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PERSPECTIVE

A study shows that walking is good for your mood, regardless of your surroundings.

Biren Singh Visits JNIMS, Condemns Killing of Two Naga Men, Questions Security Arrangements

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK
IMPHAL:Former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh visited the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal, where the mortal remains of two Naga men, allegedly killed in an incident at Makui and Tapon villages, were kept.

During his visit, Biren Singh condemned the violence and questioned the security arrangements, raising concerns over the failure to ensure the safety of civilians. The deceased were identified as Dibambou Ringkangmai, 48, of Makui village, and Ajinbou Ringkangmai, 52. Their mortal remains were brought to the JNIMS mortuary on Sunday. The incident has triggered serious concern among tribal communities, particularly over reports that Ajinbou's head was missing. The Working Committee of the Joint Tribes Council (JTC-Manipur), representing the Inpui, Liangmai, Rongmei and Zeme communities, has demanded the recovery of the missing head. The committee has also issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the governments of India and Manipur, seeking action in the matter. The committee further announced that the post-mortem examinations of both deceased would remain suspended until the missing head was recovered and handed over to the family for a dignified burial. Biren Singh's visit came amid growing concern over the killings, with demands for accountability and questions over the security arrangements and protection of civilians in the affected areas.

WHO SAID WHAT



This isn't a movement. It's a regime-change project by Dimagi Naxals

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

Haflong looks to emerge as Northeast's next big hill destination

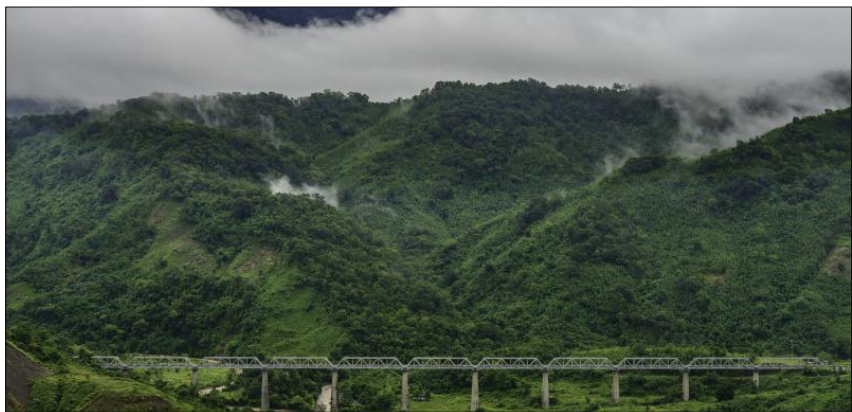
GUWAHATI

As travellers across the Northeast explore alternatives to established hill destinations, Assam's Dima Hasao is seeking to draw greater attention to Haflong, offering a mix of rolling hills, tranquil landscapes, indigenous culture, local cuisine and adventure tourism.

The renewed push comes amid changing travel preferences and recent violence in neighbouring Meghalaya, which has brought the question of tourist destination choices across the region into focus. Dima Hasao hopes to use the opportunity to strengthen its position on the Northeast's tourism map while ensuring that the benefits reach local communities.

"Dima Hasao is at an important stage in its tourism journey," said Joshringdao Phonglo, chairman of the tourism department under the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC).

The district's tourism potential was evident in 2021, when it recorded an estimated 1.5 lakh visitors. However, the recovery suffered setbacks in 2022 following natural disasters that disrupted tourism activities, adding to the challenges left by the COVID-19 pandemic.



The latest effort is aimed at rebuilding visitor interest and expanding tourism circuits across the district.

Haflong, Assam's only hill station, remains central to the district's tourism ambitions. Its green slopes, panoramic views and relatively quiet surroundings offer an alternative to more frequently visited destinations in the Northeast.

But the district's appeal extends beyond its landscape. Its indigenous communities, cultural traditions, food and local

way of life offer opportunities for tourism experiences rooted in the region's distinct identity.

Adventure tourism could provide another avenue for growth, while the development of wider tourism circuits may encourage visitors to spend more time exploring the district instead of limiting their trips to Haflong town.

For local residents, a sustained tourism revival could create opportunities in homestays, transport, food services,

handicrafts and other small businesses. Such gains, however, would depend on whether visitor growth is supported by reliable infrastructure, accommodation and services.

Turning potential into sustainable growth

Dima Hasao's challenge is to convert its natural and cultural assets into a dependable tourism economy. Better connectivity, visitor facilities, promotion of lesser-known attractions and support for community-based tourism will be important to that effort.

The district must also ensure that tourism development remains sensitive to its environment and indigenous heritage. Unplanned construction and excessive commercialisation could undermine the very qualities that make the region attractive.

With its earlier visitor numbers demonstrating an existing appetite for the destination, Haflong and the wider Dima Hasao district are looking to regain momentum. The immediate task is to rebuild confidence among travellers and develop tourism in a way that provides lasting benefits to the people who call the hills home.



STAY ENRICHED

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 897 | SILCHAR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

‘Witch hunt by khap panchayat’: Bimol Akoijam challenges JNU dismissal, alleges denial of due process

Congress MP denies sexual harassment allegations, questions inquiry procedure and claims action against him was linked to his views on Manipur and the Northeast



IMPHAL

Congress Lok Sabha MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam has accused Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) of denying him due process in an inquiry into sexual harassment allegations, describing the proceedings as a “witch hunt” and alleging that the action against him was intended to silence his views on Manipur and the Northeast.

Speaking to media Akoijam, who was dismissed from his position as a JNU faculty member, claimed that the university administration acted in haste and violated the principles of natural justice during the inquiry.

The MP alleged that the inquiry report was submitted directly to the Vice-Chancellor without being shared with him. He further claimed that the dismissal order followed within hours of the inquiry

being declared closed.

“At 12.40 pm, they sent me an email stating that the inquiry was closed. Within an hour, they prepared the report and submitted it to the Vice-Chancellor, not to me. Shortly after, the dismissal order was issued, and by 2.30 pm, everything was leaked to the press,” Akoijam said.

He denied the sexual harassment allegations and rejected the suggestion that he had failed to cooperate with the inquiry. According to him, the dispute originated in academic and pedagogical matters, and he questioned the manner in which the complaints were handled.

Questions complainants and inquiry procedure

Akoijam also questioned the composition of the group of complainants. He claimed that 15 of the 97 students concerned had signed the complaint, including three male

students.Raising questions about the applicability of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, commonly known as the POSH Act, he challenged the inclusion of male students in the complaint process.

“This is a complete mockery of a system established to ensure gender justice,” he said.

The MP also disputed the inquiry’s findings regarding his alleged non-cooperation, maintaining that he would place relevant records before the court to substantiate his claims.

His objections centre on whether he was given an adequate opportunity to respond to the allegations and whether the university followed the prescribed procedures before taking disciplinary action.

Akoijam alleges political motive

The Congress MP further alleged

that the proceedings were political-ly motivated and linked the action against him to his public statements on the situation in Manipur and wider issues affecting the North-east.

However, these claims represent Akoijam’s account of the matter and have not been independently established in the information available.

The allegations against him, his denial and his objections to the inquiry procedure remain distinct aspects of the dispute. The university’s response to his claims, including its justification for the dismissal and its account of the inquiry process, was not available in the report.

The case raises questions about the procedures followed in disciplinary inquiries, the rights of those accused and the need to ensure that complaints of workplace sexual harassment are examined fairly and in accordance with the law.

KNA-B denies operating in India, accuses Manipur government of shifting blame



GUWAHATI

The Myanmar-based Kuki National Army-Burma (KNA-B) has denied having any operational presence in India, accusing security agencies and the Manipur government of using the group as a scapegoat for alleged failures to maintain law and order.

In a statement issued on October 12, the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), which describes itself as the Government of Kuki State General Headquarters, said the KNA-B's military activities were confined to Myanmar, where it claimed to be fighting for the restoration of democracy and the protection of civilians.

The organisation dismissed as fabricated recent intelligence reports alleging that two KNA-B cadres had been killed in Manipur’s border district of Kamjong.

The denial comes amid heightened security along the India-Myanmar border, where reports of armed movement have raised concerns in several border districts.

The KNO asserted that the KNA-B had never conducted military operations on Indian soil and maintained no operational links with Kuki armed factions based in India.

Addressing concerns over ethnic ties between Kuki communities on both sides of the international border, the organisation argued that shared ethnicity should not be treated as evidence of cross-border militancy.

The statement also referred to historical instances of factional conflict involving armed groups operating across international borders, including the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak-Mui-vah (NSCN-IM).The organisation maintained that Kuki communities in India had democratic avenues to raise their grievances and were pursuing political negotiations to address the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur.The KNA-B's denial comes against the backdrop of continuing tensions in Manipur, particularly in the hill districts bordering Myanmar, where the movement and activities of armed groups remain a sensitive security concern.

Kamjong has recently witnessed violence and reports of fatalities amid clashes in the wider Kamjong-Ukhrul region, prompting heightened attention to security along the border.

The group's statement represents its response to the allegations. Its claims that it has no operational presence in India and that the reports of cadre killings were fabricated have not been independently verified in the information available.

The competing claims underline the challenges facing security agencies in monitoring the porous India-Myanmar border, where ethnic ties, armed activity across the frontier and the wider conflict in Manipur continue to complicate the security situation.

Cachar Swimmer Ngangbam Birola Singha Wins Five Silver Medals at Asian Masters' Championship



SILCHAR

Bringing laurels to Cachar district and the Assam Territorial Army, Ngangbam Birola Singha, a Subedar of 119 Infantry Battalion (Territorial Army) Assam, won five silver medals at the 2nd Asian Masters' Swimming Championship held in Bengaluru from October 4 to 11, 2026.

Singha showcased his swimming prowess in five events, securing silver medals in the 100-metre freestyle, 200-metre freestyle, 400-metre freestyle, 200-metre individual medley and 4x50-metre freestyle relay.

His achievement has brought pride to the Rhino fraternity and the Terriers family, with his dedication, discipline and sporting spirit earning recognition. His performance at the continental-level championship has also brought attention to the sporting talent emerging from the Barak Valley.

Singha hails from Binnakandi Part-II (Mayai Leikai) under Lakhimpur police station in Cachar district, Assam. He is the son of Ngangbam Rukini Singha. His achievement is being celebrated by members of the Territorial Army fraternity, who have congratulated him on his success.

His five-medal haul stands as a notable accomplishment for the region and highlights his commitment to competitive swimming alongside his service in the Territorial Army.

Manipur Police arrest 13 in ‘Operation Dignity’ over alleged circulation of intimate images



IMPHAL

Manipur Police have arrested 13 people, including a child in conflict with the law, for allegedly circulating, trading and monetising intimate videos and photographs of women without their consent through multiple Telegram channels.

The case, being investigated under the codename ‘Operation Dignity’, also involves the alleged distribution of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), police said.

Acting on credible information about the circulation of the material, police registered a first information report (FIR) at Moirang police station and launched an investigation into the alleged online network.

During the operation, police seized 14 mobile phones and one laptop suspected to be connected to the case.

Investigators are now working to identify the wider network, trace suspected financial

transactions and determine whether other women or children were targeted.

Twelve adults, one child held

The 12 adult arrestees have been identified as N. Rajesh Singh alias Maipakchao (21), H. Dhanajit Singh alias Taison (19), S. Saphaba Singh (19), Th. Cavendish Singh alias Ingocha (21), H. Rojit Singh (19), M. Clinton Singh (28), Kh. Bipin Singh (31), S. Simpson Singh (34), A. Aria Singh (24), S. Alexander Singh (31), K. Rakesh Singh (18) and Ch. Robert Singh (27).

The thirteenth person is a child in conflict with the law. Police have not publicly identified the child.Of the 12 adults, five are from Bishnupur district, three from Imphal West, two from Kachhing and one each from Thoubal and another district not specified in the information released.

Investigation focuses on wider online network

The alleged circulation of non-consensual intimate material has prompted investigators to examine the digital devices seized during the operation and trace the channels through which the content was shared and allegedly monetised.

The investigation is continuing, and police are seeking to establish the extent of the network and identify any additional victims.

The allegations against those arrested remain subject to investigation and judicial proceedings.



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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 897

RATE HIKES
WON'T RESCUE
BANKS

India's banking sector faces a paradox. Interest rates are rising, corporate credit is expanding, and the economy continues to project strong growth. Yet banks remain caught between mounting funding costs, long-term loan commitments and the persistent risk of corporate defaults. The Reserve Bank of India's decision to tighten monetary policy may help contain inflationary pressures, but it will not, by itself, resolve the structural weaknesses that have made large corporate lending a source of concern.

The central question is not simply whether higher interest rates will improve banks' profitability. It is whether the banking system can continue financing capital-intensive corporate projects without compromising the interests of depositors, small businesses and ordinary borrowers.

Corporate credit has crossed ₹69 lakh crore, rising from ₹63.19 lakh crore in FY2024-25 to ₹69.22 lakh crore in FY2025-26. Loans to large industries account for approximately ₹32.3 lakh crore, with credit to the segment reportedly growing by 17.7 per cent year-on-year. Infrastructure, manufacturing, energy and green technology have driven much of this demand. These investments are essential to economic development, but their scale also raises questions about how banks assess risk, allocate capital and recover money when projects fail to deliver.

The RBI's reported decision to raise the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.50 per cent on October 7, 2026, marks a shift towards tighter monetary conditions. The implications extend well beyond the financial markets. Higher policy rates can increase borrowing costs across the economy, making housing, vehicle and personal loans more expensive. Businesses may postpone investment, while households could find themselves paying more to finance consumption. For banks, however, the consequences are less straightforward. Higher lending rates can improve interest income, but the benefit depends on how quickly banks can reprice their loans compared with their deposits. If competition for household savings forces lenders to offer higher deposit rates, the additional income from lending may be offset by a rising cost of funds. A rate increase is therefore no automatic guarantee of healthier bank balance sheets. The pressure on deposits is particularly significant. As households increasingly explore mutual funds and equity markets, banks are finding it harder to mobilise low-cost savings. This creates an uncomfortable incentive: lenders must protect their margins while competing for funds and maintaining credit growth. If that competition encourages excessive risk-taking in retail or corporate lending, the immediate gains could eventually translate into higher losses.

The more fundamental problem lies in the concentration of credit among large corporate borrowers. Reliance Industries, the Adani Group, Bharti Airtel, JSW Steel, Tata Steel and Vedanta operate across sectors that require enormous and often long-term investments. Ports, power plants, telecommunications networks, refineries and industrial facilities cannot generate returns overnight. Their financing needs are legitimate, but the risks must be measured against the duration of the projects, the borrowers' repayment capacity and the availability of alternative sources of capital.

Banks are particularly vulnerable when short-term deposits finance projects that may take decades to generate adequate cash flows. This maturity mismatch can leave lenders exposed to liquidity pressures even when their loan portfolios appear substantial. Funds committed to long-term projects cannot always be recovered or redeployed when fresh credit demand emerges elsewhere in the economy. The consequences are felt most acutely by smaller borrowers. When large corporate exposures absorb capital and liquidity, banks have less flexibility to extend credit to micro, small and medium enterprises. These businesses frequently depend on bank loans to finance working capital, purchase equipment, pay employees and expand production. Restricting their access to affordable credit can undermine employment and entrepreneurship, weakening the wider economy that banks are supposed to support.

The problem becomes more serious when corporate borrowers default. Over the past 12 financial years, banks have reportedly written off nearly ₹10 lakh crore in loans to large corporations and the services sector. A write-off can clean up a bank's balance sheet for accounting purposes and create room for fresh lending, but it does not necessarily mean the money has been recovered. The distinction between removing a bad loan from the books and recovering public money must remain central to any assessment of banking health.

Recovery through insolvency proceedings, including mechanisms under the National Company Law Tribunal, has historically been limited. If recoveries remain substantially below the amounts owed, the gap raises difficult questions about the effectiveness of resolution procedures, the quality of lending decisions and the accountability of those responsible for approving large exposures. The burden of failure cannot be allowed to become an invisible cost borne by ordinary depositors. Banks mobilise savings from millions of households, many of which depend on interest income for financial security. When large loans turn bad, provisions and losses can erode profits, restrict future lending and weaken confidence in the banking system. Although depositors do not automatically bear every corporate loss directly, persistent financial stress can affect the returns banks offer and the services they are able to provide.

Nor should the argument be reduced to a choice between corporate investment and financial prudence. India needs infrastructure, industrial expansion and energy-transition projects. Large companies can deliver investments that smaller enterprises cannot undertake independently. But the economic importance of a borrower must not become a substitute for rigorous credit assessment. No company should receive favourable treatment merely because its projects are large, politically prominent or associated with national development priorities.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good, just because it's accepted by a majority." - Booker T. Washington

SWISS PRESIDENT'S
VISIT TO INDIA: A STEP
TOWARDS STRONGER
BILATERAL RELATIONS



DR D. K. GIRI

Responding to a question, Swiss Confederation President Guy Parmelin said, "It is a pleasure to return to India so soon, and it is also a testament to the excellent state of our bilateral relations." Parmelin is in India on a three-day state visit. This is his second visit to the country, following his participation in the AI Impact Summit in February this year. It is understandable that several countries, particularly those in the West, are rediscovering India in view of its rapidly expanding market.

On October 7, the World Bank raised its GDP growth forecast for India to 7.1 per cent for FY27 in its October 2026 India Development Update. This is the fastest projected growth rate among the world's major economies. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a capital-intensive, technology-driven country like Switzerland should seek to engage seriously with the Indian market. Parmelin said, "The objective of my visit this time is to strengthen cooperation and unlock new opportunities for both our countries and our people."

Parmelin's visit must also be viewed against the backdrop of the India-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), which completed one year of implementation on October 1, 2026. TEPA was signed on March 10, 2024, following 16 years of negotiations between India and the four EFTA countries-Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. It is worth recalling that EFTA committed to investing \$100 billion over 15 years and creating one million direct jobs.

Switzerland is a leading member of EFTA and India's largest trading and investment partner within the bloc. The visit provides an opportunity to review the progress of TEPA, and its timing coincides with the second India-EFTA Prosperity Summit scheduled to be held in New Delhi on October 7.

The information shared by Sibi George, Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs, during a media briefing on October 5 indicates that progress is being made on the ground, beyond formal policy frameworks. More than 340 Swiss companies have a presence in India through subsidiaries, joint ventures or liaison offices. Of these, 110 companies have established manufacturing operations, while 30 have set up research and development (R&D) centres. Another 74 companies use India as an export hub for other markets.

Investments made or under consideration by Swiss companies cover a wide range of sectors, including transport and logistics, financial services, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, technology, precision instruments and electronics. Since 2024, Swiss companies and businesses from other EFTA countries have also undertaken 150 promotional activities.

Last Monday, TEPA moved to the next stage as India and Switzerland signed a series of significant agreements. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described TEPA as an "ambitious blueprint" for investment, innovation, jobs and shared prosperity. Five memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were announced across several areas, including sustainable infrastructure development, exchanges of young professionals, innovation, technology transfer and entrepreneurship. The human dimension of the partnership is particularly promising. The Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement, especially its Young Professionals Scheme, will facilitate exchanges of young professionals seeking temporary employment in the other country, enabling them to enhance their professional and language skills in their respective fields. Young Indians looking to work abroad for better opportunities, apply their skills and gain exposure to new environments are likely to find the scheme particularly useful.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the Young Professionals Scheme provides for the exchange of 300 individuals per country annually, with the number potentially rising to 500. It also stipulates timelines of 30 and 90 days for verification of nationality and residence status. For a country with an average age of around 28, this represents a significant opportunity.

An intent document has also been signed between India's Department of Science and Technology and its Swiss counterpart, the Swiss National Science Foundation. The objective is to promote long-term cooperation between Indian and Swiss research communities by supporting exploratory scientific collaboration, building partnerships for future joint research and establishing a comprehensive framework to sustain long-term initiatives in mutually agreed priority areas.

This is particularly important because India needs such partnerships in R&D, given that it invests considerably less in innovative research than many Western countries. India spends approximately 0.7 per cent of its GDP on R&D, compared with more than 3 per cent in Switzerland. The development of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic may have been an exceptional achievement, but it earned considerable appreciation worldwide. Swiss precision in research and India's scale of talent could prove complementary strengths.

On the Indian side, pharmaceutical companies have raised some concerns regarding intellectual property provisions. They fear that such restrictions could affect access to affordable generic medicines. The Swiss side has clarified that these concerns are unfounded. TEPA does not restrict access to medicines; on the contrary, it facilitates the availability of low-cost drugs. However, established standards and procedures must be respected.

Switzerland brings considerable expertise in pharmaceutical research and innovation, while India has a strong manufacturing base, scientific talent, excellence in information technology and a rapidly expanding biotechnology sector. With greater India-Switzerland cooperation, India could emerge as a pharmaceutical hub not only for generic medicines but also for novel biologics. Modi said that particular attention had been given to market access for Indian agricultural products, pharmaceuticals,

textiles and engineering goods.

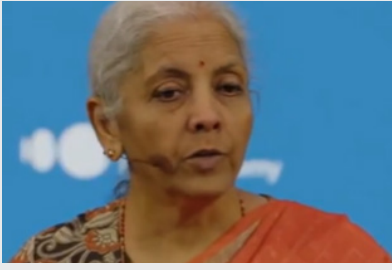
Another issue discussed during the visit was the exchange of financial account information between the two countries. For Indians, Swiss banks have long been associated with black money and undisclosed wealth. The automatic exchange of tax and account information has been in place since 2019, while the exchange of information upon request is also functioning effectively. Switzerland must

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Within the country, we are making sure that we keep the macroeconomic fundamentals sound.

Fiscal discipline is something which is very close to Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi's heart. He had maintained fiscal prudence even as a Chief Minister.

He's been very keen on not affecting welfare spending, not affecting education and health spending, but yet being very prudent. And we've kept that line all through. ~ Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister



continue to uphold the confidence of Indians who expect greater transparency regarding undisclosed assets.

President Droupadi Murmu, while hosting a banquet for President Parmelin at Rashtrapati Bhavan, emphasised that cooperation between the two countries extends to democracy, the rule of law and financial transparency. Kashmiri delicacies, including kanna guchhi pulao, tsok wangun and phirni, featured prominently on the menu.

On terrorism, a continuing concern for India, Switzerland has reiterated its support. It has pledged to uphold global standards, including the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and to curb terrorist financing in all its forms, including through virtual assets and underground banking. President Parmelin said Switzerland works closely with international partners and the private sector to combat terrorism.

Finally, the symbolism of this visit extends beyond Hyderabad House. On October 7, President Parmelin is scheduled to visit the Noida International Airport at Jewar, a project involving Zurich Airport International AG, a wholly owned subsidiary of Zurich Airport. It is a tangible example of Swiss capital contributing to the development of Indian infrastructure.

As President Murmu noted, Swiss companies have a notable presence in the construction of roads, railway bridges and tunnels. The two countries can now explore further opportunities in clean and green technologies and artificial intelligence.

In short, this is not merely a ceremonial visit. It is a visit intended to follow through on earlier commitments. From the AI Impact Summit in February to the first anniversary of TEPA in October, Switzerland appears to be moving from its \$100-billion investment pledge towards projects on the ground.

For India, which saw its exports to EFTA decline by 10.7 per cent to \$1.75 billion in FY26 following the implementation of TEPA, the real test will be whether market access improves. For Switzerland, the challenge is whether its 340 companies can translate India's projected 7.1 per cent growth into shared prosperity.

Both sides appear willing to make the effort.

Dr D. K. Giri Professor of Practice, Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar

Meghalaya SIR: 95.35% of voter notice hearings completed, final roll on Oct 26

SILLONG

More than 95 per cent of hearings on notices issued during Meghalaya's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls have been completed, with the final voter list scheduled for publication on October 26, the Chief Electoral Officer's (CEO) office said on Monday.

According to the latest figures released by the office, 6,21,399 hearings have been completed out of 6,51,735 notices issued across the state, taking the completion rate to 95.35 per cent. A total of 2,641 electors have so far been found ineligible for inclusion in the final electoral roll, while 20,86,026 voters have been retained for publication.

Chief Electoral Officer B.D.R. Tiwari



reviewed the progress of the exercise during a virtual meeting with Deputy Com-

missioners, District Election Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, Assistant Electoral Registration Officers and other election officials.

A separate meeting was also held with representatives of recognised national and state political parties to review the status of notices and hearings, applications received and preparations for publication of the final roll.

Over 6.5 lakh notices issued
Meghalaya's draft electoral roll contained 21,69,243 electors. During the revision exercise, election authorities generated 6,51,735 notices, including 2,22,786 cases involving the absence of mapping and 4,28,949 cases involving discrepancies in mapping.

Tiwari directed officials to expedite the

remaining hearings and pending cases while ensuring that all decisions comply with statutory procedures and the Election Commission of India's instructions.

The CEO's office said 28,627 applications had been received and digitised during the revision exercise.

These included 17,248 Form 6 applications for inclusion of names, 1,963 Form 7 applications seeking deletion or raising objections, and 9,416 Form 8 applications for changes to existing electoral records.

Of the Form 8 applications, 1,673 concerned changes of residence, while 7,743 sought corrections to entries in the electoral roll.

Electoral Registration Officers and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers have been instructed to scrutinise and

dispose of the applications within the prescribed timelines.

Special enrolment drive planned
The final electoral roll is scheduled to be published on October 26 under the revised timetable approved by the Election Commission. The CEO's office said efforts were underway to complete the remaining statutory procedures and ensure an accurate, inclusive and transparent voter list. A special enrolment drive is also proposed after publication to include eligible citizens whose names have been left out, first-time voters and young electors. The office reiterated that voter registration remains a continuous process and that eligible citizens can apply for inclusion through the prescribed procedure if their names do not appear on the electoral roll.

Scindia to Launch 10 Projects in Mizoram, Flag Off North East Banking Push

AIZAWL

Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya M. Scindia will visit Mizoram on October 12-13 to launch 10 development initiatives and attend the North East Bankers' Conclave 3.0, officials said.

The two-day visit will focus on development projects, student engagement and discussions on expanding banking access and institutional credit across the Northeast.

Scindia, who is making his second visit to Mizoram since taking charge of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, will arrive in Aizawl on Monday before travelling to Tuivamit on the western outskirts of the capital. In the presence of Chief Minister Lalduhoma, the Union Minister will inaugurate completed projects and lay foundation stones for new initiatives. Officials have said the programme will cover 10 development projects.

Scindia will later visit Mizoram University to interact with students, including participants in the DoNER Ministry's Ashtalakshmi Darshan Programme. The initiative provides an opportunity for students to engage with the Northeast's development priorities and explore the region's diverse cultural and economic landscape.

On October 13, Scindia will inaugurate the North East Bankers' Conclave 3.0 and deliver the keynote address at Mizoram University.

The conclave is expected to bring together banking-sector representatives to discuss ways to widen financial inclusion, improve access to institutional credit and support economic growth across the northeastern states. Access to formal credit remains an important issue for businesses, entrepreneurs and communities seeking to expand economic activity across the region. The discussions are expected to explore how banking institutions can play a greater role in supporting these priorities. Officials said the visit is aimed at strengthening the Centre's development partnership with the Northeast while facilitating engagement with students, civil society representatives and financial-sector stakeholders.

"Fresh Hill Violence Deeply Distressing and Utterly Condemnable" :M. Asnikumar Singh



SILCHAR

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cased his swimming prowess in five events, securing silver medals in the 100-metre freestyle, 200-metre freestyle, 400-metre freestyle, 200-metre individual medley and 4x50-metre freestyle relay.

His achievement has brought pride to the Rhino fraternity and the Terriers family, with his dedication, discipline and sporting spirit earning recognition. His performance at the continental-level championship has also brought attention to the sporting talent emerging from the Barak Valley.

Singha hails from Binna-kandi Part-II (Mayai Leikai) under Lakhimpur police station in Cachar district, Assam. He is the son of Ngangbam Rukini Singha. His achievement is being celebrated by members of the Territorial Army fraternity, who have congratulated him on his success.

His five-medal haul stands as a notable accomplishment for the region and highlights his commitment to competitive swimming alongside his service in the Territorial Army.

'SIR Should Be Conducted Every Five Years': Himanta Sarma Targets Rahul Gandhi Over Electoral Rolls

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday defended the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, arguing that the exercise should be conducted every five years to safeguard democracy. Targeting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, he accused the Opposition party of questioning electoral outcomes selectively and attempting to put pressure on constitutional institutions. Addressing a press conference, Sarma said regular revision of electoral rolls was necessary to identify and remove ineligible entries, including those of alleged foreign nationals. "Every five years there should be an SIR. Only then will the democracy of the country prevail," he said. The chief minister cited demographic changes in Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar to underline the need for the exercise. He also alleged that illegal immigration from Bangladesh was contributing to these changes, although he did not present specific evidence to substantiate the claim during

the press conference. Responding to Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the Election Commission and electronic voting machines (EVMs), Sarma accused the Congress of adopting inconsistent positions on electoral processes. "If the Assam elections are wrong, then how is Kerala's vote good? If Bengal's vote is wrong, then why isn't Tamil Nadu's vote wrong?" he asked. Sarma challenged the Congress to clarify its position on elections conducted under Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. He referred to Karnataka, Telangana, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu, where Congress-led or Congress-allied governments are in power, and questioned why the party continued to participate in elections while raising concerns about the electoral process.

He also challenged the Congress to declare that it would not contest future elections using EVMs for as long as Kumar remained the Chief Election Commissioner. The chief minister accused the Opposition of attempting to pressure the Elec-

tion Commission and the Supreme Court through protests in Delhi. He argued that such demonstrations could undermine public confidence in constitutional institutions.

During the press conference, Sarma narrated an anecdote involving Hazrat Muhammad and a mother who sought advice on curbing her son's habit of eating too many sweets. According to the version recounted by the chief minister, the mother was asked to return after a few days so that the advice could be given after addressing the habit himself. Sarma invoked the story to question Gandhi's consistency on electoral issues, arguing that the Congress should apply its objections uniformly rather than accept election results selectively.

Sarma announced that the BJP would organise peaceful rallies at district headquarters across Assam from October 13 to 31 in support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the party's position on democratic institutions.

He urged people to speak out

against what he described as attempts to weaken the country's institutions. The chief minister also alleged that foreign interests were supporting efforts to destabilise India but did not provide evidence for the claim in his remarks.

Criticising the Congress's protest strategy, Sarma argued that political parties should focus on public service and winning back voters rather than challenge electoral outcomes after defeats.

Sarma maintained that EVMs were not introduced by the BJP and referred to earlier statements by Congress leaders defending the machines. He argued that parties should accept election results and seek public support through their work. The Congress, meanwhile, has raised concerns about the functioning of the Election Commission and the revision of electoral rolls. The dispute has intensified amid the wider political debate over the SIR exercise, the credibility of electoral processes and the role of constitutional institutions.

Nagaland Explores Five-Year Indian-German Partnership to Revamp Government Schools

DIMAPUR

Nagaland is exploring a long-term partnership with Indian and German philanthropic organisations to improve the quality of education in government schools, strengthen teacher training and ensure more effective use of public funds.

Adviser to the School Education Department Kekhrielhoulie Yhome said the proposed collaboration aims to improve student learning outcomes while strengthening existing government education systems.

According to reports, discussions have been underway since October 5 between the state government and a delegation led by Nikunj Jhaveri, president of the Rotary Club of the Queen's Necklace, Mumbai, and Martin Kasper, president of Germany-based Childaid Network Foundation.

The proposed partnership would focus on teacher training, digital infrastructure, early childhood education, vocational skills and project-based



learning.

Kasper said the initiative could involve a minimum five-year engagement, with a detailed roadmap to be developed to improve teaching quality and student performance.

The proposed partnership comes as the state looks to address persistent challenges in government schools, including infrastructure gaps, uneven learning outcomes, limited teacher capacity and concerns over public confidence in government-run institutions.

Yhome highlighted these issues

while addressing a consultative meeting of school heads and teachers under EBRC Block-Viswema Village at John Government Higher Secondary School in Viswema.

He stressed the need for stronger monitoring mechanisms, greater accountability, improved school facilities and more effective teacher training programmes.

Yhome also called for greater community participation, emphasising that improving government education requires coordinated efforts by teachers, school authorities, administrators

and local stakeholders.

The adviser said strengthening government schools would have benefits beyond academic performance. Better teaching standards and improved facilities, he noted, could help restore public confidence in these institutions and reduce the financial burden on parents.

Access to reliable and affordable education remains a key concern for families, particularly when government schools struggle to meet expectations around infrastructure and learning quality. While the proposed Indian-German collaboration offers a potential framework for addressing these challenges, its impact will depend on the roadmap, implementation and sustained monitoring developed under the partnership. The state government is expected to continue discussions with the organisations to explore how the proposed initiative can support and strengthen Nagaland's existing public education system.

Manipur Police Partners with Babina Healthcare to Provide Medical Benefits for Personnel and Families



BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL :In a major initiative to enhance welfare measures for police personnel, the Manipur Police Department has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Babina Hospital and Babina Diagnostics. The agreement aims to provide comprehensive healthcare benefits and services to police officers, personnel, and their families across the state.

The formal signing ceremony took place at the Police Headquarters (PHQ) in Manipur. The MoU

was officially signed by Mukesh Singh, IPS, Director General of Police (DGP), Manipur, on behalf of the police department, and Dr. Thangiam Dhabali Singh, Managing Director of Babina Healthcare and Hospitality Industries Pvt. Ltd., representing the healthcare institution.

Senior officials of the Manipur Police were also present at the event to mark the collaboration, which is expected to facilitate seamless access to diagnostic and clinical healthcare facilities for the police force.

Gauhati High Court Seeks Timeline of Tribunal Orders Behind Deportation of Two Assam Women to Bangladesh

GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has sought precise dates and times from the Assam government to establish when a Nagaon Foreigners' Tribunal prepared the orders that led to the deportation of two women to Bangladesh, raising fresh questions over the circumstances in which the action was carried out.

A division bench of Justices Kalyan Rai Surana and Pranjal Das, hearing the cases on October 7, directed the state government to disclose when the tribunal prepared its opinions declaring Jahanara Begum and Mumtaz Begum foreigners.

The court warned that if the government failed to provide the details, it would presume that the opinions "were not made ready within the appropriate time" before the women were taken into police custody. The Indian Express reported.



The High Court is examining the two cases separately but has issued similar directions in both. The orders were uploaded to the court's website on Thursday.

Two women deported, whereabouts still unknown

The deportations have come under judicial scrutiny because the women were sent to Bangladesh while their legal challenges were still pending. Their present whereabouts remain unknown, and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has informed the court that efforts to trace them are continuing.

During the latest hearing, the MEA

sought additional time, saying inquiries into the women's whereabouts were still underway. Reports in late September indicated that Bangladeshi authorities had begun searching for Mumtaz after media organisations raised questions about her case.

In September, the High Court had directed the Assam government to investigate when the tribunal prepared fresh opinions declaring the two women foreigners. Those opinions formed the basis for their deportation.

Court orders interim compensation in Mumtaz's case

According to court records, Mumtaz Begum, 43, was declared a foreign national by the Foreigners' Tribunal, 4th Nagaon, at Juria.

She was handed over to the Border Security Force (BSF) on June 13 and sent to Bangladesh during the night of June 13-14 through the Kalaincherra area of Cachar district.

The High Court subsequently directed the Assam government to pay interim compensation of Rs 2 lakh to her husband, Mujammel Hoque.

The court noted that Mumtaz had been sent to Bangladesh without her husband or any adult family member

being informed of her detention. It also observed that the circumstances had prevented her from effectively challenging the tribunal's decision.

The latest direction seeks to establish the timeline surrounding the tribunal's opinions, a crucial aspect of the court's examination of the deportations.

Deportation cases trigger political controversy

The issue has also become a point of political contention in Assam. During the recent Nagaon bypoll, Opposition parties questioned the state government over the deportation of the two women.

The All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) lodged a police complaint against BJP candidate Devashish Sharma, who was serving as Nagaon deputy commissioner during the period in question.

The Assam Congress, meanwhile, wrote to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, seeking his intervention to trace the women.

With both women still untraced, the High Court's demand for precise records places renewed focus on the timing of the tribunal's decisions and the procedures followed before their deportation.

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India’s growth outlook strengthens as IMF projects 7% expansion for two years



NEW DELHI

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised India’s economic growth forecast to 7.0% for both FY27 and FY28 in its October 2026 World Economic Outlook (WEO), citing resilient domestic demand and strong services activity. The upward revision reinforces India’s position as the world’s fastest-growing major economy despite rising global oil prices and persistent geopolitical tensions.

The latest projections mark an improvement over the IMF’s July estimates of 6.4% for FY27 and 6.7% for FY28. The upgrade reflects robust domestic consumption, favourable demographic trends and continued structural reforms supporting economic activity.

While India’s economic outlook has strengthened, the IMF has warned that the global recovery remains fragile and uneven. Global growth is projected at 3.1% in 2026 and 3.4% in 2027, with conflicts in West Asia, elevated energy costs and broader geopolitical uncertainties posing risks to

the global economy.

The divergence highlights India’s relative resilience amid a challenging international economic environment.

Higher crude oil prices remain a key risk to India’s growth and inflation outlook. The IMF’s projections assume average crude oil prices of \$95.74 per barrel in 2026, representing a 41% increase from 2025, before easing to \$87.39 per barrel in 2027. As a major oil importer, India could face increased import costs and pressure on its trade balance if energy prices remain elevated. Higher oil prices could also contribute to domestic inflation and complicate monetary policy decisions.

The IMF expects India’s consumer inflation to reach 5.0% in FY27 before moderating to 4.4% in FY28. Meanwhile, the country’s current account deficit is projected to widen slightly to 1.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) in FY27, reflecting potential external pressures.

These projections suggest that, although economic growth remains strong, inflation management and external

stability will continue to be important policy priorities.

The IMF’s revised forecast is broadly in line with the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) optimistic assessment of the domestic economy. The RBI has projected growth of 7.1% for the current fiscal year, slightly above the IMF’s estimate.

The differing forecasts reflect continued confidence in India’s domestic economic momentum, although the outlook remains sensitive to global energy prices, geopolitical developments and inflationary pressures.

The IMF’s upward revision underscores India’s strong growth prospects, supported by consumption, services and structural reforms. However, sustaining this momentum will depend partly on the country’s ability to manage rising energy costs, contain inflation and maintain external economic stability.

With global growth facing persistent headwinds, India’s performance is expected to remain a key indicator of resilience among major emerging economies.

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called for a shift from concentrating power to empowering people, saying technology, data, knowledge and innovation must benefit wider sections of society rather than remain the preserve of a privileged few.

Addressing the Bloomberg New Economy Forum in New Delhi, Modi said the central question in the changing global economic landscape was not who possessed power, but how it was used to create opportunities and improve people’s lives.

The Prime Minister welcomed the decision to host the forum in India for the first time, saying Bloomberg founder Michael Bloomberg had chosen “the right place at the right time”.

“Every year at this forum, we discuss economy, energy, etc. For the first time, it’s been held in India. I’d like to say to Mr Bloomberg that he has chosen the right place at the right time,” Modi said.

Emphasising the need to make technological progress more inclusive, Modi questioned whether the benefits of innovation would be restricted to a small group or open up opportunities for millions.

“Will technology only be beneficial for a few people or will it create opportunities for crores of people? Will knowledge remain the strength of a few people, or empower everyone?” he asked.

Modi said the idea of “power to empower” required a fundamental change in how governments, businesses and institutions approached growth and development. He advocated enabling people over controlling them, cooperation over competition, and helping others succeed rather than focusing solely on individual achievement.

“This seeds a new thinking - power to empower. Ahead of power to control, power to enable. Ahead of power to compete, power to cooperate. Ahead of power to succeed, power of helping others to succeed,” he said.

The Prime Minister added that the principle of using knowledge, wealth and authority for a larger social purpose was deeply rooted in India’s tradi-



tions. The true worth of power, he said, depended on the purpose it served and the way it was exercised.

“This is not new to India. We have always emphasised the importance of utilisation of knowledge, money, and power. The real value of power lies in its purpose,” Modi said.

He argued that the philosophy remained relevant at a time when technological advances and shifting economic and geopolitical realities were reshaping the global order. India’s experience, he added, reflected an effort to apply these principles in governance and work culture.

The eighth edition of the Bloomberg New Economy Forum has brought together more than 500

influential leaders from the public and private sectors across the world. Held under the theme “A World in Play: Defining the New Levers of Power”, the forum is examining changes in geopolitics, emerging risks and opportunities, and possible pathways towards future prosperity.

In remarks ahead of the event, Modi described India as a country moving beyond its role as an investment destination to become a partner in shaping the global economy.

“Today, India stands at a defining moment in its journey. India is no longer just a destination for investment; it is a trusted partner in shaping the global future,” he said.

Modi said the country’s pursuit

of Viksit Bharat - a developed India - involved building a reliable engine of global growth while contributing to a more balanced international economic order.

He also said participants at the forum would have an opportunity to experience India’s economic momentum and its growing role in defining the emerging global economy.

The Prime Minister’s message placed inclusive growth and the wider social use of technology at the centre of the discussions, underscoring the challenge of ensuring that advances in knowledge, innovation and wealth translate into opportunities beyond a narrow circle of beneficiaries.

INTERNATIONAL

The Kremlin relishes the US-Russia diesel deal and Trump’s criticism of Zelenskyy

MOSCOW

A deal between Moscow and Washington over exports of Russian diesel and fresh U.S. criticism of Ukraine’s leader mark important political victories for the Kremlin, reversing some of the sanctions for its full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

While the size of Russia’s diesel exports is relatively small and unlikely to significantly impact prices, the revenue will help Moscow replenish its war coffers and — more importantly — undermine efforts by Kyiv and its European allies to put up a united front against President Vladimir Putin.

Along with President Donald Trump suggesting that Ukraine should get a new leader to replace President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the developments strengthen the Kremlin’s hand at a critical junction of the war, amid relentless attacks by Russia on energy systems and other vital infrastructure.

Ahead of next month’s midterm elections, Trump blamed a spike in diesel prices on Ukrainian attacks on Russian refineries, even though the U.S.-led war in Iran has sent global energy prices soaring.

Mark Galeotti, a Russia expert who heads the Mayak Intelligence consultancy, described the deal that Trump announced Friday as an “astonishing birthday present” for Putin, two days after he turned 74.

While Russia’s diesel exports could be a “drop in the ocean compared with actual overall demand,” Galeotti said it was “a gift for Putin, even if a single barrel of diesel is not exported.”

That’s because “it drives another and increasingly thick wedge between Trump and Zelenskyy,” he said in a podcast Sunday.

“Effective immediately, Russia continued attacking Ukraine’s energy facilities, said Zelenskyy, who has criticized the diesel deal as a show of weakness.

Zelenskyy emphasized that he is

open to an energy ceasefire if it includes a halt to Russian attacks on Ukraine’s power grid.

Russia has not said whether it agrees to such a ceasefire, and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday only that “contacts are ongoing.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov shrugged off Zelenskyy’s comments as an attempt “to promote his interest in a ceasefire.”

“I don’t think he deserves a respite,” Lavrov said.

Galeotti predicted that Putin is unlikely to halt attacks on Ukraine’s energy facilities, which he sees as “absolutely central to his winter air war strategy.”

Russia stepped up aerial attacks on Ukraine in recent months with ballistic missiles and new jet-powered drones, taking advantage of Kyiv’s shortage of U.S.-made Patriot interceptors whose stockpiles have been drained by the war in Iran.

Putin has repeatedly emphasized that Moscow wants a comprehensive, long-term agreement, not a temporary halt to hostilities.

Asked to comment on Zelenskyy’s statement that Ukraine needs a minimum of 60 days to prepare elections, Peskov said Putin could order a ceasefire only on the day of voting.

In recent months, Ukraine launched successful aerial attacks that knocked out over half of Russia’s oil refining capacity, according to the Ukrainian Defense Ministry. The strikes caused a severe fuel crisis with long lines at gas stations, bringing the war home to millions.

Ukraine also methodically struck oil terminals at the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk and targeted dozens of tankers at sea, seeking to derail Moscow’s oil exports and drain Moscow’s revenues.

Putin acknowledged the damage but noted that Moscow is capable of inflicting much bigger blows to Ukraine.

Some officials and analysts questioned whether Russia will be able to provide diesel supplies under the deal announced by Trump.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski voiced doubts about it, saying that even the Russian capital is experiencing fuel shortages.

Others say Moscow actually has a surplus of diesel, now that demand has eased following the end of the harvest season.

“Russia planned to export more diesel anyway,” said Janis Kluge, head of the Eastern Europe and Eurasia Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Still, some Russian motorists exhausted by months of waiting at gas stations were worried the new deal could leave fewer supplies for the domestic market. “I don’t think that’s very good, because you can see what’s going on at gas stations — people are standing in line around the clock,” said Marat Salavatov, waiting to refuel at a Moscow gas station.

Russian officials sought to quell such fears, saying there will be enough supply to keep the domestic market stable.

The volume of production is able “to fully satisfy the needs of the local market while delivering the agreed amounts to the global market,” Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said in a government statement announcing the lifting of the diesel export ban that had been in place since July.

Trump’s criticism of Zelenskyy is seen as aiding Russia.

In addition to the diesel deal, Trump unleashed biting criticism of Zelenskyy that marks perhaps the lowest point in their relationship since the disastrous Oval Office meeting in February 2025.

Trump’s remark that it was time for a new president in Ukraine and his suggestion that Zelenskyy has not done enough to end the war topped the news on Russian state television and was widely discussed by pro-Kremlin

commentators and military bloggers.

Officials in Kyiv viewed the diesel deal and the hostile rhetoric as a political move aimed at making Zelenskyy a scapegoat for U.S. voters ahead of the midterms, said Oleksandr Merezhko, a lawmaker from Zelenskyy’s party.

“We are not happy when our ally and partner gives money to a dictator who is killing us,” Merezhko said. “By demanding that Ukraine stop striking Russian oil refineries, Trump looks as though he cares more about the Russian war machine than about the civilians Putin is killing.” Kyiv fears that easing sanctions without meaningful concessions from Russia could weaken Washington’s leverage over the Kremlin and further diminish prospects for fair terms to end the war. The Trump-Zelenskyy tensions come as Kyiv continues to rely heavily on Washington for military assistance, including Patriot systems and vital intelligence. A disruption of that support could leave Ukraine more vulnerable.

Galeotti said Trump’s comments casting Zelenskyy as an obstacle to peace were “benefit No. 1 for Putin.”

Trump’s move also raises questions about the European Union’s efforts to go after Russia’s so-called shadow fleet of tankers carrying oil to global markets, he said, observing that Europe has been left in a position “where it’s obviously just regarded as a vassal region that has to accept whatever policy comes from the White House.”

The diesel deal also will boost Russia’s credentials with developing countries, helping its posture as a great global player worthy of being a partner, Galeotti said.

Tatiana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Russia and Eurasia Center said the move could look like a “moment of triumph” for Putin.

“He has secured an economic deal, albeit a modest one, before a peace settlement, departing from Washington’s previous position,” Stanovaya said in a commentary.

Elon Musk donates USD 276 million to Republicans for mid-term polls: Report



WASHINGTON

Elon Musk has emerged as the largest donor to Republican groups by funnelling a staggering USD 276 million to shore up the party in the November 3 mid-term elections, according to a media report on Monday.

These donations have been made by Musk since July and helped power Republican campaigns across battleground states where it is facing a tough challenge from the Democratic party, The New York Times reported.

In the 2025-26 election cycle, Musk has given USD 366 million to the Republicans, significantly higher than the USD 290 million he had contributed to President Donald Trump’s election campaign in 2024.

According to the NYT, Musk donated USD 158 million to the Republicans’ Senate Leadership Fund, which was

the single largest political donation in American history, and more than what the Democrats raised from all of their donors in summer.

In addition, Musk donated USD 76 million to America PAC, which is actively canvassing for Republican Senate candidates in over three dozen seats.

The SpaceX chief donated USD 20 million to the Congressional Leadership Fund, the main super PAC for House Republicans, USD 10 million to Lone Star Liberty PAC, a group supporting Ken Paxton, the Republican nominee for Senate in Texas, USD 10 million to the Republican Governors Association, and USD two million to the Republican Attorneys General Association.

“These robust investments have allowed the G.O.P. apparatus to get its message out so

Republicans can have a fighting chance to defy history,” Andrew Romeo, a spokesman for America PAC, the group Musk founded in 2024 to support Trump, told the paper.

Musk oversees a vast business empire and has benefited from government contracts and is known to wield considerable influence in the White House.

In January last year, Trump appointed Musk as in-charge of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to reduce government spending, but the two had a bitter fallout months later.

Musk returned to the Trump camp and was awarded the prestigious National Medal of Science. Trump described Musk as a “modern day Edison” at the ceremony to confer the honours on the SpaceX chief and five other technology leaders.

Bhupen Hazarika's centenary celebrated in London, call for UK arts centre to preserve his legacy



The music of Bhupen Hazarika travelled across borders and generations as London marked the birth centenary of the legendary Assamese singer, composer and filmmaker with an evening of music, remembrance and renewed calls to preserve his cultural legacy.

Titled Ganga Behti Ho Kyun, the programme was held at The Nehru Centre on October 9, featuring acclaimed violinist Sunita Bhuyan, singer Mayukh Hazarika and performances by the Luitporia Dance Ensemble. Organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Assam, in collaboration with the High Commission of India in the UK, the event drew a packed audience comprising members of the British and Asian diaspora, cultural personalities, dignitaries and members of the House of Lords.

Beyond the musical performances, the centenary celebration highlighted the need for a permanent institutional platform in the United Kingdom to preserve and promote Hazarika's works, alongside those of other major Indian cultural figures. Several cultural leaders proposed establishing an arts centre on the lines of the Tagore Centre to introduce his music, ideas and humanist philosophy to wider international audiences.

A video message from Hazarika's son, Tej Hazarika, who joined the programme from New York, added a personal note to the occasion.

The evening opened with the ceremonial lighting of a lamp by Naorem J. Singh, director of The Nehru Centre, alongside the curators, artists and community representatives, including members of the Assam Charity Trust.

The Suraj Foundation, which has been taking Hazarika's music and philosophy to audiences across the world, also presented copies of a book on the musician, written by author Anuradha Sharma Pujari and published by the Assam Publication Board, to The Nehru Centre and the Assam Charity Trust. The book was released in Assam on September 8, 2025, marking the beginning of the centenary year.

Songs that crossed linguistic and cultural boundaries

The programme began with an invocation by the Luitporia Dance Ensemble, led by Chinu Kishor, based on a Sanskrit composition by Hazarika composed by cultural leader Uma Subramaniam.

London-based Assamese media personality Hiramoni Sharma hosted the evening, recounting significant episodes from the musician's life and career.

One of the highlights was Mayukh Hazarika's performance of Bistirno Parore in three languages. The singer, who is Bhupen Hazarika's nephew, also performed Ami Ek Jajabor in Bengali and Akashi Ganga Bisora Nai.

His deep baritone and interpretation of the songs drew an enthusiastic response from the audience.

Sunita Bhuyan followed with a violin recital that began with Hazarika's favourite bhajan, Vaishnava Janato, and included Dil Hoom Hoom Kare. She concluded with a classical duet, Jhooti Mooti Mitwa / Snehe Amar, accompanied by London-based pianist Ronojit Bhuyan.

The musical ensemble included Sandeep Chakrabarty on tabla and percussion, Pretom Saha on keyboards and Siddharth Singh on guitar.

The evening reached its culmination when Bhuyan and Mayukh Hazarika performed We Are on the Same Boat, Brother.

The song brought the audience into the performance, ending the programme with a standing ovation.

The choice of music reflected the enduring appeal of Hazarika's compositions, which often explored human dignity, social equality, fraternity and the shared experiences of people across linguistic and geographical boundaries.

A cultural bridge between Assam and the world

Young Assamese professionals based in London, Akhil Chakrabarty and Sameer Baruwa, also spoke about the significance of celebrating Hazarika's legacy in the British capital. Their participation underlined the role of the diaspora in keeping Assam's cultural heritage alive among younger generations living abroad.

For many in the audience, the occasion was not merely a commemoration of a legendary musician but also a reminder of the possibilities of cultural exchange. Hazarika's songs, rooted in the social and cultural landscape of Assam, have long reached listeners well beyond the region through their themes of humanity, solidarity and collective struggle.

Bhuyan, the programme's curator and chief curator for arts and culture at the Suraj Foundation, emphasised the significance of carrying Hazarika's music to international audiences. She drew a connection between the rivers that shaped the musician's life, from the Brahmaputra of his childhood to the Mississippi he encountered during his youth in the United States.

"He believed a song could cross any border. Bringing his music to London and then New York in his hundredth year is our way of keeping that promise alive," she said.

The London event forms part of the international centenary celebrations launched by the Mumbai-based Suraj Foundation on September 7, 2025. The inaugural programme, also titled Ganga Behti Ho Kyun, was held at the Tata Theatre of the National Centre for the Performing Arts and featured performers including Usha Mangeshkar, Anup



Jalota, Suresh Wadkar and Zubeen Garg. The celebrations are now set to continue in New York, extending the international tribute to Hazarika's life, music and philosophy. The Suraj Foundation is a not-for-profit Section 8 company based in Mumbai that works

in arts, culture, inclusion and women's entrepreneurship. Its centenary initiative seeks to bring Hazarika's artistic and humanist legacy to new audiences, keeping alive the message of a musician whose songs continue to connect people across borders.



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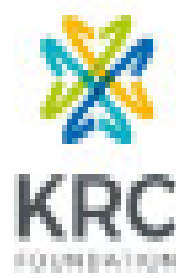
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