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Woman Killed, Two Injured in Fresh Firing Near Manipur's Kangpokpi; NH-2 Travel Warning Issued

IMPHAL

A 40-year-old woman was killed and two others injured in fresh firing at Taphou Kuki village along the Senapati-Kangpokpi district boundary on Thursday morning, triggering panic among residents and disrupting paddy harvesting in the area.

According to a police report, the firing took place around 11 am. Kimneineng Chongloi, wife of Thanggou Chongloi and a resident of Taphou village, sustained bullet injuries and died at the spot.

The two injured persons were identified as Sehngam Chongloi, alias David, and Lamkhochon Chongloi, both residents of the same village. They also suffered bullet injuries in the incident.

The firing reportedly broke out while villagers were harvesting paddy in their fields. As gunshots rang out, farmers abandoned their work and fled to safer locations. Reports indicated that gunfire continued in the area even after the initial incident.



Amid the heightened tension, villagers reportedly cautioned commuters against travelling along the affected stretch of National Highway-2 (NH-2), advising them to avoid non-essential journeys.



Fresh violence amid lingering tensions

Thursday's firing comes days after tensions escalated over the killing of two Kuki youths from Taphou Kuki village, whose bodies were recovered after they went missing on October 28.

Paoginlal Hangsing, 20, and Tinginlun Chongloi, 20, were found dead on November 1 during search operations. Their bodies were recovered from an area east of NH-2 along SP Road.

The killings triggered protests in Kangpokpi. The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) refused to claim the bodies until the government addressed its charter of demands.

A major point of contention has been the jurisdiction of the area where the bodies were recovered. CoTU has demanded that the area be transferred from Senapati Police Station to Kangpokpi district, alongside demands for a thorough investigation into the killings and improved security arrangements.

The jurisdictional dispute has continued to fuel tensions in and around Taphou Kuki.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh had visited the village a few days before Thursday's firing amid efforts by the authorities to ease the situation.

Further details of the latest incident were awaited.

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PERSPECTIVE

You will never truly understand something until it actually happens to you.

Paninna Miri to Represent Arunachal Pradesh at 62nd Femina Miss India

ITANAGAR



Paninna Miri will represent Arunachal Pradesh at the upcoming 62nd Femina Miss India pageant after being crowned Femina Miss India Arunachal Pradesh 2027 at North East Diva 2026.

Hailing from Arunachal Pradesh, Paninna's selection marks an important milestone in her pageant journey, giving her an opportunity to compete on a national platform and showcase her talent, confidence and individuality.

Her participation will also bring the spotlight on the state's rich cultural heritage, diverse traditions and distinct identity. Through the national pageant, she will have an opportunity to represent not just herself but also the cultural diversity and aspirations of Arunachal Pradesh.

The achievement comes amid growing participation of young women from Northeast India in national-level beauty pageants and other platforms. Such opportunities are increasingly providing contestants from the region with greater visibility to showcase their abilities, personalities and cultural backgrounds.

As Paninna prepares for the 62nd Femina Miss India, expectations will be high as she gets ready to carry the pride and aspirations of Arunachal Pradesh onto the national stage.

WHO SAID WHAT



**"In the face of lies, hatred and the law of "might makes right" - universities are irreplaceable.
They are places where we learn to question, to verify and to debate.
More than ever, we must protect academic freedom and the independence of research."**

~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Assam reports over two murders daily; Guwahati leads five-year homicide tally



GUWAHATI

Assam has recorded an average of more than two murders every day over the past five years, with Guwahati accounting for the highest cumulative number of homicide cases, according to official Assam Police data.

The figures highlight the continuing challenge of violent crime across the State, with several districts reporting significant numbers of murder cases and the geographical pattern of such incidents shifting over the years.

Since 2022, Guwahati has registered 277 murder cases, the highest among the districts and urban areas covered by the data. Nagaon and Tinsukia follow closely, with 246 and 245 cases, respectively, during the same period.

However, Guwahati's annual figures indicate a gradual decline in murder cases. The city recorded 74 cases in 2022, which fell to 67 in 2023, 63 in 2024 and 62 in 2025.

Despite the decline in the State capital, other districts continue to report substantial numbers of homicides. In 2025, Nagaon recorded 61 murder cases, while Sonitpur reported 44.

At the State level, Assam registered 858 murder cases in 2025, translating into an average of approximately 2.35 murders every day.

The trend has continued into 2026. Assam Police data show that more than 300 murder cases were registered between January and May, maintaining an average of around two cases daily.

The geographical distribution of homicides during the first five months of 2026 also points to a shift in crime patterns. Guwahati recorded 11 cases during the period, while Tinsukia reported the highest number at 19. Kamrup district followed with 17 cases.

Police observers suggest that increased surveillance, urban policing initiatives and intensified patrolling may have contributed to the decline in murder cases in Guwahati. However, districts such as Tinsukia, Nagaon and Kamrup continue to report considerable levels of violent crime.

Senior police officials have often attributed a significant proportion of homicide cases in Assam to sudden disputes and personal conflicts rather than organised criminal activities. Domestic disagreements, property-related disputes and altercations allegedly linked to drug or alcohol abuse are among the factors cited.

The figures underline the need for targeted policing, stronger community-level intervention, early resolution of local disputes and sustained vigilance across both urban centres and rural districts.

With more than 300 murder cases already recorded in the first five months of 2026, the latest data point to the continuing challenge of preventing violent deaths across Assam.

Man Missing After Jumping into Barak River to Escape Pursuers in Cachar



SILCHAR

A man went missing after allegedly jumping into the Barak River to escape a group of people chasing him at the Gangapur-Nagatila ferry ghat in Assam's Cachar district on Thursday morning.The missing man has been identified as Afaz Uddin Majumdar, a resident of the Niyargram Phuljan Tinimukh area.According to local sources, a group of people allegedly armed with sticks and spears chased Afaz Uddin towards the ferry ghat. Seeking shelter, he reportedly boarded a launch. However, when the pursuers allegedly followed him onto the vessel, he jumped into the river in an attempt to escape. He has remained untraceable since the incident.The incident triggered panic and tension in the ferry ghat area. Local residents reportedly began searching the river on their own, but no official rescue team had reached the spot at the time of reporting.Preliminary information suggests that a land-related dispute may have led to the confrontation. However, the circumstances behind the incident remain unclear.

Residents have urged the authorities to launch an immediate rescue operation to trace Afaz Uddin. Further details are awaited.

Manipur Publishes Draft Voter Rolls Ahead of 2027 Revision, Lists 19.94 Lakh Electors

IMPHAL

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Manipur, on Thursday published the draft photo electoral rolls for all 60 Assembly constituencies in the state as part of the Special Summary Revision ahead of the 2027 electoral cycle.The draft rolls contain a total of 19,94,357 electors, including 9,69,298 men, 10,24,735 women and 324 voters belonging to the third gender. January 1, 2027, has been fixed as the qualifying date for the revision.

The CEO's office has urged voters to verify their names and personal details in the draft rolls. The lists are available at the offices of Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) and Booth Level Officers (BLOs). Electors can also check the rolls through the CEO Manipur website.

The window for filing claims and objections will remain open from November 12 to December 11, 2026.

The authorities have set December 28 as the deadline for disposing of the claims and objections, while the final electoral rolls will be published on January 4, 2027.

Eligible citizens can apply for inclusion of their names through Form 6 or Form 6A. Form 7 can be used to raise objections to proposed inclusions or deletions, while Form 8 is meant for changes in residence, correction of electoral details, replacement of Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) and marking of persons with disabilities.

The revision exercise will also take into account the subsequent qualifying dates of April 1, July 1 and October 1, 2027.

Applications can be submitted in person to the EROs, AEROs or BLOs. Voters have also been encouraged to use the Voter Service Portal or the ECINET app to submit applications online through Aadhaar-enabled electronic signatures.

The CEO's office said help desks have been established in all 16 districts to assist voters, particularly members of vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Electors can also seek assistance through the Election Commission's helpline number 1950 or use the 'Book a Call with BLO' facility available on the ECINET app.

The lists of claims and objections will be displayed on the notice boards of the respective EROs and uploaded to the CEO Manipur website. Individuals wishing to challenge claims can approach the concerned EROs.On Thursday, the CEO's office also held a meeting with recognised national and state political parties to brief them on the revision schedule. The parties were asked to appoint Booth Level Agents (BLAs) at every polling station to coordinate with BLOs during the exercise.

Printed and digital copies of the draft electoral rolls, without photographs, for each Assembly constituency were also handed over to the recognised political parties.

The CEO's office appealed to all eligible citizens to enrol themselves and participate in the revision process to ensure the accuracy of the electoral rolls.

NIA Takes Over Probe into Pakistan-Based Network Accused of Online Radicalisation of Indian Youths

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken up a case involving an alleged Pakistan-based network accused of radicalising Indian youths through online platforms and attempting to recruit them for terror-related activities, officials said on Thursday.

The case concerns Pakistan-based gangster Shahzad Bhatti and suspected Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) operatives who allegedly sought to influence Indian youths through social media, with the purported aim of carrying out attacks and disturbing internal peace and communal harmony.

The investigation originated from a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) in April this year. Initially, the probe focused on allegations that Pakistani sleeper cells were being established through social media platforms.

The FIR named eight accused, including Bhatti, whom investigators have identified as a Pakistan-based ISI agent. Other Pakistan-based individuals named in the case include Md Hamad Barkati, Abid Jatt, Major Hamid, Major Iqbal and Major Anwar, all suspected of having links to the ISI.

The NIA has also named Tushar Chauhan, alias Hijbullah Ali Khan, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, and Sameer, a Delhi resident, as accused. Both were arrested by the UP ATS in April.



According to the ATS investigation, the two allegedly maintained direct contact with Pakistani operatives and were involved in plans for what officials described as a "major disruptive act".

Investigators suspect that Bhatti, Jatt and radical Pakistani YouTubers, allegedly acting on ISI instructions, were attempting to radicalise Indian youths online and attract recruits through financial incentives. The alleged objective was to create disruption and undermine peace and communal harmony in the country.

Uttar Pradesh Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Amitabh Yash had earlier said the network was attempting to exploit social media to influence young people in India.

The NIA investigation comes amid a wider crackdown on the Shahzad Bhatti Network (SBN), which the Union government declared a terrorist organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in September.

The Ministry of Home Affairs had said in August that security agencies arrested more than 200 alleged SBN operatives across 14 states during coordinated operations ahead of Independence Day.

The network has also come under investigation in Assam. The Assam Police Special Task Force (STF) has arrested five people in connection with the alleged activities of the network.

The latest arrest in the state was made on September 1, when the STF apprehended a 31-year-old resident of Nalbari. Earlier, Akramul Islam of Dhubri, Aminur Rahman of Chirang and Abdul Hussain of Barpeta were arrested on July 25. Fazal Islam Barbhuiyan was arrested from Ramnathpur in Hailakandi district on August 26.

The NIA is now expected to investigate the wider network, its alleged links with Pakistani operatives and the suspected efforts to recruit and radicalise Indian youths online.

Shillong Literary Festival opens at Ward's Lake, Conrad Sangma inaugurates sixth edition



SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Thursday inaugurated the sixth edition of the Shillong Literary Festival at Ward's Lake, bringing together writers, artists and literary enthusiasts to celebrate books, ideas and creative expression.

Looking back at the festival's journey over the past six years, Sangma said an initiative that began with a vision and considerable uncertainty had gradually developed into an important platform for promoting literature, creativity and intellectual exchange.

He said the festival was part of the state government's broader effort to create opportunities for young people to discover their abilities, express themselves and interact with creative minds from different parts of the world.

The Chief Minister expressed hope that the event would gradually expand to other cities in Meghalaya and secure wider recognition on international platforms in the coming years.

The inaugural session also featured the release of books authored by Daniel Challam, Rudy Warjri, Sanjoy Hazarika, Yadawanka Pala, Streamlet Dkhar and Bijoya Sawian.

Extending his best wishes to the authors, artists, organisers and participants, Sangma said he hoped the festival would continue to encourage young people to explore literature and creativity and develop a lasting interest in reading and ideas.

The sixth edition of the festival marks another step in Meghalaya's efforts to strengthen its literary and cultural platforms and provide a space for writers and creative voices to engage with a wider audience.

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DELHI'S POLLUTION CRISIS

When pollution crosses the limits of the monitoring system, the problem is not merely a technical gap. It raises a larger question about whether the country's air quality data can adequately reflect the risks people are breathing.

Delhi's post-Diwali pollution crisis has exposed an uncomfortable contradiction in India's air quality monitoring system. At a time when residents are struggling to breathe under a blanket of toxic smog, some of the monitoring stations have failed to reflect the full extent of the pollution in their official readings. The reason is not necessarily a failure of the instruments to detect pollutants, but a decade-old data validation framework that cannot adequately process extreme readings.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) introduced the National Air Quality Index (NAQI) in 2015, when particulate matter analysers were calibrated to measure concentrations between zero and 1,000 micrograms per cubic metre. Under the existing automated validation system, hourly readings exceeding this range are classified as out-of-range and excluded from AQI calculations. Consequently, when pollution levels rise beyond the prescribed threshold, the official data may show gaps precisely when accurate information becomes most critical.

This is more than an administrative or technical inconvenience. Air quality data is the foundation on which public warnings, emergency restrictions and health advisories are issued. If the monitoring framework cannot properly accommodate extreme pollution episodes, the reliability of the information available to policymakers and citizens comes into question.

The scale of the problem became evident after Diwali, when reports indicated that 45 of Delhi's 59 monitoring stations had recorded missing hourly readings for at least one pollutant. Environment Ministry sources have clarified that the readings were available but were not being included in the AQI calculations because they exceeded the system's calibrated range. In other words, the pollution was being detected, but the existing methodology was unable to incorporate it into the official index.

The distinction matters. A missing reading can easily be mistaken for missing data, while the actual problem lies in the rules governing its use. Yet, from the perspective of an ordinary citizen checking the AQI to assess the danger outdoors, the distinction offers little reassurance. What matters is whether the published figures accurately communicate the severity of the situation.

The CPCB has defended its methodology, pointing out that the AQI is designed to assess exposure over time rather than react to momentary fluctuations. Its 24-hour running average requires at least 16 hours of available readings for most pollutants to generate a sub-index. The board has also maintained that an AQI of 500 already represents the highest health concern category, and that extending the numerical scale would not change the assigned 'Severe' classification.There is a scientific rationale behind standardised measurement and averaging. Instantaneous readings can fluctuate, and comparisons between monitoring systems require consistent methods. However, scientific consistency should not become an excuse for allowing an outdated framework to remain unchanged when pollution patterns and monitoring technologies have evolved.The contrast between infrastructure expansion and methodological stagnation is particularly striking. India's network of continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations has increased from 30 in 2014-15 to 634. Delhi's network has expanded from 10 to 59 stations. Monitoring instruments have also undergone upgrades. Yet, according to Environment Ministry sources, the underlying data validation methodology has remained largely unchanged.This raises an obvious question: what is the purpose of expanding the monitoring network and investing in sophisticated equipment if the system cannot adequately process the data generated during the most extreme pollution episodes?The CPCB has acknowledged that its methodology is under review and that internal discussions are underway on how readings beyond the existing measurement range should be handled. However, the absence of a formally constituted external expert group suggests that the review process has yet to acquire the institutional depth it requires.India needs an independent scientific assessment involving atmospheric scientists, public health experts, monitoring specialists and environmental researchers. Such a review should examine not only the upper measurement limits but also the treatment of extreme readings, averaging periods, data gaps and the communication of health risks. International practices should be considered, but the revised framework must also reflect India's distinctive pollution patterns and urban conditions.

Another concern is the growing difference between readings published by government monitoring stations and those displayed on private air quality platforms. The CPCB attributes these variations to differences in measurement techniques, averaging periods and sensor quality. While these explanations deserve consideration, the public should not be left navigating conflicting figures without a clear understanding of what each measurement represents.Transparency must therefore be central to any reform. Individual pollutant concentrations, out-of-range readings and the reasons for their exclusion should be clearly disclosed. An extreme reading should not simply disappear from public interpretation because it falls outside an existing calculation framework. Even if it cannot be incorporated directly into the standard AQI, it should trigger an appropriate warning indicating that pollution has exceeded the system's measurement threshold.The larger issue is that air quality monitoring must serve public health, not merely statistical uniformity. An index is useful only when it communicates the danger accurately. A system that continues to report the highest pollution category without adequately explaining how far concentrations have exceeded the prescribed limits risks reducing a serious public health emergency to a numerical classification.Delhi's pollution crisis is not going to be resolved by changing an algorithm or extending the measurement range alone. Vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, construction dust, waste burning, crop residue burning and other sources require sustained policy intervention. But effective action begins with reliable information.

The CPCB's acknowledgement of the limitations of its existing framework should be treated as an opportunity for urgent reform, not another round of official deliberations. The 2015 methodology was designed for the circumstances and technology of its time. A decade later, it must be reassessed against present realities.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident." ~ Arthur Schopenhauer

Why India Needs Nuclear Power Beyond Solar Energy

Solar and wind will drive India's clean energy transition, but round-the-clock electricity demand, industrial expansion and the limitations of battery storage make nuclear power essential for long-term energy security



ARUNENDRA KUMAR TIWARI AND ALEKHYA DATTA

India's transition towards a cleaner energy system is gathering momentum, but generating more electricity from renewable sources alone will not be enough to meet the country's growing energy needs. As industries expand, cities grow and household consumption rises, the real challenge will be to ensure a reliable supply of clean electricity at every hour of the day. This is where nuclear power must become an important part of India's long-term energy strategy.

The goal set by the COP31 Presidency of increasing electricity's share to 35 per cent of global final energy demand by 2035 reflects a major shift in how economies will function in the coming decade. Electrification is no longer limited to household lighting or transport. It increasingly involves cooking, industrial production, cooling, commercial activities and the rapidly expanding digital infrastructure that supports modern economies.

India has made considerable progress in this direction. According to the Bureau of Energy Efficiency's India Energy Scenario 2024-25, electricity accounted for around 23 per cent of the country's final energy consumption. However, when traditional fuels such as firewood, agricultural residue and dung are included, the share falls to approximately 19 per cent. The increase has also been gradual, rising from around 22 per cent five years ago on the narrower electricity-consumption measure.

Achieving the 35 per cent target by 2035 will therefore require a much faster pace of electrification.

The biggest challenge lies in the industrial sector, which accounts for nearly half of India's final energy consumption. Electricity currently meets only about 19 per cent of industrial energy requirements, while coal continues to supply close to 58 per cent. Replacing coal in industrial heating and manufacturing processes will require enormous quantities of electricity that are not only affordable but also available continuously.

This makes the nature and timing of electricity generation as important as the total quantity produced.

Solar power and the changing demands on the grid

Solar energy has transformed India's electricity landscape and will remain central to its clean energy ambitions. On July 29, 2025, renewable energy sources met a record 51.5 per cent of the country's electricity demand. This demonstrates the growing contribution of clean energy to the national grid.

However, solar generation is inherently dependent on daylight, whereas electricity consumption does not follow the same pattern. Demand often remains high well after sunset, particularly during summer when households continue using fans and air conditioners through the night.

Buildings already account for nearly one-third of India's electricity consumption. Household electricity use almost doubled over the past decade, increasing from 217 billion units in 2014-15 to around 409 billion units in 2024-25.

The growing adoption of electric vehicles adds another dimension. Around 8 per cent of new vehicle registrations are now electric, with much of the charging demand occurring during evening hours. Meanwhile, data centres, steel plants and other industrial facilities require uninterrupted electricity throughout the day.

This mismatch between solar generation and consumption is placing increasing pressure on the electricity grid. Analysis indicates that the midday decline in net electricity demand, after accounting for solar generation, has widened from around 25 GW in 2023 to 64 GW in 2026.

In practical terms, the electricity supplied by solar plants during the day must be replaced by other sources after sunset. At present, coal-fired power stations largely fill this gap.

Battery storage can help bridge the difference between daytime generation and evening demand. India is expanding its storage capacity, but the installed base remains relatively small. By mid-2026, the country had installed approximately 9.3 GWh of battery storage, compared with the Central Electricity Authority's estimated requirement of around 35 GWh by 2026-27.

Batteries are particularly useful for storing surplus solar electricity and releasing it several hours later. However, relying entirely on battery storage to sustain an industrial economy through prolonged cloudy periods, monsoon spells and extended periods of high demand remains a difficult proposition.

India therefore needs dependable low-carbon electricity that is not dependent on weather conditions.

Nuclear energy: A long-term necessity

Nuclear power offers an important part of the solution. Unlike solar and wind, nuclear reactors can generate electricity continuously, making them suitable for meeting the country's round-the-clock energy requirements.

At present, nuclear energy contributes only around 3 per cent of India's total electricity generation. Even with projects currently under construction, installed nuclear capacity is expected to reach approximately 22.4 GW by 2034.

This represents meaningful progress, but nuclear power alone will not drive India towards its 2035 electrification target. Solar, wind, energy storage and improvements in efficiency will continue to account for the largest share of the expansion.

The importance of nuclear energy lies beyond that immediate target. It could determine whether India's growing electricity consumption remains environmentally sustainable after 2035.

Without sufficient dependable low-carbon generation, the country may become increasingly reliant on coal to meet demand during the night and periods of low renewable generation. That would undermine the environmental benefits of electrification.

Nuclear power is among the few established sources of firm, low-carbon electricity that India can potentially expand using its domestic technological capabilities and fuel-cycle expertise.

Recognising this, the government has set an ambitious target of achieving 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047. The SHANTI Act of 2025 has also opened the sector to greater private participation, allowing private companies to build, own, operate and decommission nuclear facilities, subject to central licensing and regulatory approvals.

The policy shift has generated interest among major industrial groups. NTPC has outlined plans for approximately 30 GW of nuclear capacity across at least 14 states, while the Adani Group has announced ambitions to develop up to 10 GW by 2035.

However, nuclear projects require long planning and construction periods, often approaching a decade. Decisions taken during the next five years will therefore have a direct bearing on India's ability to maintain a clean and reliable electricity supply in the 2040s.

The race towards 2035 and the preparation for the decades beyond it must proceed simultaneously.

Three reforms to accelerate nuclear expansion

India's nuclear ambitions will require more than investment announcements and capacity targets. The country needs reforms in electricity markets, technology deployment and financing.

First, electricity markets must reward reliability alongside affordability.

At present, India's power markets largely favour the cheapest available electricity at a particular time. While this approach supports the expansion of low-cost solar power, it does not adequately recognise the value of generation sources that can supply electricity during periods of peak demand.

Power available at midday and power available at 9 pm during a hot August evening do not necessarily have the same system value.

Capacity payments, two-part tariffs and procurement mechanisms designed around round-the-clock electricity supply could help correct this imbalance. Such reforms would allow nuclear power to compete on the basis of its principal advantage: dependable generation.

Second, small modular reactors should be linked to industrial demand.

Steel, cement, fertiliser and chemical manufacturing clusters require large and continuous supplies of electricity. The expansion of data centres will further increase demand for reliable power.

Bharat Small Reactors could provide an opportunity to develop captive or cluster-based nuclear power facilities for such energy-intensive industries. This would bring generation closer to major consumers and potentially reduce pressure on long-distance transmission infrastructure.

The approach could also help industries reduce their dependence on coal and other fossil fuels.

Third, the cost of financing nuclear projects must come down.

One of the biggest obstacles to nuclear expansion is the high initial investment and the long period required to recover costs. Financing expenses account for a substantial portion of the overall cost of nuclear electricity.

Long-term concessional loans, sovereign green bonds and the clear inclusion of nuclear power in India's green finance framework could improve the economics of new projects.

International cooperation on technology transfer and climate finance, particularly under the COP31 agenda, could also help mobilise the capital required for large-scale nuclear development.These reforms must be supported by integrated energy planning. Nuclear power, renewable generation, battery storage and transmission infrastructure cannot be developed in isolation. Their expansion must be based on hourly electricity demand, seasonal variations and the changing requirements of industry and households rather than annual generation estimates alone.

The energy choices that will shape India's future India's experience offers an important lesson for other rapidly developing economies pursuing ambitious electrification targets. Increasing electricity's share in final energy consumption is only one part of a successful climate strategy. The other is ensuring that the electricity itself comes from reliable and low-carbon sources.

Solar energy can provide much of the additional electricity India needs by 2035. But maintaining a clean supply after sunset, during prolonged periods of poor weather and throughout the following decades will require a more diverse energy mix.

Nuclear power is unlikely to be the principal driver of India's 2035 electrification target. Its greater significance lies in what comes next. Without dependable clean generation, the country risks replacing direct fossil-fuel consumption with electricity that is still heavily dependent on coal.

The objective, therefore, should not be to choose between solar and nuclear energy. Both have complementary roles in India's energy transition. Solar and wind can provide expanding volumes of renewable electricity, while nuclear power can strengthen the reliability of the grid and reduce dependence on fossil fuels when renewable generation falls.India's clean energy future will ultimately depend not simply on how much electricity it can generate, but on whether that electricity remains affordable, dependable and environmentally sustainable around the clock.Nuclear power may not determine whether India wins the electrification race by 2035.

But the decisions taken today could determine whether the country wins the much bigger race for a secure, reliable and low-carbon energy future.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Imagine New Delhi becoming home to the world's largest museum display area?
Think scale. Think culture.
That is the vision behind the Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum!
Today's Cabinet decision will give impetus to transform historic North and South Block buildings into a magnificent celebration of Bharat's civilisational journey.
From ancient knowledge systems, mathematics and astronomy to architecture, art, languages and spirituality, the museum will bring thousands of years of our heritage to life through immersive experiences and world-class galleries.
Buildings that have been centres of governance will now become a place where millions can discover, experience and celebrate the timeless richness of our civilisation.
A historic new chapter for India's cultural heritage!

~ Narendra Modi, PM



Guwahati becomes Assam's first 'Swachh City', wins national cleanliness award

President Droupadi Murmu presents the Swachh Survekshan 2025-26 award; state Urban Affairs Minister Kaushik Rai and GMC Mayor Mrigen Sarania receive the honour

GUWAHATI

Guwahati has been recognised as Assam's first 'Swachh City' under the Union government's Swachh Survekshan 2025-26, marking a significant achievement for the city in the national urban cleanliness assessment.

President Droupadi Murmu presented the award at a ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Wednesday. Assam Urban Affairs Minister Kaushik Rai and Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) Mayor Mrigen Sarania received the honour



on behalf of the city.

Sharing the news on social media, Rai said he was privileged to receive the recognition from the President. He dedicated the achievement to sanitation workers, government officials, municipal employees and residents who have contributed to Guwahati's cleanliness initiatives.

The minister also acknowledged the contributions of the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs and other line departments, describing the recognition as the outcome of collective efforts to make Guwahati cleaner and more sustainable.

He said the achievement reflected the state government's commitment to improving urban sanitation under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The award-receiving delegation also included Kavitha Padmanabhan, Commissioner and Secretary of the Housing and Urban Affairs Department, and GMC Commissioner Chinmoy Phookan.

The recognition comes as part of the 10th edition of Swachh Survekshan, the annual urban cleanliness assessment conducted by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Guwahati had earlier received the 'Promising Swachh Shehar' recognition in the previous edition of the survey, held in July 2025. North Lakhimpur was also recognised in that category.

The latest award marks a step forward for Guwahati in the national cleanliness rankings and places greater emphasis on sustaining improvements in waste management, sanitation and public hygiene.

Train services restored on both lines at Digaru after Kolkata-Sairang Express derailment

GUWAHATI

Train services have resumed on both the Up and Down main lines at Digaru railway station in Assam following the derailment of the Kolkata-Sairang Express on Wednesday morning. However, restoration work involving the locomotive and five derailed coaches is still underway, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) said.

Train No. 13125 Kolkata-Sairang Express derailed at around 6.54 am while entering Digaru station, approximately 44 km from Guwahati. The train was being received at the station to allow another train to pass when its locomotive and five coaches went off the tracks, disrupting movement on both main lines.The NFR said normal train operations had subsequently been restored, allowing services detained at different locations to resume their journeys gradually.Railway authorities said all passengers were safe and no major injuries had been confirmed. However, eyewitnesses claimed that several passengers sustained injuries during the incident.A special train was arranged to carry stranded passengers towards their destination, Sairang. It departed Digaru at 11.40 am. Food and drinking water were also provided to passengers during the waiting period.The NFR launched rescue and relief operations immediately after the derailment. The General Manager and other senior railway officials visited the site to monitor restoration work.Meanwhile, conflicting accounts have emerged over the cause of the accident. Railway authorities attributed the derailment to the loco pilot's alleged inability to control the train's speed while entering the station. However, a video recorded shortly before the incident reportedly captured the loco pilots claiming that the brakes had failed. The exact cause of the derailment is yet to be formally established.The incident also disrupted other railway services in the region. Train No. 15769 Alipurduar Junction-Mariani Junction Intercity Express was short-terminated at Kamakhya, while the Guwahati-Haibargaon-Guwahati DMU services (Train Nos. 75727/75728) were cancelled.

'No one can dictate our food or culture': Pradyot Debbarma hits out at BJP MLA

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha Party founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma has strongly criticised a Tripura BJP MLA over alleged derogatory remarks about the indigenous Tiprasa community, demanding a public apology and indicating that he would urge people to lodge police complaints against the legislator.Reacting to the controversy, Debbarma said an elected representative who had taken an oath to uphold the Constitution should not make statements that insult the food habits, lifestyle and cultural traditions of indigenous communities.Drawing a parallel between the MLA's alleged remarks and comments by YouTuber Amir Shokeen, who had reportedly mocked people from Northeast India, Debbarma questioned whether there was any difference in their attitudes towards the region's indigenous population.He also questioned the moral authority of individuals allegedly involved in activities such as cattle smuggling across the Bangladesh border and those accused of assaulting Border Security Force (BSF) personnel to comment on the food habits and cultural practices of indigenous communities.Debbarma said he had raised the issue with BJP leaders, who, according to him, acknowledged that the legislator's remarks were inappropriate. He maintained that the MLA should publicly apologise for the statement.The Tipra Motha founder further said he would appeal to people to file FIRs against the legislator over the alleged remarks.

"This is India; no one has the right to dictate what we eat or what our culture should be," Debbarma said, asserting that indigenous communities must be free to preserve their food habits, traditions and way of life without ridicule or discrimination.

Meghalaya minister faces protest over Shillong Peak ropeway, demonstrators demand project scrapped

SHILLONG

Meghalaya minister and BJP leader Sanbor Shullai was forced to leave a public consultation on the proposed Shillong Peak Ropeway project on Wednesday after protesters surrounded him and demanded that the project be scrapped.

Shullai, who represents South Shillong in the Meghalaya Assembly, was escorted out of the venue by his personal security officer as tensions escalated during the meeting.

The confrontation began shortly after the consultation started, with residents accusing the organisers of failing to provide them adequate opportunity to raise objections. Protesters raised slogans against the minister, shouted "shame" and demanded his resignation. Members of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) also reiterated their opposition to the proposed ropeway.



Responding to the protest, Shullai alleged that the demonstration was politically motivated. He questioned whether those opposing the project were genuinely concerned about its environmental impact.

The minister maintained that the government was willing to explain the project and address concerns raised by residents. He also said he had recommended the formation of an expert committee to examine the objections.

The consultation was convened by Shullai in his capacity as the local MLA and chairman of the 19-South Shillong Advisory Committee to gather opinions from residents and other stakeholders.

The proposed 913-metre ropeway is expected to connect Madan Laban with Shillong Peak. However, the project has faced sustained opposition from residents and pressure groups, particularly over its potential impact on the environment, local water sources and catchment areas.

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) has also raised objections, citing the absence of a trading licence and other necessary local clearances.

Despite the growing opposition, Meghalaya Tourism Minister Paul Lyngdoh has maintained that the government will not abandon the project. He has said consultations with stakeholders would continue to address concerns surrounding its implementation.

The latest confrontation has further highlighted the widening gap between the government's push for tourism infrastructure and residents' concerns over environmental protection and regulatory compliance.

BJP targets Congress over Bimol Akoijam's inclusion in Manipur poll panels, raises sexual harassment allegations



IMPHAL

The BJP has accused the Congress of adopting an "anti-women" stance after the party included Inner Manipur MP A Bimol Akoijam in three key committees formed to oversee its preparations for the upcoming Assembly elections, citing sexual harassment allegations against him.

BJP national general secretary Smriti Irani criticised the Congress's decision, alleging that it contradicted the party's public position on women's rights and gender equality.In a post on X, Irani questioned the Congress's decision to assign Akoijam an important organisational role despite allegations reportedly made by 11 female students at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).She also accused the Congress of treating women's dignity as an election slogan rather than upholding it as a matter of principle.BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari echoed the criticism, describing the Congress as an "anti-women" party. He alleged that the party's slogan of "Smash the Patriarchy" was hollow and accused Rahul Gandhi of promoting people facing allegations involving crimes against women.

The Congress announced the formation of several committees on November 11 to coordinate its preparations for the Manipur Assembly elections. Akoijam was named to three of the panels.

The controversy comes after JNU terminated Akoijam following sexual harassment allegations. He has described the university's action as a "witch-hunt" and questioned whether due process was followed.

The BJP also criticised the Congress through its official X handle, alleging that the party had rewarded Akoijam with an important organisational position instead of demonstrating accountability.

The party further questioned Rahul Gandhi's silence on the issue, referring to his public advocacy of the "Smash the Patriarchy" slogan.

The allegations against Akoijam and the circumstances surrounding his termination from JNU remain central to the political dispute, with the BJP using the Congress's committee appointments to question its position on women's rights.

OIL raises compensation to Rs 25 lakh for families of six workers killed in Assam fire



GUWAHATI

Oil India Limited (OIL) has increased its ex-gratia assistance for the families of six workers who died in a fire at its Intermediate Tank Farm in Tengakhat, Dibrugarh district, on November 6, from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 25 lakh each.

The decision was announced on Wednesday following demands from various organisations for higher compensation and employment for one member of each bereaved family.

Separately, the contractor that had engaged the workers has announced compensation of Rs 10 lakh for the family of each deceased worker and Rs 5 lakh for the family of each injured worker.

In a statement, OIL said it was contacting the families of the deceased contractual workers to facilitate the disbursement of the announced assistance, followed by the settlement of applicable statutory dues and benefits.

The company expressed grief over the deaths and said it had made efforts to provide the injured workers with the best available medical care. Despite sustained treatment, however, all six workers eventually succumbed to their injuries.

OIL said a medical specialist had been flown from Delhi to Dibrugarh to assess the injured and guide their treatment. Following a medical assessment, one injured worker was airlifted to Delhi on November 9 for specialised treatment at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital.

The company said it remained focused on ensuring medical care for the surviving injured worker and extending support to all affected families.The fire broke out during maintenance work at the tank farm. Six workers were initially rescued and taken for treatment. One died at the site, while the remaining five later succumbed to their injuries at different hospitals.

Of the injured, five were admitted to Assam Medical College and Hospital in Dibrugarh, while one was taken to OIL Hospital in Duliajan.

Manipur celebrates Ningol Chakkouba with family feasts and community gatherings

IMPHAL

Manipur celebrated Ningol Chakkouba on Wednesday with traditional family feasts and community gatherings, reaffirming the festival's importance in strengthening family ties and promoting social harmony.

Observed on the second day of the Meitei lunar month of Hiyangei, the festival brings married women, known as Ningols, back to their parental homes. Dressed in traditional attire and accompanied by their children, they visit their families carrying fruits, vegetables and other traditional food items.

They are welcomed with elaborate meals, often featuring a variety of fish dishes. Brothers also present gifts to their sisters, who, in turn, offer blessings for their well-being and prosperity.

Community celebrations bring people together

Moving beyond traditional family gatherings, the All Manipur Ethnical Socio-Cultural Organisation (AMESCO), in collaboration with the Indian Army, Assam Rifles and Manipur state forces, organised inter-community celebrations at Khonghampat, Kakching, Pallel, Kakching Khunou and Bishnupur.

The events brought together security personnel, Naga women, members of different tribal communities and residents of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.



Participants shared meals and exchanged gifts, using the occasion to build connections across communities.

Governor, Chief Minister extend greetings

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla said Ningol Chakkouba reflects Manipur's rich cultural heritage and spirit of social harmony. He noted that family values and mutual affection continue to bring people together and encourage peaceful coexistence.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh also extended his greetings through social media, describing the festival as a cherished celebration of family relationships. He expressed hope that the occasion would strengthen unity, peaceful coexistence and prosperity across the state.

A festival with deep cultural roots

Ningol Chakkouba, which literally means a grand feast for married women, is one of Manipur's most significant cultural festivals. It is believed to have originated during the reign of King Chandrakirti (1850-1886).

Over generations, the festival has remained an occasion for married women to reconnect with their parental families and reinforce the bond between brothers and sisters.

Beyond its family-centred traditions, Ningol Chakkouba has increasingly provided a platform for interaction among different communities in the state.

Quest!

Mathematicians have shown that calculus can be taught to kids as young as five years old.



NATIONAL

‘Ground has shifted’ under Modi govt; regime ‘not here to stay’: Sonia Gandhi in memoir

NEW DELHI

The “ground has shifted” under the Modi government’s feet, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi says, expressing her firm belief that the regime is not here to stay and that the government’s actions demonstrate its insecurity.

In her memoir, Belonging: A Journey of Love, Gandhi says she senses the next generation’s yearning for fairness, an end to oppressive systems and injustice. “It will take time, but I know the wheel will turn and they will succeed. They will retrieve the soul of our country and heal its wounds,” she writes in the book, which hit the stands on Tuesday.

The country’s young men and women will safeguard its hard-won freedoms and carefully designed harmony, Gandhi says in the 526-page book, which traces her life from her childhood in Italy and meeting Rajiv Gandhi in Cambridge to his assassination and her entry into politics.

“As of this writing the government continues with its narrative that its power and popularity remain intact. But it’s my belief that the ground has shifted under their feet. The mainstream media remains as partisan as before, but the government’s actions demonstrate its insecurity,” she says.

State elections held in recent months, for instance, strongly point to large-scale tampering with electoral rolls, Gandhi says, referring to the opposition’s “vote chori” allegations.

“In Parliament, the ruling party evades vitally important affairs: China’s occupation of parts of our territory along the border, legislation that encroaches upon federal principles, minority rights, the privacy of citizens, and many other substantial issues fundamental to our integrity as a nation. But the official fictions have ceased to be credible; people reacting to rising prices, unemployment, and widespread corruption, are less afraid to speak out,” the former Congress President says.

On the long-term repercussions of the “BJP’s divisive rule”, Gandhi says authoritarian regimes respond to popular resistance with increased repression, something that India is also undergoing.

“But this regime is not here to stay. Abuse of power brings its inevitable consequences, leading to its downfall. Less than a century ago, nobody could have believed that the mighty British empire spread over the globe would become a distant relic; nobody could have imagined that a frail man clad only in a dhoti would unite millions of Indians and vanquish that colossal force,” she says.

“Nor could anyone have foreseen, seventy years ago, that democracy would take root in newly independent India, a desperately poor country with 12 percent literacy. Universal suffrage, giving every adult a vote, was a radical act in a hierarchical society. This democratic promise cannot be easily undone, and in the long term it will protect this nation,” she asserts in her memoir.

Gandhi says she firmly believes that, despite the ruling establishment’s attempts to control and polarise people, its project of uniformity will inevitably run into India’s intrinsic plurality.

“I have no doubt that the RSS’ long-term design of domination, to impose one religion and one language on our multiplicity, will be firmly resisted...”

In her book, she also discusses the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, saying the BJP began to lose its nerve after seeing the response on the ground to the opposition INDIA bloc.

“The prime minister started faltering. He reverted to his customary crude slogans warning people of the supposed dangers to them posed by the minorities. His speeches became threatening, disconnected, at times almost surreal. In one interview that went viral, he claimed that he was of celestial descent, ‘non-biological’,” she says.

Many people across the country began to see through the PM’s fabrications and turn away from his speeches, which were full of anger and hate and devoid of progressive or constructive content. They began paying attention to what the INDIA bloc were saying, Gandhi recounts.

On the day of the results, Gandhi says she began to hear the sound of drums from afar, followed, as they came closer, by chanting and bursts of firecrackers from the party office next door.

“Something was clearly going on: celebrations seemed to be breaking out, garlands and floral bouquets piling up in our garden.

I learnt that though our party hadn’t won, we had improved our tally and pushed back our opponents enough to weaken them considerably. I welcomed Rahul and Priyanka home with a huge embrace enfolding all three of us, after which they went to the party office to share in the excitement all over the country, our party offices were erupting in celebrations,” she says.

“It became obvious that, for all the tricks and stratagems of the BJP and RSS, our INDIA alliance had dented their invincibility. The BJP failed by a large margin to gain a majority. They were compelled to seek the support of two regional parties to form a government. We were rejoicing because we had demonstrated something vitally important: that the opposition in our Parliament was alive and well,” she says.

Centre overhauls visa regime, cuts categories from 13 to 9 to ease entry for foreigners



NEW DELHI

The Centre has overhauled India’s visa regime, reducing the number of main visa categories from 13 to nine and sub-categories from 49 to 23, in a bid to simplify entry procedures and attract more foreign tourists, medical travellers, students, investors and business professionals.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), which announced the changes in 2026, has also reduced the number of fields in visa application forms by 65-70 per cent across all 23 sub-categories, significantly cutting down the information applicants need to furnish.

The revised framework seeks to eliminate overlapping provisions, make visa selection more straightforward and facilitate legitimate foreign travel to India for tourism, healthcare, education, research and business.

Noting that the latest exercise follows an earlier rationalisation in October 2025, when the government reduced the number of main visa categories from 22 to 13 and sub-categories from 63 to 49, officials in the MHA said the changes were undertaken after studying visa systems in developed countries and global practices.

“One of the key changes is the renaming of the erstwhile Tourist Visa as the Visitor Visa, reflecting a wider range of activities permitted under the category. The new Visitor Visa has been divided into two sub-categories, V-1 and V-2,” he said.

The nine categories include Business Visa, Diplomatic Visa, Work Visa, Journalist Visa, Medical Visa, Official Visa, Student Visa, Visitor Visa and Miscellaneous Visa.

According to the officials, the V-1 visa, valid for 30 days with multiple entries, will cover short-term visits, including business meetings, medical consultations, wellness retreats, short-duration medical treatment and courses in Indian languages, music, art and craft, while the V-2 visa will cater to longer visits, with validity of one, five or 10 years, depending on eligibility. It will also cover mountaineering, for which a six-month multiple-entry visa will be issued, he added.

The Medical Visa framework has also been streamlined to facilitate medical value travel. The M-1 visa will cover treatment other than under AYUSH systems, while the M-3 visa will apply to treatment under AYUSH.

“Both, including their e-visa variants, will ordinarily be granted for one year with multiple entries. Separate attendant visas, M-2 and M-4, will be available for persons accompanying patients under the respective categories,” the official said.

The move is expected to provide greater continuity for foreign patients requiring multiple consultations, follow-up visits or extended treatment, while supporting the government’s ‘Heal in India’ initiative.

The Student Visa category has been consolidated into two broad sub-categories. S-1 will cover school, graduate and postgraduate education, while S-2 will include PhD scholars, researchers, visiting faculty, internships, exchange programmes and specified scientific and academic activities.

Foreign students admitted to Indian institutions through the Study in India portal may be granted an e-S1 visa for up to five years or the duration of their academic course, whichever is shorter, with multiple entries.

The Business Visa category has similarly been reorganised into B-1 and B-2. While B-1 will cover long-term, licence-based business activities, including setting up industrial and commercial ventures, B-2 will cater to short-term, contract-based assignments, conferences, sports, performing arts and film-related activities.

A specific provision under B-2 has also been introduced for foreign technical experts, engineers and subject-matter specialists engaged by Indian companies. It will facilitate the deployment of overseas professionals for installation, commissioning, quality checks, maintenance, production, IT and ERP operations, training, plant design and technology transfer.

Such professionals can also avail themselves of the Production Investment Business Visa through the e-visa platform, a facility earlier provided under the e-B4 nomenclature.

Currently, India’s e-visa facility is available to nationals of 172 countries across 13 sub-categories.

The MHA official said the reduction in application-form fields would make the process less time-consuming for applicants while improving administrative efficiency and enabling more focused scrutiny of applications.

The ministry is now upgrading its information technology systems to operationalise the revised framework, he said, adding that visas under the new system are expected to be issued by the end of 2026.

As per government data, nearly 25,000 foreigners are residing in India on Employment Visas, while over 40,000 were granted Student Visas on arrival. In the case of Medical and related Visas, over 18 lakh were issued during 2023-25, while nearly 5,000 AYUSH and attendant visas have been issued since the launch of the scheme in 2026.

INTERNATIONAL

Russia and Ukraine agree to a large exchange of prisoners of war, officials at Abu Dhabi talks say



ABU DHABI

Officials at U.S.-mediated talks between Russia and Ukraine said Wednesday that the sides have agreed a large exchange of prisoners of war.

“One of the positives is we agreed that we’re going to have the biggest humanitarian release of prisoners, which we’re going to finalize the numbers tomorrow,” Jared Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump’s son-in-law, said after the two days of talks in Abu Dhabi ended.

Vladimir Medinsky, the head of the Russian delegation, and Rustem Umerov, who led Kyiv’s delegation in Abu Dhabi, confirmed the planned exchange.

Hopes were low for any major breakthrough in the first meeting in nine months between the delegations. Russia and Ukraine have from time to time swapped prisoners during their nearly five-year war.

U.S. officials say they are determined to revive Washington’s peace efforts that so far have failed to deliver significant results.

Kushner says he and U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff will travel to Moscow on Thursday to meet with President Vladimir Putin, then fly to Dublin to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The context of the negotiations has changed since the last meeting in February in Geneva. The Trump administration has to reckon with Democrats, who could demand more support for Ukraine, taking over the U.S. Congress in January following the U.S. midterm elections.

Also, Russia’s wartime economy is under heavy strain, and Ukraine is reeling from devastating aerial attacks on its power grid.

Umerov said Kyiv’s delegation is expected to meet Wednesday with European officials.

United States envoy Steve Witkoff, right, speaks during the coordination meeting before the trilateral talks between Russia and Ukraine mediated by the US in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2026.

Moscow doesn’t want European countries, which are concerned about Russia’s conduct and broader intentions on the continent, involved in the direct negotiations. However, representatives of European governments, the European Union and NATO were in Abu Dhabi and were consulting with the Ukrainian delegation, officials said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday’s session was “constructive and quite substantive.”

The talks were largely about humanitarian issues, including possible prisoner exchanges and returning Ukrainian civilians in captivity, as well as children taken from the country, he said.

Security guarantees also were discussed, he said. However, Russia and Ukraine have shown no sign of a willingness to compromise on their demands.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called the meeting “very productive,” while cautioning that a breakthrough on stopping the war will take time.

The Abu Dhabi talks are being held against the backdrop of continued fighting on the front line, where little territory has changed hands this year.

Meanwhile, both countries are battering each other with long-range missiles and drones.

Overnight, Russia struck the southern Zaporizhzhia region and the eastern city of Kharkiv, wounding seven civilians and damaging property.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said that air defenses downed 627 Ukrainian drones overnight, 150 of them over the region around St. Petersburg, according to the regional Gov. Alexander Drozdenko.

He said that the drones started a fire at the port of Ust-Luga, one of the main facilities for Russian oil exports, injuring three workers.

Indonesia’s vice president resigns as his eligibility and academic credentials are questioned



JAKARTA

Indonesia’s vice president resigned Thursday as questions grew over his eligibility for the office after recent court rulings disputed his educational credentials.

Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the 39-year-old son of former President Joko Widodo, submitted his resignation to the leadership of the People’s Consultative Assembly, the country’s highest legislative body, at the parliament building in the capital, Jakarta.

Raka did not comment as he left the meeting.

The academic credentials investigation was apparently not related to investigations into allegations that top police officials had been involved in wiretapping targeting the president.

Under Indonesia’s Constitution, a vice presidential vacancy does not trigger a new election. The office remains vacant until the People’s Consultative Assembly elects a replacement from two candidates nominated by the president within 60 days.

Raka had offered to resign Tuesday during a meeting with President Prabowo Subianto, saying he wanted to avoid a prolonged political controversy. But a Cabinet minister said the president urged Raka at the time to defend himself and it wasn’t clear if he accepted the resignation offer.

The Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court ruled last month that the documents Raka submitted regarding his overseas education didn’t meet election requirements.

A subsequent petition, submitted Wednesday to the House leadership by 120 lawmakers from eight political parties, began a parliamentary process that could lead to his impeachment.

Under Indonesian law, House leaders must establish a special committee to examine whether Raka has violated the constitution by serving as vice president, despite allegedly failing to meet election requirements. If lawmakers determine there is sufficient basis for the accusation, the House must ask the Constitutional Court to rule on whether a constitutional violation has occurred.

Assam Artisan Brings Bangalipara's Cane Craft to the Big Screen Through 'Ramayana'





Assam's traditional cane craftsmanship has found an unexpected place in the world of Bollywood, with the skills of an artisan from Bangalipara village in Jania coming into the spotlight through Nitesh Tiwari's recently released film Ramayana: Rise of a Legend.

While the film has attracted considerable attention for its scale, cast and box-office performance, it has also brought recognition to a group of traditional craftsmen whose contribution has remained largely outside the public gaze. Among them is Jainal Abedin, a cane artisan from Assam who has spent nearly 35 years working with the material and has now taken his craft into the world of film costume production.

Abedin was entrusted with creating cane-based costumes and other items intended for the characters of Ram and Lakshman. The assignment was a significant departure from his regular work, as he had never before undertaken a project of this nature for a major film production.

For someone who had spent decades working with cane, the challenge was not simply to make another decorative or utility item. It was about adapting a traditional material to meet the specific requirements of a cinematic production, where appearance, flexibility, finishing and the overall design have to match the vision of the creative team.

The opportunity came when representatives of the film's production team contacted Abedin and showed him the designs and samples of the items they wanted. Although he had extensive experience in cane craftsmanship, the proposed assignment was unfamiliar.

"When they contacted us, they showed us the things they wanted. At first, we said that we had not tried something like this before, but we would give it a try," Abedin recalled.

The initial response reflected both the uncertainty and willingness to experiment that accompanied the project. Making traditional cane products was familiar territory for him, but translating a design intended for a film character into a wearable costume required a different approach.

From bamboo cane to an innovative material combination

The first major assignment involved making a jacket. Abedin initially attempted to create it using bamboo cane, relying on the material and techniques he had worked with for years.

However, the production team found the finished piece too hard for its intended use. The jacket did not meet the flexibility requirements of the design, prompting the team to suggest a modification in the material.

According to Abedin, the production team proposed using a plastic material imported from China, which could be combined with bamboo cane to achieve the required finish and flexibility.

The material was subsequently sent to him, and he began experimenting with the combination. After several adjustments to the approach, he managed to produce a jacket that satisfied the production team's expectations.

"When they found it hard, they said there was a plastic material that comes from China. I agreed, and they sent it to us. After receiving it, we made the jacket using a mixture of plastic and bamboo cane. That was successful," he said.

The successful completion of the first sample proved to be an important turning point. It established that the traditional craftsmanship Abedin had practised for decades could be adapted to an entirely different creative requirement.

It also opened the way for further assignments from the production team.

Rather than restricting the work to a single item, the team began sending additional designs and specifications. Abedin and his associates were then required to reproduce the designs using their craftsmanship, while making necessary adjustments to suit the material and the intended purpose.

The experience demanded a combination of traditional knowledge and experimentation. The artisans had to understand the designs, select suitable materials and work within the production team's requirements. The challenge was made more demanding by the short notice often given for completing individual orders.

Thirty to 35 items prepared for the film

The assignment eventually involved around 30 to 35 items. However, the workload was not always predictable.

Abedin said the production team sometimes placed orders for five items in a single day, while on other occasions it required only one piece, which too had to be delivered immediately.

"We made around 30–35 items for them. We could not keep track of the exact number. Sometimes they wanted five items in a day, and sometimes they would order just one. Even that one had to be made immediately," he said.

Such requirements meant that the artisans had to remain prepared to work according to the production schedule. Unlike conventional craft orders, where artisans generally have greater control over the pace of production, film-related assignments can involve changing designs, urgent requirements and strict timelines.

The work also required coordination among several craftsmen. Abedin was assisted by a group of artisans from Alipur in West Bengal, including Nagen Biswas, Nandalal Das, Mintu Debnath, Ramen Debnath and Shahidul Haque.

Together, they worked on the cane-based costumes and other accessories intended for Ram and Lakshman. Their collaboration brought together skills and experience from two regions with established traditions of working with cane and related materials.

The project therefore became a collaborative effort rather than an individual assignment. Each design had to be translated into a finished product while maintaining consistency with the requirements communicated by the production team.

For Abedin, who had spent most of his working life handling cane, the experience also offered an opportunity to explore the possibilities of his craft beyond its conventional applications.

A new platform for traditional craftsmanship

Assam has a long association with bamboo and cane craftsmanship. These materials have traditionally been used to produce a wide range of household, agricultural, decorative and utility products. From baskets and storage containers to furniture, screens and ornamental objects, cane and bamboo have remained an integral part of the state's craft traditions.

In rural areas, the skills associated with these materials have often been passed down through generations. For many artisans, the craft is not merely an occupation but a livelihood built around years of practice, familiarity with local materials and an understanding of techniques developed through experience.

However, traditional artisans frequently face difficulties in expanding their markets. Limited access to modern tools, inadequate financial support, irregular demand and the absence of organised marketing channels can restrict the commercial potential of their work.

Abedin's association with Ramayana: Rise of a Legend offers an example of how such skills can find opportunities in sectors that are not traditionally associated with handicrafts.

The film industry regularly requires specialised costumes, accessories, props and decorative elements to recreate particular settings and visual identities. While large production houses often depend on established design teams and specialised manufacturing units, traditional artisans can also contribute when their skills are matched with the requirements of a project.

The Bangalipara artisan's experience illustrates how a traditional material such as cane can be adapted to meet contemporary creative needs. It also demonstrates that craftsmanship developed in small villages can have applications in large commercial productions.

The importance of the assignment lies not only in the visibility it has brought to Abedin but also in the possibilities it highlights for other artisans in Assam.

Recognition after nearly 35 years of work

Despite working with cane for nearly three-and-a-half decades, Abedin said he had continued his craft without government assistance.

His involvement in the film has now brought his work into a much wider arena. For an artisan whose professional life has largely revolved around traditional craftsmanship, being associated with a major cinematic production represents a different kind of recognition.

The project has also drawn attention to Bangalipara, a village in Jania whose traditional skills have now found a connection with a film reaching audiences across the country and beyond.However, the larger question remains whether such recognition can translate into sustained opportunities for traditional artisans.

A single film assignment can provide exposure, but the long-term growth of the craft depends on regular orders, access to markets, institutional support and opportunities to work with designers and production houses.

Artisans also need assistance in improving product finishing, accessing better tools and materials, developing new designs and protecting the traditional knowledge associated with their work. Training and exposure to contemporary markets could help craftsmen adapt their skills without losing the identity of their traditional practices.

In this context, Abedin's experience could serve as an example of how local craftsmanship can be connected with newer commercial opportunities. It also underlines the need to identify and support artisans whose work has the potential to reach markets beyond their immediate surroundings.

A film's commercial success adds to the spotlight

The film has meanwhile registered a strong box-office performance, adding to the visibility of the production and, indirectly, the artisans associated with it.

According to recent media reports, Ramayana: Rise of a Legend collected Rs 440.45 crore net in India, while its domestic gross collection stood at Rs 526.50 crore. Its worldwide gross reportedly reached Rs 823.50 crore by the sixth day of its release.

With the film attracting attention on a national scale, the contribution of artisans such as Abedin provides another dimension to its production story.

While actors, directors and other prominent members of the filmmaking team generally receive public recognition, the work of craftsmen involved in creating costumes and accessories often remains behind the scenes. Their contribution, nevertheless, is essential to translating creative concepts into physical objects that become part of the film's visual presentation.

For Abedin and his collaborators, the experience has been an opportunity to demonstrate that traditional craftsmanship can move beyond familiar boundaries.The journey from a cane workshop in Bangalipara to a major film production also reflects the changing possibilities for rural artisans. A skill developed over decades, often practised away from the attention of mainstream markets, can find relevance in an entirely different industry when given the right opportunity.

For Assam, the connection is significant. The state's bamboo and cane traditions are widely recognised as part of its cultural and economic heritage, but their potential remains far from fully explored.

Abedin's work for Ramayana: Rise of a Legend has brought that potential into sharper focus. More than a Bollywood association, it is a reminder that traditional skills from Assam's villages can find a place on much larger platforms, provided artisans receive opportunities to innovate, collaborate and reach new markets.

Try and wait 24 hours before getting mad and reacting. If it doesn't bother you by then, it probably wasn't important enough to get mad over.



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