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Assam govt showcases 200-day record, puts investment and infrastructure in focus

From student welfare and job creation to semiconductor manufacturing and new connectivity projects, Himanta Biswa Sarma outlines key priorities of NDA 3.0

GUWAHATI

Investment, infrastructure expansion and employment generation have emerged as major priorities of the Assam government during the first 200 days of its third consecutive NDA tenure, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday, while presenting an account of the administration's initiatives.

Marking the milestone, Sarma shared a detailed assessment of the government's work through a social media post, highlighting welfare programmes, industrial projects, infrastructure development, law enforcement and cultural preservation. He thanked the people of Assam for their continued support and reiterated his government's commitment to building a "Viksit Assam".

Among the key initiatives highlighted was the expansion of social



welfare programmes, including Orunodoi 3.0, Nijut Moina and Nijut Babu. The government has also continued its scooter distribution programme for students, which the Chief Minister said was aimed at supporting education and encouraging academic performance.

Employment and industrial development featured prominently in the government's account of its achievements. Sarma pointed to recruitment through transparent government selection processes and efforts to expand employment opportunities in manufacturing, technology, industry and entrepreneurship.

The state's emerging semiconductor ecosystem at Jagiroad was among the major industrial developments highlighted. Other projects cited included the proposed Defence Park, defence manufacturing facilities at Rangia and upcoming data centres in Jorhat and Silchar.

On connectivity, the Chief Minister referred to the Union Cabinet's approval for a greenfield airport at Doloo in Cachar district and the proposed Gohpur-Numaligarh underwater road-cum-rail tunnel. Both projects are expected to strengthen transport infrastructure and improve regional connectivity.

The government also highlighted investments in roads, bridges, healthcare, education and electricity infrastructure. A proposed proton therapy facility at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) was cited as an important step towards expanding specialised healthcare services in the state.

Security and policing were another focus of the government's 200-day assessment. Sarma referred to the modernisation of Assam Police and the operationalisation of a Smart Response Unit, comprising specialised Urban and Jungle Intervention Units to strengthen response capabilities.

Alongside development and security, the Chief Minister stressed the importance of protecting Assam's cultural identity. He invoked the contributions of Srimanta Sankardev, Lachit Barphukan and Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, while also mentioning initiatives such as Khel Maharan.

Describing the completion of 200 days as the beginning of a longer development journey, Sarma said the government would continue working towards an Assam where families feel secure, children have access to opportunities and young people can pursue their ambitions without leaving the state.

PERSPECTIVE

If you had to describe India in just three words, what would they be? My three would be: Diverse. Deep. Ambitious.
What would your three words be? ~ Harsh Goenka, Chairman, RPG enterprises

Youth found dead beside railway tracks

SUSHANTA ROY

DIPHU : Shock and grief gripped residents of Diphu on Friday morning after the body of a 28-year-old youth was discovered beside the railway tracks near the Panbari forest office.

The deceased has been identified as Santosh Gurung, a resident of the Sarsari area in Diphu. Local passersby spotted the body lying near the tracks early Friday morning and immediately alerted family members and local authorities.

Word of the incident spread quickly, prompting distraught relatives and neighbors from Sarsari to gather at the scene near the Panbari forest office as they awaited the arrival of local police and Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel to conduct an inquest and recover the body.

"We received word early this morning that Santosh was found near the railway line," a family member said at the scene while waiting for officials. "We are completely devastated and want the police and railway authorities to investigate thoroughly how he ended up here and what caused his death."

Railway and local police officials sent the body to Diphu Medical College and Hospital for a post-mortem examination to ascertain the exact cause and time of death. Further investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident is underway.

WHO SAID WHAT



India is steadily strengthening its indigenous defence capabilities. This reflects our commitment to self-reliance and our confidence in the capabilities of our engineers, scientists, skilled workers and industry.

~ Smt Droupadi Murmu, President of India

Myanmar-based armed groups under NIA scanner over alleged Manipur terror links



IMPHAL

The alleged cross-border network behind insurgent activities in Manipur has come under renewed scrutiny, with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) launching a fresh probe into suspected links between Myanmar-based ethnic armed organisations and banned militant groups operating in India.

Officials said on Saturday that the investigation, initiated on the directions of the Union Home Ministry, aims to establish the extent of the alleged conspiracy, including arms trafficking, secret financial transactions and plans to carry out targeted attacks in Manipur.

According to the FIR, certain ethnic armed organisations based in Myanmar were allegedly working in coordination with leaders and cadres of proscribed outfits, including the People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and PREPAK-Progressive.

Investigators suspect that the Myanmar-based groups were facilitating the supply of arms, ammunition and explosives to insurgent organisations in India through clandestine networks. The FIR also alleges that funds were being raised and transferred through covert channels to support terrorist activities.

The alleged conspiracy reportedly included plans to target civilians and security personnel. Investigators believe the intended attacks were aimed at aggravating ethnic tensions, triggering further violence and creating an atmosphere of fear across the region.

The fresh investigation comes amid the NIA's ongoing probe into the alleged involvement of foreign nationals in training ethnic armed groups in Myanmar.

The agency has been investigating the case involving US national Matthew Aaron Van Dyke and six Ukrainian nationals, who were arrested earlier this year over allegations of illegally crossing from India into Myanmar and training armed groups. Van Dyke has subsequently been released on default bail.

Manipur has remained affected by ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities since May 2023. The conflict has claimed at least 306 lives, left 49 people missing and displaced thousands, according to figures cited in the report.

The latest NIA investigation is expected to examine whether armed groups operating across the Myanmar border have played a wider role in sustaining insurgent activities and fuelling instability in the state. The allegations are subject to investigation.

Political controversy deepens against Assam Deputy Speaker

DIPHU

The political row surrounding Assam Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker and Amri MLA Dr. Habbey Teron intensified this week following fresh statements from the complainant, counter-demands from local women's organizations, and calls from opposition leaders for an impartial investigation. The controversy escalated after the woman, Kaban Killingpi, addressed a press conference at the Karbi Anglong District Press Club in Diphu on November 24, reiterating her claims of a long-standing personal relationship with Dr. Teron and alleging that he fathered her child before distancing himself after assuming office. She publicly offered to undergo a DNA test to substantiate her claims. "I am ready to undergo a DNA test at any government-approved laboratory to prove the truth," the complainant told reporters in Diphu. "All I am seeking is accountability, legal recognition, and security for my child's future."

Following her press briefing, several local women's groups in Karbi Anglong stepped into the debate, urging restraint against unverified public accusations and challenging the complainant to submit concrete documentary evidence before a court of law rather than relying solely on media trials. "Serious allegations involving public representatives must be backed by verifiable proof and pursued through proper legal channels," a representative of a local women's body stated on Thursday. "We challenge the complainant to place all supporting evidence before the appropriate judicial authorities." Meanwhile, opposition leaders from the Congress party have written to the state leadership demanding a special, independent inquiry into the matter, while former Deputy Speaker Dr. Numal Momin also weighed in publicly calling for a DNA test to clear the air.

Karimganj Youth Arrested in Gujarat Over Suspected JeM Links, Alleged Plot to Target Air Force Station

GUWAHATI

A 22-year-old youth from Assam's Karimganj district has been arrested by the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) over alleged links with Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and a suspected conspiracy to target the Indian Air Force station in Vadodara.

The arrest of Mohammad Saharul Islam Kabiruddin has brought the focus of a major counter-terror investigation to Karimganj, with Gujarat ATS probing his alleged connections with a Pakistan-based handler and the possible involvement of other individuals.

According to ATS officials, Kabiruddin was arrested near a hotel on the Halol-Vadodara Road on Thursday night while returning from Dahod. Investigators alleged that he had travelled there to collect an AK-47-like assault rifle through a secret weapon handover arrangement known as a 'dead drop'.

The agency suspects that the weapon was intended to be used in an attack on the entrance gate of the Vadodara Air Force station.During the operation, officials reportedly seized an automatic rifle resembling an AK-47, two empty magazines, three live cartridges, a Jaish-e-Mohammed flag, two mobile phones, SIM cards and Rs 20,000 in cash.

Investigators also claimed to have recovered photographs of the Air Force establishment from his mobile phone. The images were allegedly marked with red crosses, raising suspicions about a possible target-selection exercise.

The ATS further alleged that Kabiruddin had been communicating with a Pakistan-based handler identified as Mufti Rafiq, alias Ibn Abdullah, through WhatsApp for nearly a year. He had reportedly watched online videos about operating AK-47 rifles.

According to the investigation, the Karimganj youth travelled from Assam to Bhopal before reaching Vadodara, where he stayed at a hotel near Sayajigunj railway station. He subsequently travelled to Dahod to collect the firearm.

The arrest has prompted investigators to examine Kabiruddin's background in Karimganj, his contacts and whether any local links or associates were involved in the alleged conspiracy. The ATS is also trying to establish the extent of the suspected network and identify other individuals connected to the case.

A case has been registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Arms Act. Further investigation is underway.

The allegations against Kabiruddin are yet to be established through judicial proceedings.

Delimitation row intensifies as Gaurav Gogoi alleges use of agencies to weaken Opposition

Congress MP questions timing of revised legislation, accuses BJP leadership of exploiting institutional pressure ahead of Parliament's special session

NEW DELHI

The proposed second round of delimitation legislation has triggered a fresh political confrontation, with Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi accusing the Narendra Modi government of weakening Opposition parties through central agencies and institutional pressure ahead of its renewed attempt to restructure parliamentary and Assembly constituencies.

Reacting to the proposed Delimitation (Second) Bill, 2026, Gogoi alleged that the ruling BJP had created favourable political conditions for the legislation by splitting Opposition parties with the help of the Election Commission and using Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigations to put pressure on political rivals.

In a post on X, Gogoi said the proposed legislation would not have reached this stage without what he described as compromised institutions and a passive judiciary. His allegations have added to the growing political debate over the government's proposed delimitation framework.

The controversy comes ahead of the special session of Parliament scheduled to begin on November 30. The government is expected to introduce a revised legislative package linking the implementation of women's reservation with the delimitation of parliamentary and state Assembly constituencies.The revised bill proposes a 50 per cent increase in the strength of the Lok Sabha and state Legislative Assemblies. If implemented, the maximum strength of the Lok Sabha would rise from the present 543 to 850 seats.The proposed framework also envisages using the 2011 Census figures for redrawing constituencies while maintaining the existing relative representation of states until 2051. A Delimitation Commission would be constituted by the Centre to carry out the exercise.



The legislation is also intended to facilitate the implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures.However, the government's renewed initiative follows the failure of its earlier delimitation package to secure the required two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha in April. The revised proposal incorporates substantial changes, particularly the proposed 50 per cent expansion in legislative seats.

The Congress and several other Opposition parties have questioned the proposed arrangement, raising concerns over the independence of the Delimitation Commission, the use of 2011 Census data and the possible political consequences of restructuring constituencies. Gogoi has maintained that women's reservation should be implemented within the existing strength of the Lok Sabha, without disturbing the current proportion of parliamentary representation among states for the next 25 years.

The Congress has also criticised the timing of the special parliamentary session and the delay in circulating the draft legislation to MPs. The party is seeking a coordinated Opposition position before the proposed bills are taken up.

On November 28, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge convened a meeting of Opposition leaders to discuss a common strategy. The INDIA bloc has indicated its opposition to the proposed legislative package, although differences persist among some Opposition parties over the approach.The government, meanwhile, has defended the proposed changes as necessary to expand legislative representation and operationalise women's reservation. The Opposition argues that the reservation should be implemented without making it dependent on a fresh delimitation exercise.

With the special session approaching, the delimitation proposal is emerging as a major test of political consensus, institutional credibility and the balance of representation among states.

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GREEN GOLD OR ECOLOGICAL TRAP?



India's ambition to slash its crippling edible oil import bill—where palm oil accounts for more than half of all vegetable oil imports—is entirely understandable from a macroeconomic standpoint. Yet, the vehicle chosen to achieve this self-sufficiency, the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), rests on a perilous geographical miscalculation: treating Northeast India as an empty agricultural frontier waiting to be industrialised. Unless New Delhi recalibrates this policy immediately, the Northeast risks trading its irreplaceable ecological wealth and social fabric for a fragile monoculture.

Northeast India is not an agricultural blank slate; it sits squarely inside the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot. Replacing multi-layered native forests and biodiverse jhum (shifting cultivation) fallow landscapes with uniform rows of Elaeis guineensis triggers a cascade of irreversible damage. Field assessments across the region already warn of steep declines in endemic bird and wildlife populations, alongside severed elephant and primate corridors that escalate human-wildlife conflict. Equally alarming is the hydrological toll. While the Northeast receives abundant monsoonal rain, its hill districts endure prolonged dry winter and spring spells. Mature oil palms—notoriously thirsty trees—consume up to 200 to 300 liters of water per tree daily, accelerating topsoil erosion on steep gradients and drying up the perennial hill springs upon which local villages depend.

Beyond ecology, the policy overlooks the socio-economic realities of the region. Unlike mainland India, land in the Northeastern hills is largely governed by customary, community-based tenure. Locking communal land into 25-to-30-year commercial palm plantations fractures village social structures, erodes indigenous food security, and exposes smallholders to a grueling four-year gestation period with zero yield. Worse still, fresh fruit bunches must be processed within 24 to 48 hours of harvest before oil quality degrades. In a region plagued by fragile mountain roads, monsoon landslides, and sparse processing mills, farmers are frequently trapped between perishable harvests and buyer monopolies.

Crucially, India does not need to guess where this path leads—it only needs to look at its neighbors across South and Southeast Asia, where nations have been forced to hit the brakes after learning the hard way. In South Asia, Sri Lanka took the decisive step of banning new oil palm plantations, prohibiting palm oil imports, and ordering the phased uprooting of existing estates after severe soil erosion, drying springs, and biodiversity loss threatened rural water security. Even the global titans of the industry have been forced to retreat from unchecked expansion. Indonesia, the world's largest palm oil producer, imposed a nationwide moratorium on new plantation permits following catastrophic forest fires, peatland destruction, and international trade pushback, while Malaysia capped total plantation acreage to halt primary forest clearance and comply with strict global deforestation-free mandates.

When countries that built their economies on palm oil are capping expansion—and neighbours like Sri Lanka are actively dismantling plantations to save their water tables—India's aggressive subsidy push in a fragile Himalayan biodiversity zone looks dangerously out of step with ecological science.

A course correction does not mean abandoning edible oil self-sufficiency. Rather, the Government of India must subject NMEO-OP in the Northeast to an immediate, independent ecological and social audit. First, commercial oil palm expansion must be strictly barred from forest fringes, wildlife corridors, steep slopes, and customary jhum lands, confining cultivation solely to verified, already-degraded flatlands. Second, monoculture subsidies should be replaced with agroforestry and intercropping models that preserve native tree cover and soil moisture. Finally, India's edible oil strategy—bolstered by the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-OS)—should prioritise traditional, climate-resilient crops like mustard, sesame, groundnut, and native tree-borne oils that strengthen farmer resilience without hollowing out the Northeast's natural heritage.

Self-reliance in cooking oil is a worthy national goal, but it cannot be achieved by turning one of the world's richest living landscapes into an ecological desert.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Never forget that intelligence rules the world and ignorance carries the burden. Therefore, remove yourself as far as possible from ignorance and seek as far as possible to

Three Leaders and India's Strategic Interest



DR SUDERSHAN KUMAR

History has repeatedly demonstrated that the destiny of the world is influenced not merely by wars and military victories but also by decisions made around the negotiating table by powerful national leaders. The meeting of Donald Trump, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin in Shenzhen on 19th November 2026 represents one such extraordinary moment in contemporary international relations. For the first time, the leaders of the United States, China and Russia, the world's three most consequential nuclear and strategic powers, are participating in a formal trilateral summit. Their coming together is not an expression of ideological harmony, mutual trust or a common geopolitical vision. Rather, it is an unmistakable reflection of the challenging balance of power, strategic compulsions, and the recognition that even the most powerful nations cannot pursue their ambitions without taking account of their principal competitors. The historical significance of this gathering immediately invites comparison with the Yalta conference of February 1945, when Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin negotiated the political arrangements of a world emerging from the Second World War. Yalta helped in establishing the foundations of the post-war international architecture, including the arrangements that led to the creation of the United Nations. However, the circumstances of Shenzhen are fundamentally different.

The leaders meeting today are not wartime allies seeking to defeat a common enemy, but they are strategic rivals seeking to protect their respective national interests while managing the consequences of their competition. What makes the Shenzhen meeting more interesting is the paradox of their relationship. The United States wants to preserve its global leadership, China seeks recognition as an equal, if not an alternative, centre of global power, and Russia wants to restore its position as an indispensable strategic power. Each leader aspires to reshape the international environment, but none wishes to surrender the advantages already possessed by his country. Their ambitions intersect their priorities, diverge,and their mutual suspicions remain deeply embedded in their foreign policies. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to understand the compulsions that are bringing them together and also the ambitions of each one of them and its strategic impact on India, as well as on a multipolar, fragmented world, especially after the United Nations has really become defunct. The compulsions of Donald Trump, Xi Jinping, and Vladimir Putin may be due to the following reasons: First and foremost, Donald Trump has created a political and diplomatic quagmire for himself and the United States through a series of impulsive,unpredictable,and whimsical decisions,seemingly taken without adequately considering their long term cosquences. These include the impositions of sanctions,repeated threats of imposing exorbitant tariffs ranging from 50 to 500 percent,plunging United States in to war with Iran and alienating European Nations through confrontational rhetoric and unilateral actions. On several occassions he has even questioned the functioning and relevence of established international inatitutions and nations.Far from achieving their intented objectives, many of these impulsive decision have back fired and created an increasing precarious and volatile geoplolitical environment across the globe. A glaring manifestation of the political backlash against the leadership has been Republicans setbacks reflecting growing discontent with his policies and their consequences. Besides, Washington also wants to prevent an uncontrolled nuclear arms race, manage economic and technological competition and explore the possibility of ending the conflict involving Iran and Russia. Second, Beijing wants to avoid strategic encirclement, safeguard its economic interests, strengthen its influence on the Indo-Pacific, and establish itself as a principal architect of multipolarity. Third, Moscow wants to address its Diplomatic Isolation, secure a favourable outcome in Ukraine, preserve its nuclear status and ensure its strategic interests are recognized by Washington and Beijing. Therefore, the most consequential question is whether these three leaders will attempt to establish an informal understanding regarding the future distribution of global power. Can their meeting become the beginning of a new geopolitical accommodation, in which major powers negotiate their respective interests pointedly at the expense of countries not represented at the table? Or will it remain a carefully managed diplomatic encounter without any fundamental change in the international system?Before one actually delves into these questions,it is important to know the ambitions of these three most powerful world leaders.Even though each leader represents a country with economic, military and technological capabilities, but their understanding of the future international order differs considerably.Their ambitions are:-

The American ambition under Donald Trump is centred on preserving American leadership while changing the terms on which the USA exercises that leadership. Trump's major ambitions include maintaining American supremacy, negotiating from the position of strength, managing China, ending costly international conflict and containing nuclear dangers. In short, Donald Trump's central ambition is to pressure American Global Leadership through a combination of economic leverage, military strength and personalized diplomacy.

Xi Jinping's ambitions are considerably more structural. China does not want to participate in the existing international order. It wants a greater role in determining its rules, institutions and strategic direction. Its ambition includes establishing China as an equal global power, reducing American strategic influence in the Indo-Pacific, achieving technological independence and promoting multipolarity. Besides, it also believes in the One China policy, thereby securing Taiwan-related objectives. Hence, his greatest ambition is to establish China as a central architect of the twenty-first-century international order.

Putin's ambition is fundamentally linked to Russia's Historical identity as a major military, nuclear and geopolitical power. It is well known that the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 fundamentally altered the international balance of power. Russia subsequently experienced a reduction in its geopolitical influence, particularly in Eastern Europe and part of its former Soviet neighbourhood. Putin has sought to reverse this decline. His major ambition includes ending diplomatic Isolation, securing favourable conditions in Ukraine war, and preserving Nuclear and Military influence. The most interesting aspect of the Shenzhen summit is that the three leaders met despite having fundamentally conflicting strategic ambitions. Their decisions to engage reflect the practical reality that international political rivalry cannot be resolved through confrontation, and that cooperation sometimes becomes necessary even among competitors. Needless to say, the most important dimension of the Shenzhen summit is India's unique relationship with each of the three participating powers. India does not share identical strategic interests with any of them. Its relationship with Washington, Beijing and Moscow has developed through different historical experiences, economic requirements and security considerations.

This creates a complicated diplomatic situation in which India must maintain constructive relationships with all three without compromising national interest. Hence, the Shenzhen summit should serve as a reminder that diplomatic influence ultimately rests on national strength. So there is an urgent need to pursue strategic autonomy, Military preparedness, technological independence, Economic resilience, Indo-Pacific leadership, balanced relations with Russia, Constructive engagement with China, work towards energy security, global governance reform and national development. Besides India, must pay particular attention to its Northern and Western Borders. The country's international standing ultimately depends on the strength of its domestic foundation. The author is of the opinion that the summit may not produce a comprehensive settlement or create a new international order overnight. However, it demonstrates that the World's most powerful countries are increasingly prepared to negotiate directly with one another on questions affecting international security, economic stability and the future distribution of power. The comparison with Yalta is relevant in highlighting great power diplomacy, but the international environment of 2026 is considerably more complex than in 1945; today the world has several influential centres of power, and the legitimate interests of countries outside the negotiating room cannot be ignored indefinitely. Therefore, India must neither become a pawn in the strategic game of major powers nor become spectator to the making of new world order.it must emerge as one of its architects.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Assam's cultural fraternity is ready to pay a musical tribute to Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhupen Hazarika on his birth centenary.

Acclaimed singer Malabika Bora and fellow artistes will present Sudhakantha's timeless creations at Bharat Mandapam on 29 November, in the presence of Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi

.

#BhupenDaAt100

~ Chief Minister's Office, Government of Assam



Security Alert Forces BSF to Move 62nd Raising Day Parade from Manipur to Delhi

IMPHAL

Continuing security concerns in Manipur have forced the Border Security Force (BSF) to relocate its 62nd Raising Day parade from Churachandpur to Delhi, reversing an elaborate arrangement for the force's annual celebration just days before the scheduled event.

The parade, originally planned for December 1 at the BSF Subsidiary Training Centre in Churachandpur district, will now be held in the national capital, a senior BSF officer confirmed on November 27.

Officials said the last-minute decision followed intelligence inputs pointing to potential security risks. The move comes against the backdrop of continuing intermittent violence between the Meitei community in the valley and the Kuki communities in the hill districts, following the outbreak of ethnic conflict in May 2023.



The relocation represents a significant change in the BSF's preparations, with nearly 3,000 personnel and several ceremonial contingents already mobilised from different parts of the country for the Manipur event.

The arrangements included the deployment of weapons, artillery and specialised ceremonial units featuring camels, horses and trained dogs. These personnel and equipment will now have to be redirected to Delhi.The BSF had earlier publicly highlighted its preparations for the occasion. On November 12, the force shared updates on social media after its Director General reviewed the arrangements at the Churachandpur training centre and expressed satisfaction with the progress.

The sudden change of venue is also expected to lead to substantial logistical expenditure and additional administrative costs, officials indicated.

The decision is being seen as a reflection of the security challenges that continue to affect Manipur, even as efforts are underway to restore normalcy in the conflict-hit state.Established on December 1, 1965, the BSF is one of India's principal border guarding forces. With approximately 2.65 lakh personnel, it is responsible for securing more than 6,000 kilometres of India's international borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh.The 62nd Raising Day celebration was intended to bring the force's annual ceremonial event to Manipur. However, the security assessment has now shifted the occasion back to the national capital.

Tripura Civic Polls Marred by Violence Claims, Congress Questions Election Security

AGARTALA

Allegations of voter intimidation, physical assaults and booth capturing have triggered a fresh political confrontation in Tripura, with Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman accusing the ruling BJP of undermining the democratic process during the Urban Local Body elections.

Addressing the media on November 27, Roy Barman alleged that voters were attacked, threatened and prevented from exercising their franchise at several polling locations. He claimed that incidents of violence began as early as 5 am, with people allegedly pulled out of queues and stopped from entering polling stations.

The Congress legislator also highlighted allegations of assaults on women, claiming that one woman sustained dental injuries after being punched during the violence. He further alleged that sticks and sharp weapons were used to intimidate voters."Everyone has witnessed how democracy has been murdered in Tripura," Roy Barman said, urging the national media to bring the alleged electoral irregularities to wider public attention.Drawing a comparison with the 2021 Agartala Municipal Corporation elections, the Congress leader claimed that the situation during the 2026 civic polls was even worse.He also questioned the effectiveness of the security arrangements, pointing out that an additional 25 companies of security personnel had reportedly been deployed for the elections. Despite the reinforcement, he alleged, voters were left vulnerable to attacks and intimidation.

Roy Barman further questioned the neutrality of the election machinery and the state administration. He raised concerns over the roles of the District Election Officer, Director General of Police and other officials, alleging a lack of impartiality in handling the situation.

Tripura Police-BSF Joint Operation Uncovers Rs 4.4-Crore Cough Syrup Consignment, One Held

AGARTALA

A major consignment of suspected illicit pharmaceutical products has been intercepted in Tripura, with police and the Border Security Force (BSF) seizing 44,000 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup worth an estimated Rs 4.4 crore in North Tripura district and arresting one person.

The seizure was made during a joint operation by Panisagar police and personnel of the BSF's 199 Battalion following specific intelligence inputs, Sub-Divisional Police Officer Kishalay Sisodia said.

According to the police, the joint team intercepted a vehicle travelling from Assam towards Panisagar through Kathatali Road. The vehicle was subsequently brought to Panisagar police station for a detailed search.

During inspection, officials discovered 44,000 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup concealed beneath sacks of wheat loaded inside the vehicle. The unusual concealment was allegedly intended to evade detection during transportation.

Speaking to reporters at Panisagar police station, Sisodia said each bottle had an estimated market value of around Rs 1,000, putting the total value of the seized consignment at approximately Rs 4.4 crore.

One person was arrested in connection with the seizure. Further investigation is expected to establish the source of the consignment, its intended destination and the possible involvement of a wider trafficking network.Police described the operation as a result of coordinated intelligence and enforcement efforts between the state police and the BSF. Officials said joint operations would continue to prevent the movement of illegal substances through the region.

Assam, Mizoram to launch coordinated border operations to curb drug trafficking, vehicle theft

GUWAHATI

Assam and Mizoram have agreed to strengthen security coordination along their shared inter-state boundary, with a renewed focus on tackling drug trafficking, vehicle theft and localised tensions through joint enforcement operations.

The decision was reached during a video conference on November 27 involving the Deputy Commissioners of Mizoram's Kolasib and Mamit districts and Assam's Hailakandi district. Senior police and forest department officials from all three districts also attended the meeting.

Rather than allowing local disputes to escalate into fresh confrontations, officials agreed to address boundary-related issues through dialogue and mutual cooperation. The meeting also stressed the need for regular coordination between district administrations and enforcement agencies to maintain stability in the border areas.



A key outcome was the decision to conduct periodic joint operations involving police and forest personnel. The proposed exercises will focus on preventing cross-border criminal activities, particularly drug trafficking and the movement of stolen vehicles between the neighbouring states.

The renewed coordination comes against the backdrop of a long-standing boundary dispute between Assam and Mizoram, which has periodically strained relations between the two states.

Mizoram's Aizawl, Kolasib and Mamit districts share a 164.6-km boundary with Assam's Cachar, Sribhumi and Hailakandi districts. The territorial disagreement largely revolves around two competing colonial-era boundary demarcations - the 1875 notification under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation and the 1933 demarcation.

The dispute has led to several confrontations over the years, most notably the violent clash near Vairengte village on July 26, 2021. The incident, involving police forces from both states, claimed seven lives, including six Assam police personnel.

Since August 2021, the two governments have held at least four rounds of ministerial-level discussions, alongside several official-level negotiations and virtual meetings, to find a lasting solution.

The latest initiative signals an attempt to strengthen cooperation at the district level even as the larger territorial disagreement remains unresolved. By placing greater emphasis on joint policing, intelligence coordination and dialogue, the two neighbouring states are seeking to prevent border tensions from spilling over into law-and-order problems and organised cross-border crime.

Shillong Ropeway Dispute: Meghalaya Govt Calls Joint Site Inspection on December 1 to Address Local Concerns

SHILLONG

Facing continued opposition from local organisations over the proposed Shillong Peak ropeway project, the Meghalaya government has scheduled a joint inspection of the site on December 1, seeking to address concerns over its possible impact on sacred sites, forests and water sources.

The inspection, to be coordinated by the Tourism Department and the Meghalaya Ropeway Development Authority (MRDA), will involve representatives of traditional institutions, Dorbar Shnongs, local committees, women's and youth organisations from seven localities, as well as members of the media.

The decision followed a stakeholders' meeting convened by the Tourism Department on Thursday under the chairmanship of Tourism Minister Paul Lyngdoh. Representatives of traditional institutions, senior government officials and technical agencies participated in the discussions. However, members of the Joint Action Committee (JAC), which has been leading opposition to the project, did not attend.

The December 1 exercise is intended to allow stakeholders to examine the proposed alignment, inspect the locations of the infrastructure and assess the government's claims regarding environmental safeguards.

Seeking to allay apprehensions, the government maintained that the project would not affect the Umiew catchment, Mawphlang Dam or existing water sources. It said the proposed site was approximately 3.15 km from Lum Shyllong, a sacred location, and that all ropeway towers would be located outside the Umiew catchment and Mawphlang Dam areas.

The Tourism Department also claimed that the project had obtained the necessary statutory clearances, including forest approval from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and no-objection certificates from the Airports Authority of India, the Air Force Station and the Indian Army.

On the environmental safeguards, officials said the ropeway cables and cabins would operate above the tree canopy. Tree felling, according to the government, would be restricted to the six proposed tower locations and two terminal stations.Lyngdoh said the project was initiated in 2022, when its foundation stone was laid by the President of India. He maintained that no organisation had formally or informally raised objections during his earlier tenure as Tourism Minister between March 2023 and September 2025, claiming that opposition emerged towards the latter part of 2025.Describing the ropeway as a major tourism infrastructure initiative, the minister said it could generate employment, expand livelihood opportunities and create new economic avenues for Meghalaya's youth.

He also stressed the importance of involving village headmen and traditional institutions in discussions concerning the project.

The JAC, however, has maintained its opposition, citing potential environmental damage to the surrounding forests, water catchments and the sacred Lum Shyllong area. It has also demanded wider consultations with affected communities and called for the project to be scrapped or relocated.

Estimated at Rs 151 crore, the Shillong Peak Ropeway Project is being implemented by MRDA with financial assistance from the New Development Bank and the Centre's Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) scheme.

The December 1 inspection is expected to provide an opportunity for the government and local stakeholders to examine the disputed aspects of the project on the ground, although the JAC's continued opposition indicates that a consensus remains elusive.

Kokrajhar Moves Towards Quieter Roads, Horn-Free City Initiative From January 2027



KOKRAJHAR

Kokrajhar is set to introduce restrictions on unnecessary honking from January 2027, as the district administration moves to tackle noise pollution alongside its efforts to improve road safety and traffic discipline.

District Commissioner Pankaj Chakraborty announced the proposed horn-free city initiative on Friday while addressing a road safety awareness programme organised by the district administration in front of Kokrajhar Sadar Police Station.

The initiative is aimed at discouraging unnecessary use of vehicle horns and promoting a quieter, safer traffic environment in the town.

Chakraborty said the administration had been undertaking several awareness programmes to reduce road accidents and encourage responsible driving. He urged residents and motorists to follow traffic regulations, maintain discipline on roads and recognise the importance of protecting human lives.

The proposed initiative will add noise pollution control to the district's broader road safety campaign, making public cooperation an important part of its implementation.

The awareness programme also featured a street play by members of the Lwrgi Theatre Group outside Kokrajhar Sadar Police Station. Through theatrical performances depicting the consequences of violating traffic rules, the group sought to communicate road safety messages and encourage responsible behaviour among motorists and pedestrians.

The district administration reiterated its appeal to residents to observe traffic rules and actively participate in efforts to make Kokrajhar's roads safer.

With the January 2027 launch approaching, the horn-free city initiative is expected to bring greater attention to civic responsibility, traffic etiquette and the impact of noise pollution on urban life.

Assam University Plans Constitution Museum to Preserve India's Democratic and Artistic Heritage

SILCHAR

Assam University is preparing to create a dedicated museum showcasing the making, evolution and artistic legacy of the Indian Constitution, with Silchar MP Parimal Suklabaidya committing Rs 25-30 lakh from his Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) fund towards the proposed project.

The initiative aims to turn the university into a centre for preserving and interpreting India's constitutional history, bringing together archival documents, photographs, historical accounts and educational exhibits tracing the country's democratic journey.

The financial commitment was announced by Suklabaidya on Thursday during a Constitution Day programme at the Bipin Chandra Pal Seminar Hall, jointly organised by the Department of Political Science and the Dr B.R. Ambedkar Chair.

The university is expected to provide suitable land and develop a separate building to house the museum. A preliminary architectural design has already been prepared.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Rajive Mohan Pant said the university had been considering the project for nearly two years. The institution already possesses a published replica of the original Constitution, donated by a former professor, and is exploring possibilities of collecting additional archival and educational materials from New Delhi.



The proposed museum will go beyond displaying historical documents. Its exhibits are expected to cover the Constituent Assembly, the contributions of its members, important constitutional amendments and the development of India's democratic institutions.

Photographs, archival records, explanatory panels and educational displays will form part of the collection.

Addressing the programme, Suklabaidya described the Constitution as the institutional foundation of India's democratic republic, emphasising that its principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity must be understood beyond academic and legal discussions.

He stressed the importance of constitutional awareness among young people, saying that meaningful democracy required citizens to understand both their fundamental rights and responsibilities.

The MP also highlighted the collective contribution to the making of the Constitution, drawing particular attention to Dr B.R. Ambedkar's role as chairman of the Drafting Committee and the artistic contribution of Santiniketan artist Nandalal Bose, whose illustrations gave the original handwritten Constitution its distinctive visual identity.

Presiding over the programme, Prof. Pant said constitutional values remained essential for national unity and social harmony, particularly in building a society founded on mutual trust, fraternity and institutional accountability.

Earlier, Head of the Department of Political Science Prof. Debotosh Chakraborty discussed the constitution-making process and the contributions of members from Assam and the Barak Valley.

The academic programme also featured discussions on the role of women members of the Constituent Assembly, constitutional ideals and social inclusion, and fundamental rights and freedom of expression.

Assistant Professor Deepshikha Bhattacharjee, Dean Prof. B.K. Behera and research scholar Papiya Chakraborty participated in the sessions.

The programme concluded with a collective reading of the Preamble.

Once established, the museum is expected to serve as an academic and public resource, offering students, researchers and visitors an opportunity to explore the historical foundations, democratic principles and cultural dimensions of the Indian Constitution.

Quest!

Studies show that slow music makes people shop leisurely and spend more, while classical music encourages people to buy more expensive items.



NATIONAL

Bisleri in fresh trouble as sample from Bengal unit fails FSSAI test



NEW DELHI

Food regulator FSSAI has sanctioned fresh prosecution against Bisleri International after a packaged drinking water sample collected from its West Bengal plant failed laboratory testing, sources said.

The sample tested positive for coliform bacteria, they added. This form of bacteria can enter water systems through sewage leaks or damaged pipes, among other pathways.

The presence of coliform bacteria in the sample taken from a plant in Jalpaiguri's Telipara village, was confirmed by both primary and referral laboratories.

As a result, the FSSAI prohibited the sale of only one specific batch (batch number PB 201) on August 12, 2026, sources stated.

This action marks the second instance of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) sanctioning prosecution against Bisleri International Pvt Ltd, a leading player in the packaged drinking water sector in the country.

On Sunday, the FSSAI announced similar legal proceedings after a sample from one of Bisleri's plants in Goa also failed testing. In view of the violations of the food safety rules, FSSAI has granted "sanction for prosecution" against Bisleri International.

Responses from the FSSAI and Bisleri International could not be ascertained immediately. In the Goa case, the FSSAI had said the "sample was found non-compliant with the prescribed bromate limits and declared unsafe under the FSS Act, 2006.

Following an appeal from Bisleri, the sample was forwarded to a referral food laboratory, which also classified it as "unsafe" due to detection of polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), according to the regulator.

These laboratory findings confirmed violations related to unsafe food practices, which led the FSSAI to initiate prosecution under the Food Safety Act, 2006.

On Monday, Bisleri International asserted that its product is safe for consumption and that the company would cooperate with the FSSAI to address the issues raised.

Earlier this week, FSSAI CEO Rajit Punhani stated that the agency is collecting packaged drinking water samples nationwide, with lab testing for quality expected to be completed within one to two months.

He emphasised that enforcement actions aim to ensure compliance, not to create panic. He noted that the regulator, in the past year, has undertaken enforcement activities for many food as well as beverage products, adding that it would soon start inspection of 'packaging materials' used for food items.

Additionally, the FSSAI has expanded the scope of its scrutiny. The central regulator has communicated with state food commissioners and regional directors to enhance surveillance, inspection, and sampling of 'packaged drinking water and mineral water.

In this calendar year, the FSSAI has increased enforcement measures against food business operators and e-commerce companies.

The regulator has also taken action against manufacturers of energy drinks and alcoholic beverages.

Three bills, 850 Lok Sabha seats and 25-year freeze: Centre's plan for delimitation-linked women's quota



NEW DELHI

Primer Minister Narendra Modi-led Union government is confident that the three bills to implement women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies will be passed, with significant changes made to secure the support of parties such as the DMK and the NCP (SP), which had strongly opposed the earlier bill defeated in April, official sources said on Friday.

Following the Union Cabinet's nod on Friday, the government is expected to introduce three bills, two of them constitutional amendments, to implement 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies before the 2029 parliamentary elections.

The proposed legislation will explicitly provide for a 50 per cent increase in the number of seats allocated to each state.

Official sources said the government was confident of securing the passage of all three bills. "We are supremely confident that the three bills will be passed this time. We have already consulated many parties and their leaders and only after we got full assurance that we have decided to convened the special sitting," a source said. The number of Lok Sabha seats will be increased to a maximum of 850, with parliamentary constituencies in each state set to increase by 50 per cent, barring a few Union territories.

The boundaries of Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies will be redrawn on the basis of the 2011 Census, while the ratio of constituencies will be determined using the 1971 Census, the sources said. The move is aimed at allaying concerns among southern states that they could lose their share of parliamentary representation if delimitation were based solely on current population figures. These states have successfully controlled population growth, unlike their northern counterparts, the sources said.

The DMK has made it clear that Tamil Nadu's existing 7.18 per cent share of Lok Sabha seats should not be reduced under any circumstances.

"DMK's demands will be honoured," the source said.

Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies will be frozen for 25 years, until 2051. Initially, seats will be reserved for women for 15 years, similar to the provision under which seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were initially reserved for 10 years after the adoption of the Constitution. The seats reserved for women will be rotated after every term.

The reservation for women is expected to be extended beyond the initial 15-year period by the government in power at the time. The government will introduce two constitutional amendment bills, the 131st and 132nd, one providing for the constitution of a delimitation commission and the other for redrawing constituency boundaries. A third bill will deal with Union territories. The sources said the new bill on delimitation, the 132nd, was substantially different from the one defeated in the Lok Sabha in April. It will include major amendments to at least eight Articles of the Constitution, they said. The proposed 50 per cent increase in constituencies will not apply to smaller Union territories such as Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

However, the formula is likely to be applied in states such as Nagaland and Mizoram, where the number of seats would increase from one to two. This will be a political decision, which is why the bill will specify that the maximum number of Lok Sabha seats will be capped at 850, sources said. A delimitation commission will be constituted immediately to expedite the process.

Although ratification of the constitutional amendment bills by at least 50 per cent of state assemblies is not mandatory, the Modi government will seek it as a matter of convention.

As part of its plan, the government will first withdraw the two bills on delimitation and Union territories currently pending before the Lok Sabha.

Following their withdrawal, the three new bills will be introduced for debate and passage.

The sources said around 10-12 hours were expected to be allocated for debate, with another five hours set aside for voting.

INTERNATIONAL

Zelenskyy urges US to pressure Russia and questions Trump's reference to Putin as 'friend'



KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed frustration with the US stance toward Russian leader Vladimir Putin, in the latest sign of deepening tension between Kyiv and Washington, as new questions emerged about Europe's future financial commitments to Ukraine.

Zelenskyy said in an interview with the BBC broadcast Friday that he wants the US to apply more pressure on Putin to stop his invasion of Ukraine, which began almost five years ago and grinds on despite President Donald Trump's efforts to broker a peace deal.

The Ukrainian president described Trump calling Putin "my friend" at a recent summit in China as "strange" because the Russian leader is "an aggressor and a killer."

"He can't be a friend," Zelenskyy told the British broadcaster in Kyiv, likening the statement to someone calling Adolf Hitler a friend during World War II.

Trump on Thursday again defended his comments about his relationship with Putin. "We want to make a deal. We want to stop the killing," Trump said.

"I could walk in and say, 'I don't like you!' and then we have the same problem that we have with Zelenskyy and Putin," he said. Speaking to reporters at Mar-a-Lago, he added: "The biggest problem with that settlement is the fact that you have two leaders that really hate each other."

The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Putin for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine.

The Trump administration, meanwhile, has imposed sweeping sanctions on the court as part of its campaign to dismantle the tribunal over investigations into the US and its allies, including Israel.

The Kremlin has said that Russia also does not recognize the ICC and considers its decisions "legally void." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov in 2023 called the court's move against Putin "outrageous and unacceptable."

Speaking Friday about the BBC interview, Peskov said Zelenskyy was "insulting his counterpart," showing that the Ukrainian leader "is not willing to follow the path of (a) peace settlement."

Zelenskyy's comments were broadcast a day after Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and a US envoy trying to mediate an end to the war, complimented Putin on being a "grandmaster" of politics and weeks after Kushner's partner in peace efforts, Steve Witkoff, described Putin as a "humanitarian."

Moscow's invasion has killed hundreds of thousands of troops and thousands of Ukrainian civilians. It also brought heavy sanctions on Russia and diplomatically isolated Putin in the West before Trump resumed relations.

At the same time, Zelenskyy has complained that the Pentagon is not delivering to Ukraine paid-for Patriot missiles that could stop Russia's ballistic missiles and that SpaceX's military-grade version of the Starlink satellite internet service, which is the backbone of Ukraine's drone operations and communication, isn't working properly. Europe has in the past vowed to stay the course in helping Ukraine fend off Russia's invasion. But European Union leaders on Thursday failed to reach consensus after fraught talks over a new $49 billion loan for Ukraine's economic and military needs next year.

Elections in the EU over the next 12 months could amplify the influence of parties reluctant to send more money to Ukraine and may fray the continent's support. A bus pulled up at Ukraine's northern border in the Chernihiv region on Friday, and an 8-year-old boy ran out of it.

"Mom!" he shouted into the crowd. His mother, Alina Sydorenko, was there to reunite with him after nearly five years apart.

She hugged him tight as he kept saying, "Mother, mother." The boy was one of nine Ukrainian children returned Friday from Russia and Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. "I want to show him everything that he missed and was taken away from him," Sydorenko said. Some of the children had lost their parents, who died in occupied territory. Relatives met them off the bus.

Zelenskyy announced the latest Bring Kids Back UA operation on social media, thanking US first lady Melania Trump for her role in mediating recent wartime reunifications, which so far have brought 43 children home, the White House said Wednesday.

In all, Ukraine has so far managed to bring home 2,875 children, according to Zelenskyy. "We remember each and every one of them. We are doing everything we can to find them and return them to their families," he said. Ukraine's top diplomat looks to allay concerns over Libya strike

Ukraine is determined to keep fighting for its independence, Kyiv officials say, and the country has launched daring attacks against Russian assets.

A recent strike on a Russian navy vessel docked in Libya, however, raised alarm in Europe and Washington that the war could spread to other countries.

In an apparent attempt to defuse tensions, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said he held a phone call with Libyan Foreign Minister Al-Taher Al-Baour, informing him that Ukraine had no intentions of drawing Libya into the war.

Sybiha said in comments posted on X late Thursday that he reaffirmed Kyiv's support for Libya's sovereignty and efforts to reunify the country.

The grinding aerial bombardment between Russia and Ukraine has escalated recently. Russia launched close to 300 aerial attacks a week through Nov. 20 on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, or ACLED, which tracks violence. Zelenskyy warned Thursday that a major Russian attack is looming.

Ukrainian air defenses intercepted 110 of 155 Russian drones launched overnight Friday, including 51 jet-powered Shahed-type drones, according to the Ukrainian air force. Hits were recorded at 27 locations across Ukraine, it said.

The attacks targeted railway infrastructure, energy facilities, civilian businesses and residential buildings across nine Ukrainian regions, killing at least one person and wounding at least six, Ukrainian Prime Minister Serhii Koretskyi said.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry said Friday that its forces overnight intercepted 318 Ukrainian drones over 10 Russian regions and illegally annexed Crimea.

Residents of St. Petersburg reported explosions in eight districts of the city, the Russian online news outlet Astra said. Also, 70 apartments in a multistory building were damaged in a drone attack on the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk in Russia's Krasnodar region, local officials said Friday. Officials reported that Ukraine's attacks killed at least two people and wounded six others.

Pakistan hosts Saudi and Turkey in high-level meeting of Makkah trilateral alliance



ISLAMABAD

A two-day meeting of the trilateral Makkah Defence Alliance's top decision-making body began on Friday in Pakistan's national capital, with discussions expected to focus on the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthis.

The trilateral defence agreement, signed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye in August, establishes a framework for collective deterrence and stipulates that an armed attack against any one of them would be regarded as an attack against all.

The third session of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee (SPDC) is being held in Islamabad, which has been decorated with the flags of Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Authorities declared a public holiday on Friday and imposed special movement restrictions in view of the high-level gathering in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Earlier, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the foreign and defence ministers of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan would attend the meeting.

Terming the meeting as "very important," Asif said the "continuous turmoil south of Saudi Arabia will obviously be on the agenda."

"Any threat to Saudi Arabia is a threat to Pakistan and Turkiye according to the pact, which is absolutely clear," Asif was quoted as saying by Dawn.

A day earlier, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi over the phone and exchanged views on the wider regional situation and efforts to promote peace and security in the region.

Saudi Arabia has witnessed multiple attacks by Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthis, who have repeatedly targeted the Gulf kingdom's oil facilities and airports.

On Tuesday, Houthis targeted a tower in the financial district of Saudi Arabia's capital, damaging the building and injuring 11 people, including two Indians and three Nepalese nationals. On Thursday, Saudi Arabia hit western and southwestern Yemen.

During an emergency meeting of the SPDC in Riyadh on October 5, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye agreed to move immediately to the practical implementation of the collective defence commitments and to take the necessary measures to provide the agreed military forces and capabilities and ensure their rapid deployment in the kingdom.

Earlier this month, the Pakistan Army's spokesman Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that his country is ready to take "all necessary defensive measures" to protect Saudi Arabia amid regional tensions.

In an interview with a Saudi newspaper, the spokesman stressed that Islamabad's commitment to the Kingdom's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity "is absolute and non-negotiable".

He said that Pakistani troops were already stationed in the Kingdom, where they performed various duties, primarily providing defensive support and participating in exercises and military manoeuvres. He, however, did not disclose specific details.

From a Microscope to a Movement: The Remarkable Journey of Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh

SANJOO THANGJAM

There are individuals whose lives are measured by the positions they occupy, the wealth they accumulate or the awards they receive. And then there are those whose contributions are better measured by the institutions they build, the opportunities they create and the difference they make in the lives of others. Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh belongs to the latter category.

His journey from Manipur to becoming a distinguished medical professional, entrepreneur, philanthropist and institution-builder is a story of perseverance, vision and an enduring commitment to his homeland. His achievements extend well beyond medicine, encompassing healthcare, hospitality, tourism, historical preservation and social responsibility. It is a journey that offers valuable lessons, particularly to the younger generation aspiring to make a meaningful contribution to society.

From medical science to a larger vision

Trained as a medical professional, Dr. Dhabali Singh specialised in Pathology, pursuing his medical education at the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal, and postgraduate studies at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh. His scientific training provided him with the foundation for a professional career, but his ambitions gradually extended beyond the conventional boundaries of medical practice.

He recognised a major challenge confronting Manipur: the limited availability of advanced diagnostic facilities. Patients often had to travel outside the State for specialised investigations, involving considerable financial expenditure, inconvenience and emotional stress for their families.

Rather than simply acknowledging this deficiency, he decided to address it through enterprise and initiative. This determination eventually became the foundation of what would grow into the BABINA Group.

BABINA: Building healthcare infrastructure in Manipur

The establishment of BABINA Diagnostics in 1983 was an important milestone in his professional journey. What began as a diagnostic initiative gradually developed into a recognised healthcare enterprise, contributing to the expansion of medical diagnostic services in Manipur.

The significance of this development goes beyond the growth of an institution. It demonstrated that quality medical facilities could be established and sustained within the State through professional competence, investment and a long-term vision.

Over the years, the group's activities expanded into hospital services and specialised healthcare. Its association with AOI-BABINA Specialty Hospital has added an important dimension to the availability of specialised cancer care in the region.

In a State where patients and their families have frequently faced the hardship of travelling elsewhere for advanced treatment, such institutional initiatives have considerable social relevance. They also demonstrate the importance of private enterprise complementing public healthcare infrastructure.

Entrepreneurship beyond medicine

One of the remarkable features of Dr. Dhabali Singh's career is his willingness to explore opportunities beyond his original profession.

Recognising the need for better hospitality infrastructure in Manipur, he ventured into the hotel industry. The development of The Classic Hotel and The Classic Grande contributed to the growth of organised hospitality in Imphal. His involvement in other hospitality and tourism initiatives, including Hotel Imphal and Sendra Resort, reflects his broader interest in promoting the State as a destination for visitors, investors and tourists.

These ventures have significance beyond commercial success. Hospitality infrastructure creates employment, supports allied businesses and provides facilities for visitors, professionals and delegates. For a State with considerable tourism potential, such investments can contribute to wider economic development.

His entrepreneurial journey demonstrates an understanding that the development of Manipur requires a diversified economic base, where healthcare, tourism, hospitality and other sectors can reinforce one another.

Preserving history and promoting international friendship

Another important dimension of Dr. Dhabali Singh's contribution is his involvement in preserving the historical relationship between Manipur and Japan.

The Battle of Imphal during the Second World War remains a defining episode in the history of this region. The hills and valleys of Manipur witnessed immense suffering and sacrifice, but the conflict also created historical links between people of different countries.

Through initiatives associated with the Manipur Tourism Forum and collaborative efforts towards historical conservation, Dr. Dhabali Singh has contributed to bringing international attention to this shared history.

The Imphal Peace Museum at Maibam Lotpa Ching is an important example of how a place associated with wartime tragedy can be transformed into a centre for remembrance, education and peace.

The museum carries a message that transcends national boundaries: the lessons of war should encourage reconciliation and understanding rather than perpetuate hostility.

His contribution to India-Japan friendship received international recognition when the Government of Japan conferred upon him the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, in 2020. This honour acknowledged his contribution to strengthening relations between the two countries.

Success accompanied by social responsibility

The true worth of entrepreneurship is not determined solely by financial achievements. Its larger value lies in how it contributes to society.

Healthcare awareness and community-oriented initiatives associated with the BABINA Group, including screening and diagnostic programmes, have helped draw attention to the importance of early detection and preventive healthcare.

Such efforts are particularly relevant in Manipur, where awareness, affordability and accessibility remain important considerations in public health.

His involvement in social initiatives, support for vulnerable sections of society and employment generation also reflect a broader understanding of institutional responsibility.

In a State where unemployment and migration of educated youth remain serious concerns, institutions that create sustainable employment and professional opportunities are particularly valuable.

The next generation: Dr. Babina Thangjam

The story of Dr. Dhabali Singh also brings into focus his daughter, Dr. Babina Thangjam, who has pursued a professional career in medicine, specialising in Pathology, and is associated with BABINA Diagnostics.

Her professional involvement represents an important generational dimension of the family's healthcare journey. The participation of women in medical leadership and institutional management is particularly significant in a society where their professional contributions deserve greater recognition and encouragement.

However, Dr. Babina's identity should also be appreciated independently of her father's achievements. Her medical qualifications, professional responsibilities and role in the healthcare sector constitute an important contribution in their own right.

The continuity of professional values across generations offers an encouraging example of how institutions can preserve their founding vision while adapting to changing healthcare needs.

An autobiography that records a journey

In 2026, Dr. Dhabali Singh's autobiography, Microscope to Milestones: A Pathologist's Journey Beyond the Lab, was released, offering readers an opportunity to understand the experiences and reflections behind his remarkable journey.

An autobiography is more than a documentation of achievements. It provides insights into the struggles, decisions, uncertainties and determination that shape an individual's life.

For young people in Manipur, his story can offer lessons in perseverance, professional commitment, calculated risk-taking and the courage to pursue a vision even when circumstances are challenging.

His receipt of the 17th ONE India Award 2026 further recognises his contributions across different fields of endeavour.

A legacy beyond personal achievement

Manipur today needs visionary individuals who can build institutions, generate employment, strengthen healthcare and create opportunities for future generations. The journey of Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh offers an interesting example of how individual initiative can contribute to these larger objectives.

His life illustrates that professional knowledge need not remain confined to a particular discipline. When combined with entrepreneurial courage and social commitment, it can become a force for institutional and community development.

From a diagnostic laboratory to a diversified enterprise, from healthcare to hospitality, and from tourism promotion to the preservation of historical memory, his journey reflects an expansive understanding of development.

Ultimately, the legacy of Dr. Dhabali Singh should not be measured merely by the number of institutions he has established or the honours he has received. It should also be assessed by the opportunities created, the services made accessible and the inspiration his journey provides to those who wish to contribute to Manipur.

A microscope reveals the smallest details of life, but vision enables us to see possibilities beyond the immediate horizon. Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh's journey from medical science to institution-building is a reminder that when knowledge is accompanied by determination and a sense of responsibility, one individual's vision can leave a lasting imprint on society.

The writer is a Sub-Editor of The Morning Bell.

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