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STAY ENRICHED



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President Murmu to Attend 27th Hornbill Festival, Visit Mizoram During Six-Day Tour

President's Northeast engagements include tribal freedom fighters' museum visit and Mizoram University convocation; Kisama to host her at Hornbill Festival inauguration on December 1

AIZAWL/KOHIMA

President Droupadi Murmu will visit Mizoram and Nagaland as part of a six-day tour covering three states from November 27 to December 2, with engagements highlighting the region's tribal heritage, cultural traditions and educational institutions.

According to a statement issued by the President's office, Murmu will visit the Ropuiliani Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museum at Kelsih in Mizoram on November 29.

On November 30, she will attend the 21st convocation of Mizoram University in Aizawl and participate in the closing ceremony of the institution's Silver Jubilee celebrations.

The President will travel to Nagaland on December 1 to attend the inaugural ceremony of the 27th Hornbill Festival at Kisama.



One of Nagaland's most prominent cultural events, the Hornbill Festival brings together the traditions and heritage of the state's diverse tribal communities. The annual showcase features traditional music, dance, crafts, food and indigenous cultural practices, attracting visitors from across India and abroad.

Her visit to the Ropuiliani museum is another significant component of the Northeast leg of the tour, highlighting the region's tribal history and contributions to the freedom struggle.

Before arriving in the Northeast, Murmu will undertake engagements in Keralam.

On November 27, she is scheduled to visit the birthplace of Adi Shankaracharya at Thalayattumpilli and attend the concluding ceremony of the golden jubilee celebrations of Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda College in Thrissur.

On November 28, she will attend the Autumn Term 2026 Passing Out Parade at the Indian Naval Academy in Ezhimala.

The President's six-day tour will conclude on December 2, following a series of cultural, academic, heritage and institutional engagements across the three states.

PERSPECTIVE

Life is not a spectacle or a feast; it is a predicament

Assam records over 6,000 arrests in child marriage crackdown since 2021: Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam has arrested more than 6,000 people in connection with child marriage cases since 2021, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday, reiterating the state government's resolve to eliminate the practice.

In a statement marking the first International Day for the Elimination of Child, Early and Forced Marriage, Sarma said the state had been pursuing a sustained campaign against child marriage, backed by stringent action against those allegedly involved in such offences.

"Since 2021, we have waged a sustained battle against child marriage, with over 6,000 arrests and firm action against offenders, which continues to date," the Chief Minister said in a social media post.

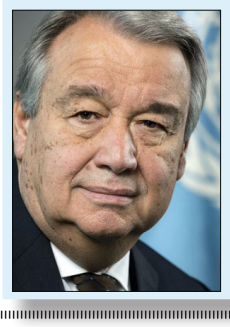
He maintained that the government's commitment to ending child marriage remained unwavering, adding that protecting the dignity, rights and future of girls was a priority.

"No child should ever have to sacrifice her childhood to a forced marriage," Sarma said.

The crackdown has remained a major component of the Assam government's campaign against child marriage, with arrests and legal action forming the core of its enforcement strategy.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on September 4, 2026, designating November 27 as the International Day for the Elimination of Child, Early and Forced Marriage. The observance seeks to raise awareness about the consequences of early and forced marriages and strengthen global efforts to protect children, particularly girls, from the practice.

WHO SAID WHAT



In today's peace processes, emerging technologies like AI can help reach thousands of people - when in the past, mediation & talks were restricted to a select few.But more information doesn't always mean better decisions. Technology can't substitute for the human relationships & trust upon which peace & conflict resolution depend.

~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations

Rural Nagaland accounts for bulk of child marriages, official data reveals

KOHIMA

The rural-urban divide in Nagaland's fight against child marriage has emerged as a major concern, with girls in rural areas nearly three times more likely to be married before the age of 18 than their urban counterparts, according to data presented by the state government on Friday.

National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) figures show that 7.3 per cent of women aged 20-24 in rural Nagaland were married before turning 18, compared to 2.4 per cent in urban areas. The overall prevalence in the state stands at 5.6 per cent.

Social Welfare Secretary Limawabang Jamir shared the figures at an event in Kohima marking the first International Day for the Elimination of Child, Early and Forced Marriage. He described the situation as a matter of concern and stressed the need for sustained intervention, particularly at the community level.

The data has highlighted the challenges facing efforts to eliminate child marriage, especially in rural communities where teenage pregnancy has also emerged as a significant concern.

Jamir said Child Marriage Prohibition Officers had been designated in all 17 districts of Nagaland. The state is also implementing initiatives under Mission Shakti's 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programme to encourage girls' education, reduce school dropout rates and address discriminatory social practices.

He added that the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, was being processed for formal adoption by the state government, although its core principles were already being implemented through departmental interventions.

Social Welfare Advisor and MLA Wangpang Konyak, speaking at the event, said protecting women and girls was fundamental to human rights, equality and sustainable development.



He called for greater social responsibility towards girls, questioning how families would respond if their daughters were forced into marriage, denied education or deprived of the freedom to decide their own future.Konyak also cautioned against measuring the scale of child marriage solely through officially reported cases. The absence of formally registered child marriages, he said, should not lead to complacency when teenage pregnancies, particularly in rural areas, continue to raise concerns.He called for coordinated action involving government departments, churches, tribal and community leaders, educational institutions, NGOs and civil society organisations.As part of the proposed intervention, participants at the event suggested a statewide 100-day awareness campaign from November 27 to March 8 next year. The campaign is expected to involve churches, village councils and civil society groups, with a focus on preventing child marriage and child trafficking.The rural-urban disparity in the NFHS-5 figures has placed renewed emphasis on strengthening grassroots awareness and ensuring that preventive measures reach vulnerable girls beyond urban centres.

Barak Festival to spotlight Manipur's cultural diversity, four-day event set for Dec 12

IMPHAL

Manipur is preparing to showcase its rich indigenous heritage and cultural diversity through the Barak Festival 2026, scheduled to be held from December 12 to 15 at Ziilipou (Zelipou) village near the Barak River in Senapati district.

The four-day festival, organised under the theme "Heritage in Harmony", aims to bring different communities together while highlighting their cultural traditions and longstanding association with the Barak River.Preparations for the event were reviewed by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh during a meeting with a delegation of the Naga People's Organisation (NPO) at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Babupara.

The Senapati-based delegation was led by NPO president Kuba Pater and general secretary M. John. Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho and Tourism Minister Khuraijam Loken Singh were also present.During the meeting, the Chief Minister stressed the need to promote peace, preserve indigenous games and traditional cultural practices, and celebrate the spirit of Christmas. He assured the organisers of the state government's support for the successful conduct of the festival.Khemchand Singh also emphasised that all 36 communities of Manipur should receive equal respect and recognition. He called for greater efforts to conserve and protect the Barak River, which holds cultural, ecological and economic significance for the region. Commissioner of Tourism Namoijam Kheda Varta informed the meeting that the state Tourism Department provides financial assistance for the festival, while its organisation is supervised by a committee headed by the Senapati Deputy Commissioner.He also proposed involving the Departments of Information and Public Relations, Art and Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports, and Information Technology to expand the festival's visibility and outreach.

Manipur's 1891 freedom struggle to find a permanent memorial in Andamans



IMPHAL

The legacy of Manipur's freedom fighters exiled by the British after the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 is set to receive renewed recognition, with the Manipur government and the Andaman and Nicobar Administration joining hands to develop a dedicated memorial museum at Manipur Parvat.

The two administrations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on November 26 for the joint development of the Manipur Parvat Memorial Museum and Traditional Gate, marking a step towards preserving an important chapter of Manipur's resistance against British colonial rule.The agreement was signed by Naorem Praveen Singh, Secretary of Art and Culture, on behalf of the Manipur government, and Jyoti Kumari, Secretary of Art and Culture, representing the Andaman and Nicobar Administration. Lieutenant Governor Dinesh Sharma witnessed the signing ceremony.

The memorial site carries particular historical significance for Manipur. Mount Harriet in South Andaman was officially renamed Manipur Parvat on October 16, 2021, to honour 23 Manipuri freedom fighters who were deported to the Andaman penal settlement following the British victory in the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891.

Among those exiled were Maharaja Kulachandra Dhwaja Singh and Prince Angousana Senapati, who were sentenced to life imprisonment by the British.

Historical accounts indicate that the exiled Manipuri leaders were initially imprisoned on the hillock before the construction of the Cellular Jail. Several died during their captivity, while others were subsequently transferred elsewhere.

The 23 deported freedom fighters remain important symbols of Manipur's resistance to colonial rule. Their sacrifices are remembered alongside those of Yubraj Tikendrajit and General Thangal, who were executed in Imphal following the 1891 conflict.

The proposed museum and traditional gate are expected to provide a dedicated space to preserve documents, historical accounts and the memory of the freedom fighters, while promoting awareness of their contribution to India's freedom struggle.

Both administrations said the agreement would facilitate the conservation and development of the Mount Manipur Memorial and strengthen cultural relations between Manipur and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The initiative also seeks to deepen the historical connection between the two regions, linking Manipur's colonial-era struggle with the Andaman Islands, where several freedom fighters from the Northeast endured imprisonment and exile under British rule.

Anaemia affects nearly three-fourths of adult women in Assam, ICMR survey finds

Prevalence reaches 76.9% among elderly women; Assam records the country's highest rate among men aged 60 and above

GUWAHATI

Assam is facing a widespread anaemia burden, with nearly three-fourths of adult women and elderly residents affected by the condition, according to a national nutrition survey conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

The survey found that 72.8 per cent of women aged 20-59 years in Assam were anaemic, the highest prevalence recorded in the country for this age group. The figure is substantially above the national average of 54.8 per cent.

The situation is even more concerning among elderly women. Anaemia prevalence among women aged 60 years and above stood at 76.9 per cent in Assam, compared with the national average of 55.7 per cent.

Assam also recorded the country's highest prevalence among elderly men, with 74 per cent of men aged 60 and above found to be anaemic. The corresponding national average was 44.7 per cent.



The burden extends to younger and middle-aged men as well. Among men aged 20-59 years, anaemia prevalence in Assam stood at 46.8 per cent, more than twice the national average of 22 per cent and the highest among states.

Women in their reproductive years are similarly affected. Anaemia was recorded in 71.9 per cent of women aged 15-49 years in Assam, against the national average of 55.9 per cent.

West Bengal reported a marginally higher prevalence of 72.4 per cent.

The findings also point to a significant burden among adolescents. Among girls aged 10-19 years, 58.8 per cent were found to be anaemic, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. The prevalence among adolescent boys was 37.4 per cent, against the national average of 22.8 per cent.

The data are part of the Survey for Assessment of Markers of Population Health, Activity, Diet, and Anthropometry (SAMPADA), conducted by the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition between 2023 and 2025.

The survey was designed to generate comprehensive data on dietary intake, anthropometry, anaemia and other nutritional biomarkers, addressing gaps in India's nutrition database.

More than 1.7 lakh blood samples were analysed to generate data on anaemia and micronutrient deficiencies across different stages of life, including among people aged above 60.

The nationwide exercise covered over two lakh individuals from more than 81,000 households across 183 districts in 35 states and Union territories. It used a multi-stage, stratified cluster sampling design to generate both national- and state-level estimates.

The findings place Assam among the states facing a particularly high anaemia burden across age groups and genders, underlining the scale of the nutritional health challenge confronting the state.

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INDIA-NEPAL TIES NEED MORE THAN DIPLOMATIC GESTURES

New Delhi and Kathmandu have opened a promising chapter in bilateral relations, but the real measure of this diplomatic engagement will lie in resolving longstanding disputes, accelerating connectivity and building trust on equal terms.

The first bilateral foreign visit of Nepal's newly elected Prime Minister Balendra Shah to India carries significance beyond diplomatic protocol. At a time when Kathmandu could have chosen to signal a shift in its foreign policy priorities, Shah's decision to make New Delhi his first destination reflects an understanding that Nepal's relationship with India remains central to its economic future, regional stability and strategic interests. The outcome of his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers an opportunity to redefine a relationship that has experienced both deep cooperation and recurring mistrust.

The visit has produced an ambitious package of financial assistance, infrastructure commitments and sectoral agreements. India's development assistance of NPR 24,000 crore, including grants for earthquake reconstruction and infrastructure development and a line of credit for energy projects, signals a substantial commitment. Eight agreements covering health, forensic sciences, sustainable urban development and fisheries, alongside the vision document titled 'Viksit Bharat and Samunnat Nepal', outline a broad framework for cooperation in trade, energy, water resources, climate resilience, technology and public services.

Yet the significance of this engagement should not be measured merely by the financial scale of the announcements. India and Nepal have signed agreements and announced ambitious projects in the past. Their relationship has frequently suffered not from a shortage of diplomatic declarations but from delays in implementation, political disagreements and an inability to address sensitive issues with sufficient trust and transparency. The present engagement must therefore be judged by what it delivers on the ground.

Connectivity has emerged as one of the most promising areas of cooperation. The launch of the Saryu-Kamala Express between Ayodhya and Janakpur carries religious and cultural symbolism, while also offering opportunities to strengthen cross-border tourism and people-to-people exchanges. Plans to develop Buddhist and Shiv-Shakti pilgrimage circuits further recognise the shared cultural and historical connections between the two countries.

The proposed expansion of Nepal's access to Indian ports, including Deendayal Port at Kandla and eventually Paradip, is equally important. For a landlocked country, reliable access to international trade routes is essential to economic growth. New integrated check posts, the Dharchula-Darchula cross-border bridge, the second phase of the Motihari-Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline and the proposed terminal at Jhapa could strengthen commercial exchanges and reduce logistical constraints. These projects, however, will matter only when they become operational and deliver measurable benefits to businesses and ordinary citizens.

Energy cooperation represents an even larger opportunity. Nepal's immense hydropower potential and India's growing demand for clean electricity create a natural basis for a mutually beneficial partnership. Cross-border power trade can generate revenue for Nepal while supporting India's energy transition. But cooperation in this sector must move beyond memoranda and project announcements. Investment certainty, transmission infrastructure, transparent pricing and long-term power purchase arrangements are essential if the Himalayan country's energy resources are to become a genuine engine of development.

Water management must receive comparable attention. The rivers originating in the Himalayas sustain millions of people across Nepal and northern India, but they also bring recurring floods, erosion and ecological challenges. Climate change is making these vulnerabilities increasingly difficult to manage. Neither country can effectively address these problems in isolation. Joint planning for flood control, river management, irrigation and hydropower development must become a permanent feature of bilateral cooperation. Equitable sharing of benefits and responsibilities will be crucial to sustaining public confidence.

However, economic opportunities cannot permanently overshadow the political sensitivities that continue to complicate India-Nepal relations. The boundary disputes involving Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh, as well as the Susta area, remain unresolved. These disagreements carry considerable political and emotional weight in Nepal, where concerns over sovereignty and territorial integrity are deeply rooted. The memory of the 2015 border blockade also continues to influence public perceptions of India.

The decision by the two Prime Ministers to direct their foreign secretaries to pursue discussions on outstanding boundary issues is therefore a welcome step. It acknowledges that disagreements exist and that they cannot be wished away through expressions of friendship. Territorial disputes require patience, historical understanding and sustained diplomatic engagement. Neither side benefits from allowing them to become instruments of domestic political mobilisation.

India, for its part, must recognise that its relationship with Nepal cannot be sustained through geographical proximity or historical ties alone. Nepal is a sovereign country with its own political aspirations, national priorities and foreign policy choices. Its desire to diversify economic and diplomatic partnerships should not automatically be interpreted as a challenge to Indian interests. A relationship based on mutual respect will be far more durable than one shaped by expectations of unquestioned alignment.China's growing engagement with Nepal adds another dimension to the relationship. Through infrastructure investment and its Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing has sought to expand its economic and strategic presence in the Himalayan region. Kathmandu has legitimate reasons to explore multiple sources of investment and development assistance. At the same time, India's concerns about strategic infrastructure near its sensitive northern frontier cannot simply be dismissed. The challenge for New Delhi is to remain Nepal's preferred development partner through reliable delivery, competitive cooperation and respect for Kathmandu's independence, rather than through geopolitical pressure.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The oldest, shortest words — "yes" and "no" — are those which require the most thought.
~ Pythagoras

Vaibhav's Bat Gives Rise to a New Sun in the Cricketing Sky



LALIT GARGG

Some days in the history of cricket do not merely remain dates on a calendar; they leave an indelible signature on the pages of sporting history. Tuesday turned out to be one such historic day for Indian cricket, when barely fifteen-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi produced an extraordinary batting spectacle in Doha, creating a new sunrise in the cricketing sky whose brilliance stunned the entire cricketing world. At an age when most teenagers are only beginning to dream of flying high, Vaibhav unfurled the flag of his name across the cricketing horizon with a performance that is destined to be remembered for years to come. Vaibhav smashed a breathtaking double century in just 52 balls, leaving the cricketing world stunned. A century in merely 28 balls, 150 runs in just 40 balls and 28 sixes in a single innings—these numbers sound like the fictional scorecard of a video game, yet Vaibhav transformed them into reality on the cricket field. His explosive innings has sent ripples across the cricketing world, overshadowing many other major headlines and becoming the talk of the global cricket fraternity. Today, Vaibhav Suryavanshi's extraordinary batting brilliance is on every cricket lover's lips. Former players and cricketing greats are showering praise on the young sensation, while an equally important question is being asked: When will this prodigious opening batter be given a place in India's T20 and ODI teams?

Of his sensational 204 runs, 168 came through sixes. Every ball struck by his bat seemed to fly beyond the boundary and write a fresh chapter in cricketing history. This was not merely an innings of extraordinary run-scoring; it was a spectacular challenge to the conventional limits of batting itself. Vaibhav's performance has demonstrated how far fearless and naturally gifted batting can push the boundaries of the modern game. Indian cricket has repeatedly produced extraordinary talents who have made the world acknowledge the strength and brilliance of Indian cricket. Sunil Gavaskar symbolised classical technique, Kapil Dev embodied courage and athleticism, Sachin Tendulkar represented extraordinary genius, Sourav Ganguly brought confidence and aggression, Mahendra Singh Dhoni became synonymous with decisive leadership and Virat Kohli established a new benchmark of aggressive consistency. Yet Vaibhav Suryavanshi's story is different because his extraordinary journey is unfolding while he is still in his teenage years.

At present, Vaibhav's bat is not merely striking the ball; it is challenging some of the old assumptions about the limits of young cricketers and creating a new narrative of its own.

His batting carries confidence, fearlessness, aggression and, above all, a remarkable natural rhythm. He does not appear intimidated by the reputation, experience or stature of the bowler standing before him. Watching him bat gives the impression that a delivery is not a threat but an opportunity, and that the boundary is not a wall but an invitation. Vaibhav Suryavanshi's list of achievements is equally astonishing. His performances in T20 cricket and the Indian Premier League have already established him as a rare batting talent. His explosive strike rate, extraordinary six-hitting ability and consistency at such a young age underline the enormous potential within him. In the 2026 IPL season, his remarkable tally of sixes and his success in the race for the Orange Cap further strengthened his credentials as one of the most exciting young batting talents in world cricket. The Doha innings has once again raised the question of when he should be given an opportunity in India's ODI and T20 teams.

The demand to see such an exceptional talent tested at the international level is entirely natural. But along with opportunity, patience and wisdom are equally important. Talent needs exposure, but it also needs protection, guidance and mental preparation. Cricket is not merely a game of bat speed and power; it is a test of temperament, adaptability, strategy, pressure management and mental resilience.

The example of Sachin Tendulkar, who made his international debut for India against Pakistan at the age of sixteen, continues to inspire generations. Sachin transformed that opportunity into the beginning of one of the greatest careers in cricket history. Vaibhav too stands before a vast horizon of possibilities. He certainly deserves opportunities, but those opportunities must be provided with a clear understanding of his cricketing development, temperament and long-term potential.

For Indian cricket's administrators and selectors, Vaibhav represents a rare talent that needs to be nurtured intelligently rather than hurriedly exposed to enormous pressure.

The world's bowlers will now be studying his batting closely. They will be searching for weaknesses, devising plans to neutralise his power-hitting and finding ways to contain his fearless aggression. That very challenge will define the next phase of his journey. Vaibhav will need to develop greater versatility in his technique, maturity in shot selection and the ability to adapt his batting according to match situations. Because true greatness in cricket does not lie merely in breaking records; it lies in maintaining excellence after the records have been broken. Some believe that naturally aggressive and instinctive players are born only rarely, and that denying them timely opportunities can sometimes affect their confidence and development.

Therefore, it is equally important for Vaibhav to preserve the fearless character of his game while adding consistency, discipline and technical refinement to it. He must continue to remain alert to the demands of modern cricket, constantly learn, analyse his own game and prepare himself for challenges that will inevitably become tougher. More international exposure, when provided at the right stage, can add maturity and depth to his batting. After his latest breathtaking performance, there is little doubt that bowlers around the world will be searching for ways to contain him. Strategies will be designed, weaknesses will be examined and plans will be created to neutralise his extraordinary hitting power. Yet, whatever comes next, Tuesday's innings will remain a spectacular and potentially epoch-making moment in cricket. At an age when most young cricketers are still dreaming of performing on the biggest stage, Vaibhav has already taken centre stage and made it his own. The sixes that soared from his bat did more than cross the boundary ropes—they gave wings to the dreams of an entire new generation of Indian cricketers.

Vaibhav Suryavanshi's cricketing sun has not risen merely to illuminate one extraordinary day; it appears destined to keep rising. The brilliance emerging from his bat has the potential to illuminate the future of Indian cricket. Undoubtedly, this is much more than a record. It is a golden page being written in the history of Indian cricket. The entire cricketing world should salute this teenage phenomenon and say: Vaibhav, the sun rising from your bat is shining brilliantly today, but the possibilities awaiting you on your cricketing journey are brighter still. Time will decide whether this extraordinary innings remains merely a record in the annals of cricket or becomes the opening line of a golden cricketing saga whose chapters future generations will read with pride. But one thing is certain—the Vaibhav story has begun with a thunderous stroke, and the cricketing world will now watch with anticipation as this young sun continues to rise. Vaibhav's bat has spoken.

The cricketing sky has witnessed a new sunrise.



DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Did you know? Barak Valley's only airport was built by the British in 1944.
Now, for the first time since Independence, the region is getting its own greenfield airport.
And people still ask, "Modi ji ne kya kiya?"

Today, Silchar gave the answer.
Our people came out in large numbers to thank Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji for yesterday's historic Cabinet decision
~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



Assam Congress takes Constitution Day protest to streets, Gaurav Gogoi targets BJP over voting rights

'SAVE VOTE, SAVE COUNTRY' CAMPAIGN FEATURES A GUWAHATI MARCH; CONGRESS RAISES ALLEGATIONS OVER CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS, ELECTION COMMISSION AND WOMEN'S SAFETY

GUWAHATI

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on Thursday took its "Save Vote, Save Country" campaign to the streets of Guwahati, organising a "Save Constitution" march on Constitution Day and accusing the BJP of undermining constitutional rights and democratic institutions.

The march began at the Manabendra Sharma Complex in Dispur and was attended by former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister and Assam Congress in-charge Bhupesh Baghel, APCC president Gaurav Gogoi, MPs, MLAs and senior party leaders.

Hundreds of Congress supporters joined the procession, raising slogans including "Vote Chor, Gaddi Chor" and "Chai Wala Chor Hain". Police



personnel were deployed in the area to maintain law and order.

Addressing the gathering, Gogoi said the Congress had pledged to protect the Constitution across state capitals on the occasion of Constitution Day. He accused the BJP of attempting to weaken the constitutional framework and deprive different communities of their constitutional rights.

The Congress leader said his party, which had played a role in India's freedom struggle, now had a responsibility to safeguard democracy. He argued that removing the BJP from power was necessary to keep democratic institutions alive.

Gogoi also commented on the controversy involving Assam Assembly Deputy Speaker Dr Habbey Teron. He said the Congress stood with the woman from Karbi Anglong who had levelled allegations against the BJP legislator.

Questioning the BJP's claims on women's safety and dignity, Gogoi referred to controversies involving party leaders in different states and alleged that political protection or electoral opportunities were sometimes extended to those facing such allegations.

The APCC president also criticised the Election Commission in connection with Congress candidate Sibamoni Borah's petition challenging BJP candidate Devasish Sharma's election in the October Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election.

Gogoi said the Gauhati High Court had examined the documents and affidavits before accepting the petition. He alleged that the Election Commission had been functioning as an agent of the BJP. The court's acceptance of the petition, however, does not by itself establish the allegations made in the election challenge.

Congress leader Zakir Hussain Sikdar accused the BJP of running governments through what he described as "vote theft". He said alleged manipulation of voting rights amounted to an attack on the Constitution.

Dhubri MP and Congress leader Rakibul Hussain also alleged that governments at both the Centre and in Assam were failing to uphold constitutional principles, despite taking their oaths in the name of the Constitution.

The Guwahati march formed part of the Congress's nationwide "Save Vote, Save Country" campaign. The party used Constitution Day to highlight what it described as threats to voting rights, constitutional safeguards and the independence of democratic institutions.

Mizo Innovator Lalbiakzuala Ralte Becomes First Northeasterner to Win Jamnalal Bajaj Award

AIZAWL

Mizoram-based innovator Lalbiakzuala Ralte has become the first person from Northeast India to receive the Jamnalal Bajaj Award, with the 2026 honour recognising his contribution to rural development through affordable science and technology solutions.

Ralte received the award at a ceremony in Mumbai on November 25. The recognition carries a cash prize of Rs 20 lakh.

His work focuses on developing practical and affordable machines to address the challenges faced by rural communities, particularly those living in hilly and difficult-to-access areas where conventional agricultural activities and transportation often involve considerable time and labour.

Among his notable innovations are bamboo incense-making machines, fodder grinders and agricultural ropeways. These technologies are designed to improve productivity, reduce manual labour and make livelihood activities more accessible to rural households.

A significant impact of his work has been the creation of income-generating opportunities, particularly for women in rural communities. His innovations have contributed to more than 10,000 livelihood opportunities, according to the report.

Ralte's machines have also expanded beyond Mizoram, finding users in different parts of India and markets in neighbouring countries, including Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The award recognises his efforts to apply science and technology to grassroots development, with a focus on solutions shaped by the specific needs of rural communities.

His achievement also marks a milestone for the Northeast, with Ralte becoming the first recipient from the region to receive the prestigious Jamnalal Bajaj Award.

Assam Secures Second Rank in CSE's State of India's Environment 2026 Report

GUWAHATI

Assam has secured the second position nationally in the Environment category of the Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) State of India's Environment 2026 report, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Thursday.

Sharing the development in a post on X, Sarma attributed the recognition to the state's efforts in forest restoration, biodiversity conservation, wildlife protection and environmental management.

The assessment is based on 48 indicators spread across 16 environmental sub-categories. These cover a range of areas, including forests and biodiversity, waste management, climate-related concerns and water resources.

Highlighting the state's conservation initiatives, the Chief Minister said Assam had reclaimed more than 18,000 hectares of forest land. He also pointed to the expansion of protected areas, strengthened wildlife protection measures and afforestation programmes as key components of the state's environmental efforts.

Sarma described the ranking as recognition of Assam's initiatives to protect its natural resources and improve environmental management.

He also highlighted the importance of the state's forests, rivers and wildlife, describing them as major natural assets that require sustained conservation efforts.

The second-place ranking places Assam among the leading states in the report's Environment category. However, the long-term impact of forest restoration, biodiversity protection and other conservation measures will remain central to assessing the state's environmental progress.

Assam Transport Strike Continues as Operators Reject Verbal Assurances, Seek Written Commitment

GUWAHATI

Commercial transport services across Assam are set to remain disrupted as the All Assam Motor Transport Association (AAMTA) refused to call off its indefinite strike despite assurances from the state government on its six-point charter of demands.

The deadlock continued after a meeting between the association's representatives and senior Transport Department officials at Janata Bhawan in Guwahati on Thursday, November 26. The meeting, held at 1 pm, was attended by Transport Commissioner and Secretary Akash Deep and other senior officials.

Although the department indicated that the association's demands would be addressed, transport operators maintained that verbal assurances were insufficient and insisted on a written commitment from the government before withdrawing the agitation.



AAMTA said its six demands had been submitted to the department following decisions taken at the association's convention on November 22. The organisation maintained that the strike would continue until the government's commitments were formally communicated in writing.

The dispute primarily concerns the implementation of regulations relating to Vehicle Location Tracking Devices (VLTDs) and Speed Limiting Devices (SLDs) in commercial vehicles.

One of the major objections raised by transport operators is the practice of inspecting speed-limiting devices on highways by lifting vehicle wheels with jacks. The association has also sought an extension of the deadline for updating SLD and VLTD certificates.The issue of multiple electronic challans has emerged as another major point of contention. AAMTA has alleged that some vehicles are being issued as many as 30 e-challans and has demanded a transparent mechanism for resolving such disputes, including referring contested cases to courts.The association has also highlighted infrastructure-related difficulties faced by commercial vehicle owners. It pointed out that Guwahati has only one centre for installing SLDs, with the work currently handled by a single agency. It has urged the government to allow multiple authorised companies to provide the service.

A shortage of vehicle fitness-testing centres across Assam has also been flagged, with transport operators alleging that inadequate facilities are creating difficulties in obtaining and renewing fitness certificates.

Other demands include the establishment of Transport Appellate Tribunals in every district, simplification of permit and fitness certificate renewal procedures, and a review of increased taxes and charges.

AAMTA has additionally sought clarity on the vehicle scrapping policy for commercial vehicles older than 20 years and demanded adequate parking facilities for commercial vehicles in Guwahati and other parts of the state.

The association had announced the indefinite strike after the deadline given to the government to address its demands expired. At a press conference on November 24, it had warned that commercial transport services would be suspended if its demands remained unresolved.

With AAMTA refusing to accept verbal assurances as a basis for ending the agitation, the disruption is likely to continue until the government provides a formal written response.

870-Bed GMCH Hospital to Open on December 2, Seven Departments to Shift to New Facility

GUWAHATI

Assam's healthcare infrastructure is set for a major expansion with the inauguration of a newly constructed 870-bed hospital attached to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) on December 2.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will inaugurate the facility at 4 pm, Health Minister Ashok Singhal announced on Thursday after inspecting the building and reviewing preparations ahead of its opening.The new hospital will initially operate as an annexure of GMCH, with seven departments from the existing facility scheduled to move into the new building.

The departments identified for relocation are Medicine, Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT), Psychiatry, Emergency Medicine and Pulmonary Medicine.

The facility will have approximately 870 beds, including around



120 intensive care unit (ICU) beds equipped with ventilators. It will also house advanced operation theatres designed to strengthen specialised treatment and surgical services.

Speaking after the inspection, Singhal said construction of the building had been completed. The remaining work involves shifting hospital facilities, completing operational arrangements and carrying out final cleaning ahead of the inauguration.

The Health Minister described the operation theatres as state-of-the-art and said their infrastructure was comparable to the best available in the country.

He added that the hospital had been developed in accordance with national healthcare standards and would serve as a benchmark for infrastructure development at future medical colleges and hospitals in Assam.

The new facility is expected to ease some of the infrastructure pressure on GMCH, one of the state's principal tertiary healthcare institutions. The addition of ICU capacity, ventilator support and specialised departments is also expected to strengthen its ability to handle critical and complex medical cases.

The December 2 inauguration will mark the beginning of operations at the new building, with the seven departments expected to be shifted as part of the initial phase of expansion.

Tuliram Ronghang calls allegations against Assam Deputy Speaker Habbey Teron a 'political conspiracy'

GUWAHATI

Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang has dismissed allegations levelled by a woman against Assam Assembly Deputy Speaker and BJP MLA Dr Habbey Teron as a "political conspiracy", asserting that there is no evidence to substantiate the claims.

Speaking at a press briefing in Howraghat on Wednesday, Ronghang said the matter was now before the courts and that any further action would be guided by the law.

"What happens next will be decided by the law. This is all a political conspiracy and politically motivated," he said.

Rejecting the allegations, Ronghang maintained that no proof had been presented so far. He said the court would take a decision if evidence was produced.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, meanwhile, said the state government would abide by the outcome of the legal proceedings.Speaking to reporters in Rangia on Wednesday, Sarma pointed out that Karbi Anglong has its own laws, traditional courts and customary institutions, while the state also has an established legal system. He declined to comment further, saying the government would respect whatever decision was taken under the law and by the courts.

The controversy began after a woman alleged that she had developed an extramarital relationship with Teron during the Covid-19 pandemic, when he was treating her as a doctor.

She claimed that the relationship resulted in the birth of a child who is now five years old. According to her, Teron had promised to marry her and arranged rented accommodation for her in Guwahati. She further alleged that she ended her relationship with her previous husband after receiving the marriage assurance.

The woman also claimed that after Teron became a BJP MLA and Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, he used security personnel to evict her from the rented accommodation.

The allegations have triggered demands for an investigation from Opposition parties. On Tuesday, the Assam Pradesh Mahila Congress called for an impartial and time-bound probe into the matter.

The claims against Teron have not been established through a judicial finding. While Ronghang has described them as politically motivated, the controversy has brought renewed attention to demands for an independent examination of the allegations.

Assam Expands Digital Footprint Beyond Guwahati with Airtel's Jorhat, Silchar Projects

Rs 705-crore investment to create 40 MW data centre capacity across three cities; 264 direct jobs expected from the two new facilities

GUWAHATI

Assam is looking to extend its digital infrastructure beyond Guwahati, with Bharti Airtel signing agreements with the state government to establish two new data centres in Jorhat and Silchar, marking a significant expansion of the state's ambitions in the technology sector.

The proposed facilities, with a combined capacity of 25 MW, will involve a first-phase investment of Rs 455 crore and are expected to generate 264 direct jobs. Once operational, they will take Airtel's planned data centre capacity across Assam to 40 MW, with cumulative first-phase investments of approximately Rs 705 crore.

The agreements were exchanged on Wednesday in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who described the projects as part of Assam's broader effort to position itself as a technology-driven economic destination.

The expansion is particularly significant for Jorhat and Silchar, as the



investment will extend large-scale digital infrastructure into Upper Assam and the Barak Valley, areas traditionally outside the state's main technology investment corridor.

Under the proposed plan, the Jorhat facility will come up on approximately four acres with a planned capacity of 10 MW. Its first phase will require an investment of Rs 200 crore and is expected to provide 164 direct jobs.

The Silchar centre will occupy around five acres and have a capacity of 15 MW. The project involves an initial investment of Rs 255 crore and is expected to generate another 100 direct jobs.

Both facilities are scheduled for completion within two years of land possession, according to the project details furnished by Airtel.

Sarma said the expansion of data centre infrastructure was becoming increasingly important as economic activity, public services and businesses relied more heavily on secure and reliable digital systems.

He said Assam should move beyond being merely a consumer of digital services and become an active contributor to India's expanding digital economy.

The Chief Minister also pointed to the state's geographical position, improving connectivity, infrastructure development and availability of skilled human resources as factors that could help Assam emerge as a digital infrastructure gateway for eastern and northeastern India.

The Jorhat and Silchar investments will complement Airtel's ongoing data centre project at Tech City in Guwahati. Spread across two acres of land acquired from the Assam Electronics Development Corporation Limited (AMTRON), the Guwahati facility will have a planned capacity of 15 MW.

That project involves a first-phase investment of Rs 250 crore and is expected to be completed by March 2028, generating more than 100 direct employment opportunities.

Together, the three projects will establish a planned 40 MW data centre network across Guwahati, Jorhat and Silchar.

Beyond direct recruitment, the new facilities are expected to generate indirect employment in construction, engineering, security, maintenance and other supporting services. The agreements also envisage the development of local supply chains and greater participation of regional businesses in project-related activities.

Under the MoUs, Airtel has committed to mobilising the necessary capital and resources, implementing the projects according to schedule and creating employment opportunities. The state government will facilitate land access, statutory approvals, policy incentives and supporting infrastructure.

While the investment marks an important addition to Assam's digital infrastructure, the eventual economic benefits will depend on timely execution, local workforce participation and the development of a wider technology ecosystem around the proposed facilities.

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NATIONAL

DMK may back delimitation bill if Lok Sabha seat share of state is protected

CHENNAI

As the Parliament convenes for a special sitting from November 30, DMK maintains its stand that it would consider supporting the proposed delimitation bill if Tamil Nadu's existing share of parliamentary representation is protected, irrespective of the increase in the total number of Lok Sabha seats.

However, sources in DMK said the party was awaiting the draft of the bill as an assurance to take a final call on extending support.

"If the draft bill clearly gives us an assurance of protecting our representation in the Parliament, we may consider it," a senior MP close to the leadership told TNIE.

Asked if the party high command has issued any direction, another MP said, "We have just been informed about the special session and we do not know the business of the House. There has been no instruction from the party high command till now."

DMK has maintained that it is not opposed to an increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats, provided the exercise does not disadvantage states such as Tamil Nadu that have effectively implemented population-control measures.

During the debate on the delimitation-related Bills in the Lok Sabha in April, DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi had questioned Union Home Minister Amit Shah's assurance that the proposed bill would not reduce the representation of southern states.

"The home minister said a 50% increase in seats will occur. What happens if the delimitation commission doesn't listen to the home minister? Where will we go for justice?" she asked, seeking a constitutional guarantee to protect the interests of the southern states.

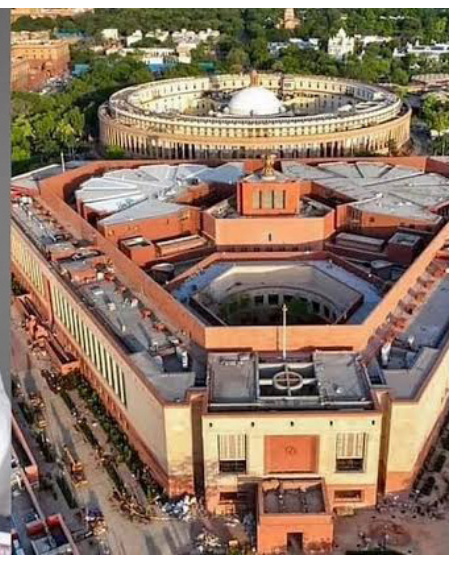
In response, Shah assured the House that no state, particularly those in south India, would suffer any injustice under the proposed exercise.

He said the centre's model envisaged a uniform 50% increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats across states, taking the strength of the House from 543 to 816.

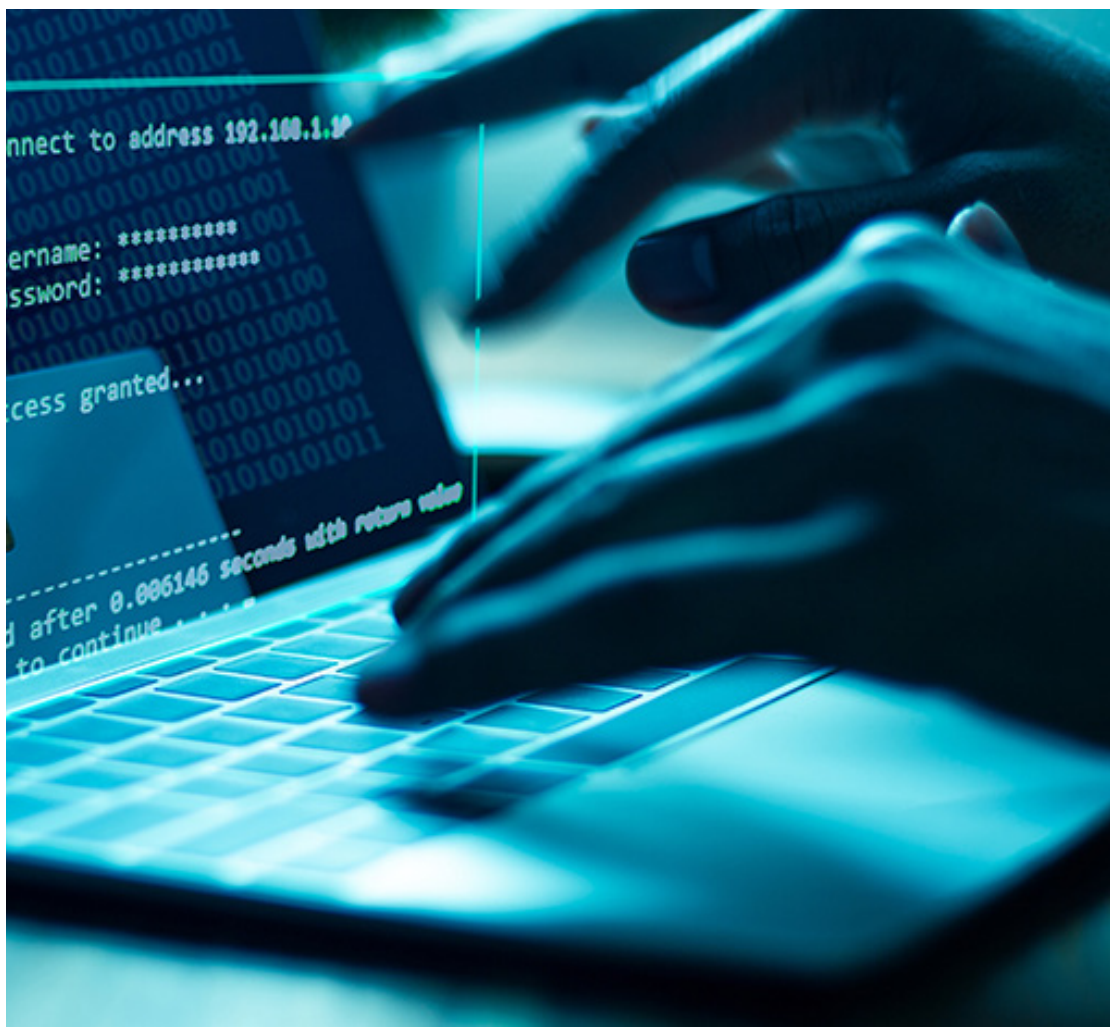
He also offered to bring an official amendment to guarantee a 50% increase in seats for every state, seeking the opposition's support for the legislation.

DMK had also sought an extension of the freeze on delimitation based on the 1971 Census by another 25 years. However, it has maintained that an oral assurance in Parliament would not be sufficient and that the safeguards must be incorporated into the bill itself.





164 foreigners lured to India, held captive and forced into online investment fraud



NEW DELHI

In a major crackdown on an alleged international cybercrime and human trafficking syndicate, the Delhi Police has rescued 164 foreign nationals, including 92 Indonesian and 72 Malaysian nationals, who were allegedly held captive and forced to participate in online investment fraud, an official said on Thursday.

Police recovered 549 digital devices, 174 passports and other electronic equipment from the premises. A 25-year-old Malaysian national has been arrested in connection with the case, an official said.

All the foreign nationals had arrived in India around three months ago on business visas. After their arrival, their passports were allegedly confiscated and they were provided scripts to carry out cyber fraud, officials said. They were kept in paying guest accommodations, allegedly served substandard food and physically assaulted if they refused to work.

The foreign nationals were trained to execute a specific pattern of cyber fraud and given written scripts containing conversations they had to follow while approaching prospective victims.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused were allegedly operating an organised international cyber fraud network by bringing foreign nationals to India on various pretexts, including promises of employment and lucrative opportunities. After their arrival, they were allegedly confined and forced to participate in cyber fraud activities, Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Surender Kumar said.

The syndicate allegedly used websites and APK-based applications to lure people with promises of high returns. The operators created fictitious female identities and online profiles to approach prospective victims through social media, develop online relationships and gain their confidence before inducing them to invest through fraudulent trading platforms, Kumar said.

"We got to know about the fraud after the Crime Branch received an email alert about the alleged cyber fraud racket around a week ago, following which its officers began developing intelligence about the network," the officer said.

The rescued foreign nationals were allegedly forced to communicate with prospective victims and operate the platforms using mobile phones, desktop computers, laptops and SIM cards. Initial information suggested that around 60 to 70 foreign nationals were being held captive. However, the number turned out to be significantly higher when the police team raided the suspected premises, rescuing 164 people.

Tan Guan Wei, a Malaysian national, has been arrested. His role and association with other members of the network are being investigated. During the investigation, the role of Indian handlers Sunil Kumar and Sushil Kumar also surfaced. Certain bank accounts maintained by them have allegedly been used to meet rental and operational expenses of the network.

Police are examining the recovered devices and financial transactions to identify victims, trace the proceeds of the alleged fraud and establish the complete network. A case has been registered at the Crime Branch police station under relevant provisions of the BNS.

INTERNATIONAL

UK reveals exit clause in EU trade deal amid opposition threats to undo Brexit reset

LONDON

A trade deal struck last week between Britain and the EU as part of Prime Minister Andy Burnham's reset with the bloc contains a termination clause, London confirmed Thursday.

It comes as the leaders of the right-wing opposition Conservative and Reform UK parties suggested they could seek to scrap the agreements if they defeat Labour at the next general election.

Burnham has reignited the Brexit wars that dominated British politics following the narrow victory for the leave campaign during the 2016 referendum by suggesting Britain could apply to rejoin one day.

The UK premier and top EU officials signed three agreements in Brussels on November 20 designed to improve post-Brexit ties in the short term, kicking decisions on their long term relationship down the road.

They include the so-called sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) deal, which the British government says could add £5.1 billion ($6.7 billion) to the country's economy by slashing red tape on food and drink exports when it comes into force in 2028.

The legal text of the agreement published Thursday shows that if one party ends the agreement within its first 10 years they would have to pay "reasonable and proportionate costs" to rebuild the border checks infrastructure that the deal removes.

"That termination clause is a standard practice in international treaties, and this one applies equally to both sides, including the EU," Burnham's deputy spokesperson told reporters.



If the sides cannot agree on the sum then it would go to an international tribunal, UK officials said.

An EU diplomat told AFP that the reciprocal clause "provides stability for the agreement to deliver its benefits".

Charles Grant, director of the Centre for European Reform think-tank, said it "makes sense" for the EU given the ongoing debate in Britain about its future relations with Brussels.

"It's an insurance policy," he told .

Friday's summit also agreed measures linking the two sides' emissions-trading schemes and allowing young people to study and work across UK-EU borders.

On Thursday, Burnham's government formally introduced into parliament the legislation required to implement the trade and electricity agreements.

MPs will get their first chance to debate them on December 7, with a vote expected to follow, Labour confirmed Thursday.

The EU Partnership Bill, which the government also refers to as the "Cutting Costs" bill, will almost certainly be approved by the lower House of Commons, where Labour holds a large majority.

It will see the UK align with EU rules for sectors covered by the agreements, something known as dynamic alignment.

The Conservatives and Reform argue that it will see Britain become a "rule taker" from Brussels.

The agreement stipulates that the EU will "informally" consult British experts when drafting legislation but the UK will have "no voting rights".

It also states that the UK must pay a "participation fee" for the removal of the border checks for agricultural products.

Reform leader Nigel Farage said this week he would "repeal" the reset deal while Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch said Thursday she "does not support" what Burnham is doing.

The UK government says linking the pair's carbon markets will exempt 6.5 billion pounds' ($8.1 billion) worth of British exports from EU carbon border taxes.

London and Brussels have given themselves six more months to reach agreement on reduced university tuition fees for EU students in Britain, a key demand of the bloc.

Having previously said he would like to see Britain rejoin the EU in his lifetime, Burnham has promised to lay out options that could range from leaving things as they are to entering the customs union or becoming a member again.

The prime minister has vowed to present his options to the public after a year of "informal brainstorming" with the EU. He said this week that rejoining without a referendum would be "unthinkable".

Several former Conservative prime ministers, including Rishi Sunak, Boris Johnson, Theresa May and David Cameron, have warned against reopening a debate that deeply divided the country.

Trump calls for investigation into what he claims as 'fake' US GDP figures



WEST PALM BEACH

President Donald Trump called Thursday for an investigation into a routine revision of economic growth figures as he pushed his groundless claims of interference in the US midterm elections.

Trump lashed out at what he called "FAKE" figures a day after the US Commerce Department strongly revised GDP growth in the third quarter up to 4.3 percent from the previous estimate of 3.4 percent. Such updates are commonplace.

"Why wasn't the correct number issued before the Election? I am asking for an immediate investigation of this situation," Trump said on his Truth Social network.

"This is not a small error, this is a massive, and purposeful, error."

Trump followed up in a lengthy second post for the US Thanksgiving holiday in which he also took aim at a series of perceived enemies and critics of his extensive makeover of the White House.

"I would like to wish a Happy Thanksgiving to even those who issued fake Economic Numbers, just prior to the Election, and corrected them yesterday, three weeks late," wrote Trump.

He added that it was a "RECORD SETTING ERROR, and one so grave that it should be immediately investigated."

Trump's allegation of deliberate action echoes his other recent baseless claims calling into doubt his Republican Party's brutal defeat in the November 3 midterm elections.

Democrats won control of Congress as voters hammered Trump's Republicans over economic headwinds sparked by the Iran war and the president's chaotic tariff policies.

Throughout his two presidencies, the 80-year-old Trump has repeatedly attacked the political, legal and economic norms that have long underpinned US democracy.

Trump has previously defended his economic performance by pointing to data like GDP growth, which has been robust despite the headwinds, mainly on the back of the AI boom.

Issuing its new GDP estimate on Wednesday, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis said the growth "primarily reflected an acceleration in investment and an upturn in government spending that were partly offset by a downturn in exports."

Hasina's December 16 Return Bid Puts India-Bangladesh Ties Under Diplomatic Strain



The approaching December 16 deadline for Sheikh Hasina's proposed return to Bangladesh is putting New Delhi in a delicate diplomatic position, with Dhaka insisting that the former prime minister must face the legal process while India continues to examine Bangladesh's extradition request.Against this backdrop, the separate but simultaneous morning appearances of the US and Indian envoys at two golf clubs in Dhaka on November 26 have attracted attention, although there is no evidence that the diplomats met or discussed Hasina's future.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent Thomas Christensen was at Jolshiri Golf Club from around 6.25 am to 8.50 am, while Indian High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi arrived at Kurmitola Golf Club at approximately 6.30 am. The two venues are around 20 km apart.

The timing has prompted speculation about possible diplomatic activity as Bangladesh, India and the United States navigate the political and legal complications surrounding Hasina's proposed return. However, the two separate engagements cannot, in themselves, be treated as evidence of any coordinated diplomatic initiative.

The issue has gained urgency following Hasina's announcement that she intends to return to Dhaka on December 16, Bangladesh's Victory Day. She fled the country on August 5, 2024, after a student-led uprising brought an end to her 15-year rule.

Her spokesperson, Syed Mozammel Ali, has said Hasina wants the Tarique Rahman-led government to facilitate her journey from New Delhi to Dhaka aboard Biman Bangladesh Airlines. Dhaka, however, has made it clear that it is not considering an unconditional political return.

Extradition remains Dhaka's preferred route

The BNP government maintains that Hasina's return must take place under the extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India. Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed recently told a meeting of the BNP parliamentary party that the government would take necessary steps under the existing agreement.

Law Minister Mohammad Asaduzzaman has also maintained that the legal procedures required to secure her extradition have been completed and that the next move rests with New Delhi.

The legal complications have deepened following Hasina's conviction in absentia by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal in November 2025. She was sentenced to death for crimes against humanity linked to the crackdown during the July-August 2024 uprising. Hasina has rejected the charges and the proceedings.

Prime Minister's information adviser Zahed Ur Rahman has clarified that Dhaka is negotiating with the Indian government rather than Hasina herself. Bangladesh has also indicated that she would face arrest if she entered the country or its diplomatic missions.

New Delhi has so far avoided making any definitive public commitment. On November 25, Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal drew a distinction between Hasina's proposed voluntary journey using travel documents and Bangladesh's formal extradition request. He said the two matters were separate and that India was examining the extradition request in accordance with established procedures.

The distinction is significant. It leaves New Delhi room to consider Hasina's request for travel documents independently of Dhaka's demand for her extradition. Whether India is actually considering facilitating such a journey remains unclear.

For India, the decision involves more than a bilateral legal arrangement. Hasina's prolonged stay in India has become a sensitive issue in relations with the new government in Dhaka. At the same time, handing her over could carry considerable political and diplomatic implications.

The United States has also maintained a cautious position.

A senior US State Department official, speaking to South Asian journalists in September, said Washington had not adopted a formal position on Hasina's return. The official acknowledged that her continued presence in India was a major irritant in India-Bangladesh relations and expressed hope that New Delhi and Dhaka would resolve the issue through discussions.

Washington's approach suggests little appetite for direct involvement in what it considers primarily a bilateral matter.

Christensen and Trivedi have previously held two official meetings this year, on June 25 and November 12. The first took place at the KGF, while the second was held at the Indian High Commission in Baridhara.

Their separate appearances at Dhaka's golf clubs on November 26 have consequently attracted attention. Golf clubs can provide informal meeting spaces for diplomats and political figures, but there is no independently established evidence of any interaction between the two envoys on this occasion.

With Victory Day approaching, the three governments face different calculations.

For Tarique Rahman's administration, securing Hasina's return through the extradition process is a matter of legal and political significance. For India, the challenge is to protect its relationship with Bangladesh without overlooking the legal and diplomatic consequences of its decision on Hasina. Washington, meanwhile, appears keen to prevent the dispute from becoming a wider source of regional tension.

The central question is no longer simply whether Hasina wants to return to Bangladesh. It is whether India will facilitate her proposed journey, honour Dhaka's extradition demand or continue to defer a decision.

December 16 could therefore emerge as a critical test of the new political relationship between New Delhi and Dhaka, with the former prime minister's fate at its centre.

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