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PERSPECTIVE

Self trust is the first secret of success

Assam Expands Nijut Moina Scheme to Include Nursing Students from Next Year

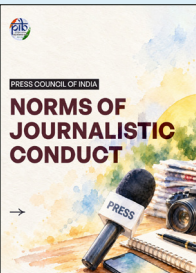
GUWAHATI

The Assam government will extend the Nijut Moina scheme to students pursuing BSc Nursing and General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) courses from next year, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Thursday.The announcement was made at an event at the Jyoti-Bishnu Auditorium in Guwahati during the distribution of the first instalment of financial assistance under the Nijut Moina and Nijut Babu schemes.The proposed expansion will bring students enrolled in professional nursing courses within the scope of the Nijut Moina scheme, which seeks to encourage girls to pursue higher education and reduce financial barriers to continuing their studies.However, the government has not yet disclosed the detailed eligibility criteria, amount of assistance or application procedure for the newly included nursing students.



President Droupadi Murmu paid floral tributes to Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India on his birth anniversary at Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

WHO SAID WHAT



Press Council of India: Norms of Journalistic Conduct
Responsible journalism begins with distinguishing facts from conjecture, speculation, and opinion. As outlined in the Press Council of India's Norms of Journalistic Conduct 2022, journalists must uphold accuracy, exercise editorial responsibility, and ensure that satire and commentary do not cross the line into defamation. Verify before you publish. Contextualise before you comment. Uphold the truth in every report.

NEW DELHI

BJP women MPs on Thursday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to refer allegations against Congress MP Bimol Akoijam, linked to a sexual harassment complaint involving Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), to Parliament's Ethics Committee for examination.

The MPs met the Speaker and submitted a memorandum seeking a probe into the matter. They said the findings of an internal committee warranted scrutiny at the parliamentary level.

BJP MP Daggubati Purandeswari said the internal committee had reportedly held Akoijam responsible in the matter. On that basis, the delegation requested the Speaker to refer the issue to the Ethics Committee.

"We have submitted a memorandum. The internal committee has found Congress MP Bimol responsible, and we have requested the Speaker to refer the matter to the Ethics Committee for examination," Purandeswari said.



The BJP MPs also sought consideration of whether the internal committee's findings could have any bearing on Akoijam's position as a Member of Parliament. They argued that the seriousness of the

allegations and the committee's reported findings merited parliamentary scrutiny.

According to Purandeswari, the Speaker assured the delegation that he would examine the

memorandum and consider the legal aspects. He would also look into the possibility of referring the matter to the Ethics Committee if he considered it necessary, she said.

Manipur: Severed Head of Naga Man Recovered Five Days after Deadly Attack



IMPHAL

Security personnel recovered the severed head of Naga man Ajinbou Ringkamai near the site of an attack in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, five days after the incident that allegedly killed four Naga men.

The remains were recovered on Wednesday during a joint search operation by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Manipur Police, according to official sources. The attack, which took place on October 10, has been blamed on suspected armed Kuki individuals.

Four Naga men were allegedly killed in the attack at Makui village. Ringkamai was among those killed, and his head had reportedly been taken away after the incident.

The missing remains had become a

major point of concern for Naga organisations, which had pressed the authorities to locate and recover them.

Following the recovery, the remains were taken to the mortuary of the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal.

On October 12, Naga organisations had given the administration a 48-hour deadline to recover the missing remains, warning of further action if their demand was not met within the stipulated period.

The Joint Tribes Council (JTC-Manipur) had also withheld the post-mortem examinations of two deceased Naga men, Divambou Ringkamai, 48, and Ajinbou Ringkamai, 52, in protest against the killings and the failure to recover the missing head. Their bodies had been brought to the JNIMS mortuary on October 12.

The JTC also demanded the arrest of three individuals, naming Thangboi Kipgen, David Hangs??? and Dr Sailen Haokip in its statement. The allegations against the named individuals have not been independently verified.

The organisation further alleged that those responsible for the attack were operating with impunity under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement. It accused the Centre and the state government of failing to take action against the alleged perpetrators.

The recovery is being viewed as a significant development in the investigation. However, details regarding the identification of those responsible, possible arrests and the next steps in the post-mortem process have not yet been made available.

Naga organisations continue to demand swift action against those allegedly involved in the killings, putting the focus on the authorities' next steps.

Cachar Police Seize Yaba Tablets Worth Rs 57.5 Crore, Arrest Two in Udharbond

SILCHAR

Cachar Police have seized 2.3 lakh Yaba tablets estimated to be worth Rs 57.5 crore in the black market and arrested two men after intercepting a truck bearing a Nagaland registration number in the Udharbond area of Assam.

Cachar Superintendent of Police Partha Protim Das said on Thursday that the seizure was made during a naka operation along the Udharbond bypass in the Panch Mile area, under Udharbond police station. The operation followed intelligence gathering over the past two to three months.

Describing the recovery as a major breakthrough, Das said it was the highest-value drug seizure made by Cachar Police in recent times.

"For Assam Police in Cachar district, this is the highest recovery against seizure of drugs in terms of black market value," the SP said.

The two arrested men are from Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh and Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, respectively, Das said.

According to the SP, a search conducted in accordance with procedures prescribed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act led to the recovery of the tablets from a concealed compartment inside the truck.

Police are investigating where the consignment originated, where it was headed and who was allegedly involved in the interstate trafficking network. Investigators are also examining the financial trail to establish where the tablets were procured and who financed the operation.

The operation followed sustained intelligence gathering and was aimed at intercepting the consignment before it could reach its intended destination, police said.

Hailakandi Juvenile Board Orders Adult Trial for 17-Year-Old Accused in Rape-Murder Case

HAILAKANDI

The Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) in Assam's Hailakandi district has directed that a 17-year-old accused in the alleged rape and murder of a 16-year-old girl be tried as an adult.

Police said the board took the decision after considering a preliminary assessment, psychological report, medical records and a report submitted by the investigating officer.Hailakandi Police said on Tuesday that the board's principal magistrate had examined several aspects of the case, including the accused's age, the nature of the alleged offence and his capacity to understand its consequences.The girl's body was recovered from her home in the Aloichora area under Katlicherra police station on the night of August 1. Hailakandi Superintendent of Police Amitabh Sinha said the accused was 17 years and five months old at the time of the incident. He was detained in the first week of August.

The case was registered under several provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Section 65(1), relating to rape involving a girl under 16, and Section 103(1), relating to murder. Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, which deals with aggravated penetrative sexual assault, was also invoked.

The incident triggered protests in several parts of the Barak Valley, with some residents blocking National Highway 6 and demanding stringent punishment for those accused.

Police initially detained five people in connection with the case. During the investigation, one of them was identified as being below 18 years of age. The investigating team subsequently approached the board seeking permission for the juvenile to face trial as an adult.

A special investigation team (SIT) was formed to investigate the case. According to the Superintendent of Police, a detailed chargesheet against the five accused was filed in September after investigators examined forensic and medical evidence, witness statements, digital records and materials seized from the crime scene.

Under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, a preliminary assessment may be conducted when a child aged between 16 and 18 is accused of a heinous offence.

The assessment considers the child's physical and mental capacity to commit the alleged offence, the ability to understand its consequences and the circumstances in which the offence is alleged to have occurred.Based on the assessment, the board decides whether the case is suitable for transfer to a court for trial under the adult justice system. The board's decision does not establish guilt, and the case must continue through the applicable legal process.Senior advocate Gautam Ghosh welcomed the board's decision, saying the details of the incident reported in the media and reflected in police statements were serious. He said he supported the decision in that context.

BJP rally in Silchar draws over 25,000, targets Congress over 'divisive politics'

Kaushik Rai, Sushmita Dev and other leaders attack Congress at 'Jan Jagaran Samavesh'

SILCHAR

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) organised a 'Jan Jagaran Samavesh' in Silchar on Wednesday, drawing more than 25,000 supporters for a rally centred on national unity, with party leaders launching a sharp attack on the Congress over what they described as its divisive politics.

The programme in Assam's Cachar district was attended by state minister Kaushik Rai, Rajya Sabha MPs Kanad Purkayastha and Sushmita Dev, Lok Sabha MP Parimal Suklabaidya, MLAs Rajdeep Goala and Rajdeep Roy, Amiyo Kanti Das and other party leaders and functionaries.

A rally was also taken out through the streets of Silchar as the BJP used the gathering to mobilise supporters and reiterate its backing for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sar-



ma. Addressing the gathering, Kaushik Rai criticised Congress leader

Rahul Gandhi, accusing the opposition party of pursuing divisive and anti-national politics. He asserted

that people across the country continued to support Modi's leadership.

BJP MLA Rajdeep Goala also targeted the Congress, alleging that Rahul Gandhi's reported treatment of a senior party colleague reflected his attitude towards others.

Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev challenged the Congress's claims of widespread public support, citing the turnout at the Silchar rally as an indication of backing for Modi and Sarma.

Dev also referred to the BJP's recent rally in Nagaon, pointing to the participation of supporters there as evidence of the party's public support.

The 'Jan Jagaran Samavesh' formed part of the BJP's political outreach in Assam, with leaders using the platform to criticise the Congress and reinforce the party's message on national unity and its leadership in the state and at the Centre.

Tripura to Recruit 126 More Assistant Professors for Degree Colleges: Manik Saha

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has announced that the state government will recruit another 126 assistant professors for degree colleges as part of efforts to strengthen higher education.

The announcement was made at an event held at the Matangini Auditorium of Women's College in Agartala .The programme was jointly organised by the departments of Higher Education and Youth Affairs and Sports. During the event, appointment letters were handed over to 74 assistant professors, most of whom were women. Appointment letters were also issued to 10 youth organisers responsible for implementing youth development programmes at the grassroots level.The Chief Minister also distributed scooters to 30 meritorious girl students under the Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana. The initiative aims to encourage girls to pursue higher education and ease commuting difficulties that may otherwise disrupt their studies.

Saha said 152 students benefited from the scheme in the 2023-24 academic year and another 122 in

2024-25. The Finance Department has allocated Rs 1 crore annually for the scheme, which was launched in 2025, he said.Highlighting women's empowerment, the Chief Minister said the government was focusing on expanding opportunities for girls in higher education while helping them become financially independent. He also referred to the provision for 33% reservation for women in government jobs.Saha said various initiatives were being implemented through self-help groups to improve women's livelihoods and economic conditions. He added that empowering women socially and financially could have a wider positive impact on society.According to the Chief Minister, the proposed recruitment of additional assistant professors would help address staffing requirements in the state's higher education sector. Schemes such as scooter distribution, meanwhile, are intended to help meritorious students continue their education. However, the government has not yet announced a detailed recruitment schedule or the selection process for the 126 proposed posts.



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INDIA'S REBUKE TO THE OIC

India's response to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at the United Nations General Assembly's Sixth Committee was measured in tone but firm in substance. Delivering India's national statement on measures to eliminate international terrorism, Lok Sabha MP Biplab Kumar Deb rejected the organisation's remarks on Jammu and Kashmir and India's actions against terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan. His central charge—that the OIC continues to confuse the victim with the perpetrator—strikes at the heart of a persistent contradiction in international diplomacy: the tendency to invoke global norms selectively while overlooking the conduct of those one chooses to defend.

The OIC's repeated interventions on Kashmir are hardly surprising. What is troubling, however, is its apparent unwillingness to acknowledge the wider context of cross-border terrorism and the obligations that international peace and security impose on every state. An organisation that claims to speak for the interests of the Muslim world cannot afford to let geopolitical loyalties overshadow the universal imperative to combat terrorism.

The bloc's reliance on old United Nations resolutions on Kashmir illustrates this problem. Such resolutions emerged from a different historical and political context, and their implementation was tied to conditions that were never fulfilled. Repeating them without addressing those circumstances does little to advance a meaningful discussion. Instead, it reduces a complex dispute to a familiar diplomatic ritual, largely serving political constituencies rather than contributing to a durable resolution.

There is an equally important question of consistency. International efforts to combat terrorism cannot be separated from the networks that finance, shelter and sustain extremist organisations. Pakistan's record in this regard has drawn sustained international scrutiny. Its prolonged presence on the Financial Action Task Force's grey list, before its removal in 2022, reflected serious concerns over deficiencies in combating money laundering and terrorist financing. The discovery and killing of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad in 2011 also raised enduring questions about the presence of one of the world's most wanted terrorists on Pakistani soil.

These facts do not mean that every allegation against Pakistan should be accepted without scrutiny. They do, however, make it incumbent upon any organisation defending Islamabad's position to confront the evidence and address legitimate concerns about terrorism. Diplomacy loses credibility when it demands accountability from one side while treating the conduct of the other as beyond question.

The OIC's approach is particularly difficult to justify when its interventions appear to be driven by religious solidarity rather than a consistent assessment of facts. Terrorism has no religion, nationality or civilisational boundary. Its victims include Muslims in large numbers, and communities across South Asia have suffered from violence perpetrated in the name of competing ideological and political causes. To defend a state's position merely because it claims to represent a particular religious constituency is neither principled nor productive. It risks confusing solidarity with impunity.

That is why India's rebuttal must be understood as more than a bilateral exchange with Pakistan. It is also an argument about the credibility of multilateral institutions. International organisations cannot effectively confront terrorism if political considerations determine whose actions are condemned and whose are excused. A consistent standard must apply to all states, irrespective of their strategic partnerships, religious affiliations or regional influence.

On Jammu and Kashmir, India has maintained that the Union Territory is an integral part of the country. New Delhi also regards Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir as territory under Pakistan's illegal occupation. The OIC's interventions do not alter India's position, nor do repeated declarations from Islamabad settle the larger questions of peace, security and the rights of people living in the region.

Deb's reference to Rawalakot was a pointed reminder that concerns about rights and political freedoms cannot be confined to one side of the Line of Control. If the OIC wishes to establish itself as a credible voice on Kashmir, it should be prepared to examine conditions in Pakistan-administered areas with the same seriousness it brings to its criticism of India. Selective concern for human rights is not a substitute for a universal commitment to them.

At the same time, India must recognise that a strong diplomatic position is most effective when it is supported by credible evidence, consistent principles and an openness to scrutiny. Its right to protect citizens from cross-border terrorism is undeniable. But the legitimacy of any particular security operation must be assessed on its facts, its objectives and its compliance with applicable law. A firm response to terrorism does not require abandoning the standards by which all states should be judged. India's actions against terrorist infrastructure, as described by New Delhi, have been presented as targeted responses to threats emanating from across the border. The broader principle is clear: no state can be expected to remain passive in the face of repeated attacks on its people. Yet deterrence must go hand in hand with accountability, and military capability must be matched by diplomatic clarity. Restraint should not be mistaken for weakness, just as strength should not be treated as an exemption from scrutiny.

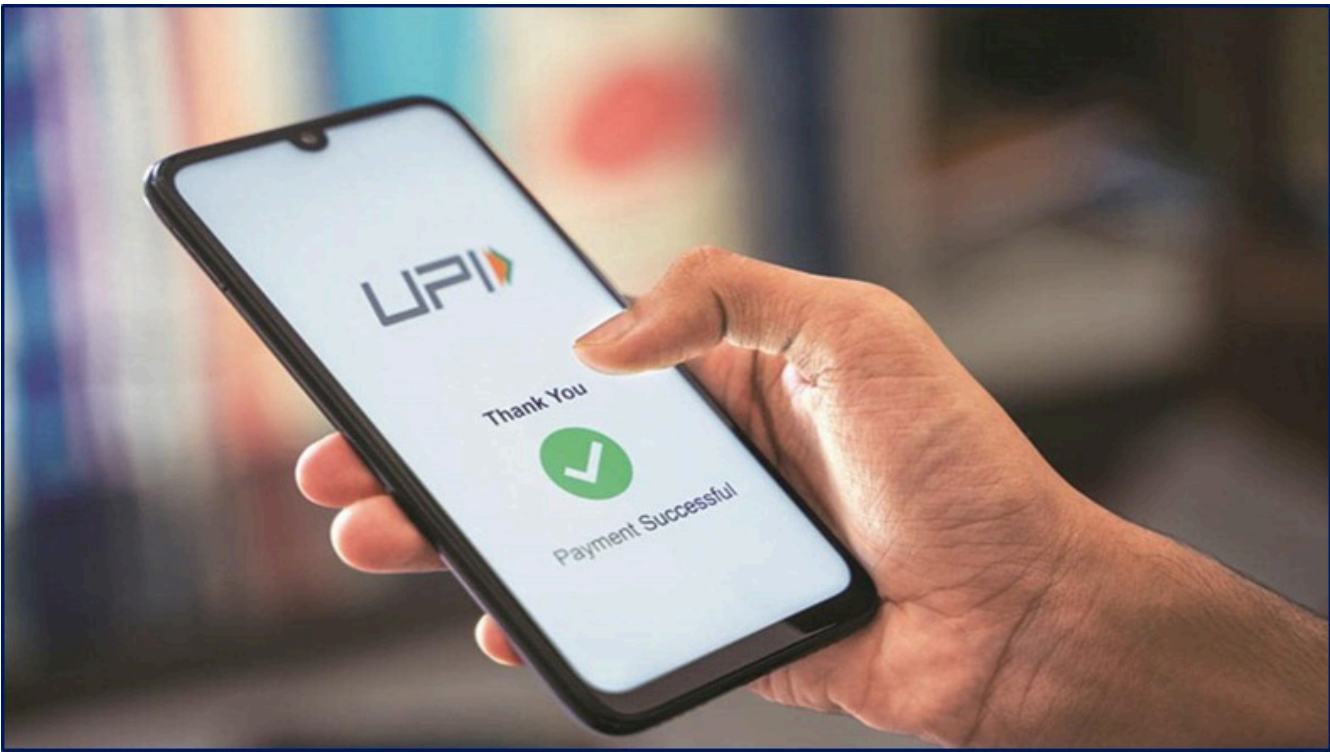
The OIC, for its part, would do well to reconsider whether its repeated endorsement of Pakistan's position is advancing peace or deepening mistrust. An organisation representing a diverse range of countries has a responsibility to rise above the narrow interests of individual members. It should encourage dialogue, condemn terrorism consistently and insist that every government fulfil its international obligations. Anything less risks reducing a potentially influential multilateral platform to an instrument of political messaging.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The most hateful torment for men is to have knowledge of everything but power over nothing.”

- Herodotus

UPI'S NEXT CHAPTER: BUILDING RESILIENCE WITH MDR



RAKESH MAGOTRA

At a tea stall in Jammu, a customer finishes a cup of chai, scans a QR code and is on the way in no time. Another one in a busy Mumbai market, makes the same small gesture at a crowded Amul counter while picking up a pack of Amul Dahl. In Leh, where distances between settlements can be considerable, a digital payment can make a routine purchase simpler without a search for exact change. Different settings, one shared expectation: the payment should be quick, dependable and easy.

That expectation captures both the achievement and the challenge of India's Unified Payments Interface. UPI has brought digital payments into everyday life, across crowded city markets and smaller communities. Its growth is often measured in transaction volumes, but its real impact is felt in ordinary moments: a customer paying a shopkeeper, a family member sending money home, or a small business receiving payment without needing to handle cash.

Behind the simplicity of a scan and a confirmation lies a network of banks, payment service providers and technology systems. They must work together to process transactions, protect users and keep services available. As the volume of digital payments grows, so does the need to invest in capacity, cybersecurity, fraud prevention and customer support. The conversation around the Merchant Discount Rate, or MDR, belongs in this wider context.

A new MDR framework is scheduled to take effect on 15 October 2026 (Though discussions suggest a deferment to January 2027). It has raised a question among customers and merchants: will using UPI now cost more? Under the framework, customers will not pay an additional UPI fee. Person-to-person transfers remain free and merchants are not authorized to pass MDR on to customers. The amount displayed for a product or service should remain the amount the customer pays, regardless of the payment method.

MDR is a processing charge associated with specified merchant transactions. Under the framework, person-to-merchant payments up to Rs 2,000 will continue to carry zero MDR. Eligible transactions above that threshold will attract a standard rate of 0.4%, with a ceiling of Rs 300 for transactions of Rs 75,000 and above.

Some categories have a different rate. Payments above Rs 2,000 for railways, telecom services, insurance, fuel and specified public utilities, such as electricity and water, carry a flat Rs 5 charge per transaction. Certain payments relating to mutual funds, securities, stockbrokers and dealers attract a rate of 0.02%, capped at Rs 300.

These distinctions matter in a region as varied as Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. A family making a personal transfer, a customer buying everyday essentials and a business receiving a higher-value payment are not all in the same position. The framework is designed to distinguish between them. According to the available data, about 96% of commercial transactions are expected to remain outside the MDR's scope, based on their current value-wise composition.

MDR is not a tax collected by the Government. It is intended to circulate within the payments ecosystem to support the infrastructure and services that enable digital transactions. This is a question of long-term sustainability: a system used at immense scale needs continued invest-

ment if it is to remain reliable, secure and available.

That need can be understood through the geography of J&K and Ladakh. Markets, villages and service centres are spread across very different terrain. Digital payments help bridge some of those distances, but the technology behind them must work consistently wherever the customer and merchant happen to be. The same geography also makes trust especially important. A payment that fails at a busy counter creates inconvenience anywhere. When a merchant or customer has fewer nearby alternatives, a failed transaction or an unclear dispute process can create greater uncertainty. Reliability, clear confirmation messages and accessible support are therefore not secondary features. They are part of the service itself.

Small merchants are central to this story. A neighbourhood shop, a local artisan or a small service provider may receive many modest payments over the course of a day. A charge applied indiscriminately to every transaction could discourage acceptance and weaken the habit of digital payment that UPI has helped establish.

The proposed framework provides a separate Person-to-Person-Mer-

chandise category for eligible small vendors. Merchants receiving up to ₹1 lakh a month through UPI QR codes directly into designated personal bank accounts continue to receive zero MDR. The eligibility is based on the monthly collection threshold and account category and that GST registration is not required for this purpose. Existing QR codes and sound boxes are expected to continue functioning.

For a small merchant in a market in Jammu or Srinagar, or a shop serving residents in a Ladakh town, continuity matters. The familiar QR code should remain usable; the customer should not be asked to pay an extra amount and the merchant should understand whether the business falls within the protected category. Clear communication by banks and payment providers will be essential to avoid confusion.

Banks, too, have a continuing responsibility. UPI is not only a payment channel; it is a point of contact between banks, customers and businesses. Secure onboarding, prompt resolution of complaints, safeguards against fraud and reliable transaction processing all contribute to confidence in digital payments. If an MDR framework is intended to support stronger infrastructure, its success should ultimately be visible in better service: fewer failed transactions, more effective fraud controls and dependable assistance when something goes wrong.

A customer scanning a QR code in Jammu, a merchant in the Kashmir Valley checking a payment alert, or a traveller paying for a service in Ladakh may never see the systems

tections for customers and small merchants, seeks to support the system's long-term capacity while keeping routine payments free. Its promise depends on careful implementation and transparent communication.

Across J&K and Ladakh, the terrain changes from plains and foothills to valleys and high mountains. The value of a dependable payment system does not. If the QR code continues to work, if small merchants remain protected and customers pay no more than the displayed price, digital payments can keep serving the region's varied communities. At the same time, sustained investment can help make the net-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

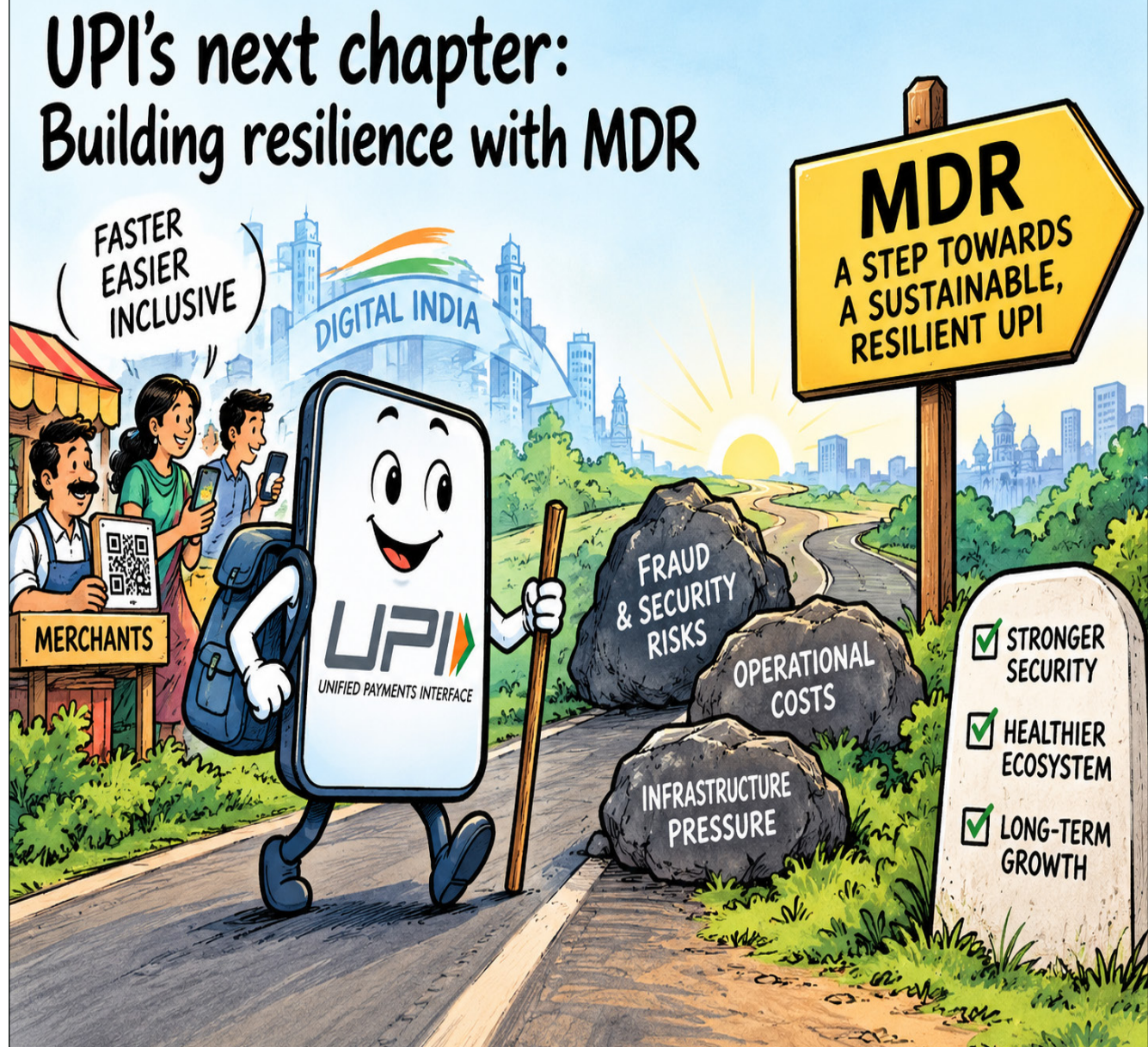
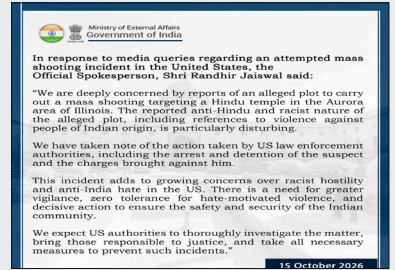
Official Spokesperson's response to media queries regarding an attempted mass shooting incident in the United States

In response to media queries regarding an attempted mass shooting incident in the United States, Official Spokesperson Shri Randhir Jaiswal said:

We are deeply concerned by reports of an alleged plot to carry out a mass shooting targeting a Hindu temple in the Aurora area of Illinois. The reported anti-Hindu and racist nature of the alleged plot, including references to violence against people of Indian origin, is particularly disturbing. We have taken note of the action taken by US law enforcement authorities, including the arrest and detention of the suspect and the charges brought against him.

This incident adds to growing concerns over racist hostility and anti-India hate in the US. There is a need for greater vigilance, zero tolerance for hate-motivated violence, and decisive action to ensure the safety and security of the Indian community. We expect US authorities to thoroughly investigate the matter, bring those responsible to justice, and take all necessary measures to prevent such incidents.

New Delhi
October 15, 2026



chant category for eligible small vendors. Merchants receiving up to ₹1 lakh a month through UPI QR codes directly into designated personal bank accounts continue to receive zero MDR. The eligibility is based on the monthly collection threshold and account category and that GST registration is not required for this purpose. Existing QR codes and sound boxes are expected to continue

operating behind the screen. They should not have to. Their concern is simple: did the payment go through, was the amount correct, and can they trust the next transaction to work?

UPI's next chapter will be judged by how well it answers those everyday questions. A calibrated MDR framework, limited to specified transactions and paired with pro-

work more secure and resilient. That is the balance UPI must carry into its future: the ease of a simple payment, supported by infrastructure strong enough to reach across a diverse and demanding geography and MDR must be viewed from the lens of resilience of UPI infrastructure only.

The author is Group Compliance Officer in JK Bank)

Meghalaya coal row: Conrad Sangma pushes reinvestment of mining revenue as 13 lakh tonnes go missing

SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday called for reinvesting mining revenue in sustainable livelihoods, community infrastructure and alternative economic activities, amid scrutiny over a reported shortfall of more than 13 lakh tonnes of coal from depots across the state.

The remarks came days after a committee appointed by the Meghalaya High Court sought a detailed inquiry into the discrepancy involving 13,02,456.184 metric tonnes of coal and called for accountability to be fixed.

The committee, headed by retired Justice B P Katakey, found a significant difference between the 32,56,715 tonnes of coal recorded as available and the 19,54,258.816 tonnes found during physical verification by district deputy commissioners. It also noted that the Supreme Court had held the state government to be the receiver and custodi-

an of the coal.

Addressing a programme marking 10 years of the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) at the State Convention Centre in Shillong, Sangma said mining remained a key pillar of Meghalaya's economy, but the revenue it generated needed to support communities beyond the life of mining activities.

"Mining is a very important part of our economy. But it is important for the state to be able to reinvest the revenue and the money we get from it, in the form of things like DMF and other activities," he said.

"181 crore mobilised through DMF Sangma said the DMF had mobilised 181 crore in Meghalaya over the past decade, with 923 projects sanctioned and 542 completed.

The projects have supported classrooms, healthcare facilities, drinking water schemes, footbridges connecting remote villages and environmental

restoration initiatives, including water conservation structures and tree plantation in quarry areas.

The chief minister stressed the need to direct more funds towards livelihood generation and income-earning infrastructure, particularly in mining-affected communities.

Citing examples of alternative economic activities, he referred to an eco-tourism park and a value-added bee products unit at Nengmandalgre, silk-worm rearing and a weaving centre in Ri Bhoi, and a district emporium promoting locally made products.

Such initiatives, he said, could generate employment, encourage entrepreneurship and reduce communities' dependence on mining.

He also highlighted the potential of food processing, tourism and value addition, arguing that processing agricultural produce locally could improve returns for farmers and create sustain-

able businesses.

CM asks districts to improve fund utilisation

Referring to the Meghalayan Age Pavilion, inaugurated in Shillong on Tuesday, Sangma said the facility showcased products made by local entrepreneurs, including weavers, fruit wine producers and ice cream makers.

"Every single shop out there that has been opened is an entrepreneur of Meghalaya. Every single product that is being sold there is a product that is made in Meghalaya by our people," he said.

The chief minister urged deputy commissioners to identify innovative ways to use DMF funds, prioritising projects that create jobs and generate sustainable income. He said the state government, its departments and the Chief Minister's Secretariat would support districts through coordinated funding and convergence of resources.

He also directed districts where DMFs had not been constituted or were not functioning despite mining activity to take steps to make them operational.

District administrations were asked to ensure timely completion of sanctioned projects and effective utilisation of available funds.

Government explores options for small miners

On the wider mining sector, Sangma said the industry continued to support thousands of families and remained an important source of employment in Meghalaya.

He said the government was pursuing a gradual transition towards safer, scientific and environmentally responsible mining, taking into account the state's geological conditions and community land ownership system.

Discussions with the Centre, including the Union Coal Minister, had produced positive developments to-

wards reconsidering minimum area requirements for mining, potentially enabling smaller operators to participate in scientific mining, he said.

The government was also examining ways to address regulatory challenges faced by small-scale miners extracting stone, boulders, sand and other minerals, while balancing environmental safeguards with employment generation and local economic interests.

The reported coal shortfall, meanwhile, has brought renewed attention to the management of mineral resources and the state's responsibility for coal under its custody. The High Court-appointed committee's call for a detailed inquiry puts the focus on establishing how the discrepancy occurred and fixing responsibility, even as the government emphasises the need to channel mining revenue into long-term development.

Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah calls for SIR every five years, says no foreigner should remain on voter list

GUWAHATI

The minister also targets Rahul Gandhi and Congress over the EVM debate, while claiming growing support for the BJP at a Nalbari rally

Assam minister Jayanta Mallabaruah has called for a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls every five years, arguing that regular scrutiny is essential to ensure that no foreign national's name remains on the state's voter list.

"Everyone wants an SIR in Assam. Not a single foreigner's name should remain on Assam's voter list," Mallabaruah said, amid an ongoing political debate over voter verification, citizenship and illegal immigration. Referring to Assam's six-year anti-foreigners' agitation, which ran from 1979 to 1985, the minister said the state had particular reasons to ensure regular checks of its electoral rolls. The agitation was driven largely by demands to identify alleged illegal immigrants and remove ineligible names from voter lists. Illegal immigration has remained a politically sensitive issue in Assam for decades, with questions surrounding citizenship and voter eligibility frequently featuring in electoral campaigns and political debates. The minister also criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and the Opposition over allegations concerning electronic voting machines (EVMs) and demands to return to ballot paper voting.

Accusing Congress of questioning the electoral process after election defeats, Mallabaruah said the party blamed EVMs or raised other objections instead of accepting the results.

"Congress never stands with the public, which is why they keep losing. And after losing, they blame EVMs, sometimes ballot papers, or make other excuses," he said. The remarks come amid continuing political disagreements over the credibility of EVMs, with Opposition parties raising concerns about the voting system and the conduct of elections. Speaking about the Jan Jagaran Samdal rally in Nalbari, Mallabaruah claimed that young people and women were increasingly backing the BJP-led governments at the Centre and in Assam.

Tripura appoints 1,536 teachers and officials, distributes scooties to 152 meritorious girls

AGARTALA

The Tripura government handed over appointment letters to 1,536 candidates across the education and youth affairs sectors, while distributing scooties to 152 meritorious girl students under the Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana. Chief Minister Manik Saha handed over the appointment letters at a programme held at the International Fair Grounds in Hapania, Agartala, marking a major recruitment exercise across several government departments.

Of the total appointments, 1,452 were for graduate teachers, including 766 teachers for Classes 6 to 8 and 686 for Classes 9 and 10. Another 74 candidates were appointed as assistant professors under the Higher Education Department, while 10 received appointment letters as youth organisers under the Youth Affairs and Sports Department.

The distribution of appointment letters brought relief and excitement to the newly appointed candidates and their families, many of whom had been waiting for an opportunity to enter government service. The programme also highlighted the state government's efforts to promote girls' education and self-reliance. The chief minister handed over scooty keys and helmets to 152 meritorious girl students under the Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana. The scheme aims to encourage academic achievement among girls and make it easier for them to travel to educational institutions, supporting their pursuit of higher education. Speaking to media after the programme, Saha outlined the state government's plans and priorities for the education sector.

The recruitment drive is intended to strengthen teaching capacity in schools and higher education institutions, while appointments in the youth affairs sector are expected to support programmes for young people.

Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika seeks stronger AAU partnership to boost farm productivity

JORHAT

Assam Agriculture and Irrigation Minister Pijush Hazarika on Wednesday held discussions with Assam Agricultural University (AAU) Vice-Chancellor Dipjoyti Rajkhowa and the university's deans in Jorhat, stressing the need for closer coordination between agricultural researchers and the state government to improve farm productivity and farmers' income.

The meeting was held at the university's guest house in the presence of Jorhat MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, according to an official statement issued by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR).

During the discussions, university authorities briefed Hazarika on ongoing academic programmes, research activities and various initiatives undertaken by the institution.

The minister outlined the Agriculture Department's priorities for strengthening farmers' capacity, improving agricultural output and expanding the overall potential of Assam's agricultural sector.

Emphasising the importance of scientific research in transforming farming practices, Hazarika urged AAU to extend its research expertise, technical assistance and sci-



entific guidance to the Agriculture Department.

He stressed that research findings must be translated into practical, farmer-centric solutions capable of addressing field-level challenges and helping cultivators improve both productivity and in-

come.

The minister also highlighted the university's role in bridging the gap between agricultural research and its implementation on the ground. Stronger coordination between AAU and the Agriculture Department, he said, would help disseminate modern agricultural technologies, improved farming techniques and sustainable practices among farmers.

The discussions underscored the importance of institutional collaboration in unlocking Assam's agricultural potential. Closer cooperation between the university and the department is expected to strengthen agricultural extension services, encourage innovation and improve farmers' access to scientific knowledge.

The initiative comes amid the broader push to make agricultural research more accessible to cultivators and ensure that scientific advances translate into tangible benefits for farming communities across Assam.

Assam, Arunachal Pradesh target December roadmap to settle border dispute

GUWAHATI

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have agreed to accelerate efforts to resolve their long-standing boundary dispute, with the two states targeting a roadmap by December 2026 for villages where differences remain unresolved.

The decision was taken at the second regional committee meeting on the boundary dispute involving Arunachal Pradesh's Papum Pare district and Assam's Biswanath and Lakhimpur districts.

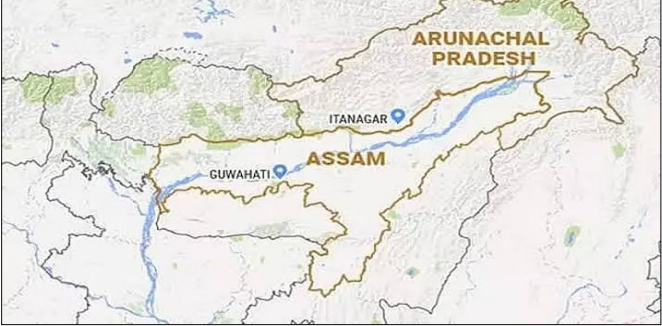
Arunachal Pradesh Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja and Assam Revenue Minister Keshab Mahanta led their respective delegations at the meeting. Doimukh MLA Nabam Vivek, Papum Pare Deputy Commissioner Mamu Hage, Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu and MP Ranjit Dutta were also present.

During the meeting, deputy commissioners from the concerned districts presented updates on progress made since the first meeting on January 9, 2023, including the findings of joint field inspections.

Officials said the disputed villages had been divided into three categories to facilitate a phased resolution. Category I comprises nine villages, Category II includes 22 villages with relatively minor localised disputes, while Category III covers two villages where complex disagreements continue to prevent a consensus.

The two state governments agreed to maintain the status quo in accordance with mutually agreed cut-off dates and prevent fresh encroachments and tree felling in disputed areas.

They also agreed to initiate the necessary procedures for withdrawing first information reports (FIRs) registered against officials from either state in



connection with the dispute.

A key decision was to install boundary pillars immediately in the nine Category I villages. Disputes involving the 22 Category II villages will be addressed through the respective district administrations. The district administrations have also been directed to engage the Survey of India to begin formal boundary demarcation within two months, officials said. For the two Category III villages where differences persist, a roadmap will be prepared after consultations with local legislators, district officials and residents. The next regional committee meeting is scheduled for late December 2026.

The Assam-Arunachal boundary dispute dates back to 1951, when more than 3,600 square kilometres of plain areas were transferred from the North-East Frontier Agency to Assam following the recommendations of the Gopinath Bordoloi committee.

Tripura University sets up Indian Knowledge Systems corner ahead of national-level examination

AGARTALA

Tripura University has opened an Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Corner at its Central Library to promote awareness of India's traditional knowledge heritage and support students preparing for a national-level examination on the subject.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Debabrata Das inaugurated the facility on October 12. The initiative was organised by the university's Central Library in collaboration with Vidya Bharati Uchha Shiksha Sansthan, Tripura.

The dedicated corner will provide students and research scholars with access to study materials on India's traditional knowledge systems, while encouraging academic engagement with their relevance to contemporary education, research and learning.

University officials said the facility would serve as a resource centre for exploring India's intellectual heritage and examining its potential applications in modern academic settings.

Support for national-level examination

The IKS Corner will also of-

fer preparatory materials for the Bharat Boudhiks 2.0 National Level Examination on Indian Knowledge Systems, scheduled for November 21, 2026.

The examination will be conducted across colleges and universities in the country. Access to study materials at the Central Library is expected to help aspirants familiarise themselves with the subject and prepare for the test.

Tripura University Finance Officer Debashish Pal and Central Library Librarian Dr Champeswar Mishra attended the inauguration, along with faculty members, university staff, students, research scholars and other dignitaries.

Through the initiative, the university aims to expand awareness of India's traditional knowledge traditions and create more opportunities for students and researchers to study the subject.

The collaboration with Vidya Bharati Uchha Shiksha Sansthan is expected to further the university's efforts to integrate the study of Indian knowledge systems into academic engagement and research.

Arunachal's 11,200-MW Siang project divides opinion as residents weigh jobs against land, environment risks

ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh's proposed 11,200-MW Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) has triggered a debate over development, environmental protection and community rights, with some residents hopeful of better connectivity and employment even as protests continue over land and the project's potential impact.

For communities along the Siang River, where difficult terrain and poor connectivity have long restricted access to development, the project has raised expectations of improved infrastructure and public services. But concerns remain over land requirements, livelihoods, the environment and the preservation of local cultural identity.

"People are naturally worried when they hear about a project of this scale. But we also have to think about what opportunities it could bring. The youth need jobs, better connectivity and more opportunities to stay and build their lives here," said Oyin, a young resident of Boleng town.

She said the Siang River had shaped the lives, culture and landscape of communities along its banks for generations.

The project is currently at the Pre-Feasibility Report (PFR) stage, which is intended to assess its technical viability. The state government has maintained that the ongoing assessment does not amount to a final decision to construct the project.

Protesters, however, have demanded an immediate halt to survey work and other activities related to the pre-feasibility exercise. They have also called for the withdrawal of security personnel deployed in areas likely to be affected.

The state government has argued that the project could promote economic growth, generate employment for local youth and strengthen water and energy security for Arunachal Pradesh and the country.

M Tame, a resident of Parong village in Siang district, said development and the preservation of local identity should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

"We should not assume that develop-



ment means losing everything. If there is proper planning and local people are included, development can also mean better schools, healthcare, roads, communication and opportunities for our children," he said.

Several residents in potentially affected areas have sought greater clarity on land requirements, rehabilitation, livelihood security, environmental consequences and the long-term implications for their communities. Siang Deputy Commissioner Tayi Tagu has described the project as a potential boon for people in the Siang belt and urged them to support government-backed initiatives. At a review meeting in Yingkiong last month, State Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Minister Ojing Tasing, who also heads the Empowered High-Level Commit-

tee on SUMP, called for sustained public engagement, transparency and systematic documentation of feedback from local communities.

Environmental activist Bhanu Tatak said local consent was crucial even at the pre-feasibility stage.

She alleged that the deployment of paramilitary personnel, registration of FIRs and legal proceedings against protesters had deepened mistrust between residents and the state government.

"It is hard to trust the state government now due to its lack of sensibility," Tatak said.

For many in the region, the debate extends beyond whether hydropower development is desirable. They want assurances that decisions affecting their land, livelihoods and future will be taken transparently and with meaningful community participation.

Aluk, who identified herself by her first name, said the issue should not turn residents into opposing camps of development supporters and critics.

"We want our children to have a future here. If a project can contribute to that future, people will want to understand it. The important thing is that development should happen with people, not simply around them," she said.

As the pre-feasibility exercise continues, the proposed Siang project remains at the centre of a broader debate over infrastructure-led growth, environmental risks and the rights of communities living along one of Arunachal Pradesh's major river systems.

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Rubio to visit India amid trade talks, tensions over Russian oil and US tariffs



NEW DELHI

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will begin a five-day visit to India and Uzbekistan on Saturday, with energy cooperation, trade negotiations and bilateral ties likely to feature prominently in discussions amid persistent differences over tariffs and India's purchases of Russian oil. Rubio will visit Mumbai and Jamnagar in India before travelling to Samarkand in Uzbekistan. In Mumbai, he will meet External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for discussions on bilateral relations and areas of cooperation. The visit comes as New Delhi and Washington seek to advance trade negotiations despite strains over US tariff policies, President Donald Trump's repeated claims of having brokered an India-Pakistan ceasefire and a US military attack on a vessel off Oman that killed three Indian seafarers. India has also expressed concern over US legislation that could allow tariffs of up to 100% on imports from countries purchasing Russian

oil and gas, as Washington seeks to increase pressure on Moscow over its war in Ukraine. Jaishankar said on Wednesday that India-US trade negotiations were moving towards a resolution, even as Washington's changing economic policies compel countries to reassess their engagement with the United States. "The United States has repositioned itself," Jaishankar said, adding that countries needed to "recalibrate and reset" their relationships with Washington. Rubio's visit follows his four-day trip to India in May, when he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jaishankar to discuss trade, energy, defence, maritime security and regional developments. During his May 24 meeting with Jaishankar, Rubio expressed confidence that the two countries could reach a durable trade agreement. India has called for an early conclusion to an interim trade agreement as a step towards a broader bilateral

pact first envisaged during Modi's February 2025 visit to Washington. Energy cooperation is expected to be an important part of the engagement, particularly as the two countries navigate differences over Russian oil purchases and sanctions. India has been reducing its reliance on Russian crude amid the threat of punitive US tariffs, with Russia's share of Indian crude imports falling to about 35% in September from as high as 56% in July, according to commodities tracking platform Kpler. The proposed US measures have raised concerns in New Delhi over the potential impact on energy security, trade and Indian exports. Rubio's meetings will provide an opportunity for both sides to sustain diplomatic engagement while seeking progress on trade and energy issues. The broader challenge will be to reconcile Washington's evolving trade and sanctions policies with India's priorities of economic growth, energy security and strategic autonomy.

Doval raised safety of Indian seafarers, tankers with Iran; attacks on civilian infrastructure 'unacceptable': MEA



NEW DELHI

The safety and security of Indian seafarers and tankers were raised during a phone conversation between National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and his Iranian counterpart Mohsen Rezaei on October 12, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Wednesday. Rubio's meetings will provide an opportunity for both sides to sustain diplomatic engagement while seeking progress on trade and energy issues. The broader challenge will be to reconcile Washington's evolving trade and sanctions policies with India's priorities of economic growth, energy security and strategic autonomy.

versation, Jaiswal said the safety and security of Indian seafarers and tankers were discussed. India has expressed concern over repeated attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, as well as attacks on civilian infrastructure in the Gulf. New Delhi has called such attacks "completely unacceptable" and urged that they cease immediately. On the proposed India-US bilateral trade agreement, Jaiswal said both sides remained engaged in negotiations to reach a mutually beneficial deal. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had addressed the issue at the Bloomberg New Economy Forum, he added.

India and the US are working to resolve differences over the proposed agreement, with negotiations approaching a "landing point", Jaishankar said on Tuesday. He also noted that the core fundamentals of the bilateral strategic partnership remained unchanged. Asked whether the H-1B visa issue and recent remarks by the US vice-president would figure in US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's upcoming visit to India, Jaiswal said several bilateral issues would be discussed. Rubio is scheduled to visit India next week to strengthen energy cooperation, according to the US Department of State. On the proposed visit of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi to Canada and the status of a bilateral trade agreement, Jaiswal said the fifth round of negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) had been held in Ottawa about a week ago. Both countries remained committed to a mutually beneficial agreement, he said. Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney spoke over the phone on Tuesday and agreed to build on the positive momentum in bilateral ties. Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand, who is on a working visit to India, also met Modi on Wednesday to discuss cooperation in trade, technology and energy. On concerns raised by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council over recent communal incidents, Jaiswal said India expected the Bangladeshi government to address the issues. Referring to the first BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting held in New Delhi on Tuesday, Jaiswal said all member countries participated and adopted the Delhi Declaration, committing to strengthen cooperation in counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics measures and anti-money laundering efforts. India expects the inaugural dialogue to strengthen security cooperation among BIMSTEC members, he added. Responding to remarks by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva on the detention of thousands of protesters in Delhi, Jaiswal termed them "unwarranted" and "unacceptable", saying they amounted to interference in India's internal affairs. He accused the organisation of "extreme selectivity" and said such an approach could undermine faith in multilateralism and its own credibility.

INTERNATIONAL

House Democrats plan first 100-days agenda if they sweep to power in US midterm elections

WASHINGTON

US House Democrats are preparing an ambitious 100-days agenda focused on delivering their campaign promises — making life more affordable and conducting vast oversight of the Trump administration — if the party seizes majority control in next month's elections. Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, who is in line to become House speaker if the party wins power, said the Democrats will be united "right out of the gate" on reinstating Affordable Care Act tax breaks, reversing Republican Medicaid cuts, holding votes against the Iran war and undoing President Donald Trump's tariff regime. They expect to launch the agenda in the first 100 hours, once the new Congress is seated in January. "Fighting for an affordable America — that's what unites Democrats all across the country," Jeffries said recently at the party campaign headquarters in Washington. "That's our commitment to the American people, because the cost of living is way too high and far too many people who are working hard, playing by the rules, can't thrive and can barely survive — and are drowning — in the Trump economy." It's a hyper-focused agenda tapping into the voter sentiment that is driving much of the midterm election as Americans wrestle with affordability concerns and inflationary costs from the Iran war and other policies. The undertaking will also test the ability of the sprawling House Democrats to work together and avoid the chaotic divisions and disruptions that have hobbled Republicans under Speaker Mike Johnson's leadership. Democrats have been out of power in the House since 2023. If Jeffries takes the helm, he would be the first Democratic speaker since Nancy Pelosi, leading a new generation of lawmakers that includes a handful of left candidates who are



aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America. "The antidote to that is getting things done," said Illinois Rep. Nikki Budzinski, who is poised to become chair of the New Democrat Coalition, the largest caucus within the House Democrats. She said the party is determined to show the American people that "Democrats know how to govern." Rep. Greg Casar, D-Texas, the chairman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said he is often asked if Democrats will be confronting their own version of the Freedom Caucus, referring to the far-right Republicans who often grind the House agenda to a halt. "It doesn't work that way," Casar told The Associated Press in an interview. "The Freedom Caucus breaks things. But if you're a progressive, you want to pass things." Leader Jeffries, Casar and other Democrats have been in touch with the progressive candidates, many of whom are backed by the DSA as the party focuses on shared priorities. "This notion that because we'll have new members somehow we're going to be disjointed — not so," said Louisiana Rep.

Troy Carter, who hopes to become chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. "All those banking on that, save the popcorn for another day." The Republicans, who are confronting an increasingly difficult election-year climate to hold onto their majority, portray Democrats as beholden to a far-left socialist agenda. If Republicans retain power, Johnson has said they would press on with what they have already accomplished alongside Trump, which has been an agenda focused on cutting taxes and federal spending. "What we would do in the next two years is exactly what we have been doing already," Johnson said on CNBC's Squawk Box, "and that is putting the conditions in place for a strong America again." Months ago, Jeffries launched five working groups to tackle the affordability agenda focused on healthcare, housing, groceries and goods, gas and utilities, and care-giving. Each group is headed by a progressive and a centrist Democrat — the healthcare working group, for example, is run by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Rep. Terri Sewell of Alabama — with the goal of striking common ground on draft policies that all House Democrats

can support. At the same time, Jeffries has tasked the ranking Democrats on the House Oversight and Judiciary committees with preparing investigations. They are focused on Trump, his family and his administration, as part of a sweeping anti-corruption agenda. Impeachment, Jeffries has said, is neither on nor off the table. "We need to lower the cost of groceries and gas. Two, we need to make healthcare affordable for every single American. Three, we're going to hold the crooks accountable who've visited unprecedented corruption on the American people," Jeffries said. "Beginning on day one." Democrats plan to vote quickly to reinstate the health care tax credits for the Affordable Care Act, which expired in 2025, leaving millions of Americans confronting higher health insurance costs. Proposals are also ready to reverse the Medicaid cuts that Republicans put in place as part of their "One Big Beautiful Bill" of tax breaks and program cuts, including new work requirements for recipients. There are measures to reverse Trump's tariffs as Congress works to claw back power from the White House. And Democrats, who have forced multiple votes on ending the Iran conflict, plan to pressure the Trump administration to end the military action by pushing forward more war powers resolutions. Much of the House Democrats' agenda, if they regain power, would depend on the size of the majority. Details also depend on the Senate, and whether it flips to Democrats. "We cannot simply go back to the status quo," said Usamah Andrabi, a spokesman for Justice Democrats, an outside group that supports the left progressives. And Trump, at the White House, has ultimate say, with veto power at the stroke of a pen. "We're going to do a lot and we're going to be very busy," Carter said. "We will not be able to fix everything overnight."

Nobel winner Navi Pillay blasts 'unlawful' Trump ICC sanctions



THE HAGUE

Nobel Peace Prize winner Navi Pillay hit out at Donald Trump's "illegal" sanctions against the International Criminal Court, saying the US president needed a lesson in international law. In an interview with AFP, Pillay also said it was no coincidence the US sanctions on the ICC were announced just hours after her Nobel, as a "reaction to the fact that the award was not given to President Trump." Asked what her message was for Trump, the 85-year-old judge told AFP: "Call in your legal advisors to explain to you what international law is." "He should call in his advisors to tell him why we say that it is unlawful for him to interfere with an independent international court." On Friday, the US announced sanctions against the ICC aimed at crippling the day-to-day operations of the court, which tries individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Trump's administration has vowed to dismantle the court "brick-by-brick", furious that judges have issued

an arrest warrant for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged crimes in Gaza. Pillay noted that previous US administrations had welcomed an ICC arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying, "that's selective, that's double standards, and that's wrong." The sanctions, which will hit the court's technology and banking operations, take effect in six months and Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten has urged talks with Washington during that time to discuss reforms to the court, based in The Hague. But Pillay said the idea of reforms to the ICC was "euphemistic", adding that what Trump wanted was "an undertaking that they won't pursue investigations of US citizens." "You can't do that, because you can't have double standards. You can't selectively pursue one lot of people and not the other," Pillay told. "It will be such a bad, dangerous precedent." Pillay also hit back at Israeli officials who reacted with outrage to her Nobel, after she headed the UN Independent

International Commission of Inquiry (COI), which found last year that genocide was occurring in Gaza. Netanyahu called her a "bigot" while Israel's foreign ministry said Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels must be "applauding from hell" at her award. "I think it's very hurtful and insulting," said Pillay. "Goebbels had blood on his hands...responsible for the death of thousands of people. Not only Jews, but people of colour like me," she added. She acknowledged there was little political appetite to arrest Netanyahu to face the ICC accusations, which he furiously denies. "But all my life I've seen people get around difficulties, so I'm confident that it will happen," she said, asked if Netanyahu was ever likely to appear in the ICC dock. Pillay said she was still digesting the news that she had won. She found it difficult to believe at first "because they give their awards to very few women — gross inequality in the practice so far." At 85, she frets she will be unable to travel far and wide to sing the praises of international justice with the amplified voice of a Nobel Peace Prize winner. "I think that age will constrain me somewhat. I can't be as active as I used to," she said, noting that she visited 79 countries when she was UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. She said she was consulting people about how best to spend the 12 million Swedish krona prize (\$1.2 million) but hinted some of it might be invested in her native South Africa. "Africa is suffering. South Africa is suffering. It's very difficult to raise funds there," she said. "The University of KwaZulu-Natal has set up a unit in my name, so I'll begin to have discussions with them. I believe in education for children and the youth."

Manipur CM Inaugurates ESeva Kendra

CM calls upon Manipur's youth to embrace AI and Emerging Technologies; appreciates BHASHINI initiative to bridge Linguistic barriers

BISWADEEP GUPTA

Chief Minister of Manipur Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Tuesday inaugurated the eSeva Kendra, Manipur, at the Manipur Information Technology Park, Mantripukhri, Imphal and attended the One-Day BHASHINI Manipur Rajyam Workshop organised by the Department of Information Technology, Government of Manipur.

The Chief Minister said Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly enabling communication across languages spoken worldwide and called on the younger generation to take a greater role in embracing and advancing the technology. He expressed confidence that Manipur's youth would keep pace with these developments and move forward without being left behind.

Appreciating the efforts of the BHASHINI in overcoming language barriers through AI-based language technologies, the Chief Minister said the initiative would facilitate communication among people speaking different languages across the country. He also said that the initiative will bring together the 33 linguistic communities of Manipur through their respective languages and develop mechanisms for seamless communication among them.

Stating that Manipur has earned recognition across the world in various fields such as arts, culture and sports, Yumnam Khemchand Singh expressed confidence that the State's youth would also take a leading role in the field of Information Technology. He assured that the State Government would extend all possible support to encourage and empower young people to participate more actively in the sector.

The Chief Minister highlighted the importance of making digital services accessible to citizens in their own languages, particularly those living in remote areas. He expressed hope that the application of AI and language technologies would improve access to public information and services and create new opportunities in education, healthcare and citizen-service delivery. The Chief Minister also inaugurated the eSeva Kendra, Manipur, aimed at bringing government services closer to the people. The centre will provide assisted access to digital government services, with a focus on clear guidance and support for citizens who require assistance in navigating digital platforms and administrative procedures. Emphasising the need to make technology meaningful in people's lives, he called upon departments and institutions to explore practical applications of emerging technologies and develop locally relevant solutions that address the needs of the people.

During the programme, the Government of Manipur and Microsoft exchanged a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in areas including Artificial Intelligence, digital governance, emerging technologies, capacity building and digital skilling. The Chief Minister expressed



hope that the partnership would translate into practical outcomes that empower the youth, strengthen institutions and improve public services.

The programme also featured the presentation of training and placement certificates to selected candidates under the HCLTech TechBee Programme.

The State Government provides sponsorship of 50,000 per student under the initiative. Of the 116 students trained so far under the programme, 57 have completed their training and joined HCLTech as full-time employees while continuing their graduation.

The Chief Minister interacted with candidates who had completed their training and secured employment placements in different States, encouraging them to make the most of the opportunities available in the IT sector. The programme also included recognition of winners of the Hackathon Championship, with the Chief Minister handing over prizes to the winners. He subsequently inspected various stalls showcasing technology, innovation and startup initiatives, and interacted with participants.

The programme was attended by Somorjit Salam, IAS, Secretary, Information Technology; Amitabh Nag, Chief Executive Officer, Digital India BHASHINI Division; Keshri Kumar Asthana, Chief Technology Officer, Public Sector, Microsoft; Thirumugan Subbaraj, Associate Vice President, HCLTech; representatives of MeitY and NeGD; officials of the State Government; participants; and other dignitaries.

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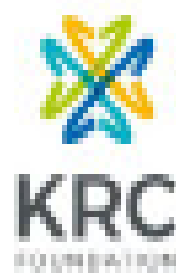
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5 categories: A- Class- VI, VII, VIII | B- Class- IX, X, XI, XII | C-College & PG Students | D- Working Class & Homemaker | E- Retired & Senior Citizen (60+)

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