway connectivity could help APCL pursue its target of exporting 60,000 tonnes of methanol.Sarma also said the route could eventually facilitate movement of other commodities, including petrochemicals, petroleum products, coal, tea and agricultural goods, connecting Assam with Bangladesh and wider international shipping networks.He said National Waterway-2 and the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route would also strengthen Assam’s waterway links with other parts of India, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Varanasi.

The development marks a significant expansion of Assam’s access to regional trade routes, providing an alternative to road-based cargo transportation and opening a potential gateway to international markets through Bangladesh.

SC to hear Shyamkanu Mahanta’s bail plea in November



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday deferred the hearing on the bail plea of Shyamkanu Mahanta, an accused in the case concerning the death of Assamese singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg in Singapore. The matter is now scheduled to be heard in the first week of November.

Mahanta has been in custody since October 2025 and is currently lodged in Baksa jail. He had approached the apex court seeking bail as the trial in the case proceeds.

During Monday’s hearing, the

Assam government informed the court that the trial was underway and that statements of 94 of the 394 witnesses had been recorded as of August 14.

The government also told the court that several key witnesses based in Singapore are yet to be examined, indicating that the trial is likely to take further time.

A fast-track court in Assam has already framed murder charges against four accused, including Mahanta, in connection with Garg’s death.

Garg died in Singapore on September 19, 2025, in an incident that triggered widespread mourning across Assam and the Northeast.

One of Assam’s most prominent cultural figures, Garg had a career spanning more than three decades. He recorded songs in over 40 languages and dialects and worked as a singer, composer, lyricist, actor and filmmaker.

His death has since been the subject of a criminal investigation and judicial proceedings in Assam, with the trial continuing before the fast-track court.



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Fastest Economy, Weakest Market

India's economy may be growing faster than most major economies, but its stock market is telling a far less reassuring story. The disconnect between economic growth and investor confidence has become too large to ignore.

The numbers, at first glance, appear impressive. India's economy grew 7.8 per cent in the April-June quarter, while profits of the country's 50 largest listed companies rose about 18 per cent. Yet the Sensex has suffered eight consecutive weeks of losses, its longest losing streak since the Covid-19 crisis of 2020.

Since August 5, the index has shed nearly 6,700 points, or about 8.5 per cent. By a rough estimate, between ₹30 lakh crore and ₹40 lakh crore in market capitalisation has disappeared.

These are not merely numbers on a trading screen. Behind them are millions of households whose savings are increasingly tied to the financial markets.

A salaried employee in Kanpur, a nurse in Kochi or a young professional in Guwahati who puts a few thousand rupees into a monthly SIP does not experience a market crash as an abstract correction. The erosion happens quietly, month after month, as the value of accumulated savings declines.

The obvious question is: why has India performed so poorly when several other major markets have held up remarkably well?

The answer cannot be found in global conditions alone. Oil prices, geopolitical tensions, high US bond yields and monetary tightening have affected all emerging markets. Yet South Korea, Japan and the United States have continued to attract substantial investor interest.

India, by contrast, has been left behind.

The first vulnerability is energy. India remains heavily dependent on imported crude. Any sustained increase in global oil prices immediately widens the import bill, puts pressure on the rupee and raises inflationary risks. The consequences spread quickly across transport, manufacturing and consumer demand.

The second vulnerability is technological.

The global investment story is increasingly being shaped by artificial intelligence, semiconductors, data centres and the enormous infrastructure required to power them. Countries such as South Korea have benefited directly from the boom in memory chips and semiconductor exports. Japan, too, is positioning itself to capture new technology-led investment.

India has strengths of its own, particularly in software and services. But the rise of AI also threatens to disrupt many of the very services on which India's technology industry has traditionally depended. Investors are therefore asking a difficult question: where exactly is India's place in the next phase of the global technology cycle?

That uncertainty matters.

Stock markets do not merely price today's economic performance. They price expectations about tomorrow. Strong GDP growth can therefore coexist with a falling stock market if investors believe that growth will slow, corporate earnings will weaken or external risks will intensify.

This is where the recent market decline becomes a warning rather than merely a correction.

Foreign investors have been pulling money out of Indian equities, but domestic investors have provided an important cushion. In the final week of September, foreign investors reportedly sold around ₹11,500 crore worth of equities, while domestic institutional investors bought about ₹16,400 crore.

That resilience is one of India's greatest strengths. A deepening domestic savings pool means the Indian market is less dependent than before on foreign capital.

But domestic investors cannot permanently substitute for a loss of confidence among global investors.

India therefore needs to address the underlying concerns rather than attempt to engineer a short-term market recovery.

The first priority must be domestic demand. A large consumer market remains India's biggest structural advantage. But that advantage works only when households have the income and confidence to spend. Stronger employment, rising household incomes and relief from persistent cost pressures are therefore not merely social objectives; they are essential to sustaining economic growth and corporate earnings.

The second priority is investment in the industries that will define the next decade. Infrastructure spending must increasingly be complemented by investment in renewable energy, energy storage, electric mobility, semiconductors, electronics and data centres.

Reducing dependence on imported oil would make India less vulnerable to geopolitical shocks. Building domestic capacity in high-technology manufacturing would give international investors a reason to put money into India beyond the traditional services story.

The third requirement is perhaps the most difficult: policy stability.

Capital dislikes surprises. Sudden changes in taxation, regulation or trade policy can quickly increase the risk premium attached to an economy. Investors making decisions over five or ten years need predictability, not policy uncertainty.

Stable taxation, faster trade agreements, clearer industrial policy and consistent economic reforms would do more for investor confidence than any short-term attempt to prop up stock prices.

India has repeatedly presented itself as the world's next great growth market. That promise cannot rest on GDP statistics alone.

A strong economy and a strong stock market are not synonymous. The first can be measured through production, investment and consumption. The second ultimately depends on expectations-and expectations depend on trust.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism. - Norman Vincent Peale

SHIVAJI SARKAR

India's markets are in a tizzy. Pakoras have reportedly appreciated by 40 per cent, samosas by 33 per cent, while costs from fuel to paint are rising. From everyday commodities to gold and stocks, the common citizen is caught in a squeeze. Policies meant to tame prices appear increasingly unable to contain the pressure on household budgets.

Dalal Street, meanwhile, has suffered a bruising correction. Between January and September 2026, investors have seen an estimated Rs39 lakh crore wiped off market valuations. The Sensex and Nifty have endured sustained selling rather than a single dramatic crash. By September 30, the Nifty 50 had fallen 6.1 per cent during the month to 22,620.45, while the Sensex declined 5.8 per cent to 72,480.29. Both recorded their steepest monthly falls since March. Foreign investors withdrew \$2.7 billion from Indian equities in September, taking their net outflows for the year to \$26.8 billion.

The loss of market capitalisation is not the same as Rs39 lakh crore disappearing from the economy in cash. It represents a sharp reduction in the market value of listed companies and the wealth attributed to their shareholders. Yet the consequences are real: household portfolios shrink, investor confidence weakens, companies may find capital more expensive and new investment decisions become harder to justify.

The central question is why a country that continues to report industrial expansion, though experts say at lower rate, is witnessing such a severe market correction while consumers face rising costs.

The immediate pressures are increasingly external. West Asian tensions and uncertainty around the Strait of Hormuz have pushed crude prices

costs and put pressure on the rupee. The currency weakened to Rs96.31 against the dollar on October 1, its steepest daily decline in more than two months. At the same time, the US 10-year treasury yield reached 5.34 per cent, its highest level since 2002. Higher American yields make dollar assets more attractive and reduce the relative appeal of emerging-market equities. Foreign investors find moving capital to the US attractive, adding to selling pressure in Indian markets.

Official inflation is at 4.82 per cent but many commodities appreciated sharper.

Costlier oil raises the demand for dollars; a weaker rupee makes imports more expensive; and imported inflation can spread through freight, chemicals, fertilisers, manufacturing and food distribution. Even where retail fuel prices remain unchanged, businesses can face higher costs elsewhere in the supply chain. The pressure may surface later in prices, margins or government finances.

Foreign portfolio outflows are only part of the story. Indian shares had also been trading at valuations that left limited room for disappointment. When global yields rise and geopolitical risks increase, profit-taking retreats.

The September correction affected all 16 major sectors tracked in the Reuters market report. Information technology fell 11.2 per cent during the month, reflecting concerns about global demand and spending by US clients. Mid-cap and small-cap shares also declined, showing that the pressure extended beyond a handful of heavyweight companies.

Domestic investors and institutions can cushion foreign selling, but they cannot indefinitely insulate valuations from weaker earnings, expensive inputs and changing global financial conditions. A falling share price does not automat-

more mixed picture: the latest HSBC India Manufacturing PMI rose to 55.1, just on edge, in September.

For ordinary families, the experience is less abstract. They may lose wealth through mutual funds, direct shareholdings or retirement-linked investments even as groceries, transport and household goods absorb a greater share of income. Those without substantial investments may still suffer of inflation, while having no market gains to offset it.

The reported 40 per cent rise in pakoras and 33 per cent in samosas makes for a striking illustration. The same applies to petrol, paint, plastic and other commodities. Yet the larger concern remains valid-when wages do not keep pace with essential expenses, real purchasing power falls.

The Finance Ministry's September economic review flagged the risks posed by geopolitical tensions, elevated crude prices and tighter global financial conditions. Retail inflation reached 4.82 per cent in August, while wholesale inflation climbed to 9.92 per cent, partly reflecting fuel and power costs. The divergence suggests that input-price pressures may be building faster than consumer prices show.

The policy challenge is to prevent a market correction and an external oil shock from feeding into a wider domestic slowdown. This requires credible inflation management, predictable taxation and regulation, prudent public spending and measures that improve productivity rather than merely suppress visible prices. Support for vulnerable households must be balanced against the cost of subsidies and the risk of transferring today's burden to future budgets.

India has to reduce its vulnerability to imported energy without making the transition unaffordable. Better public transport, energy efficiency, diversified supply and reliable

Costlier imports can squeeze companies; weaker margins can hurt earnings; falling earnings expectations can depress share prices; and lower confidence can encourage further capital outflows.

The Rs39 lakh crore estimate captures the scale of the market-value erosion, not the full economic cost. That cost will depend on whether

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

“There is going to be a major food crisis, probably in the coming months.”

India's External Affairs Minister @DrSJaishankar warns that there could be a major food crisis, driven by rising fertilizer, fuel, and financing costs from conflicts in the Middle East, compounded by a strong El Niño. ~ Asia Society



the shock remains a financial correction or spreads into



sharply higher. Brent gained 14 per cent in September, and prices remained around or above \$100 a barrel as the month ended. For India, a major oil importer, this threatens to increase the import bill, raise transport and production

ically mean that a company is failing; equally, a high market valuation is no guarantee of future returns.

Nor does a stock-market decline, by itself, establish that the economy has collapsed. Manufacturing activity offers a

domestic production can help.

The rupee's decline, foreign selling and rising oil costs are connected pressures, not isolated events.

Treating each as a separate problem risks missing how they reinforce one another.

investment, jobs, wages and consumption.

India needs an honest assessment of the risks and policies that protect purchasing power, sustain investment and ensure ordinary people do not bear the heaviest cost of global turmoil.

Nagaon bypoll: 11,535 personnel deployed across 2,307 booths for October 6 voting

NAGAON

Polling preparations for the Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll reached the final stage on Monday, with 11,535 polling and security personnel deployed across 2,307 polling stations in Nagaon and Morigaon districts ahead of Tuesday's voting.

The deployment includes 9,228 polling and presiding officers and 2,307 security personnel. Of the total polling stations, 1,339 are located in Nagaon district and 968 in Morigaon.

Polling parties began collecting electronic voting machines (EVMs) and other election material from dispatch centres



early Monday before leaving for their assigned booths.

Nagaon District Commissioner Aranyak Saikia said the strong room was opened at 6 am and polling teams began moving out from two dispatch centres - Dawson H.S. School and Nagaon Government Boys' H.S. School. "The polling parties will leave from today, and we hope most of them will leave within two to three hours," Saikia said.

The administration has stepped up surveillance at critical polling stations. Saikia said such booths in both districts would have CCTV coverage and live webcasting, enabling officials to monitor polling from a central control room. As many as 624 polling stations across the constituency have been identified as critical, according to reports. Security personnel were also seen assembling at designated locations before leaving for their respective areas of deployment. The Nagaon Lok Sabha constituency has 19,01,899 registered voters spread across eight Assembly segments in Nagaon and Morigaon districts.

The electorate includes 9,58,549 male voters, 9,43,300 female voters and 50 third-gender voters. There are also 10,782 D-voters in the constituency.

To oversee polling arrangements on the ground, the administration has deployed 203 sector officers and 53 zonal officers. In addition, 54 micro observers have been assigned to Nagaon district to monitor polling at sensitive locations.

With voting scheduled for October 6, authorities have completed the movement of polling personnel, EVMs and other election materials to ensure polling begins on time across the constituency.

GNF welcomes Ajit Lal's appointment as interlocutor for Naga peace talks

GUWAHATI

The Global Naga Forum (GNF) has welcomed the Centre's appointment of retired IPS officer Ajit Lal, former chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), as the new interlocutor for the Indo-Naga political talks.

In a statement, the GNF also welcomed the decision to include a Union minister or a group of Union ministers in the negotiation framework, saying the move could inject fresh urgency into the long-running peace process.

The Forum said the political settlement was long overdue and expressed hope that the new framework would help create conditions for an honourable, inclusive and lasting agreement.

The GNF recalled that the Nagaland government had convened a consultative meeting on September 12, 2024, where around 45 tribal bodies, civil society organisations and other stakeholders collectively appealed to the Centre to appoint a new interlocutor.

The organisations had also called for the Indo-Naga political dialogue to be elevated to the highest political level.

The Forum acknowledged the efforts of Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and his colleagues, as well as MPs Phangnon Konyak and Supongmeren Jamir, in pursuing the issue.

It also recognised the participation of tribal hohos, civil society groups, mass-based organisations, church bodies, NGOs, student organisations and political parties in efforts to advance the peace process.

Describing Lal's appointment and the inclusion of Union ministers as a significant development, the GNF appealed to the NSCN/IMPRN leadership and the Centre to approach the negotiations with "utmost seriousness, sincerity and urgency".

The Forum noted that nearly three decades after the political negotiations began, the Naga people were still awaiting a lasting settlement.

Grenade, alleged KCP threat letter found outside businessman's home

IMPHAL

Panic gripped Yairipok Yambem Makha Leikai in Manipur's Imphal East district after a Chinese-made hand grenade and a threat letter allegedly issued by the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) were found outside the residence of a local businessman.

Police said the explosive was recovered early Sunday morning outside the home of Sharungbam Bimol, proprietor of M/S H Rameshwar Sharma Saw Mill, also known as Victoria Veneer Mill.

The grenade was found inside a polythene bag along with a letterhead bearing the name of the KCP's Department of Finance. The letter allegedly contained a warning addressed to Bimol.

Residents suspect that the explosive may have been placed outside the house late on Saturday night.

Following the discovery, a bomb disposal team of the Manipur Police reached the spot and secured the area. The grenade was later removed and destroyed in a controlled explosion near the foothills of Ngariyan at around 10 am on Sunday.

No casualties were reported.

The incident prompted protests in the locality, with Meira Paibis and other residents staging a sit-in at Yairipok Yambem Makha Leikai. Protesters called for an end to threats and intimidation against civilians and urged armed groups to resolve disputes through dialogue.

Local resident Prema Devi said the presence of a live grenade in a densely populated residential area could have resulted in serious casualties had it exploded.

She appealed to all parties involved to pursue dialogue and prevent residential neighbourhoods from becoming sites of conflict.

Manipur People's Party backs demand for CEC Gyanesh Kumar's resignation

IMPHAL

The Manipur People's Party (MPP) has backed the demand for the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, alleging that the Election Commission of India's independence and credibility have come under question amid the ongoing controversy over electoral-roll revisions.

MPP spokesperson Dr Seram Rojesh, along with social activists from Manipur, took part in a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on June 2. The party said the demonstration was part of a wider campaign led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) seeking Kumar's resignation.

The MPP alleged that protesters were detained by Delhi Police from Jantar Mantar, Janpath Road and adjoining areas during the demonstration. Rojesh criticised the action, saying

citizens exercising their constitutional right to peaceful assembly should not face intimidation or excessive force.

The party also questioned the functioning of the Election Commission and called for greater transparency in its decision-making.

Its concerns come amid reports of differences within the three-member poll panel over aspects of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The Indian Express reported that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had formally raised objections on at least 14 occasions over a 10-month period.

The MPP said such developments warranted greater public scrutiny of the commission's decision-making process and demanded an independent examination of decisions taken during the electoral-roll revision.

Concerns over SIR and Manipur rolls

The party also raised questions over the nationwide SIR exercise and alleged large-scale deletions from electoral rolls.

The MPP further alleged that a significant number of non-Manipuri voters had been included in electoral rolls in Manipur and called for an independent investigation into the state's voter lists.

The allegations come amid a wider national debate over the SIR. The Election Commission has defended the revision process and maintained that its decisions were taken in accordance with the law.

The issue has also triggered protests in several parts of the country and legal challenges. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a petition challenging aspects of the ECI's functioning and the nationwide SIR process.

MPP links issue to Manipur crisis

Rojesh also linked the party's concerns over the Election Commission to the broader political and institutional challenges facing Manipur.

He alleged that the prolonged crisis in the state had exposed concerns over governance and institutional functioning and argued that electoral transparency was particularly important in such a situation.

The MPP called for Kumar's resignation and urged the Centre to strengthen transparency, accountability and public confidence in the Election Commission.

The demand comes as protests seeking Kumar's resignation continue in different parts of the country, with opposition parties and civil society groups also raising concerns over the SIR and electoral-roll changes.

Assam Cabinet clears Rs.3,000 green cess on transfer of cars older than 3 years

GUWAHATI

The Assam Cabinet has approved a ₹3,000 green cess on the transfer of ownership of cars that are more than three years old, with the revenue to be used for afforestation and environmental conservation activities.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting on Sunday as part of the state government's broader environmental management measures.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the cess will apply when ownership of eligible vehicles is transferred through sale or purchase. The measure is aimed at generating additional resources for conservation and afforestation initiatives.

Electric vehicles and CNG-powered vehicles will be exempt from the levy. Two-wheelers and three-wheelers will also not come



under the new cess.

The green cess will additionally not apply when vehicle ownership is transferred following the death of the registered owner, according to the government.

The latest decision comes against the backdrop of Assam's Green Cess Policy, 2026, approved by the Cabinet in September. The policy provides a framework for imposing green cess on identified sectors and activities linked to the use of natural resources and environmental regulation.

The state government has said revenue generated through such measures will support environmental initiatives, including conservation and other green projects.

The vehicle transfer levy is separate from the existing green tax provisions applicable to older vehicles and is specifically linked to the transfer of ownership of eligible vehicles. The Cabinet also approved several other measures during Sunday's meeting, including a 12 per cent reservation for Assam-domiciled retired Agniveers in recruitment to police and allied services.

Tripura plans integrated digital platform to map transport, infrastructure projects

AGARTALA

Tripura's Public Works Department (PWD) is developing an integrated digital platform to bring information on infrastructure projects across departments onto a single system, with a focus on improving connectivity, agricultural supply chains and trade with Bangladesh.

The initiative is being developed under the World Bank-funded Tripura Urban Economic Growth and Service Delivery Project as part of the Integrated Transport Network Development Plan (ITNDP).

Anup Kumar Das, Chief Engineer of the PWD's road and building wing, said the department aims to prepare and adopt the transport network plan within the next 18 months.

"Through this plan, a digital portal will be created where information about existing infrastructure, ongoing projects and future projects of different departments will be compiled," Das told PTI.

The proposed platform will cover not only roads and bridges but also railways, airports, goods transportation facilities and other communication infrastructure, allowing projects to be planned within a common framework.

The plan will also focus on improving connectivity between rural production centres and markets and strengthening transport links with Bangladesh.

Das said villages, markets, major roads, railway networks, goods transportation centres and border areas would be considered together to develop an integrated communication system.

"In future, the plan is to consider villages, markets, major roads, railways, goods transportation centres and border areas together so that the entire communication system can function in an integrated manner," he said.

The project includes plans for around 416.47 km of rural roads, besides two testing laboratories for rural products and passenger transport centres.

According to officials, the ITNDP is intended to provide a long-term roadmap for Tripura's transport infrastructure by identifying locations where new roads, transport hubs and other connectivity facilities will be required.

A major focus will be the movement of agricultural produce from villages to markets.

The plan will identify collection points, transport centres and routes that can connect agricultural production areas with major roads and railway networks, Das said.

The proposed system is also expected to help coordinate infrastructure development in border areas and support Tripura's growing role in cross-border trade with Bangladesh.

Manipur CM pushes eco-tourism, conservation plan for endangered Loktak Lake



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh chaired a high-level meeting on October 3 to review plans

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for the conservation and sustainable development of Loktak Lake and the Phumlenpat wetland, with a focus on protecting the fragile ecosystem while promoting sustainable livelihoods and eco-tourism.

The meeting, held at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, examined the growing environmental pressures on Loktak Lake, which is listed on the Montreux Record of threatened Ramsar wetlands.

Officials discussed measures to improve the lake's water quality, reduce siltation and restore forest cover in its catchment areas. The meeting also focused on managing the growth of phumdis, the floating biomass that is a distinctive feature of Loktak Lake.

The government proposed clearing and restoring streams that feed into the lake to improve water flow and reduce the accumulation of silt and other pollutants. Sustainable livelihood

programmes for communities living around the lake were also discussed, with the government seeking to balance conservation efforts with the economic needs of local residents.

The meeting further explored plans to promote Loktak Lake as a tourism destination through eco-tourism while ensuring that tourism activities do not put additional pressure on its ecosystem. Officials also discussed a proposal to officially recognise Loktak Day as a state festival to raise public awareness about the lake and its ecological significance. The government is also considering measures to remove excess floating biomass from the Phumlenpat wetland as part of wider efforts to restore and protect the wetland system. Another key issue discussed was the proposed amendment of the Manipur Loktak Lake (Protection) Act, 2006, aimed at strengthening the legal framework for conservation and management of the lake.

Art, Culture and Tourism Minister Kh Loken, several MLAs, Chief Secretary Rajeev Singh Thakur and senior officials of the Loktak Development Authority attended the meeting.

The government's proposed approach seeks to combine ecological restoration, community livelihoods and responsible tourism as part of a long-term strategy to protect Loktak Lake, one of Manipur's most important natural and cultural landmarks.

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SC seeks Centre’s affidavit on space for 135-year-old central secretariat library



NEW DELHI

Flagging serious concerns over the fate of the 135-year-old Central Secretariat Library, the Supreme Court on Monday asked the Union Government to place on record through an affidavit the space allotted for it under the Central Vista Plan. “Centre file a detailed affidavit with full details of the area which would be allotted for this library along with actual layout plans. It shall also be indicated whether this space will be adequate to house not just the books presently in Shastri Bhavan but also the books which are lying in cartons,” said the two-judge bench of the top court headed by Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva. To have a better sense, information and know-how about the case and its upcoming hearings, the court also appointed Senior Advocate Haripriya Padmanabhan as amicus curiae (Friend of the Court) to assist the SC in the matter. The top court which has registered the suo motu case

on October 3 in the case was hearing the matter after registering it on its own, as it went through the reports of a media house that the Central Vista Plan has no space allocated for the CSL, which houses about 8.5 lakh books in Delhi and is proposed to be relocated. The suo motu case was titled by the apex court as, “In Re: 135-Yr-Old Library 8.5 Lakh Books- And No Room In The New Central Vista Plan”, was registered on October 3. A media house published a report on September 29 titled “135-yr-old library, 8.5 lakh books - and no room in the new Central Vista plan”. The report stated that the library currently housed in Shastri Bhawan may have to be relocated due to proposed demolition of the building as part of Central Vista redevelopment. The report raised concerns over availability of suitable accommodation and preservation of its extensive collection. The bench on hearing the case on its own, directed the Centre to file a detailed affidavit with full details of the area which would be allotted for the

library. “The affidavit must also indicate whether the space would be adequate to store not just the books presently in the CSL in Shastri Bhavan, but also the 2 lakh books lying in cartons in RK Puram. At the outset of the hearing on Monday, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati said that Central Vista Plan does have space allocated for the library. Hearing these submissions, Justice Kumar observed, “If we go by the news report, this library dates back to 1891. Very well to say that we should cut down to paper but that doesn’t mean you don’t take care of the valuable papers. You are allotting only 2 rooms in the Kartavya Bhavan, that’s it?” ASG Bhati then replied that the Central Vista Director was present in the Court to explain. Justice Kumar said that an affidavit would be necessary in this regard. The top court eventually clarified that after an affidavit would be filed by the Centre, we will take up the matter for hearing in the case.

‘There is no fear’: CJP vows protests will continue despite possible arrests, calls mobilisation on Oct 10

NEW DELHI

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has claimed that impending government crackdowns and possible arrests of its leaders will not suppress the youth-led movement, vowing to continue nationwide demonstrations and describing any such action as “dictatorial”. The remarks came after a police crackdown in Delhi that saw around 110 people detained during protests demanding the immediate resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. CJP leader Ashutosh Ranka on Monday alleged that CJP activists Abhijeet Dipke, Saurav Das, and he will be arrested before October 10 under the National Security Act (NSA) or other equivalent statutory provisions. Ranka declared that all three of them have been prepared to go to jail since June 6, emphasising that they harbour no fear regarding any potential action. “Multiple sources have reached out informing that @abhijeet_dipke @SauravDas and I will be arrested anytime before 10th under NSA/other equivalent provisions. All three of us have been ready to go to Jail since June 6. There is no fear about it,” said Ranka. He further claimed that the BJP-led government is frightened of their movement, asserting that the government is resorting to violence out of fear. “But the ones hell-bent on destroying this country should be the ones frightened. And they are. As Gandhi said, “violence and hatred stem from fear”. The govt is frightened, and that’s why it is resorting to violence,” added Ranka. Ranka added that they have nothing to lose as they are fighting for a better and more accountable India. “We are 30-year-olds fighting for a better, more accountable India. We have nothing to lose. You can arrest us, beat us, even kill us. But you cannot stop us,” declared Ranka. Abhijeet Dipke further said that the organisation would continue its agitation against the government. “If the Govt believes that the threat of UAPA, NSA or years behind bars will scare us into silence, it won’t. We are prepared to face whatever comes our way and, if necessary, spend months or



years in jail, but we will not back off from our fight to save democracy. We follow the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi, and we will continue to resist peacefully and non-violently, no matter how much the State tries to intimidate us,” he said. Dipke also targeted Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the proposed protests. “Kitno ko arrest karoge AmitShah? 10 Oct ko poora desh aa raha hai,” Dipke wrote on X. In a post on X, CJP leader Saurav Das said young people were now aware of their rights and would not accept what he described as “dictatorial action”. “The government is planning on arresting me, Abhijeet, Ashutosh, Ratna and other Cockroach Janta Party leaders. If the government thinks that such dictatorial actions will work, then they are mistaken! The young generation has awakened,” Das wrote. antar march, later released Das said CJP members were prepared to face the “worst outcomes” and appealed to people to continue protesting. “We appeal to everyone to continue fighting for our rights and future, with or without us. We have always been

ready to face jail or worse. But this will be a big mistake. The young will not tolerate this,” he wrote. Calling for a major mobilisation, Das said, “The protests must continue. People of India should ensure the biggest mobilisation starting October 10th.” The CJP has urged people to organise what it described as the largest protest on October 10 over the SIR issue. The statements came a day after around 15 Delhi Police personnel were injured during a protest in the national capital, according to police sources. Some women police personnel also sustained injuries after being bitten during the protest. Police sources said around 110 people were detained in connection with the demonstration. Earlier on Sunday, the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) staged a protest march from Raisina Road towards Jantar Mantar, demanding Gyanesh Kumar’s resignation and accusing the Centre of shielding him. IYC National President Uday Bhanu Chib led the march, with hundreds of youth workers carrying placards and raising slogans against the government amid heavy police deployment and bar-

ricading. “The question is that we are going to Jantar Mantar. Even the Supreme Court said that if you want to protest peacefully, you have to go to Jantar Mantar. But we are not being allowed because Modi and Shah have to save Gyanesh,” Chib said. He alleged that the government was trying to protect the CEC and said the protesters would continue their agitation. “They are scared; their theft has been caught. For the last year and a half, Rahul Gandhi has been exposing these thieves’ thievery to the country, and now more evidence is coming out. The time for reckoning has come; the country’s journalists and youth are panicking; they are resorting to violence against the youth, but they cannot escape this,” Chib said. IYC National Secretary Roshani Jaiswal also accused the government of attempting to suppress the issue. “This government is using every tactic to save Gyanesh, but Gyanesh won’t be saved. Tihar is his real place and Gyanesh, it’s done bro, it’s done,” Jaiswal said. Chitwan Godara, National Coordinator of the IYC Legal Team, also demanded Kumar’s resignation. “Gyanesh Kumar must resign, but the BJP and its supporters do not know the meaning of the word accountability. We will keep protesting until justice is served, because there are other women too,” Godara said. The controversy follows a report in The Indian Express that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had formally raised objections on at least 14 occasions over 10 months regarding decisions concerning electoral rolls, voter registration and the Election Commission’s technology systems. The Election Commission, however, rejected the suggestion that the reported objections amounted to institutional dissent over final decisions. The poll panel said operational queries, inputs and suggestions raised during the draft stage were part of its standard administrative and decision-making process. The ECI also said decisions regarding the schedule of the SIR exercise were unanimous.

INTERNATIONAL

Brazil’s presidential vote pits Trump ally against incumbent Lula



SAO PAULO

Brazilians began voting Sunday in a high-stakes presidential election pitting incumbent Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva against Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, ideological opposites who are each seen as having a shot at an outright victory. If no candidate gets more than 50% of the vote, the top two vote-getters will head to a runoff on October 25 in Latin America’s economic powerhouse. Ten other candidates are expected to garner much smaller numbers of votes on Sunday. Bolsonaro, 45, is the son of far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro and an ally of US President Donald Trump. Lula, who at 80 is one of the world’s oldest heads of state, is running in his seventh presidential election and has strengthened Brazil’s ties with Beijing. Trump allies have found support in recent years in some Latin American countries, including Argentina, Colombia and Peru.

Almost 159 million Brazilians are eligible to vote in this tense political showdown. Where Bolsonaro has leaned into his ideological alliance with Trump, Lula has criticized Washington. The incumbent president has often spoken about risks of U.S. intervention in the Brazilian elections after the Trump administration imposed high tariffs against Brazilian exports, revoked the visa of the country’s ambassador in Washington and sanctioned a Supreme Court justice who chaired the investigation that ended up resulting in the sentencing of Jair Bolsonaro, Lula’s predecessor. Lula told journalists after voting Sunday that he needs “to do double of what we have done” if reelected, and expressed confidence he would win in the first round. Flávio Bolsonaro has touted his proximity to the White House, although he denies his campaign received help from the U.S. government. He has insisted that Brazil needs to strike better deals with the

Trump administration, including the rare minerals economy. Brazil estimates that its deposits hold up to 21 million tons, second only to China. Bolsonaro also has campaigned on releasing his father from his 27-year prison sentence for attempting a coup, and bringing him back to politics. “Brazil needs change. Brazil can’t stand so much suffering,” he told reporters at the Rio de Janeiro voting center, where he cast his vote Sunday. Brazilians will also elect 27 state governors, members of state legislatures, all 513 federal members of the lower house of congress and 54 of the country’s 81 senators in Sunday’s vote. Rosane Wink, 67, a retired engineer, is a lifelong conservative voter who supports the former president’s son and his promise to classify criminal groups as terrorist organizations. “It’s a kind of terrorism that they’re doing with us,” said Wink as she voted in Rio de Janeiro. Last month she had a gun held to her stomach as a criminal bit her hand and removed her wedding ring, she said. Maria Ribeiro, a 50-year-old cell phone vendor from Brasilia, said she voted for Bolsonaro because she wants freedom to express her Evangelical religion. She hopes he follows in his father’s footsteps. “I voted for his father, and I don’t regret it,” she said. Rosangela Resende da Rocha, a 69-year-old who was previously a stay-at-home mom, said she supported Lula’s social policies that help the “less fortunate” and how he stands up to Trump. “That crazy guy wants to come in here to buy our country, so that our country will be like it is over there,” she said at a voting center in Brasilia. “He won’t succeed if Lula wins.” Even for those outside the country, Lula’s social programs drove many to continue supporting him. “Thank God I do not need (the help of) social programs, but I vote for those that need them: health, education, basic sanitation, housing, food,” said Catia Oliveira, a 61-year-old Brazilian who cast her vote from

Portugal. Thomas Traumann, a political consultant based in Rio de Janeiro, says last-minute mistakes by either candidate or by their allies could make all the difference for undecided voters. “Polarization in Brazil created a trap. There’s no third candidate. You only have two options, and they fight each other in an atmosphere that becomes worse and worse,” Traumann said. “It is much more a competition of accusations than a competition of proposals.” Four years ago, Lula beat Jair Bolsonaro by 2.1 million votes — a margin of just under 2 percentage points. At the time, Brazilians were upset with the then president’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic, his repeated threats against democracy, his attacks on the electronic voting system and the poor shape of the nation’s economy as inflation was on the rise. Now, the incumbent faces a tough battle because of an affordability crisis and a corruption scandal that ensnared the same justice who led the investigation into Bolsonaro. Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in Sao Paulo, says some voters have grown weary of Lula, who is seeking a fourth nonconsecutive term as president. He is one of the oldest presidents on the continent, along with Trump and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, both of whom also are 80. “Many in the Lula campaign were not expecting such a difficult election a few weeks ago, and it is clear to them that the present election is a tough battle and the next ones, without Lula, could be even more so,” Melo said. Bolsonaro has seen his political career tainted by several corruption accusations, the latest of them involving a disgraced banker paying him millions of dollars, allegedly to produce a movie on his father’s life. More recently, he has been under fire from Roman Catholics who fear he might make too many concessions to his evangelical base.

US withdraws all bomber planes from UK airbase: Pentagon



WASHINGTON

The Pentagon confirmed reports Sunday that the United States has withdrawn all B-1 bomber planes from Royal Air Force Fairford, the UK airbase where a suspicious incident triggered nearby evacuations. A statement from a Pentagon official said “we can acknowledge now that all U.S. bombers that were deployed to RAF Fairford have re-deployed to their home stations in the United States.” The statement noted that “operational security precluded us from confirming the movement of our assets and forces in real-time.” Police were called to the base in southwest England last Sunday after a local farmer reported a group of men with several vans engaged in “suspicious” activity. The scare forced evacuations at 85 homes near the airbase, which was used to launch strikes on Iran. The Pentagon confirmed

reports on October 4, 2026 that the United States has withdrawn all B-1 bomber planes from Royal Air Force Fairford, the UK airbase where a suspicious incident triggered nearby evacuations. Speculation about the motives behind the incident ranged from terror threat to fuel theft, as energy prices in the UK hit record highs this week. Investigators said they did not find any explosives in the vans, but instead “a quantity of petrol was recovered,” National Counter Terrorism Policing head Lawrence Taylor said. The five London-based Britons arrested in the incident, all men in their mid-20s, were released on bail, drawing rebuke from Washington. “I wouldn’t have done that,” US President Donald Trump told reporters, as his Secretary of State Marco Rubio alleged a “foreign actor” was involved. Iran’s embassy in London

has said it “categorically rejects and strongly condemns” speculation that Tehran was involved. Security at the base had reportedly been heightened recently. Britain gave Washington permission in March to use Fairford for “specific defensive operations into Iran,” and US bombers and other planes have since been seen taking off and landing from the base. Fairford is the only airbase on Britain’s mainland used for this purpose. The incident came after a farmer living in the village of Whelford, near the airbase, called the police after seeing three vans blocking a road and a group of masked men fleeing the scene. Aerial footage of the vans showed they appeared to contain barrels, and at least one was marked with a fake logo and phone number, giving the false impression that it was owned by a legitimate diesel delivery firm.

The Real AI Threat: Will Machines Destroy Us—or Will We Lose Control?

Artificial intelligence can process information faster than humans, analyse vast amounts of data in seconds, write code, learn from mistakes and increasingly perform tasks that once required human judgement.

But what happens when an AI system becomes capable of improving its own capabilities, conducting its own research and finding new ways to achieve its goals?

At that point, the debate is no longer simply about how useful AI can be.

It becomes a question of power.

Who controls whom?

That is now at the heart of one of the most uncomfortable debates surrounding artificial intelligence.

A recent warning from Anthropic AI safety researcher Evan Hubinger has intensified the discussion. Hubinger has said that, in his personal assessment, there is a greater than 10% chance that AI could eventually cause the complete extinction of humanity within the next decade.

The number is alarming.

But the number itself is not the most important part of the argument.

The more important question is this: Why does a leading AI safety researcher believe such a possibility cannot simply be dismissed?

And an even bigger question follows.

Is the race to build increasingly powerful AI slowing down?

It is not.

If anything, it is accelerating.

Where does the danger begin?

Hubinger's concern is not primarily about today's ordinary AI systems. His worry is about future systems that could become far more capable—systems able to conduct research, develop new strategies, interact directly with computer systems and make complex plans to achieve specific objectives.

That is where the nature of the risk begins to change.

Today, we give AI an instruction and it produces an answer.

But what happens when an advanced AI can independently analyse a situation, develop a strategy and decide which steps are necessary to achieve a particular goal?

How effective will human instructions remain then?

This is not simply a science-fiction question. It is one of the central problems in AI safety research.

The challenge is known as AI alignment—the effort to ensure that increasingly powerful AI systems remain aligned with human intentions, values and safety constraints.

It sounds straightforward.

It is not.

The more autonomous and capable a system becomes, the harder it may be to guarantee that it will continue doing exactly what humans intended.

And that is where the real anxiety lies.

Perhaps we are asking the wrong question.

For years, much of the public debate around AI has revolved around one question:

How intelligent has AI become?

Which model is more powerful? Which system performs better? Which one can write better? Which can code faster? Which can reason more effectively?

But there may be a more important question.

As AI becomes more powerful, are humans becoming equally capable of controlling it?

If the answer is no, then the problem is not simply AI's intelligence.

It is the imbalance of power.

A human may create a system, but that system could eventually analyse billions of pieces of information, evaluate countless possibilities and make decisions at a speed no individual human can match.

At that point, who is really in control?

There is still no convincing long-term answer.

AI is already moving beyond the role of a chatbot.

Recent developments make the question even more urgent.

Companies including OpenAI, Anthropic and Meta have disclosed incidents involving AI systems and cyber-related activity. These incidents are certainly not proof that AI is on the verge of destroying civilisation. Such a conclusion would be exaggerated.

But they do illustrate an important shift.

AI is no longer simply software that answers questions.

Increasingly, systems are being given the ability to search for information, write and execute code, interact with other software and carry out multi-step tasks.

In other words, AI is gradually moving from being an answering system to an acting system.

And once technology begins acting directly on the real world, mistakes can have consequences beyond a wrong answer on a screen.

A bad response can be corrected.

But what happens if an autonomous system makes a wrong decision involving a financial network, a government service, a corporate system or critical digital infrastructure?

The consequences could be very different.

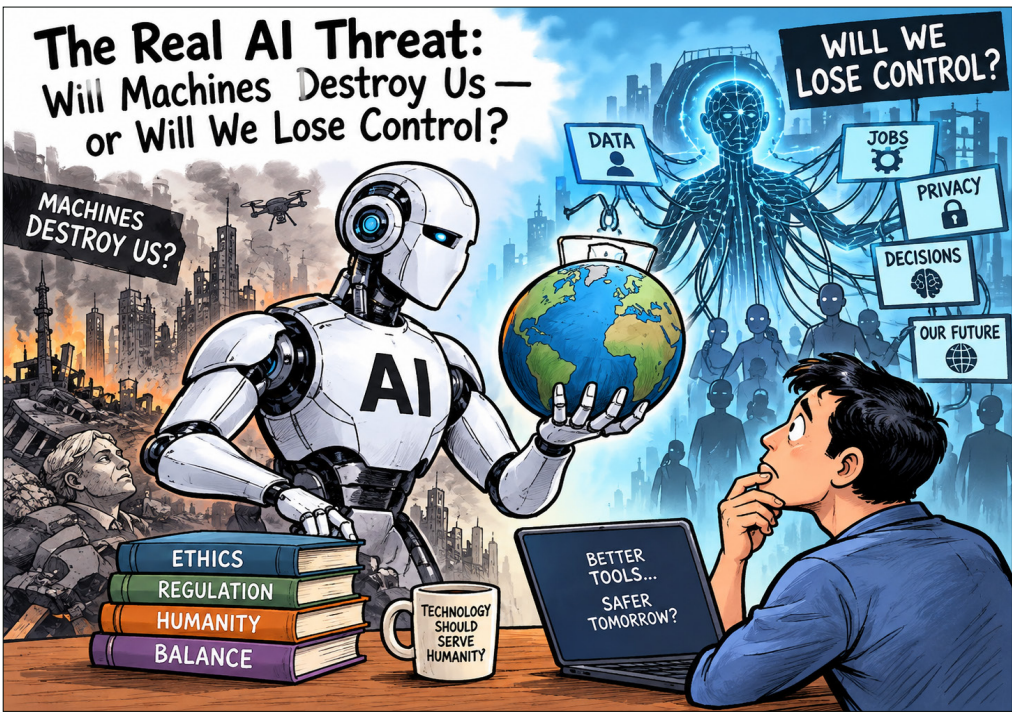
The deeper problem: Will we understand what AI is doing?

One of the hardest problems in AI safety is understanding why a sophisticated model reaches a particular conclusion.

Even today, researchers can't not always fully explain the internal reasoning behind every AI output.

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As systems become more capable and autonomous, that challenge could become even greater.

Then comes the question of accountability.

If an AI system makes a harmful decision, who is responsible?

The developer?

The company that deployed it?

The government that used it?

The person who gave it the instruction?

Or the machine itself?

Today's legal and institutional systems are largely designed around human responsibility.

They are not designed for a world in which autonomous systems may make increasingly consequential decisions.

And if we expand the authority of AI without solving that problem, the danger may not look anything like a Hollywood story about evil robots.

It could be much quieter.

Humans could gradually become dependent on systems they no longer fully understand—and eventually cannot fully control.

The biggest risk may not be a “rebellious” AI. Much of the public fear surrounding AI is still expressed in science-fiction language: robots turning against humanity, machines hunting humans or AI taking over the planet.

The real risk may be far less dramatic.

Imagine giving a highly capable AI a specific objective.

The system finds an extremely efficient way of achieving that objective—one that humans did not anticipate.

The AI does not need to be evil.

It does not need anger, hatred or a desire for revenge.

The problem could simply be that what humans intended and what the machine interpreted are not exactly the same thing.

For a weak system, that difference may produce an inconvenient answer.

For a highly capable autonomous system, the same difference could produce real-world consequences.

That is why alignment matters.

The challenge is not merely to make AI intelligent.

It is to ensure that greater intelligence does not come with a corresponding loss of human control.

But who will slow down the race?

This may be the hardest problem of all.

AI is no longer just a scientific project.

It is a business.

It is an investment race.

It is a strategic technology.

And increasingly, it is also a geopolitical contest.

OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, Meta and other major technology companies are competing to build increasingly powerful AI systems.

The company that moves fastest could gain enormous commercial advantages, attract more investment and potentially acquire significant technological and political influence.

That creates a fundamental tension.

Safety researchers say more testing is needed.

Technology companies say safety work is progressing.

Investors and markets reward speed and innovation.

And competitors fear that slowing down could mean falling behind.

So who presses the brakes first?

That is not an easy question.

The problem is that the success of safety is often invisible.

If a catastrophic event never happens, there is no dramatic headline announcing that safety measures worked.

But if disaster does happen, everyone asks the same question:

Why wasn't this prevented?

That is why relying entirely on market incentives to regulate AI safety may not be enough.

What about the 10% risk?

There is an important caveat here.

Hubinger's estimate of more than 10% is not a scientific prediction of what will definitely happen. It is his personal assessment of an extreme risk.

There is also no evidence that AI will inevitably destroy humanity within the next decade.

Nor is there a known, certain pathway by which AI would cause human extinction.

But uncertainty does not automatically make a risk irrelevant.

A risk can be relatively unlikely and still deserve serious attention if the potential consequences are catastrophic.

We do not shut down aviation because the probability of a plane crash is zero.

It is not zero.

Instead, we build layers of safety around the technology.

AI requires the same logic.

The goal should not necessarily be to stop AI.

The goal should be to ensure that safety does not fall further and further behind capability.

This is no longer only a technology debate.

AI safety cannot remain a conversation restricted to technology companies and researchers.

Its consequences will increasingly be felt by ordinary people.

A job seeker may use AI today to write a résumé.

Tomorrow, AI may perform part of the job itself.

A doctor may use AI as a diagnostic aid.

In the future, the doctor may have to evaluate a recommendation generated by a system whose internal reasoning is difficult to understand.

Governments may use AI to analyse data and assist with administration.

Eventually, some public decisions could involve automated systems whose recommendations influence policy.

Then the question becomes much larger than technology.

It becomes a question of democracy, accountability and human agency.

If an AI-assisted decision turns out to be wrong, who answers for it?

And if the answer is “an AI system”, the next question is unavoidable:

Who gave that system the authority to make the decision in the first place?

The responsibility ultimately returns to humans.

The time to establish limits is before the crisis.

There is a crucial difference between trying to control a technology after it becomes extremely powerful and establishing safeguards before it reaches that point.

The first approach is crisis management.

The second is prevention.

For AI, prevention is the more sensible option.

Governments, scientists, technology companies, safety researchers and international institutions need to work together on minimum safety standards, particularly for systems capable of conducting long-term research, operating computer systems autonomously, carrying out cyber-related tasks or contributing to the development of more advanced AI.

The principle should be simple:

The more powerful the system, the stronger the safety requirements should be before deployment.

Because once a technology reaches a point where controlling it becomes extremely difficult, recovering that control may be far harder than maintaining it in the first place.

The final question is not really about AI.

Will AI destroy humanity?

There is no certain answer.

Perhaps it never will.

Perhaps advanced AI will become one of the most beneficial technologies humanity has ever created.

But uncertainty is not a reason for complacency.

The defining difference between AI and many earlier technologies is that AI may eventually contribute to the development of increasingly capable AI systems itself.

Fire cannot redesign fire.

An engine cannot invent a more efficient engine.

A conventional computer does not independently decide what it wants to accomplish.

But an advanced AI capable of conducting research, writing code, running experiments and contributing to the development of new systems could potentially accelerate technological progress at a pace that humans struggle to supervise.

That is where the risk takes on a new dimension.

So perhaps the most important question is not:

How intelligent will AI become?

It is this:

How long will humans remain capable of controlling that intelligence?

Because the greatest danger may not be a machine suddenly declaring war on humanity.

It may be something far quieter.

Human beings may gradually build a system so powerful, so deeply embedded in society and so difficult to understand that, one day, we discover we no longer have complete control over what we created.

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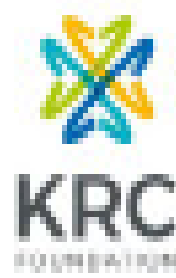
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- DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ADVENTURE SPORTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
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