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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 930 | SILCHAR THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

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18 Years After 26/11, India Better Equipped to Counter Security Threats: Himanta Biswa Sarma

Assam Chief Minister pays tribute to victims of the Mumbai terror attacks, remembers security personnel who laid down their lives

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said India had made significant progress in strengthening its national security framework since the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, asserting that the country was now better equipped to tackle both external and internal threats.

Marking the 18th anniversary of the November 26, 2008, attacks, Sarma described the incident as a "Black Day" in India's history and paid tribute to those who lost their lives in the tragedy. He also remembered the security personnel who were killed while fighting the terrorists.

In a social media post, the Chief Minister said India had



come a long way in safeguarding its national security since the attacks and remained committed to taking firm action against forces threatening the country's security.

The anniversary marks one of the darkest chapters in India's fight against terrorism. Between November 26 and 29, 2008, ten terrorists belonging to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba carried out coordinated attacks at several locations across Mumbai, including the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Oberoi Trident, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus and Nariman House.The four-day assault left 175 people dead, including nine terrorists, while more than 300 others were injured. The siege ended after security forces, including the National Security Guard (NSG), launched Operation Black Tornado to neutralise the attackers.The attacks exposed serious gaps in India's intelligence coordination, counter-terrorism preparedness and coastal security arrangements, prompting a series of reforms in the country's security architecture. Since then, India has undertaken measures to strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms, improve specialised counter-terrorism capabilities and tighten surveillance along its coastal borders.

Sarma's remarks come as the country observes the anniversary by remembering the victims and security personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice during the attacks, while renewing the call for vigilance against terrorism.

PERSPECTIVE

Be happy with what you have, while working for what you want.

Manipur HC Seeks Government Response on Public Access to Deputy CM's Office

IMPHAL

The Manipur High Court has sought the state government's response to a petition demanding effective administrative functioning and public access to the office of Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen at the Civil Secretariat in Imphal.

The petition came up for hearing on November 23 before Justice A. Guneshwar Sharma, who directed the petitioner to serve a notice on the Deputy Chief Minister through Speed Post. The court has fixed January 15 for the next hearing.

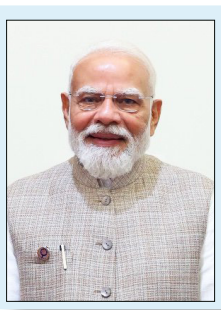
Additional Advocate General S. Chittaranjan and counsel A. Priyokumar, appearing for the state authorities, accepted the notice and sought three weeks to file a counter-affidavit.

The writ petition, filed under Article 226 of the Constitution by 59-year-old Ngatangmi Hungyo of Khambi village in Ukhrul district, alleges that key departments under Kipgen's charge have remained largely inaccessible and lack effective administrative supervision.The departments specifically mentioned in the petition are Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, and Tribal Affairs and Hills.

Hungyo, an active member of the Tangkhul Elders Forum in Imphal, approached the court after the authorities allegedly failed to act on a representation submitted on October 5, followed by a legal notice served on November 7.

Clarifying the scope of the petition, the petitioner's counsel, Meihoubam Rakesh, said the plea does not question the Deputy Chief Minister's constitutional position, personal circumstances or security arrangements. It also does not seek her removal or any change in her ministerial responsibilities.

WHO SAID WHAT



The Barak Valley's growth story is all set to soar to new heights!
The Cabinet has approved the development of a Greenfield Airport at Doloo, Silchar.
5 exciting things about this project:
Capability of handling large aircraft.
A modern terminal capable of handling heavy passenger traffic during peak hours.
Enhanced air connectivity for Southern Assam and adjoining states.
A major boost to trade, tea and agro-based industries.
New opportunities in tourism, investment and employment.

~ Narendra Modi, PM

Rs 2,014-crore airport puts Barak Valley on Northeast's aviation map

SILCHAR

Barak Valley's long-pending demand for improved air connectivity received a major boost on Wednesday as the Union Cabinet approved the Rs 2,014-crore greenfield airport project at Doloo in Cachar district, raising expectations of a wider economic transformation in southern Assam.

The project is being viewed as more than an expansion of passenger aviation infrastructure, with its proposed cargo facilities, employment potential and connectivity to neighbouring northeastern states expected to play a significant role in the region's economic development.

Welcoming the Cabinet decision, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and described the approval as another major step towards strengthening connectivity in the Northeast.Sarma pointed out that the number of operational airports in the region had increased from nine in 2014 to 16. Referring to the revival of Rupsi Airport and the new terminal at Guwahati, he described the Silchar project as Assam's next major aviation milestone.Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal also welcomed the approval, calling it a defining moment for the state's aviation infrastructure and a new gateway for southern Assam.Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev termed the sanction a "dream come true" for Barak Valley, where inadequate air connectivity has long been cited as a constraint on trade, tourism and investment.Cabinet Minister Kaushik Rai credited the Chief Minister's sustained efforts since 2022, particularly the progress made in land acquisition and preparatory work, for moving the project towards approval.

Rai said the airport should be considered alongside other major infrastructure initiatives, including broad-gauge railway connectivity, the East-West Corridor and the proposed Panchgram-Barapani high-speed corridor.He said the combined impact of these projects could substantially improve passenger and freight movement while creating fresh opportunities for investment, tourism and commercial activity.Silchar MLA Rajdeep Roy highlighted the potential benefits for local businesses, particularly through improved cargo connectivity. Better air freight facilities could help reduce transportation costs and enable producers and traders in the region to reach markets beyond southern Assam, he said.Roy also referred to the Chief Minister's target of handling one million passengers annually, adding that the project could generate employment for local youth and skilled professionals. The airport is expected to serve not only Cachar and the wider Barak Valley but also neighbouring Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura, giving it significance beyond Assam's geographical boundaries.

To be developed by the Airports Authority of India, the proposed facility will have a 2,705-metre runway designed to accommodate Airbus A320 aircraft. The 12,351-square-metre terminal building will have a peak-hour passenger handling capacity of 800 and an annual capacity exceeding one million passengers. Its apron will be capable of accommodating six A320 aircraft.The project process began on May 12, 2022, when the Cachar district administration initiated land acquisition at Doloo tea estate. The exercise involved large-scale land clearance and subsequent administrative and statutory procedures.Meanwhile, the Cabinet approval has triggered political celebrations in the district. The BJP's Cachar unit has announced a gratitude rally in Silchar on Thursday, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for the clearance.While the Cabinet nod marks a crucial step forward, the project's eventual impact on Barak Valley will depend on timely execution and the development of supporting road, rail and logistics infrastructure.

Manipur Steps Up Anti-Poppy Drive, Destroys 160 Acres of Illegal Cultivation

IMPHAL

Manipur intensified its crackdown on illegal poppy cultivation, with security forces destroying around 160 acres of plantations across Kangpokpi and Ukhrul districts on November 25. In a parallel initiative, Churachandpur District Police distributed potato seedlings to 11 families to encourage a shift towards legal agricultural activities.

In Kangpokpi, a joint team comprising district police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Forest Department, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and officials from the SDO's office, Saitu-Gamphazol, carried out a destruction operation in the hill ranges of K Lhangnom village under the Koubru Reserve Forest area.

The operation resulted in the destruction of approximately 20 acres of poppy plantations. Two huts allegedly used for illegal cultivation were also burnt, while herbicides and equipment used for farming were destroyed. Security personnel collected three poppy pods for examination.A case has been registered at Gamnom-Sapormeina Police Station, and further investigation is underway. In Ukhrul district, another joint operation involving personnel of 4 MAHAR, 8 BIHAR, the 132nd and 164th Battalions of the Border Security Force (BSF), the 34th Battalion of the CRPF, NCB, Narcotics and Affairs of Border (NAB) and Litan Police Station led to the destruction of around 20 acres of illegal poppy cultivation. Three huts were also destroyed during the operation.

In a separate drive, Ukhrul District Police, Assam Rifles and the Forest Department jointly cleared another 120 acres of poppy plantations across the Phalee, Tora and Champhung hill ranges under Lungchon Maiphai Police Station.

While enforcement operations continued in the hill districts, Churachandpur Police focused on providing farmers with an alternative to illicit cultivation.

Manipur CM Urges 36 Communities to Put Unity Above Differences on Constitution Day



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Thursday appealed to people belonging to the state's 36 communities to strengthen unity, mutual understanding and social harmony, invoking the values of the Indian Constitution on the occasion of Constitution Day.

Addressing the Constitution Day (Samvidhan Diwas) programme at the Civil Secretariat in Mantripukhri, Imphal, the Chief Minister stressed the need to rise above community differences and uphold a shared national identity.

He said people should identify themselves first as Indians and then as Manipuris, emphasising that unity and mutual respect were essential for maintaining harmony in the diverse state.

Referring to the spirit of the Constitution's Preamble, Khemchand Singh urged all communities to work together in promoting love, understanding and peaceful coexistence.

During the programme, the Chief Minister administered the pledge based on the Preamble and signed a printed copy of the constitutional document.

The observance was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, Tourism Minister Khuraijam Loken Singh, the Advocate General, several MLAs, Chief Secretary, senior administrative officers and other government officials.

Constitution Day is observed every year on November 26 to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly in 1949. The occasion highlights the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity that form the foundation of India's constitutional framework.

The Chief Minister's appeal comes amid the continuing need to rebuild trust and strengthen relations among Manipur's diverse communities.

Rising Food Costs Put Assam Households Under Pressure as Wholesale Prices Surge

Rice, pulses, onions and edible oils record substantial year-on-year increases; Akhil Gogoi alleges illegal collections and syndicate networks are adding to the burden on consumers

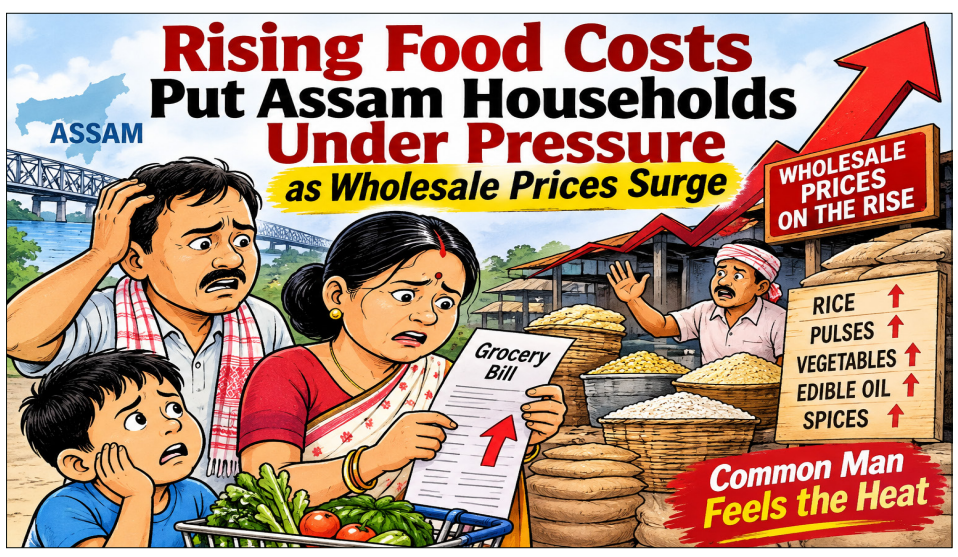
GUWAHATI

The rising cost of everyday food items is adding to the financial strain on households across Assam, with wholesale prices of several essential commodities registering significant increases over the past year. Raijor Dal president Akhil Gogoi has blamed alleged illegal collections, syndicate networks and the government's failure to check market practices for the situation.

A comparative price statement released by the Kamrup Chamber of Commerce, tracking wholesale rates between November 13, 2025, and November 20, 2026, indicates substantial increases in several commonly consumed commodities, particularly onions, tur dal and different varieties of rice.

Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, Gogoi alleged that the price escalation was affecting ordinary consumers and questioned whether Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was adequately aware of the economic difficulties faced by households.

"The price of a packet of rice has gone up by Rs 500, while the price of cooking oil has increased by Rs 60 per litre. This government is pushing the people of Assam towards an alarming economic crisis," he said.



Gogoi also alleged that illegal syndicates were collecting an unofficial 'goon tax' on commodities entering and leaving Assam, adding to transportation costs and pushing market prices upwards.

He accused certain political and administrative figures of being associated with these alleged collection networks and claimed that a new syndicate structure was being prepared in Guwahati. He said he would disclose further details on the issue on Thursday.

The chamber's comparative figures provide an indication of the pressure building in the wholesale market.Fine rice, which was selling between Rs 3,000 and Rs 5,500 per quintal in November 2025, is now priced between Rs 3,550 and Rs 8,000. Indigenous rice has also become costlier, with prices rising from Rs 3,300-Rs 3,700 to Rs 3,400-Rs 4,800 per quintal.The increase in pulses has been particularly notable. Tur dal, previously priced between Rs 8,400 and Rs 10,100 per quintal, is now selling at Rs 12,000-Rs 14,000. Small-grain masoor dal has increased from Rs 9,500-Rs 11,500 to Rs 11,800-Rs 12,400 per quintal.Moong dal is currently priced between Rs 9,900 and Rs 11,000 per quintal, compared with Rs 8,800-Rs 11,000 a year ago.Onions have witnessed one of the steepest increases. Indore onions, sold in 50-kg bags, have risen from Rs 2,000-Rs 2,100 in November 2025 to Rs 4,400-Rs 4,800 in November 2026.Edible oils have also recorded increases across categories. Mustard oil, sold in 15-litre tins, has risen from Rs 2,800-Rs 2,850 to Rs 2,950-Rs 3,350. Refined oil has increased from Rs 2,150-Rs 2,180 to Rs 2,350-Rs 2,400 per 15-litre tin. Soybean refined oil now costs Rs 2,400-Rs 2,600 per 15-litre tin, against Rs 2,100-Rs 2,250 previously. Rice bran refined oil has increased from Rs 1,840-Rs 1,900 to Rs 2,200-Rs 2,230 per 13-litre tin.

Vanaspati ghee prices have also moved upwards, rising from Rs 1,700-Rs 1,750 to Rs 1,980-Rs 2,050 per 15-kg tin. Small-grain sugar is currently selling between Rs 5,850 and Rs 6,000 per quintal in the wholesale market.The comparative statement was issued by the Kamrup Chamber of Commerce from its Fancy Bazar office and signed by its general secretary, Nirmal Kumar Jain.Although wholesale rates do not always translate directly into equivalent retail increases, higher procurement and transportation costs can eventually feed into consumer prices.

For households, the impact is particularly significant because rice, pulses, onions and cooking oil form a substantial part of everyday food expenditure. Any sustained increase in these items leaves families with less room in their monthly budgets for other necessities.Gogoi's allegations have brought the focus back to the functioning of Assam's commodity supply chains and the need for effective monitoring of transportation costs, market intermediaries and alleged illegal collections. The government's response to his latest charges was not available at the time of publication.

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COP31 FAILURE

The collapse of the Antalya climate summit exposes the growing gap between global climate commitments and political realities. Unless governments confront fossil fuel dependence and resolve the question of climate finance, international climate diplomacy risks becoming an exercise in postponing action.

The failure of the COP31 climate summit in Antalya, Turkey, should be viewed as more than another diplomatic setback. It is a reflection of a deeper crisis in global climate governance, where political calculations, economic interests and competing national priorities continue to take precedence over the urgency of environmental action.

After two weeks of negotiations and nearly 48 hours of extended discussions, participating countries failed to reach an overarching agreement. The inability to include an explicit reference to coal, oil and gas in the proposed text was particularly revealing. Even when the consequences of fossil fuel consumption are increasingly visible across the world, governments remain reluctant to confront the principal source of the problem.

This raises an uncomfortable question: what purpose do international climate summits serve if the world's governments cannot agree to identify, let alone address, the central cause of global warming?

The disagreement at Antalya was not merely about terminology. It reflected the continuing influence of fossil fuel-dependent economies and the reluctance of several countries to accept commitments that could affect their energy security, industrial growth and economic interests. The emphasis on carbon capture technologies further demonstrated how the debate is increasingly shifting towards managing emissions rather than decisively reducing dependence on the fuels that produce them.

Carbon capture has a legitimate role in climate policy, particularly in sectors where emissions are difficult to eliminate. But technological optimism cannot become a convenient justification for extending the life of fossil fuel industries. The transition to cleaner energy requires investment, innovation and realistic timelines, but it also demands political willingness to reduce fossil fuel dependence.

Equally troubling is the continuing failure to resolve the question of climate finance. Developing countries are expected to expand renewable energy, modernise infrastructure, protect vulnerable populations and strengthen their resilience against climate disasters. Yet the financial support required to meet these obligations remains a contentious issue.

The historical dimension of this dispute cannot be ignored. Developed economies built much of their industrial wealth through decades of fossil fuel consumption. It is therefore difficult to justify demanding equally ambitious transitions from developing countries without recognising the unequal responsibilities and capacities involved.

Climate action cannot become an additional economic burden on nations that are still struggling to provide basic energy access, employment and infrastructure to their populations. Financial assistance, technology transfer and affordable access to clean energy are not acts of charity. They are essential elements of an equitable global climate agreement.

The developed world must also recognise that its credibility depends on delivering financial commitments rather than repeatedly announcing ambitious targets. Developing countries, for their part, must ensure that climate assistance is transparently utilised and that domestic policies support a genuine transition rather than perpetuating dependence on carbon-intensive growth.

The failure of COP31 also exposes the limitations of the United Nations' consensus-based negotiation system. Giving every country a voice is fundamental to multilateral cooperation. However, when consensus becomes a mechanism through which individual governments can dilute collective ambition, the process loses much of its effectiveness.

A global climate agreement cannot satisfy every national economic interest. It must, however, establish a framework in which the survival and security of vulnerable populations receive greater consideration than the short-term commercial interests of powerful industries.

The consequences of diplomatic indecision are already visible. Rising temperatures, retreating glaciers, warming oceans and increasingly destructive weather events are placing enormous pressure on communities and economies. For countries such as India, where millions remain vulnerable to floods, heatwaves, changing rainfall patterns and agricultural uncertainty, climate change is not a distant environmental concern. It is a development and livelihood challenge.

The ambition of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. Every delay in reducing emissions makes the task more complicated and expensive. Yet governments continue to approach climate negotiations as though another summit can always compensate for the failures of the previous one.

COP31 should serve as a warning that the world is running out of time for diplomatic exercises that produce limited results. Climate negotiations must move beyond carefully worded declarations and confront the difficult questions of fossil fuel dependence, historical responsibility, financial accountability and enforceable commitments.

The responsibility does not rest with developing countries alone, nor can developed nations continue to evade their obligations by invoking domestic political difficulties. A meaningful transition requires shared responsibility, but shared responsibility must not be confused with equal responsibility.The next climate summit must deliver more than another promise to act. It must establish a credible pathway for reducing fossil fuel dependence, ensure predictable financial support for vulnerable economies and strengthen the ability of international institutions to turn commitments into action.The climate crisis does not recognise national boundaries, diplomatic disagreements or negotiating deadlines. Governments may disagree over the wording of an agreement, but nature will not wait for them to reach a consensus.

The failure of COP31 is therefore not simply the failure of one conference. It is a warning about the consequences of a world that knows what needs to be done but remains unwilling to make the choices necessary to do it.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Nobody is going to pour truth into your brain. It's something you have to find out for yourself."
~ Noam Chomsky

Constitution Day: From constitutional promises to the challenge of equal rights



NARENDRA MODI

India marks Constitution Day on November 26, commemorating the adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, an occasion that also renews the debate over how effectively its founding principles have translated into the everyday lives of citizens.

Paying tribute to the architects of the Constitution, including Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr B.R. Ambedkar and other members of the Constituent Assembly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's constitutional framework drew upon the country's civilisational traditions while establishing the foundations of a modern democratic republic.

The government decided in 2015 to observe November 26 as Constitution Day, with the stated objective of taking constitutional values beyond Parliament and the courts and connecting younger generations with the country's democratic foundations.

In his Constitution Day message, Modi described the Constitution as an instrument that enables individuals to overcome the limitations imposed by their social and economic circumstances. Recalling his own childhood in a modest family, he said the opportunity to serve as Prime Minister demonstrated the transformative potential of the constitutional system.

He particularly highlighted the Constitution's commitment to social and economic justice, referring to constitutional scholar Granville Austin's description of the document as primarily a social document.

Welfare programmes and the promise of social justice

The Prime Minister linked the constitutional vision of equality and dignity with several government welfare initiatives, arguing that access to housing, healthcare, clean cooking fuel, credit and digital services has helped translate constitutional principles into practical benefits.

He cited the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana and Ayushman Bharat as examples of programmes intended to improve living conditions among economically vulnerable families. He also referred to the MUDRA scheme and PM-SVANidhi, which provide credit facilities to small entrepreneurs and street vendors.

Digital platforms, particularly the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), were presented as another example of how technology has expanded access to financial services and economic opportunities.

Referring to poverty reduction, Modi cited a recent World Bank report which, according to him, indicated that nearly 50 crore Indians had moved out of poverty.

He argued that the constitutional promise of dignity becomes meaningful when families gain access to permanent housing, healthcare and livelihood opportunities that were previously beyond their reach.

Constitutional amendments and institutional reforms

The Prime Minister also defended several constitutional amendments introduced during the past decade, describing them as measures aimed at addressing long-standing social and economic concerns.

He referred to the 101st Constitutional Amendment, which introduced the Goods and Services Tax, and the 102nd Amendment, which granted constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.

The 103rd Amendment, providing 10 per cent reservation for Economically Weaker Sections among communities outside the existing reservation framework, was also highlighted as an important step towards addressing economic disadvantage.

Modi further pointed to the availability of the Constitution in all 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule, describing the initiative as an effort to make the country's supreme legal document more accessible to ordinary citizens.

Another major reform cited was the replacement of colonial-era criminal laws with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The Prime Minister said the new legislation represented a shift from a punishment-oriented colonial system towards a justice-centred approach.

Emergency and the debate over constitutional history

A substantial part of the Prime Minister's message focused on what he described as historical instances of constitutional misuse.

Referring to the First Constitutional Amendment of 1951, he questioned the restrictions placed on fundamental freedoms and argued that the amendment was introduced by the government before the country's first general election.

He also recalled the 42nd Amendment, passed during the Emergency in 1976, which altered the balance between constitutional institutions and restricted the scope of judicial review. He urged younger generations to study the 38th and 39th Amendments as well.

The repeated invocation of Article 356 to dismiss elected state governments was another issue raised by Modi. He accused the Congress of having frequently used the provision to remove state governments, describing it as an example of the misuse of constitutional authority.

The Prime Minister also referred to Articles 370 and 35A, arguing that their continuation had prevented the full application of the Constitution in Jammu and Kashmir and restricted the rights of several disadvantaged communities and women. He described their removal in 2019 as the correction of a historical injustice.

Women, tribal communities and political accountability

Highlighting the contribution of women members of the Constituent Assembly, Modi expressed concern over the failure to pass legislation intended to strengthen women's representation in legislative bodies earlier this year.

He assured women that the government remained committed to securing greater political representation for them.

He also linked the campaign against Naxalism with the restoration of constitutional rights in tribal and remote areas, arguing that armed extremism had prevented economically disadvantaged communities from exercising their democratic freedoms.

At the same time, his remarks included sharp criticism of the principal Opposition party over its position on reservation policies and women's representation. He alleged that attempts to introduce religion-based reservation would undermine the constitutional framework and accused the Opposition of obstructing legislative processes.

These political observations formed a significant part of the message, placing the debate over constitutional values alongside the continuing contest between the ruling party and the Opposition.

Beyond celebration, the test of constitutional democracy

Constitution Day is not merely an occasion to remember the work of the Constituent Assembly. It is also an opportunity to examine whether the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity are being upheld in practice.

The Constitution provides a framework for both governance and accountability. Its strength lies not only in the powers it grants to elected governments but also in the safeguards it establishes for individual freedoms, institutional independence and the rights of minorities and disadvantaged communities.

The role of the Opposition, the independence of constitutional institutions, the protection of fundamental rights and the fair implementation of welfare policies are equally important to the functioning of a healthy democracy.

As India moves towards the ambition of Viksit Bharat by 2047, Modi called for placing national interest above political considerations and emphasising Kartavya, or civic duties, alongside constitutional rights. He cited initiatives such as Swachh Bharat, water conservation and environmental protection as examples of collective responsibility.

Ultimately, the success of the Constitution cannot be measured solely through amendments, government schemes or political declarations. Its real test lies in whether every citizen, irrespective of caste, religion, language, gender or economic background, enjoys equal rights, dignity and opportunities.

Seventy-seven years after its adoption, that remains the central promise of the Indian Constitution - and an ongoing responsibility of the Republic.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

26th November is Constitution Day!
Every Indian should know the history of the journey of the Constitution of India.
For me, Babasaheb Dr BR Ambedkar is equivalent to a god. I also pay my tributes to the founding members of our Constitution.
~ Kiren Rijiju, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs



Highway Access, Naga-Kuki Tensions in Focus as Rio Meets Manipur CM

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio's Imphal visit comes amid renewed efforts to ease tensions between Naga and Kuki communities, with uninterrupted movement along a key inter-state highway emerging as a major concern.

IMPHAL

Ensuring uninterrupted movement along the Imphal-Dimapur highway and strengthening coordination between Manipur and Nagaland featured prominently in discussions between Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and his Manipur counterpart Yumnam Khemchand Singh during a meeting in Imphal on Wednesday.

The meeting, held at the Chief Minister's Bungalow in Babupara, took place against the backdrop of renewed efforts by church leaders and civil society representatives to explore reconciliation between the Naga and Kuki communities in Manipur. The two leaders discussed peace, development, inter-state relations and cooperation, although no official statement directly linked their meeting to the ongoing reconciliation initiatives. According to a statement from the Manipur Chief Minister's Secretariat, both leaders emphasised the importance of maintaining smooth vehicular movement along the Imphal-Dimapur highway, a crucial transport corridor connecting the two neighbouring states.

The highway is strategically important for the movement of people, essential commodities and commercial traffic. Any disruption to its functioning can have wider implications for Manipur's connectivity with Nagaland and other parts of the Northeast.

Singh subsequently described the interaction as constructive, saying the discussions were aimed at strengthening mutual trust and cooperation between the two states.

Rio also invited the Manipur Chief Minister to attend the 2026 Hornbill Festival, scheduled to take place in Nagaland from December 1 to 10.

Speaking to reporters after arriving in Imphal, Rio said his visit was intended to meet his Manipur counterpart as well as party colleagues and members of the Naga community in the state."The Northeast is part of the same country, and I have my party here in Manipur, along with my Naga friends. So, I've come to visit and also meet my counterpart, the chief minister," he said.Rio, who is also president of the Naga People's Front (NPF), was received at Imphal airport by NPF Manipur unit president and MLA Awangbow Newmai, along with party legislators, leaders and supporters. Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho and Newmai were also present during the meeting.

During his interaction with the media, Rio was asked about the NPF Manipur unit's demand for the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen over her husband's alleged involvement in the ethnic conflict involving the Naga and Kuki communities.

Describing such demands as a normal feature of political organisations, Rio said party members often seek the resignation of their leaders when they are dissatisfied with the handling of particular issues.

His remarks came amid political unease within the NPF's Manipur unit over the controversy surrounding Kipgen.

Rio arrived in Imphal from New Delhi at around 10 am and departed for Kohima by helicopter at approximately 2 pm, according to the official release.

His visit coincided with renewed attempts by church leaders and civil society representatives to explore the possibility of a Christmas truce between the Kuki and Naga communities. However, whether the meeting between the two chief ministers will contribute directly to the reconciliation process remains unclear.

Manipur illicit liquor tragedy claims 20 lives; nine arrested, probe widened across districts

IMPHAL

The death toll in Manipur's suspected spurious liquor tragedy has climbed to 20 after a 35-year-old man from Kakching district died at the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Imphal on Wednesday, November 25.

The deceased has been identified as Mayanglambam Bikram, a resident of Kakching Makha Leikai. His death has added to the mounting casualties linked to the consumption of suspected illicit liquor in Chandel and Kakching districts.

According to family members, Bikram was taken to RIMS at around 10 am on Wednesday after complaining of abdominal pain, dizziness and nausea. He had reportedly consumed locally brewed liquor on Sunday and started experiencing health complications the following day.

His condition subsequently deteriorated, prompting his family to rush him to the hospital. He was declared brought dead, according to the report.With the latest death, the toll has reached 20, including 17 victims from Chandel district and three from Kakching district. Meanwhile, police have arrested nine people, including two women, in connection with the incident. They were produced before a court and subsequently remanded to six days of police custody.

The investigation is continuing as authorities seek to establish the source and composition of the suspected contaminated liquor.

Manipur government spokesperson Sapam Ranjan said that 813 patients had been discharged, while 1,236 people had undergone screening in connection with the incident.

Samples of the suspected liquor have been sent to the National Food Laboratory (NFL) in Kolkata for testing. Additional samples have also been forwarded to the Forensic Science Laboratory and the State Public Health Laboratory in Imphal to determine their composition.

In response to the tragedy, the State Excise Department has intensified enforcement operations against illicit liquor across the districts. More than 5,000 litres of illegal liquor have reportedly been seized during the crackdown.

Silchar ATM break-in attempt leads to arrest; police probe possible links to earlier incidents



SILCHAR

Silchar Police have arrested a 33-year-old man while he was allegedly attempting to break into a State Bank of India (SBI) ATM in the Bilpar area late Tuesday night, November 24.

The accused has been identified as Abdul Aziz Laskar, a resident of Thana Road in the Madhurbond area of Silchar. His father has been identified as Lutfur Rahman Laskar.

According to police sources, the arrest could be linked to a series of earlier ATM break-in attempts reported in different parts of the town. Laskar is suspected of attempting to break into an SBI ATM at Ghungoor and a Bank of Baroda ATM at Rangirkhari before the latest incident.

Police said the accused had allegedly managed to escape from both locations, prompting a search for him. He was eventually apprehended at the Bilpar SBI ATM while allegedly attempting another break-in.

Several tools and other materials suspected to have been used in the attempted burglary were also seized during the operation.

Investigators are now examining whether the accused was involved in other similar incidents reported across Silchar and whether the three cases are connected.

Police are continuing their investigation to establish the circumstances surrounding the alleged attempts and identify any possible wider links.

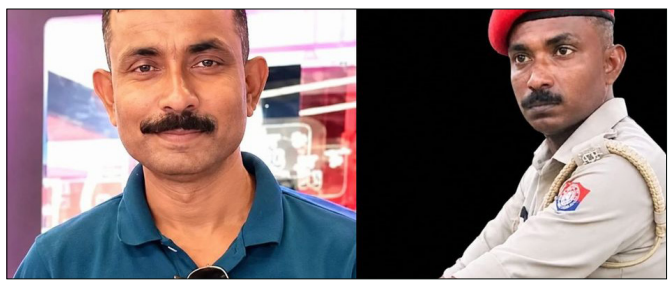
Suspended Cachar cop faces fresh scrutiny over property claims, long posting at Silchar outpost

SILCHAR

The suspension of a Cachar Police lance naik over alleged negligence in a POCSO investigation has brought fresh attention to a series of allegations concerning his property holdings, financial resources and prolonged posting at a police outpost in Silchar.

Hari Pada Roy, who was suspended along with investigating officer Ananta Sinha over alleged lapses in the investigation of a sexual assault case involving a nine-year-old girl, is now facing questions from local residents over the source of his alleged assets.

According to claims made by residents, Roy owns a four-storey building in the Rangirkhari area of Silchar, besides other properties in Tarapur and Ashram Road. They have estimated that the land on which the Rangirkhari building stands was purchased for around Rs 70 lakh.



Residents have questioned how the properties attributed to the police personnel could be reconciled with his reported monthly salary of approximately Rs 70,000. They have demanded an examination of his income, financial transactions and property records to establish whether the allegations have any factual basis.

His posting history has also come under scrutiny. According to the allegations, Roy has been associated with the police department for around 25 years, including an estimated 12 to 13 years at Rangirkhari Town Outpost. Residents claim that although he was transferred elsewhere for a period, he returned to the same outpost within a relatively short time.

The circumstances surrounding his return and the length of his tenure have prompted demands for an inquiry into the transfer and posting records.

Some residents have also alleged that Roy maintained links with local business establishments and may have exercised influence while performing his official duties. These claims, however, remain unverified and have not been independently established.

The controversy gained wider attention following the departmental action against Roy and investigating officer Ananta Sinha in connection with the POCSO case involving the nine-year-old girl. The suspension has since prompted residents to seek a broader examination of allegations surrounding the lance naik.Demanding a high-level and impartial investigation, residents have called for scrutiny of the properties allegedly owned by Roy, the sources of funds used for their acquisition and his prolonged posting at Rangirkhari Town Outpost.

The allegations have not yet been established through any official investigation, and no independent confirmation of the claimed property holdings or financial irregularities is available. The response of the Cachar Police administration to the demands for a wider inquiry is awaited.

Four Months On, Sivasagar Flood Survivors Still Wait for Promised Compensation

GUWAHATI

The aftermath of the July floods continues to weigh on families in Sivasagar, where affected residents are still waiting for promised financial assistance beyond the initial Rs 15,000, four months after the disaster.Raijor Dal president and Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi on Wednesday accused the Assam government of failing to fulfil its compensation commitments, alleging that repeated assurances from Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had not translated into additional relief for the victims.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Gogoi said families whose houses and household belongings were damaged in the July 19 floods had received only the initial assistance, despite the submission of lists of affected people and subsequent assurances of further compensation.

He claimed that the Chief Minister had earlier assured him that the beneficiaries' list would be forwarded to the Central government and that the additional assistance would be released within a day or two."Four months have passed, and the victims are still waiting. Apart from the initial Rs 15,000, not a single penny has been provided as additional compensation," Gogoi alleged.The MLA's latest criticism follows his 14-day satyagraha inside the Assam Legislative Assembly in October, during which he demanded adequate compensation for flood-affected families. He said that even after the protest ended and the government reportedly made fresh assurances, the promised assistance remained pending.

Gogoi also questioned the state's financial position, alleging that mounting liabilities and dependence on open-market borrowings were restricting the government's ability to respond to public needs.

He claimed that Assam's liabilities could approach Rs 3 lakh crore by the end of the present government's tenure and accused the administration of increasingly depending on market loans carrying high interest rates.The financial concerns, he argued, were reflected in the delay in providing assistance to families who had lost essential household possessions and suffered structural damage to their homes.

With winter approaching, Gogoi said many affected households were facing difficulties arranging basic necessities, including beds and other essential items.

Beyond household losses, he drew attention to the continuing damage to public infrastructure in Sivasagar, Demow and Nazira. According to his claims, nearly 80 per cent of roads in the affected areas had suffered damage, while several bridges had been washed away.

He said he had approached ONGC for temporary assistance to address some of the connectivity problems and that damage assessments had already been submitted to the concerned authorities.

However, Gogoi alleged that funds for repair work had not been released despite assurances from the district administration. He also claimed to have contacted the Chief Minister through WhatsApp regarding deteriorating road conditions and the difficulties faced by residents but had received assurances rather than concrete action.

The MLA urged the state government to expedite the pending compensation process, release funds for infrastructure restoration and ensure that flood-affected households in Sivasagar and other districts receive the assistance they were promised.

The allegations have brought renewed attention to the gap between immediate flood relief and longer-term rehabilitation, particularly for families whose losses extend beyond the initial emergency assistance.

ED moves court against retired Assam PWD engineer, wife over alleged Rs 3.08-crore corruption proceeds

GUWAHATI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a prosecution complaint against a retired Assam Public Works Department (PWD) executive engineer and his wife, alleging that they laundered proceeds of corruption to acquire assets worth Rs 3.08 crore beyond their known sources of income.

The complaint was filed on November 21 before the Special Court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Guwahati against Md Chamed Ali and his wife, Parbeen Sultana.

According to the ED, Ali accumulated assets worth approximately Rs 5.09 crore during the check period between January 1, 2001, and February 28, 2021, against known sources of income amounting to around Rs 2.01 crore. The alleged disproportionate assets were calculated at Rs 3.08 crore, representing 152.96 per cent above his known income.

The agency has also attached immovable properties and financial assets valued at approximately Rs 3.06 crore under the PMLA.

The money laundering investigation originated from a case registered by the Chief Minister's Special Vigilance Cell (CMSVC), Assam, under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Following its investigation, the vigilance cell submitted a charge sheet before the Special Judge, Assam, on March 6, 2024.Ali joined the Assam PWD as an assistant engineer in May 1990 and served in several divisions, including Ulukunchi, Sivasagar, Karimganj, Badarpur, Patharkandi and Ratabari. He retired as an executive engineer on February 28, 2021.In its prosecution complaint, the ED alleged that Ali routed suspected proceeds of crime through bank accounts belonging to relatives and deposited unaccounted cash into accounts held by his wife and children to conceal the source of the funds.Investigators further claimed that the money was used to acquire properties and make financial investments. These allegedly included the construction of a three-storey building on Lalmatia Road in Guwahati, purchase of land in his wife's name, and investments in Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) policies and mutual funds.

The agency also alleged that Ali purchased a plot at Jurpara in Guwahati in his wife's name and subsequently constructed a residential building there, from which he retained rental income.

Following his retirement, he allegedly acquired three additional flats in Guwahati in the names of himself, his wife and daughter.

The ED has also accused Parbeen Sultana of assisting her husband in laundering the alleged proceeds of crime. According to the agency, she received substantial amounts from PWD contractors, which were subsequently used to purchase land in her name.

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

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

GUWAHATI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quest!

If removed from the stress of the modern world, the average human would sleep about 10 hours a day.



NATIONAL

'No force can prevent justice to women': PM Modi targets Opposition over defeat of women's quota bill



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a sharp attack on the Opposition over the defeat of the Constitution amendment bill providing 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures, accusing the Congress-led opposition of obstructing women's political empowerment and asserting that no force could prevent the government from delivering justice to women.

In a signed article published in leading newspapers, Modi, without naming the Congress, said the defeat of the bill in Parliament earlier this year was a matter of shame and reflected the opposition party's "disdain for constitutional values".

"I assure the 'Nari Shakti' of India that no force can prevent us from ensuring that justice is done to them," he said.

The prime minister said India's constitutional journey would remain incomplete without acknowledging the contribution of women who helped shape the Constitution. He regretted that legislation intended to ensure adequate representation for women in legislative bodies had been prevented from being passed.

Taking aim at the principal opposition party, Modi said the role of the Opposition in a constitutional democracy was clearly defined, but alleged that the Congress had increasingly become an "Avrodh Paksh" (obstructionist) rather than a "Virodh Paksh" (opposition).

"Disrupting democratic processes is no substitute for discharging constitutional responsibilities," he said.

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, which was linked to delimitation, sought to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha from the existing 543 seats to a maximum of 850, paving the way for the implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies ahead of the 2029 general elections.

The legislation required a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha but was defeated in April after the government failed to secure the requisite numbers.

Modi also accused the largest opposition party of seeking to reduce reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and introduce reservations for Muslims, claiming that such proposals were contrary to the vision of the Constitution's makers, particularly Dr B R Ambedkar.

"It is most appalling that the biggest party in the Opposition wants to reduce OBC reservation and bring Muslim reservations," he said.

In the article, the prime minister also highlighted the government's efforts to eliminate Naxalism, claiming that its successful eradication this year had enabled the poorest sections of society, particularly those in tribal areas, to exercise their constitutional rights without fear.

For decades, Naxalites had used the threat of violence to deny people in several parts of the country their rights under the Constitution, he said.

"Now, we are left only with 'Dimagi Naxals', far removed from the realities of our times but persistent in their efforts to derail our growth trajectory," Modi said, using the term to target those he accused of obstructing the country's development.

He said the elimination of Naxalism was particularly significant as it had restored the ability of the poorest citizens to participate in democratic processes and access their constitutional rights.

25% proposed US tariffs: India rejects excess capacity charge, seeks early trade deal



NEW DELHI

The Union government on Wednesday said India was committed to working closely with the United States towards an early conclusion of a bilateral trade agreement, while rejecting Washington's allegation that the country had structural excess manufacturing capacity.

The remarks came after the US proposed 25 per cent tariffs on imports from India on Wednesday, with a provision to cap them at 17 per cent if the two countries conclude a bilateral trade deal, giving India a slight edge over its Asian competitors.

The proposed tariffs followed investigations by the US Trade Representative (USTR) into 16 economic jurisdictions - China, the European Union, Singapore, Switzerland, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Japan, Norway, Mexico and India - over allegations of structural excess capacity and production in manufacturing sectors.

In a statement, the Commerce Ministry said India had taken note of the Notice of Determination and Request for Comments issued by the USTR in its Section 301 investigation into the acts, policies and practices of 14 economies, including India, relating to structural excess capacity and production in manufacturing sectors.

The notice is currently under examination.

US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"India engaged constructively throughout this investigation. In response to the Notice of Initiation and in subsequent proceedings, the Department of Commerce stated that India does not have structural excess capacity in any sector," the statement said.

It added that India and the US were negotiating a bilateral trade agreement and that New Delhi had maintained that any trade-related concerns should be addressed within the framework of these negotiations.

"Government of India remains committed to working closely with the United States towards the early conclusion of the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement, as announced on 2nd February 2026, and in accordance with the Joint Statement issued on 7th February 2026," it said.

During negotiations on the trade deal, India has been seeking a competitive advantage over its Asian rivals, a demand that Washington has addressed in its proposed tariff structure.

However, it was not immediately clear whether the one-percentage-point differential would address India's concerns.

Commenting on the development, think tank GTRI said the new tariffs proposed by US President Donald Trump under the Section 301 excess-capacity investigations recreated the reciprocal-tariff regime under a new name. It said the move was designed to pressure trading partners into signing one-sided, expensive trade deals rather than genuinely addressing structural industrial overproduction.

By deploying a dual-rate structure - threatening steep baseline tariffs against countries that refuse a pact while offering lower rates to those that sign - Washington reclaims the bargaining power to impose duties at will and extract unilateral concessions, allowing a government to secure tariff relief even if the industrial capacity that prompted the investigation remains unchanged, it said.

"Under the proposal, Indian imports face a 17 per cent tariff if a trade pact is finalized –offering a calculated 1 per cent edge over Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand (18 per cent deal rate) and a 3 per cent edge over Vietnam and China (20 per cent deal rate) - while rising up to 25 per cent without a deal, alongside the risk that an adverse USTR ruling could bring further duties or import quotas," it added.

INTERNATIONAL

US planning to hike tariffs against India, China and 14 other countries: Report



WASHINGTON

The United States is planning to raise tariffs on China, India and 14 other economies as early as this week, arguing that they have supported excess industrial production that has hurt American companies, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer is expected to unveil the findings of an investigation his office launched on March 11 into industrial subsidies in the 16 economies under Section 301 of the 1974 Trade Act, which allows the president to impose tariffs after determining that a country has engaged in unfair trade practices.

Greer has said subsidies and other forms of government support have created excess industrial capacity in the targeted economies, allowing their companies to flood global markets with cheaper goods and undermine US producers, the WSJ reported.

The proposed tariffs are expected to cover most products exported from the targeted economies, although some industrial goods, including steel, aluminium and automobiles, could be excluded as they are already subject to tariffs imposed under separate national security provisions, according to the report.

The final tariff rates remain unclear. However, the levies are likely to be imposed on top of tariffs arising from a separate US investigation into forced labour in foreign supply chains, completed in July.

That investigation provided the basis for tariffs of between 10 and 12.5 per cent on dozens of trading partners, including all 16 economies covered by the industrial overcapacity probe.

Countries that struck trade agreements with the Trump administration, including Japan, the European Union and South Korea, are likely to face overall tariff rates of 15 per cent or lower, while countries such as India and Vietnam could face higher rates, depending on the terms of their agreements with Washington, the WSJ reported, citing people familiar with the plans.

China is likely to face higher tariffs than many other economies, the report said, citing US officials who have described its subsidies as particularly extensive and disruptive to the global economy.

The administration could also include provisions allowing it to raise tariffs further if industrial overcapacity worsens or countries fail to make policy changes during future negotiations with Washington, according to the report.

USTR declined to comment on the proposed announcement, while the White House did not respond to requests for comment, the WSJ reported.

India and the US are negotiating an interim bilateral trade agreement after the framework they had finalised in February went back to the drawing board, following the United States Supreme Court's decision to strike down tariffs imposed last year under the Emergency Economic Powers Act.

India is seeking lower tariffs on its exports to the US than those faced by competing economies such as Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia.

North Korea demands closure of Switzerland's new diplomatic office and orders diplomat to leave



SEOUL

North Korea on Wednesday demanded the closure of Switzerland's new diplomatic office in Pyongyang and ordered the senior diplomat heading it to leave the country within 48 hours.

A day earlier, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, threatened to close the office and condemned Switzerland for imposing sanctions on a youth camp in eastern North Korea over its alleged role in the transfer of children from Russia-occupied areas of Ukraine.

The Korean Central News Agency said a senior Foreign Ministry official summoned Astier Sylvain, who heads the Swiss diplomatic office that opened in Pyongyang last month, and handed him a notice demanding the office's closure and his departure, in protest of the Swiss sanctions on the Songdowon International Children's Camp in Wonsan. The report said the ministry declared Sylvain persona non grata.

Kim Yo Jong, one of Pyongyang's top foreign policy officials, described the Swiss sanctions as an "open hostile act" and a infringement of the North's sovereignty in her statement Tuesday. She claimed that the Songdowon International Children's Camp in the coastal city of Wonsan supported "legitimate" cooperation between North Korea and Russia but didn't directly address Western accusations that some Ukrainian children abducted by Russian forces were sent there to be reeducated.

North Korea has closely aligned with Russia over the war in Ukraine, sending thousands of troops and large shipments of weapons in recent years to support Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion, possibly in exchange for aid and military technology transfers. Strengthened ties with Moscow and Beijing have been key drivers of Kim Jong Un's increasingly assertive foreign policy as he looks to break further out of isolation and position North Korea as part of a united front against Washington.

Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis traveled to North Korea in late October as Switzerland opened a diplomatic office in Pyongyang and held talks with senior North Korean officials, including Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, on "promoting dialogue and cooperation," KCNA said at the time.

In adding the Songdowon camp earlier this month to its broader sanctions related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Swiss authorities said the camp participates in programs involving the transfer of Ukrainian children from Russia-occupied territories to North Korea and exposes them to propaganda and activities designed to promote pro-Russia narratives.

The United Kingdom in May and the European Union in September imposed similar sanctions on the Songdowon camp, freezing its assets and prohibiting financial transactions with the facility. The practical impact of those measures is unclear given North Korea's limited financial ties with European countries.

Switzerland established diplomatic relations with North Korea in 1974 and is one of the few Western countries to maintain dialogue with the country.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation opened a "cooperation office" in Pyongyang in 1997 that mostly focused on humanitarian programs, but the office closed in March 2020 as North Korea shut its borders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Swiss government had said the new diplomatic office in Pyongyang, which reports to the Swiss Embassy in Beijing, would help strengthen direct contacts with North Korean officials and promote dialogue.

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs said Tuesday the country aimed to "maintain channels of dialogue" despite differences with other governments. "The reopening of the office is independent of our sanctions policy, whether with regard to UN sanctions related to North Korea's nuclear program or EU sanctions adopted by Switzerland in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine," it said in the statement to The Associated Press.

Beyond the Siliguri Corridor: Why Nepal Is Critical to the Northeast's Economic and Strategic Future

From energy security and cross-border connectivity to regional trade and China's growing influence, India's partnership with Nepal could reshape the economic future of the Northeast.

India's Northeast is often viewed through the narrow prism of geographical isolation, with the Siliguri Corridor serving as its principal connection to the rest of the country. But the region's future cannot be determined by what happens within India's borders alone. Its economic prospects, energy security and strategic stability are increasingly linked to developments across the Eastern Himalayas, particularly in Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Among these neighbours, Nepal occupies a position that New Delhi can no longer afford to overlook.

The November 22–23 visit of Nepalese Prime Minister Balendra Shah to New Delhi and his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi have brought this wider regional question back into focus. Beyond the diplomatic symbolism and bilateral announcements, the engagement raises an important question: can India turn its relationship with Nepal into a strategic opportunity for the Northeast?

The answer could have far-reaching implications for the region.

The Northeast needs a wider economic neighbourhood

For decades, India's Northeast has struggled with the disadvantages of geographical distance, limited market access and inadequate transport infrastructure. Despite its proximity to Southeast Asia and the neighbouring countries of South Asia, its economic integration with the wider region remains below its potential.

Nepal's importance must be understood against this background. Its geographical proximity to North Bengal, access to the Himalayan trade routes and growing energy cooperation with India create opportunities that extend beyond conventional bilateral relations.

The proposed Siliguri–Jhapa petroleum pipeline is one such example. The approximately 50-kilometre project, alongside the foundation stone for a petroleum terminal in Nepal's Jhapa district, could strengthen fuel supply infrastructure across the eastern Himalayan region. It is expected to reduce transportation costs and improve the reliability of petroleum supplies to eastern Nepal.

For India, however, the significance is broader. Such infrastructure can strengthen the economic importance of North Bengal and create the foundation for more integrated energy and commercial networks in the region.

The challenge is to ensure that these developments are connected to a larger regional economic strategy rather than remaining isolated bilateral projects.

Energy cooperation could change the regional equation

Nepal's hydropower potential is among its most valuable economic resources. India, with its expanding electricity requirements, offers a major market for Nepalese power. This economic complementarity creates an opportunity to develop an integrated regional energy network involving Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and India's northeastern states.

The 669 MW Lower Arun Hydroelectric Project, whose foundation stone was laid during Shah's visit, reflects the scale of the possibilities. The proposed Saptakoshi and Sunkoshi multipurpose projects and the long-discussed Pancheshwar project also demonstrate the potential for cooperation in electricity generation, irrigation and water management.

India's announcement of 15,000 crore in development assistance to Nepal, including 3,500 crore in grants and 11,500 crore through a rupee-denominated line of credit for energy projects, provides an additional financial framework for this engagement.

For the Northeast, the implications deserve greater attention. Assam and other northeastern states are strategically positioned to participate in a wider electricity and infrastructure network. Cross-border transmission facilities, regional power trading and coordinated energy planning could create new economic opportunities.

Such cooperation would also help diversify energy supply and strengthen regional resilience.



The Siliguri Corridor cannot be viewed in isolation

The strategic importance of Nepal becomes even more evident when viewed alongside the vulnerability of the Siliguri Corridor. This narrow stretch of territory in North Bengal connects mainland India with its eight northeastern states. Its security and uninterrupted functioning are therefore critical to India's national interests.

However, treating the corridor merely as a security-sensitive passage would be an incomplete approach. Its long-term resilience also depends on economic development, infrastructure diversification and stable relationships with neighbouring countries.

Nepal and Bhutan are important to the wider geographical environment surrounding North Bengal, while Bangladesh offers significant opportunities for transit, trade and access to maritime routes.

A stronger Nepal–India economic partnership could contribute to a more interconnected eastern neighbourhood. Better transport facilities, energy infrastructure and commercial exchanges would help reduce the Northeast's dependence on a limited number of logistical routes.

This is also where the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) framework needs renewed political attention. The four countries possess complementary economic strengths, but their potential remains constrained by infrastructure gaps, regulatory barriers and uneven implementation of connectivity agreements.

For the Northeast, BBIN should not remain a diplomatic concept. It needs to become a practical economic framework.

Nepal's changing politics demands a different Indian approach

The political transition in Nepal presents both an opportunity and a challenge for New Delhi. Balendra Shah's emergence reflects changing public expectations, particularly among younger generations seeking employment, accountable governance and economic opportunities.

India cannot assume that historical ties alone will sustain its influence in Nepal. The younger political constituency is likely to assess bilateral relations through tangible outcomes rather than traditional diplomatic sentiment.

The joint vision for Viksit Bharat and Samunnat Nepal, announced during the November 23 discussions, attempts to address this changing environment through cooperation in connectivity, energy, digital services, innovation, climate resilience and economic development.

The proposed agro-industrial park in Chitwan and an offshore campus of the Indian Institute of Technology are significant in this regard. They suggest a shift towards building productive capacities rather than limiting cooperation to conventional infrastructure and financial assistance.

For India, the priority should be to ensure that these initiatives translate into employment, investment and sustainable economic growth.

China's presence makes economic diplomacy more important

China's growing engagement with Nepal adds another layer to India's strategic calculations. Infrastructure development, connectivity initiatives and economic partnerships have expanded Beijing's presence in India's immediate neighbourhood.

But India's response cannot be based solely on geopolitical competition. Nepal is a sovereign country with legitimate interests in maintaining diversified international partnerships.

New Delhi's geographical proximity, extensive market access, established transit networks and longstanding people-to-people connections provide it with considerable advantages. Yet these advantages will matter only if India offers dependable projects, timely implementation and mutually beneficial economic arrangements.

The review of existing bilateral agreements, including the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, by mutual consent is therefore an important development. It recognises the need to adapt historical arrangements to contemporary political and economic realities.

Outstanding boundary questions must also be addressed through sustained diplomatic engagement. Differences should not be ignored, but neither should they be allowed to overshadow the wider possibilities of cooperation.

From geographical proximity to regional prosperity

The larger opportunity lies in connecting Nepal's economic potential with the development priorities of India's Northeast. This requires a more coordinated approach involving transport infrastructure, energy networks, trade facilitation, digital connectivity and disaster management.

Climate resilience is particularly important. The Himalayan region and the northeastern states face growing risks from extreme rainfall, floods, landslides and other climate-related disruptions. Cooperation over shared river systems and multipurpose water projects could strengthen regional preparedness while creating economic benefits.

India must also ensure that its northeastern states are active participants in regional planning. Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and other states should not remain peripheral to decisions concerning cross-border connectivity and energy cooperation.

The Modi–Shah engagement has created an opportunity to move in that direction. The 15,000-crore assistance package, the energy projects and the wider joint vision provide a foundation. But announcements alone cannot transform regional relationships. Their success will depend on implementation, political consistency and the ability to deliver measurable benefits.

Ultimately, Nepal's importance to India extends well beyond traditional diplomacy or border security. It is linked to the question of whether the Northeast can emerge from geographical constraints and become an active participant in a wider South Asian economic network.

India must begin viewing the Eastern Himalayas not simply as a frontier requiring protection, but as a region offering opportunities for shared development. Nepal could be one of the most important partners in that transformation. For the Northeast, the future may depend as much on the strength of its connections with neighbouring countries as on the infrastructure India builds within its own borders.



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Published by KRC Foundation.H.No. 15, Old Kalibari Road, Malugram, Silchar, Assam 788002. Editor-in-chief: Biswadeep Gupta. Tel: 8721838313, e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com www.krctimes.com

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THE SELECTED ARTICLE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON WWW.KRCTIMES.COM

"I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn."

– Anne Frank

TOPICS

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

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

Each entry will receive a digital participation certificate

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

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FAVOURITE

TEACHER

YOUR VOICE. YOUR VOTE.

Celebrating and Honouring the Educators
who Inspire, Empower and Transform

Nominations are open for

North East Integration Rally

Teacher Excellence Award

2026-27

Who Can Nominate?

Students | Schools | Parents | Citizen | Self Nominate

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