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Rahul Gandhi Likely to Visit Manipur on November 26 Ahead of 2027 Assembly Polls

IMPHAL

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is likely to visit Manipur on November 26 as the party steps up preparations for the 2027 Assembly elections. Churachandpur is expected to be among the places on his proposed itinerary, with plans for him to meet internally displaced persons (IDPs) from different communities.

Congress Legislature Party leader K. Meghachandra Singh said the party had received definite communication about Gandhi's proposed visit, though the detailed itinerary and programmes were yet to be finalised.

"Rahul Gandhi is likely to visit Manipur in the last week of November. Although the itinerary has not been finalised yet, we have received definite communication regarding his visit," Meghachandra said.

Gandhi is expected to interact with internally displaced people, youths and healthcare workers. The state Congress unit is also planning programmes involving young people as part of the proposed visit.



Churachandpur is likely to feature in the itinerary, particularly for interactions with displaced families. However, it remains unclear whether Kangpokpi will also be included.

Meghachandra said the visit should not be viewed solely as a political exercise, arguing that Gandhi wanted to understand the situation on the ground and explore ways to address the ethnic violence and tensions that have continued in the state for nearly three-and-a-half years.

Asked whether the visit was also linked to the forthcoming Assembly elections, he acknowledged that the electoral dimension was part of the programme. He said the party intended to make it an inclusive exercise.

The proposed visit comes as the Manipur Congress prepares for the 2027 polls amid reported differences within its state unit.

A Congress leader familiar with the party's internal affairs said three political groupings had emerged around Meghachandra, state Congress president O. Ibobi Singh and Congress MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam.

The leader described Ibobi Singh as the most influential Congress figure in the state, while Akoijam's emergence as another political centre has added a new dimension to the party's internal dynamics. Akoijam has reportedly expressed interest in contesting the next Assembly election from the Keishamthong constituency.The Congress faces the twin challenge of mounting a political challenge to the BJP and addressing internal differences, consolidating its leadership and strengthening its organisational network ahead of the polls.

Gandhi had visited Manipur in June 2023, shortly after ethnic violence broke out, and again in July 2024, when he visited relief camps and met people affected by the conflict.

While November 26 has emerged as the likely date for his next visit, the Congress leadership is yet to formally announce the final itinerary and programme.

He further questioned the BJP-led alliance's internal leadership changes and government formation strategies, alleging that certain steps were constitutionally flawed.

The Congress demand comes amid continuing political debate over the government's handling of Manipur's prolonged ethnic crisis, rehabilitation of displaced people, financial assistance and restoration of normalcy.

The state government's response to the allegations made by the Congress leader was not available in the report.

PERSPECTIVE

We never "lose" friends, we just learn who our real ones are.

Silchar Civic Body Suspends Accounts Superintendent Over Alleged Financial Irregularities

SILCHAR

The Silchar Municipal Corporation has suspended its Superintendent of Accounts, Raju Dey, over alleged financial irregularities, barely a week after newly elected councillors took oath.

Municipal Commissioner Ankur Das issued the suspension order on November 7 following allegations of discrepancies in the civic body's financial records and expenditure.

According to sources, Dey has been accused of failing to furnish proper accounts of funds allocated for employees' salaries and expenditure incurred on various development schemes over the past few years.

One of the key allegations concerns the salary budget, with the amount shown as spent on employees' salaries reportedly exceeding the actual requirement by a substantial margin.

The corporation has assigned the inquiry to Executive Officer Abhijit Bey and Financial Management Officer Debashis Saikia. They have been directed to investigate the alleged discrepancies and submit a report to the state government in Dispur.

Copies of the suspension order have also been forwarded to Silchar Municipal Corporation Mayor Amarendra Paul and Deputy Mayor Bijendra Prasad Singh.

WHO SAID WHAT



"Democratic governance has helped deliver freedom and dignity to billions across the globe. But it is far from universal, and in many places, it is under growing strain. Democracy is never a given: It is something we build and sustain together."
~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

NIA Takes Over Probe into Killing of Two Kuki Youths in Manipur; CM Khemchand Assures Justice



IMPHAL

The Manipur government has handed over the investigation into the killing of two Kuki youths to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh said on Monday.

Meeting the families of the deceased, Paoginlal Hangshing and Tingginlun Chongloi, the Chief Minister assured them that nobody involved in the killings would be spared and that all those responsible would be brought to justice.

The bodies of the two youths were recovered from a forested area in Senapati district on November 1. Both belonged to Taphou Kuki village in Kangpokpi district and had been missing since October 28. Their bodies were recovered during a joint search operation by security forces.

During his interaction with the bereaved families, Khemchand said the investigation might take some time as authorities needed to collect and verify evidence. However, he assured them that the government would not compromise on identifying and arresting those responsible.

He also appealed to the public to cooperate with investigators and share any information that could help establish the circumstances surrounding the killings.

The families placed several demands before the Chief Minister, including the initiation of consultations with various civil society organisations (CSOs) in the aftermath of the incident. They also urged the government to make arrangements for the early funeral of the two victims.

L. Chongloi, village chief of Taphou Kuki, separately apprised the Chief Minister of the difficulties faced by residents following the killings. He also expressed concerns over the prevailing situation and the safety of villagers.

Khemchand referred to the earlier incident in which two children were killed in a bomb attack at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district. He said the NIA had taken nearly four months to arrest the accused in that case after collecting sufficient evidence, underlining the importance of a thorough investigation.

The Chief Minister also interacted with personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) deployed in Taphou Kuki village and appreciated their role in maintaining peace and security in the area.

The killings have triggered fresh concerns in Kangpokpi and Senapati districts, with families seeking justice and an early funeral even as the investigation moves forward. The government's response to the demand for dialogue with civil society organisations will also be closely watched.

Nagaland to Host Historic First IFL Match on November 14, NUSC to Face Gokulam Kerala

DIMAPUR

Nagaland is set to enter a new chapter in its football history with the state hosting its first-ever Indian Football League (IFL) match at Chumoukedima Football Stadium on November 14.

Nagaland United Sports Club (NUSC), the first team from the state to compete in the IFL, will face Kerala-based Gokulam Kerala FC in its first home fixture of the season. The match is scheduled to kick off at 6.30 pm.

The fixture marks a significant milestone for football in Nagaland, bringing a professional national-level league match to the state for the first time and offering local supporters an opportunity to watch IFL action on home soil.

Nagaland United made an impressive start to its maiden IFL campaign, registering a 3-1 victory over Real Kashmir FC in its debut match on October 30.

The club will now look to build on that opening performance as it prepares to take on Gokulam Kerala in front of its home supporters.

Beyond the immediate result, the November 14 fixture is expected to generate greater interest in professional football across Nagaland. It will also provide aspiring footballers and young sporting enthusiasts an opportunity to witness national-level competition in their home state.

The arrival of the IFL is being viewed as an important development for the state's football ecosystem, with the potential to encourage grassroots participation and provide greater visibility to local sporting talent.

Nagaland United SC has appealed to football supporters from across the state to attend the match in large numbers and make the historic home fixture a memorable occasion.

Rs.501-Crore Caustic Soda Plant to Cut NRL's Dependence on Outside Supplies



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has announced a ?501-crore investment for setting up a caustic soda manufacturing plant in the state, a move aimed at reducing Numaligarh Refinery Limited's (NRL) dependence on supplies from outside Assam.Announcing the proposed project in a social media post, Sarma highlighted the importance of caustic soda in the refinery's operations, pointing out that NRL currently procures thousands of metric tonnes of the chemical every year from sources outside the state.The proposed manufacturing facility is expected to change that dependence by ensuring local availability of the industrial chemical."This will now be history," a graphic shared by the Chief Minister stated, referring to NRL's reliance on external supplies.The project is expected to offer multiple industrial and economic benefits. Local production could make the supply chain more efficient, reduce transportation and logistics costs, and ensure easier access to caustic soda for industrial requirements.

The proposed investment is also expected to generate employment opportunities and contribute to the Assam government's revenue. Increased availability of the chemical within the state could further encourage the establishment and expansion of industries that depend on it.Projecting the initiative as part of Assam's broader industrial expansion strategy, Sarma underlined its potential to create fresh business opportunities and strengthen the state's manufacturing ecosystem.

However, several key details are yet to be disclosed. The government has not specified the proposed plant's location, production capacity, construction schedule or the agency responsible for implementing the project.

The actual economic impact will depend on the project's execution, its production capacity and the timeline for commercial operations. For now, the announcement marks a significant proposed investment in Assam's industrial infrastructure, with NRL's supply requirements providing a major potential demand base.

NEC Releases Rs 79.53 Crore for Northeast Projects; Assam Gets Rs 14.79 Crore

Funding for rural roads, a bridge, dairy processing, tribal livelihoods and heritage conservation; bamboo research capacity in Jorhat expanded tenfold

SHILLONG

The North Eastern Council (NEC) released Rs 79.53 crore for development projects across the region in October, with Assam receiving Rs 14.79 crore for initiatives covering rural connectivity, infrastructure, livelihood promotion and heritage conservation.

According to an NEC statement, Meghalaya received the highest allocation among the eight northeastern states at Rs 26.56 crore. Sikkim was allocated Rs 15.51 crore, Arunachal Pradesh Rs 11.18 crore and Nagaland Rs 7.99 crore. Tripura received Rs 3.50 crore, while funding was also extended to projects in Manipur and Mizoram.

The allocation for Assam covers rural road connectivity, including the Mangaldoi-Mazikuchi link and the Bogamati-Umananda route via Naobandha and Khaagrabari. Funds have also been provided for an RCC bridge in Udalguri, a 20,000-litre dairy processing plant at Patacharkuchi, support for Deori tribal weavers in Lakhimpur and the Sepoy Mutiny War Memorial at Hailakandi.

Alongside the fresh releases, the NEC reported progress in several completed projects in Assam. The Rain Forest Research Institute (RFRI) in Jorhat has commissioned an expanded tissue-culture laboratory, increasing its bamboo tissue-culture capacity tenfold from 3,000 to 30,000 plantlets.



Other completed initiatives include the integrated development of Socheng Development Block in West Karbi Anglong, provision of essential services at Rongmongwe Block in Karbi Anglong and the development of a high-tech horticulture nursery.

Meghalaya's allocation includes substantial support for the 46.08-km Chokpot-Kharukol road under the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme-Roads. The project is expected to improve connectivity for 78 villages and more than 15,000 residents. Support was also extended for a multi-disciplinary training-cum-resource centre in Shillong.Arunachal Pradesh received funds primarily for strategic road connectivity in remote and border areas, while Sikkim's allocation will support organic agriculture and veterinary healthcare infrastructure. In Nagaland, the projects cover enterprise development, trade facilitation, mineral-resource assessment and road connectivity. Tripura received funding for an international trade and research centre aimed at strengthening the agarwood sector.The NEC, functioning under the Union Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, released the funds under its Schemes of NEC and NESIDS-Roads programmes. The projects span connectivity, rural infrastructure, agriculture, enterprise development, education and cultural preservation.The council also reported the completion of several projects across the region during October, including infrastructure development, scientific research, agricultural initiatives and cultural conservation. The NEC further supported the North East Bankers Conclave 3.0 in Aizawl, which discussed financing for major projects and improving institutional credit access for micro, small and medium enterprises, Farmer Producer Organisations and women's self-help groups across the eight northeastern states.For Assam, the latest allocation combines immediate infrastructure needs with support for local livelihoods and scientific research. The impact, however, will depend on timely implementation and the extent to which the projects improve access and economic opportunities for communities on the ground.

Manipur Congress Demands BJP Government Step Down, Alleges Governance Failure

IMPHAL

The Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) has called on the BJP-led government in the state to surrender power, alleging persistent governance failures, unfulfilled financial commitments and an inability to resolve the prolonged ethnic crisis.

MPCC president and Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader K Meghachandra Singh made the demand while speaking to reporters at his residence in Yairipok, Thoubal district, on November 9.

He alleged that the ruling administration continued to make assurances without delivering tangible results, while ordinary people remained burdened by the prolonged crisis and its consequences.Meghachandra questioned the government's implementation of its announced financial assistance programmes, particularly those aimed at women and economically vulnerable families.He pointed out that the state budget had allocated ?350 crore for women's empowerment but alleged that the government had failed to fulfil its widely publicised commitments.

The Congress leader specifically referred to a promise by several BJP legislators to provide ?10,000 to every woman belonging to poor and helpless families ahead of the Ningol Chakouba festival.According to him, the government instead distributed only ?1,000 to internally displaced persons across ten districts, a development he described as unfortunate.

He also questioned the government's silence over what he described as discrepancies between budgetary allocations and the actual financial assistance reaching beneficiaries.The MPCC chief attributed Manipur's continuing instability to internal differences within the ruling BJP, alleging that political divisions had weakened the government's ability to restore peace and normalcy.

He also criticised what he described as a leadership deficit, claiming that governance had become confined largely to virtual Cabinet meetings, with insufficient visible action on the ground.On employment and security, Meghachandra alleged that the government's failure to generate adequate job opportunities had contributed to frustration among local youth, with some taking up arms in the name of protecting the state's territorial integrity.

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AGNIVEERS BEYOND FOUR YEARS

The decision to extend the service tenure of Agniveers by two years and create a pathway towards permanent recruitment is a welcome recognition of ground realities. It addresses the anxieties of young recruits, protects the investment made in military training and offers an opportunity to balance a younger fighting force with the experience essential for national security.

India's military reforms must be guided by two equally important considerations: the need to build a younger, technologically equipped armed force and the responsibility to recognise the aspirations and sacrifices of those who wear the uniform. The Agnipath scheme, introduced with the promise of transforming the recruitment structure of the armed forces, has been an important part of this exercise. However, its four-year tenure has also raised questions about the future of thousands of young recruits who leave military service at an age when their professional lives are only beginning.

Against this backdrop, the Government's decision to provide an additional two years of service to Agniveers, alongside a pathway towards permanent recruitment, is a significant and welcome development. It indicates that defence policy need not remain rigid when experience and operational requirements point towards the need for adjustments.

The issue goes beyond employment or service benefits. Soldiering is fundamentally different from an ordinary occupation. Guarding India's borders, operating in extreme climatic conditions, maintaining vigilance in difficult terrain and responding to security threats demand physical endurance, mental resilience and sustained professional commitment. The responsibilities of a soldier cannot be measured by conventional working hours or the routines of civilian employment.

Modern warfare is increasingly dependent on technology. Drones, satellite surveillance, artificial intelligence and electronic monitoring have transformed military operations. Yet technology cannot eliminate the need for trained personnel on the ground. Human judgement, terrain awareness, discipline and the ability to respond to unpredictable situations remain indispensable. A technologically advanced military still needs experienced soldiers.

This is where the proposed extension assumes particular importance. Training a recruit into an effective soldier requires considerable time, resources and institutional investment. Weapon handling, field operations, discipline, teamwork and operational preparedness develop through sustained training and practical experience. Releasing a large proportion of trained personnel after four years inevitably raises questions about the utilisation of that investment.

An additional two years can help address this concern. It gives Agniveers more time to consolidate their skills, gain operational experience and contribute to unit effectiveness. Experienced personnel can also guide younger recruits, strengthening discipline, confidence and cohesion within military formations.

The revised arrangement, as outlined by the military leadership, offers the 75 per cent of Agniveers who would otherwise leave after four years an opportunity to serve for another two years, with improved remuneration, enhanced Seva Nidhi benefits and seniority-related advantages. A further opportunity for enrolment as regular soldiers, subject to willingness and prescribed selection criteria, provides an additional incentive.

The 25 per cent retained through the existing selection process will continue to enjoy seniority over those recruited later. This distinction is important because any revised recruitment structure must preserve fairness and recognise the service of those selected under the original arrangement.More importantly, the decision acknowledges that military reforms must be evaluated against actual field requirements rather than administrative targets alone. The armed forces operate in an environment where experience can make a critical difference. A soldier who has spent years understanding a particular terrain, working with a unit and handling sophisticated equipment brings capabilities that cannot be immediately replaced by a new recruit.The Government's decision also reflects a broader principle of policy-making: reforms must remain open to review. The Agnipath scheme was introduced as a structural change, but its long-term effectiveness can only be judged through operational experience, feedback from commanders and the performance of successive batches. Adjusting the framework does not necessarily mean abandoning the original objective. It can instead strengthen the reform by correcting weaknesses that emerge during implementation.Nevertheless, the latest decision should not be treated as the final answer to every concern surrounding Agnipath. The future of those who eventually leave the armed forces after six years remains an important question. Their rehabilitation, employment opportunities, skill recognition and social security require a comprehensive and credible framework.Military training develops qualities that are valuable far beyond the battlefield. Discipline, leadership, technical competence, teamwork and the ability to function under pressure can make former Agniveers valuable contributors to civilian institutions, industry, infrastructure, disaster management and security services. But these skills must be formally recognised, and employment pathways must be supported by effective implementation rather than policy announcements alone. The Government must also provide clarity on whether the four-plus-two arrangement will apply to future recruitment batches. Predictability is essential for young people considering a career in the armed forces. Recruitment policies must inspire confidence, not leave candidates uncertain about the terms and conditions of their service.

There is also a need for continuous consultation with the three services and commanders in operational areas. A recruitment policy designed for a modern military must take into account the differing requirements of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The objective should be to create a force that is young and physically capable without sacrificing institutional experience and professional continuity. Ultimately, the success of Agnipath should not be judged merely by the number of recruits inducted or the financial savings achieved. It must be assessed by the quality of military preparedness, the effectiveness of operational units and the dignity and security extended to those who serve. The additional two-year tenure and the proposed pathway towards permanent recruitment represent a constructive step in that direction. They offer reassurance to serving Agniveers while giving the armed forces an opportunity to retain valuable experience.A strong military is not built by keeping its soldiers young alone; it is built by combining youthful energy with experience, training and commitment. India's defence reforms must recognise this balance. The real test of the revised Agnipath framework will be whether it delivers a future-ready fighting force while ensuring that those who serve the nation are not left uncertain about their own future.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Stupidity is far more dangerous than evil, for evil takes a break from time to time, stupidity does not." - Anatole France

Newly Constituted Silchar Municipal Corporation: Expectations and Immediate Priorities



PRADIP DUTTA ROY

After a prolonged wait, the newly constituted Silchar Municipal Corporation is finally set to begin functioning with its elected representatives. This undoubtedly marks a significant administrative transition for the city. Naturally, the development has generated fresh expectations among its residents. However, the crucial question remains: Will the transformation from a Municipal Board to a Municipal Corporation help resolve Silchar's long-standing civic problems, or will it remain merely a formal administrative change?

In the recent elections, the BJP-led alliance secured 34 seats, the Congress won 2, and independent candidates emerged victorious in 6 seats. Consequently, the ruling alliance enjoys an overwhelming majority in the newly constituted Corporation. In any democratic institution, a strong opposition plays an important role in ensuring administrative accountability and transparency. Here, that opportunity is limited, although the role of independent councillors should not be underestimated. Under these circumstances, the responsibility of elected representatives becomes even greater, while civil society must also assume an active role in monitoring the functioning of the Corporation.

Silchar's problems are not confined to waterlogging, traffic congestion or dilapidated roads. Unplanned urbanisation, a dysfunctional drainage system, inadequate waste management, degradation of wetlands and a lack of coordination among government departments have made everyday life increasingly difficult for residents. Addressing these problems through an integrated urban development strategy, rather than treating them as isolated issues, will be the foremost challenge before the newly constituted Corporation.

Drainage and Waterlogging: The Highest Priority

Waterlogging and flooding undoubtedly constitute Silchar's most serious civic problems. Over the years, numerous projects have been undertaken, funds allocated and construction works carried out in the name of drainage improvement. Yet a lasting solution remains elusive. One of the principal reasons is the continued reliance on isolated drain construction and renovation projects without adequately considering the city's natural drainage network as an integrated system.

A comprehensive technical assessment of the present condition and water-carrying capacity of natural drainage channels, including Rangirkhal, Singirkhal, Longaikhal and Bachchaikhal, is urgently required. Equally important is the conservation of natural water bodies and wetlands, including Malini Beel. Besides maintaining ecological balance, these wetlands play a crucial role in absorbing and retaining excess rainwater.

As an immediate measure, detailed information regarding ongoing and incomplete drainage projects, including Rangirkhal, should be made public. Citizens have every right to know how much money has been allocated to each project, how much has been spent, the extent of progress achieved and the expected date of completion.

The highest priority must be accorded to preparing a scientifically designed, integrated Drainage Master Plan. Such a plan should take into account the city's topography, rainfall patterns, natural watercourses, water levels of the Barak River, drainage outlets and the prospects of future urban expansion. Assistance from specialised technical institutions should be sought wherever necessary.

The active cooperation of the Water Resources Department, Public Works Department and the State Government, alongside the Municipal Corporation, will be indispensable for this exercise.

Waste Management and Urban Cleanliness

Accumulation of garbage in different parts of the city, irregular collection and the absence of scientifically managed waste disposal facilities have become serious concerns for the environment and public health.

Regular door-to-door waste collection must be ensured in every ward. Although such a system already exists, its coverage and effectiveness remain inadequate. Segregation of biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste, establishment of processing facilities and development of modern disposal infrastructure are urgently needed. Allegations that some equipment previously procured for waste management has remained unused or become dysfunctional should also be investigated.

Special attention must be given to cleanliness in markets, hospitals and densely populated neighbourhoods. Adequate public toilets and safe management of septic waste must also be ensured. Preventing the discharge of untreated wastewater into open drains is equally important.

Traffic Congestion, Roads and Unplanned Urbanisation

Increasing traffic congestion has become one of Silchar's major civic challenges. Narrow roads, growing numbers of vehicles, unregulated parking, inadequate footpaths and loading and unloading of goods on public roads have further aggravated the situation.

Instead of relying exclusively on traffic police, the Municipal Corporation must develop a coordinated traffic management and parking strategy. Suitable parking facilities in major commercial areas, safe pedestrian footpaths and designated loading and unloading zones should be identified and developed.

At the same time, planned vending zones must be established while safeguarding the livelihoods of small traders and street vendors. Indiscriminate eviction in the name of development is unacceptable, but the rights of pedestrians to safe and unobstructed movement cannot be ignored either.

Questions have also been raised regarding the effectiveness of the proposed flyover in addressing traffic congestion. The final Detailed Project Report (DPR), construction plan and scientific assessment of its likely impact on traffic movement should be made available to the public. The residents of Silchar have every right to access such information.

Simultaneously, unregulated construction of multistorey buildings, encroachment upon natural drainage channels and urban expansion through the filling of low-lying land must be strictly controlled. Otherwise, today's unplanned development may become the cause of tomorrow's major urban disasters.

Equal Attention to Newly Incorporated Municipal Areas

With 42 wards now falling under the jurisdiction of the newly constituted Municipal Corporation, its administrative responsibilities and the geographical scope of civic services have expanded considerably.

Ward-wise surveys are necessary to identify deficiencies in roads, drainage, street lighting, drinking water supply and waste collection, particularly in newly incorporated areas.

Care must be taken to ensure that developmental disparities between older and newly included wards do not widen. Separate development plans, accompanied by clear implementation timelines, should be prepared for every ward.

Public Health, Environment and Disaster Preparedness

The development of a modern city cannot be measured merely by the number of roads or multistorey buildings it possesses. Public health, safety and quality of life are equally important indicators.

Access to safe drinking water, prevention of mosquito-borne diseases, regular cleaning of drains, adequate street lighting and public sanitation facilities must be improved. Initiatives are also required to preserve children's playgrounds, parks, open spaces and wetlands.

Pedestrian infrastructure suitable for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, safe road crossings and accessible civic services must receive due attention. There is also an urgent need to install a functional electric crematorium at the Silchar cremation ground.

Furthermore, considering Silchar's recurring experiences of flooding, every ward should have its own disaster management plan. Such plans must include early warning mechanisms, safe shelters, rescue arrangements and access to emergency services.

Financial Transparency and Administrative Accountability

The transition from a Municipal Board to a Municipal Corporation has increased administrative responsibilities and will inevitably require additional financial resources.

The first step should therefore be the publication of a transparent financial statement detailing the liabilities inherited from the former Municipal Board, financial commitments relating to ongoing projects, revenue collection, government grants and projected future funding requirements.

Incomplete projects should undergo both technical and financial reviews. Citizens must be informed about expenditure incurred, progress achieved and the reasons behind delays.

A simple and accessible grievance redressal mechanism should be established in every ward, supported by a centralised digital system for registering complaints and ensuring their resolution within specified timelines.

Elected councillors should also interact regularly with residents and publicly report progress on development activities.

Powers of the Corporation and Responsibilities of the State Government

Many of Silchar's major civic problems involve government departments that do not fall directly under the administrative control of the Municipal Corporation. Large-scale drainage projects, river-related flood protection measures, major roads and water supply infrastructure require the active involvement of the State Government.

It would therefore be unreasonable to hold municipal councillors solely responsible for every problem. Equally, limitations of jurisdiction cannot become an excuse for avoiding responsibility.

A permanent coordination mechanism must be established among the Municipal Corporation, district administration, Public Works Department, Water Resources Department, Public Health Engineering Department and urban planning authorities.

In keeping with the objectives of the 74th Constitutional Amendment, serious attention must also be given to empowering urban local bodies with effective administrative authority, adequate financial resources and sufficient personnel.

Without genuine powers and resources, merely changing the name or administrative status of an institution cannot deliver the desired improvements.

Announce a First 100-Day Action Plan

To earn public confidence, the newly constituted Municipal Corporation should announce a realistic and publicly accessible action plan for its first 100 days.

The initial phase may include ward-wise identification of civic problems, surveys of drainage systems and roads, review of ongoing projects and establishment of an effective public grievance redressal mechanism.

The subsequent phase should focus on emergency interventions in water-logging-prone areas, regular waste collection and preliminary measures to ease traffic congestion.

Within the first 100 days, the Corporation should publish a comprehensive action plan specifying the agencies responsible for major projects, estimated costs, sources of funding and implementation timelines.

A mechanism for publishing periodic progress reports should also be introduced to ensure continued public scrutiny and accountability.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Silchar Municipal Corporation undoubtedly represents an important administrative milestone. However, its success will ultimately be judged by the extent to which it brings meaningful improvements to the everyday lives of ordinary citizens.

The people of Silchar aspire to better roads, freedom from chronic waterlogging, a cleaner environment, smoother traffic movement, safe drinking water and reliable civic services.

Meeting these expectations requires a long-term, scientifically designed and integrated urban development strategy rather than a succession of disconnected projects. Administrative transparency, financial accountability, proactive elected representatives and meaningful citizen participation must form the foundation of this transformation.

The transition from a Municipal Board to a Municipal Corporation must not remain confined to an enhancement of administrative status. Instead, it should mark the beginning of lasting solutions to Silchar's long-standing civic problems and the creation of a planned, environmentally sustainable and liveable city.

Fulfilment of these expectations should be the foremost objective of the leadership of the newly constituted Municipal Corporation.

The views expressed are those of the author.

(The author is the founding president of the students' organisation AAKSA and an advocate practising at the Gauhati High Court.)

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The Indian Army has deployed advanced robotic mules to strengthen border defence with cutting-edge technology and real-time intelligence.

Key capabilities include:
*** Advanced surveillance and real-time intelligence.**
*** Support for ambush operations.**
*** Tracking enemy movements.**
*** Patrolling the most challenging terrains.**

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)



Diwali Fires Ravage Assam: 112 Incidents Reported, Firecrackers Linked to 49 Cases



GUWAHATI

Assam witnessed 112 fire-related incidents during Diwali celebrations on November 8, including 22 in Kamrup Metro, with firecrackers suspected to be responsible for 49 of the cases, according to the Fire and Emergency Services Department.

Three major fire incidents were reported from Lakhimpur, Pathsala and Silapathar, while emergency response teams remained engaged across the state throughout the festival. One person sustained injuries in a fire at Jorabat's 12th Mile area in Kamrup Metro.

In one of the serious incidents, a house at Ambher village in Jorabat was completely gutted. An elderly resident, identified as Ratan Sharma, was trapped inside the burning house and suffered serious injuries.

According to preliminary information, the fire broke out while other members of the family had gone to the market to purchase firecrackers. Local residents suspected an electrical short circuit as the possible cause.Fire and police personnel rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control. Sharma was rescued and shifted to a hospital for advanced medical treatment.

Another fire broke out in Guwahati's Panbazar area during Diwali celebrations. The blaze, reportedly triggered by firecrackers, gutted a roadside hut near the Don Bosco area, close to Cotton University.

In a separate incident at Simen Chapori in Jonai, seven business establishments were destroyed in a major fire on Sunday evening. Although the exact cause of the blaze remained unclear, local residents suspected that it had originated in a garage.The fire caused property losses worth several lakh rupees. A jewellery shop, a bakery, a salon and an electronic goods store were among the establishments reduced to ashes.

The Fire and Emergency Services Department said its personnel responded to emergencies at multiple locations across Assam during the celebrations.

The figures highlight the fire safety challenges associated with Diwali festivities, with firecracker-related incidents accounting for 49 of the 112 cases reported across the state.

Cachar Youth Dies After Falling from Ninth Floor of Bengaluru Building

SILCHAR

A 31-year-old youth from Cachar district died after falling from the ninth floor of a multi-storey building in Bengaluru, where he had been working as a painter.

The deceased, identified as Enamul Haque Mazumder, died in the accident on Friday. His body was brought back to his native village on Monday, four days after the incident, leaving his family and local residents in deep mourning.

Enamul hailed from Cholitatal village under Durganagar Sixth Block in the Udharbond Assembly constituency of Cachar district. He was the second son of Ali Ahmed Mazumder.

According to family members, Enamul had moved to Bengaluru nearly 10 years ago in search of employment. He had been working there as a painter to support his family back home.

Family sources said the accident occurred at around 11 am on Friday when he fell from the ninth floor of a multi-storey building at his workplace. He sustained critical injuries and died.

The news of his sudden death plunged his family into grief.

His coffin arrived at Silchar Airport at around 3.15 pm on Monday, from where it was taken to his residence in Durganagar. A large number of relatives, neighbours and villagers gathered at the house to pay their last respects.

His funeral prayers were held at the local graveyard at around 5.30 pm, following which he was laid to rest.

Enamul is survived by his wife, a daughter and a specially-abled son. His death has left the family facing an uncertain financial future, as he was its sole earning member.

Having spent nearly a decade away from home to provide for his loved ones, Enamul's sudden death has left an irreplaceable void in the family.

The tragedy has cast a pall of gloom over Durganagar, with relatives and neighbours struggling to come to terms with the loss.

Silchar to Host International Tennis Masters and State Junior Championships

SILCHAR

Silchar is preparing to host two consecutive tennis tournaments, bringing veteran international players and emerging young talents to the Barak Valley. More than 200 players are expected to participate in the World Tennis Masters MT200 Silchar Tournament, scheduled from November 10 to 15, and the All-Assam Junior Ranking Tennis Tournament, which will run from November 16 to 19.The two events, organised by The Tennis Club, Silchar, are expected to attract participants from different parts of India and abroad, providing a major platform for promoting competitive tennis in southern Assam.

"The two tournaments would provide an important platform for promoting tennis in the Barak Valley and encouraging young talents to compete at the state and national levels," said Arup Kumar Deb, a member of The Tennis Club, Silchar, and convener of the All-Assam Junior Ranking Tennis Tournament.

The World Tennis Masters MT200 will feature competitions across several age groups. Men's, women's and mixed doubles events in the 30+, 35+, 40+, 45+ and 50+ categories will be held from November 10 to 14. Men's singles competitions in the 55+, 60+, 65+ and 70+ categories are scheduled from November 12 to 15.According to Deb, the tournament has already received 128 official singles entries and 145 doubles entries through the World Masters Tennis portal, besides three wild-card entries in each category.Players from across India are expected to participate, alongside international competitors from Bhutan, South Korea and Bangladesh. Participation from Bhutan and South Korea has been confirmed, while entries from Bangladesh are awaiting visa clearance.

Assam BJP Accuses Congress of Communal Polarisation Ahead of 2027 Uttar Pradesh Polls

GUWAHATI

The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday accused the Congress of attempting to polarise voters ahead of the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections by raising sensitive religious and historical issues.

The BJP alleged that remarks by senior Congress leaders on the Babri Masjid demolition, the Batla House encounter and Diwali were part of a political strategy aimed at influencing specific vote banks ahead of the crucial electoral contest.Addressing a press conference at the party's state headquarters, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan, in Guwahati, BJP spokesperson Ranjib Kumar Sharma claimed that Congress leaders were bringing religious issues back into the political discourse to secure electoral advantage in Uttar Pradesh.

Referring to a reported interview given by former Congress president Sonia Gandhi to British newspaper The Guardian, Sharma said she had recalled breaking down after watching television footage of the Babri Masjid demolition in the 1990s.

Questioning the timing and political context of the remarks, the BJP spokesperson alleged that the Congress was attempting to revive the Ram Janmabhoomi issue for electoral gains.

Sharma also referred to the 2012 Uttar Pradesh Assembly election campaign and a statement reportedly made by then Union Law Minister Salman Khurshid at an election meeting in Azamgarh.

According to Sharma, Khurshid had then said that Sonia Gandhi became emotional after hearing about the Batla House encounter. The BJP alleged that the incident had also been used for electoral purposes during that period.The Batla House encounter took place on September 19, 2008, in Delhi's Jamia Nagar area, when the Delhi Police Special Cell conducted an operation against suspected members of the Indian Mujahideen.Two suspects, Atif Amin and Mohammed Sajid, were killed in the operation, while police officer Mohan Chand Sharma also lost his life. Delhi Police had claimed that the two suspects were linked to the serial blasts that rocked the national capital on September 13, 2008.The BJP spokesperson also questioned Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's recent remarks concerning Diwali.Sharma alleged that Kharge had introduced a communal dimension into the discussion by comparing Diwali with Eid. He described the remarks by Kharge and Sonia Gandhi as part of what he termed the Congress's larger political strategy.

The BJP leader further accused Sonia Gandhi of selectively expressing concern over certain incidents.Referring to the killings of Kashmiri Pandits, the Bhopal gas tragedy, serial blasts in Mumbai, Delhi and Guwahati, the 1984 anti-Sikh violence and the deaths of 855 people during the Assam Movement, Sharma questioned why similar emotional responses had not been expressed on those occasions. He also raised the issue of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's December 9, 2006, remarks at an official function at Vigyan Bhawan in Delhi concerning minorities, particularly Muslims, having priority in access to the country's resources.

Sharma questioned why Sonia Gandhi had not expressed similar concerns at that time.

The BJP spokesperson alleged that the Congress had consistently placed electoral interests above the country's cultural and religious traditions. He cited the party's positions and leaders' remarks on the Babri Masjid demolition, the Batla House encounter and religious festivals as examples.

Nagaland Organisation Backs Arunachal Communities Opposing 11,200-MW Siang Dam, Urges Centre to Respect Village Decisions

KOHIMA

A Nagaland-based organisation has extended its support to indigenous communities in Arunachal Pradesh opposing the proposed 11,200-MW Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP), urging the Centre and the Arunachal Pradesh government to respect decisions taken by traditional village councils.

The Nagaland Community Conserved Areas Forum (NCCAF) said the concerns and objections raised by indigenous communities in the Siang Valley must be taken seriously and that no major development project should be imposed by disregarding the collective decisions of local people.

In an open letter addressed to residents of the Siang Valley, the organisation expressed solidarity with their efforts to protect ancestral land, natural resources and the Siang River.The letter, signed by NCCAF chairman Heirang Lungalang and secretary Seve R. Vadeo, draws parallels between the experiences of tribal communities in Nagaland and the situation in the Siang Valley.

It raises concerns over land rights, local control over natural resources and the impact of security force deployment on communities dependent on agriculture and forests.The organisation also referred to reports of women guarding riverbanks, action against village elders supporting the local movement and the detention of youths. It further cited allegations that farmers were being prevented from accessing agricultural land during the harvest season and that restrictions had been imposed on carrying traditional farming implements.

A key focus of the letter is the traditional decision-making institution of the Adi community, known as the Kebang or village council.

According to the NCCAF, decisions concerning ancestral land and natural resources must take into account the resolutions adopted by these traditional institutions.

The organisation cited the resolution adopted at the General Bogum Bokang Kebang held at Geku in August 2025. The meeting had declared the Siang River as 'Ane Siang', or Mother Goddess River, and adopted a resolution opposing the proposed dam as well as feasibility studies related to the project.

It also referred to a March 2026 resolution of the Kebang of Ramku village, which stated that no individual or group could claim to represent the entire village without the approval of its village council.

The NCCAF expressed concern that collecting signatures from individual families or presenting a handful of residents as representatives of an entire village could undermine collective decisions and create divisions within indigenous communities.

The letter also highlighted conservation initiatives undertaken by the Adi community, including restrictions on fishing and hunting using explosives, poison and electricity.Citing Gubuk village, the organisation said communities that were once associated with hunting had increasingly embraced conservation practices. Several villages in Upper Siang had also taken steps to protect their forests as community resources.

The NCCAF argued that opposition to the proposed mega dam should not be interpreted as opposition to development.

Heavy Rain Disrupts Normal Life in Tripura's Gomati



AGARTALA

Heavy rainfall has disrupted normal life in several parts of Tripura's Gomati district, prompting the district administration to launch emergency response and restoration operations.

Following intense rainfall on Sunday evening, several areas witnessed waterlogging and difficult conditions. Authorities have begun clearing affected roads and working to restore normal vehicular movement.

According to administrative sources, officials from the subdivisional administration, police personnel, various government departments and Civil Defence volunteers have joined the rescue and restoration efforts.

Teams are working to clear roads affected by the rainfall and ensure that communication and transportation services return to normal.

The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) is closely monitoring the situation.

According to the latest information available from the district administration, no major accident or loss of life has been reported so far. However, all concerned departments have been placed on alert to respond to any emergency.

Coordination has been maintained among the administration, police and other agencies to ensure that assistance can be provided without delay if the situation deteriorates.

Meanwhile, residents have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel and remain indoors as far as possible.People have particularly been cautioned against using waterlogged roads, vulnerable stretches and other potentially dangerous locations. Authorities have also urged residents to stay away from overflowing drains, open water channels and areas experiencing strong water currents.Residents have been asked to immediately inform the district administration, police or relevant government departments in case of an emergency.With the possibility of further deterioration due to continued rainfall, the administration has decided to maintain surveillance and emergency response arrangements until conditions improve.

Manipur Government Prioritises Security Before Returning Displaced Families Home, Says Home Minister

IMPHAL

The Manipur government is working towards the rehabilitation of people displaced by the ethnic violence, but their safe return to their homes remains its foremost priority, Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam said on Sunday.

The minister said the government was aware of the hardships faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and was making continuous efforts to facilitate their return. However, the possibility of fresh violence following their return remained a major concern.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the concluding ceremony of the Manipur International Textile Expo, Konthoujam said the government was sympathetic towards displaced families and wanted them to resume normal lives in their respective homes.

"The government is aware of the suffering and difficulties of internally displaced people. Every effort is being made to support them and facilitate their return home. However, there is also a possibility of fresh violence after their return, and that concern has to be taken into account," he said.



Meanwhile, the state government has announced special financial assistance for displaced families ahead of Diwali and Ningol Chakouba, one of the most significant traditional festivals of the Meitei community.

An amount of Rs 5.88 crore has been released from the State Contingency Fund for 58,863 eligible beneficiaries. The funds have already been transferred to the designated accounts of the Deputy Commissioners in 10 districts.

The districts covered under the assistance programme are Imphal West, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Thoubal, Ukhrul, Kakching, Kangpokpi, Tengnoupal, Jiribam and Bishnupur.

The Home Minister said the government wanted displaced families to celebrate Ningol Chakouba like other members of society and did not want them to miss out on the festivities because of their displacement.

Ningol Chakouba is an important family festival among the Meitei community. On the occasion, married women return to their parental homes and spend time with family members over a traditional meal. The festival symbolises the enduring relationship between married daughters and their parental families.

According to figures cited by the state government, at least 306 people have died in the ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities since May 2023, while several people remain missing.

In April this year, the state government had reported that 58,821 people had been displaced by the violence. Separately, clashes between Kuki and Naga communities since February this year have reportedly claimed around 50 lives.

While the festive assistance is expected to provide temporary relief, the larger challenge remains the safe and sustainable rehabilitation of displaced families. Restoring normal life, ensuring security and rebuilding trust among communities remain critical to Manipur's recovery.

Quest!

Research shows that people believe fake news because it's easier than critically evaluating and analysing everything else they've heard.



NATIONAL

1.27 crore Hindu voters deleted from UP electoral rolls, have reached out to EC: CM Yogi Adityanath

LUCKNOW

It is not only the Opposition which is protesting against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and seeking its revocation; even UP CM Yogi Adityanath has raised the issue of the alleged deletion of 1.27 crore Hindu names from the voters' list in UP.

On CM Yogi's initiative, the BJP is reported to have reached out to the Election Commission of India (ECI), claiming that while the number of Muslim voters increased by 1.65 per cent in the state, 1.27 crore Hindus have been excluded from the voters' list.

CM Yogi said the BJP had appealed to the poll body to include those who were left out despite there being evidence of them being voters, and asked how the names of those Hindu voters had gone missing and who was behind it.

Speaking to a Hindi news channel in Ayodhya during Deepotsav, the UP CM lashed out at the Opposition over "false propaganda" on SIR, claiming that SP president Akhilesh Yadav would no longer oppose the SIR or demand its rollback as the number of Muslim voters had increased.

"Ask Akhilesh Yadav to demand the rollback of SIR now. He will not do so because the number of Muslim voters has increased by 1.65% in UP after SIR. And I have spoken about the situation of Hindu voters," Yogi said. "That is why we have given our memorandum to the Election Commission, asking why this happened," the CM said, adding, "I am speaking about those 1.27 crore Hindu voters who have their names in the electoral list of UP panchayat polls, but their names do not exist in the voters' list of ECI."

"How did it happen? Who was behind this? There are 66 lakh such voters; 55 lakh are those Hindu voters who are getting benefits of the government's welfare schemes, but their names are missing from electoral rolls; and 4.5 lakh voters from the 18-19 age group are missing from the electoral rolls," the CM added.

Meanwhile, taking to X, Akhilesh Yadav made three demands regarding the elections.

"Aadhaar card should be linked with voting; metal cards should be provided instead of paper- or plastic-made cards (EPIC) so that fake cards are not made; fingerprints or eye biometrics should be used for identification. Then BJP will not be able to get bogus voting done." Even senior SP leader Udaiveer Singh asked Yogi to back the impeachment motion to remove the CEC if he had any genuine grievance related to SIR.

However, UP Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said he would reply to all queries related to the SIR on November 17, after the draft roll of the special summary revision was released.



Pranab hinted at PM ambitions, shocked me with 'time for change at top' suggestion: Sonia Gandhi



NEW DELHI

Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee hinted at his "long-held desire" to become prime minister during a 2010 conversation with then party chief Sonia Gandhi when he shocked her with the suggestion that perhaps "it was time for a change at the top", according to her memoir.

In the candid "Belonging: A Journey of Love", Gandhi rejects criticism that she was a "back seat driver" during the UPA years. At one point, she writes, she was clear that Manmohan Singh was the prime minister now and, while she could give him her opinion or suggestions as party president, or differ with him, it was her duty to defer to him.

"Further. I was determined not to be under any circumstance the cause of a misunderstanding that could give our opponents occasion to rejoice and weaken our government," she says in the book that hit the stands on Tuesday.

The 526-page book begins with an inscription from the Rig Veda: "Move together, speak together, let your minds be in concord. United be your purpose, harmonious be your hearts, Collected be your thoughts, so that you dwell in togetherness, in wholeness."

According to Gandhi, there was an "unspoken division of responsibility" between the prime minister and her, one that worked smoothly -- "the government under Dr. Manmohan Singh, and the party under me".

While pointing out the separation of powers between the party and government, Gandhi also narrates an anecdote of how Pranab Mukherjee once hinted at his desire to be PM.

"A core group met weekly with the prime minister to ensure coordination between the two. Its other members were Pranab Mukheriee, who had been a minister in Indira Gandhi's cabinet in the 70s; the politically insightful Arjun Singh, a former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh; A K. Anthony, a former chief minister of Kerala: and Ahmed Patel.

"We also met regularly as members of the Strategy Group, set up to discuss issues to be taken up in Parliament. Sometimes Pranab ji, as I always called him, would stay back for a chat," she says.

"He (Pranab) had developed serious differences with the Finance Minister P Chidambaram, and on one occasion, in 2010, I think after expressing his frustration, he shocked me with the suggestion that perhaps it was time for a change at the top, which I understood as a hint of his long-held desire to become prime minister," Gandhi says,.

"I gently changed the subject, and though he may have been disappointed, he never made me feel he held it against me," she adds.

Gandhi goes on to point out that the Congress did nominate Mukherjee in 2012 as the UPA candidate for president, the highest office in the republic, and he was elected.

"I often called on him, mostly just to converse with the erudite and knowledgeable politician that he always remained."

On allegations that she was wielding the real power during the UPA years -- Manmohan Singh was prime minister from 2004-2014 -- Gandhi writes about the "rash of stories" that appeared in the media, some fed by people around the prime minister.

"A decade later, a book was published by one of his former aides, reaffirming the malicious and totally false allegations spread all along by my opponents: that I sent for files from the prime minister's office (PMO), interfered with administrative matters, and made key appointments," she says, rebutting the BJP's oft-repeated charge.

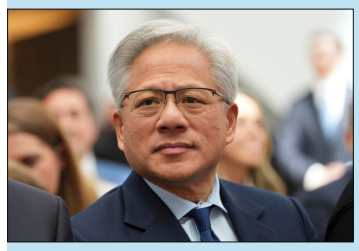
"Though I had been the subject of worse accusations over the years, the fabrication that distressed me most was that I was looking into official files something improper for anyone outside the government. I had always been particular about adhering to rules, all the more so during this period," she says.

The PMO issued a statement categorically denying that official files had ever been shown to me, she says.

"Dr. Manmohan Singh's daughter Upinder Singh in an interview called the book 'nothing but a stab in the back. . . a huge betrayal of trust' and 'a mischievous, unethical exercise'. She affirmed that her father's relationship with me was one of 'mutual trust and respect'. However, the opposition and the media looked for every opportunity to spin the narrative that I was the government's 'back-seat driver'," Gandhi says.

INTERNATIONAL

FBI looking into Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang's affair with alleged Chinese agent: Trump



WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said Monday that the FBI is investigating Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang's affair with an alleged Chinese government agent, but said he doesn't think the executive who has helped to develop artificial intelligence has a reason to worry.

"I know the FBI is looking into it in terms of something else, and I think that he'll be in good shape," Trump said at a White House briefing.

The sudden emergence of Huang's infidelity has rocked the political class and America's tech sector, creating new concerns about whether China has been able to access the cutting-edge chips designed by Nvidia that are powering the development of artificial intelligence.

Trump suggested the extraordinary step of directly involving himself in a counterintelligence investigation, a sign of his friendly relationship with Huang and the possible geopolitical stakes.

"I did speak to him today just to see if he's feeling all right, how you're doing," Trump said. "He said he had absolutely no idea that the person in question was a spy."

Huang — a singular figure in the technology landscape and one of the world's wealthiest people — has acknowledged he had an affair, issuing an apology to his wife and to the company in an open letter posted on Nvidia's website. The New York Times reported that U.S. intelligence determined that the woman was gathering information for Beijing.

"I support the investigation and will cooperate fully. I love our country and our company. I am committed to protecting NVIDIA and supporting America's national security," Huang said in his letter.

Nvidia announced Sunday it was conducting an independent investigation into reports that Huang was the "target of a foreign intelligence effort."

The episode also is attracting congressional scrutiny, with top Democrats Sen. Mark Warner and Rep. Hakeem Jeffries saying Monday they are interested in investigating it further. Jeffries said the Nvidia issue came up during a closed-door session with the CIA director and the Director of National Intelligence that was primarily about Iran.

"We're going to need a full briefing, specifically as it relates to the Nvidia issue, so we can all get to the bottom of what has happened," he said, "and what the implications are in terms of America's national security."

U.S. President Donald Trump stands with NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang, after presenting him with the National Medal of Science during the "A New Golden Age" summit.

Trump is slated to meet next week with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Shenzhen, China, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, but he was noncommittal about bringing up the situation with Xi.

"No, I don't think so," Trump said. "I mean, maybe. I'm sure President XI will ask me about it. I just know Jensen very well. I just think he's a very honorable man."

FBI counterintelligence investigations often examine efforts by foreign powers to spy on the United States, whether by surreptitiously stealing technology designed by American companies, covertly waging foreign influence campaigns aimed at shaping public opinion or cultivating relationships with powerful political and industry figures. Such investigations can take years and do not necessarily culminate in criminal charges. China has been regarded across presidential administrations of both political parties as a persistent counterintelligence threat.

China denied Monday that it engaged in an attempt to ensnare Huang. "The so-called Chinese spy allegation is unsubstantiated. It is nothing but smears against China," Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Guo Jiakun said.

Beijing earlier had dismissed The New York Times report saying Huang had developed a close relationship with a Chinese citizen named Alice Huang, who ran a company that last year faced claims it was illicitly shipping advanced Nvidia computer chips into China.

Huang and Nvidia play a critical role in the artificial intelligence industry as many of the world's leading AI developers rely on the company's specialized chips to power their systems. Huang has also helped persuade Trump to take a lighter touch on regulating AI, arguing that existing laws could cover any security issues stemming from the technology and that individual companies should behave responsibly with the products they develop and release.

Huang also has lobbied Washington to loosen limits on sales of Nvidia chips to China in recent years, winning Trump's approval for selling its H200 chips this year. It's unclear if Beijing would allow Chinese companies to buy those chips in large quantities. Nvidia said in a regulatory filing in August that it has sold only a small amount to China as such sales are restricted by the Chinese government.

The H200 chips are not Nvidia's most cutting-edge models, but they are still advanced. Previously, Huang also lobbied Trump to be allowed to sell Nvidia's less-advanced H20 chips, which were designed to comply with U.S. export restrictions on China.

In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press in June, Huang said: "National security should always be the top concern of all technologies. But having said that, you know, you have to be very specific about the risk that you're concerned about, before setting up policies for export controls."

Nvidia shares dropped more than 4% in trading Monday. Nvidia stock has shed roughly 11% of its value since last Wednesday.

The New York Times said Alice Huang was a former executive of a Singapore-based data center company called Megaspeed International, whose website prominently touts its partnership with Nvidia.

Many offices in Singapore were closed Monday for a holiday. Megaspeed and the Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

Nvidia is one of the world's most valuable publicly traded companies, alongside Apple and Microsoft. Its sales of computer chips to China have at times been targeted by U.S. regulators seeking to limit Beijing's access to such technology.

"The key questions are whether he was aware of any espionage activities and whether any confidential or strategically sensitive information was compromised," said George Chen, a partner and chair of digital practice at The Asia Group, a Washington-based consultancy.

"Those questions require evidence rather than speculation," he added in a text message to reporters.

Chinese media have largely focused on Huang admitting to the affair and state media outlets have mainly echoed the official government line. Some have said the New York Times report was aimed at destabilizing U.S.-China relations.

"Whenever China-US relations begin to improve, there are often those firing shots from the shadows," the state-owned Global Times said.

'The End of Everything' by M John Harrison wins the 2026 Booker Prize for fiction



LONDON

British writer M. John Harrison won the Booker Prize for fiction on Monday for "The End of Everything," a satirical dystopian novel whose themes of "catastrophe and apocalypse" chime with our uneasy times.

It's the first work of science fiction to take the prestigious 50,000 pound ($67,000) literary award, but 81-year-old Harrison said he doesn't want to be hemmed in by the sci-fi label.

He said Booker recognition after six decades as an author shows that the era of "genres as fences and boxes, pigeonholes, is over."

"I think this book shows, and the prize now shows, that it is very possible to write a book that mixes not just two genres, but three or four," Harrison told reporters at a post-ceremony news conference.

Harrison beat five other finalists including previous winners Douglas Stuart and Marlon James, who had been the odds-makers' favorites, and Pulitzer Prize laureate Elizabeth Strout.

"The End of Everything" is set on England's Channel coast in the near future, after an unspecified calamity has shattered society and brought an influx of enigmatic alien entities to Britain. It centers on a beachcomber who lives with his gun-toting aunt and discovers a puzzling, shape-shifting artifact on the shore.

Asked what he wanted to convey to readers, Harrison said: "It's a grim world, and it'll keep on being grim. And it's weird. But at the end of things there may be some kind of — I wouldn't say hope, or closure, but there might be some kind of relief."

Critics have praised the book's dark humor, though some have been confused by its elusive narrative.

Historian Mary Beard, who chaired the judging panel, said the book is "the politics of now seen through the lens of the future," and about a society "undergoing a catastrophe that they don't really understand."

"What he does is to say, when the catastrophe comes, you won't know what's happening," Beard said. "And there are bits where you, the reader, are with the characters in not fully understanding. Now, I think that's fantastically exciting." Harrison spent years working for the speculative fiction magazine New Worlds, and he won the Arthur C. Clarke science fiction award for a previous novel, "Nova Swing." Although borders between publishing genres are increasingly blurred, it's still rare for a work of sci-fi to win a major literary prize.

Harrison said before he won that he had been "working for 40 to 50 years to shift the balance, both as a novelist and as a critic. Why shouldn't a well-written (work of science fiction) be considered to be literary fiction?"

He said after winning that the publishing industry had done nothing to break down barriers between categories.

"There's almost no point these days in writing your own book, because it will be framed as something else to sell it," he said. "To a degree, that's quite offensive" to the author.

He said the validation of the Booker Prize "gives you permission to be what you are, without a label stuck on your forehead."

Booker Prize Foundation chief executive Gaby Wood noted that the prize has removed references to "literary fiction" from its materials, because "all fiction is literary."

Beard said Harrison's win was "recognition of what some people would see as the blindingly obvious, that you find great books in every genre."

Founded in 1969, the Booker Prize is open to English-language novels from any country published in the U.K. and Ireland and has a reputation for transforming writers' careers.

Its winners have included Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan and Arundhati Roy. Last year's winner was "Flesh" by Hungarian-British writer David Szalay. Harrison is the oldest writer to win the Booker, two years older than Margaret Atwood when she won in 2019. "The End of Everything" is his 13th novel. But Beard said the prize was definitely "not a lifetime achievement award."

"We thought this was a book that had earned it," Beard said.

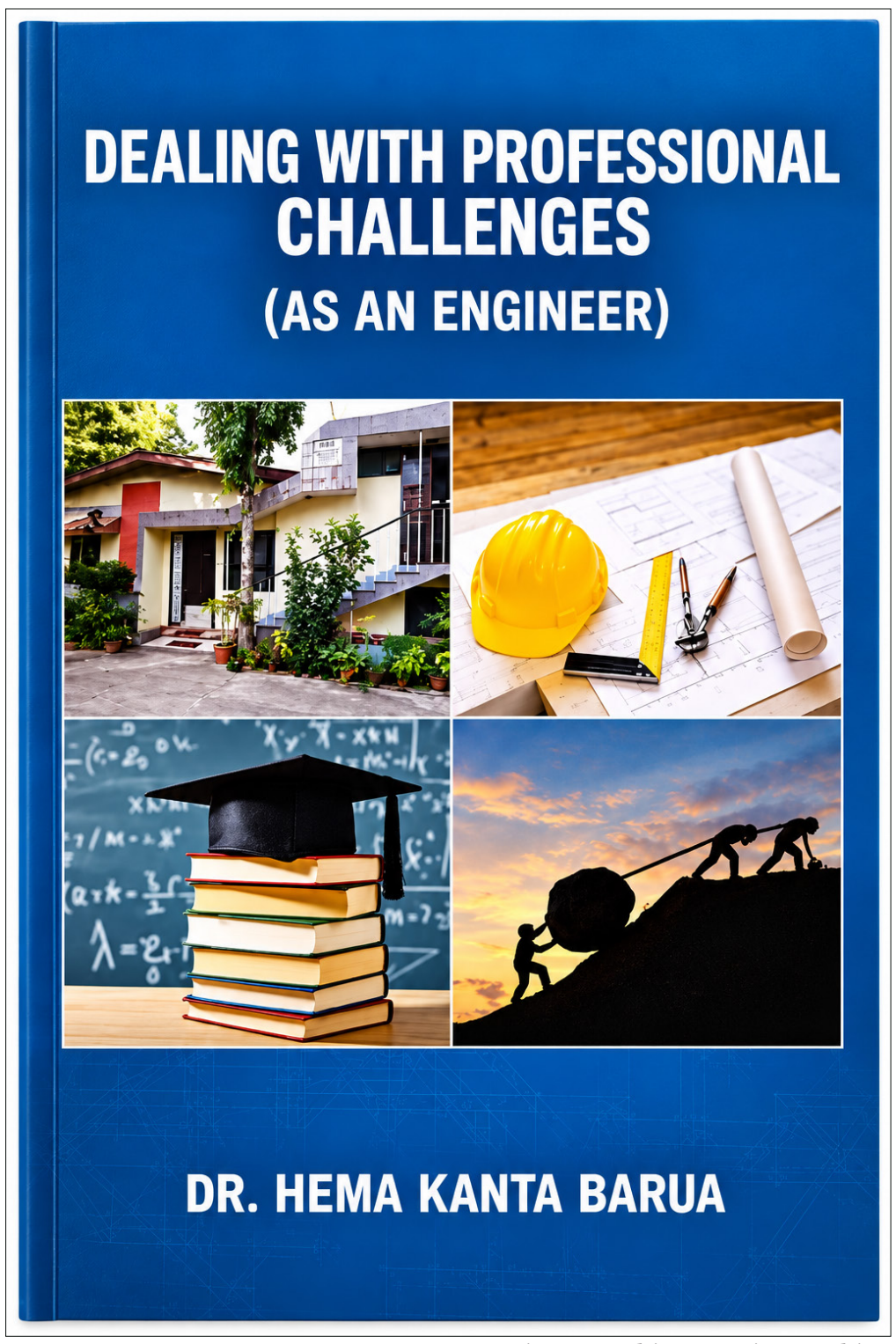
She said the judges, who included poet Raymond Antrobus and singer Jarvis Cocker from the band Pulp, met for four or five hours to pick a winner, and the choice was ultimately unanimous.

As for what he plans to do with the prize money, Harrison said: "I think I'll probably spend it on repairs to the house. Because being an author means your house is falling down all the time."

BOOK REVIEW

Dealing with Professional Challenges as an Engineer

A Journey of Engineering Excellence, Professional Integrity and Lifelong Learning





About the book:

This book reflects the professional life of a civil engineer with reference to different challenges the author had to deal with, while trying to live a life of values. The contents of different chapters of the book will expectedly encourage the younger generation of practising and budding engineers to uphold the professional ethics and integrity to lead a life of satisfaction and achievements.

About the Author:

Dr. H. Barua is a civil engineer, being specialised in structural engineering with a Ph. D. obtained half a century back from IIT, Kharagpur. His salient achievements include the following-

(a) He published a number of research papers in both national & international journals.

(b) This is his third book. The first book published in 2025 is A Journey through the Construction Industry (ISBN: 978-93-48892-09-6), while the second one titled Urban Flooding & Rainwater Harvesting (ISBN: 978-93-48892-56-0) was also published in 2025.

(c) Apart from the books and papers (as stated above), he published and edited a technical news-record popularly known as the Construction Tribune during the period from 1982 to 1995.

(d) He floated his own consultancy company named RGT Consulting Engineers Pvt. Ltd. in 1988. This private limited company is still alive.

(e) Dr. Barua participated in a number of international events too. These events include- the UN Commission Colloquium on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Vienna, the IGCC Delegation to Germany for study of energy efficiencies in buildings and Sixth World Conference on Earthquake Engineering.

BY DIPAK CHAKRAVARTY

Retired Managing Director, Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)

Dr. Hema Kanta Barua's third book, Dealing with Professional Challenges as an Engineer, is an absorbing and insightful account of a distinguished professional journey, enriched by decades of practical experience, academic excellence and an unwavering commitment to professional ethics. Written with remarkable clarity and sincerity, the book goes beyond the conventional boundaries of engineering literature to offer valuable lessons in professional responsibility, perseverance, leadership and lifelong learning.

As a technocrat myself, I read the book with immense interest and found it difficult to put down. Dr. Barua has presented his experiences in such an engaging and lucid manner that the reader is drawn into the challenges, decisions and achievements that have shaped his professional life. His observations are not merely recollections of an accomplished engineer but constitute a valuable body of knowledge for practising professionals, aspiring engineers and even readers without a technical background.

One of the most compelling aspects of the book is its emphasis on professional ethics. At a time when ethical considerations are increasingly being compromised across different spheres of professional activity, Dr. Barua's experiences offer a timely reminder that technical competence must always be accompanied by integrity, accountability and a strong sense of responsibility. These lessons are particularly relevant to younger generations entering professions where decisions can have far-reaching consequences for society.

The book also provides fascinating insights into structural engineering, a discipline fundamental to the safety, reliability and sustainability of the built environment. Drawing upon his extensive teaching and professional experience, Dr. Barua explains several critical aspects of structural engineering with admirable precision and accessibility. His academic journey, culminating in doctoral research on a challenging engineering subject at an internationally reputed institution, reflects his intellectual dedication and commitment to advancing technical knowledge.

Equally inspiring is the account of his professional career, beginning with his association with tea research and extending through the various responsibilities he discharged until his superannuation. The diversity of his experiences demonstrates how an engineer's professional life is shaped not only by technical challenges but also by institutional responsibilities, human relationships, administrative decisions and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Particularly noteworthy is his initiative in conceiving The Construction Tribune, which reflected his vision of creating a platform for sharing technical knowledge, practical experience and professional insights. Such initiatives demonstrate his belief that knowledge acquires greater significance when it is disseminated for the benefit of the wider professional community and future generations.

His contributions to engineering education are equally significant. Students at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) have had the privilege of benefiting not only from his command of technical subjects but also from the wisdom accumulated over a lifetime of professional engagement. The combination of academic knowledge and practical experience that he brings to teaching is an invaluable resource for young engineers.

Having followed an academic and professional path with several similarities to that of Dr. Barua, I found many of his observations personally relatable. I also recall with great appreciation his address as the guest speaker at Numaligarh on the occasion of Engineers' Day, when I was serving as Director (Technical) at Numaligarh Refinery Limited. His deliberations on that occasion reflected the same depth of knowledge, clarity of thought and commitment to the engineering profession that are evident throughout this book.

With three published books to his credit, Dr. Barua has made a substantial contribution to the documentation and dissemination of engineering knowledge and professional experience. His writings serve as a bridge between generations, preserving valuable lessons from the past while offering guidance for the challenges of the future.Dealing with Professional Challenges as an Engineer deserves particular attention from structural engineers, construction professionals, engineering educators and students. However, its relevance extends well beyond the engineering fraternity. The book offers broader insights into how professional challenges can be approached with knowledge, sound judgement, ethical conviction and determination.

What makes this work especially valuable is its ability to combine technical substance with the human dimensions of professional life. Dr. Barua has succeeded in transforming his personal experiences into a meaningful educational resource, written in language that even a non-engineer can appreciate and enjoy.I have personally gained much from reading this book, both in terms of structural engineering knowledge and the larger principles that should guide professional conduct. It is a work that deserves a place in the libraries of engineering institutions and in the personal collections of professionals who believe that learning must continue throughout life.

I warmly congratulate Dr. Hema Kanta Barua on this significant literary and professional contribution. I wish him continued good health and many more years of intellectual engagement, writing and service to the engineering community.

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