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STAY ENRICHED

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Census 2027: Centre announces population count schedule, Manipur kept out for now

A revisional round will be conducted from March 1 to March 5, 2027, the notification said.Self-enumeration window from January 10.The government has introduced an option for self-enumeration ahead of the house-to-house population count.People will be able to submit their details through the self-enumeration process from January 10 to January 24, 2027.

NEW DELHI

The Centre has announced the schedule for the population enumeration phase of Census 2027, with the exercise set to take place across most parts of the country from January 25 to February 28, 2027. Manipur, however, will remain excluded until further orders, according to a notification issued by the Registrar General of India (RGI) and Census Commissioner on October 30.

The notification, issued by Census Commissioner Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, states that the reference date for the census will be midnight on March 1, 2027.

The exercise will also be deferred in poll-bound Goa, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Ladakh. Specified snow-bound areas of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir have been excluded from the schedule as well.

A revisional round will be conducted from March 1 to March 5, 2027, the notification said.

Self-enumeration window from January 10The government has introduced an option for self-enumeration ahead of the house-to-house population count.People will be able to submit their details through the self-enumeration process from January 10 to January 24, 2027.

The house-to-house enumeration will begin on January 25 and continue until February 28, covering the areas included in the latest schedule.

The exclusion of Manipur follows the Centre's earlier decision to defer house-listing operations in the state. The latest notification has kept Manipur outside the current enumeration schedule until a further announcement.

Assembly elections are scheduled to be held early next year in Manipur, Goa, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand.

Census to be conducted in two phases

Census 2027, the eighth census since Independence, will be conducted in two phases - house listing and housing census, followed by population enumeration.

The decennial exercise was originally scheduled for 2021 but was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Union Cabinet has approved Rs 11,718 crore for the nationwide exercise, which is expected to be the country's biggest-ever population count.

India's last census was conducted in 2011, when the country's population was recorded at 1.21 billion, comprising 62.32 crore males and 58.75 crore females. The country had 24.95 crore households at the time.

PERSPECTIVE

Necessity is the mother of invention, but laziness is the father

Arunachal Govt Open to Dialogue on Siang Dam Project Amid Regional Tensions: Mein

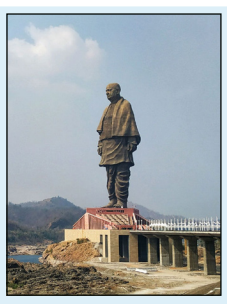
ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Pradesh government is willing to engage in dialogue with all stakeholders to address concerns surrounding the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP), Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said, calling for constructive discussions and mutual understanding to resolve differences over the mega project.

Speaking at the silver jubilee celebration of the All Palin, Chambang, Yangte, Gangte and Tarak-Lengdi Students' Union at Palin, Mein said the government was open to discussions with all concerned sections, including community-based organisations, student bodies, civil society groups and individuals who have expressed apprehensions about the proposed project.

He stressed that differences of opinion in a democratic society should be addressed through dialogue rather than confrontation. He also called for an environment in which all stakeholders could freely express their concerns and views.Mein reiterated that the government was prepared to listen to different perspectives and engage with organisations opposing or expressing reservations about the project. Highlighting the importance of informed public discussions, the Deputy Chief Minister said expert consultations and technical assessments were essential to addressing concerns surrounding the proposed mega dam.He stressed that a clear understanding of the project's technical aspects and possible implications was necessary to ensure meaningful discussions among stakeholders.According to Mein, wider public awareness and access to relevant information would help facilitate constructive engagement and enable people to participate in discussions with a better understanding of the project.

WHO SAID WHAT



Paid homage to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at the 'Statue of Unity' in Kevadia. His extraordinary vision, unwavering resolve and monumental contribution to national integration continue to inspire generations.
~ Narendra Modi, PM

Tripura to Vote in 21 Urban Local Bodies on November 27; Counting on December 2

AGARTALA

Elections to 21 urban local bodies (ULBs), including the Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC), in Tripura will be held on November 27, with counting of votes scheduled for December 2, State Election Commissioner Pradip Kumar Chakravarty announced.

The elections will cover 345 wards spread across 17 subdivisions in eight districts of the state. Among the civic bodies, the Agartala Municipal Corporation has the highest number of wards at 51.

Announcing the poll schedule at a press conference on Friday, Chakravarty said the State Election Commission had taken all relevant factors into consideration before finalising the election dates.

According to the schedule, the filing of nomination papers began on October 31 and will continue until November 6. Scrutiny of nominations will take place on November 7, while candidates can withdraw their nominations until November 10.

Polling will be held on November 27, followed by counting on December 2. The tenure of the existing urban local bodies is scheduled to end on December 9.

Over 6.29 lakh voters eligible

A total of 6,29,903 voters are eligible to participate in the civic elections. Of these, 3,21,745 are women and 3,08,115 are men, according to the State Election Commission.

The Agartala Municipal Corporation, with 51 wards, will be the largest civic body among the 21 going to the polls.

The commission has completed several preparatory measures to ensure the smooth conduct of the elections. These include the first-level checking of electronic voting machines (EVMs).

Chakravarty said the commission was taking necessary steps to ensure that the elections were conducted in a free, fair and peaceful manner.

The November 27 polls are expected to be a significant political exercise for the state's major parties, with the results likely to provide an indication of their organisational strength and support at the urban grassroots level.

Biswajit Daimary Clarifies ULFA Remark, Says Comments Reflected Motak Community's Sentiments

GUWAHATI

Assam Cabinet Minister Biswajit Daimary on Saturday clarified his controversial remarks on the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), saying his comments were intended to reflect the sentiments, contributions and sacrifices of the Motak community in Assam's struggle.

Daimary said his statement had been made in the context of the Motak community's commitment to Assam and the Assamese people, and should not be interpreted beyond that context.

"I was referring to the thoughts of the Motak community towards Assam and the Assamese people, and the struggle and sacrifices they have made for the state," Daimary said.

He further pointed out that members of the community had made significant sacrifices in the name of the Assamese cause, with several losing their lives in the struggle.

"The community has made many sacrifices in the name of the Assamese cause, and several people from the community have lost their lives," he added.

The clarification comes amid a political controversy over Daimary's remarks at the central foundation day celebration of the Matak Yuva Chhatra Sanmilan, held at Dirak Nawajyoti village in Kakopathar, near the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border in Tinsukia district.

During the programme, Daimary had reportedly said, "Because of ULFA, no one has been able to lay a hand on Assam." He had also highlighted the role of the Moran and Matak communities in the organisation, claiming that members of the two communities had made significant contributions to its leadership.

His remarks triggered criticism from the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), which questioned the implications of a ruling party minister allegedly praising an organisation that continues to be associated with insurgency and separatist politics.

Manipur must be governed inclusively, not by favouring one community: CM Khemchand Singh

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Saturday called for an inclusive approach to governance, asserting that the state, home to 36 different communities, cannot be governed by prioritising the interests of any one community.

Addressing the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas celebrations at the 1st Battalion Manipur Rifles Parade Ground in Imphal, the Chief Minister said community-centric thinking would not help ensure the state's integrity, peace or economic progress.

He stressed that the interests of all communities must be taken into account to achieve lasting peace and development in Manipur.

Emphasising the importance of unity and a collective identity, Khemchand Singh urged people to move beyond narrow community considerations and work towards a common future for the state.

The event was organised to mark the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, observed across the country as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas or National Unity Day.

Recalling Patel's contribution to India's freedom struggle, the Chief Minister referred to his leadership in movements against British rule, including the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement.

He also highlighted Patel's role in the integration of princely states after Independence, describing it as a landmark achievement in strengthening India's unity and territorial integrity.Khemchand Singh noted that the observance of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas was initiated in 2014 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reinforce the importance of national unity and integrity.

He also referred to the inauguration of the Statue of Unity in Gujarat on October 31, 2018. Standing at 182 metres, the monument is the world's tallest statue and was built in honour of Patel.

As part of the celebrations, nine contingents participated in a march past commanded by Pramesh Arambam, Commanding Officer of the 4th Indian Reserve Battalion.

The programme also featured a choreographic presentation titled Akhoigi Apunba Saktam (Our Collective Identity) by the Government Dance Academy.

Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, MLAs, the Chief Secretary, Security Advisor, Director General of Police and senior administrative and police officials attended the programme.

Health Employees in Imphal East Protest Mounting Monetary Demands

ANNUAL FINANCIAL BURDEN REPORTEDLY RISES FROM RS.4-5 LAKH TO RS.16-17 LAKH AFTER MAY 2023 CONFLICT

BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL: Medical employees serving under the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Imphal East district, staged a sit-in protest on Thursday, appealing for relief from repeated monetary demands allegedly made by various organisations, including civil society bodies and unlawful armed groups.

The protest, held at SAYC ground, Porompat, Soibam Leikai, was joined by doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, ANMs, health workers and other staff who said the growing financial burden had become increasingly difficult to bear alongside their household expenses.

According to health personnel and a senior official associated with the CMO office, annual monetary demands and donations have reportedly increased from around 4–5 lakh before the outbreak of violence on 3 May 2023 to approximately 16–17 lakh since the conflict began.

Khagembam Bikramjit Singh, Pharmacist (Allopathy) and Store-in-charge of the Non-Communicable Disease Cell, Imphal East, told KRC TIMES that medical teams are routinely deployed at sporting events, cultural programmes and melas held at various venues including Khuman Lampak Sports Complex, Hapta Kangjeibung and City Convention Centre. "These additional duties do not bring extra remuneration", he said.

Employees speaking on condition of anonymity said demands were being made both at the CMO office and directly to individual health centres. Consequently, staff at peripheral facilities may have to contribute towards demands raised at the district level as well as separate demands made to their respective workplaces.

They said the repeated demands were particularly burdensome for lower-paid employees, including ANMs, health workers, staff nurses and laboratory technicians, whose salaries leave limited room for additional expenses.

A senior official acknowledged the sharp increase in the financial burden and said employees had approached the CMO office with a proposal to hold the protest. The office recommended the proposal, recognising their concerns as reasonable.

The official also expressed concern about the security of medical personnel, many of whom are women, particularly at peripheral health facilities where staff may be vulnerable to intimidation and disruption.

Protesters displayed placards appealing to organisations not to disturb medical staff or impose unbearable monetary demands on health offices.

The allegations of coercion and unlawful demands require appropriate investigation. The employees' protest, however, highlights the hardship faced by a public health workforce already carrying demanding responsibilities, including additional duties during public events.

Their appeal is for the authorities to protect medical personnel from coercion and ensure they can perform their duties without repeated financial pressure.

Safeguarding healthcare workers is not merely an employment concern; it is essential to protecting the patients and communities who depend on them.

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GLOBALISATION 2.0

As geopolitical tensions, technological disruption and supply-chain uncertainties reshape the global economy, the future of globalisation will depend not merely on trade volumes but on technology, trust and cooperation. India has the opportunity to emerge as a key architect of a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable economic order.

Globalisation is not coming to an end. It is changing its character. The era when economic integration was driven largely by cheaper production, expanding markets and the unrestricted movement of goods is giving way to a more complex global order, shaped by geopolitical rivalries, technological competition, climate concerns and the growing importance of economic security. The challenge before the world is not whether countries should remain connected, but how they can sustain those connections in an increasingly uncertain environment.

Recent disruptions have exposed the vulnerabilities of an economic system built around concentrated supply chains and excessive dependence on a limited number of markets. Conflicts, trade restrictions, maritime insecurity and energy uncertainties have demonstrated how quickly developments in one part of the world can affect businesses, consumers and industries thousands of kilometres away. The lesson is unmistakable: efficiency without resilience can become an economic liability.

The next phase of globalisation must therefore be built on a different foundation. Diversification, technological cooperation, institutional credibility and mutual trust will increasingly determine the strength of international economic partnerships. For India, this transition presents both an opportunity and a responsibility.

With its large domestic market, expanding manufacturing base, digital infrastructure, skilled workforce and growing international engagement, India is well positioned to play a more influential role in shaping the emerging economic architecture. But economic scale alone cannot establish global leadership. The country must demonstrate its ability to generate ideas, develop technologies, build partnerships and deliver solutions to challenges that extend beyond national boundaries.

India has already begun establishing its credentials in this regard. Its leadership in promoting the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure reflects an understanding that global challenges require collective responses. The India AI Impact Summit, held in New Delhi earlier this year, also provided an opportunity to advance discussions on responsible and inclusive artificial intelligence. These initiatives indicate that India's international engagement need not be confined to conventional diplomacy or trade negotiations. It can also help shape the rules, priorities and institutions governing emerging global challenges.

However, the real test lies in translating diplomatic initiatives and international declarations into practical outcomes.

Trade remains the backbone of global economic integration, even as its priorities and geographical patterns change. The World Trade Organization's October 2026 projections estimate that global trade in goods and services will expand by 3.7 per cent in 2026 and 4.7 per cent in 2027, partly supported by investment in artificial intelligence-related infrastructure. These projections suggest that despite geopolitical uncertainties, international commerce continues to offer considerable opportunities.

India has reasons to be optimistic. Its exports touched a record $863.1 billion in 2025-26, reflecting the growing contribution of manufacturing and services to the economy. Yet export growth should not become a reason for complacency. India's ability to sustain this momentum will depend on whether it can improve productivity, enhance product quality, reduce logistics costs and integrate more effectively into global value chains.

Trade agreements can provide access to new markets, but access alone does not guarantee competitiveness. Indian businesses must be able to meet international standards, deliver consistently and respond quickly to changing market requirements. Small and medium enterprises, which constitute a substantial part of the country's industrial ecosystem, must also become active participants in global supply chains rather than remaining confined to domestic markets.

Diversifying commercial engagement with Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia would further strengthen India's economic resilience. A wider network of trading partners would reduce excessive dependence on individual markets while creating opportunities for Indian industries, entrepreneurs and service providers.

Yet trade is only one dimension of the transformation underway. The more significant shift is taking place in the creation of economic value itself.

Artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, quantum computing and advanced manufacturing are redefining the foundations of industrial competitiveness. Countries that can develop, commercialise and deploy these technologies will increasingly command strategic and economic advantages. The traditional distinction between manufacturing economies and technology economies is also becoming less relevant as digital innovation transforms almost every sector.

India has considerable advantages in this emerging landscape. Its engineering talent, startup ecosystem, digital public infrastructure and expanding technology services sector provide a strong foundation. But the country must move beyond being primarily a destination for technology adoption and services delivery. Greater emphasis is needed on original research, intellectual property creation, advanced manufacturing and the commercialisation of indigenous innovations.

This transition will require sustained investment in research and development. Universities, research institutions and industries must work more closely to convert scientific discoveries into commercially viable products. International partnerships can accelerate this process by facilitating knowledge transfer, joint research and access to specialised expertise.

No country, however powerful, can independently develop every critical technology or control every stage of the global production chain. Attempts to pursue complete technological self-sufficiency may prove economically inefficient and strategically counterproductive. India's objective should instead be to strengthen domestic capabilities while remaining open to international collaboration. Strategic autonomy and global interdependence need not be contradictory.

But neither trade nor technology partnerships can flourish without trust.

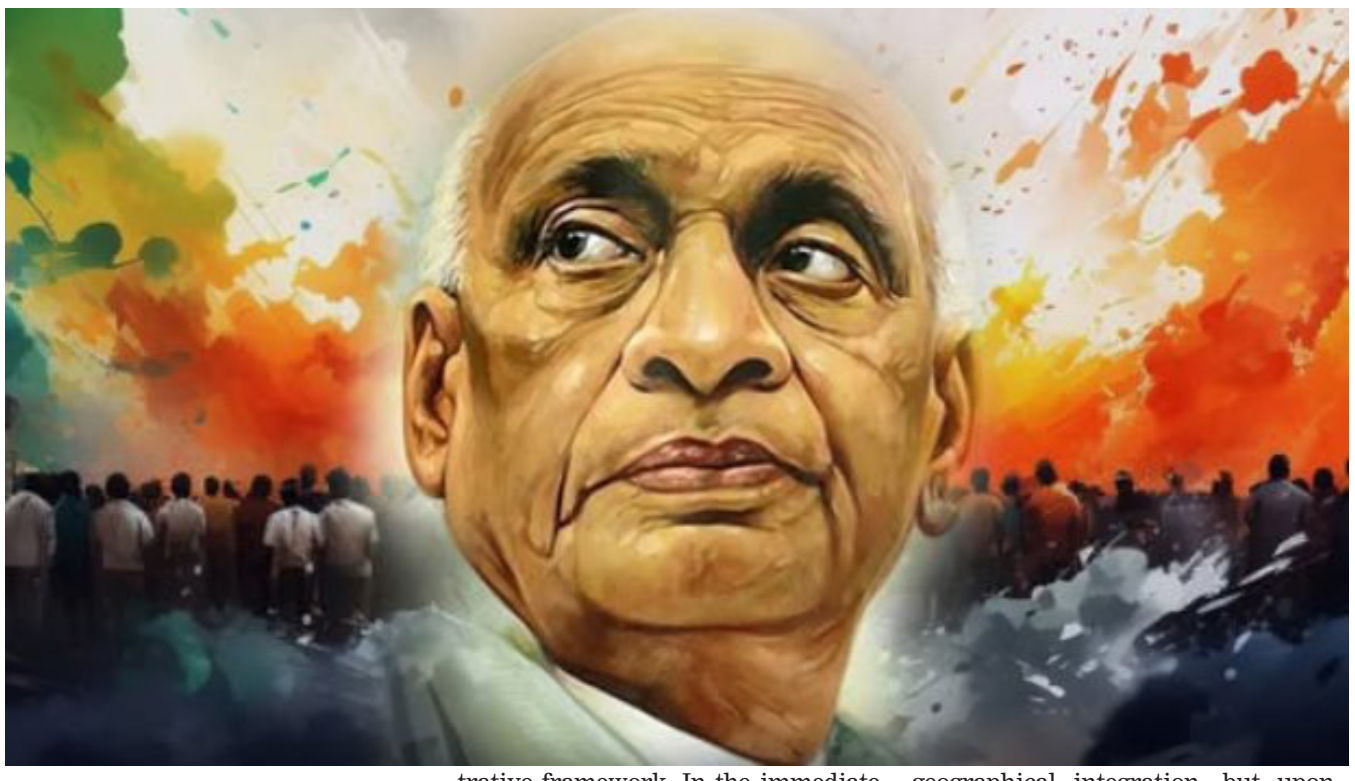
In an increasingly fragmented world, trust has emerged as a crucial economic asset. Investors look for predictable policies, transparent regulations and credible institutions. Businesses seek secure digital infrastructure, consistent standards and dependable commercial partners. Governments, meanwhile, want assurances that economic relationships will not become instruments of strategic vulnerability.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bullshit."

W.C. Fields

SARDAR PATEL: THE ARCHITECT OF A UNITED INDIA AND A VISIONARY STATESMAN



LALIT GARGG

The making of a nation does not end with the attainment of independence. Its real test lies in transforming freedom into the enduring strength of unity, integrity, security and collective resolve. This was the greatest challenge confronting India after independence. The country was grappling with the fragmentation of princely states, the trauma of Partition, communal tensions, insecurity along its borders and numerous political and administrative challenges facing a newly born democracy. At this critical juncture, if there was one leader who shouldered the historic responsibility of uniting India—not merely geographically, but politically and nationally—it was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. National Unity Day, observed on his 151st birth anniversary, is not merely an occasion to remember a great statesman; it is an opportunity to renew our commitment to India's collective strength, national pride and the enduring values of visionary leadership. Sardar Patel possessed the resilience of a rock against which even the fiercest storms of adversity seemed powerless. His determination, organisational acumen and extraordinary ability to mobilise people during the freedom struggle earned him a distinctive place in India's national leadership. The Kheda Satyagraha and the Bardoli Movement established him as a champion of farmers' rights and struggles. It was the women of Bardoli who bestowed upon him the title 'Sardar', a name that eventually became synonymous with his national identity. However, his most consequential historical contribution emerged after independence, when the foremost task was to consolidate India into a united nation.

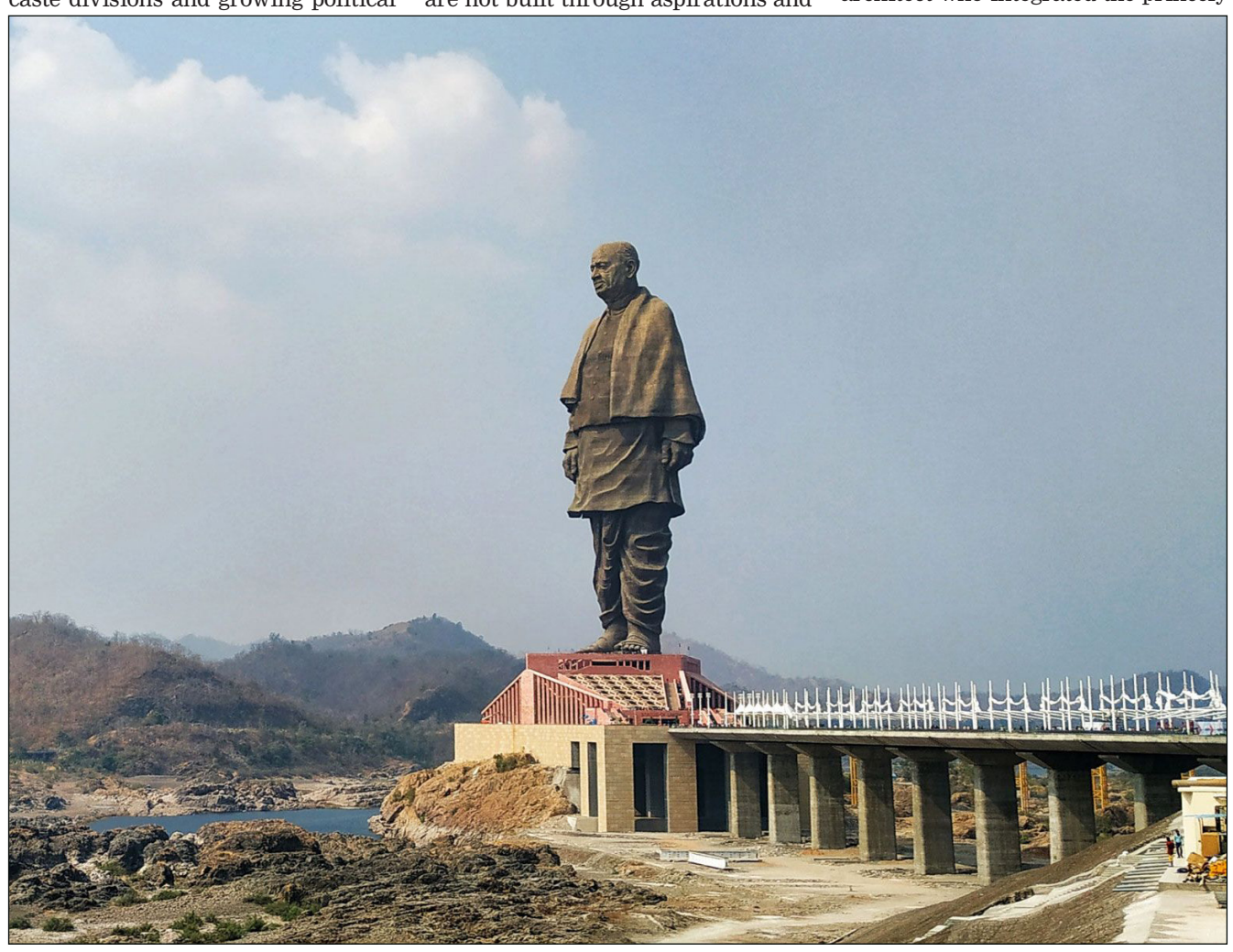
At that time, India comprised more than 562 princely states. Several rulers aspired to retain their independent status or remain outside the Indian Union. Had this situation continued, India's political map could have been irreparably fragmented. Sardar Patel confronted this formidable challenge through his political determination, exceptional diplomatic skills and pragmatic wisdom. Wherever necessary, he pursued dialogue and persuasion; wherever circumstances demanded, he demonstrated firmness; and wherever national interests were at stake, he refused to yield to pressure. The integration of Hyderabad into the Indian Union stands as a remarkable example of his resolve. This was not merely an exercise in merging princely territories; it was a historic mission that laid the foundation of a unified modern nation. Patel's greatest strength was that he regarded politics not as an instrument of acquiring power, but as a solemn responsibility towards nation-building. For him, national interest always stood above party considerations, ideological differences, regional affiliations and community interests. He understood that independence could not be safeguarded through emotional slogans alone. It required a strong administrative framework, disciplined governance, a clear foreign policy and robust internal security arrangements. His concerns regarding Pakistan's policies, the Kashmir question and the challenges confronting India's border regions reflected this larger vision of national security. His letter of November 7, 1950, to the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, cautioning him about China's policy towards Tibet, remains an important document demonstrating his strategic foresight. He believed that relations with neighbouring countries must be guided not only by goodwill but also by vigilance and an unwavering commitment to protecting national interests.

Another significant dimension of Sardar Patel's vision was his contribution to building India's administrative framework. In the immediate aftermath of independence, many advocated the abolition of the administrative services inherited from British rule. Patel, however, recognised their institutional importance and understood that a newly independent country needed a strong, professional and nationally integrated administrative machinery. He provided a firm foundation for the All-India Services, particularly the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. He believed that such institutions were indispensable for preserving national unity and administrative stability, ensuring that governance continued to function effectively irrespective of political changes. He instilled confidence among civil servants that their allegiance was no longer to a foreign administration, but to independent India and its people. This is why he is widely remembered as the architect and guardian of India's civil services. His political approach was characterised by firmness, but never by inflexibility. He understood that a nation cannot be strengthened through laws and administrative institutions alone; it also requires social trust, mutual respect and a sense of civic responsibility. He viewed national unity not as the suppression of diversity, but as the development of a shared national consciousness amidst diversity. India's languages, cultures, traditions and faiths may differ, but loyalty to the nation and respect for its constitutional values must bind every citizen together. At a time when ideological disagreements, regional assertions, caste divisions and growing political bitterness are increasingly visible in society, this message of Sardar Patel assumes even greater significance.

As India moves forward with the ambitious vision of becoming a developed, self-reliant, prosperous and globally influential nation by 2047, the thoughts, vision and nation-building philosophy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel have become more relevant than ever. The united India he envisioned was founded not merely upon geographical integration, but upon national solidarity, social harmony, administrative strength and collective responsibility. Today, India faces significant challenges as well as unprecedented opportunities in economic growth, technological self-reliance, social equality, internal security, good governance and global leadership. Patel's unwavering commitment to the nation, indomitable willpower and pragmatic leadership can provide valuable guidance in addressing these challenges. The dream of a developed India can become a reality only when the country's diversity becomes its strength, national interest remains paramount and every citizen actively participates in the process of nation-building. In this sense, Sardar Patel is not merely a towering figure of history; he is an enduring source of inspiration for shaping the direction and destiny of India in 2047.

The personality of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel represented an extraordinary synthesis of indomitable courage, iron willpower, discipline, forthrightness, organisational excellence, administrative competence and unwavering patriotism. Along with his determination and resolute character, he possessed exceptional pragmatism, foresight and an unparalleled capacity for decisive leadership. He was not merely a freedom fighter or India's first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister; he was a visionary nation-builder who gave lasting strength and stability to the unity and integrity of the country. His life teaches us that great nations are not built through aspirations and declarations alone. They are shaped through strength of character, discipline, dedication to duty, sacrifice and collective commitment. These timeless values are precisely what contemporary India and future generations need most. Today, India is advancing towards becoming an economic powerhouse, assuming a greater role in global leadership and establishing itself as a developed nation. Yet, the foremost prerequisites for this journey are internal unity and national security. Economic prosperity can be sustainable only when a country is socially cohesive, politically stable and strategically strong. Sardar Patel's life conveys a profound message: the true strength of a nation lies not merely in its material resources, but in the collective resolve of its people, the quality of its leadership and the unity of its national consciousness.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel passed away on December 15, 1950, but his nationalist vision continues to remain an integral part of India's national consciousness. The 182-metre-high Statue of Unity, inaugurated in Gujarat in 2018, stands as a monumental tribute to his towering personality and extraordinary contribution to the nation. Yet, his true legacy does not reside merely in the height of a statue; it lives on in our collective efforts to preserve India's unity and integrity. Sardar Patel was not simply the architect who integrated the princely states; he was a visionary statesman who transformed a fragmented national consciousness into a unified national resolve. On his birth anniversary, we must pledge to regard India's unity not merely as a historic achievement, but as a present-day responsibility and the most valuable inheritance for future generations. That would be the most fitting tribute to the Iron Man of India and the true fulfilment of the purpose of National Unity Day.



DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

BIG NEWS FOR ASSAM!

At the request of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma ji, the Modi Government has approved Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport, Guwahati, as the export point for Agarwood chips and Agarwood oil.

This is a big relief for farmers, producers, and exporters of this special product, of which Assam is a leading producer. It is a massive logistical leap not only for Assam but also for the North East, bringing potential markets closer to home.

Many congratulations to our brothers and sisters in Assam as well as the North East. ~ Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry

Manipur CM looks to agriculture for economic recovery, pushes double cropping and organic farming

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh has called for a renewed focus on agriculture to revive the state's crisis-hit economy, urging officials and farmers to increase productivity through double cropping, organic cultivation and improved market access.Addressing the PM Kisan Utsav Diwas programme at the Manipur State Film Development Society in Imphal on October 30, Singh said agriculture remained one of the strongest pillars of the state's economy and could generate income and support livelihoods amid the ongoing crisis.

He noted that the economic disruption had affected revenue sources, including GST collections, while daily wage earners and people dependent on daily livelihoods continued to face hardships.

Singh said agriculture, horticulture, handloom, handicrafts and tourism had traditionally supported Manipur's economy, but collective efforts were now needed to strengthen these sectors.

Double cropping to increase farm productivity

The Chief Minister highlighted the need to promote double cropping, pointing out that many farmers continued to practise single-crop cultivation, leaving their fields unused for nearly six months.

He asked the Agriculture Department to work towards enabling a second crop across agricultural areas in the state and acknowledged the Horticulture Department's efforts in this direction.

Singh also urged officials and field-level workers to discharge their responsibilities with dedication to improve agricultural productivity and support farmers.

Emphasising the potential of organic cultivation, Singh said the Agriculture Department had covered 400 hectares under organic farming in the previous phase, with another 400 hectares targeted for the current year.

He called for further expansion of organic farming to create additional economic opportunities for farmers.

The Chief Minister stressed that farmers adopting organic cultivation should receive better market access and remunerative prices, considering the additional time and effort involved.

He suggested establishing more dedicated outlets for organic products across Manipur to create reliable markets for locally produced goods and encourage more farmers to take up organic cultivation.

During the programme, financial assistance and agricultural inputs were distributed to farmers and farmer groups under various schemes.

The assistance included ?60,000 each for purchasing water pumps under the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization, ?50,000 per unit for constructing vermicompost units under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, and ?1 lakh each for installing mini oil mills under the National Mission on Edible Oils-Oilseeds.

Mustard seeds and bee boxes were also distributed to farmer groups for the Rabi season, while pea and gram seeds were provided under the Pulse Mission. Subsidised knapsack sprayers were distributed under the agricultural mechanisation scheme.

According to the programme release, 14,740 farmers in Manipur received financial assistance amounting to ?2.95 crore on Friday.

Centre releases ?18,690 crore under PM-KISAN

The programme was held alongside the nationwide release of the 24th instalment of the PM-KISAN Samman Nidhi scheme by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Gujarat.

More than ?18,690 crore was released to over 9.34 crore farmers across the country.

The Prime Minister also dedicated 521 infrastructure units developed under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund and inaugurated 12 horticulture clusters.

The Imphal programme was attended by MLAs, dignitaries, senior Agriculture Department officials and farmers from different parts of Manipur.

US Consul Noah Hogan Meets Kohima Deputy Commissioner Ahead of Hornbill Festival

KOHIMA

Consul at the Consulate General of the United States in Kolkata, Noah Hogan, paid a courtesy visit to Nagaland's Kohima Deputy Commissioner, B Henok Buchem, ahead of the upcoming Hornbill Festival.During Wednesday's meeting, Hogan briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the proposed visit of the US Ambassador to Nagaland for the annual cultural festival, according to an official report

Hogan explained that the US Consulate General in Kolkata oversees a wide jurisdiction covering Jharkhand, Bihar and the entire Northeast region, with a primary focus on the safety and welfare of American citizens visiting these areas.He said his visit was aimed at strengthening engagement with local authorities, establishing important contacts and identifying essential resources, including hospitals, doctors and legal professionals.Such coordination, he noted, would help ensure that American citizens receive timely assistance from local authorities in the event of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.During their interaction, Hogan and Buchem also discussed visa application procedures and explored possibilities for cooperation in areas of mutual interest.Highlighting the historical relationship between Nagaland and the United States, Buchem acknowledged the contributions of American missionaries during the 19th century, particularly their role in shaping the state's social and educational landscape.

The Deputy Commissioner thanked Hogan for his visit and expressed hope that the longstanding historical connections between the two sides would continue to strengthen through greater engagement and cooperation.

He also expressed optimism that the relationship would open up further opportunities for regional development and prosperity.

The meeting comes ahead of the Hornbill Festival, Nagaland's flagship annual cultural event, which attracts visitors from across India and abroad and provides an important platform for international cultural engagement.

Bengali Community Protests in Lakhipur Over Sribhumi Incident, Submits Five-Point Memorandum

LAKHIPUR

Members of the Bengali community staged a protest in Assam's Lakhipur on Friday against the alleged attack and harassment of Bengali families in Sribhumi, raising concerns over what they described as the repeated targeting of Bengali-speaking people by labelling them Bangladeshis.

The protest was held in front of Swami Vivekananda Point at Fulertal, where demonstrators raised slogans and condemned the October 24 incident in Sribhumi.

The alleged attack on Bengali families reportedly followed a dispute during an idol immersion procession. The incident has triggered protests and expressions of concern among sections of the Bengali community in the Barak Valley.

During Friday's demonstration, protesters alleged that Bengali-speaking residents of the region were repeatedly subjected to humiliation and harassment by being branded as Bangladeshis. They maintained that no one should face discrimination or intimidation on the basis of language or identity.

Following the protest, a delegation submitted a five-point memorandum to the Lakhipur Sub-Divisional Commissioner, seeking administrative intervention and justice for the affected families.

The key demands included an impartial investigation into the Sribhumi incident, the arrest of those allegedly involved, and the release of Bengali youths arrested in connection with the case.

The memorandum also sought financial compensation and medical assistance for the families affected by the alleged attack.

The protesters urged the administration to identify all those responsible and ensure strict legal action against them. They also called for steps to prevent further incidents of harassment targeting Bengali-speaking people in the Barak Valley.

Another major demand is the counting of previous service for seniority and promotions in accordance with UGC guidelines.

ACTA has sought Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) promotions from the dates teachers became eligible, in line with the prescribed UGC timelines.

It has also demanded the immediate regularisation of fixed-pay teachers and the release of financial benefits to eligible CAS-promoted teachers from their respective dates of eligibility, without additional conditions.

Other demands include comprehensive leave rules for college teachers and the release of pending UGC-scale arrears and withheld additional increments for MPhil and PhD qualifications.

Retirement age, recruitment also on agenda

The association has called for raising the retirement age of college teachers to 65 years in accordance with UGC norms.

It has also sought the removal of administrative hurdles and irregularities affecting promotions, along with a simplified mutual transfer process to address teachers' personal difficulties.

Filling vacant teaching posts across departments is another key demand.

ACTA said recruitment was necessary to maintain the prescribed student-teacher ratio and reduce the workload on existing faculty members.

ACTA appeals for unity

The association has appealed to college teachers across Assam to participate in the pen-down strike and demonstrations, stressing that collective action was necessary to secure their long-pending demands.

Acknowledging that the agitation could temporarily disrupt academic activities, ACTA maintained that the protest had become a last resort after prolonged delays in resolving teachers' grievances.

The association has urged the state government to intervene urgently and address the outstanding issues affecting teachers in provincialised colleges.

Nagaland CS flags rising youth unemployment, urges colleges to align courses with industry needs

KOHIMA

Nagaland Chief Secretary Sentiyanger Imchen has called on universities and colleges across the state to introduce industry-oriented courses and strengthen practical training, warning that the widening gap between academic qualifications and employment requirements is contributing to the state's unemployment challenge.

Addressing a consultative seminar titled 'Emerging Trends: Introduction and Realising Potential', organised by the Department of Higher and Technical Education on October 30, Imchen said rapid technological advancements, climate change and changing economic demands were reshaping the employment landscape.Citing the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report of March 2026, he said the unemployment rate among people aged 15-59 in Nagaland stood at 7.3 per cent, against the national average of 3.5 per cent.

The gap was more pronounced among young people, with youth unemployment in Nagaland reaching 17.5 per cent compared to the national figure of 9.9 per cent, he said.Referring to a 2025 report on unemployment, skills and migration in Nagaland, the Chief Secretary said 92 per cent of the state's residents lacked formal vocational or technical education, while 78 per cent of workers had no previous work experience.

Imchen urged higher education institutions to move beyond conventional academic programmes and introduce courses in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), data science, cybersecurity and renewable energy.He said educational institutions needed to respond to changing industry requirements by equipping students with relevant technical knowledge and practical skills.Welcoming Nagaland University's decision to incorporate AI components into postgraduate and PhD programmes from the 2026-27 academic session, he encouraged other universities and colleges to adopt similar initiatives.He also stressed the importance of collaboration between educational institutions, industry partnerships and faculty-sharing arrangements to overcome infrastructure and staffing constraints.Delivering the special address, Nagaland University Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Dipak Sinha said emerging courses could be introduced by updating existing curricula rather than establishing entirely new programmes.He emphasised the need to integrate AI across academic disciplines, while giving greater importance to practical training, career guidance and entrepreneurship.The seminar featured technical sessions covering renewable energy, agriculture, veterinary sciences, artificial intelligence, machine learning, cybersecurity, medical technologies and emerging teaching methods in arts and commerce.

Assam college teachers to suspend classes, stage statewide protests over pending dues

GUWAHATI

\College teachers across Assam will suspend academic activities and stage statewide sit-in protests on October 30, following a call by the Assam College Teachers' Association (ACTA) to press for the resolution of long-pending service-related and financial issues.

The agitation will cover provincialised colleges across the state, with teachers observing a pen-down strike and holding peaceful demonstrations on their respective campuses.

In a statement, ACTA president Dr Bipul Chakrabarty and general secretary Dr Parag Jyoti Mahanta said the protest was prompted by prolonged administrative delays, unresolved policy issues and the alleged failure of the state government to fulfil its financial commitments to college teachers.

The association said inadequate implementation of University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines had adversely affected teachers' promotion prospects, professional dignity and morale.

It warned that the continued delay in resolving service-related issues was adding to the challenges facing Assam's provincialised higher education sector.

Pension reform, promotions among key demands

ACTA has urged the state government to reopen the OM 2013 portal to resolve pending service-related matters.

The association has also demanded the scrapping of the National Pension System (NPS) and restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), stating that teachers need adequate retirement security.

Another major demand is the counting of previous service for seniority and promotions in accordance with UGC guidelines.

Mizoram steps up anti-drug crackdown with second phase of Operation Jericho

AIZAWL

Mizoram has launched the second phase of its anti-drug campaign, Operation Jericho, to intensify the crackdown on narcotics trafficking ahead of the festive season, with special attention to border districts and suspected trafficking routes.

Director General of Police Sharad Agarwal formally launched Operation Jericho-2 at a programme held at the police headquarters in Aizawl on October 30.

Officials said the second phase would involve personnel from the first, third and fifth battalions of the Mizoram Armed Police, along with the first Indian Reserve Battalion. The respective district Superintendents of Police will supervise the operation.The campaign will focus on preventing the entry and movement of narcotics into and across Mizoram, particularly in districts bordering neighbouring countries.

The scale of the crackdown is reflected in the cumulative figures released by the authorities.

Since the launch of Operation Jericho, a total of 447 cases have been registered, 663 people arrested and narcotics worth ?843.47 crore seized as of October 26, officials said.The first phase of the operation was launched on September 1 last year through a joint initiative involving the Mizoram Police, the Excise and Narcotics Department and the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA).

Initially, police personnel were deployed in 22 villages along the India-Myanmar border in Champhai district to curb drug trafficking. The operation involved coordination among district police, civil society organisations, village defence parties and local YMA branches.

Between its launch and March 31 this year, when the dedicated deployment was withdrawn, the first phase resulted in the seizure of narcotics worth approximately ?391.95 crore. Police registered 203 cases and arrested 298 people during this period.

Under the second phase, authorities plan to strengthen intelligence-based enforcement, improve coordination among agencies and intensify surveillance along vulnerable border areas.

Community participation will also remain a key component of the campaign, officials said.The operation is aimed not only at intercepting narcotics consignments but also at identifying and dismantling trafficking networks operating across the state.Mizoram's location along the international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh makes border surveillance an important component of its anti-narcotics strategy.The state government has appealed to residents to remain vigilant and promptly report information about drug trafficking, peddling and other narcotics-related activities to the authorities.Officials said cooperation from local communities would be crucial to identifying trafficking routes, preventing drug distribution and making the second phase of Operation Jericho more effective.

Dikhow River Damage: Centre Directs Assam, Nagaland to Probe Alleged Illegal Mining and Ecological Violations

GUWAHATI

The Centre has directed the Assam and Nagaland governments to investigate alleged environmentally destructive activities in the upper catchment and basin of the Dikhow river along the inter-state border, following a letter and subsequent intervention by Jorhat MP Gaurav Gogoi.

The development comes amid concerns over the possible link between unregulated mining, deforestation and hill-cutting in the river's upper catchment and the severe downstream flooding witnessed in parts of Assam during July.

The Congress said on Thursday that Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav had responded to Gogoi's representations and confirmed that instructions had been issued to the concerned departments of both states to examine the allegations and initiate necessary action.

Gogoi, who is also the Deputy Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha and president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), had written to Yadav seeking urgent intervention. He also met the Union Minister personally to highlight the environmental concerns surrounding the Dikhow basin.

In his communication, Gogoi flagged alleged illegal coal mining, unregulated extraction of sand, gravel and riverbed boulders, dumping of mining waste, deforestation, stone quarrying and extensive hill-cutting in the upper catchment area.

According to the Congress MP, these activities have severely disturbed the river's ecological balance and could aggravate flooding in downstream areas.

The issue has assumed significance following torrential rainfall across Assam and Nagaland between July 18 and 22, when the Dikhow and several other tributaries witnessed an unprecedented rise in water levels.

The resulting floods caused extensive damage in Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat districts. More than seven lakh people were affected, while over 1.1 lakh hectares of agricultural land were submerged. Houses, livestock and road infrastructure also suffered widespread damage.Seeking a long-term response, Gogoi called for a coordinated scientific assessment of the entire Dikhow river basin, stronger monitoring mechanisms, ecological restoration and closer cooperation between Assam and Nagaland to reduce future flood risks.In his written response, Yadav outlined the environmental clearance requirements governing mining activities. He stated that mining projects covered under the relevant environmental regulations must obtain prior Environmental Clearance (EC), with proposals examined by an Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) to recommend appropriate safeguards.

Mining activities outside these provisions are regulated through consent mechanisms administered by the respective State Pollution Control Boards.

The Union Environment Ministry issued directives to the concerned authorities in Assam and Nagaland on September 30. The Directorates of Geology and Mining, State Pollution Control Boards and State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA) of both states have been asked to examine the allegations within their respective jurisdictions.

The authorities have also been instructed to conduct field verification wherever necessary and initiate strict action against violations of environmental regulations.

Separately, the Principal Chief Conservators of Forests (PCCFs) of Assam and Nagaland have been asked to take appropriate measures for catchment-area management and environmental protection.

Recognising that flood management, restoration of river systems and river pollution control also fall within the mandate of the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, the Environment Ministry has forwarded the matter to its Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation for further action.

The Centre's intervention has brought renewed attention to the ecological vulnerability of the Dikhow basin, which extends across the Assam-Nagaland border. The proposed investigations are expected to examine the nature and extent of alleged environmental violations and the measures required to protect the river system and reduce flood-related risks in downstream Assam.

Quest!
A snail can sleep for three years.

NATIONAL

Rs 30,000 per light bulb, ltr phenyl Rs 33,000: Activist flags corruption in ULBs, MP Minister calls him 'nuisance'

BHOPAL

Allegations of massive irregularities in purchases by urban local bodies (ULBs) in Madhya Pradesh unexpectedly became the centre of attention at the BJP's 'Loktantra Bachao, Arajakta Hatao' (Save Democracy, Remove Anarchy) rally in Indore on Friday, after a social activist confronted the state's Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya with questions over alleged exorbitant purchase prices.

The controversy erupted when social activist Prahlad Pandey, accompanied by his wife, reached the rally venue carrying a poster questioning the purchase of light bulbs at Rs 30,000 apiece and phenyl at Rs 33,000 per litre. His wife was also carrying a bottle of phenyl. The poster demanded accountability from the department headed by Vijayvargiya.

The incident took an ugly turn when the minister, visibly annoyed by the protest, interrupted his address and asked police officials to remove Pandey from the venue. In a video of the incident circulating on social media, Vijayvargiya is heard describing the activist as a 'nuisance' and saying that if people had to answer his questions, they would do so elsewhere. He also warned that people could give him an answer 'for free'.

The minister also reportedly used objectionable language against the activist before directing the police to take him away. Police subsequently detained Pandey and his wife. Pandey was repeatedly heard questioning the police about his alleged offence.

The activist later said he was merely raising questions about alleged corruption in the procurement of various items by urban local bodies. "Democracy survives when people ask questions, and those in power should answer them," he said.

The protest comes amid growing scrutiny of alleged financial irregularities in municipal procurement across Madhya Pradesh. A recent departmental presentation reportedly highlighted questionable purchases, including unusually high prices for LED bulbs, phenyl and other municipal equipment.

According to officials, 392 municipal personnel, including 135 Chief Municipal Officers, have faced investigation or scrutiny in connection with alleged irregularities. Seven officials have reportedly been dismissed.

The episode has raised questions about public accountability, freedom to question elected representatives and the government's response to allegations of corruption, particularly at a rally organised under the banner of saving democracy.

Reacting to what happened in Indore during the BJP's rally on Friday, the opposition Congress said the incident showed that the BJP "gets rattled by questions" and accused the minister of handing a peaceful protester over to the police. The party said that while the BJP speaks of democracy, it cannot tolerate questions about alleged irregularities in civic bodies.

Importantly, this is not the first time the Pandey couple have protested against Vijayvargiya in Indore. In July, the Pandey couple were detained by police after staging a sit-in near the minister's Nanda Nagar residence, carrying a copy of the Constitution. They were protesting remarks Vijayvargiya allegedly made about students agitating in Delhi over the NEET-UG exam.

Ready for special session on 'vote theft', but Opposition not interested, says Amit Shah

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday that the BJP is ready for a special Parliament session to discuss the alleged "vote theft", but the Opposition parties are not interested in discussion.

"I challenge Rahul (Gandhi) and Akhilesh (Yadav). The BJP is ready to discuss every allegation inside Parliament ... But they will not discuss," Shah told party workers in Lucknow, dismissing the allegations against the poll panel as baseless.

Amit Shah said, "We have nothing to hide. Let us convene a special session of Parliament—but they have no intention of speaking there. They refuse to let Parliament function; instead, they just create a ruckus".

Listing the BJP's victory in Haryana, Maharashtra, Bihar, Delhi, Puducherry, Assam and West Bengal, Shah said, " After the events in Bengal, they have realised that they simply cannot win elections. Naturally, when a team loses a match or a game, they should sit down and practice more—that is what is expected, isn't it?"

He added, "Instead of accepting defeat, they began accusing the umpire of cheating, claiming that votes were stolen."

Amit Shah's statement comes ahead of the INDIA bloc's plan to hold a "public impeachment" of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Saturday and a protest rally at the Ramlila ground on Sunday under the slogan 'Vote Bachao, Desh Bachao'.

The move is part of the Opposition's escalating campaign against Gyanesh Kumar, whom it has accused of partisan conduct and mishandling the revision of electoral rolls. The parties have been demanding his resignation, alleging that the exercise has resulted in the large-scale deletion of eligible voters.

Inviting political parties, civil society groups and the public to join the march in large numbers, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said both programmes were against the "demolition of Indian democracy" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Gyanesh Kumar.

Accusing Shah of trying to prevent people from reaching Delhi to attend the march, Gandhi alleged that party workers and ordinary citizens traveling from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Telangana and Punjab were being stopped.

It may be recalled that the controversy intensified after the Election Commission's SIR exercise placed 13.39 crore electors under the categories of absent, shifted, dead and duplicate (ASDD) across the country. The poll panel has maintained that the exercise was intended to remove ineligible and duplicate entries, while allowing genuine voters whose names were omitted to seek inclusion.

The Opposition's campaign received fresh impetus following reports that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had raised objections on at least 14 occasions over decisions relating to the SIR and the management of electoral rolls. The Election Commission, however, has maintained that its decisions were unanimous.

INTERNATIONAL

We have time: Trump calls Iran war not typical as peace efforts stall

WASHINGTON

United States President Donald Trump has stated that Washington is in no hurry to end its war with Iran, characterising the ongoing hostilities as "not a typical war" while maintaining that time favours the American side despite months of fighting and repeated diplomatic efforts failing to yield a lasting settlement.

Trump likewise claimed that Tehran remains eager to pursue negotiations with American authorities but faces severe domestic hurdles, specifically highlighting an inability to pay military personnel and law enforcement officers.

"There are talks. They want to talk. They keep talking," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

"But look, they're not paying their soldiers, they're not paying their police. They're in a lot of trouble. And we have time, frankly. It's a war, but it's not a typical war, we've been there for seven months," he added.

The American leader also minimised the economic cost of the campaign, asserting that Washington's financial outlays on the conflict remain minimal.

"We're spending very little money, relatively speaking. I heard somebody say, you're spending money. I said, well, any money we spent, we've more than made up for in a place called Venezuela, like by 10 times..." he remarked.

He did not provide figures to substantiate his assertion concerning the recovery of expenditures through South American channels.

Trump's insistence that Washington has adequate time for diplomatic efforts persists despite his frequent references to the possibility of renewed military action against Iran.

Previously, he noted that the US could launch "another little Epic Fury", alluding to the initial military operation directed at Tehran, while on separate occasions suggesting that a "big and good" agreement might still materialise.

His latest remarks come amid persistent ambiguity surrounding the trajectory of the confrontation. Although Trump intimated that Tehran desires an agreement, both capitals remain divided on core prerequisites, notably Iran's nuclear programme, sanctions and the US blockade of Iranian ports.

Diplomatic outreach aimed at seeking a resolution advanced on Friday as Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan held a formal meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during a G20 ministerial gathering hosted in the United States.

The discussions encompassed ongoing negotiations between Washington and Tehran, alongside broader regional developments and bilateral relations, as outlined by Turkey's official Anadolu Agency.

That meeting followed a telephone conversation between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Trump days earlier, during which Ankara conveyed its vigilance over maritime passages and expressed support for diplomatic efforts aimed at defusing regional tensions.

Hostilities commenced on February 28 following joint American and Israeli strikes targeting military installations, missile facilities and nuclear infrastructure within Iran. The initial bombardment resulted in the death of former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, prompting retaliatory missile salvos directed at Israel and American assets across the region.

In response, Tehran restricted navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, threatening international petroleum supply chains and raising global energy security concerns.

Subsequent mediation frameworks attempted to halt military action, yielding temporary pauses and structured dialogue addressing maritime commerce, nuclear capabilities, sanctions relief and the status of frozen monetary reserves. However, fundamental disagreements persisted regarding sequencing and core terms.

Further diplomatic initiatives during September and October, involving intermediary states, introduced confidence-building proposals and phased de-escalation roadmaps. However, core differences remained unaddressed, with Washington prioritising immediate curbs on nuclear development while Tehran demanded the immediate lifting of economic embargoes and port restrictions.

While Ankara has joined regional actors in engaging American counterparts to explore pathways forward, Trump's stance regarding the availability of time, coupled with ongoing threats of military escalation, underscores the continued fragility of any prospective diplomatic breakthrough.

Tanker carrying 27 Indians hit by limpet mines in Strait of Hormuz

HORMUZ:

A Panama-flagged oil tanker carrying 27 Indian seafarers was struck by limpet mines in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday, triggering a fire in its engine room and temporarily disabling the vessel. All crew members were safe and no injuries were reported, the government said.

The attack on MT LOUISE 1 marks the first reported successful use of limpet mines against a vessel in the strategic waterway since the US-Iran conflict began in February.

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal confirmed that all 27 Indian seafarers aboard the tanker were safe. He said the government was closely monitoring the situation and coordinating with the ship management company to ensure their safety and well-being.

According to maritime security sources cited by Reuters, a small boat approached the tanker and attached two limpet mines to its hull before leaving the area. The subsequent explosions triggered a fire in the engine room, temporarily disabling the vessel.

The crew managed to bring the fire under control. No environmental damage was reported, and the tanker later resumed its voyage towards its next port of call.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said the incident occurred about 25 nautical miles (46 km) north-east of Khasab in Oman. It confirmed that the crew was safe, the fire had been extinguished and the vessel was continuing its journey.

Although UKMTO did not identify the vessel, three maritime security sources identified it as MT LOUISE 1.

The incident came a day after another vessel, the Liberia-flagged very large crude carrier (VLCC) MT ARZANAH, carrying two Indian nationals, was targeted in a projectile attack in the Strait of Hormuz on October 29.

Sonowal said all 29 Indian seafarers aboard the two vessels were safe, with no injuries reported.

The perpetrators of the attack on MT LOUISE 1 have not yet been identified. Maritime security sources said a previous attempt to use similar explosives in September had failed, as the devices did not detonate.

The latest incident has heightened concerns over the security of commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital passage for global energy supplies. Limpet mines are magnetic explosive devices that can be attached to a ship's hull, often by divers or occupants of small boats. Their relatively simple deployment makes them a potential threat to commercial vessels, particularly in busy shipping channels.

Greece-based maritime risk management company Marisks said the ability of a small boat to approach a moving tanker, attach explosives and withdraw posed a significant security challenge. It also noted that limpet mines had been used against commercial vessels in the region in previous years.

The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea and serves as one of the world's most important routes for oil and gas shipments. The latest attack adds to a series of security incidents involving commercial vessels in and around the waterway since the US-Iran conflict began in February.

Manipur's Handloom Heritage Takes the Global Runway in Russia

Shirui Lily-inspired collection showcases the state's traditional weaving, cultural identity and indigenous craftsmanship at St Petersburg's Admiralty Needle Festival

Manipur's traditional handloom heritage and cultural identity received international exposure as a collection inspired by the iconic Shirui Lily was showcased at the 31st Admiralty Needle International Fashion, Art and Design Festival in St Petersburg, Russia.

The presentation, held from October 19 to 23, was part of Delhi Fashion Week's International Reinvent Northeast Season 9, which brought together regional textile traditions, contemporary fashion and indigenous craftsmanship from India.

The participation marked an important opportunity for Manipur's designers and traditional textile practitioners to introduce the state's distinctive weaving traditions to an international audience.

A major highlight of the showcase was Threads of Manipur: A Legacy of Heritage & Elegance, a collection designed by Lairenlakpam Lily Chanu of Shiroi Lily Closet, Imphal.

Drawing inspiration from Manipur's centuries-old weaving traditions and the iconic Shirui Lily, the collection blended traditional craftsmanship with contemporary fashion aesthetics. It reflected the artistic richness of the state's handloom sector while highlighting the cultural identity and natural heritage of the Shirui Hills in Ukhrul district.The Shirui Lily, known for its distinctive appearance and association with the hills of Ukhrul, provided the creative inspiration for the collection.

Through its designs, the showcase sought to establish a connection between Manipur's natural landscape, cultural traditions and textile heritage.By bringing indigenous textiles to an international runway, the presentation demonstrated how traditional weaving techniques and cultural narratives can find expression in modern fashion without losing their original character.

The collection also drew attention to the role of handloom craftsmanship in preserving the cultural identity of Manipur, where weaving remains an important part of the state's artistic and social traditions.

Northeast India's textile traditions gain international exposure

The initiative was led by Harshit Dhingaun, Chairman of Delhi Fashion Club and Director of VOY Media & Events. It aims to create greater visibility for the designers, artisans and traditional textile industries of Northeast India through national and international platforms.

The Manipur showcase formed part of the broader International Reinvent Northeast initiative, which seeks to connect the region's indigenous craftsmanship with contemporary fashion and international markets.

Dhingaun served as International Fashion Director for the Delhi Fashion Week segment and Show Director for the international programme. He also joined the jury for the festival's designer competition.

The participation highlighted the growing potential of fashion platforms to promote regional craftsmanship beyond conventional markets and introduce traditional textiles to new audiences.

For Manipur, the showcase offered an opportunity to present its handloom heritage as a living tradition capable of adapting to contemporary design while retaining its cultural significance.

Meghalaya's Ryndia silk featured in academic engagement.The international programme extended beyond the fashion runway, with a separate academic engagement highlighting Meghalaya's indigenous Ryndia silk, commonly known as Eri silk.

A masterclass titled India: The Land of Diversity, Ryndia - The Fabric of Peace was organised at Saint Petersburg State University of Industrial Technologies and Design.

The session introduced participants to the cultural significance of Ryndia silk and its place in Meghalaya's traditional textile practices. It also explored the relevance of indigenous Indian fabrics in contemporary fashion and sustainable design.

The masterclass provided an opportunity to discuss how traditional textile knowledge can contribute to modern design practices while supporting the preservation of indigenous craftsmanship.

The initiative received moral support from the Meghalaya Textile Department, with advisory support from IAS officer Fredrick Roy.

Delhi-based sustainable fashion label Kamari also participated in the international programme. Represented by Dhingaun, the label presented a contemporary approach to Indian fashion, highlighting the possibilities of combining sustainable practices with traditional craftsmanship.

Bridging traditional craftsmanship and contemporary fashion

Speaking about the initiative, Dhingaun said that taking Manipur's handloom heritage to an international platform was an important step towards increasing global awareness of India's indigenous textile traditions.

He emphasised that International Reinvent Northeast seeks to create opportunities for designers from the region while bringing attention to the cultural and artistic value of traditional textiles.

The St Petersburg showcase brought together three distinct dimensions of India's textile landscape - Manipur's traditional handlooms, Meghalaya's Ryndia silk and Delhi's contemporary sustainable fashion.

The participation also highlighted the potential of international fashion and academic platforms to promote Northeast India's indigenous craftsmanship, encourage cultural exchange and create wider recognition for the region's textile traditions.

For Manipur, the Shirui Lily-inspired collection represented more than a fashion presentation.

It offered an opportunity to place the state's cultural heritage, traditional weaving skills and artistic creativity before an international audience.The showcase also underscored how indigenous textiles can contribute to contemporary fashion while retaining their connection to local traditions, landscapes and communities.As designers from the Northeast increasingly explore international platforms, such initiatives could help create wider opportunities for regional artisans and strengthen the visibility of the region's handloom sector in the global fashion industry.

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