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PERSPECTIVE

Be careful when you follow the Masses. Sometimes the ‘M’ is silent.

Assam Police and animal welfare groups foil illegal meat trade

SUSHANTA ROY
DIPHU :In a major joint operation, the Assam Police, acting in close coordination with volunteers from four prominent animal protection organizations foiled an illegal meat smuggling attempt today from Bokolia Ghat area of Karbi Anglong around 10.00 am today.

The animal protection organizations involved in this operation were Just Be Friendly, Humane World for Animals India, UCI Foundation, and Anaajoree. The volunteers intercepted a suspicious vehicle and busted an illegal animal smuggling and meat trade racket in the district.

During the interception, authorities rescued 26 dogs who were found cruelly crammed into jute sacks with their mouths tightly bound, pointing to a severe violation of animal welfare regulations.

The rescued animals have since been safely transferred to local rescue partners for emergency veterinary evaluation, medical care, and rehabilitation.Expressing deep concern over the cruelty involved, a senior police official stated: “The prompt cooperation between local law enforcement and animal rights volunteers has saved these helpless animals from a grim fate.We have initiated a thorough investigation to identify the network behind this illegal transportation, and strict legal action will be taken against anyone found guilty under the relevant animal protection laws.”Representatives from the participating animal welfare groups also lauded the swift response of the police, emphasizing the urgent need for continuous vigilance against illegal animal trafficking rings operating across transit routes in the region.

WHO SAID WHAT



Our transparent recruitment process is ensuring that deserving candidates get a fair chance to fulfil their aspirations and serve the state with pride. Merit first, always. That is the Assam we are building.

- Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma

Sribhumi Incident: Calls for an Impartial Probe, Questions Over Barak Valley Leaders’ Response

KRC TIMES DESK

SILCHAR: The facts behind the clash must be established through a fair investigation. Allegations of harassment based on Bengali identity also deserve scrutiny, while questions grow over the role of local representatives.

The clash in Sribhumi has triggered widespread discussion and political reactions across Assam, bringing several important questions to the fore. Who was involved, what role did each person play, and what evidence exists against those accused? These questions must be answered through a proper investigation. However, concerns are also being raised over whether the incident is being given an Assamese-versus-Bengali dimension before the facts have been fully established.

If any individual is found guilty of an offence, the law must take its course. But the actions of one person cannot be used to hold an entire linguistic community responsible. If the Sribhumi incident has led to ordinary people facing abuse, threats or harassment because of their Bengali identity, those allegations must also be investigated seriously.

Justice cannot be the preserve of one side. Evidence against the accused is essential, but protecting the rights and safety of innocent people is equally the administration’s responsibility.

Questions over the role of elected representatives

Several leaders from Guwahati have reportedly reacted to the incident, calling for an impartial investigation and strict action against those found guilty. Such demands are legitimate, provided they do not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. At the same time, allegations of harassment or hostility directed at ordinary people because of their linguistic identity must receive equal attention.

This raises questions about the role of elected representatives in the Barak Valley. Expectations are high of legislators, MPs and ministers from the ruling party, as well as those from the Opposition. Are they seeking a comprehensive account of the incident from the administration? Are they meeting the families concerned? Are they helping arrange legal assistance wherever necessary?

Reports that a mother has publicly sought justice for her son make it all the

more important for representatives to hear her concerns and examine the status of the case. However, justice must be determined by evidence and due process, not by emotion or public pressure.

If people are dissatisfied with the visible response of their representatives, those concerns deserve an answer. Standing by citizens during a crisis is part of the responsibility of elected office, not a question of political allegiance.

Police statements and the need for transparency

The official statement of the Superintendent of Police has also become part of the debate. The police version deserves consideration, but it cannot substitute for a thorough investigation. The full sequence of events must be established by examining complaints, witness accounts, documents and other relevant evidence.

Who participated in the clash? What evidence has been gathered against those arrested? What is the basis of the allegations concerning police action? These questions require clear answers. Complaints regarding a police lathi-charge or any other action must also be examined impartially.

Accepting one side’s version with-

out verification would be inappropriate. Equally, information supported by evidence should not be dismissed because of political considerations or linguistic identity.

Social organisations have a responsibility too

The role of social, cultural and language-based organisations in the Barak Valley is also being questioned. It is right to insist that facts be verified before making public statements. But caution should not mean avoiding questions about citizens’ safety and dignity.

Organisations can call for an impartial investigation, help affected families access legal assistance and appeal for an end to hostility against any community. Such steps can be taken firmly without aggravating tensions.

If individuals are being targeted because they are Bengali, those incidents deserve to be condemned and investigated. Any response, however, should remain evidence-based, peaceful and within the law.

Justice, not division

Turning the Sribhumi incident into an Assamese-versus-Bengali confrontation would ultimately hurt ordinary people.

The social ties, livelihoods and everyday relationships shared by different linguistic communities across Assam and the Barak Valley are far more significant than the political interpretation of a single incident.

The demands, therefore, should be clear: identify those responsible for the clash and act against them in accordance with the law; protect anyone facing wrongful harassment; investigate allegations concerning police conduct; and examine any threats or abuse allegedly directed at people because of their linguistic identity.

Questions also remain for the elected representatives of the Barak Valley. What steps are they taking to address these concerns? Will they come together to seek transparency from the administration and provide answers to the people they represent?The Sribhumi incident must be judged on the basis of evidence, not identity. The alleged wrongdoing of an individual cannot be used to blame an entire community. The people of the Barak Valley deserve justice and dignity-and ensuring both is the responsibility of the administration, political leaders and social organisations alike.

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EC Orders Transfer of Poll-Related Officials in Five States Ahead of 2027 Elections

Manipur among states covered by directive aimed at ensuring free and fair polls; transfers apply to officers posted in home districts or serving in the same district for three years

IMPHAL

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has directed the immediate transfer of election-related administrative and police officials in five states, including Manipur, ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

The directive, issued on October 27, covers Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The current term of the Manipur Legislative Assembly is scheduled to end on March 13, 2027.

According to the communication sent to the Chief Electoral Officers of the five states, the transfers are intended to prevent officials from remaining in positions that could compromise the neutrality of the electoral process and to help ensure free and fair elections.

The order applies to officials posted in their home districts and those



who have served in the same district for three years during the past four

years. In Manipur, the requirement also covers officers who will complete three years in a district on or before March 31, 2027.

The transfer directive covers several key administrative positions, including District Election Officers, Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, Assistant Magistrates, Tehsildars and Municipal Commissioners.

Police personnel are also covered, including senior officers such as Additional Directors General and Inspectors General at the range level, State Armed Police Commandants, District Superintendents of Police and sub-divisional police officials.

The Commission said such transfers form part of its established procedures in states approaching elections. The measures are intended to maintain a level playing field for

political parties and candidates.

The directive comes as preparations for the 2027 Manipur Assembly elections continue. A delegation led by senior deputy election commissioners recently visited the state to review electoral preparedness.

The transfer exercise is also taking place alongside the annual Special Summary Revision of electoral rolls across all five states. The final electoral rolls are scheduled to be published on January 4.

The Commission’s preparations follow electoral-roll revision exercises in several states, including a separate Special Intensive Revision process in certain jurisdictions.

With the Manipur Assembly’s tenure due to end in March 2027, the transfer order and voter-list revision are among the administrative steps being undertaken ahead of the next round of Assembly elections.

Meghalaya Politics: Three Former UDP MLAs Join NPP, Regional Party Reduced to One Legislator



SHILLONG

Meghalaya’s political landscape has witnessed a major realignment, with three former United Democratic Party (UDP) legislators joining the ruling National People’s Party (NPP), further strengthening the party led by Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma.

Sangma, who is also the NPP’s national president, formally welcomed former UDP MLAs Paul Lyngdoh and Renikton L Tongkhhar at an induction ceremony held at the party’s state office in Shillong on Wednesday. The third legislator, Nujorki Sungoh, who represents Mookaiaw, could not attend the programme due to ill health.

NPP state president Prestone Tynsong and national vice-president Sniawbhalang Dhar were among the senior leaders present at the ceremony. Supporters of the three legislators also formally joined the party.

Welcoming the new entrants, Sangma expressed confidence that they would uphold the party’s principles and contribute to Meghalaya’s development and prosperity.

In a post on X, the chief minister welcomed Lyngdoh, the MLA from West Shillong; Tongkhhar, the representative from Mawkyrwat; and Sungoh, the leg-

islator from Mookaiaw, along with their supporters, into what he described as the growing NPP family.

The induction follows the formal recognition by Meghalaya Assembly Speaker Thomas A Sangma on October 23 of the merger of the three UDP legislators with the NPP under Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.

Earlier, on October 16, the Speaker had recognised the merger of eight UDP legislators with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The successive defections have drastically weakened the UDP’s presence in the 60-member Meghalaya Assembly. From an original strength of 12 MLAs, the party has now been reduced to just one legislator, with its president, Metbah Lyngdoh, remaining its sole representative in the House.

The BJP has gained eight legislators, while the NPP has added three, marking a significant shift in the state’s political equations.

The defections represent a major setback for the UDP, one of Meghalaya’s prominent regional political parties, while consolidating the position of the NPP and BJP in the Assembly.The developments could have implications for the state’s regional political dynamics, particularly as the UDP faces the challenge of rebuilding its legislative presence and organisational strength.

With the NPP expanding its ranks and the BJP also gaining from the defections, attention will now focus on how the reshaped political landscape influences the state’s governance and the future of regional opposition politics.

Tripura Police Arrest Suspected Arms Trafficker, Seize 200 Bullets

AGARTALA

Tripura Police arrested a suspected arms trafficker and seized 200 bullets from his possession in the Maharani police station area of Udaipur in Gomati district on Thursday, officials said.

The accused, identified as Bimal Chakma, son of Bhubanta Chakma, is a resident of Shantitila, Dudukchhara, in the Panchhari area of Bangladesh’s Khagrachhari district, according to police sources.

Police sources alleged that Chakma is associated with the Santu faction of the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), a Bangladesh-based organisation. He is also suspected of having links with Pratyuttar Chakma and Samajpriya Chakma, who are reportedly associated with the group.

According to the sources, the two individuals operate under Jyotisman Chakma, alias Bulbul, described as the deputy field commander of the Jumma Liberation Army and a grandson of JSS leader Santu Larma.

Police have launched an investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding the recovery of the ammunition and verify the suspected links of the arrested man with the alleged trafficking network.

Investigators are also seeking to establish the origin of the bullets, their intended destination and whether the seizure is connected to a wider cross-border arms trafficking operation.

Further details are awaited. Police have not yet disclosed additional information about the suspected network or the circumstances leading to Chakma’s arrest.

Silchar-Guwahati Express Locomotive Derails on Badarpur Bridge, Train Services Hit

SILCHAR

The locomotive of the Silchar-Guwahati Express derailed on Badarpur Rail Bridge over the Barak River on Thursday morning, disrupting train services along the Lumding-Badarpur hill section. No casualties or injuries were reported, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) said.

The incident occurred around 8:50 am when the front trolley of the locomotive of Train No. 15616 derailed at kilometre 166/7 under the Lumding Division of NFR, between Badarpur and Sukritipur railway stations.

According to a statement issued by the Chief Public Relations Officer of NFR, the rear portion of the train, including all passenger coaches, was pushed back to Badarpur. All passengers were reported safe.

Restoration work was initiated under the supervision of senior railway officials, while several trains operating along the affected section were regulated at different stations.

Several Trains Regulated, Two Services Cancelled

NFR announced that the following trains were regulated following the derailment:

“ Train No. 15615 (Guwahati-Silchar Express): Regulated at Bihara.

“ Train No. 13175 (Sealdah-Silchar Express): Regulated at New Haflong.

“ Train No. 13126 (Sairang-Kolkata Express): Regulated at Badarpur.

“ Train No. 15660 (Agartala-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus



Express): Regulated at New Karimganj.

“ Train No. 13174 (Agartala-Sealdah Express): Regulated at Dharmanagar.

“ Train No. 13125 (Kolkata-Sairang Express): Regulated at Langting.

Train No. 15616, the Silchar-Guwahati Express scheduled to depart on October 29, was short-terminated at Badarpur, with services between Badarpur and Guwahati cancelled. Train No. 15615, the Guwahati-Silchar Express scheduled to operate the same day, was also cancelled.

Railway authorities advised passengers to check the latest train status before travelling as restoration work continued on the affected section.



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INFLATION IS DIMMING INDIA'S FESTIVE CHEER

Rising food and fuel prices are squeezing household budgets, weakening purchasing power and putting small businesses under pressure. The government must move beyond short-term relief and address the structural causes of inflation without undermining economic growth.

Festivals in India are not merely occasions for religious observance or social gatherings. They are also an expression of hope, generosity and economic activity. From new clothes and sweets to gifts, decorations and family feasts, festive spending sustains millions of traders, artisans, small manufacturers and service providers. Yet this year, rising prices are threatening to take some of the shine off the celebrations. For many households, the question is no longer how much they can spend, but how much they must save to meet essential needs.

Inflation is most punishing when it affects everyday necessities. A rise in the prices of vegetables, cooking oil, cereals and other food items leaves families with little room to adjust. Higher fuel costs add another layer of pressure by increasing transportation expenses and pushing up the prices of goods and services. When household incomes fail to keep pace with these increases, festive purchases become an easy target for cuts. Families postpone discretionary spending, settle for cheaper alternatives and increasingly look for discounts.

This may appear to be a sensible response at the individual level, but its wider economic consequences deserve attention. Small retailers, neighbourhood shops, street vendors and local artisans depend heavily on the festive season to generate a substantial share of their annual earnings. If consumers spend less, businesses face a difficult choice: reduce prices and accept thinner margins or retain prices and risk losing customers. Either way, prolonged pressure can threaten livelihoods and weaken the informal economy, which remains an important source of employment.

The challenge, therefore, is not simply to make festivals more affordable. It is to ensure that inflation does not erode the purchasing power of ordinary citizens or undermine the economic activity that festive demand supports.

There are several forces behind the present pressure on prices. Unfavourable weather conditions can disrupt agricultural production and reduce the supply of essential commodities. Irregular monsoon patterns, crop damage and inadequate storage facilities often lead to sharp fluctuations in vegetable prices. Global energy markets add another source of uncertainty. When international crude oil prices rise, the effects can spread through transportation, manufacturing and distribution. A weakening rupee can further increase the domestic cost of imported oil, fertilisers and other essential inputs.

These pressures expose a persistent weakness in India's inflation management: the tendency to rely on immediate interventions without sufficiently addressing the structural problems that make prices vulnerable to shocks. Monetary policy is important, but it cannot produce vegetables, repair damaged crops or move food supplies more efficiently from farms to markets.

The Reserve Bank of India must remain vigilant about inflation expectations and the broader price outlook. Interest-rate decisions can influence borrowing costs, credit demand and overall consumption. However, higher rates are a blunt instrument against inflation driven primarily by supply shortages. If food prices rise because of a poor harvest or distribution bottlenecks, tighter monetary policy alone cannot resolve the problem. It may instead increase the cost of loans for households and businesses, discourage investment and place additional pressure on an economy that needs sustained demand to generate employment.

A balanced policy response is therefore essential. The government must coordinate monetary and fiscal measures while recognising the different sources of inflation. Temporary supply disruptions require timely action to ensure adequate availability of essential commodities. Strategic releases from public stocks, better procurement planning and carefully calibrated trade measures can help moderate sudden price increases. But such interventions must be transparent and predictable. Abrupt export restrictions or frequent changes in import duties can create uncertainty for farmers, traders and investors, potentially discouraging the production needed to improve supplies over the longer term.

Agricultural reform must occupy a central place in this effort. India needs better cold-storage facilities, modern warehouses, efficient transport networks and stronger links between farmers and markets. A substantial proportion of perishable produce loses value because it cannot be stored or transported efficiently. Investment in food processing and local distribution infrastructure would reduce wastage, improve availability and make prices less vulnerable to temporary disruptions. Greater domestic production of oilseeds could also reduce dependence on imported edible oils, although this would require sustained investment in research, irrigation, improved seeds and farmer support.

Equally important is the need to protect vulnerable households without creating fiscal pressures that become difficult to sustain. Targeted assistance, effective public distribution and support for low-income families can cushion the impact of rising essential costs. Subsidies may be justified when price shocks threaten food security, but they should complement, rather than substitute for, improvements in productivity and supply chains. Consumer awareness campaigns can help households make informed purchases, yet information alone cannot compensate for the loss of purchasing power caused by persistently high prices.

The festive marketplace also offers an opportunity to strengthen local enterprise. Small businesses and artisans can respond to changing consumer preferences by offering affordable products, transparent pricing and practical alternatives to expensive goods. Digital platforms and cooperative marketing can help local producers reach wider markets. But it would be unreasonable to expect individual traders to absorb the full impact of rising input costs while consumers demand lower prices. Their resilience must be supported by access to affordable credit, reliable logistics and a more predictable policy environment.

There is another dimension to the problem. Inflation is not experienced equally across the country. Rural households may face greater pressure when food prices rise, particularly if agricultural earnings are uncertain. Urban wage earners, meanwhile, must contend with rent, transport, education and healthcare expenses alongside food costs. Even when headline inflation appears manageable, the prices of frequently purchased essentials can shape public perceptions of economic well-being far more directly than a single aggregate figure.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“To acquire knowledge, one must study; but to acquire wisdom, one must observe.” ~ Marilyn vos Savant

ISRAEL'S ELECTION: A CRUCIAL TEST OF NETANYAHU'S LEADERSHIP



KRC TIMES DESK

With the October 7 security failure, the unresolved wars, rising living costs and military conscription dividing the electorate, Israel's vote could determine not only Benjamin Netanyahu's political future but also the direction of its regional policy and relations with Washington.

Israel's election has emerged as a defining political contest over leadership, accountability and national security. For Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the vote is far more than a battle to retain power. It is a test of whether voters still trust the man who built his political identity around keeping Israel safe, despite the unprecedented security failure of October 7, 2023, and the prolonged conflicts that followed.

The political stakes are exceptionally high. Netanyahu's Likud party faces a challenge from a fragmented opposition, with former military chief Gadi Eisenkot and other political figures seeking to turn public anger into an electoral alternative. Yet the contest remains difficult to predict. Opinion polls have offered conflicting assessments of the two leading camps, while neither side has consistently demonstrated a clear path to the 61 seats required for a majority in Israel's 120-member Knesset.

The uncertainty reflects a deeply divided electorate. For many Israelis, the election is an opportunity to hold the government accountable for the Hamas-led attacks of October 7, 2023, when Israel suffered one of the gravest security failures in its history. For others, Netanyahu remains a leader with the experience and determination required to confront the country's enemies in an increasingly volatile Middle East.

The October 7 attacks remain central to this political calculation. According to findings cited by the Israel Democracy Institute, more than 60 per cent of Israelis say the events influence their voting decisions. However, the national trauma has not necessarily translated into a decisive shift in political loyalties.

Netanyahu's supporters argue that the intelligence and security establishment failed to prevent the attacks and that the government subsequently took steps to restore Israel's military deterrence. His critics counter that a prime minister who repeatedly presented himself as the country's foremost security expert cannot escape responsibility for such a catastrophic failure.

The demand for accountability has become a major electoral issue. Thousands of demonstrators gathered in Tel Aviv shortly before the vote, calling for an independent state commission of inquiry into the events of October 7. Opposition leaders have promised to establish such a commission if they form the next government.

Netanyahu's reluctance to accept an independent investigation has reinforced suspicions among his opponents that political survival is taking precedence over institutional accountability. For the families of those killed or taken hostage, the issue extends beyond party politics. They want answers about how the attacks occurred, why warnings were not acted upon and who should bear responsibility.

Security remains central, but the public mood is changing

National security continues to dominate Israeli politics, but the electorate's concerns extend well beyond the immediate battlefield. Hamas remains a security challenge, Hezbollah continues to threaten Israel from Lebanon, and Iran remains a central concern in Israeli strategic calculations. The outcome of the conflict with Iran and the effectiveness of the ceasefire have also raised questions about whether the government has achieved its declared

objectives.

Netanyahu has long argued that confronting Iran and weakening its regional network are essential to Israel's survival. His political appeal has rested partly on his promise to prevent hostile forces from acquiring the capacity to threaten the Israeli state.

Yet military operations alone cannot settle the question of political success. Voters must also assess whether the conflicts have produced sustainable security, whether the threat of renewed violence has diminished and whether the country has a credible strategy for the period after the fighting.

The distinction between military achievements and long-term political outcomes is becoming increasingly important. Even when military operations inflict substantial damage on adversaries, the absence of a clear post-war settlement can leave the underlying conflict unresolved. For Netanyahu, this creates a difficult challenge: he must defend his security record while facing questions about the costs, duration and ultimate objectives of the wars.

The wider regional implications are equally significant. Israel's relations with its neighbours, the future of the Palestinian question and its strategic partnership with the United States will all influence the country's next political chapter.

Economic pressures and military service deepen divisions

The cost of living is another major concern. Higher household expenses have added to the burden on families already affected by prolonged conflict and uncertainty. Defence expenditure has risen sharply since 2023, placing additional pressure on public finances and intensifying debate over how the costs of national security should be distributed.

For many voters, the central question is whether the government can maintain military preparedness without allowing the economic burden to fall disproportionately on ordinary citizens. Rising prices, housing costs and pressure on public services can weaken support for a government even among voters who broadly agree with its security objectives.

The controversy over military conscription has further complicated Netanyahu's position. Ultra-Orthodox exemptions from compulsory military service have become a major source of public resentment, particularly as reservists and their families shoulder the demands of prolonged military operations.

The High Court of Justice has challenged the legal arrangements that protected broad exemptions for ultra-Orthodox men. The issue has exposed a wider disagreement over equality, religious identity and civic responsibility. With tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox men of military age outside regular service, demands for conscription or meaningful sanctions have gained support across much of the electorate.

The dispute also threatens the stability of Netanyahu's governing coalition, which depends on religious parties whose support for exemptions is politically important. Any attempt to change the system could therefore create a conflict between electoral demands for greater fairness and the coalition arithmetic required to remain in power.

Netanyahu's political and legal battles

Netanyahu enters the election with considerable political experience. Having served multiple terms as prime minister over nearly two decades, he has built an international profile as a leader who places military strength and confrontation with Iran at the centre of Israeli policy.

The endorsement of US President Donald Trump has also provided Ne-

tanyahu with an important political advantage. His supporters present the relationship as evidence of Israel's influence in Washington and argue that his experience is essential during a period of regional instability.

However, Netanyahu faces serious challenges on the domestic front. His coalition has lost political ground in several mainstream opinion polls, while opposition parties with different ideological positions are attempting to coordinate around a common objective: ending his premiership.

The opposition is far from ideologically united. It includes security hawks, centrists and left-leaning politicians who disagree on important questions of domestic and foreign policy. Their principal point of agreement is that Israel needs a change of leadership and a more accountable approach to governance.

Netanyahu's legal difficulties add another layer of uncertainty. He denies the bribery, fraud and breach-of-trust charges against him, which he argues are politically motivated. His ongoing corruption trial and request for a presidential pardon have kept the issue in the public spotlight.

A change of government could alter the political circumstances surrounding these disputes, although the legal process would remain subject to the applicable judicial framework. Netanyahu's opponents have made his departure from public life a condition for any arrangement that might bring the trial to an end.

The election therefore carries consequences beyond the immediate question of who will occupy the prime minister's office. It could determine whether Netanyahu continues to negotiate from a position of political authority or faces his legal and political challenges without the advantages of incumbency.

A fragmented opposition and the arithmetic of power

Even if Netanyahu's Likud fails to emerge as the largest party, removing him from office will not necessarily be straightforward. Israel's proportional electoral system makes coalition building essential, and a fragmented opposition may struggle to assemble a stable majority.

Arab political parties could hold a significant number of seats, but Netanyahu and several opposition leaders have ruled out relying on them as formal coalition partners. This political exclusion narrows the options available to parties seeking to replace the incumbent government.

The result could be a prolonged period of negotiations, an unstable coalition or another election if no political camp can secure a majority. Under such circumstances, Netanyahu could remain prime minister in a caretaker capacity while negotiations continue.

That possibility illustrates the difference between winning public support and securing the parliamentary numbers needed to govern. A party may perform strongly in the election yet remain unable to form a government if its potential partners cannot agree on a common programme.

For the opposition, defeating Netanyahu is only the first challenge. It must also demonstrate that its competing political factions can work together on security, the economy, religious exemptions and the Palestinian question.

What the result could mean for the Middle East

The election's regional consequences should not be exaggerated. A change of prime minister would not automatically produce a fundamental shift in Israeli policy, particularly on security and the future of Palestinian statehood.

Both Netanyahu and several leading opposition figures have expressed opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state under current con-

ditions. This creates a significant obstacle to diplomatic initiatives aimed at achieving a broader regional settlement.

Saudi Arabia's position on normalising relations with Israel has also been linked to progress towards Palestinian statehood. Consequently, even a new Israeli government could face difficulties in advancing a major diplomatic agreement unless it is prepared to address the Palestinian question in a more substantive way.

Washington will remain central to Israel's strategic calculations. Trump's support for Netanyahu has highlighted the close relationship between the two leaders, while differences over the future course of military action against Iran could become more pronounced

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Despite efforts over the last few decades, the plague of gender inequality persists. Women & girls continue to face violence, exclusion, discrimination & abuse.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Gender equality isn't a dream. It's a decision.

A decision the world needs to take.

~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations



under a different Israeli administration.

The next government will have to balance its security priorities with international diplomatic pressure, regional stability and the economic costs of prolonged confrontation. Whether Netanyahu remains in office or a successor takes over, these challenges will not disappear with the election.

Ultimately, Israel's vote is about more than the survival of one politician. It is a judgement on the government's handling of the October 7 attacks, its conduct of the subsequent conflicts, its approach to economic pressures and its willingness to accept institutional accountability.

Netanyahu's supporters believe his experience makes him indispensable at a time of continuing danger. His opponents argue that the country cannot rebuild public trust without a change in leadership and a transparent investigation into its gravest security failure.

The election may not immediately resolve Israel's internal divisions or its regional conflicts. But it will establish the political conditions under which the country confronts them. For Netanyahu, the question is whether a long record in power remains an asset or has become a liability. For Israel, the larger challenge is to determine whether its next chapter will be defined by the continuation of existing policies or by a renewed effort to combine security with accountability, economic stability and a credible diplomatic strategy.

Festivals should be a time of celebration, not a reminder of economic insecurity. The measure of effective economic management is not merely whether inflation remains within a numerical target, but whether families can meet their essential expenses without abandoning the small pleasures and traditions that give social life its meaning. The government must act with urgency, but also with foresight. Short-term relief can soften the immediate blow; only sustained improvements in agriculture, energy security, logistics and market efficiency can offer a lasting solution. India's festive cheer should not depend on temporary discounts or the willingness of small businesses to sacrifice their margins. It should rest on an economy in which rising prosperity is accompanied by stable prices and stronger purchasing power. That is the real test of inclusive growth.

Meghalaya: Mukul Sangma warns of possible militant regrouping, calls for police reforms



SHILLONG

Leader of the Opposition Dr Mukul Sangma has expressed concern over reports that former militant groups may be attempting to reorganise in Meghalaya, urging the state government to strengthen police preparedness, fill vacant posts and ensure that appointments and transfers remain free from political interference.

The concerns were raised during a meeting of the State Security Commission on October 28, which reviewed police operations and security challenges across the state.

Sangma stressed the need to improve the police force's operational capabilities and emergency response mechanisms to deal with

mob violence, civil disturbances and other security-related incidents. He called for strengthening the force to ensure a timely and effective response to emerging threats.

The opposition leader also emphasised that vacancies in the police department should be filled without delay. He argued that appointments and transfers must be insulated from political and external influence to safeguard administrative integrity and professional policing.

Sangma raised concerns over unauthorised influx and illegal immigration, calling for strict implementation of the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act, 2016.

He also highlighted the need for

stronger coordination between Assam and Meghalaya to address security concerns and maintain stability along their shared interstate boundary.

Referring to difficulties faced by residents along the India-Bangladesh border, Sangma pointed to landowners whose access to their properties has reportedly been restricted by border fencing. He stressed that the concerns of affected families must be addressed while maintaining effective border security.

The opposition leader also called for a thorough investigation into suspected illegal coal mining and transportation in Meghalaya.

Citing alleged discrepancies in official coal stock records, Sangma

raised concerns over possible irregularities and alleged that high-level patronage might be facilitating unlawful activities.

He called for a comprehensive probe to establish the facts, identify those responsible and ensure accountability.

The issues raised during the State Security Commission meeting placed police preparedness, possible militant regrouping, border management, immigration and suspected illegal coal operations at the centre of the discussion.

Sangma's concerns and allegations regarding militant activity and coal-related irregularities will require verification by the authorities.

Mizoram State Museum Inaugurated in Aizawl to Showcase Mizo Heritage

AIZAWL

Mizoram Art and Culture Minister C. Lalsawivunga on Wednesday inaugurated the Mizoram State Museum at the New Secretariat Complex in MINECO, Aizawl, marking a step towards preserving the state's cultural heritage, history and identity. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Lalmanpuia Punte, MLA and Adviser to the Chief Minister, along with senior officials, students and invited guests. Addressing the programme, Lalsawivunga thanked the Union Ministry of Culture for funding the museum building and the Smart City initiative under the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department for supporting its interior arrangements. He also acknowledged the contributions of officials and others involved in completing the project. Emphasising the role of museums in safeguarding cultural identity, the minister said they were not merely repositories of historical objects but institutions that preserve a community's traditions, history and way of life. He described museums as a link between the past and the present, helping people understand their heritage while supporting cultural preservation and development.

The minister said the Mizoram State Museum was designed as a multipurpose institution, housing a diverse collection of artefacts that could serve as an important learning resource for students and younger generations. He encouraged members of the Mizo community to visit the museum more frequently, observing that many of its visitors were tourists and people from other communities. Lalsawivunga also revealed that more than 50 per cent of the museum's collections had been donated by individuals. He appealed to people possessing historically or culturally significant objects to contribute them so that they could be preserved and displayed for public benefit. Stressing the need for collective participation, the minister said the museum represented Mizoram and its people, making its preservation and maintenance a shared responsibility.

Assam Rifles Chief Reviews Border Security, Fencing Progress in Manipur's Tengnoupal



IMPHAL

Assam Rifles Director General Lt Gen Vikas Lakhera on Wednesday reviewed the security situation and progress of border-fencing work in Manipur's Tengnoupal district, focusing on strengthening surveillance and preventing illegal cross-border activities.

During his visit, the Assam Rifles chief inspected the strategic border locations of Moreh and Chongiang, assessing ongoing infrastructure projects and operational preparedness along the India-Myanmar international boundary. Officials briefed Lt Gen Lakhera on the progress of fencing work, security arrangements and

measures being implemented to improve border surveillance. The inspection also covered operational challenges and infrastructure requirements in the sensitive border areas. The review comes amid continued efforts to strengthen border management and address security concerns along the international boundary. Lt Gen Lakhera also interacted with local residents during the visit, seeking their views on security-related issues and discussing the concerns of communities living in border areas. The interaction highlighted the importance of coordination between security forces and local communities in maintaining stability and addressing challenges along the border, officials said.

The visit forms part of the Assam Rifles' ongoing efforts to strengthen border security infrastructure and improve operational effectiveness in Manipur's border regions.

Nagaland pushes for complete PAP withdrawal ahead of Hornbill Festival



KOHIMA

Nagaland is pressing the Centre for the complete withdrawal of the Protected Area Permit (PAP) regime ahead of the Hornbill Festival, arguing that the restrictions affect foreign tourist arrivals, investment prospects and the state's broader economic growth. Tourism and Higher Education Minister Temjen Imna Along said

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had raised the issue with Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a recent visit to New Delhi, following discussions in the Nagaland Assembly in September.

Speaking on the sidelines of the inaugural inter-government college band competition, Campus Clash 2026, Along said Shah had assured Rio that he would exam-

ine the matter and consider possible steps at the earliest.

"Security and national issues are paramount," Along said, adding that the state government was capable of managing foreign tourist arrivals. Nagaland has been seeking the complete withdrawal of the permit regime to facilitate international tourism and open up wider economic opportunities. Along said easing the restrictions could attract more visitors, encourage investment, create business opportunities and enable educated unemployed youth to establish tourism-related enterprises. He expressed hope that the Centre would take a favourable decision before the Hornbill Festival, the state's flagship cultural event that draws visitors from across India and abroad.

The PAP regime requires foreign nationals to obtain special permits to visit designated protected areas. The restrictions have implications

for access to parts of the Northeast, where tourism is seen as a potential source of employment and economic growth.

Meanwhile, the Nagaland government is preparing to invite President Droupadi Murmu as the chief guest for the opening ceremony of the 10-day Hornbill Festival 2026, scheduled to begin on December 1. Along said the state was processing the necessary protocols, official documents and correspondence relating to the proposed presidential visit. He expressed hope that Murmu, India's first tribal President, would attend the inaugural ceremony, describing her possible presence as a significant occasion for Nagaland. The state is now looking towards the Centre for a decision on the PAP regime while making arrangements for the annual festival, which showcases the cultural traditions, crafts, music and heritage of Nagaland's communities.

Dimapur Restricts Diwali, Gurgurab Firecrackers to 8-10 PM



DIMAPUR

Dimapur Police have restricted the bursting of firecrackers during Diwali and Gurgurab to a two-hour window from 8 pm to 10 pm, warning that violations will invite legal action.

The restrictions will apply across Dimapur, Chumoukedima and Niuland districts, according to an advisory issued by the Commissioner of

Police, Dimapur, on Wednesday. Under the guidelines, firecrackers will also be permitted between 11.55 pm and 12.30 am on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

The advisory prohibits the bursting of firecrackers within 100 metres of designated silence zones, including hospitals, healthcare centres, educational institutions, courts and religious places.

It also bans fireworks that produce noise levels exceeding 125 dB(A) or a peak of 145 dB(C), measured at a distance of four metres from the point of bursting.

Online delivery of banned fireworks prohibited

Dimapur Police have directed e-commerce platforms and online marketplaces not to process orders for or deliver firecrackers within the three

districts. Online delivery of banned fireworks will invite action under applicable laws.

The sale of permitted green crackers will be allowed only through licensed traders holding valid permits, the advisory stated.

Residents have also been encouraged to opt for organised community fireworks displays at designated open grounds identified by the local administration. The move aims to reduce individual firecracker use, particularly in congested residential areas.

The Commissioner of Police has instructed officers-in-charge to carry out regular inspections of local markets, monitor compliance and take strict action against violations.

Police have urged residents to celebrate the festivals responsibly and in an environmentally conscious manner, emphasising that anyone found violating the prescribed restrictions will face penalties under the law.

BDF Seeks CM's Direct Intervention Over Sribhumi Clash, Demands Probe into Alleged Police Excesses

OUR CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR: The Barak Democratic Front (BDF) on Thursday demanded the direct intervention of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to restore normalcy in Sribhumi district following the recent clash during an immersion procession and allegations of police excesses.

In a press statement, BDF Convener Hrishikesh Dey said the administration and local public representatives had failed to handle the situation impartially, leading to growing mistrust among people in the Barak Valley.

In a video message, Dey referred to the public clarification by the Superintendent of Police of Sribhumi, earlier known as Karinganji, that the incident involved a clash between two groups of youths allegedly under the influence of alcohol and was not related to any ethnic conflict. Despite this clarification, he alleged that the incident was being given a political and communal colour.

Dey questioned the impartiality of the police action, claiming that several people allegedly assaulted at the spot and inside the police station had no direct involvement in the clash. He also expressed concern that Bengali people appeared to have been arrested, while the alleged involvement of members of both groups needed to be investigated fairly.

He said the 13 MLAs and three MPs representing the Barak Valley should have taken the initiative to ensure an impartial investigation, identify the actual offenders and rebuild trust between the two communities. However, he alleged that the elected representatives had failed to fulfil their responsibilities.

Dey also referred to Sribhumi district minister Krishnendu Paul's meeting with members of the Assamese community affected by the incident. While appreciating the minister's gesture of expressing sympathy and assuring action against those responsible, he questioned the absence of similar assurances regarding the injured



persons from the other side and those who allegedly faced police brutality.

The BDF convener also criticised Assam Jatiya Parishad leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi for allegedly attempting to gain political mileage from the incident. He said Gogoi should have consulted people from both communities and worked towards restoring harmony instead of organising a rally representing one community.

Meanwhile, BDF Media Cell Convener Jaydeep Bhattacharjee alleged that police excesses and the administration's handling of the situation had raised serious concerns about democratic rights and public confidence.

He cited the case of a poor businessman who had allegedly gone to the scene in search of his son but was beaten by police and detained at the police station for 18 hours. According to Bhattacharjee, the man later had to borrow Rs 20,000 to secure bail.

He further alleged that fear and pressure had prevented eyewitnesses and families of those allegedly subjected to police excesses from speaking freely to the media. He claimed that public anger over the administration's role and the response of local representatives had spread across the Barak Valley.

The BDF has placed four demands before the Chief Minister.

First, it has sought the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of cases against innocent persons who were not present at the scene and have already been granted bail. It has also demanded the release of other innocent persons allegedly detained under similar circumstances.

Second, the organisation has demanded a magisterial-level inquiry into the allegations of police brutality. It has called for legal action against personnel found guilty and compensation of at least Rs 1 lakh for each person subjected to unjustified torture.

Third, the BDF has demanded the immediate arrest of the actual offenders from both sides and their inclusion in the investigation.

Fourth, it has sought appropriate government action against certain media outlets in the Brahmaputra Valley that it accused of repeatedly portraying people from the Barak Valley as "Bangladeshis".

Bhattacharjee said the Barak Valley had a long history of coexistence, mutual respect and communal harmony among different communities. He urged the Chief Minister to intervene and take steps to prevent the controversy from escalating further.

The BDF said its demands were aimed at restoring public confidence, ensuring justice and bringing normalcy back to the district. The information was conveyed through a press statement issued by BDF Convener Debayan Deb.

Dr Basudev Singh Appointed DCCI North-East Unit President for Three Years



BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL: The Divyang Cricket Council of India (DCCI) has appointed Dr. Basudev Singh of Imphal, Manipur, as President of its North-East Unit for a three-year term, effective October 28, 2026. The appointment was approved by the DCCI Board of Directors at its meeting held on the same day.

As President, Dr. Singh will lead the council's activities across the eight North-Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. His responsibilities will include building the regional and state-level organisational structure, organising championships and selection trials, registering players on the national registry, and coordinating with State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities and sports departments.

Dr. Singh brings extensive experience in sports administration and public life. He is the Vice President of the Yoga Culture Federation of India and President of the Manipur Yoga Society. He has also

served as President of Manipur Hockey and Treasurer of the Manipur Olympic Association.

Besides his sporting responsibilities, he is the Organising Secretary of the 38th National Yogasana Championship 2026, scheduled to be held in Imphal, and President of the Manipur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Welcoming the appointment, DCCI Chairperson Rajesh Bhardwaj said the North-East had produced some of India's finest sports persons. He expressed confidence that Dr. Singh's experience in sports administration would help the council expand opportunities for divyang cricketers across all eight states.

Accepting the responsibility, Dr. Singh said sports had the power to unite and uplift people. He expressed his commitment to ensuring that cricketers with disabilities across the North-East received opportunities to play, compete and excel.

The Divyang Cricket Council of India Foundation is a not-for-profit company registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013. It works to develop, organise and promote cricket for persons with disabilities across the country. The organisation describes itself as a non-political sporting body.

Dr. Singh informed that in Barak Valley also a committee is going to be formed to Kickstart the movement as well across North-East region.

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‘Government choosing its voters’: CJP backs INDIA bloc November 1 rally against CEC



NEW DELHI

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Wednesday extended its support to the INDIA bloc’s November 1 rally demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

In a statement, the outfit alleged that the SIR exercise risked excluding eligible voters and undermining the principle that voters should choose their government, rather than the government choosing its voters.

“By undermining this very principle through SIR, Gyanesh Kumar has lost the trust required to oversee

free and fair elections. His resignation is therefore necessary to restore the credibility and independence of the Election Commission,” the CJP said. Invoking the Constituent Assembly’s commitment to universal adult franchise, the outfit said B R Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and other framers of the Constitution had placed their faith in the electorate when millions of Indians had never participated in an election.

“The idea was simple: bring more citizens into democracy, not keep them out of it,” it said.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke also announced the outfit’s support for the rally in a post on X, writ-

ing, “Gyanu must go! The Cockroach Janta Party extends its support to the INDIA Bloc’s November 1 rally. Nation above all!”

The outfit said the Election Commission was responsible for protecting every eligible citizen’s voting rights and should not create barriers to their exercise. “Our Constitution gave every adult citizen the right to vote. It is our responsibility to ensure that no eligible citizen is deprived of that right,” the statement said.

The CJP said it would support organisations campaigning for free and fair elections in the country. The statement ended with the slogans “Jai Bhim” and “Jai Hind”.

Five killed as Cyclone Arnab batters Andhra Pradesh; triggers floods and landslides in Odisha

TAMILNADU

Cyclone Arnab crossed the Andhra Pradesh coast early on, killing five people in related incidents and damaging roads, power infrastructure and crops, while heavy rain and strong winds battered southern Odisha, triggering landslides and flooding. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said advance preparations and evacuations had helped the state achieve its “zero casualty” objective.

The very severe cyclonic storm crossed the Andhra Pradesh-Yanam coast between 2 am and 8 am before weakening, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Heavy rainfall inundated low-lying areas across both states, uprooted trees and electric poles, disrupted transport and left thousands of hectares of agricultural land damaged.

In Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said five people had died in incidents involving electrocution and a wall collapse. He sought central assistance and said a preliminary damage assessment would be submitted to the Centre, followed by a comprehensive report.

In Odisha, Gajapati was the worst-affected district among eight initially placed on alert, Majhi said. The state evacuated 43,827 people to 634 relief centres, while 2,037 centres had been kept ready.

Andhra: Five killed, power infrastructure damaged

Hundreds of villages across more than 10 districts, including Eluru, West Godavari and Vizianagaram, bore the brunt of the cyclone, with several locations recording more than 200 mm of rain and low-lying areas becoming inundated.

Addressing a press conference at the Real Time Governance System (RTGS) in the secretariat, Naidu said one person died in Visakhapatnam after coming into contact with a live electric wire following a tree’s fall on it. A woman died in rural Visakhapatnam after an electric pole fell on her, while an uprooted palm tree killed a man in Bhimavaram. A woman died of electrocution in Anakapalli and another person was killed when a wall collapsed in Sakinetipalli.

“Despite many efforts, five people died today. We have been telling, some cooperated, some were casual and ventured out and misfortune will strike us,” said Naidu.



The chief minister said the cyclone had disrupted normal life across the state. He promised to visit the worst-affected Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema and West Godavari districts.

Naidu said he had written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking assistance and briefed him on the cyclone’s intensity and its impact on Andhra Pradesh. He also sought a visit by a central team to assess the damage. Standing crops, including paddy, suffered extensive damage.

Naidu said coconut plantations and other horticultural crops were also affected, with nearly 50,000 trees uprooted in Konaseema and West Godavari districts. An official press release said 33,000 coconut trees had been uprooted in Konaseema alone.

Thousands of acres of paddy fields were flattened by strong winds and heavy rain. A video of a banana farmer salvaging a bunch of bananas from his inundated plantation also went viral.

Naidu said the government had given special attention to maintaining drinking water supplies and sanitation in affected areas. Families whose homes were inundated would receive 25 kg of rice, while affected weavers and fishermen would receive 50 kg. The government would also distribute one kilogram each of onions, cooking oil and red gram dal to affected people.

Those who took refuge in cyclone shelters would receive Rs 1,000 per person, with assistance capped at Rs 3,000 per family. Naidu also announced financial assistance for small businesses, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and other affected groups under different categories.

A decision on the relief measures

would be taken at a virtual Cabinet meeting scheduled for Thursday, he said.

Naidu said the state’s average rainfall deficit had narrowed from 39% to 27% following the downpour. He added that 30,000 government officials had been deployed for relief work.

Around 15,000 electric poles were uprooted, Naidu said, adding that power had been restored across the state except in Konaseema and West Godavari districts. Bhimavaram, the headquarters of West Godavari district, had been without electricity since Tuesday night.

The chief minister instructed officials to clear all uprooted trees from villages by Wednesday night to restore transport links.

The IMD said rainfall exceeding 200 mm was recorded at several locations in Anakapalli, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts between 8.30 am on October 27 and 4 am on October 28. Kamuripalem in Anakapalli recorded the highest rainfall at 261.5 mm, followed by KVBR School in Vizianagaram district at 259.74 mm and the 16th Police Battalion area in Visakhapatnam at 259.06 mm.

The IMD’s Cyclone Warning Centre issued a moderate to high flash flood risk warning for 13 districts until 5.30 am on Thursday. The warning covered Bapatla, Guntur, NTR, Krishna, Eluru, East Godavari, Kakinada, Alluri Sitarama Raju, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Anakapalli, Parvathipuram Manyam and West Godavari districts.

Odisha: Nearly 44,000 evacuated, heavy rain forecast

Heavy rain and strong winds triggered by Cyclone Arnab uprooted trees and electric poles, flooded roads and

caused landslides in southern Odisha, officials said.

Reviewing the situation after the cyclone crossed the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh coast, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said advance preparations had helped the state meet its “zero casualty” objective despite the damage.

“Though it was initially expected that the cyclone would make landfall on Wednesday forenoon, it hit the Andhra Pradesh coast much earlier, around 2 am. Our early preparations and evacuation saved many lives,” he said.

He warned that Malkangiri could be affected further as the cyclone moved across Odisha after causing extensive damage in Andhra Pradesh.

“The government was focusing on Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur districts,” he said.

“We have evacuated 43,827 people to 634 relief centres and are providing them with essentials such as food, water and medicines,” he said, adding that 2,037 relief centres had been kept ready.

Majhi said eight ministers, including the two deputy chief ministers, and seven senior Indian Administrative Service officers were stationed in affected districts to monitor the situation.

Schools and anganwadi centres in 16 districts remained closed on Wednesday because of the cyclone.

Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari said the cyclone had disrupted train services, with more than 50 trains cancelled along the eastern coast. He said the next 12 hours would be critical as the impact intensified.

Bhubaneswar airport director Prasanna Pradhan said flight operations were largely normal, but a nine-seater service on the Bhubaneswar-Jeypore-Visakhapatnam route was cancelled for the day. Flights from Chennai and Hyderabad to Bhubaneswar took alternative routes to avoid the affected Visakhapatnam airspace, he said.

The Regional Meteorological Centre in Bhubaneswar said the cyclone had weakened after crossing the Andhra Pradesh-Yanam coast but had triggered heavy to extremely heavy rainfall across southern Odisha over the preceding 24 hours.

Mahendragarh in Gajapati district recorded the highest rainfall at 249.9 mm, followed by Pottangi in Koraput at 188 mm, Mohana in Gajapati at 168.8 mm, Ganjam at 161.4 mm and Similiguda in Koraput at 143.1 mm.

INTERNATIONAL

US warns allies to prepare for possible Iran strikes, retaliation after midterm elections



WASHINGTON

US officials have told several West Asian countries and regional allies to be prepared for potential renewed military action against Iran after next week’s midterm elections in the United States, as well as the possibility that Iran will attempt to retaliate against them, according to two diplomats briefed on the matter.

Both of the diplomats spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment about the sensitive warnings conveyed by US diplomats and defense officials.

President Donald Trump has not made a final decision on whether to carry out new strikes against Iran, the diplomats stressed. The president, however, has repeatedly said that he is weighing ordering new military action once the critical Nov. 3 elections in

the United States are over.

Those threats and the fresh US urgings for allies to prepare for potential retaliation are putting the region on alert that a return to major operations could now be on the horizon.

The White House and US officials declined to comment.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Wednesday in a post on X that Tehran “continues to give diplomacy a chance to succeed” and is working with mediators to review ideas that Tehran included in a proposal floated last month, summarily rejected by Trump, that the Iranians still want to see used as the basis to return to a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates foreign ministry issued a statement urging the sides to “exercise wisdom and pursue political solutions to help contain tensions” and prevent

a return to full-scale operations in the war that began in late February.

The US has told regional allies that the new round of military action could last for several days, but regional officials are bracing for Iran and its proxy groups to retaliate, leading to a fight that could last even longer, the diplomats said.

The allies have also been urged by U.S. officials to take precautionary measures in anticipation that Iran’s response will include retaliatory strikes on energy facilities and other crucial infrastructure.

While the US has not carried out a strike against Iran since early September, the situation in West Asia has become more complicated.

The conflict has spread, with Iran-backed Houthi rebels carrying out attacks on Saudi Arabia’s oil infrastructure and airports. A Saudi-led coalition has responded with its own deadly attacks on Houthi-held territory in Yemen.

The Wall Street Journal reported earlier on Gulf nations being briefed to be prepared for potential escalation by the US.

It’s unclear how soon after Election Day that the US military would be ready to potentially resume strikes.

The Pentagon late last month deployed the USS Theodore Roosevelt, along with a series of amphibious landing ships with Marines aboard – roughly 9,000 troops in all – from San Diego to the Persian Gulf to bolster the U.S. military in the region.

At the time, one U.S. official said this deployment could lead to an unusually high naval presence of more than 20,000 sailors and Marines, as well as hundreds of aircraft, in the region, which has only occurred a handful of times in the last two decades. The Navy had three carrier strike groups in the Middle East in

April for the first time since 2003.

Trump, who has focused in recent weeks on campaigning for Republicans ahead of the Nov. 3 elections, has been evasive about what he plans to do next with Iran.

The war has proved to be a heavy weight on Republican candidates as they make their case to voters who are fatigued by rising gasoline prices, a byproduct of the war that’s driven up costs across nearly every sector in the global economy.

The cost of fighting the Iran war to American taxpayers has grown to \$47.1 billion, according to the latest estimate the Pentagon has provided to Congress.

While campaigning for Republicans, Trump has consistently assured voters that the war’s end is near, while also threatening that a new round of bombing could be coming once the election passes.

During a campaign stop in Lubbock, Texas, on Tuesday, Trump said a conclusive end to the eight-month-old conflict could be coming “in a couple of weeks, if you don’t mind.”

“Somebody asked me before, when will the war in Iran end?” Trump said earlier in the same address. “I said, ‘Whenever I want it to end.’ It’ll be very quick, but we have to have it end properly, with total and complete – a total statement, they will never have a nuclear weapon.”

Trump may be looking at a post-election timeline for possible action, but the region is on edge that Tehran could do something provocative before then – especially if they feel U.S. actions are imminent, said Jonathan Schanzer, executive director at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a hawkish Washington think tank.

“Why would they wait until after the elections here ... if they could initiate it and potentially gain the upper hand?” he said.

North Korea fires missile barrage toward the sea as tensions with South rise



SEOUL

North Korea launched a barrage of ballistic missiles toward the sea Thursday, South Korea’s military said, days after the North threatened to resume front-line propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts and deploy new weapons along the rivals’ tense border.

The launches also followed leader Kim Jong Un’s surprise weekend visit to China, the North’s main ally and economic pipeline, to push for greater cooperation.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected about 10 short-range ballistic missiles fired from the North’s eastern coastal town of Wonsan. It said South Korea’s military bolstered its surveillance posture and was closely exchanging information about the launches with the U.S. and Japan.

Animosity between the Koreas has deepened after last

month’s land mine blasts that injured three South Korean soldiers. Seoul accused North Korea of planting mines south of the military demarcation line that caused the Sept. 21 blasts, but Pyongyang has denied responsibility for the explosions and warned of retaliation if provoked.

Last week, North Korea said it would restart propaganda broadcasts and deploy new weapons systems along the border in protest of what it called repeated warning shots by South Korean troops at border areas. South Korea later proposed talks on clarifying the border to prevent accidental clashes, but North Korea hasn’t responded.

Thursday’s launches were the latest in a series of weapons tests by North Korea in recent weeks, which involved submarine-launched cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles. Experts say North Korea

likely aimed to pressure the U.S. into making bigger concessions as President Donald Trump expressed his desire to restore diplomacy with Kim.

On Saturday, Kim visited the Chinese border city of Dandong via a newly inaugurated bridge to pay respect at a memorial marking China’s support of North Korea during the 1950-53 Korean War. It was his sixth visit to China since taking office in late 2011.

At the memorial, Kim said North Korea will firmly carry forward “the invincible” friendship with China. Later he met top Chinese Communist Party official Wang Huning and reaffirmed his resolve to develop bilateral cooperation.

Kim has recently taken steps to bolster ties with China after years of prioritizing ties with Russia by sending troops and munitions to support its war against Ukraine.

Manipur Proposes Rs10,000 Annual Incentive for Pony Owners, Mobile Veterinary Units Treat 7,205 Cases

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The Manipur government has proposed increasing the annual financial incentive for Manipuri Pony owners to ₹10,000 per animal as part of efforts to conserve the state's endangered indigenous breed and preserve its centuries-old polo heritage.

The proposal comes alongside the introduction of a Pony Registration System aimed at systematically documenting the animals and strengthening conservation measures. The pony population has reportedly shown an encouraging increase this year.

Dr L. Arunkumar Singh, Director of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry, outlined the government's initiatives during a press briefing organised by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations under its 'Meet the Press' series.

He said Polo Heritage had been identified as Manipur's unique selling proposition under the regional development framework reviewed in coordination with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. A joint project focusing on genetic-based selective breeding and infrastructure development has also been approved to protect the indigenous breed.

The state had earmarked ₹30 lakh in its annual budget for the initiative, which previously benefited 1,150 pony owners.

Mobile veterinary units handle over 7,200 cases

Highlighting the expansion of doorstep animal healthcare, Dr Arunkumar said Manipur's 33 Mobile Veterinary Units had handled 7,205 cases since April 1 this year.

Launched in July 2024, the service can be accessed through the toll-free helpline 1962. Of the total cases handled, 693 were resolved through teleconsultations, while field teams

carried out visits to address 6,512 cases.

The State Veterinary Hospital in Imphal treats between 80 and 100 animal patients daily. Plans are also underway to install diagnostic X-ray equipment at the facility to improve veterinary diagnostic services.

Vaccination drive targets major animal diseases

The department is continuing disease prevention and control measures under national programmes. Under the National Animal Disease Control Programme, which aims to eradicate Foot and Mouth Disease by 2030, Manipur has completed seven rounds of vaccination, with the eighth round currently underway.

The Centre has also approved the strengthening of key border check posts at Mao and Jiribam.

Vaccination programmes against Lumpy Skin Disease, African Swine Fever, Haemorrhagic Septicaemia, Black Quarter and rabies are continuing under the Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases scheme.

Insurance, breeding and infrastructure expansion

To improve livestock productivity and protect farmers against financial losses, 2,456 animals have been covered under the third phase of the National Livestock Insurance Scheme since April.

The government has also received approval to establish a Pig Semen Processing Unit in consultation with the ICAR-National Research Centre on Pig in Guwahati. Under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission, artificial insemination infrastructure is being expanded, alongside the deployment of Multipurpose Artificial Insemination Technicians in Rural India.

Several infrastructure projects are being implemented with support from the North Eastern Council and the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund.

Construction of five modern slaughterhouses is underway in Churachandpur, Senapati, Ukhrul, Imphal East and Imphal West to improve access to hygienic meat

and strengthen slaughter-house facilities.

The department has completed a goat farm and is upgrading the Veterinary Field Assistant Training Centre at Khumbong. Water supply improvements, including borewell facilities, have also been completed at state farms in Ningthoukhong and Lamphelpat.

The government plans to establish 87 Pashu Aushadhi Vikray Kendra pharmacies across state, district and block levels to improve access to affordable veterinary medicines. Under the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment, ₹100 crore has been earmarked.

The state has met five of the six prescribed eligibility criteria, including digital infrastructure mapping through the Bharat Pashudhan and Dairy Bikash portals.

The state's only Liquid Nitrogen Plant, located at Porompat, continues to support livestock breeding programmes across Manipur.

Joint Directors Dr T. Bidyarani Devi and Dr Gojen Singh, along with Deputy Director Jairaj Pukhrambam, were also present at the press briefing.

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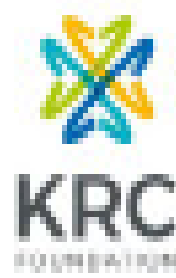
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