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PERSPECTIVE

Most of your depression is caused by over-thinking.

Assam approves 12% job quota for eligible Ex-Agniveers in seven departments

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has approved 12 per cent horizontal reservation for eligible Ex-Agniveers in specified government posts, with annual recruitment drives under the scheme scheduled to begin in 2027.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the decision on social media platform X, saying the initiative aims to recognise the service of former Agniveers and expand their employment opportunities after their tenure in the armed forces.

According to a notification issued by the Home (A) Department, the decision follows the Assam Cabinet meeting held on October 4, 2026. The reservation will apply to designated vacancies filled through direct recruitment, with the scheme to be implemented through annual recruitment drives.

Eligibility criteria

The reservation will be available to former Agniveers who fulfil the prescribed conditions. Applicants must be permanent residents of Assam, have been recruited into the Indian Army, Navy or Air Force under the Agnipath scheme, and successfully complete the full four-year term of service.

Candidates must also possess an official Agniveer Certificate issued at the time of discharge to claim the benefit.



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KRC TIMES

STAY ENRICHED

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 905 | SILCHAR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

Guwahati Hotel Shooting: Owner Helena Bharali, Four Others Killed; Accused Leaseholder Arrested

GUWAHATI

A dispute over a hotel lease may have culminated in a deadly shooting that claimed five lives in Guwahati on Monday night. Hotel owner Helena Bharali and four others were shot dead inside Hotel Bilas Inn in the Bora Service area along GS Road. The accused, identified as leaseholder Ghanakanta Gogoi, was arrested within an hour of the incident, police said.

According to police, the firing took place at around 9 pm on October 26. The deceased have been identified as hotel owner Helena Bharali, her son Devarshi Kashyap, daughter-in-law Riniki Kashyap, brother Bhudev Bharali, and driver Narayan Das.

Four of the victims belonged to the same family, while the fifth was reportedly from their village.

Another person, aged 42, sustained bullet injuries and was admitted to Guwahati Medical



College and Hospital (GMCH). His condition was reported to be stable.

Guwahati Police Commissioner Partha Sarathi Mahanta said preliminary findings suggested that the killings could

have stemmed from a dispute between the hotel owner's family and the person who had taken the property on lease.

Gogoi had reportedly leased the hotel from its owners last year. A disagreement over the

lease agreement had allegedly been continuing for some time.

According to the police commissioner, all five deceased were associated with the owner's side, and the leaseholder allegedly opened fire. Investigators are questioning the accused to establish the sequence of events and determine what triggered the shooting.

Police have seized a licensed .32-bore pistol in connection with the case. The exact circumstances leading to the shooting, including whether an argument preceded the attack, are being investigated.

Forensic team examines crime scene

A forensic team visited the hotel along with senior police officials to examine the scene and collect evidence. Investigators are analysing the available material as part of the ongoing probe.

Police said the investigation was at a preliminary stage and

that further details would be shared as more information emerged.

The shooting has sent shockwaves through Guwahati, as the attack took place inside a hotel located along the city's busy GS Road. Reports indicated that several people were present when the firing occurred.

Congress raises law and order concerns

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi expressed grief over the killings on Tuesday and called for a thorough investigation.

He also raised concerns about the law and order situation in Guwahati, holding Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma responsible for addressing the alleged rise in crime.

While police suspect a lease-related dispute as the immediate trigger, the precise motive and the circumstances surrounding the shooting remain under investigation.

Manipur targets 1 lakh Lakhpati Didis by 2029

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Tuesday called on banks to extend greater support to women entrepreneurs, stressing that financial institutions would play a crucial role in achieving the state's target of creating one lakh Lakhpati Didis by 2029.

The Chief Minister was speaking at the inauguration of the 18th Saras Aajeevika Mela 2026 at the City Convention Centre in Imphal. Organised from October 27 to November 6, the 11-day fair features more than 100 stalls showcasing products made by women members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Addressing the gathering, Khemchand Singh said Manipur currently has around 26,000 Lakhpati Didis, and the state aims to increase the number to one lakh over the next three years. He emphasised that achieving the target would require active cooperation from banks and sustained financial assistance for women-led enterprises.

Highlighting the repayment record of SHGs, the Chief Minister said the average loan default rate among SHGs nationally stands at around 5 per cent, compared with just 2 per cent in Manipur. He cited the figures to underline the importance of strengthening the partnership between banks and women entrepreneurs.

Recalling the historical contribution of women to Manipur's social, political and economic life, Khemchand Singh referred to the Nupi Lal movements against British rule. He also highlighted Imphal's Ima Market, which is run exclusively by women, as an example of their longstanding role in sustaining the state's economy through trade and commerce.

The Chief Minister praised the staff of the Manipur State Rural Livelihoods

Mission (MSRLM) for their efforts to promote rural livelihoods, strengthen self-help groups and support women seeking to establish sustainable businesses.

Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen, who joined the programme through video conferencing, described the Sale of Articles of Rural Artisans Society (SARAS) as a flagship market-promotion initiative under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

She said SARAS fairs provide self-help groups with a platform to display and sell their products, interact directly with customers and explore opportunities to expand their businesses beyond local markets.Commissioner of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Sumant Singh said research on women's participation in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) had ranked Manipur first in terms of women-owned businesses.He said exhibitions such as the Saras Aajeevika Mela could help increase the incomes of SHG members by promoting rural entrepreneurship, improving market access and encouraging product innovation.

An interactive session was also organised with Lakhpati Didis, who shared their experiences and acknowledged the support provided by MSRLM in developing their businesses and sustaining their livelihoods.

Following the inaugural programme, the Chief Minister visited the stalls and inspected a range of products manufactured by self-help group members.

The event was attended by the State Mission Director of MSRLM, a general manager of NABARD, representatives of banks, SHG members, Lakhpati Didis and MSRLM officials, among others.

Sribhumi Bihu violence: Banga Sahitya body demands impartial probe, urges restraint

SILCHAR

The Barak Upotyokya Banga Sahitya O Sanskriti Sammelan has called for a high-level, impartial inquiry into the October 23 violence in Sribhumi involving a Bihu performance troupe, urging authorities and civil society to prevent the incident from straining longstanding ties between Assamese and Bengali communities.

In a statement, the organisation condemned the incident as "unfortunate and undesirable" and called for a thorough investigation into the violence, the alleged role of those who instigated it and the administration's response.

Central spokesperson Gautam Prasad Dutta said unverified claims and provocative social media posts risked creating unnecessary tensions between communities in the Barak and Brahmaputra valleys. He appealed to governments, cultural organisations and civil society groups to promote communal harmony and counter inflammatory narratives.

Dutta maintained that there had been no objection to the performance of Bihu songs and dances during the idol immersion procession organised by Club Hindustan after Vijaya Dashami. According to him, certain groups had exaggerated the incident without properly verifying the facts.

The procession featured Assamese performers from Bargol and Adarkona in the Barak Valley. Participants also paid tribute to cultural icons Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg, as well as Ahom general Lachit Borphukan, Dutta said.

Referring to the preliminary findings of Sribhumi district police, the organisation's spokesperson said the incident did not appear to involve a conflict between Assamese and Bengali communities. He stressed that the circumstances surrounding the midnight violence should be investigated impartially and that those found responsible should face legal action without political interference.

Himanta Alleges Congress High Command Approved Fake Video Targeting Indian Army



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has accused the Congress high command of approving the circulation of a doctored video allegedly aimed at discrediting the Indian Army and gaining political mileage. He has called for legal action against those responsible for spreading the clip.In a post on X on Tuesday, Sarma described the alleged circulation of the video as a "classic Congress playbook". He accused the party of using fabricated content to damage the reputation of the armed forces and bring disrepute to the country."This wasn't a slip. It was sanctioned by their High Command. Those behind it must face the full force of the law," Sarma wrote. However, he did not provide detailed evidence in the post to substantiate his allegation that the Congress leadership had authorised the circulation of the video.

The controversy erupted after Congress leader Ritu Choudhary shared a post containing claims about Lieutenant General Girish Kalia, General Officer Commanding of the Army's Spear Corps, and

the security situation along the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh.

In the viral clip, the senior Army officer appeared to claim that China had taken control of Asaphila, Longju and Taksing Circle in Arunachal Pradesh. The video also alleged that the Centre was prioritising the deployment of paramilitary forces against Gen Z protesters in the state instead of using them to counter China.The clip further claimed that 25 soldiers had been arrested and that their whereabouts remained unknown. It also questioned the Centre's commitment to protecting India's territorial integrity.However, the Indian Army's official fact-checking handle, Indian Army Fact Check (@MythbusterXX), rejected the video as fabricated. According to the Army, the clip used artificial intelligence-generated lip-syncing and voice cloning to falsely attribute the statements to the senior officer.The Army's clarification challenged the authenticity of the claims circulating in the video, which had triggered a political controversy over national security and the alleged use of manipulated digital content.Sarma subsequently targeted the Congress leadership, alleging that the circulation of the video was part of a deliberate attempt to malign the armed forces for political gain.While the Army has identified the clip as fabricated, the allegation that the Congress high command sanctioned its circulation remains a claim made by the Assam Chief Minister. No independently verified evidence establishing the leadership's involvement was cited in the report.

IIT Guwahati Study Reveals How Plants Rewire Their Water Transport Systems to Survive Drought

GUWAHATI

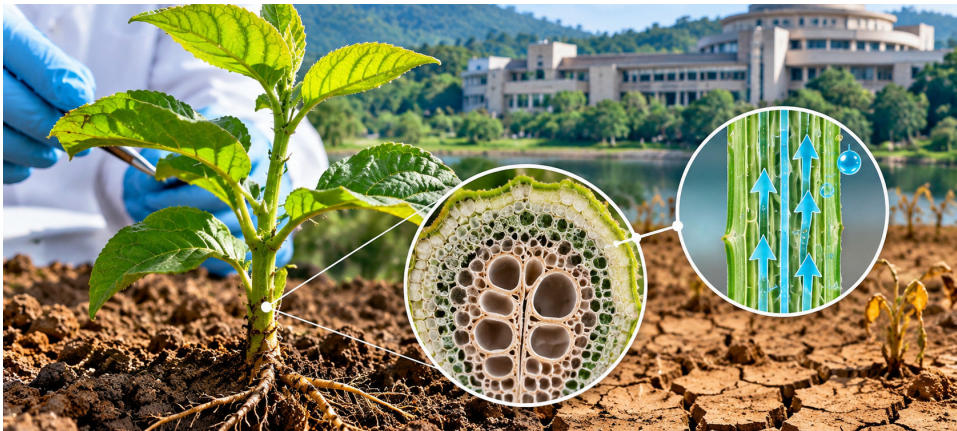
Plants can adapt to drought by changing the way water moves through their internal transport systems, according to a study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IIT Guwahati). The findings offer fresh insights into how plants manage water shortages and could help scientists develop drought-tolerant crop varieties, improve agricultural water-use efficiency and reduce crop losses.

Published in Applied Physics Reviews, the study examined how drought-induced water stress affects the structure and functioning of xylem, the microscopic vessels in plant stems that transport water from roots to leaves.

Led by Professor Pranab Kumar Mondal of IIT Guwahati's Department of Mechanical Engineering, the research team combined experimental measurements with realistic three-dimensional computer simulations to investigate how plants regulate water movement under stressful conditions.

Plants modify internal water pathways

The researchers studied Indian mustard plants using advanced imaging techniques, microscopic force measurements and chemical tracking methods. They examined changes



es in the dimensions, mechanical strength and wall properties of xylem vessels, along with the tiny openings known as pits that connect neighbouring vessels.

The study found that during severe water shortages, xylem vessels become narrower and the connecting pits shrink. These changes increase resistance to water flow, restricting the upward movement of water through the plant.

Although this may appear to limit water

supply, the researchers suggest that such structural adjustments form part of the plant's response to drought. By modifying water movement, plants can regulate their internal water balance and manage water loss through transpiration.

The team also found that water can move sideways through the pits connecting neighbouring vessels. This lateral movement helps maintain water balance within the plant and supports the functioning of its interconnected

water transport network under stress.

To understand these changes more accurately, the researchers incorporated experimentally measured structural and mechanical properties into three-dimensional computer models.Earlier computational studies generally treated xylem vessels as rigid pipes, making it difficult to capture the structural changes that occur when plants experience drought. The IIT Guwahati team addressed this limitation by accounting for changes in vessel dimensions, wall elasticity and fluid movement.

Professor Mondal said the team used advanced imaging, microscopic force measurements and chemical tracking to map how drought affects xylem structure and water transport. The resulting models helped explain how plants modify their internal transport systems to manage water movement under stress.

The findings could have implications for crop breeding and agricultural practices, particularly in regions increasingly affected by water shortages and climate change.

A better understanding of how plants regulate water movement may help scientists identify traits associated with drought toler-

ance and use them to develop crop varieties that can withstand dry conditions more effectively.The research could also contribute to efforts to improve water-use efficiency and maintain crop productivity when water availability is limited.However, the study focused on Indian mustard, and further research will be needed to determine whether similar mechanisms operate in other crops and how effectively these findings can be applied under field conditions.

Professor Mondal said the research could improve scientific understanding of how plants survive in water-scarce environments and support the development of more sustainable agricultural systems.The paper was co-authored by Professor Mondal and Jinmay Kalita, a research scholar in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at IIT Guwahati; Sumit Kumar Mehta, an ANRF National Post-Doctoral Fellow who worked in the department; and Suraj Panja, a postdoctoral fellow at IIT Guwahati.

The study highlights how microscopic changes within plant stems can influence survival under drought, offering a potential scientific basis for developing crops better equipped to cope with increasingly unpredictable water availability.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 905

INDIA’S SPACE SOVEREIGNTY:

India’s space programme represents national determination, scientific excellence and strategic self-reliance. From satellite technology and launch vehicles to planetary exploration, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has demonstrated that India can develop sophisticated capabilities without surrendering its technological destiny. As private enterprise and international partnerships expand the space sector, commercial growth must not compromise national security, institutional integrity or strategic autonomy. In February 1968, Vikram A Sarabhai, founder of India’s space programme, articulated its defining philosophy: “We must be second to none in the application of advanced technologies to the real problems of man and society.” His vision was technology in the service of humanity, with scientific excellence measured by its contribution to people and national development. That principle remains relevant as India navigates commercial space technology, satellite communications and foreign investment. The question is not whether India should welcome innovation, but whether partnerships strengthen national capabilities while remaining accountable to Indian laws and strategic priorities.

Elon Musk, founder and CEO of SpaceX, has publicly challenged the circumstances surrounding Starlink’s entry into India, alleging that powerful business interests protect established market positions. Such allegations must be assessed on evidence, not accepted as fact. Equally, market access must be determined by transparent regulation and national-interest considerations, not public pressure from a powerful foreign entrepreneur. India should welcome technological investment and competition without accepting any company’s preferred terms or operating model by default. Satellite communications require appropriate licensing, security safeguards and regulatory oversight. Authorisation to provide a service must also be distinguished from compliance with all conditions required to commence operations. The test must be consistent for domestic and foreign providers: transparent rules, proportionate security requirements and accountability. A company’s foreign origin does not establish a security risk; equally, commercial reputation cannot substitute for scrutiny.

Pawan K Goenka, Chairman of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe), has cited SpaceX as a reference point for India’s commercial space ambitions. His reported remarks in 2025 and June 2026 encouraged comparison with SpaceX’s achievements and highlighted the potential for greater risk-taking by Indian investors. These remarks do not, in themselves, establish improper favouritism. India can learn from SpaceX’s innovation and commercial scale without replicating its operating model or becoming dependent on its infrastructure. IN-SPACe must balance its responsibility to promote private participation with its role in authorising space activities. Its decisions should strengthen indigenous capabilities, protect critical infrastructure and ensure continuity of essential services. These standards must apply irrespective of a provider’s nationality or commercial reputation.

On September 6, 2026, ISRO clarified that space-sector reforms would neither privatise the organisation nor diminish its importance. It reaffirmed its central role in advanced research, national and strategic missions, space science and critical technologies, describing the objective as an “ISRO-led national space ecosystem”. This is the appropriate distinction. ISRO must remain the bedrock, private enterprise the force multiplier, and the service of humanity the enduring measure of success. International experience illustrates why technological sophistication alone cannot guarantee continuity or strategic reliability. Ukraine: Starlink became operationally important to Ukrainian forces during the war.

In October 2026, reports of restrictions affecting satellite connectivity used in military operations renewed concerns about dependence on privately controlled infrastructure. The lesson is not that private operators should be presumed hostile. It is that access to critical communications cannot be treated as assured merely because a provider is commercially successful.

Iran: Starlink has been used by some people to circumvent government-imposed internet restrictions. Satellite connectivity can sustain communications when conventional networks are disrupted, while raising questions about jurisdiction, state authority and the decisions of foreign operators. These situations differ in their legal and operational circumstances. None, by itself, establishes hostile intent towards India. Together, however, they demonstrate why critical services require credible continuity arrangements, contractual protections, accountability and viable alternatives. Satellite broadband can connect remote communities, improve access to education and healthcare, support disaster response and serve areas poorly covered by terrestrial networks. Cyber-security, lawful access, network control, emergency continuity and the possibility of external leverage must therefore form part of regulatory assessment. India should apply these principles consistently to every provider.

No single platform should become a strategic vulnerability simply because it offers an efficient or commercially attractive service. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat is not technological isolation. It is the development of domestic capability and confidence so that India can engage the world from a position of strength. International partnerships can accelerate innovation and attract investment. Their value, however, must be measured by whether they strengthen indigenous capabilities, protect essential services and preserve sovereign decision-making.

IN-SPACe has a responsibility to ensure that commercial expansion and national security are considered together, while respecting legitimate commercial confidentiality. India must retain the expertise, infrastructure and institutional independence needed to pursue national priorities. Commercial partnerships should complement ISRO’s strategic mandate, not leave critical functions vulnerable to decisions beyond India’s control.

The choice is not between innovation and sovereignty. It is between partnerships that build lasting national capability and arrangements that risk creating strategic dependence. India must never confuse connectivity with dependency, innovation with sovereignty, or commercial convenience with national security.

The door is ours, and so is the key.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have.”
- Socrates

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY: A VITAL BRIDGE IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD



RUP NARAYAN DAS

At a time when the global geopolitical landscape is undergoing profound changes, diplomacy can no longer remain confined to government-to-government negotiations and high-level summits. Parliamentary engagement, often conducted away from the glare of publicity, has emerged as an important instrument for building trust, sustaining dialogue and keeping channels of communication open when conventional diplomacy encounters obstacles. The 12th BRICS Parliamentary Forum, being hosted by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on October 26 and 27, offers an opportunity to appreciate the growing significance of this less visible but increasingly relevant dimension of international relations.

The meeting follows the BRICS summit held in Delhi on September 12 and 13. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also expected to interact with distinguished parliamentarians from BRICS member countries. Such engagement provides legislators with an opportunity to exchange views directly with the Indian leadership and gain a broader understanding of the country’s perspectives on pressing international issues. At a time when geopolitical rivalries are intensifying and the international order is under strain, such interactions can help create space for dialogue beyond the limitations of formal diplomatic engagements.

Beyond the corridors of conventional diplomacy

In recent years, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh have played significant roles in advancing India’s parliamentary diplomacy. The Commonwealth Speakers’ and Presiding Officers’ Conference, organised in January this year, and the G20 Speakers’ Conference held in October 2023 are notable examples of India’s efforts to strengthen engagement among legislative institutions. Both also participated in the BRICS Parliamentary Forum in Brasilia in June last year.

The all-party parliamentary delegations sent to various countries following Operation Sindoor further demonstrated how legislators can contribute to India’s international outreach. By representing a broad spectrum of political opinion, such delegations can communicate national positions while engaging foreign lawmakers and political institutions. Their significance lies not merely in conveying a government’s message but also in establishing relationships that may prove valuable long after a particular diplomatic initiative has run its course. Yet, parliamentary diplomacy remains insufficiently understood outside policy and diplomatic circles. Its contribution is often overshadowed by the more visible activities of heads of government, foreign ministers and diplomats. This is unfortunate because legislatures provide an additional channel through which countries can sustain communication, exchange perspectives and explore common ground without necessarily committing themselves to formal agreements. The history of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), established in 1889, is instructive in this regard. Long before the establishment of the United Nations, the organisation had created a platform for dialogue and cooperation among parliamentarians across national boundaries. Its evolution reflects the enduring belief that disagreements between countries need not eliminate opportunities for communication between their elected representatives. The experience of the United Kingdom and Argentina after the Falklands War of 1982 offers a telling illustration. When relations between the two countries were severely strained, the centenary celebrations of the IPU in London in 1989 provided an opportunity for representatives of both sides to meet. Such encounters demonstrate how parliamentary platforms can help break the ice when conventional

diplomatic engagement is constrained by political circumstances.

This does not mean that parliamentary diplomacy can replace formal negotiations or resolve every international dispute. Its strength lies elsewhere: in creating opportunities for contact, preserving channels of communication and gradually building the mutual understanding necessary for more substantive engagement. Meetings held alongside major international forums can be particularly useful in this respect. Bilateral exchanges between parliamentary leaders may not produce immediate breakthroughs, but they can establish the foundations for future cooperation.

Giving the BRICS agenda a parliamentary dimension

The BRICS Parliamentary Forum is designed to carry forward the broad objectives of the grouping’s summit declarations and decisions within the legislative domain. It complements the wider BRICS framework by bringing together representatives of member countries to discuss governance, institutional development and international cooperation.

The central theme of the present

matation and enhance administrative efficiency, it also raises questions about privacy, accountability, employment and the concentration of technological power. Parliamentary institutions have a crucial role in ensuring that the adoption of AI serves human interests rather than advancing technological change without adequate safeguards. Cooperation among legislators can help countries exchange regulatory experiences and develop common approaches to issues that transcend national boundaries.

The discussion on representative global governance is equally significant. International institutions must contend with demands from emerging economies and developing countries for a greater voice in decisions affecting trade, finance, climate action, technology and security. Parliamentary dialogue can help articulate these concerns and encourage a more inclusive understanding of global governance.

BRICS and the changing international order

The international system is becoming increasingly fragmented. Strategic competition among major powers, re-

eration.

Nevertheless, the grouping offers an important forum for debating the future of global governance. The existing international order, rooted in the state-centric principles associated with the Peace of Westphalia, has evolved considerably over the centuries. However, the institutions that emerged after the Second World War have struggled to accommodate the changing distribution of economic power and the aspirations of a more diverse international community. The Non-Aligned Movement, which

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

UN Commission of Inquiry:

“Israel has committed war crimes & the crimes against humanity of extermination, persecution, torture, rape & other forms of sexual violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, intentionally targeting Palestinian civilians.” ~ United Nations Geneva

Summary

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel submits its fifth report to the General Assembly. The report mainly examines killing and causing bodily and mental harm by members of the security forces of the State of Israel and of the State of Palestine since October 2023.



meeting, ‘Fostering Parliament for People-Centric Development’, is particularly relevant at a time when democratic and representative institutions are under pressure to respond to increasingly complex public expectations. Economic uncertainty, technological disruption, social inequalities and geopolitical tensions have made governance more challenging. Citizens expect institutions not only to deliver development but also to ensure that its benefits are accessible, equitable and sustainable.

The forum’s proposed discussions on strengthening institutional resilience, promoting human-centric innovation in artificial intelligence and leveraging parliamentary cooperation for more representative global governance address some of these emerging concerns.

Institutional resilience is essential because parliaments must remain effective even amid political polarisation, economic shocks and public distrust. Their legitimacy depends on their ability to facilitate debate, scrutinise executive action and translate citizens’ concerns into meaningful policy. Resilience, therefore, should not be understood simply as the survival of institutions under pressure; it must also encompass their capacity to remain transparent, accountable and responsive. Artificial intelligence presents another important challenge. While technological innovation can improve public services, expand access to infor-

mation and disagreements over global rules have weakened confidence in the ability of existing institutions to respond effectively to contemporary challenges. The post-war international order, shaped substantially by Western powers, is facing growing demands for reform.

India’s expanding economic weight makes its participation in this debate particularly consequential. As one of the world’s largest economies and a major emerging power, India has an interest in an international system that reflects contemporary economic realities and gives developing countries a more meaningful role in decision-making.

BRICS has acquired importance in this context, particularly as a platform through which countries of the Global South can raise questions about representation, development financing and the distribution of global economic power. Its expansion has widened its geographical and political reach, although its members continue to differ in their strategic priorities, economic structures and approaches to international affairs. These differences should not be overlooked. BRICS is not a uniform political bloc, nor does its growing profile automatically translate into a common position on every international issue. Its effectiveness will depend on the ability of its members to identify shared interests, manage disagreements and develop practical mechanisms for coop-

once provided a collective platform for countries seeking to preserve strategic autonomy during the Cold War, has also lost much of its earlier political momentum. Its historical contribution remains significant, but the challenges of the present era require institutions capable of translating shared concerns into tangible outcomes. BRICS has the potential to contribute to this process, provided its members move beyond declarations and strengthen cooperation through effective institutions and implementable initiatives. For India, the BRICS platform and its parliamentary forum offer opportunities to present its perspectives on international reform, development and cooperation. But leadership in global affairs must be demonstrated through sustained engagement, credible proposals and a willingness to accommodate the legitimate concerns of other countries. A larger economic profile can strengthen India’s influence, but it cannot by itself guarantee a more representative international order. The choice facing governments is therefore clear: invest in education, employment, affordable living and institutional accountability, or risk allowing manageable grievances to develop into prolonged social unrest.

A country’s future cannot be secured by asking its young people to wait indefinitely for their turn. It must be built by giving them a fair opportunity to participate in the present.

Five Killed in Guwahati Hotel Shooting; Gaurav Gogoi Targets Himanta Government Over Law and Order



GUWAHATI

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi has questioned the state's law and order situation following a shooting at Bilas Inn hotel in Guwahati's Ulubari area that left five people dead. Expressing condolences to the victims' families on social media on Tuesday, Gogoi called for accountability from Chief Minister and Home Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and urged the government to take more effective steps to curb crime in the city.

In his post, Gogoi said the incident had raised serious concerns about public safety and the law and order situation in Guwahati. He stressed that the Chief Minister must take responsibility for the growing incidence of crime and give greater attention to

ensuring the safety of citizens. The Congress leader also called for those responsible to be brought to justice and for effective measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The shooting took place at Bilas Inn hotel on Monday at around 9 pm. Five people were killed and another person sustained injuries. Police have arrested the accused, identified as Ghanakanta Gogoi, in connection with the incident.

Guwahati Police Commissioner Partha Sarathi Mahanta said preliminary investigations indicated that a property dispute linked to the hotel's lease agreement could have triggered the shooting. However, investigators are continuing to examine the circumstances leading to the incident and establish the exact sequence of events.

The final findings of the investigation are awaited.

Meanwhile, the injured were taken to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH). Babul Kumar Bezbaruah, the hospital's officiating principal and chief superintendent, said the hospital authorities were informed about the incident between 9 pm and 9.30 pm on Monday. One person was brought to the hospital dead, he said.

The deceased was identified as Narayan Das, aged around 48. According to the hospital's preliminary observations, he had an injury mark on his lip. Bezbaruah said there appeared to be an entry wound from a bullet, but no corresponding exit wound was visible.

A team from the Forensic Science Laboratory also visited the hotel fol-

lowing the shooting. Investigators are examining the scene, the weapon allegedly used and other evidence to reconstruct the incident and establish the sequence of events.

While police are pursuing the property dispute angle as a possible motive, the deaths have triggered a political debate over public safety and crime prevention in Guwahati. The Congress has demanded accountability from the state government, even as investigators work to establish the circumstances surrounding the shooting.

The focus now remains on the progress of the police investigation, the evidence gathered from the crime scene and the steps the state government takes to address concerns over law and order in the city.

Supreme Court Seeks Tripura Government's Response on Constitutional Validity of Jamatia Customary Law

AGARTALA

The Supreme Court has sought responses from the Tripura government and the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) on a public interest litigation challenging the constitutional validity of a provision in the Jamatia Customary Law Act, 2017, concerning the handling of cases involving the alleged enticement and rape of women.

A three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mahana issued notices on Monday on a petition filed by Madhumita Bhattacharya. The bench also directed that the petition be tagged with a matter already pending before the court.

Filed through advocate Shoumendu Mukherji, the plea challenges Section 143 of the Act, alleging that the provision could allow accused persons in rape-related cases to escape criminal consequences by paying financial penalties under the community's customary adjudication system. The petitioner has sought a declaration that the provision is unconstitutional. The plea also seeks directions for the production and transmission to the Supreme Court of relevant records relating to the enactment of the legislation. Section 143 provides a mechanism for a person aggrieved by a judgment or decision delivered by Okras-traditional Jamatia spiritual or community leaders who exercise adjudicatory functions to approach the appropriate formal forum.

The Jamatia Customary Law Act, 2017, was enacted by the TTAADC under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to codify the customary practices and traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms of the Jamatia community.

Kharge's Remark on Modi's Father Sparks BJP Protests in Guwahati, Apology Demanded

GUWAHATI

The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) staged a protest at Sarusajai in Guwahati on Monday, demanding a public apology from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge over his reported remark about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's late father at a party event in Patna.

BJP leaders and workers raised slogans against Kharge and Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, joining similar demonstrations reported from several parts of the country.

BJP Mahila Morcha member Ratna Singh said the Congress president's choice of words was unacceptable and alleged that the remarks reflected the Congress's attitude towards the Prime Minister.

"Kharge is the Congress president, and his use of disrespectful language against Prime Minis-

ter Narendra Modi's late father in Patna reflects the party's true character," Singh said. She also referred to earlier remarks by opposition leaders about Modi's late mother.

Singh said BJP workers would not accept what she described as disrespectful comments about a democratically elected leader. She added that party members across the country had taken to the streets to register their protest.

BJP Mahila Morcha state president Purabi Roy demanded Kharge's resignation and a public apology.

"We demand the resignation of Kharge and a public apology for the remarks he made," Roy said.

BJP member Rupak Sharma said political differences should not lead to comments about the families of political leaders. He also alleged that Kharge had made disrespectful remarks about Assam in the past.

Meitei Alliance Demands Security Operations at All 14 SoO Camps in Manipur

IMPHAL

The Meitei Alliance has urged the Manipur government to conduct security operations at all 14 designated Suspension of Operations (SoO) camps housing cadres of the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and the United People's Front (UPF), following a joint raid at a camp in Kangpokpi district that reportedly led to the recovery of firearms, ammunition and explosives.

The demand follows an operation conducted at the Sinai SoO camp on October 23 by Manipur Police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and CoBRA commandos. The organisation has called on the state government and the Director General of Police (DGP) to extend similar operations to the remaining designated camps.

According to details cited in the Meitei Alliance's statement, security personnel detained 17

people suspected of posing as registered cadres. The operation also reportedly revealed that 158 of the camp's 159 registered cadres were absent, with only one authorised cadre present at the site. Security forces recovered 24 firearms, 38 magazines, ammunition and explosives during the raid, the organisation said. The CRPF subsequently took complete control of the camp, according to the report published by Northeast Now.

However, details regarding the whereabouts of the absent cadres and the specific allegations against the 17 detained individuals were not immediately available.

Alliance backs police action

In its statement, the Meitei Alliance praised the state government and the police leadership for conducting the operation, describing it as an important step towards restor-

ing the rule of law in Manipur.

The organisation said the state had endured nearly three and a half years of violence, displacement and loss of life. It alleged that armed groups operating under the SoO arrangement had enjoyed prolonged impunity and called for stronger enforcement of the law. The demand comes amid continuing concerns over security following the killing of three Meitei civilians on October 19. According to the report, the victims were reportedly gathering firewood when they were attacked. The alliance argued that effective law enforcement was essential to rebuilding public confidence and improving the sense of security among internally displaced people living in relief camps.

The Meitei Alliance has urged the state government and the DGP to conduct security operations at all 14 SoO camps,

arguing that preventive action should not be delayed until further civilian casualties occur.

The organisation has also called for armed groups to be disarmed and those responsible for violence to be prosecuted. It said these measures were necessary to establish lasting peace and restore public confidence in the administration.

The alliance further alleged that armed intimidation had restricted freedom of expression and hindered reconciliation between communities. It expressed hope that sustained government action would help address these concerns and create conditions for peace.

The raid at the Sinai camp has brought renewed attention to the monitoring of designated SoO camps, compliance with the terms of the arrangement and the presence of registered cadres at these facilities.

Gohpur shooting case: Gorkha community blocks Assam-Arunachal border road, seeks accused's arrest



HOLLONGI

Tension prevailed near Hollongi along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border on Monday evening after members of the Gorkha community staged a protest demanding the immediate

arrest of a man accused of killing his brother-in-law and critically injuring another person in Gohpur, Assam.

The protesters blocked roads along the interstate border on October 26, pressing the authorities to arrest the accused, identified as 42-year-

old Kenba Kami, a resident of Aalo in Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district. He allegedly fled after the shooting and remains absconding.

According to Papum Pare Superintendent of Police Taru Gusar, Kami had travelled to Gohpur to bring his wife back when the incident took place at around 7.15 pm.

Police said an altercation broke out at his wife's residence, following which Kami allegedly opened fire with a country-made pistol, killing one of his brothers-in-law. He also allegedly attacked another man, suspected to be another brother of his wife, with a machete, leaving him critically injured.

The injured man was being referred to a hospital in Dibrugarh for advanced medical treatment.

The incident triggered protests at Hollongi, where demonstrators demanded swift action against the accused. The road blockade heightened tensions in the border

area, prompting concerns over the situation as the search for Kami continued.

Police forces from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh are coordinating efforts to trace and apprehend the accused. A case has been registered at Gohpur Police Station, and an investigation is underway to establish the circumstances surrounding the shooting.

The accused had not been arrested at the time of reporting. ness guests. However, the wider economic impact will depend on sustained tourist demand, connectivity, service standards and the extent to which local enterprises participate in the tourism supply chain.

With its first five-star hotel now operational, Nagaland is seeking to position hospitality as a driver of tourism growth, employment and private investment while retaining the cultural identity that distinguishes the state.

Mizoram Seizes Drugs Worth Rs. 77.15 Crore in September, Arrests 29 Including Six Myanmar Nationals

AIZAWL

Mizoram Police seized narcotics worth an estimated ₹77.15 crore and arrested 29 people, including six Myanmar nationals, in 29 cases registered across the state in September, highlighting the continuing challenge of drug trafficking in the north-eastern region.

According to a statement issued by the state police on Monday, the largest seizure by value was methamphetamine, with 78.746 kg of the drug recovered during the month. The consignment was estimated to be worth ₹62.99 crore.

The seizures also included 8.112 kg of morphine valued at ₹8.11 crore and 2.922 kg of heroin worth ₹5.84 crore. Police additionally recovered 3.7 kg of opium, estimated at ₹18.5 lakh, and 4.22 kg of cannabis, valued at ₹2.11 lakh.

Major methamphetamine seizures

Champhai district accounted for one of the major recoveries, with police seizing 25.646 kg of methamphetamine. In Saitual district, two separate cases led to the recovery of 18.194 kg and 12.746 kg of the same drug, the statement said.

In another operation, police seized 8.946 kg of methamphetamine, 3.087 kg of morphine and

50 grams of heroin.

Other significant recoveries included 3.7 kg of opium in Champhai, 1.618 kg of heroin in Kolasib and 4.22 kg of cannabis in Lawngtlai district.

The 29 people arrested in connection with the cases included Indian and foreign nationals. Several of the accused were identified as residents of Manipur and Myanmar, according to the police statement.

Police seek public cooperation

Mizoram Police said the seizures reflected continuing efforts to disrupt drug trafficking networks and prevent the circulation of narcotics across the state. The department, however, stressed that enforcement measures alone would not be sufficient without sustained public cooperation.

Residents have been urged to share information about suspected drug trafficking and the movement of narcotics with the authorities, village councils, the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and other non-governmental organisations.

The police reiterated that cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local communities remains crucial to tackling drug trafficking and limiting the availability of narcotics in Mizoram.

Arunachal Congress Seeks Cut in RAF Deployment, Suspension of Siang Dam Surveys

ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) has demanded a substantial reduction in the deployment of 250 additional Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel in areas witnessing protests against the proposed Siang mega dam, accusing the state government of relying on security measures instead of addressing the concerns of affected communities.

In a statement issued on Monday, the Congress called for an immediate suspension of pre-feasibility survey activities until meaningful consultations are held with local residents. It also urged the government to initiate time-bound discussions with community representatives and other stakeholders.

The party sought an impartial inquiry into the reported use of tear gas against civilians during a recent 12-hour bandh, saying the circumstances surrounding the incident needed to be examined.

According to the APCC, opposition to the proposed project stems from concerns over ancestral land, customary rights, livelihoods, environmental damage, seismic risks and possible displacement.

The party said the future of the Siang river and its surrounding communities must be central to any decision on the project.

Congress questions additional security deployment

The APCC questioned the necessity, mandate and duration of the additional RAF deployment, warning that an expanded security presence could deepen mistrust and aggravate tensions instead of resolving the dispute.

The party condemned violence, arson and damage to public and private property, stating that those responsible should face legal action. At the



same time, it cautioned the government against collective punishment or the suppression of peaceful democratic protests.

The Congress also called for the release of detained youths wherever their continued detention was not legally justified. It sought a review of first information reports (FIRs) registered in connection with the protests and raised concerns over allegations of arbitrary arrests and retaliatory action.

The party further asked the state government to clarify the assurances reportedly given by Chief Minister Pema Khandu during a meeting with

Adi youths from the affected areas. It demanded details of which commitments had been fulfilled and which remained pending.

Calls for wider consultations

The APCC urged the government to engage with the Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum (SIFF), the Adi Bane Kebang Union (ABKU), the Siang Area Youth Association (SAAYA), village elders, traditional institutions and other organisations representing affected communities.

It said discussions should be conducted within a defined timeframe and should address the concerns of residents before survey activities proceed further.

The proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) is expected to have the potential to generate substantial electricity and support water-management objectives, including flood moderation, depending on its design and operational framework.

However, opposition to the project has intensified amid apprehensions over its possible impact on local communities, land rights and the fragile Himalayan environment.

The latest demands from the Congress add to the pressure on the state government to balance the project's proposed benefits with the concerns of residents in the affected areas. The government's response to the party's demands was not included in the statement.

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SC seeks Centre’s response to news publishers’ plea against data protection law

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the Centre’s response to a petition filed by the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) challenging provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act and its accompanying rules, alleging that they infringe press freedom and the right to information.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana issued notice on the plea, which has been listed for further hearing on November 17 along with related pending matters.

The association has sought the striking down of several

ing, undermine investigative journalism and compromise the confidentiality of sources.

Appearing for the DNPA, senior advocate Madhavi Divan described the petition as a comprehensive challenge by the “legacy media”, distinguishing traditional news organisations from citizen journalists. She urged the court to issue notice on the association’s plea for an interim stay on the contested provisions.

Divan argued that the law’s consent requirements could make routine news gathering difficult, particularly when reporting on individuals who have not consented to the use of their personal data.

“If I am left to the mercy of the data principal as to whether

implications for live television coverage and time-sensitive reporting.

The petitioner, DNPA, comprises 21 media outlets (including those of Gautam Adani’s NDTV and Mukesh Ambani’s CNN NEWS 18) particularly challenged the amendment to Section 8(1)(f) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, contending that it restricts access to information about public officials and undermines public scrutiny.

“The deletion is changing the whole concept of news,” Divan submitted.

The petition has further questioned the Centre’s powers to requisition information under the DPDP Act, arguing that the provisions could



provisions of the law, arguing that the absence of an exemption for journalistic activities could hamper news report-

er he or she will give consent, how will news be reported?” she asked, warning that the provisions could have serious

affect the functioning of news organisations and their ability to report on matters of public interest.

Rahul Gandhi invokes ‘Satyam Shivam Sundaram’ ahead of November 1 ‘Save the Vote’ rally



NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday posted the words “Satyam Shivam Sundaram” - meaning truth, auspiciousness and beauty - on social media platform X, days before the Congress’s ‘Save the Vote, Save the Country’ march and rally scheduled for November 1 at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi.

The post featured a graphic with three white horizontal strokes crossed by a red vertical mark against a black background. The design resembles the tripundra, a Shaivite mark traditionally made with three horizontal lines of ash on the forehead. According to scholar Antonio Rigopoulos, the three lines

symbolise Shiva’s threefold power of will, knowledge and action.

Gandhi has previously invoked the symbolism of Lord Shiva while speaking about demonstrations against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. He compared the protests to Shiva’s Tandav, describing the movement as an ongoing process that did not depend on a fixed plan.

“The plan was that we would go by bus, sit there, and get arrested. The police wouldn’t let us go. So we changed the plan,” Gandhi had said. He added that the movement was continuing in different forms and that anyone willing to participate could join what he described as Shiva’s procession, or Shiv ki Baraat.

The Congress leader had also

referred to Lord Shiva during his speech in the Lok Sabha on July 1, 2024, during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President’s address. Holding an image of the deity, he described Shiva as a symbol of fearlessness, non-violence and truth.

Gandhi also spoke about the Abhaya Mudra, a gesture associated with reassurance and fearlessness, linking it to the idea of confronting the truth without fear. He referred to Islam, Sikhism, Christianity and Jainism while discussing the emphasis on courage across religious traditions.

Congress calls for mass participation

On October 25, Gandhi appealed to students, farmers, labourers,

women, young people and traders to participate in the November 1 ‘Save the Vote, Save the Country Jan March and Mega Rally’ at Ramlila Maidan.

Alleging that voters’ names had been deleted from electoral rolls and that rules and laws had been violated, he said the Congress would not remain silent over what it described as the theft of votes.

“Our votes are being stolen, and we will not tolerate this quietly under any circumstances,” Gandhi wrote on X.

In another post announcing the programme, he urged people concerned about democracy to assemble in the national capital. “Students, farmers, labourers, women, youth, and traders - anyone who cares about democracy must come,” he wrote.

The Congress has been demanding the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, an issue that has featured prominently in its protests.

On Monday, Gandhi separately addressed Delhi’s business community, criticising the Central Government over alleged restrictions and traffic disruptions in the capital during the protests.

In his post, he claimed that metro services had been shut and roads sealed, affecting traders and residents. He also linked the disruption to the Congress’s allegations concerning electoral irregularities and reiterated the demand for Kumar’s removal.

“We love you and hear you,” Gandhi wrote, addressing traders. He alleged that the disruptions threatened businesses, savings and the future of their children, and called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to remove Kumar. Gandhi claimed that the protests would stop within 30 seconds if the demand were met.

The November 1 rally is expected to bring the Congress’s campaign over voter-list deletions and its demand for accountability from the Election Commission into focus. The allegations made by Gandhi and the Congress remain the party’s stated position.

INTERNATIONAL

India says new UNSC permanent members without veto would be ‘second-class’



UNITED NATION

India has asserted that any reform of the UN Security Council that creates a new category of permanent members without veto powers would effectively relegate them to “second-class” status, leaving the existing five permanent powers in control of the decision-making process.

China, France, Russia, the UK and the US are the five permanent members of the 15-nation Security Council and enjoy veto powers. The Council also has 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.

India’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, on Monday said the veto must be held by all permanent members of a reformed Council as long as the provision exists, stressing that fairness and justice demand equal rights and responsibilities for all permanent members.

“India’s position on the veto is principled and well known... We reiterate that as long as the veto exists, it must be held by all permanent members of a reformed

Council,” he said.

Addressing the Inter-Governmental (IGN) plenary on ‘Cluster Debate on the Question of the Veto’ in the UN General Assembly, Parvathaneni said a reform that expands the Security Council by “creating another category of long-term members without the veto effectively makes them ‘second-class’ members and would not change the decision-making dynamic of the P5”.

Creating a new category of permanent members, with or without veto powers, would further complicate an already difficult discussion and “entrench the very inequity we are seeking to correct”, he said.

“Periodic elections and the concept of permanency are fundamentally contradictory,” the diplomat said.

“History has a lesson for us,” he said, recalling that the only expansion of the Security Council, in 1965, increased the number of non-permanent members from six to 10 while retaining five permanent members.

The ratio of permanent to elected

members shifted from 5:6 to 5:10, further strengthening the relative power of the P5, Parvathaneni said.

India has consistently called for expanding both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership, warning that reform efforts would border on “failure” if they focused solely on increasing the number of non-permanent members.

New Delhi has been at the forefront of years-long efforts to achieve reform of the Security Council, saying the body, founded in 1945, is not fit for purpose in the 21st century and does not reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.

India has consistently underscored that it rightly deserves a permanent seat at the horse-shoe table.

New Delhi is also seeking a non-permanent seat for the 2028-29 term. Elections for the term are scheduled for June next year, when India and Tajikistan will contest the sole seat allocated to the Asia-Pacific Group.

India last served on the Council in 2021-22, its eighth term, having previously

held seats in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92 and 2011-12.

Parvathaneni further stressed that the veto, currently a prerogative of the five permanent members, must be exercised with “great restraint”, particularly on matters concerning international peace and security.

“It should not be an instrument of narrow political expediency,” he said.

Parvathaneni said the question of limiting the veto could not be considered in isolation from other aspects of Security Council reform, including membership categories, regional representation, the Council’s size and its working methods.

“India reiterates its call for a comprehensive approach towards Security Council reforms. The starting point is early commencement of text-based negotiations, with clearly defined timelines and milestones,” he said.

Addressing the Council’s working methods, the envoy said the veto was not limited to votes formally cast by permanent members.

An “effective or de facto veto” could also be exercised by any Council member over presidential statements, press statements and decisions of sanctions committees, where the “unwritten rule” of consensus allows a single member to block a proposal, often without explanation, Parvathaneni said.

He was referring to the working of the UNSC sanctions committees that designate and de-list terror outfits and individuals.

The diplomat also criticised the use of consensus as a “disguised, de facto veto” in the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) process itself.

Referring to the UN General Assembly resolution that established the framework for the negotiations, Parvathaneni said its guiding principle was the widest possible political acceptance, rather than consensus.

“Seventeen cycles later, we have no outcome to show for it,” he said.

Localized Russia-Ukraine ceasefire starts in deal brokered by Melania Trump, but Kyiv faces fresh attacks



WASHINGTON

MYKOLAIV: A localized ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia took effect early Tuesday ahead of a humanitarian mission led by US first lady Melania Trump, as missile attacks resumed in Kyiv.

The local pause in fighting started at 3 am in Ukraine to allow an aid mission into the Russian-occupied town of Oleshky in southern Ukraine later this week.

According to her office, Melania Trump led talks with civilian negotiators from Russia and Ukraine after meeting with United Nations officials who briefed her on the situation in the town.

The aid mission is planned ahead of a new round of US-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine expected next month and aimed at ending the war after more

than 4½ years of fighting.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators confirmed in separate statements that the ceasefire had begun.

The local ceasefire is due to last through Saturday, or longer, amid deep mistrust between Russia and Ukraine that has thwarted previous attempts at ceasefires.

Minutes after 3 am, multiple ballistic missile explosions shook Kyiv as air alerts sounded in multiple parts of the country.

Late Monday, the capital also came under attack, when Russian ballistic missiles damaged the grounds of a university in Kyiv, causing several injuries.

“It is important that the world sees that Russia is showing nothing but a desire to kill and continue waging war,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote in an online post shortly afterward.

Oleshky is in the partially occupied Kherson region, about 550 kilometers (340 miles) southeast of Kyiv, where the Dnipro River separates Russian and Ukrainian forces.

It was captured by Moscow’s forces on the first day of their full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Further calamity struck in June 2023 when floodwaters inundated the town due to a dam collapse.

Oleshky sits across the Dnipro River from the city of Kherson, the region’s administrative capital. Russian forces seized Kherson in the early stages of the 2022 invasion but retreated across the river several months later.

Negotiators involved in the aid mission said doctors, medicines, food supplies and water would be taken to Oleshky before evacuation corridors are opened.

JOURNALISM AT A CROSSROADS: WHO WILL BELL THE CAT?

The rise of social media has democratised news dissemination, but the growing confusion between content creation and professional journalism raises serious questions about credibility, accountability and press freedom. The answer lies not in state control, but in ethical self-regulation and transparent professional standards.

Journalism is undergoing a profound transformation. Digital platforms and social media have changed not only how news is produced and distributed, but also who gets to report it and how audiences consume it. A smartphone, a microphone and an internet connection can now take a person's account of an event to millions of viewers within minutes. This democratisation of information has opened up new possibilities for public participation and independent reporting. Yet it has also created a difficult question for the media industry: when everyone can publish news-like content, what distinguishes journalism from mere content creation?

Recent protests in New Delhi have brought this question into sharp focus. Images and videos of demonstrations, confrontations involving some protesters and subsequent police action spread rapidly across social media. Several content creators, some with relatively small followings, attracted millions of views through platform algorithms. Some described themselves as journalists and alleged that police personnel had obstructed their reporting or assaulted them. Complaints were reportedly filed in some cases. Meanwhile, exchanges between rival groups of media workers and online personalities descended into name-calling, with labels such as "Godi Media" and "Pappu Media" becoming part of the confrontation.

The episode illustrates both the reach of digital journalism and the risks that accompany it. Social media can expose excessive use of force, amplify the voices of overlooked communities and bring public attention to events that conventional newsrooms might miss. But viral reach is not proof of accuracy, just as a large audience does not automatically establish professional competence. When reporting becomes a contest for views, sensationalism can displace verification, and confrontation can become more valuable than facts.

Press freedom cannot be separated from responsibility. Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, a constitutional foundation for the protection of press freedom. An independent media is essential to democracy because it scrutinises power, informs citizens and provides space for competing views. But freedom of expression does not mean that every claim made in the name of journalism is beyond criticism. Nor does professional accountability justify arbitrary restrictions on reporting.

The distinction is important. Journalism is not defined merely by appearing before a camera, holding a microphone or delivering a monologue. It involves gathering information, checking facts, distinguishing allegations from established findings, seeking responses from those criticised and correcting errors when they occur. These principles apply whether a report appears in a newspaper, on television, on a digital news portal or through an independent journalist's social media account.

The challenge is that digital platforms do not necessarily reward these practices. Algorithms often favour content that generates strong reactions, while dramatic claims and confrontational videos can travel faster than careful, contextual reporting. An independent creator may perform valuable journalistic work without belonging to a large media organisation. Equally, someone working for an established outlet may fail to meet basic ethical standards. The distinction, therefore, should not be between traditional and digital media, or between established journalists and newcomers. It should be between responsible reporting and the misuse of the journalistic label.

Reports that press cards, identity profiles and microphones are being sold for small sums without meaningful verification of professional credentials raise a further concern. If such practices are substantiated, they suggest that journalistic identity itself is being commercialised. A card purchased online cannot confer professional credibility, just as the possession of a camera cannot guarantee that its user understands the responsibilities of reporting. Such arrangements can mislead the public, complicate access to sensitive locations and damage the standing of journalists who undertake their work professionally.

Yet it would be a mistake to respond by treating every independent content creator with suspicion. Many digital journalists work with limited resources, operate outside established institutions and report on issues that receive inadequate attention from mainstream media. Some have exposed wrongdoing and brought neglected public concerns into the national conversation. Professional journalism must remain open to such voices. Any attempt to reserve the right to report exclusively for established organisations would risk narrowing the democratic space that digital media has helped to expand.

The more immediate concern is accountability. Traditional media organisations generally operate



ate through editorial hierarchies, fact-checking processes and established mechanisms for addressing complaints. The Press Council of India provides a framework for dealing with ethical issues in the print media, while television news broadcasters have their own self-regulatory arrangements. These systems are not infallible, but they offer identifiable channels through which professional conduct can be examined.

Digital journalism, however, spans a much wider and more diverse field. Independent reporters, influencers, citizen journalists, commentators and entertainment creators often operate without comparable editorial structures. Their work may range from rigorous investigation to unverified commentary, yet the public can struggle to distinguish between the two. This gap calls for a serious discussion within the media fraternity about transparent ethical standards, accessible grievance mechanisms and the responsibilities that accompany claims of professional journalism.

Such a discussion must not become a pretext for government control. Any proposal to regulate who may call themselves a journalist carries a significant risk of misuse. A government could use licensing or accreditation requirements to exclude critical reporters, restrict access to public events or place inconvenient voices under pressure. In a democracy, the authority being scrutinised by the press cannot be allowed unchecked power to determine who is entitled to scrutinise it.

This is why the question of regulation cannot be answered through a simple choice between unrestricted activity and state intervention. A framework designed to protect journalism must also protect journalists from the framework itself. It should not give the government discretionary power to decide which views are legitimate, which reporters are acceptable or which organisations deserve recognition.

The media fraternity must take the lead. Editors, working journalists, digital publishers, independent reporters and professional associations should work towards a common set of principles that applies across platforms. Such principles could include transparency about affiliations, clear distinctions between news and opinion, verification of factual claims, disclosure of conflicts of interest, correction of errors and responsible conduct while covering demonstrations. The process should be open to independent journalists and smaller digital outlets, rather than being controlled exclusively by large media organisations.

Accreditation also needs careful consideration. Where official accreditation is required for access to particular events or restricted areas, the criteria should be transparent, relevant to the purpose and open to fair review. But accreditation must not become a universal test of whether someone is a journalist. Independent reporting often begins outside formal institutions, and the absence of an official press card should not automatically deprive a person of the right to gather and publish information from places where the public is lawfully permitted to be.

The safety of journalists at protest sites is another essential part of the debate. Reporters must be able to cover demonstrations without intimidation or unjustified obstruction. At the same time, media personnel should

respect lawful security arrangements, avoid interfering with police operations and clearly identify themselves when necessary for safety and coordination. If a journalist alleges assault or obstruction, the complaint should be examined impartially. Neither a press card nor a social media following should place anyone above the law; neither should the absence of formal credentials become an excuse for mistreating a genuine reporter.

The Press Council of India's initiative to issue guidance for journalists covering protests and demonstrations is a constructive step towards addressing these concerns. Guidelines can help improve coordination among reporters, media organisations and law enforcement authorities while emphasising safety and responsible reporting. Their effectiveness, however, will depend on how widely they are understood, whether media organisations adopt them and whether authorities respect the legitimate role of the press.

Experienced journalists, editors and professional bodies cannot afford to remain silent about the changes confronting their profession. Concerns about backlash, professional repercussions or being misunderstood may explain their reluctance to speak publicly, but silence will not resolve the problem. If responsible journalists do not help shape the standards of the digital age, the debate may be driven either by commercial interests or by governments whose relationship with an independent press is inevitably complicated.

Ultimately, the credibility of journalism rests on public trust. That trust cannot be secured by credentials alone, nor can it survive on appeals to press freedom while professional standards are ignored. News organisations must be prepared to examine their own shortcomings, including sensationalism, partisan presentation and the tendency to prioritise speed over verification. Independent creators, too, must recognise that influence brings responsibility, particularly when their reporting can affect reputations, public order and the safety of individuals.

The transformation of journalism is irreversible. Digital platforms will continue to reshape news consumption, and new voices will continue to challenge established media institutions. The objective should not be to reverse that change, but to ensure that greater access to publishing strengthens rather than weakens the public's right to reliable information. The real question is not whether journalism should be protected from digital media, but how journalism's core values can be protected across every platform. Governments must respect press freedom, media organisations must uphold professional ethics, and digital creators must be accountable for the claims they publish. None can shift the entire responsibility to another. Who, then, will bell the cat? The answer must begin with the media fraternity itself. The fourth estate cannot defend its independence merely by resisting outside interference; it must also demonstrate that it is willing to hold itself to the standards it demands of others. Freedom without responsibility risks eroding public trust, while regulation without safeguards risks suppressing dissent. A credible future for journalism depends on preserving both freedom and accountability.

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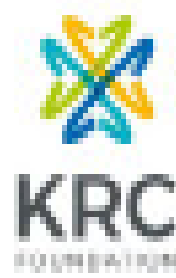
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Presents



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Writing Star Contest

MAY-NOV 2026

DIGITAL PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATE
THE SELECTED ARTICLE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON
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"I can shake off everything as I write;
my sorrows disappear, my courage is
reborn."
~ Anne Frank

TOPICS

- INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NER (ROADS, RAILS, AVIATION, HYDROPOWER & SECURITY)
- PROMOTING TOURISM, MSME, AGRO & HORTICULTURE, ACT EAST DIPLOMACY
- DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ADVENTURE SPORTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
- 5E FOR SUCCESS- PROMOTING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Open to Students from Class VI to Senior Citizens, divided into 5 categories+topics

Each entry will receive a digital participation certificate

There is NO fee for participation

The selected entry will be published on www.krcetimes.com

email articles: info@krcfoundation.org

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

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