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PERSPECTIVE

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TERROR AND HORROR IS THAT TERROR OCCURS IN ANTICIPATION OF THE HORRIFYING EXPERIENCE, WHILE HORROR OCCURS AFTER.

Purabi Roy Appointed Assam BJP Mahila Morcha President



GUWAHATI
Purabi Roy has been appointed as the new president of the Assam Pradesh BJP Mahila Morcha, the women's wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam.

The appointment was announced by Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia, who entrusted Roy with leading the organisation's activities across the state.

In her new role, Roy will oversee the Mahila Morcha's organisational initiatives, strengthen outreach among women and work to expand the party's grassroots presence. She will also be responsible for coordinating the women's wing's activities in support of the BJP's political and organisational programmes.

The Assam Pradesh BJP Mahila Morcha plays a key role in mobilising women, building connections with women voters and implementing the party's outreach initiatives across the state.

Details of Roy's future plans and the organisation's upcoming programmes have not yet been announced.

WHO SAID WHAT



I have been writing since 2020, and also earlier in Parliament, to Modi about how China is grabbing the hitherto undisputed Indian territory. I have also information that both Modi and our External Affairs Minister have denied this Chinese grabbing. When asked for a full map of Ladakh and Arunachal areas of India, the Duo decline to disclose even a map. Hence I may soon approach the Delhi High Court.

— Dr. Subramanian Swamy, President of Virat Hindustan Sangam, former Cabinet Minister, & MP

NEW DELHI

Assam and other northeastern states are set to play a role in the Centre's initiative to strengthen civilian preparedness and emergency response, with the Union Home Ministry planning to build a civil defence network involving around 60,000 volunteers across 12 states and Union Territories.

Under the pilot project, master trainers in civil defence from the selected regions will receive specialised three-day training in collaboration with the Indian Army. The initiative aims to strengthen the preparedness of civilian volunteers and develop a more organised response mechanism for security-related emergencies and other critical situations.

Assam, Meghalaya and Sikkim are among the participating states, while Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are also included in the programme.

The initiative draws inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day address, in which he outlined a vision for a modern civilian protection network equipped with



advanced technology and capabilities to address emerging security challenges.

For the Northeast, the initiative assumes particular significance given the region's geographical vulnerabilities, international borders and exposure to natural disasters. Assam and neighbouring states frequently face challenges such as floods, landslides and disruptions to transport and communication, making coordination among civilian volunteers, security agencies and emergency services crucial during crises.

However, the ministry's announcement does not specify how the proposed 60,000 volunteers will be distributed among the participating states or provide a separate implementation timeline for the Northeast.

Guwahati among 10 locations identified for emergency communication network

Alongside the civil defence initiative, the Home Ministry is planning a nationwide Broadband Public Protection and Disaster Relief (BB-PPDR) network to provide advanced communication facilities to around three million personnel from police forces, central armed police forces and disaster response agencies.

Guwahati has been identified as one of 10 locations for the proposed network, highlighting the importance of strengthening emergency communications in

infrastructure in the Northeast.

The other identified locations are the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Amritsar, Bastar, Bengaluru, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Mumbai, Rudrapur and Visakhapatnam.

According to the ministry, the proposed system will provide mission-critical push-to-talk communication, data transmission and video connectivity to state police forces, central armed police forces, the National Disaster Response Force, fire services, medical services and other security agencies.

The network is intended to enable faster information-sharing and coordination among agencies during emergencies, when conventional communication systems may be disrupted or inadequate.

For Assam, where widespread flooding can affect several districts simultaneously and interrupt road connectivity, reliable communication between rescue teams, police, medical personnel and disaster management authorities can be particularly important. The proposed network could support such coordination, although its actual coverage, operational capabilities and implementation schedule have not yet been detailed.

Northeast focus on preparedness and coordination

The two initiatives form part of the Centre's broader effort to strengthen civilian protection, emergency communication and disaster response capabilities.

The civil defence programme will focus on developing trained volunteers through a master-trainer system, while the proposed broadband network is intended to improve communication among professional responders and security agencies. For the Northeast, the effectiveness of these measures will depend on how quickly training reaches local volunteers, whether the communication network covers vulnerable and remote areas, and how well the different agencies coordinate their operations.

The Home Ministry has invited suggestions from the public and stakeholders on the proposed nationwide broadband network. Further details on the rollout, funding and state-wise implementation of the projects are awaited.

COCOMI Threatens Statewide Campaign from October 31, Sets October 30 Deadline for Peace

IMPHAL

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), along with like-minded Naga civil society organisations, has threatened to launch a large-scale campaign across Manipur from October 31 if the state government fails to take concrete steps to end the ongoing conflict by October 30.

The announcement was made during a sit-in protest organised by COCOMI, the Foothills Naga Coordinating Committee (FNCC) and the Naga Humanitarian Aid Committee Manipur (NHACM) at Lamphel on Thursday. The protesters demanded an end to what they described as "India's proxy war" in the state.

Addressing the media after the protest, COCOMI convener YK Dhiren accused the state government of making misleading claims about the restoration of peace, particularly during visits to hill districts.

He alleged that assurances about improving security had encouraged civilians to travel to areas that remained unsafe, potentially exposing them to further danger.

Dhiren also demanded that the government take responsibility for the killing of three Meitei woodcutters in an attack at Khongban Sunurok on October 19. He claimed that the victims had relied on government assurances that normalcy was gradually returning before venturing into the area.

COCOMI alleges continued conflict

Dhiren alleged that the continuing violence amounted to a proxy war being orchestrated by the Indian

government through Kuki militants. He said COCOMI and its supporting organisations would expand their movement across both the hill and valley districts if their demands were not met by the October 30 deadline.

The allegations against the Centre and the claimed involvement of militants reflect the protesters' position and have not been independently established.

The proposed campaign comes amid continuing concerns over civilian safety and the prolonged ethnic conflict in Manipur, which erupted in May 2023.

Naga organisations call for concrete action

NHACM co-convenor Amana Thaimai said indigenous communities had endured more than three years of conflict and alleged that the situation had continued to worsen rather than improve.

She said people were suffering in their own land and urged the state government to take decisive steps to resolve the crisis within the stipulated timeframe.

Thaimai warned that the organisations would intensify their agitation from October 31 if the government failed to respond to their demands. During the sit-in, demonstrators raised slogans such as "End proxy war", "Long live Manipur" and "Stop killing innocent people", calling for an end to civilian killings and a resolution to the prolonged unrest.

With October 30 set as the deadline, attention is now on the state government's response and whether the organisations proceed with their proposed statewide campaign from the following day.

Newly Built Drain Wall Collapses Within 24 Hours, Residents Allege Construction Irregularities

SILCHAR

Questions have been raised over the quality of a drainage project along Kathal Road in Silchar after a newly constructed concrete wall of a culvert-cum-drain collapsed within 24 hours of the completion of the work, triggering anger among local residents.

The incident occurred between Bank Colony and Laskar Lane. According to local sources, construction of the concrete wall was completed on October 22, but the structure reportedly collapsed by the afternoon of October 23.

Residents have alleged that the collapse points to the possible use of substandard construction materials and inadequate supervision of the work. However, these allegations have not been independently verified, and the reasons behind the collapse remain unclear.

The incident has raised concerns about the quality of public infrastructure projects and the monitoring of construction work in the town. Residents have demanded a thorough investigation to determine whether construction standards were followed and whether any negligence contributed to the failure.

Commuters and residents have also expressed concern over the absence of proper alternative traffic arrangements while construction work remains underway. According to locals, movement through the area has become difficult, with children and elderly people particularly vulnerable to unsafe conditions.

Residents have urged the concerned authorities to inspect the damaged structure, assess the quality of the construction and initiate strict action against anyone found responsible for irregularities.

They have also called for an immediate arrangement of a safe alternative route to reduce inconvenience to commuters and ensure the safety of people living in the affected area.

NPP Appoints James Sangma, Mmhonlumo Kikon to Lead Manipur Election Preparations

IMPHAL

The National People's Party (NPP) has appointed James Sangma as convener and Mmhonlumo Kikon as co-convenor of its Manipur Political and Election Coordination Committee, tasking the two leaders with overseeing the party's organisational activities and election preparations ahead of the forthcoming Assembly polls.

According to an order issued by the party, Sangma, a Rajya Sabha MP and the NPP's National Working President, will head the committee, while Kikon, the party's National General Secretary (Political), will serve as co-convenor. The committee will function under the overall supervision of the NPP national president.

The committee has been assigned responsibility for coordinating political activities, mobilising party workers and strengthening the organisation across Manipur. Its mandate includes working with state leaders, elected representatives and party functionaries to assess constituency-level preparedness and coordinate campaign planning.

The panel will also focus on improving coordination among the party's state, district, block and polling station units as the NPP prepares for the next Assembly elections.

Another key responsibility will be to consult party leaders on prospective candidates and consolidate

recommendations through the organisation's established channels. However, the final selection and approval of candidates will remain with the party's Central Election Committee, in accordance with Article 14 of the NPP Constitution.

The order also lays down procedures for decisions concerning political alliances, seat-sharing arrangements and other major political commitments. Proposals on these matters must be submitted to the national president for consideration by the competent party authority before being finalised or publicly announced.

The convenor and co-convenor will also oversee official communications relating to the committee's responsibilities, ensuring that political statements and electoral announcements reflect duly approved party decisions.

The committee will submit regular reports and recommendations to the national president. Issues that remain unresolved or require higher-level approval will be referred to the national president or the appropriate party body.

The order, issued under the provisions of the NPP Constitution, takes immediate effect and will remain in force until further notice.

The appointments mark a step in the NPP's preparations to strengthen its organisational network and coordinate its political strategy in Manipur ahead of the next Assembly elections.

Arunachal Siang Dam Protests Turn Violent; NHPC Office, Police Station Set Ablaze in Pasighat

ITANAGAR

Protests against the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) in Arunachal Pradesh turned violent on Friday, October 23, with an office of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and a police station in Pasighat reportedly set ablaze. Seven police vehicles were also reportedly torched, while a journalist sustained injuries during the unrest.

The violence erupted amid mounting opposition to preliminary survey work for the proposed 11,000-megawatt hydropower project on the Siang River. Protesters have demanded the immediate release of detained activists, the withdrawal of security personnel from the Siang region and a complete halt to the pre-feasibility report (PFR) survey associated with the project.

Tensions escalated as demonstrators confronted security personnel. Local reports alleged that police used tear gas to disperse



the protesters. Security was subsequently tightened in Pasighat as authorities attempted to bring the situation under control.

The extent of the damage to government and other properties remained unclear, with no detailed official account of the incidents immediately available.

Opposition to Siang project intensifies

The latest violence has brought renewed attention to the opposition surrounding the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project, one of the major hydropower initiatives planned in Arunachal Pradesh.

The project, proposed on the Siang River and being pursued by NHPC, has faced resistance from sections of local communities concerned about its potential impact on land, livelihoods, settlements and the river ecosystem.

For communities in the Siang region, the debate extends beyond electricity generation and infrastructure development. Concerns over the possible displacement of residents, environmental changes and the long-term consequences of a large dam have contributed to

opposition to the project.

The demand to stop the pre-feasibility survey reflects protesters' resistance to preliminary activities associated with the project. The latest mobilisation has also focused on the presence of security forces and the detention of activists, turning the dispute into a wider confrontation over the manner in which the project-related process is being pursued.

The reported burning of the NHPC office, police station and police vehicles marks a serious escalation in the protests. The injury to a journalist has also raised concerns about the safety of media personnel covering the unrest.

Authorities deployed additional security personnel in Pasighat following the incidents. However, details regarding the circumstances leading to the arson, the identities of those responsible and the official assessment of the damage were not immediately available.

The demands raised by protesters centre on three immediate issues: the release of detained activists, the withdrawal of security forces from the Siang region and the suspension of survey activities for the proposed project.

The situation underscores the challenge facing the authorities in balancing infrastructure development with local concerns over land, the environment and community rights.

As tensions continue over the proposed hydropower project, the immediate priority remains restoring order and establishing the facts surrounding the violence. The longer-term challenge will be to address the concerns of affected communities through transparent consultations and a credible assessment of the project's social and environmental implications.

The reports of arson and damage had not been independently confirmed by an official account at the time of publication.



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INDIA-US
TRADE DEAL

A durable agreement between New Delhi and Washington will depend on mutual concessions, respect for national interests and a recognition that strategic partnerships cannot be sustained through economic pressure alone. Geopolitical alliances are rarely static. They are forged by shared interests, tested by crises and reshaped by changing economic and security realities. As the Russia-Ukraine war continues to unsettle global markets and the confrontation between the United States and Iran threatens critical energy supplies, the proposed India-US trade agreement has acquired significance far beyond tariffs and market access. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's recent visit to India and his assessment that the pact is "about as close as you can be without having an executed agreement" suggest that both sides are keen to overcome their differences. Yet the final stretch of negotiations may prove the most consequential.

The urgency of an agreement must be understood against Washington's increasingly assertive trade policy. The United States has used tariffs as an instrument of economic leverage against both competitors and partners, arguing that trade imbalances and unequal market access require corrective action. However, such an approach carries unequal consequences. Wealthier economies possess greater capacity to absorb tariff shocks and retaliate, while developing countries often face disproportionate pressure on exports, employment and investment. India, despite its expanding economic strength, cannot remain insulated from these disruptions.

The bilateral economic relationship is too substantial to be reduced to a contest over duties. Indian exports to the United States exceed \$100 billion, while imports from the American market stand at roughly \$43 billion, according to the figures cited in the debate over the proposed agreement. The relationship also extends to advanced technology, defence manufacturing, energy and strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Disrupting these connections through prolonged trade friction would impose costs on both countries.

Energy has emerged as one of the most sensitive dimensions of the negotiations. Washington has repeatedly expressed concern over India's purchases of Russian crude oil, viewing them through the prism of the Ukraine conflict and its broader sanctions strategy. India, however, has maintained that energy procurement must be guided by national requirements, affordability and the security of supplies. For a country with a vast population and a rapidly expanding economy, access to reasonably priced energy is not merely a commercial consideration; it is fundamental to economic stability.

Rubio's comparatively conciliatory remarks in Mumbai, including his acknowledgement that diversifying energy sources is a sensible but gradual process, indicate a measure of pragmatism in Washington's position. Such flexibility is welcome. Energy markets cannot be reshaped overnight, particularly when geopolitical conflict disrupts established supply chains, shipping routes and refining operations.

The confrontation involving Iran and the uncertainty surrounding the Strait of Hormuz have underscored the vulnerability of global energy supplies. Any prolonged disruption in this strategically vital passage can affect oil prices, transportation costs, inflation and industrial production across continents. For India, which depends heavily on imported crude, the consequences can be particularly severe. The United States, despite its substantial domestic energy production, is not immune to the wider economic effects of instability in international markets.

This changing energy landscape also highlights India's growing importance in global refining. The country has developed sophisticated processing capabilities, including at Reliance Industries' Jamnagar complex in Gujarat, one of the world's largest refining hubs. Its ability to process different grades of crude makes India an important participant in the international petroleum market. Rubio's description of India as a refining "superpower" reflects the commercial and strategic value of this capacity.

However, energy cooperation must not become another instrument for imposing one-sided obligations. Washington may seek greater Indian purchases of American crude, liquefied natural gas and other energy products. New Delhi, in turn, must retain the freedom to diversify suppliers and secure the most competitive terms available. A trade agreement should expand commercial choices, not narrow them.

The same principle applies to defence and technology. India needs access to advanced technologies, dependable defence supplies and investment that can strengthen domestic manufacturing.

The United States, meanwhile, sees India as an increasingly important strategic partner in balancing China's influence and maintaining stability across the Indo-Pacific. These interests create considerable scope for cooperation, but they also make mutual confidence indispensable.

Trade negotiations, therefore, cannot be conducted as though India were merely seeking access to the American market. New Delhi represents a major consumer economy, a growing manufacturing base and a strategic partner whose importance extends well beyond bilateral commerce. A successful agreement must recognise these strengths rather than treating market access as a concession that Washington can grant or withdraw at will.

Agriculture remains one of the most difficult areas of negotiation. The United States has an interest in expanding access for its agricultural products, while India must protect a sector that supports hundreds of millions of people, including small and marginal farmers. Differences in farm sizes, production costs, subsidies, rural employment and social safety nets make a straightforward comparison between the two agricultural systems misleading.

India's caution on agricultural concessions is consequently justified. Opening sensitive sectors too quickly could expose vulnerable producers to intense competition and create economic distress in rural areas. At the same time, protection cannot become an excuse for avoiding every form of reform or competition.

The challenge is to identify areas where greater access can benefit consumers and producers without undermining livelihoods or food security.

A balanced agreement should provide safeguards for vulnerable sectors, establish clear rules for market access and create mechanisms to address disputes. Any concessions should be assessed on the basis of their long-term economic value rather than their immediate political appeal. An agreement that delivers export opportunities but weakens rural livelihoods would be difficult to defend. Equally, an arrangement that fails to generate meaningful gains for Indian exporters would offer little justification for the compromises involved.

Predictability is another essential requirement. Businesses make investment decisions over years, not electoral cycles. Frequent changes in tariff policy, uncertainty over market access and the threat of sudden restrictions discourage companies from building supply chains or committing capital. India and the United States need a framework that reduces such uncertainty and provides transparent procedures for resolving disagreements.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“People will vote for what is comfortable—and lies are very comfortable.” -Osho

INSIDE IMPHAL'S “SOUND PROTEST” AND THE CHASM BETWEEN STATE AND CITIZEN



BISWADEEP GUPTA

The recent outbreak of a synchronised “noise protest” across Manipur's five valley districts, spearheaded by the Federation of Haomee (FoH), marks a profound shift in civil expression against the prolonged ethnic conflict. Thousands of citizens took to the streets, banged utensils, struck electric poles, blared vehicle horns, and briefly plunged neighbourhoods into darkness to register their deep-seated frustration over continuing violence and administrative inaction.

The noise protest march in Imphal has witnessed an unprecedented turnout, with mothers carrying infants on scooters and children walking alongside their parents. Carried out in a highly disciplined manner, without a hint of violence, the demonstration is historic, peaceful, and truly one of

a kind.

This mobilisation was triggered by mounting public outrage over recurring killings and an escalating sense of insecurity, prompting citizens to demand concrete state and central accountability. Between 7:00 PM and 8:00 PM of 23rd October 2026, residents in Imphal and surrounding valley areas transformed the night air with discordant noise—beating drums, striking metal plates and poles, and organising vehicle rallies. Prominent civil society voices underscored critical political demands, including the abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact with specific militant groups, the updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur, and a definitive end to escalating civilian vulnerabilities. As crowds swelled and marched toward historical landmarks like the Western Gate of Kangla Fort,

thy, the silence must be broken by sound.

However, heavy barricades around cultural and historical flashpoints like Kangla Fort highlight a troubling security reflex. Suppressing democratic dissent—even when expressed

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

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#UNDAY ~ Antonio Guterres



unconventionally through cacophony rather than placards—risks further alienating an already aggrieved populace.

Addressing this public anguish requires the administration to recognise that frustration stems from structural security deficits. Tackling core demands regarding transparency, law enforcement efficacy, and border and internal security protocols is vital to restoring public trust. Civil society groups like the Federation of Haomee reflect deep-seated community anxieties, meaning that rebuilding a credible bridge between state leadership and local stakeholders requires transparent engagement rather than reactive crowd-control measures. At the same time, while citizens have a democratic right to express anguish, maintaining civic order prevents situations from devolving into structural friction with security forces, ensuring that the core message of peace is not lost in urban gridlock or minor clashes. For months, both the valley and hill districts have lived under the heavy shadow of prolonged strife—marked by displaced populations, interrupted livelihoods, and a recurring cycle of violence that defies easy political resolution. “The time has come for a wake-up call for all stakeholders: there is no alternative to peace, and both the State and Central governments are duty-bound to achieve this goal and fulfil their constitutional responsibilities.” Whether this demonstration will finally push the Manipur conflict toward a resolution remains to be seen. Yet with elections looming, the message to political parties is undeniable: rethink your strategy and demonstrate real leadership. Policymakers are at a critical crossroads, and the voters' ultimatum is clear—bring peace before seeking votes.



IMPHAL WITNESSES UNPRECEDENTED 'NOISE PROTEST' AGAINST ONGING CRISIS.

Thousands take to streets from 7:30 PM - 8:00 PM across valley districts in deafening call for peace.

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Assam Announces 2025 Civilian Awards: 17 Individuals and Organisations Honoured

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has finalised the recipients of the Assam Baibhav, Assam Saurav and Assam Gaurav awards for 2025, recognising 17 individuals and organisations for their contributions to healthcare, wildlife conservation, sports, agriculture, culture and entrepreneurship. Dr Harsha Bhattacharyya, president and founder trustee of Srimanta Sankaradeva Nethralaya, has been selected for the Assam Baibhav, the highest civilian honour conferred by the state government, in recognition of his contributions to eye care and healthcare services. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the names at a press briefing at Lok Sewa Bhawan on Friday, following the state Cabinet meeting. He said the 2025 awards could not be conferred last year and the government was announcing the list now.

According to the Chief Minister, the 2025 awards will be presented in December this year, while the 2026 awards will be conferred in January 2027. The government plans to announce the names of the 2026 awardees within a month.

Sarma said a Cabinet sub-committee comprising ministers Keshab Mahanta, Ajanta Neog, Ranoj Pegu and Jayanta Malabarua had overseen the selection process. "The Assam Baibhav, Assam Saurav and Assam Gaurav awards for 2025 have been finalised. As we could not confer the awards last year, we are announcing the 2025 list now. The list of awardees for 2026 will be announced within a month, and the two sets of awards will be presented separately," the Chief Minister said.

Dr Harsha Bhattacharyya has been selected for the Assam Baibhav in recognition of his work in eye care and healthcare delivery. As president and founder trustee

of Srimanta Sankaradeva Nethralaya, he has contributed to the development of specialised eye-care services in the state. The Assam Baibhav is the highest of the three civilian honours instituted by the Assam government.

Four selected for Assam Saurav
Four distinguished personalities have been chosen for the Assam Saurav award for their contributions to wildlife conservation, cultural heritage and the arts.

The recipients are:
"Dr Kushal Konwar Sarma: Padma Shri awardee and noted wildlife expert.

"Nuruddin Ahmed: Padma Shri awardee recognised for his contributions to the arts and cultural heritage.

"Pulak Banerjee: Singer known for his contribution to music.

"Dr Purnima Devi Barman: Wildlife conservationist renowned for her efforts to protect the greater adjutant stork, local-

ly known as the hargila.

The selection recognises work spanning wildlife protection, cultural preservation and the promotion of Assam's artistic traditions.

Assam Gaurav recognises diverse achievements

The Assam Gaurav awardees represent a wide range of fields, including football, cricket, chess, agriculture, tourism, entrepreneurship and cultural preservation.

The selected recipients are:

1. Devi Prasad Bagrodia
2. Holicharan Narzary, footballer
3. Simu Das, visually impaired cricketer
4. Harakanta Basumatary, recognised for successful palm oil cultivation
5. Dhanjit Talukdar, associated with manuscript conservation
6. Nibetiya Yein, food and tourism entrepreneur

7. Mayong Chakraborty, chess grand-

master

8. Jiten Sarangfangsa, agricultural entrepreneur known for ginger cultivation in Karbi Anglong

9. Tanumaya Sonar Bishwakarma, recognised as a Lakhpati Baideu

10. Dikpal Lahon, associated with travel and tourism in Lakhimpur

11. Kolong Kopili, a non-governmental organisation

12. Podum Pathar Agro Organic Producer Company Limited, a farmer-producer organisation

The selections highlight achievements in both individual and community-led initiatives. From sporting accomplishments to agricultural innovation and the preservation of traditional manuscripts, the awards seek to recognise contributions that support the state's cultural and socio-economic development.

The inclusion of a non-governmental

organisation and a farmer-producer company also extends recognition beyond individual achievers to organisations working in community development and agriculture.

2026 award list due within a month

With the 2025 recipients announced, the state government is preparing to complete the next cycle of civilian honours. Sarma said the 2026 awardees would be announced within a month, with the awards to be presented separately in January 2027. The staggered schedule means Assam will hold two award ceremonies within a short period: the delayed presentation of the 2025 honours in December 2026, followed by the 2026 awards in January 2027.

Assam Cabinet Clears Rs 300-Crore Sintex Project in Rangia, 300 Jobs Expected

GUWAHATI

The Assam Cabinet has approved a Rs 300-crore industrial project by the Welspun Group, owner of the Sintex brand, in Rangia, with the proposed unit expected to generate around 300 jobs.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the decision while briefing the media at Lok Sewa Bhawan following the Cabinet meeting on Friday.

"The Cabinet has approved an investment proposal from the Welspun Group, which owns the Sintex brand, to establish an industry worth Rs 300 crore in Rangia. The project is expected to generate employment for around 300 people," Sarma said.

The Cabinet also approved amendments related to the investment proposal, clearing the way for the proposed industrial unit. However, details regarding the project's implementation timeline, production capacity and the specific nature of the jobs are yet to be announced.

The proposed investment is expected to provide a boost to industrial activity in Rangia and create fresh employment opportunities for local residents. The project also forms part of the state's broader efforts to attract private investment and expand its industrial base.

In another significant decision, the Cabinet approved the election rules for the Missing Autonomous Council and the Sonawal Kachari Autonomous Council, paving the way for elections to both bodies in November.

Sarma said the state government had directed the State Election Commission to conduct the polls during the month.

The approval marks an important step towards initiating the electoral process for the two autonomous councils. The election schedule, including the dates for nominations, polling and counting, is yet to be announced.

The two decisions featured prominently in Friday's Cabinet meeting, with the government advancing plans for industrial investment and employment generation while also moving forward with elections to the autonomous councils.

Two Unidentified Bodies Found in Four Days in Assam's Dima Hasao, Police Probe Suspected Murder

DIMA HASAO

The recovery of two unidentified bodies within four days has raised concern in Assam's Dima Hasao district, with police investigating the latest discovery in a forest near Gidingpur village under Maibang Police Station.

The latest body was found around 1.30 pm on Friday by villagers who had entered the forest to collect firewood. The remains were reportedly in a semi-decomposed state. The villagers alerted the police after discovering the body.

A police team from Maibang Police Station reached the spot, accompanied by Maibang Sub-Divisional Police Officer Rahul Kalita and Dima Hasao Senior Superintendent of Police Ripunjoy Kakoti.

The body was subsequently sent to Diphu Medical College for examination. The post-mortem and other procedures are

expected to help establish the deceased's identity and determine the cause of death.

Police suspect that the case may involve murder, although the circumstances surrounding the death remain unclear. An investigation is under way, and the identity of the deceased has not yet been established. The latest recovery comes just three days after another unidentified body was found in the Diyung River on October 20. That body was recovered near a railway bridge close to New Haflong Railway Station. The identity of the deceased in that case also remains unknown.

The discovery of the two bodies in quick succession has heightened concern among local residents. Police are continuing their investigation into the latest case, while further details about both recoveries are awaited.

GUWAHATI

The Assam government is planning to use satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) to detect encroachment in reserved forests at an early stage, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stressing that timely intervention is essential to protect forest cover and prevent illegal settlements from expanding.

Speaking at the launch of the Forest Department's new online transfer portal on Friday, Sarma said conventional monitoring by forest guards and other officials alone would not be sufficient to tackle encroachment effectively. He called for a technology-based alert system that could identify the first signs of tree felling, deforestation and construction on reserved forest land. "If we can use satellites to monitor our forests, we will come to know about the first encroachment in a reserved



forest, the first tree felled. If we turn back the first encroachment, then it will prevent hue and cry," the Chief Minister said. He argued that authorities often fail to intervene when encroachment begins on a small scale, allowing isolated structures to develop into larger settlements. Once hundreds of families occupy forest land, eviction drives become more complicated and trigger wider administrative

and social concerns. Sarma said the government should focus on identifying the first unauthorised structure rather than waiting until an encroached area has expanded significantly.

"Why cannot we target the very first house that is built over reserve forest land?" he asked.

Under the proposed mechanism, periodic satellite images and data on forest cover and land use

would be analysed to identify possible encroachment. Alerts could then be sent to divisional forest officers (DFOs), who would be expected to inspect the affected areas and take appropriate action.

Sarma said an early-warning system could help officials intervene before unauthorised occupation becomes widespread.

"If we could not bring AI alert system with periodic data and images of forest and its land use, if we get a warning for the first house erected in reserve forest, we can make the person understand and send them back without force," he said. The Chief Minister maintained that technology would have limited value unless forest officials were held accountable for acting on the warnings. He stressed that the department must respond promptly to reports of initial tree felling or construction instead of allowing encroachment to continue unchecked.

12 Manipur Youths Selected for Jobs in Japan as State Explores Overseas Employment Opportunities

IMPHAL

Twelve youths from Manipur have been selected for jobs in Japan following a recruitment drive facilitated by NSDC International, as the state government steps up efforts to expand overseas employment opportunities for local candidates.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Friday met representatives of Zenken Corporation and six Japanese social welfare corporations at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Imphal.

The delegation was in Manipur to participate in the recruitment process at the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) International Academy at Manipur University.

The recruitment drive was organised by NSDC International in collaboration with Manipur University, with support from the state government's Department of Skills, Labour, Employment and Entrepreneurship (SLEE).

During the meeting, Khemchand Singh assured the Japanese representatives that the state government would extend all possible assistance to young people seeking employment opportunities in Japan. He emphasised the importance of creating more avenues for Manipur's youth to access jobs abroad.

The chief minister said more than 230 people from Manipur are already working in Japan across different sectors. He also announced that the government would soon organise training programmes for

truck and taxi drivers interested in securing employment in the country.

The initiative is expected to broaden the range of overseas job opportunities available to candidates from Manipur, particularly through skills training and recruitment partnerships with Japanese employers.

The six participating Japanese organisations are Social Welfare Corporation Fukushima Gakudan, Social Welfare Corporation Gasshoen, Social Welfare Corporation Goshiki, Social Welfare Corporation Life no Gakkou, Social Welfare Corporation Mineyama and Social Welfare Corporation Kuneikai.

The meeting was attended by SLEE Secretary N. Bandana Devi and representatives of the Japanese organisations. Those present included HIDA Daisuke, president of Fukushima Gakudan; Kamio Masashi, managing director of Gasshoen; Iwaya Katsuyoshi, facility head of Goshiki; and Okamoto Yutsuke, facility head of Life no Gakkou.

Shimizu Mami, management staff of Mineyama; Nakagawa Yukari, manager of Zenken Corporation; Heidy Nerissa Putri, supervisor of Zenken Corporation; and Masotmi Zimik, NSDC's state engagement officer, also attended the meeting.

The selection of the 12 candidates marks another step in Manipur's efforts to connect local jobseekers with international employers through institutional partnerships and targeted skills development.

Zubeen Garg Death Case: Gaurav Gogoi Questions Justice Delay, Slams Unfinished Memorial

SONAPUR

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Gaurav Gogoi on Friday launched a sharp attack on the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led Assam government over the investigation into singer Zubeen Garg's death, alleging that the authorities had failed to deliver justice despite making strong public claims about the case.

During a visit to Zubeen Kshetra in Sonapur, Gogoi questioned the government's handling of the investigation and expressed concern over the delay in completing the memorial dedicated to the late singer, even a year after his death.

Gogoi alleged that the government had failed to substantiate its claims before the court, despite assurances from the Chief Minister and the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT).

"We have not seen any positive result in terms of justice for the singer," Gogoi said, questioning why the allegations made during the investigation had not translated into what he described as tangible progress in court.

He also challenged the Chief Minister to explain why the government had not been able to produce the evidence necessary to support its claims before the judiciary.

Gogoi questions government's handling

Quest!

In 2010, there was a major traffic jam in China that lasted 12 days.



of the investigation

Taking his criticism further, Gogoi questioned the government's priorities, alleging that it had demonstrated its ability to pursue evidence in other political matters but had failed to do enough in the case concerning Garg's death.

"I am struggling to understand here that the government who can bring proof from Pakistan against me, that government even after the Chief Minister giving his word, why couldn't he provide proof. Why didn't he use his power," he said.

Gogoi also questioned why the state's Advocate General had not been entrusted with a more prominent role in the case. Referring to the Advocate General's alleged proximity to the Chief Minister and his position at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the Congress leader sought an explanation for his absence from the legal

proceedings.

The remarks formed part of Gogoi's broader criticism of the government's handling of the investigation. His allegations, however, were political claims and did not establish that the prosecution's case had failed on its merits.

Gogoi alleged that the handling of the case would remain a stain on Sarma's political legacy and accused the ruling establishment of using the singer's name for political gain.

Unfinished Zubeen Kshetra raises fresh questions

Apart from the investigation, Gogoi criticised the slow pace of work at Zubeen Kshetra, questioning why the memorial remained incomplete a year after the singer's death.

He contrasted the delay with government publicity highlighting the completion of flyovers and other infrastructure projects, arguing that the condition of the memorial reflected the government's priorities. "One year went by, still Zubeen Kshetra is incomplete. Currently, the public is sad with the justice process of Zubeen Garg. Standing with the people today, we came here," Gogoi said.

He added that the unfinished site raised questions about the government's commitment to honouring the singer's contribution to Assam's cultural and social life.

Zubeen Garg, one of Assam's most influential cultural figures, commanded a vast following across generations. His death triggered widespread grief across the state, alongside demands for a transparent investigation and accountability.

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NEW DELHI

Indian equities continue to bleed through the festive season when buying sentiment is typically strong. The benchmark indices—BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty 50—settled in the red in all four trading sessions of this week, with the broader indices facing a much steeper decline.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex opened higher but later plunged 797.02 points, or 1.08%, to hit an intraday low of 72,452.37. It later recouped some losses to settle at 73,123.83, down 125.56 points, or 0.17%.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 87.65 points, or 0.39%, to close at 22,600 after tumbling 315.65 points, or 1.39%, to a low of 22,372 on Friday. The Nifty Midcap 100 declined 2.21% and the Nifty Smallcap 100 fell 2.94%.

Investors lost over Rs 20 lakh crore this week as the

market capitalisation of all BSE-listed firms came down from Rs 473.46 lakh crore to Rs 452.40 lakh crore.

The decline is primarily attributed to elevated crude oil prices amid growing tensions in West Asia. At about \$116 per barrel, Brent crude oil is trading near a six-month high. For India, persistently high crude prices pose risks to imported inflation, corporate margins, and currency stability. If oil prices remain high, it could also lead to foreign fund outflows, further hurting domestic equities.

“Indian markets are currently seeing selling pressure primarily due to global factors with elevated geopolitical tensions, rising bond yields and the sharp rise in crude oil prices, which increased concerns around inflation, margins and the current account. At the same time,

tighter global liquidity and higher interest rates have reduced risk off sentiment,” said Shweta Rajani, associate director, Anand Rath Wealth Ltd.

Rajani explained that historically, the festive season that starts from the Navratri days till the end of Diwali has been favourable for equities.

The Nifty50 and Sensex have fallen by around 14% since the beginning of this year. If the bearish trend continues till December, it would be the first time in the past 10 years that Indian equities give negative returns in a calendar year.

According to Sudeep Shah, head of technical and derivatives research at SBI Securities, the sharp correction in AI- and data centre-related stocks across global exchanges has deepened market volatility.

‘Is another Galwan unfolding?’: Congress targets PM Modi over reported PLA face-offs in Arunachal

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday accused the Centre of remaining silent on reports of continuing face-offs between Indian and Chinese forces in Arunachal Pradesh, demanding answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on border security and India’s diplomatic approach towards Beijing.

The allegations followed reported remarks by Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Director General Shatruijeet Kapoor about recent confrontations with China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), responding to questions on the remarks, said Chinese forces sometimes diverged from established patrolling patterns along the border.

“Insofar as the specifics are concerned, I would refer you to the Ministry of Defence. As we have noted in the past, the situation in the India-China border areas gets disturbed from time to time when Chinese forces diverge from established patrolling patterns,” the MEA spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said both countries continued to use diplomatic and military mechanisms to resolve outstanding issues and prevent misunderstandings along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). “Both sides continue to use existing diplomatic and military mechanisms to resolve outstanding issues and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The two sides have also agreed to discuss ways to improve understanding of the LAC in appropriate areas for better border management. I would also like to emphasise that the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas is essential for the overall development of bilateral relations,” the spokesperson added.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge led the opposition’s criticism, arguing that the government had given Beijing “enough clean chits” and demanding accountability over the border situation.

In a post on X, Kharge raised questions about national security, India’s economic dependence on China and the outcome of diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

“The ITBP DG’s confirmation of



continuing PLA face-offs in Arunachal Pradesh is deeply alarming. After Doklam and Galwan, is another serious confrontation unfolding? Reports of Chinese incursions near Taksing emerged in August. Yet, even 47 days after Corps Commander-level talks at Wacha-Damai, reportedly just 180 km away, confrontations continue. Has India’s patrolling access been compromised?” Kharge asked. He said national security required accountability rather than “diplomatic photo opportunities and Huguplomacy”.

Kharge also criticised the rise in Chinese imports and India’s trade deficit with Beijing. “Since the Galwan sacrifice of 20 Indian Army bravehearts (FY2020-21), Chinese imports have surged 102%, while India’s trade deficit with China has ballooned 155% to \$112.16 billion... Has Make in India become Import from China?” he said.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also accused the government of making concessions to China while failing to address the reported face-offs in Arunachal Pradesh. “While the self-styled Vishwaguru’s calibrated concessions to China continue, the DG, ITBP, has lauded—and rightly so—its performance in recent face-offs with the PLA in Arunachal Pradesh, on which there has been a deafening silence from the PM and his establishment,” Ramesh posted on X.

Ramesh also flagged China’s renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh and the construction of a 60,000-MW dam on the Brahmaputra, warning of potential consequences for India’s ecological and water security.

At a press conference at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters, Congress leader Pawan Khara accused the government of compromising India’s interests out of fear of Beijing. He questioned whether Indian forces retained access to traditional patrolling points and raised concerns about the easing of visa restrictions for Chinese personnel and the removal of investment curbs under Press Note 3.

“What did we get? Can we patrol the points today where we used to patrol before April 2020, or not? In exchange for all this, shouldn’t you have taken something? Or did you just accept that you will do whatever China wants because you are afraid?” Khara asked.

Referring to videos from border villages in Arunachal Pradesh, Khara said residents had been raising concerns about Chinese incursions. “Every day you hear that China has entered Arunachal; local rural people are making emotional appeals on social media... Tell the DG of ITBP that everything is normal. Tell those 20 families whose people were martyred that everything is normal,” he said.

Congress MP Jebi Mather questioned why the reported confrontations had not been disclosed to the public earlier, noting that the ITBP chief’s remarks suggested the incidents had been occurring since July.

“The ITBP Director General has made a very strong revelation... but the fact is he is saying this has been happening since July, which means we are in October and now it took for the nation to know about this when an ITBP Director General revealed it. We have not heard

anything about this from our Prime Minister. We have not heard anything about this from our Home Minister,” Mather said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi also called on the government’s senior security leadership to explain the apparent gap between diplomatic statements and developments along the border.

Speaking to media, Chaturvedi said, “It is the responsibility of the country’s Home Minister, Defence Minister, and Minister of External Affairs to provide an answer. On one hand, we keep talking about trying to normalize relations with China—implying that all is well—yet, on the other hand, there is a persistent pattern of such statements being made, time and again. Given that this concerns the nation’s security, its sensitive interests, and the national interest, those responsible must be held accountable.”

Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary D Raja urged Modi to focus on national security issues instead of criticising political opponents. “Prime Minister Modi should realise he is the Prime Minister of India. Instead of resorting to cheap rhetoric against opposition leaders like Rahul Gandhi, he must speak on the real issues facing the country today,” Raja said.

He expressed confidence that the two countries could resolve their differences through dialogue.

“Both are neighbouring countries with cooperation in multiple fields. Whatever the disputes which appear, both countries have that maturity, have their experience to sort out, resolve through dialogue,” he added.

Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke also criticised the Centre’s security priorities, alleging that security forces were being deployed to prevent protests in Delhi instead of focusing on border protection. “Yeah, because forces that should be protecting our borders are being deployed to stop citizens from protesting. Modi is putting national security at risk by using security forces against his own countrymen. The priority should be securing our borders, not deploying forces to turn Delhi into a fortress to suppress peaceful citizen protests,” Dipke posted on X.

INTERNATIONAL

Gunmen open fire at a church during a funeral in Jordan, killing 7 and wounding 40



JERUSALEM

Gunmen opened fire during a funeral at a church in Jordan on Friday, killing seven people and wounding 40 others, authorities said.

The shooting took place at a Greek Orthodox church in Karak, about 180 kilometers (110 miles) south of the capital, Amman.

Footage broadcast on Jordanian state television showed two gunmen who appear to be holding pistols approaching the church and firing shots.

A third man who appears to be holding a semiautomatic rifle then approaches and opens fire, and all three then run toward the church.

Video footage taken by witnesses shows broken glass and pools of blood on the floor of the church.

Dorgham Halasa, who was among the mourners inside the church, said intense gunfire erupted 15 minutes after the funeral had started, and then people started running. “It was a weird situation, and heavy gunfire,” Halasa said.

He did not see the gunmen, but

said other people reported seeing four of them. The Associated Press could not independently verify the number of assailants, and Jordan’s security services did not immediately release details.

A government statement said that the attack was “carried out by unknown assailants,” but didn’t say whether any gunmen were captured or killed. It said that “investigations are underway at full speed.”

Jordan declared three days of national mourning, according to the

kingdom’s Petra News Agency.

Karak is home to a minority Christian population.

In 2016, gunmen ambushed police in a series of attacks in Karak, including at a Crusader castle popular with tourists, killing 10 people, including seven officers, and wounding dozens. Jordanian security forces killed those gunmen after a long standoff.

Jordan’s Health Minister Ibrahim al-Budour said two of those wounded are in critical condition.

King Abdullah II said on X that Jordan “will confront the terrorist act that targeted Karak with the harshest penalties” and offered his “deepest condolences to the families of the martyrs, and our wishes for recovery to the wounded.”

Jordan’s Prime Minister Jafar Hassan said during a security meeting in Karak on Friday evening that the attack was a result of terrorist ideology and blind extremism. He said the assailants will be punished and legal measures taken against those who seek to introduce extremism.

Condemnation of the slayings came from around the region, including from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Oman. Ahmed al-Tayeb in Cairo, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the Sunni Muslim world’s foremost religious institution, offered his condolences to the families of victims in Friday’s shooting, calling it a “heinous terrorist attack.”

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein called his Jordanian counterpart and “affirmed Iraq’s solidarity with Jordan in the face of terrorism,” Hussein’s office said in a statement.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the attack during a funeral as “especially heinous,” spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. “The secretary-general also calls for all those responsible to be found and to be held to account.”

South Korea proposes military talks with North Korea to calm rising border tensions



SEOUL

South Korea on Friday proposed military talks with North Korea to resolve disagreements about where their border lies and prevent accidental clashes in frontline areas, seeking to ease tensions after recent landmine blasts injured three South Korean soldiers.

It’s unclear whether North Korea will agree to talks. Authoritarian leader Kim Jong Un has taken a hard line toward Seoul and has suspended virtually all dialogue and cooperation with the South in recent years.

Meanwhile, North Korea has been adding mines, barbed wire fences, tactical roads, anti-tank walls and other fortifications to what’s already one of the world’s most heavily armed borders.

South Korea’s military has said North Korean soldiers crossed the border’s military demarcation line 50 times this year during fortification work, and that it responded with warning shots and broadcasts.

The South’s military made a proposal for similar talks in November that was ignored by the North. Seoul has shown greater urgency to ease tensions after the Sept. 21 mine blasts at the border, which the South’s military concluded were caused by North Korean mines planted south of the military demarcation line.

“Our Ministry of National Defense officially proposes to North Korean authorities that

South-North military talks be held to mutually confirm the exact location of the ground military demarcation line between the South and the North, discuss the restoration of military communication lines, and discuss measures to prevent accidental clashes in border areas,” Kim Hong-Cheol, South Korea’s deputy minister for defense policy, said in a televised statement Friday.

He said the South was also open to three-way talks involving the U.S.-led United Nations Command. The proposal came days after Kim Jong Un’s powerful sister visited front-line areas where North Korean troops are reinforcing the border. During her visit, she renewed a threat to retaliate against any South Korean provocation aimed at the fortification work.

Kim Yo Jong also said the North planned to activate border loudspeakers for anti-Seoul propaganda broadcasts, a psychological warfare tactic long used by both Koreas, and has placed unspecified “new counter means” on alert along the border. She blamed the South for firing warning shots and broadcasting warnings toward North Korean soldiers fortifying the border under what she called a false pretext that they were crossing the demarcation line.

South Korean officials have said North Korea’s recent border activities have highlighted the Koreans’ disagreement over exactly where the

military demarcation line lies. The line was drawn up under the 1953 armistice that stopped the fighting of the Korean War, and some decades-old boundary markers have been lost over time.

However, South Korean Defense Minister Kang Shin-chul has said the location of last month’s mine blasts was not in a disputed area. The North has denied responsibility for the incident and dismissed Seoul’s demand to apologize and remove its remaining mines. Kim Hong-Cheol, the South Korean military official, said leaving the dispute over the military demarcation line unresolved would increase the risk of accidental clashes because troops from both sides act on their own understanding of the line. “The recent increase in North Korean activities along the military demarcation line, as well as our warning broadcasts and warning shots, is also related to this situation,” he said.

While visiting front-line areas with Kim Yo Jong on Wednesday, North Korean Army Marshal Pak Jong Chon denied that North Korean soldiers were breaching the border during fortification work, saying “our army knows where our borderline is better than any others.”

He accused the South of making “deliberate, premeditated and absurd” claims to shift blame over the rising tensions and threatened an “overwhelming response” to South Korean provocations.

France’s Street Protests Expose Deepening Economic Anxiety and Political Paralysis



France is once again witnessing the power of street protests to bring the country's political and economic fault lines into sharp focus. What began in late September with thousands of high school students taking to the streets over teacher shortages and deteriorating school buildings has evolved into a wider movement against the rising cost of living, mounting economic pressures and uncertainty over the country's future.

The protests spread from Marseille in southern France to Paris and other parts of the country. Clashes between demonstrators and riot police soon followed. The government accused the far-left party France Unbowed, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, of encouraging the agitation. Yet, despite acknowledging the poor condition of many secondary schools, particularly the shortage of teachers, the authorities struggled to offer a convincing response to the students' grievances.

By mid-October, the movement had broadened considerably. Workers and other sections of society joined the demonstrations, turning a dispute over public education into a wider expression of economic discontent. Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse crowds, while incidents of looting, arson and attacks on public property were reported in several locations. Cars were set ablaze in Paris, shops were looted and municipal buildings, including historic town halls, came under attack.

The violence has complicated the political message of the protests. President Emmanuel Macron, whose second and final term is due to end in May 2027, condemned the destruction in a televised address. While public anger may have legitimate causes, he argued, it cannot justify arson and looting. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen, a potential presidential contender, also criticised the violence, insisting that destruction cannot be treated as a form of political expression.

The distinction matters. A government's failure to address public grievances can explain the growth of popular anger, but it does not legitimise attacks on people or property. Equally, condemning violence cannot substitute for confronting the economic and social problems that have brought people onto the streets.

A long tradition of protest

Street demonstrations have deep roots in French political history. The French Revolution of 1789 established the popular uprising as a powerful symbol of resistance to political authority. The storming of the Bastille on July 14 that year, now commemorated as France's national day, remains central to the country's political imagination.

That revolutionary legacy continues to influence the language of protest. During the recent demonstrations, a protester in Marseille reportedly invoked the Bastille as demonstrators forced their way into a mayoral office. Such references reflect the enduring appeal of revolutionary symbolism, although contemporary economic grievances cannot simply be equated with the struggle against the monarchy.

Student movements, too, have repeatedly challenged French governments. The protests of May 1968 remain a defining moment in the country's modern political history. Subsequent demonstrations by school students in 1990, 1998 and 2006 reinforced the tradition of youth-led resistance.

The 2006 student movement proved particularly consequential. Demonstrations against a controversial employment law, which would have made it easier for employers to dismiss young workers during an initial period of employment, forced the government to withdraw the measure. That episode remains a reminder that

sustained public mobilisation can compel political leaders to reconsider policies even after they have passed through the legislative process.

The current protests, however, are driven by a broader set of concerns. The grievances extend beyond education to the everyday pressures facing households, workers and farmers. Their common thread is the perception that the existing political and economic system is failing to provide security or a credible path towards improvement.

The widening gap between national pride and economic reality

France occupies a distinctive place in the European imagination. Its history as a colonial power, its cultural influence and its longstanding claims to intellectual and artistic leadership have shaped a strong sense of national identity. Yet that historical prestige sits uneasily alongside the economic difficulties confronting many French citizens.

The country faces persistent challenges across several sectors, including agriculture, services and manufacturing. French farmers have demanded protection against competition from agricultural imports within the European Union, while businesses and workers face pressure from changing market conditions and the cost of maintaining established living standards. Even the fashion industry, traditionally associated with French luxury and global influence, faces intense international competition, including from Italian brands.

The contrast between national expectations and economic realities has contributed to public frustration. For many people, France's international standing offers little comfort when household expenses rise, employment prospects remain uncertain and public services appear unable to meet basic needs.

There is also a growing perception that economic hardship is distributed unequally. Protesters believe that wealthier sections of society are better placed to absorb rising costs, while ordinary households struggle to maintain their standard of living. Whether expressed through demands for better schools, higher wages or more affordable essentials, the underlying complaint is that economic growth and national prosperity are not translating into a sufficient sense of security for everyone.

Economic pressures and an unresolved political crisis

The country's economic indicators underline the scale of the challenge. The figures cited in the debate include an unemployment rate of around 8.2 per cent and a budget deficit exceeding 5 per cent. At the same time, France's extensive welfare system, particularly its pension commitments, places substantial demands on public finances.

Reforming the pension system has repeatedly proved politically explosive. Attempts to rationalise expenditure or change retirement arrangements encounter strong resistance from citizens who regard social protection as a defining achievement of the French model. For many workers, pensions represent not merely a budgetary obligation but a promise of security after decades of employment.

This creates a difficult dilemma for successive governments. Public finances require greater discipline, but measures intended to contain expenditure can provoke opposition from people who already feel economically vulnerable. Without a convincing explanation of how reforms will distribute costs fairly and protect lower-income households, even technically defensible policies can become politically untenable.

The agricultural sector presents a similar problem. Farmers want protection from imports and stronger safeguards for their livelihoods, while France must operate within the rules and competitive framework of the European Union. Reconciling domestic demands with broader European commitments is a difficult task, particularly when economic pressures are already fuelling public resentment.

Political fragmentation makes these chal-

lenges harder to manage. France's traditional divide between the left and the right has widened into a more complicated contest involving the far left, centrists, conservatives and the far right. No political formation has secured the decisive parliamentary strength needed to impose a coherent programme without negotiating with others.

The result is a system of uneasy alliances and competing priorities. Centrist and conservative groups have struggled to find common ground with the left, while cooperation with the far right remains politically contentious. Govern-

ments are consequently vulnerable to parliamentary resistance, policy reversals and public dissatisfaction.

The far right gains, but offers no easy answer

The political uncertainty has created opportunities for Marine Le Pen's National Rally, which has consolidated its position as a major force in French politics. The party can capitalise on anger over living costs, immigration, public services and the perceived failure of established parties. Yet the rise of the far right does not automatically translate into a solution to France's economic problems. National Rally faces the same fundamental questions as its rivals: how to reduce the deficit, sustain the welfare state, protect workers and farmers, improve public services and restore confidence in the economy.

Political rhetoric may provide a clear target for public anger, but governing requires difficult choices. A party that promises protection from economic insecurity must still explain how it intends to finance that protection and reconcile competing demands on public resources.

The coming presidential contest will therefore be shaped not only by dissatisfaction with Macron's government but also by the credibility of the alternatives. Voters may be increasingly willing to punish established political forces, yet dissatisfaction alone cannot produce a workable economic programme.

The latest protests reveal a crisis that cannot be reduced to public disorder or attributed solely to political agitation. The original complaints about teacher shortages and deteriorating school buildings have opened a window into wider anxieties over employment, living costs, inequality and the future of France's social contract.

The government has a responsibility to restore public order and prevent violence. But it must also demonstrate that the concerns expressed by students, workers and farmers are being heard. Improving schools, strengthening public services, addressing the pressure on household budgets and explaining the costs and benefits of economic reforms would be more meaningful responses than treating the demonstrations merely as a law-and-order problem.

The protesters, for their part, face a similar challenge. Sustained public pressure can force governments to respond, as previous student movements have demonstrated. But violence and destruction risk alienating potential supporters and allowing political leaders to focus on disorder rather than the grievances behind it.

The warning from student leader Ryad Rani captures the intensity of the mood. The head of the French high school student union said the government was trembling and argued that public anger would not easily subside.

That anger is unlikely to disappear through force alone. France's streets are reflecting a deeper fear that the country's economic future may be less secure than its citizens had expected. The protests are therefore not simply a recurrence of the country's long tradition of revolutionary dissent. They are also a test of whether its political institutions can translate public frustration into credible reforms.

For Macron's government and the political forces preparing for the next presidential election, the central question is no longer how to contain the demonstrations. It is how to restore confidence in a system that many citizens increasingly believe is failing them.

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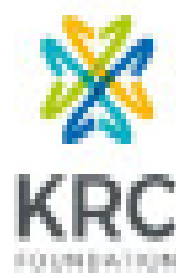


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- DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ADVENTURE SPORTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
- 5E FOR SUCCESS- PROMOTING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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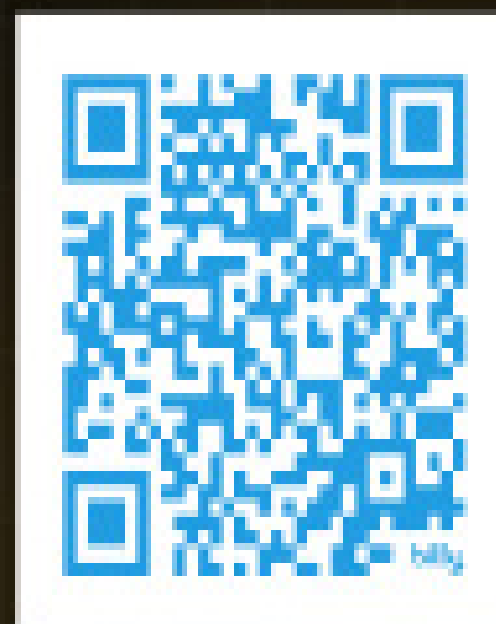
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