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PERSPECTIVE

“The more I learn about people, the more I like my dog.” ~ Mark Twain

Assam Congress ‘Black Day’ protest turns tense in Guwahati, Ripun Bora injured

GUWAHATI
A “Black Day” protest organised by the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) at Rajiv Bhawan in Guwahati turned tense on Thursday as party workers and police personnel confronted each other outside the Congress headquarters. Former APCC president Ripun Bora was injured during the protest and is undergoing treatment at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH).The protest was organised in response to the alleged police action against Congress leaders and Opposition MPs during a march in Delhi on Wednesday demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

Congress workers gathered at Rajiv Bhawan wearing black bands on their foreheads. Tension escalated as police personnel deployed outside the party office put up barricades at the entrance.

Congress leaders alleged that police used excessive force during the protest. They further alleged that an ambulance was prevented from entering the Rajiv Bhawan premises after Bora was injured.

Bora later said the demonstration was aimed at defending voting rights and asserted that police action or detention would not deter the Opposition.

“Led a massive protest to defend the right to vote. No police action, threat or detention can silence the people,” Bora said in a social media post, adding that the fight to protect voting rights would continue.

Congress leader Nandita Das also criticised the Election Commission and the BJP-led government, alleging that the functioning of electoral institutions had weakened public confidence in the electoral process.She specifically criticised Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, alleging that some decisions favoured the BJP and were taken without adequate consultation with other Election Commissioners.

WHO SAID WHAT



Dubbed a “Super El Niño,” the current forecast is set to become one of the strongest on record. This means intensifying drought, floods and other conditions across countries already grappling with food insecurity, displacement and economic pressures. ~ United Nations

From drought to deluge
‘Super’ El Niño is expanding reach

Prakash Raj, Dhruv Rathee join Bengaluru protest against SIR, demand CEC’s removal



BENGALURU

Actor-activist Prakash Raj, YouTuber Dhruv Rathee and Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke joined a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Thursday against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, with protesters demanding the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

The protest was organised as a “people’s tribunal” for those whom organisers said had been affected by the SIR exercise in Karnataka. A large number of protesters, including women and students, gathered at the venue and raised slogans

demanding that the revision exercise be scrapped.

Organisers also announced a proposed “Chappal protest” in solidarity with women.Dipke alleged that voter deletions under the SIR exercise were aimed at disenfranchising people opposed to the BJP. He accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Election Commission of undermining democratic processes and said the protests would continue until Kumar resigned.

Rathee, meanwhile, focused on electoral-roll changes in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Goa. He said the issue should be viewed in terms of citizens’

voting rights rather than political affiliations.

Addressing the gathering, Rathee urged BJP supporters to consider the issue as one affecting their own right to vote. He questioned the deletion and subsequent restoration of around 70 lakh names in West Bengal, asking why the names were removed ahead of the elections and later restored.

He also questioned the deletion of more than 40 lakh names in Bihar and raised concerns over the disclosure of the names only after the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission to make the information public.

In Uttar Pradesh, Rathee questioned the addition of more than 14 lakh names to the electoral rolls and sought clarification on the identity of the newly enrolled voters. He also raised questions over electoral registration procedures in Goa.

“These are my three claims and questions,” Rathee said while referring to developments in the four states.

Rathee said the protest was not aimed at supporting any political party but at defending citizens’ voting rights. He described those participating in the demonstration as “the biggest nationalists”.

Posters at Freedom Park carried

slogans such as “Error 404 - Name Not Found”, “Don’t erase us, hear us”, “Vote theft” and “Gyanesh Kumar, gaddi leave your chair”. Posters featuring freedom fighters Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose were also displayed.

Police said security arrangements had been strengthened at the venue to prevent any untoward incident.

The Bengaluru protest came amid continuing opposition to the SIR exercise and demands for action against the Chief Election Commissioner.

INDIA bloc MPs held a separate protest in Delhi on Wednesday, during which several MPs, including Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, were detained while attempting to reach Jantar Mantar.

Separately, the Indian Youth Congress has approached the Delhi High Court challenging the police refusal to permit its proposed protest at Jantar Mantar against Kumar. The matter is scheduled to be heard on Friday.

Two fresh FIRs have also been registered against Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in connection with Wednesday’s INDIA bloc protest in central Delhi.

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Assam student found dead in Andhra jungle, family suspects planned murder

GUWAHATI

The death of 20-year-old Assam student Himashree Boro in Andhra Pradesh has triggered protests in Guwahati, with her family alleging foul play and raising questions over her final movements, missed train and last communications before her body was recovered.

Students of B Barooah College, where Himashree was previously enrolled, staged a protest outside the college on Thursday, demanding a thorough investigation and accountability from the police and railway authorities.

“We are here to seek justice for Himashree. We seek support from the Railway and police to find the perpetrators and punish them,” said Krish Pawe, general secretary of the B Barooah College Students’ Union.

Himashree, a resident of Chapadong near Bonda in Guwahati, had travelled to Andhra Pradesh on



August 13 with a dance group for a two-month event assignment. On October 6, she reportedly boarded the Dibrugarh-Kanyakumari Vivek Express at Visakhapatnam while returning to Assam alone. She was scheduled to appear for an SBI examination.

Her journey, however, ended before she could reach home. Her body was recovered on Wednesday from a jungle near the railway tracks at Tekkali in Andhra Pradesh’s Srikakulam district.

The circumstances surrounding

her death have prompted the family to suspect that she may have been deliberately killed.

“We think it must have been a planned murder. A few men surrounded her. I request the Chief Minister to enquire into how she was killed. She died a very harsh death. She was found lying in a jungle,” Himashree’s mother said, appealing to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for intervention.The family has also questioned what happened after Himashree became unreachable. Her mother said she had tried calling her after losing contact with her. The phone initially rang but later became unreachable, the family claimed.

According to relatives, Himashree had travelled to Andhra Pradesh as part of a group of eight people, while payments for three events were allegedly still pending from the organisers.

Her sister-in-law also raised questions about the dance troupe

and its management. She alleged that the group’s manager was from Andhra Pradesh and that dancers from Guwahati had been taken there for performances.

The family said Himashree had also been in contact with a woman identified as Sumitra Devi, who had taken the group to Andhra Pradesh.

More questions have emerged over Himashree’s final hours. According to her sister-in-law, she repeatedly messaged family members saying that she was scared and remained in contact with her mother and a friend until around 1.30 am.

“She recorded a video and sent it to us. That was the last communication we had with her,” the sister-in-law said.

The family further claimed that Himashree reached a railway station at around 7.30 am but missed her scheduled train after arriving late. She subsequently boarded another train, they said.

Her belongings, including

clothes, a bag and documents, were later found when the train reached Guwahati, according to the family.

The discovery of those belongings has added to the relatives’ questions about the sequence of events and whether her movements were properly traced after she went missing.The protesters and family members have urged authorities to establish Himashree’s movements after she left the station, examine her final communications and determine what happened before her body was found.

The case has also raised wider concerns among students and families in Assam over the safety of young people travelling outside the state for employment and performance opportunities.

At the time of filing, authorities in Assam and Andhra Pradesh had not issued an official statement detailing the circumstances of Himashree’s death or the status of any investigation.

13 lakh tonnes of Meghalaya’s inventoried coal unaccounted for, HC panel seeks probe

GUWAHATI

More than 13 lakh metric tonnes of inventoried coal remain unaccounted for in Meghalaya, while abandoned rat-hole mine openings across the state continue to remain unsecured despite repeated court directions, according to the latest interim report of a Meghalaya High Court-appointed committee.

The committee, headed by retired Justice B.P. Katakey, has called for a detailed investigation to determine responsibility for the missing coal and alleged lapses in safeguarding extracted coal and tackling illegal mining.

The findings are contained in the committee’s 41st interim report, submitted as part of its continuing oversight of compliance with directions issued by the Supreme Court, the National Green Tribunal and the Meghalaya High Court on unscientific and illegal rat-hole coal mining.

The High Court constituted the committee in April 2022 following years of litigation over illegal coal mining, mine-related deaths and environmental degradation. Rat-hole mining was banned in 2014, while the Supreme Court later allowed the state to deal with coal already extracted under regulated conditions.

The state government had earlier informed the Supreme Court that 32,56,715 metric tonnes of extracted coal were available. However, an aerial assessment subsequently indicated a substantially lower quantity, while physical verification by Deputy Commissioners recorded 19,54,258.816 metric tonnes.

The resulting shortfall stands at

13,02,456.184 metric tonnes.

The committee said the discrepancy warrants a detailed inquiry, particularly because the state government had been entrusted with safeguarding the extracted coal.

The missing quantity would amount to roughly 52,000 truckloads if each truck carried 25 tonnes. At a rate of 100 trucks a day, transporting such a volume would take more than 500 days.

The state has previously attributed some of the difference to variations between physical and drone-based measurements, besides accounting for coal that had been auctioned or seized. The committee, however, has not accepted these explanations in full.

The report also raises concerns over 37,449.53 metric tonnes of illegally extracted coal detected outside designated Coal India Limited depots that subsequently went missing. Initially, police cases covered only 4,141.83 metric tonnes.

Although the government later informed the committee that cases had been registered for the entire quantity, details such as case numbers and the progress of investigations have not yet been submitted despite earlier directions.

The committee has also flagged the continued failure to close or fence abandoned rat-hole mine openings.

Despite repeated directions, no mine opening has been fully secured, the report said. Deputy Commissioners have submitted proposals for fencing, while the Oversight Committee has examined detailed project reports for permanent closure.

HSLC 2027 form fill-up begins October 12, ASSEB sets Nov 10 deadline

GUWAHATI

The Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB) has announced the schedule for online form fill-up for the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) Examination 2027, with the process set to begin on October 12 and continue until November 10.

According to an ASSEB notification, students will have to complete the form fill-up through the board’s designated online examination portal. Schools have been directed to ensure that all examination-related formalities are completed within the prescribed deadlines.The deadline for online fee payment or generation of challans is November 12, while candidates and institutions can deposit the challan amount at the State Bank of India until November 16.Schools will have until November 19 to upload corrections. ASSEB has specifically stated that no subject-related corrections will be accepted after the deadline.

The login credentials for the examination portal will remain the same as those used during Class IX registration.Students who have lost or misplaced their user ID or password have been advised to contact the Member Secretary of the concerned ASSEB regional office.

HSLC 2027 fee structure
Under the notified fee structure, candidates will have to pay:
“ Examination fee: Rs 700
“ Practical examination fee: Rs 150, wherever applicable
“ Centre fee: Rs 350

ASSEB has also announced an exemption from the examination fee for eligible students enrolled in government, provincialised and recognised schools whose parents’ annual income from all sources is Rs 4 lakh or below.

The exemption will apply to candidates registered in Class IX in 2024 and 2025.

Hagrama Mohilary aide found hanging from railway flyover in Kokrajhar, probe underway



KOKRAJHAR

The body of 47-year-old Mahesh Brahma, who was reportedly associated with former Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) chief executive member Hagrama Mohilary as his personal assistant, was recovered hanging from a newly constructed railway flyover at Khargaon in Kokrajhar, prompting police to launch an investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death.

Brahma’s body was found suspended by a rope from the flyover, following which police and a magistrate reached the spot. The body was subsequently recovered and sent for post-mortem examination.

While the circumstances of the death are yet to be established, questions have been raised over whether Brahma died by suicide or was killed and his body later hung from the flyover.

Family members have reportedly disputed the possibility of

suicide and urged authorities to ascertain the actual circumstances leading to his death.

BTC Executive Member Prakash Basumatary visited the spot after the incident and called for a detailed investigation. He urged police to examine the scene and gather evidence to determine how Brahma died.

Police are examining the available evidence and other circumstances surrounding the incident. The post-mortem report is expected to provide crucial information about the cause of death.Brahma was reportedly associated with the cultural sector and was known among acquaintances for his quiet and gentle nature. His death has caused shock in Kokrajhar, with local residents expressing concern over the circumstances in which his body was found.

The investigation is continuing, and police have not yet reached a conclusion on whether the death was a suicide or involved foul play.



কেআরসি টাইমস

স্টে এনরিচড

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Pakistan's Yemen dilemma

Pakistan has spent years walking a carefully calibrated line in its relationship with Saudi Arabia: stand firmly with the Kingdom, provide military cooperation and security assurances, but avoid being drawn directly into Yemen's war. That distinction served Islamabad well in 2015, when Parliament opted for neutrality after Saudi Arabia launched its intervention against the Houthi movement.

The recently signed Makkah Joint Defence Agreement could make that balancing act considerably harder.

Signed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye on August 7, the agreement declares that an armed attack against one member will be treated as an attack against all. Islamabad has described the pact as defensive and grounded in the collective right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. The wording is straightforward. Its implications are not.

The central question is no longer whether Pakistan supports Saudi Arabia. It plainly does. The question is what Islamabad is prepared to do if Saudi Arabia invokes the agreement in response to an attack.

There has already been a noticeable shift in the language coming from Pakistan. On September 10, Islamabad said that no military response under the Makkah pact had been discussed following Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia. Since then, Pakistan has strongly condemned reported attacks directed towards Makkah, describing them as threats to Saudi sovereignty and the security and sanctity of the Two Holy Mosques.

The military chiefs of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye have also met to discuss intelligence sharing, military coordination and capability integration. Most significantly, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said Pakistan is bound to defend Saudi Arabia and that "whatever means" Pakistan possesses would be available to the Kingdom. He has stopped short, however, of confirming Pakistani participation in airstrikes.

This does not establish that Islamabad has decided to enter the Yemen conflict. It does suggest, however, that the political and military architecture for a possible intervention is being gradually assembled.

That prospect presents Pakistan with a problem that goes beyond its treaty obligations.

Pakistan's domestic political and sectarian sensitivities cannot be ignored. The Houthis are predominantly Shia, while Saudi Arabia represents the Sunni establishment with which Pakistan has maintained exceptionally close military and political ties. Pakistan also has a large Shia population of its own. Any Pakistani military involvement against the Houthis could therefore have consequences well beyond the battlefield, potentially aggravating sectarian tensions at home. This was precisely why the 2015 position was politically convenient. Islamabad could promise to defend Saudi territory without becoming a participant in Yemen's civil war. The Makkah Agreement narrows that space.

Yet collective defence does not automatically mean sending Pakistani troops into Yemen. Assistance could take several forms: air defence, intelligence, logistics, maritime security, reinforcement of Saudi territory or other military support. The difficulty is that once a treaty declares an attack on one member to be an attack on all, prolonged inaction can itself become politically difficult to explain. This is where the emerging public narrative assumes importance. A Pakistani government contemplating military assistance would have to answer a question that remains deeply relevant: why should Pakistan become involved in another country's war? The answer being constructed appears different from the one Islamabad faced in 2015. Pakistan would not, in this formulation, be entering Yemen's civil war. It would be defending Saudi Arabia under a collective-defence agreement. The invocation of Makkah and the Haramain makes that argument even more politically potent. An attack presented as a threat to the Two Holy Mosques carries an emotional and religious weight in Pakistan that an ordinary regional military confrontation does not. There is a danger here. Religious sentiment can rapidly transform a complicated geopolitical and sectarian conflict into a binary moral proposition. Political or religious voices may seek to portray the Houthis in explicitly sectarian or theological terms. Such descriptions are political rhetoric, not objective assessments of the conflict. But their ability to mobilise public opinion should not be underestimated. The political question could consequently shift from "Should Pakistan fight the Houthis?" to "Can Pakistan stand aside when the land of the Two Holy Mosques is under attack?" That would be a fundamentally different debate. For Islamabad, therefore, the immediate challenge is not simply military preparedness. It is managing the consequences of a treaty that may have raised expectations without specifying precisely what collective defence will mean in every circumstance. The decisive threshold would come if Pakistan formally characterises a Houthi attack as an "armed attack" under the Makkah Agreement and Saudi Arabia subsequently requests a specific form of Pakistani military assistance. At that point, ambiguity would become much harder to sustain. Pakistan still has room to avoid direct participation in offensive operations in Yemen. It should use that space carefully. The country has already experienced the domestic costs of sectarian polarisation, and another Middle Eastern conflict could expose those fault lines while placing its military in a complicated regional war with no obvious exit strategy. The Makkah Agreement may have been conceived as a defensive instrument. But treaties acquire meaning through the crises in which they are tested. Pakistan now faces the difficult task of ensuring that its commitment to Saudi security does not quietly become a commitment to another war. The real test of Islamabad's strategic judgement may be not whether it can honour the pact, but whether it can do so without becoming trapped by it.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Happiness is man's greatest aim in life. Tranquility and rationality are the cornerstones of happiness.” - Epicurus

China, Cyber Space and Demography: The Three Silent Threats India Cannot Ignore



COL (DR.) ASHWANI KUMAR

India's emergence as a major global power is one of the defining geopolitical developments of the twenty-first century. With a growing economy, expanding technological capabilities, a young population, and increasing international influence, India stands at the threshold of a new strategic era. Yet, as history repeatedly demonstrates, rising powers face challenges that are often less visible than conventional military threats.

For India, three such challenges demand urgent attention, China's expanding strategic ambitions, the rapidly evolving domain of cyber and satellite warfare, and demographic changes that may have long term national security implications. While these threats differ in nature, they are interconnected and capable of influencing India's security environment for decades to come.

The challenge before policymakers is not merely to respond to individual crises but to develop a comprehensive national security framework capable of anticipating future threats before they mature into strategic vulnerabilities.

China: The Visible Strategic Challenge.

Among all external security concerns confronting India, China remains the most significant long term challenge. The issue extends far beyond periodic military standoffs along the Line of Actual Control. Beijing's strategy is multidimensional, combining military modernization, economic influence, technological superiority, information operations, and geopolitical outreach.

China's infrastructure development along the Tibetan plateau has significantly enhanced its military mobility and logistics capabilities. High-speed rail networks, all weather roads, dual use airports, and advanced surveillance systems provide China with strategic advantages that cannot be ignored.

Having served extensively in the Himalayan region, including the high altitude areas of Leh-Ladakh and the Eastern Sector bordering Arunachal Pradesh, I have witnessed firsthand the harsh realities of mountain warfare. The terrain is unforgiving, logistics are challenging, and the environment itself becomes a force multiplier. In such regions, infrastructure often determines operational capability.

The lessons are clear. Future conflicts in the Himalayas will not be decided solely by troop strength. They will be influenced by surveillance systems, satellite networks, logistics corridors, communication resilience, precision weapons, and the ability to maintain sustained operations in extreme conditions. China understands this reality and has invested heavily in all these domains.

India has made substantial progress in strengthening border infrastructure and force deployment. However, strategic competition with China is likely to remain a defining feature of Asian geopolitics for the foreseeable future.

The New Battlefield: Cyber and Satellite Warfare.

The character of warfare is changing at an unprecedented pace. Future wars may not begin with tanks crossing borders or aircraft entering hostile airspace. They may commence with cyber attacks on power grids, banking systems, communication networks, transportation infrastructure, and military command systems.

Today, cyber space has emerged as the fifth dimension of warfare alongside land, sea, air, and space.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict, Middle East conflicts, and recent global cyber incidents have demonstrated how nations can suffer strategic disruption without a single conventional battle being fought.

Equally important is the growing significance of satellite warfare.

Modern military operations depend heavily upon satellites for:

- (i) Communication
- (ii) Navigation
- (iii) Intelligence gathering
- (iv) Surveillance

- (v) Reconnaissance
- (vi) Precision targeting
- (vii) Missile warning systems

As a military analyst, I believe the next major conflict between advanced nations will involve a fierce contest in space. The side that dominates information will dominate decision-making. The side that protects its satellites while degrading those of its adversary will enjoy enormous operational advantages.

China has already demonstrated anti-satellite capabilities and continues to invest heavily in military space programs. Its integration of artificial intelligence, quantum communications, cyber operations, and satellite networks reflects a comprehensive approach to future warfare.

India has also made remarkable strides through indigenous satellite programs, anti-satellite capability demonstrations, and the growing role of the defence space ecosystem. However, the pace of technological evolution demands continuous investment and innovation. The future battlefield may extend thousands of kilometres above the earth. The nation that loses its eyes and ears in space risks losing the battle on the ground.

Operation Sindoor and the Future of Warfare.

Operation Sindoor offers valuable insights into the changing character of warfare in the twenty-first century. While the operation achieved its immediate military and strategic objectives, its broader significance lies in the lessons it provides for future conflicts. It demonstrated that modern warfare is no longer confined to traditional battlefields where success is measured solely by the number of troops, tanks, or artillery guns deployed. Instead, victory increasingly depends upon information dominance, intelligence integration, technological superiority, precision targeting, and rapid decision-making.

The operation highlighted the growing importance of real-time intelligence gathered through multiple sources, including human intelligence, electronic surveillance, drones, and space-based assets. The ability to detect, identify, track, and engage targets with precision reflects the transformation of warfare from platform-centric operations to network-centric warfare. Every sensor, communication node, and operational unit now forms part of an integrated battlefield ecosystem.

One of the most significant lessons emerging from Operation Sindoor is the role of satellites and advanced communication systems in enabling military operations. Modern commanders require uninterrupted access to intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, navigation, and secure communication networks. The side that controls information and maintains situational awareness gains a decisive advantage. This reality explains why major powers across the world are investing heavily in military satellites, anti-satellite capabilities, electronic warfare systems, and cyber commands.

The operation also underscored the increasing role of unmanned systems and precision-guided weapons. Drones, loitering munitions, artificial intelligence-enabled surveillance systems, and long-range precision strike capabilities are gradually reshaping military doctrines. Future wars are likely to witness greater integration of manned and unmanned platforms operating simultaneously across land, air, sea, cyber, and space domains. Equally important was the information dimension of the conflict. In today's interconnected world, military operations unfold not only on the battlefield but also across television screens, digital platforms, and social media networks. Strategic narratives, public perception, and information management have become critical elements of national power. The battle for perception often begins before the first shot is fired and may continue long after military operations have ended. From a military analyst's perspective, Operation Sindoor reflects the emergence of a new model of warfare where intelligence fusion, technological integration, cyber capabilities, satellite support, precision engagement, and joint operational planning work together as force multipliers. The operation demonstrated that future conflicts may be shorter in duration but significantly more intense in terms of technology, information flow, and decision cycles. Having served in operational areas ranging from Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir to Leh-Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and the North-East, and having observed the evolution of military doctrine over several decades, I believe Op-

eration Sindoor marks an important milestone in India's journey towards next-generation warfare. It highlights the growing importance of jointness, indigenous technology, cyber resilience, space capabilities, and intelligence-led operations in safeguarding national security.

The central lesson is clear:

the wars of the future will not be won merely by the strength of armies, but by the ability of nations to integrate military power with technology, information, cyber capabilities, and space assets. Operation Sindoor has provided a glimpse into that future.

Information Warfare and Artificial Intelligence.

The battlefield is no longer confined to physical terrain.

Public perception has become a strategic target. Artificial Intelligence, social media algorithms, deep fake technology, and information manipulation tools are transforming the conduct of psychological operations.

Hostile actors can influence public opinion, create social divisions, manipulate electoral discourse, and weaken institutional trust without firing a single shot.

Information warfare seeks to shape perceptions rather than destroy infrastructure.

The objective is simple: influence decision-making.

The challenge for democracies is particularly severe because open societies are inherently vulnerable to information manipulation.

India must therefore invest not only in technological defenses but also in public awareness, digital literacy, and institutional resilience.

Demography: The Silent Security Challenge.

Demography is often viewed through the lens of economics and social development. However, demographic changes can also have significant national security implications. History provides numerous examples where uncontrolled population movements, illegal immigration, and demographic shifts altered political balances, strained resources, and generated social tensions.

For a country as diverse and populous as India, demographic management is a matter of strategic importance. Border management, citizenship documentation, migration regulation, and resource planning are all interconnected components of national security.

This issue requires a balanced and mature approach. Humanitarian concerns must always be respected. At the same time, sovereign nations possess the legitimate responsibility to monitor and manage population movements that may affect security, governance, and social stability. Ignoring demographic trends today may create governance challenges tomorrow. The Interconnection of Threats

A common mistake in strategic planning is treating security challenges as isolated problems.

In reality, these threats are deeply interconnected.

China employs cyber capabilities. Cyber operations often target demographic fault lines through disinformation campaigns. Artificial intelligence amplifies information warfare.

Satellite systems enable military and cyber operations. Demographic vulnerabilities can be exploited by hostile actors to create instability. Therefore, national security can no longer be viewed exclusively through a military lens. It requires an integrated approach involving diplomacy, technology, economics, intelligence, governance, and societal resilience.

What India Must Do. India's response must be comprehensive and future-oriented.

Strengthen Border Infrastructure Roads, tunnels, airfields, logistics networks, and surveillance systems must continue to expand across sensitive frontier regions.

Build Cyber Resilience.

Critical infrastructure must be protected through robust cyber security frameworks and indigenous technological capabilities.

Secure the Space Domain.

India must accelerate investments in military space capabilities, satellite protection measures, and advanced space technologies.

Promote Technological Self-Reliance. Dependence on foreign technologies in critical sectors should be progressively reduced.

Strengthen Demographic Governance. Accurate population data, effective border management, and migration monitoring are essential components of long-term national security.

Enhance National Awareness.

Citizens must understand that future threats may emerge through smartphones, social media platforms, and digital networks rather than traditional battlefields alone

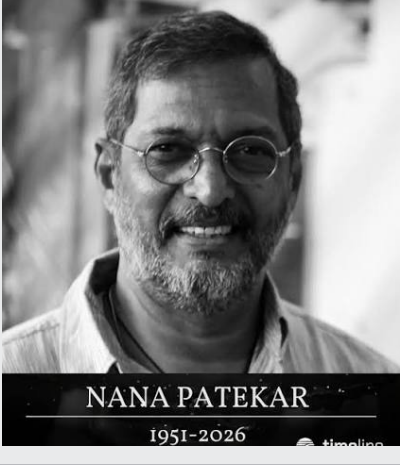
Conclusion.

History teaches us that nations rarely collapse because of threats they can clearly identify. They weaken when they underestimate dangers that emerge gradually and silently. China's strategic ambitions, cyber and satellite warfare, and demographic challenges are not isolated concerns. They represent a complex security matrix that will shape India's future.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Few actors possessed the intensity, individuality and unmistakable presence that Shri Nana Patekar Ji had. He brought remarkable versatility and creativity to every role and gave us characters that will be remembered for generations. He was also admired for his frank and forthright views, never hesitating to express what he believed in.

Shri Nana Patekar's contribution to Hindi and Marathi cinema was immense. His passing leaves a deep void. My condolences to his family, friends and countless admirers. Om Shanti. ~ Narendra Modi, PM



India possesses the capability, talent, resources, and national will to meet these challenges successfully. However, success will depend upon foresight rather than reaction, preparation rather than complacency, and national unity rather than division. The future belongs to nations that can anticipate change before it arrives. For India, the time to prepare is now.

Author's Note.

This article is influenced not only by research and strategic analysis but also by personal experiences accumulated over decades of military and national security service.

During my service in the Indian Army, I had the privilege of serving in some of the nation's most sensitive operational environments, including Leh-Ladakh, the Eastern Sector bordering Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, and the North-Eastern states and Abroad. These assignments provided me with a firsthand understanding of border realities, strategic vulnerabilities, and the immense challenges faced by soldiers operating in difficult terrain and extreme climatic conditions. My subsequent assignments in Military Intelligence, the Cabinet Secretariat, DIPAC and various national security-related appointments further reinforced the importance of anticipating future threats rather than merely reacting to them.

The observations presented in this article are therefore a combination of professional experience, strategic study, and a continuing commitment to India's national security and long-term interests.

Col (Dr.) Ashwani Kumar, MiD, VSM (Retd.)

Ashk Machhanvi

Disclaimer:

The views expressed are solely those of the author, based on personal experience, research, and professional analysis, and do not represent the official views of the Government of India, Indian Armed Forces, Cabinet Secretariat, or DIPAC (PMO). This article is intended for academic discussion and strategic awareness; references to countries, policies, or security matters are analytical and not official positions. Illustrative images, where used, may be sourced from publicly available platforms and remain the property of their respective owners.

Manipur residents seek probe into poor-quality work on 60-km NH-102A stretch

IMPHAL

Residents and village authorities in Manipur's Paomata and Chilai Phaibung blocks have raised concerns over the quality of recently completed bituminous work on a 60-km stretch of National Highway-102A between Tadubi and Lower Phaibung, alleging that the road surface began deteriorating within a week of completion.

In a statement, the residents and village authorities claimed that the newly black-topped stretch has developed potholes, cracks, peeling surfaces and loose aggregates shortly after the work was completed.

They alleged that the roadwork was executed in a sub-standard



manner and deviated from prescribed specifications of the Indian Roads Congress (IRC) and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH). The allegations have not been independently verified.

According to the residents, the deteriorating road has raised safety concerns for commuters and affected transporters, daily wage earners and others dependent on the highway for connectivity.

They also claimed that the damaged surface has contributed to vehicle damage, dust pollution and waterlogging during rainfall, affecting households located along the highway.

The residents said they had repeatedly brought the matter to the

attention of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL), contractors and sub-contractors through verbal and written communications. However, they alleged that no concrete corrective measures had been taken so far.

The village authorities have demanded an immediate technical inspection by a team comprising senior officials from the Public Works Department (PWD), NHIDCL and independent third-party experts to assess the quality of the work and determine whether contractual and technical specifications were followed.

They have also sought directions for the executing agency to repair or reconstruct defective portions at the contractor's own

cost under the applicable Defect Liability Period provisions.

The residents further called for appropriate penal and legal action against contractors or sub-contractors found responsible for negligence or the use of sub-standard materials.

To improve monitoring of future highway projects, they have proposed joint oversight by departmental engineers and village-level monitoring committees. The residents and village authorities have set a deadline in October for authorities to initiate concrete measures to repair or reconstruct the affected sections. They warned that failure to act could lead to democratic protests, including an indefinite closure or blockade of NH-102A.

'Sanatan power' will protect Modi, Rahul cannot harm him: Himanta Sarma

VARANASI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched a sharp attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, asserting that he could not "harm even a hair" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as long as the "power of Sanatan" remained in India. Addressing an event in Varanasi marking Modi's 25 years in public life as an elected representative, Sarma directly warned Gandhi against targeting the Prime Minister. "Rahul Gandhi, you listen, as long as there is the power of Sanatan in India, you cannot harm even a hair of Narendra Modi (baal bhi baanka nahi kar sakte)," Sarma said. Sarma praised Modi's leadership and highlighted what he described as the BJP's expansion and achievements over the past two decades. He also invoked the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as a major achievement of the Modi government.

Referring to the period before Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, Sarma said many Hindus had lost hope that a Ram temple would ever be built at the site associated with the Babri Masjid.

"But today, under the Prime Minister's leadership, we drove out Babur and built the Ram temple," he said. The Assam Chief Minister also credited the Modi government with taking a tougher approach towards terrorism and extremism. Referring to the 2001 Parliament attack and India's subsequent military responses, he claimed that the balance of power had shifted in India's favour. "There was a time when Parliament was also attacked. Terrorists from Pakistan used to enter our country and attack Parliament."

But today, Pakistan does not come to India; India enters Pakistan and destroys it.

"This is our leadership," Sarma said. Sarma further claimed that the BJP would remain in power in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Assam for the next 50 years, while urging party workers to continue strengthening the organisation.

Tripura Cabinet clears festival ration for 9.9 lakh cardholders, approves 1,282 posts

AGARTALA

The Tripura Cabinet has approved a special festival ration allocation for nearly 9.9 lakh ration cardholders and cleared the creation and filling of more than 1,280 government posts across various departments. The decisions were taken at a Cabinet meeting and announced by Cabinet spokesperson Sushanta Chowdhury on Wednesday. Under the special festival allocation, each ration cardholder will receive 500 grams of suji, 1 kg of maida and 1 kg of sugar free of cost through fair price shops during October and November.

The government will require around 243 metric tonnes of suji, 1,984 MT of maida and 929 MT of sugar for the distribution, with the scheme involving an estimated expenditure of Rs 9.35 crore. Chowdhury said the free festival

ration has been provided annually to all ration cardholders.

The Cabinet also approved the creation and filling of 700 Secondary Graduate Teacher (STGT) posts on a fixed-pay basis for Classes IX and X under the Education Department. For elementary education, the government cleared the filling of another 361 teaching posts, comprising 75 Graduate Teachers (GTs) and 286 Under Graduate Teachers (UGTs). The Urban Development Department also received approval for the creation and filling of 213 posts across various categories under the Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC).

In another decision, the Cabinet doubled the sitting allowance for members of sub-committees under the SC Welfare Department from Rs 100 to Rs 200 per sitting.

Rs 3.6-crore Hailakandi bridge collapses, fourth such incident in Barak Valley this year

HAILAKANDI

An under-construction RCC bridge over the Berakhal river in Hailakandi district collapsed on Wednesday morning, triggering allegations of poor construction quality and inadequate supervision. The incident is the fourth reported bridge collapse in Assam's Barak Valley this year. The bridge, being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 3.6 crore at Mohanpur village under the Algapur-Katlicherra constituency, collapsed at around 7 am.

No casualties were reported in the incident. Local residents blamed the contractor and alleged that sub-standard construction materials had been used at the site. One resident claimed that the sand, reinforcement rods and shuttering used in the project were of poor quality.

"It's because of the contractor's apathy. The materials used for the



construction, be it the sand and rods, are not suitable for construction. The shuttering is also of low quality," the resident alleged. Another resident claimed that complaints about the construction had earlier been brought to the attention of officials, including the site and departmental engineers, but no corrective action was taken.

"The site engineer, departmental engineer and contractors did not pay heed to our complaints and hence we are faced with this situation today,"

the resident alleged. A video showing the bridge collapsing was recorded by locals and later circulated on social media.

Residents said the bridge was expected to improve connectivity for thousands of daily commuters in the area. They alleged that repeated appeals to the authorities, including the SDO and departmental engineers, had failed to prevent the collapse.

Hailakandi MLA Milon Das said he had informed Chief Minister

KANGPOKPI

Three houses belonging to Kuki residents were allegedly set ablaze in Kailenjang village of Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Wednesday, amid reports of gunfire that have triggered fresh security concerns along the Kangpokpi-Senapati border.

Security officials confirmed that the three houses were burned. No casualties were reported in the latest incident. The identities of those responsible and the motive behind the arson remain unknown.

Residents of neighbouring villages reported hearing gunfire in and around Kailenjang at around 2 pm. Security personnel were subsequently deployed to monitor the situation, while reports of firing were being verified.

Two platoons of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are currently deployed in the area. One platoon is stationed at Kailen-



jang, while the other is positioned in a nearby village below it.

According to officials, CRPF personnel were present in the area when armed individuals allegedly set the three houses on fire. The circumstances surrounding the arson, including

how the houses were torched despite the security presence, are yet to be established.

Kailenjang is located around 10 km west of Senapati district headquarters, in the hills above Taphou village. The settlement has remained largely deserted

since the September 26 attack in which three Naga civilians were killed.

The September 26 incident began when unidentified gunmen opened fire at the residence of the village chief. Two civilians were killed on the spot and two others were injured. One of the injured later succumbed to his injuries, taking the death toll to three.

The attack prompted residents to leave the area amid heightened security concerns.

The latest arson has raised fresh concerns over the safety of property and displaced residents in villages affected by the prolonged ethnic conflict in Manipur.

Security officials suspect the involvement of armed elements in Wednesday's incident, although the allegation has not been independently established. Police and security forces are continuing to monitor the area as investigations into the firing and arson remain underway.

Dibrugarh University digitises 53,275 pages of rare Sanchipat manuscripts

DIBRUGARH

Dibrugarh University has digitised 53,275 pages of rare Sanchipat manuscripts, creating a major online repository aimed at making Assam's literary and cultural heritage accessible to researchers and readers worldwide.

The digital archive was launched on October 6 as part of programmes marking the birth centenary of noted Assamese poet Nabakanta Barua. The Department of Assamese launched the repository, which was formally inaugurated by university Vice-Chancellor Prof Jiten Hazarika during a two-day seminar organised to commemorate Barua's centenary.

The digitised collection, preserved at the department's Lela Gogoi Memorial Manuscript Museum, includes manuscripts written in Assamese, Tai and Sanskrit. The university said the online repository will allow researchers, scholars and members of the public to access the rare materials regardless of their geographical location.

In addition to the Sanchipat manuscripts, the university has digitised 72,867 pages of rare books from the personal library of renowned Assamese literary critic Mahendra Bora. These materials have also been made available through the digital platform.

The archive has been devel-

oped under a memorandum of understanding between Dibrugarh University and the Nanda Talukdar Foundation. University authorities described the Sanchipat collection as the largest online archive of its kind among digital repositories of rare manuscripts in the country.

The initiative is expected to help preserve fragile historical materials while making them available for academic research and wider public access.

The digital archive was launched alongside the Nabakanta Barua Birth Centenary Seminar, organised by the Department of Assamese at Sri Sri Anirudhadeva Bhawan.

The two-day seminar began with a welcome address by Department of Assamese head Prof Jayanta Kumar Bora. Vice-Chancellor Prof Jiten Hazarika formally inaugurated the event, while Prof Pranjit Bora of Krishna Kanta Handique Assam State Open University delivered the keynote address on different aspects of Barua's literary contribution.

Three academic sessions were held on the opening day, examining Barua's intellectual and socio-political context, his literary works through the lens of new historicism, and themes including his engagement with Gautama Buddha and his literary relationship with Rabindranath Tagore.

Manipur Police to Celebrate 135th Raising Day with Statewide Events

I am happy to organise the 1st Manipur Police Football Cup 2026, which will bring peace and harmony among the youths of the state: DGP



BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL: Manipur Police will celebrate its 135th Raising Day on October 19 with a series of sporting, adventure, community outreach and public engagement programmes across the state.

The celebrations aim to strengthen police-public relations, promote fitness and healthy lifestyles, encourage youth participation, and raise awareness of social challenges, particularly drug abuse.

The Manipur Police Football Cup 2026, organised in collaboration with the All-Manipur Football Association (AMFA), will also be a major attraction. Sixteen local football teams will participate, giving young players a chance to showcase their talent while promoting sportsmanship and community participation.

Inaugurating the opening ceremony of the 1st Manipur Police Football Cup, the Manipur Director General of Police, Mukesh Singh, IPS, said that with the rich history of 135 years of service, the force has a good track record and conduct. He also echoed that the outreach activities by Manipur Police on the occasion of the 135th Raising Day will bring har-



mony and peace among the youth of the state. He said that, as the DGP of Manipur, he is happy to organise the 1st Manipur Police Football Cup 2026.

The main event will be the Ceremonial Raising Day Parade at the 1st Manipur Rifles Parade Ground in Imphal on October 19. Officers and personnel of Manipur Police will participate in the parade, showcasing discipline, professionalism and commitment to public service.

As part of the celebrations, the Manipur Police Half Marathon 2026 will be held on October 18. More than 3,000 participants are expected

to take part in the event, which will feature multiple race categories and is being projected as one of the largest public sporting events organised by the state police in recent years.

Adventure activities will also form part of the celebrations. Senapati District Police will organise a trek to Mount Iso, the highest peak in Manipur, while Ukhrul District Police will conduct a trek to the scenic Shirui Hills. The initiatives are aimed at encouraging youth participation, promoting awareness about the state's natural heritage and building a spirit of endurance and teamwork.

Several other events, including badminton tournaments, running competitions, essay writing contests, community outreach programmes, awareness campaigns and cleanliness drives, are also being organised by various district police formations across the state.

Manipur Police has invited citizens, students, youth, sportspersons, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to participate in the programmes and support the celebrations.

The police said the initiatives seek to promote unity, service, fitness and social responsibility while encouraging collective efforts towards building a safer, healthier and drug-free society.

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India seeks release of 69 nationals still with Russian army, warns against military recruitment



NEW DELHI

India is continuing efforts to secure the release of 69 Indian nationals who remain with the Russian armed forces, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Wednesday, once again warning Indians against joining the Russian military.

Jaiswal said the government has been pursuing the matter with Russian authorities and has secured the early discharge of 139 Indians. “We continue to follow up with the Russian side for the release of the remaining Indian nationals with the Russian army,” he said.

According to information available with the government, 259 Indian nationals are believed to have been recruited into the Russian armed forces. Of these, 139 have been discharged following India’s efforts, while the whereabouts

of 69 others are being pursued with Russian authorities.

“We have been following up with the Russian authorities for updates on the whereabouts of 69 Indian nationals who remain with the Russian army,” Jaiswal said.

India has also renewed its warning against recruitment offers for military service in Russia, stressing the serious risks involved. “We yet again urge Indian nationals to stay away from the offers being made to join the Russian Army. It is fraught with grave danger to life,” Jaiswal said.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal addresses the press conference in Delhi.

“We condemn attacks that endanger lives of our seafarers”: MEA on Black Sea attack

The MEA said the issue remained a matter of “deep concern”, particularly as reports of Indians contin-

uing to join the Russian armed forces have emerged despite repeated government advisories over the past two years. Jaiswal noted that the latest advisory was issued on September 30, but said reports of fresh recruitment were still being received.

“In spite of our repeated advisories over the past two years, including the latest one on 30 Sept, we are continuing to see reports about Indian nationals joining the Russian armed forces. This is a matter of deep concern,” he said.

259 Indian nationals are believed to have been recruited into the Russian armed forces. Of these, 139 have been discharged following India’s efforts, while the whereabouts of 69 others are being pursued with Russian authorities. India has also renewed its warning against recruitment offers for military service in Russia.

IAF moving in right direction, but pace needs to improve, says Air Chief Marshal AP Singh

NEW DELHI

Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh on Wednesday said the force was moving in the “right direction”, but acknowledged that the pace of capability development needed to be faster amid rapidly evolving technology.

Addressing air warriors and IAF veterans at the Air Force Auditorium at Subroto Park on the eve of the force’s 94th anniversary, Singh flagged delays in the delivery of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A jets and said the IAF was actively engaging with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to resolve the issue.

“We have come to a way forward, and now we are waiting for HAL to complete whatever has been promised,” Singh said. He expressed confidence that the IAF would receive a “reasonable number” of aircraft during the current financial year, noting that the defence secretary had also spoken about the matter.

The LCA Mk-1A is an indigenously designed, developed and manufactured modern 4+ generation fighter aircraft.

Singh said the IAF continued to support the LCA Mk-2 and Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programmes. It is also pursuing the procurement of 114 Rafale aircraft under the Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) programme, along with medium transport aircraft and medium-range helicopters.

“These contracts are likely to be signed maybe in this financial year or, positively, the next financial year,” he said.

On the C-295 medium tactical transport aircraft, Singh said the 17th aircraft — the first to be manufactured in India — was already in production.

“There are some minor issues, which are getting resolved. Hopefully, it will come up in a month or two,” he said.

The first C-295 was inducted into the IAF in September 2023, following India’s Rs 21,935-crore deal with Airbus Defence and Space for the air-



craft to replace its ageing Avro-748 fleet. Airbus was to deliver the first 16 aircraft in fly-away condition from its final assembly line in Seville, while the remaining 40 are to be manufactured and assembled in India by Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) as part of an industrial partnership between the two companies.

Singh said the IAF needed “greater capacity, faster induction and more combat mass”, along with faster development of indigenous research and development and production capabilities.

Over the past few years, the IAF has shifted from a “platform-centric” to a “capability-centric” approach, while focusing on the integration of different components, he said.

“And it proved its worth during Operation Sindoor,” he added.

The IAF chief said air power was, and would continue to be, the mainstay of offensive operations.

“I am happy that we are progressing in the right direction, but whether we are progressing at the correct pace or not is something for everybody to judge. According to me, yes, we can be a little faster than what we are today,” he said.

Singh attributed some of the delays to procedural, procurement and development constraints. He said

the IAF was aware of the delays in the delivery of the 180 LCA Mk-1A aircraft currently contracted for and was holding discussions with HAL on possible solutions.

In February 2021, the Ministry of Defence signed a Rs 48,000-crore contract with HAL for 83 Tejas Mk-1A aircraft. The first aircraft was scheduled to be delivered in March 2024, but deliveries have yet to begin.

The IAF is seeking to induct the aircraft as the number of its fighter squadrons has fallen to 29, against an officially sanctioned strength of 42.

The Ministry of Defence signed another contract worth Rs 62,370 crore with HAL in September last year for 97 additional Tejas Mk-1A aircraft.

Singh also stressed the need to strengthen the IAF’s drone, counter-drone, unmanned aerial system (UAS), counter-UAS (C-UAS), space and cyberspace capabilities.

On high-altitude long-endurance (HALE) remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs), he said a contract had been signed, while negotiations were under way for medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) RPAs.

Reflecting on the IAF’s operational role, Singh said military operations had tested the force, exercises had stretched its capabilities, humani-

tarian assistance and disaster relief missions had taken it beyond the country’s borders, and air diplomacy had expanded its partnerships.

Firefighting, however, remained “an area of concern”, he said.

“In case of fires at installations, or in an aircraft, ground run or an accident, our performance has been lacking. Lacking in a sense that it can be better,” Singh said.

The IAF is planning to introduce simulators that can recreate real-fire scenarios at installations and around aircraft for training purposes. It is also planning to deploy a large number of “fire bots” to assist firefighters in areas where large equipment cannot easily be deployed.

Singh also said a new IAF museum was under construction and was expected to be ready within a few months.

“It will be a very good, world-class museum that we will be very proud of,” he said.

A senior official said the project would be a new museum. An existing museum is located near Palam air base.

Air Chief Marshal Singh is due to retire this month and will hand over the IAF chief’s post to Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, who has been named as his successor.

INTERNATIONAL

French PM denies police ordered to confront student protesters



PARIS

French security forces do not have orders to “confront” protesting high school students, the prime minister said Wednesday, as allegations of police brutality mounted following days of protests that have shaken the country.

Hundreds of students, police and teaching staff have been injured since the movement demanding better conditions in high schools began, and more than 6,500 people – mostly minors – have been arrested.

After rights groups, unions and the students accused authorities of using disproportionate force, the government said it would suspend the use of stun grenades by police at student-led demonstrations.

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said in a televised address Wednesday

evening that the country could not be “indifferent” to the concerns of high school students, acknowledging that the “anger of young people does not come from nowhere”.

He denied that security forces have “orders to confront” the young people, and promised the government would present a plan to respond to the crisis at the end of October.

But organisers urged fresh demonstrations on Thursday as several education unions called for new nationwide strikes.

“We know that if we stop making our voices heard, the movement will lose momentum,” said Marilou, a high school student in Fontainebleau, near Paris, who didn’t want to give her full name.

“We want real action, and until we get it, we’ll keep mobilising,” she told.

Student protesters – who have com-

plained of missing teachers, overloaded timetables, dilapidated classrooms and buildings that cannot cope with rising temperatures – have requested a meeting with Lecornu, saying they have costed proposals to present.

“I want to urge students – both high school and university – to stay mobilised starting tomorrow. Because the balance of power is on our side,” said student union leader Ryad Rani.

A 15-year-old lost a hand on Monday after police fired a stun grenade, and Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told radio broadcaster RTL early Wednesday that he had suspended the police use of stun grenades in response.

“I am suspending their use in the high school student protests until the facts of the incident have been clarified,” said Nunez.

He stressed that this suspension

was “only for the high school student protests” and for “just long enough to understand what happened”.

Last week, a 14-year-old student in northwest Paris was hit in the face with a tear gas grenade at such close range that he lost several teeth.

A policeman was charged Tuesday over that incident.

Police have opened 18 internal investigations into allegations of misconduct since the protests began, Nunez said.

In Wednesday’s address, Lecornu also promised to release diesel stocks in a bid to bring down fuel prices, and reiterated an aim to cut the country’s soaring debt to five percent of GDP next year.

The French government is wrestling with multiple crises including the protests and its 2027 budget, as well as a looming election next year to choose Macron’s successor, with far-right candidate Marine Le Pen riding high in the polls.

“It took several children being maimed for life for Nunez to give up using grenades against high school students,” said Manuel Bompard, national coordinator of the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI).

The government has blamed the LFI for stoking tensions around the protests.

While most schools reopened Wednesday, more than 500 remained at least partially closed with students blocking doors with mounds of trash bins.

Several lawyers representing teens taken into police custody say they have faced physical violence and insults.

Ainoha Pascual, a lawyer representing three minors in Paris, said they had been “terrorised”.

“A very large majority arrive in custody injured”, having taken baton blows or being dragged on the ground, she added.

Prisca Ancion with the Collective for Judicial Action told AFP that every single high schooler arrested reported experiencing “an insult, a slap, having their head held down on the ground, chokeholds.”

Saudi Arabia says three dead at airports after Houthis claim attacks

DUBAI

Saudi authorities said on Wednesday that three people were killed in attacks on two of the kingdom’s international airports including in the capital Riyadh, after Yemen’s Houthis claimed to have fired on both transport hubs.

The Iran-backed fighters earlier took responsibility for a flurry of attacks that included firing a ballistic missile at Riyadh’s King Khalid International Airport as the conflict deepens with Saudi Arabia, which backs Yemen’s government.

“On Tuesday and Wednesday... Abha International Airport and King Khalid International Airport were subjected to attacks targeting their facilities,” the kingdom’s civil aviation authority said in a statement, without blaming anyone for the attacks.

An Egyptian and an Algerian national were killed at Abha airport and a Sudanese national was killed at the airport in Riyadh, the agency said, with 36 people wounded in the attacks. The Saudi-led coalition that backs pro-government forces in Yemen said on X that it “destroyed the ballistic missile launch platform” used in the attack on Riyadh.

The Yemeni group, which controls most of the country’s northwest, is battling for territory against the Saudi-backed forces after the civil war reignited in July and it captured swathes of coastal land.

The fighting has displaced more than 200,000 people within the country, the United Nations said on Wednesday.

Yemen’s internationally recognised government this week declared a major counter-offensive and claims to have pushed Houthi fighters out of strategic areas on

the Red Sea and the port city of Mocha.

But the Iran-backed Houthis say they are holding their territory, and military sources from both sides contacted by AFP have not reported any major changes on the ground.

Claims by the warring parties have been impossible to independently verify with the situation moving fast and access for journalists difficult.

“Our armed forces have just targeted King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh with a ballistic missile. The strike was accurate, by God’s grace, and led to a disruption of air traffic,” Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said Wednesday in a post on X.

The Saudi-led military coalition that backs Yemen’s government had said the missile was intercepted.

In a separate post the Houthis also said they targeted a military supply convoy near the airport in the Yemeni city of Aden, the interim capital for the government. The Yemeni government’s Saba news agency reported missiles and drones targeting that airport. The agency cited transport authorities as saying one of the missiles landed near the runway minutes before the scheduled arrival of a flight from Cairo, which was forced to divert to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. Houthi drones and missiles also targeted Saudi Arabia’s Abha airport and King Khalid Air Base in Khamis Mushait, spokesman Saree said, claiming they had “hit their targets accurately”.

It is the second time this week that the Houthis claimed to have attacked the main airport in the Saudi capital.

It is facing frequent temporary closures of its

airspace, according to tracking website Flightradar24.

- “Terrified” -

Saudi Arabia leads an international coalition that has been fighting the Houthis since 2015, and is now trying to roll back the group’s latest advance.

On Monday, the coalition said it was providing air support for the counter-offensive launched by the Yemeni government forces.

After a four-year ceasefire, Yemen’s civil war re-erupted in July. Last month the Houthis seized the entire western coastline along the Red Sea in the country’s deadliest fighting in years.

On Wednesday, new clashes in Yemen’s west left at least 62 combatants dead, including 37 Houthis, military sources from both camps told AFP.

The government’s Saba news agency also said the Houthis fired a missile at the city of Taiz, which is held by government forces, wounding five civilians.

“We went out into the street to check on the wounded and saw young civilians who had been hit. The Houthi shell landed in the middle of the street, right in an area crowded with civilians,” Taiz resident Al-Fateh al-Eisaei told.

Yemen’s government has announced a goal of retaking all Houthi territory -- home to most of the country’s population, and much of it held for more than a decade. The humanitarian crisis caused by the war has left most of the nation’s population dependent on aid.

Mohammed, a 33-year-old charity worker who fled from Mocha to Aden, told AFP on Tuesday that “people there are terrified” of the Houthis.

“Life in Mocha has come to a complete standstill,” he said.

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Happy World Post Day 2026!

Prof. M.M. Goel
Propounder, Needonomics School of Thought
Founder President,
Dr. M. Goel Needonomics Foundation

From the Economics of Consumerism to the Economics of Human Connection

PROF. MADAN MOHAN GOEL FORMER VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Needonomics School of Thought extends warm greetings to people across the world on World Post Day, 9 October 2026, being observed with the inspiring theme, “One Postal Network, Infinite Possibilities.”

For me, World Post Day is much more than a celebration of the postal system. It is an opportunity to revisit my childhood memories, cherish family values and reflect on the timeless beauty of human connection.

1. Lessons in Service and Trust from My Grandfather

I fondly remember my late grandfather, Master Surat Ram Goel, a retired Headmaster who also served as the Branch Postmaster in our village. During my childhood, he would sometimes send me to deliver dak to villagers at their doorsteps.

What seemed like a simple childhood responsibility became, in retrospect, an invaluable lesson in service, trust, responsibility and social connectivity.

Every letter I delivered carried someone's expectations, affection, concerns, good news or blessings. Without realizing it at the time, I was learning a profound truth: a postman does not merely deliver letters; he carries emotions from one heart to another.

2. The Postcard: A Small Medium with Immense Emotional Value

These childhood experiences nurtured in me a special fondness for letter writing, particularly postcards. Even in today's artificial intelligence (AI) era, I regard the postcard as an open secret of meaningful communication—a simple, intimate and deeply human medium.

If you keep trying, you will find a way to succeed.

A handwritten message carries the personal touch, emotions and presence of its writer. Technology can make communication faster, but it cannot always reproduce the warmth and personal connection conveyed by a handwritten message from a loved one.

3. June 24, 1983: A Postcard That Keeps Love Alive

One of my most treasured possessions is a postcard written by my grandfather on 24 June 1983, which I have preserved for more than four decades.

Its faded paper and his familiar handwriting have become priceless to me. Whenever I look at it, I see much more than an old piece of correspondence. I see my grandfather, feel his affection and almost hear the voice of a bygone generation.

That postcard has become an emotional bridge between my childhood and the present.

My grandfather once delivered letters to doorsteps across our village; decades later, his own postcard continues to deliver his love to my heart.

Perhaps this is the most beautiful infinite possibility of the postal network: it connects not merely places, but also hearts, memories and generations.

4. My Stamp: A Personal Connection with Postal Heritage

I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Vinod Garg, Member Postal Forum Kurukshetra, a social worker whose initiative encouraged me to avail myself of the 'My Stamp' facility and obtain a personalized postage stamp bearing my

photograph.

His encouragement helped sustain my interest in the postal tradition. For me, this was more than an opportunity to obtain a personalised stamp; it was a meaningful way to connect my personal memories with India's rich postal heritage.

5. India's Postal System: A Network of Inclusion and Connectivity

With more than 155,000 post offices, India's postal system represents an extraordinary network of connectivity and inclusion. From remote villages to major cities, it has carried messages, documents, information, hopes and relationships across geographical distances for generations.

The digital revolution has transformed communication, but it has not diminished the social significance of the postal system. Instead, the system continues to evolve in response to changing needs while retaining its essential purpose: connecting people and serving society.

6. The Human Message of Needonomics in the AI Era

The Needonomics School of Thought emphasizes a fundamental principle: technology must serve human needs without displacing human values.

In the AI era, communication has become faster, easier and more convenient. Yet an important question deserves reflection: Does faster communication necessarily mean better communication?

We must ensure that speed does not come at the cost of sensitivity, convenience does not weaken compassion, and technological advancement does not diminish meaningful human relationships.

Progress is truly worthwhile when it combines technological efficiency with moral responsibility and human warmth. This is the essence of Needonomics—Need over Greed, values before volumes, and human welfare before the

blind pursuit of speed and convenience.

7. The Needonomics of Postcards: Timeless Lessons for Modern Life

Although the postcard may represent an older communication technology, its underlying message remains remarkably relevant.

Connection before consumption.
Communication before complaint.
Relationships before convenience.
Sensitivity before speed.
Humanity before technology.

These principles capture the Needonomics of communication. The real value of a message lies not merely in how quickly it reaches its destination, but in the feelings it conveys, the relationships it strengthens and the human needs it fulfills.

8. Conclusion:

For me, World Post Day is a celebration of my grandfather, my village, my childhood, that humble postcard and the enduring power of human relationships. My grandfather's postcard is a timeless reminder that meaningful communication transcends distance and time.

It teaches us that the true worth of communication lies not merely in the transmission of information, but in the preservation of affection, trust and shared memories.

Technology can transmit a message in seconds, but love, memory and human sensitivity can keep that message alive for generations. World Post Day 2026 invites us to embrace technological progress without losing sight of our humanity.

The Needonomics School of Thought calls for a shift from the economics of communication to the economics of human connection, where relationships matter more than convenience, compassion more than speed, and human values more than technological sophistication. Let us keep the human touch alive in the age of artificial intelligence.

Happy World Post Day 2026!

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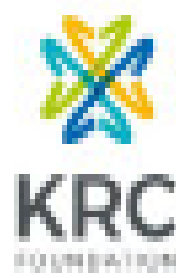
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