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Delhi-Guwahati Bullet Train Vision: Himanta Projects Under-Eight-Hour Journey to Northeast

Proposed 1,500-km corridor would connect 10 cities, with Guwahati as its eastern endpoint; project vision raises prospects as well as questions over execution

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

GUWAHATI: Bringing the Northeast closer to India's major economic centres through high-speed rail has emerged as the central theme of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's proposed Delhi-Guwahati bullet train corridor. The plan, if taken forward, could place Guwahati at the eastern end of a 1,500-km high-speed railway network connecting 10 cities across northern and eastern India.

Sharing the proposal on X, Sarma said the proposed Northern Bullet Train Corridor, envisaged from Delhi towards Siliguri, could be extended to Guwahati. He projected a journey time of less than eight hours between Delhi and the Assam capital, compared with the more than 30 hours currently required by conventional train services.



The proposed route would pass through Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Patna and Siliguri before reaching Guwahati. Such a connection could give the Northeast faster access to major urban and commercial centres while strengthening passenger movement between the region and the rest of the country.

For Assam, the potential significance goes beyond reducing travel time. Sarma has highlighted the possibility of improved trade, business opportunities and tourism, arguing that better connectivity could contribute to the Northeast's economic growth. He has also suggested that fares could be lower than air travel, making the proposed service a possible alternative for long-distance passengers.The inclusion of Siliguri and Guwahati in the proposed corridor is particularly important for the Northeast, where geographical constraints and dependence on a limited number of major transport links have long shaped connectivity challenges. A high-speed rail connection could, in principle, strengthen the region's integration with the national transport network.

Sarma has also linked the proposal to national integration and strategic connectivity, placing the project within a broader vision of improving access to the country's northeastern frontier.

But the ambitious proposal now faces a more fundamental question: how soon can the vision translate into a concrete infrastructure project? The Chief Minister's announcement did not specify whether the corridor has received formal approval, nor did it provide details on funding, technical feasibility, construction schedules or the agencies responsible for implementation.

Until these questions are addressed, the under-eight-hour Delhi-Guwahati journey remains a projection rather than a confirmed travel prospect. For the Northeast, the larger test will be whether the proposed high-speed connection becomes part of a funded national rail plan or remains an ambitious connectivity vision.

PERSPECTIVE

Everyone wants happiness. No one wants pain. But you can't have a rainbow, without a little rain.

163 LIC Policies Under ED Scanner in Rs 2.40-Crore Case Against Retired OIL Engineer

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

GUWAHATI: A network of 163 life insurance policies has come under the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) scrutiny in an alleged money-laundering case involving a retired Oil India Limited (OIL) engineer and his wife, with the agency claiming that proceeds of crime worth around Rs 2.40 crore were routed through insurance and other financial transactions.

The ED has filed a prosecution complaint against Karun Jyoti Baruah, a retired Superintending Engineer (Civil) at OIL's Duliajan establishment, and his wife, Jonali Baruah, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

The complaint was filed by the agency's Guwahati Zonal Office-I on November 13 before the Special Court (PMLA), Additional CBI Court No. 1, Assam, in Guwahati. The ED announced the development on November 16.

According to the agency, the alleged financial irregularities were linked to a disproportionate assets case registered earlier by the CBI's Anti-Corruption Branch in Guwahati. The CBI had accused Baruah of accumulating assets worth approximately Rs 2.40 crore beyond his known sources of income during the period from April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019. The alleged excess assets were assessed at 95.30 per cent of his known income. The CBI subsequently filed a chargesheet against both accused.

The ED's investigation has focused on how the alleged proceeds were introduced into the formal financial system. The agency claims that life insurance policies purchased in the names of Baruah, his wife and their dependent children were used as a principal channel.

WHO SAID WHAT



Fastest time to limbo skate under descending poles over 50 m 6.86 seconds by Shrishti Dharmendra Sharma ~ Guinness World Records

Shillong becomes a window to European cinema as 21-country film festival explores cultural ties with Northeast



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

SHILLONG: Shillong has turned into a meeting point for European cinema, with films from 21 countries being screened across the city as part of the 31st European Union Film Festival. The festival, which began on November 12, will continue until November 18, marking its first edition in the Meghalaya capital.

Organised by the Delegation of the European Union to India in collaboration with EU member states and the Asian Confluence Centre, the festival is seeking to build stronger cultural and creative links between Europe and Northeast India.

The official inauguration took place on November 13 with a screening of Dutch comedy-drama Jippie No More!, directed by Margien Rogaar.

The screenings are being hosted at four venues: the Asian Confluence Centre (The Habitat), Lady Keane College, St Edmund's College and KL Bajoria College.

The 21-film programme features productions from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

Among the films on the schedule are Austria's Rose, Bulgaria's Bring Me Home, Denmark's The Last Viking, Finland's Stormskerry Maja, France's The Richest Woman in the World, Germany's 22 Lengths, Ireland's animated feature Wolfwalkers, Latvia's Maria's Silence and Spain's Sirat.

European Union Ambassador to India Jean-Eric Paquet attended the inauguration alongside Irène Mingasson, Head of Unit, Foreign Policy Instruments, and Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director of Asian Confluence. Vijay Kumar, Commissioner and Secretary to the Meghalaya government, was also present.

The festival's wider cultural agenda was reflected in a discussion titled Beyond Borders: Exploring Synergies Between Europe and Northeast India, held ahead of the opening ceremony. Participants explored how cinema and the arts could strengthen cultural connections and create opportunities for collaboration between European and regional creative communities.

Paquet said bringing the festival to Shillong for the first time was part of the EU's effort to take European cinema beyond major metropolitan centres and reach audiences across India. He also highlighted the Northeast's growing creative ecosystem and the scope for greater interaction between European and regional filmmakers and artists.

The Shillong edition will conclude on November 18. The festival will then move to New Delhi from November 24 to December 4, with Pune also scheduled to host screenings in December.

Beyond the film screenings, the Shillong edition offers an opportunity to bring regional audiences, students and creative professionals into closer contact with European cinema and artistic traditions.

Manipur Electoral Roll Adds 33,737 Voters Ahead of 2027 Assembly Polls

IMPHAL

Manipur has added 33,737 voters to its electoral roll, taking the total electorate to 19.94 lakh, as preparations gather pace for the Assembly elections expected in March 2027.According to the latest draft electoral roll released following the Election Commission's Special Summary Revision (SSR), the state's electorate has increased by 1.72 per cent from 19.60 lakh recorded in the final electoral list published after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).The increase comes as Manipur joins Goa, Punjab and Uttarakhand in the run-up to Assembly elections scheduled early next year. The terms of the four state Assemblies are due to expire on different dates in March 2027.Among the four poll-bound states, Uttarakhand recorded the highest increase in absolute numbers, adding 1.19 lakh electors.

Its electorate rose by 1.66 per cent to 72.78 lakh from 71.58 lakh.Goa registered the highest percentage growth, with 31,815 additional voters, representing a 3.01 per cent increase. The state's electorate now stands at 10.89 lakh, compared with 10.57 lakh in the previous final roll.Punjab, in contrast, reported no change in its electorate, which remained at 2.01 crore in the latest integrated draft roll.Together, the four states added approximately 1.84 lakh electors compared with their respective final electoral rolls published after the SIR exercise.Meanwhile, the Election Commission is scheduled to publish the Integrated Draft Roll (IDR) for Uttar Pradesh on November 23. The state's electorate stood at 13.39 crore in the final SIR roll, down from 15.44 crore before the revision.

The electoral roll revision is part of the Election Commission's preparations for the forthcoming Assembly elections. The poll panel had earlier indicated that elections in Manipur, Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh could be held early next year while announcing the SSR exercise across 17 states and Union territories.

RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat to Visit Conflict-Hit Manipur, Review Organisational Activities



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat is scheduled to arrive in Imphal on November 18 for a three-day visit to Manipur, where he will review the organisation's activities and social initiatives amid the continuing impact of the state's prolonged ethnic conflict.

According to an official RSS statement, Bhagwat will remain in Manipur until November 20 and assess the progress of the Sangh's organisational programmes and social service initiatives across the state.

A key focus of the visit will be a review of activities undertaken in Manipur as part of the RSS centenary celebrations, marking 100 years since the organisation was established in 1925.

Discussions are also expected to cover future programmes under the RSS's 'Panch Parivartan' initiative, which seeks to promote five areas of social transformation.

During his stay, Bhagwat is scheduled to interact with RSS functionaries and volunteers in the state. He is also expected to encourage them to strengthen the organisation's relief and service activities, particularly in view of the continuing humanitarian and social challenges arising from the Manipur conflict.

The visit comes at a time when Manipur continues to grapple with the consequences of the ethnic violence that erupted in May 2023. Although the RSS statement does not specify any separate political or peace-related engagements, the proposed review of relief and social initiatives gives the visit added significance in the state's current circumstances.

The three-day programme forms part of the organisation's nationwide activities marking its centenary year.

Guwahati gears up for Guns N' Roses concert as November gloom gives way to rock fever

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomes the iconic American band, saying 'Paradise City has a new address, and it's called Guwahati'

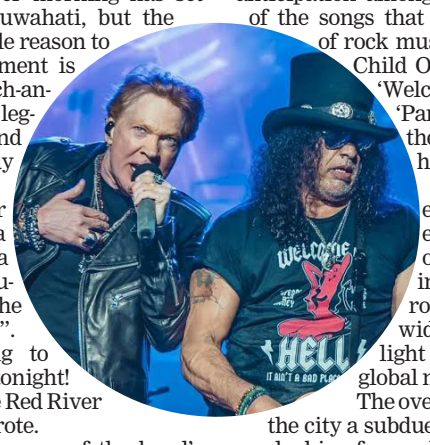
KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

GUWAHATI:A grey November morning has set a gloomy tone across Guwahati, but the city's music fans have little reason to feel subdued. The excitement is building ahead of the much-anticipated performance by legendary American rock band Guns N' Roses on Tuesday night.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomed the band in a post on X, describing Guwahati as the land of the "Red River and Blue Hills".

"Guwahati is waiting to enjoy your performance tonight! Welcome to the land of the Red River and Blue Hills!" Sarma wrote.

He also borrowed from one of the band's best-known anthems to add a local twist to the welcome. "Paradise City has a new address tonight, and it's called Guwahati. Are you ready for an Axl-ently legendary night?" he posted, referring to frontman Axl Rose.



The concert has generated considerable anticipation among fans eager to hear some of the songs that have defined generations of rock music. Tracks such as 'Sweet Child O' Mine', 'November Rain', 'Welcome to the Jungle' and 'Paradise City' remain among the band's most recognisable hits.

For Guwahati, however, the significance of the event goes beyond a night of live music. Hosting an internationally recognised rock act puts the city and the wider Northeast in the spotlight as destinations for major global music performances.

The overcast skies may have given the city a subdued start to the day, but fans are looking forward to an evening dominated by guitars, familiar anthems and nostalgia.

With the countdown underway, Guwahati is preparing to trade its November gloom for a night of rock and roll.

Two Tripura residents held with heroin worth Rs 1.05 crore in Cachar train operation



SILCHAR

Two passengers travelling from Silchar to Agartala were arrested after Assam Rifles and Cachar Police recovered 151 grams of suspected heroin, estimated to be worth Rs 1.05 crore, during a joint operation in Cachar district.

The operation was conducted near Arunachal Junction in the Masimpur area, where the joint team intercepted the two passengers travelling by train towards Agartala.

During a search, officials recovered 151 grams of heroin concealed inside 13 soap cases. A mobile phone was also seized.

The two arrested persons are residents of West Tripura district. They were subsequently handed over to Cachar Police along with the seized contraband for further investigation and legal action.

Investigators are expected to examine the source of the narcotics, their intended destination and whether the arrested passengers were part of a wider trafficking network. Officials have not yet disclosed further details about the suspected supply chain.

The seizure highlights the continued use of railway routes for alleged narcotics transportation across the Northeast.

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HASINA'S EXTRADITION

New Delhi must balance treaty obligations and legal safeguards with its wider strategic interests, while Dhaka must ensure that the demand for accountability does not derail cooperation with its largest neighbour.

The demand for the extradition of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has emerged as one of the most difficult challenges in India-Bangladesh relations. What began as a legal request has evolved into a sensitive diplomatic issue, testing the ability of both countries to separate a contentious political dispute from a partnership built over decades.

India has so far maintained that Hasina's extradition is a legal matter and will be dealt with accordingly. Responding to a question at a media briefing on November 10, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal reiterated that New Delhi would consider the request within the applicable legal framework.

The carefully worded response neither accepted nor rejected Dhaka's demand. It reflected India's attempt to avoid an immediate political commitment while keeping the issue within the framework of the bilateral extradition treaty and domestic law.

That cautious approach is understandable. But it also highlights the larger diplomatic dilemma: how can India address Bangladesh's demand without compromising legal principles, damaging its relationship with the country's new leadership or undermining its own strategic interests in the neighbourhood?

The India-Bangladesh extradition treaty, signed in January 2013 and brought into force in October that year, provides for the mutual transfer of individuals accused, convicted or wanted for trial in extraditable offences. The agreement was amended in 2016 and generally covers offences punishable by imprisonment of at least one year under the laws of both countries.

However, extradition is not automatic. The treaty provides safeguards and grounds for refusal. Article 6 allows exceptions for offences of a political character, although serious crimes such as murder, culpable homicide, kidnapping and certain terrorism-related offences are excluded from that category. Article 8 also permits refusal in circumstances where extradition could be unjust or oppressive, including cases in which the request is not made in good faith in the interests of justice.

These provisions assume particular importance in Hasina's case. The allegations against her are linked to the violent suppression of the student-led uprising in July and August 2024, which eventually brought down her government.

In November 2025, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal sentenced Hasina to death in absentia over the crackdown. She has denied wrongdoing and challenged the legitimacy of the proceedings. The United Nations has estimated that around 1,400 people were killed during the suppression of the protests.

For India, therefore, the question is not simply whether an extradition request has been submitted. New Delhi must examine the treaty provisions, the circumstances of the proceedings and the requirements of Indian law before taking a decision.

Hasina's reported efforts to obtain a new Bangladeshi passport and national identity documents have added another dimension to the debate. But the issuance of travel documents and extradition are separate legal and administrative processes. Neither automatically determines the other.

From strategic partnership to diplomatic friction

The political context makes the issue even more complicated.

For more than a decade, India and Bangladesh expanded cooperation in security, counterterrorism, trade, energy and regional connectivity under Hasina's leadership. Dhaka played an important role in addressing insurgent groups operating in India's Northeast, while bilateral initiatives strengthened railway and road links, inland waterways, electricity trade and economic exchanges.

Hasina's departure from Bangladesh in August 2024 following the political upheaval transformed that relationship. The interim administration led by Muhammad Yunus adopted a more critical approach towards New Delhi, with Hasina's continued presence in India becoming a recurring source of tension. Dhaka also objected to public statements made by the former prime minister from Indian territory.

The formation of a government led by Tarique Rahman has opened a new chapter in Bangladesh's politics. Yet the extradition demand remains an obstacle to rebuilding mutual confidence.

For Dhaka, bringing Hasina back is both a legal and domestic political priority. For New Delhi, rejecting the demand outright could deepen mistrust, while agreeing to an unconditional transfer could raise serious legal and diplomatic concerns.

Neither side can afford to allow the dispute to define the entire relationship.

India and Bangladesh share a border of approximately 4,096 kilometres, making cooperation essential for border security, the prevention of human trafficking, smuggling, illegal cross-border networks and other transnational crimes.

Bangladesh's cooperation is also important for India's security interests in the Northeast. The two countries have made considerable progress in addressing insurgent networks and improving cross-border connectivity. Any deterioration in political relations could complicate these arrangements.

The economic relationship is equally significant. Bangladesh is India's largest trading partner in South Asia, while India is one of Bangladesh's major trading partners in Asia. Railway connections, road networks, inland waterways, access to ports and electricity trade have strengthened economic integration.

For India's northeastern states, these links are particularly valuable. They offer access to regional markets and the Bay of Bengal, helping reduce geographical isolation and creating opportunities for trade and investment.Energy cooperation, including India's electricity supplies to Bangladesh, is another important component of the relationship. A prolonged diplomatic crisis could affect confidence in these arrangements and discourage future economic engagement.

The extradition dispute is unfolding alongside other unresolved bilateral issues, particularly water-sharing.

The 1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty, signed for 30 years, is due to expire on December 12, 2026. Its renewal requires sustained negotiations, given the river's importance to agriculture, irrigation and livelihoods in Bangladesh and eastern India.

Cooperation through the Joint Rivers Commission on other transboundary rivers must also continue. Allowing political tensions to obstruct these discussions could create additional difficulties for communities on both sides of the border.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted.

- Randy Pausch

The Founder Trap: When a Corporate Giant Becomes Too Dependent on One Leader





PRASAD KAIPA

How does a company built on extraordinary innovation prepare itself for a future without the person who led its rise? And what happens when the leader becomes so central to the organisation that even a change at the top creates uncertainty across the business?

These questions have acquired fresh significance following the reported resignation of Jensen Huang as chief executive of Nvidia on November 12. Huang, who transformed the graphics-chip manufacturer into a global powerhouse at the centre of the artificial intelligence revolution, stepped down amid reports concerning his personal conduct and possible national security implications. Chief Financial Officer Colette Kress has taken over as interim CEO.

Huang has acknowledged infidelity and apologised to his family, employees and shareholders. Reports alleging links to Chinese intelligence remain under investigation and should not be treated as established facts.

The immediate controversy may concern an individual, but the larger issue is institutional: has Nvidia built a leadership structure strong enough to function independently of its founder?

The price of having an indispensable leader

Founders often become the driving force behind their companies. Their vision, instinct and willingness to take risks can help transform small enterprises into global businesses. In the early stages, centralised decision-making may even be an advantage.

But as a company expands, the same leadership model can become a constraint.

When a founder remains involved in nearly every major decision, senior executives may gradually lose the authority to act independently. Employees learn to seek approval from one person, while the board may become accustomed to trusting the founder's judgement.

Over time, the organisation develops a dangerous dependence on an individual rather than on systems, institutions and collective leadership.

This is not necessarily a question of incompetence. It is often the unintended consequence of prolonged success.

Nvidia's governance question

Huang's leadership style was unconventional. More than 60 executives reportedly reported directly to him, reflecting a relatively flat organisational structure. He was also said to have resisted conventional succession planning.

Until the recent leadership change, Nvidia did not have a chairman, although it had an independent lead director. Some board members had longstanding connections with early investors and business partners. Huang's two children also held senior positions, though neither reported directly to him.

These arrangements do not establish wrongdoing, nor do they diminish the achievements of a leadership approach that helped Nvidia become one of the world's most influential technology companies.

However, they raise an important governance question: when a company becomes globally significant, can its leadership structure continue to revolve so heavily around one person?

A board's responsibility is not simply to support a successful founder. It must ensure that the company can withstand leadership transitions, manage conflicts of interest and make difficult decisions without depending on the founder's personal intervention.

When success creates its own blind spots

For nearly three decades, I have worked with corporate leaders on an idea I call Core Incompetence. It describes how a strength that repeatedly produces success can gradually become a weakness when leaders become too attached to the formula that worked in the past.

A founder who builds a company through quick, centralised decisions may find it difficult to delegate as the business grows. Executives become accustomed to waiting for instructions, and the founder begins to believe that personal involvement is essential to every important decision.

The company continues to perform well, reinforcing the very behaviour that may eventually limit its institutional capacity.

This is how success can create blind spots. Leaders may confuse their personal effectiveness with the organisation's long-term health.

The danger is not limited to founders. Boards, too, can become victims of their own success. Longstanding trust in a chief executive can provide continuity, but it can also discourage independent questioning. When a board becomes reluctant to challenge the person responsible for the company's achievements, oversight risks turning into endorsement.

What corporate history tells us

The collapse of institutions rarely follows a single pattern. Some crises result from deliberate misconduct, while others emerge from poor risk management, excessive dependence on a business model or the failure to question powerful individuals.

Volkswagen's emissions scandal showed how technical excellence could coexist with corporate deception. Wells Fargo's unauthorised account scandal exposed the consequences of aggressive targets and a culture that failed to protect customers. India's Satyam scandal demonstrated how the falsification of accounts could destroy confidence in an established company.

Silicon Valley Bank's collapse in 2023 offered a different warning. Inadequate risk management and governance failures undermined an institution that had appeared successful.

These examples are not equivalent to the unresolved allegations surrounding Huang. They nevertheless demonstrate that a company's reputation and performance cannot substitute for strong institutional safeguards.

The real test of leadership is succession

Succession planning is often treated as an administrative exercise, to be addressed when a chief executive retires or becomes unable to continue. In reality, it is one of the most important responsibilities of corporate leadership.

A company that cannot identify and prepare credible successors has failed to convert individual leadership into institutional strength.

The question is particularly important for technology companies, where rapid innovation, global competition and geopolitical pressures can make leadership continuity critical. A sudden leadership transition can unsettle employees, investors, customers and strategic partners.

Nvidia's appointment of its first chairman following a period under an independent lead director has renewed attention to the role of board oversight. The company now faces the challenge of ensuring that its governance structure is equipped for a future in which leadership cannot be assumed to remain unchanged.

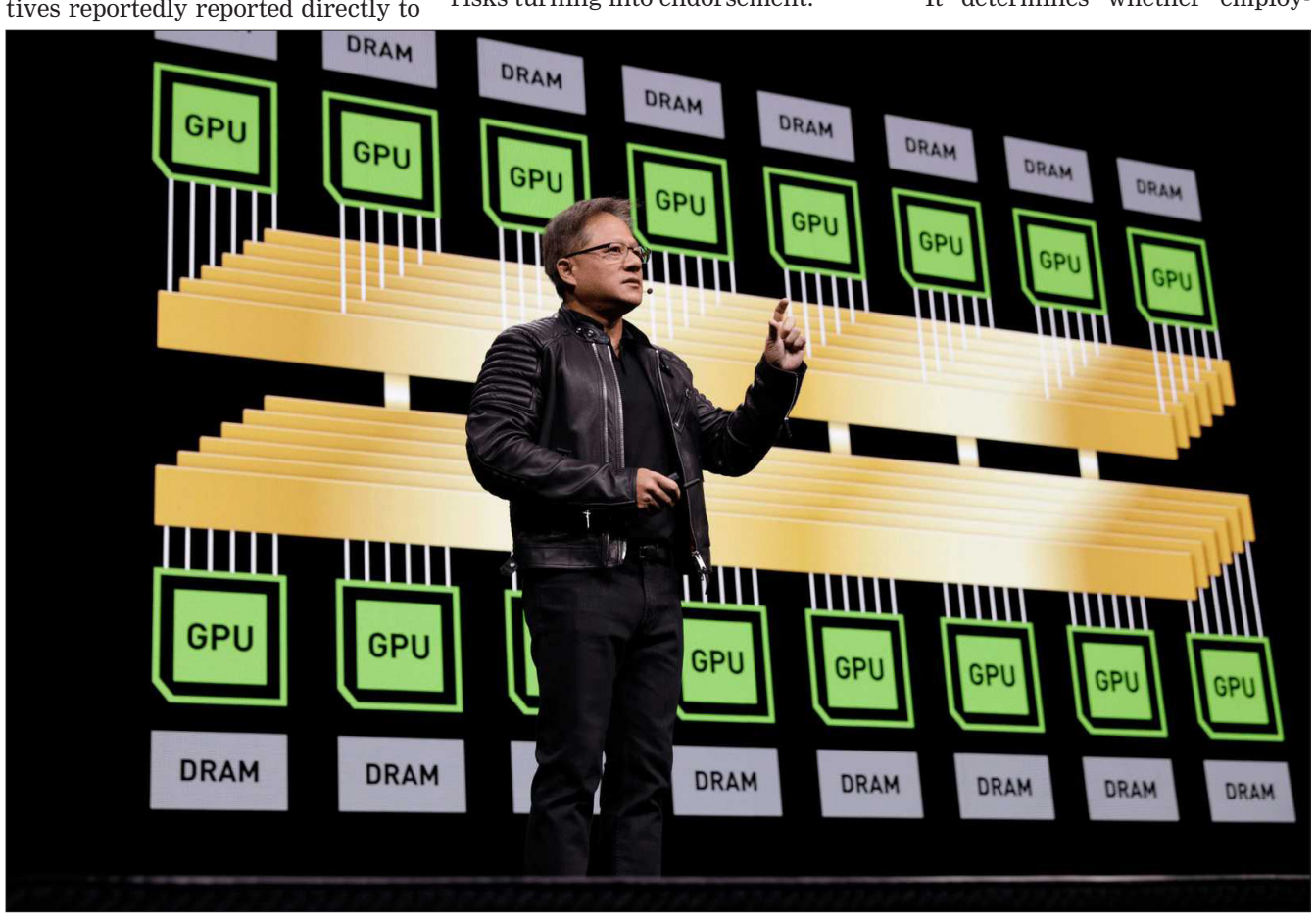
Ethics must be built into the organisation

There is also a deeper cultural issue. What a leader repeatedly rewards, tolerates and ignores gradually becomes what I call Organizational DNA.

It determines whether employees can question authority, whether conflicts of interest are addressed and whether accountability applies equally to everyone, including the most powerful executive.

A company may celebrate transparency and independent thinking in its public statements. But if employees are afraid to challenge senior leadership, those values have little meaning in practice.

The distinction between personal conduct and corporate responsibility is not always clear-cut. When a chief executive's personal relationships involve workplace power or potential conflicts of interest, the board has a duty to examine the implications. The objective should not be to judge private lives, but to protect fairness, accountability and institutional integrity.



DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

In a landmark display of visionary leadership and deep empathy for the youth, Chief Minister Shri Suvendu Adhikariis championing a progressive reform by completely abolishing application fees for government job examinations.
Recognizing the heavy financial strain on aspirants, where lakhs apply for limited seats, Chief Minister Shri Suvendu Adhikari's decision to revoke the application fees on state government exams, ensures that financial barriers will never again crush a deserving youngster's dreams again! ~ BJP, West Bengal



From intelligence to discernment

The Bhagavad Gita distinguishes between jñ?na, or knowledge, and buddhi, or discernment. Knowledge helps leaders understand opportunities. Discernment enables them to recognise what should be done, what should be avoided and when their own decisions may cause harm.

In From Smart to Wise, Navi Radjou and I argued that intelligence and professional achievement do not automatically produce wisdom. Wise leaders recognise the limits of their own capabilities and build organisations around a purpose larger than individual ambition.

For a founder, this means understanding that leadership is not about remaining indispensable. It is about creating people, systems and institutions that can function effectively without constant personal supervision.The most successful founders must eventually confront a difficult question: am I building a company that needs me forever, or an institution that can thrive without me?

The issue has particular relevance for India, where founder-led businesses are expanding rapidly and entering global markets. Many have been built around the vision and personality of a single entrepreneur.

That model can deliver impressive results, but long-term sustainability requires more than a charismatic founder. Independent boards, transparent decision-making, credible succession plans and protection for employees who raise concerns are essential.

Corporate governance should not be viewed as a burden imposed on successful businesses. It is the framework that protects their achievements from becoming dependent on the fortunes, judgement or personal choices of one individual.

A legacy bigger than the founder

The Nvidia episode is still developing. Huang's achievements remain significant, and allegations that have not been established must be treated with caution. But the questions it raises about founder dependence and corporate governance will remain relevant long after the immediate controversy fades.

A founder may create a company through personal vision and determination. But the true measure of leadership is whether that company can preserve its values, make sound decisions and continue to innovate after the founder steps away.

The ultimate test of a corporate leader is not how indispensable they become, but how well they prepare the institution to succeed without them.

Kaziranga Crash: Assam Orders Two-Week Probe, Suspends Golaghat DTO After 26 Deaths

Additional Chief Secretary K C Samria to examine possible administrative lapses and submit findings; around 15 injured passengers remain under treatment



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

GUWAHATI : The Assam government has ordered a high-level inquiry into the road accident near Kaziranga National Park that killed 26 people on November 13 and suspended Golaghat District Transport Officer Rajib Pegu over alleged lapses in administrative supervision.

Additional Chief Secretary K C Samria, an IAS officer, will lead the fact-finding inquiry and submit his report within two weeks, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said on Tuesday.

The inquiry will examine whether any administrative lapses, negligence or shortcomings in enforcement contributed to the accident.

The suspension of Pegu follows what the CMO described as an apparent lack of effective administrative supervision.

The accident occurred on November 13 when a minibus collided head-on with a container truck near Kaziranga National Park. Twenty-six people, including women and minors, were killed, while 20 others sustained injuries.

Around 15 injured passengers are still undergoing treatment. One is admitted to Assam Medical College and Hospital in Dibrugarh, while the remaining patients are being treated at Jorhat Medical College and Hospital.

The inquiry is expected to examine the administrative and enforcement-related aspects surrounding the accident and identify responsibility, if any, for lapses.

Following the tragedy, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced an ex gratia payment of Rs 9 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased victim. The amount includes Rs 2 lakh from the Centre.

With the inquiry now underway, the focus will be on whether the tragedy could have been prevented through more effective transport regulation and administrative oversight.

Two Killed, Two Seriously Injured as Scooter Carrying Four Crashes in Assam's Sribhumi



SRIBHUMI

Two people were killed and two others seriously injured after a scooter carrying four persons crashed at Medley Tea Garden in Assam's Sribhumi district on Monday afternoon.

The accident took place around 2 pm near the tea garden manager's bungalow, under the Patharkandi Assembly constituency. According to preliminary information, the four were travelling from Medley market towards Lalkhira on a TVS Ntorq scooter without a registration number plate when the vehicle reportedly lost control and crashed.The deceased have been identified as Kalidas Madgi, 50, a resident of Medley, and Hari Prasad Telugu, 30, from Pipargul.The injured have been identified as scooter rider Suraj Madgi and pillion rider Deepak Madgi, both residents of the Medley area. They were rescued and taken to Sribhumi Civil Hospital for treatment.

Kathaltali Police Outpost Officer-in-Charge SI Raj Rangmei reached the spot with a police team after receiving information about the accident. With the assistance of local residents, the injured were shifted to the hospital.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them for post-mortem examination. The accident has cast a pall of gloom over the Medley Tea Garden area.

Historic Nimso Kerung world record set

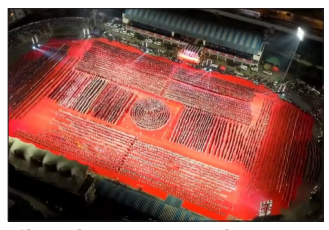
SUSHANTA ROY

DIPHU : KASA Stadium in Diphu transformed into a sea of cultural grandeur on Monday as approximately 15,000 traditional dancers and musicians representing 17 indigenous tribes and communities made a monumental Guinness World Record.

Organised as a prime centerpiece of the 75th Karbi Anglong Day celebrations, the massive assemblage united under a shared banner to perform the traditional Karbi folk dance, Nimso Kerung, perfectly synchronised to the beats of the indigenous Jeli instrument.

Media outlets across the region, including live video coverage and updates shared on platforms, captured the historic scale of the event, which brought together diverse hill communities in an unprecedented display of heritage preservation.

"This is history made for Karbi Anglong," noted a senior council spokesperson at the venue. "Bringing over 15,000 artists together from 17 different communities to perform as one demonstrates the unbreakable spirit and vibrant living traditions of our people on a global platform."



The breathtaking spectacle drew thousands of spectators to the stadium, marking another milestone in the district's rich cultural history following previous global recognitions.

Official confirmation and adjudication results from the Guinness World Records team are currently pending review of the event's extensive documentation and video logs.

Chief Minister discusses expanded economic cooperation with EU Ambassador Jean-Eric Paquet

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

GUWAHATI: Assam is looking to expand its economic engagement with European markets, with tea, trade and tourism emerging as key areas of cooperation following the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma shared the development after meeting European Union Ambassador to India Jean-Eric Paquet on November 16, describing the interaction as productive and engaging.

In a post on X, Sarma said Assam was keen to play a significant role in strengthening India-EU relations, particularly in the wake of the historic trade agreement.

He noted that the relationship between India and the European Union was multifaceted and that the FTA was expected to create further opportunities for cooperation in the coming years.



The Chief Minister also highlighted the Blue Valley Cluster as an important initiative in Assam's efforts to deepen its engagement with European markets.

Tea, trade and tourism were among the major sectors discussed during the meeting, reflecting the state's interest in expanding commercial opportunities and attracting greater international engagement.Paquet is currently visiting Assam and has also held interactions with state government officials, academic institutions and startup representatives. The discussions are aimed at identifying potential areas of cooperation and exploring opportunities for greater access to European markets.The proposed engagement comes at a time when Assam is seeking to strengthen its position in international trade and investment networks.While the FTA could open new avenues for the state's businesses, translating the opportunity into tangible gains will depend on export readiness, product standards, market access and stronger commercial linkages with European partners.

Sivasagar Identifies 47,107 Flood-Hit Families, Sends Final Compensation List to Assam Government

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

SIVASAGAR: The Sivasagar district administration has completed the verification of flood damage and identified 47,107 eligible families for compensation, forwarding the final list to the state Revenue and Disaster Management Department on October 13.

The assessment was conducted in phases following the devastating floods that severely affected the district. During the first phase of the Rapid Damage Assessment survey, carried out from August 9 to 31, more than 46,000 families were covered under the severe and fully damaged categories.

The administration subsequently undertook a fresh verification of around 6,500 households whose details had discrepancies in Aadhaar cards, bank accounts, ration cards and other documents, as well as families left out during the initial survey.



The second phase of verification was conducted between September 23 and October 3. A team of 118 verifiers identified 6,339 eligible affected individuals during this exercise.

Before finalising the list, officials conducted random verification of 5 per cent of the households. The final list of 47,107 eligible families was then approved by the district-level committee constituted by the Revenue and Disaster Management Department.

Meanwhile, the district administration has issued a clarification after reports circulated through individuals and social media claiming that applications for flood compensation were being accepted at the District Commissioner's Office.

The administration said the entire damage assessment and verification process had been conducted digitally through a mobile application. It clarified that no physical application forms had been issued and no offline applications were being accepted.

The clarification comes amid concerns over misleading information regarding the compensation process, with the administration urging residents not to be misled by claims of an offline application procedure.

Manik Saha Predicts BJP Sweep in Tripura's 21 Urban Local Bodies, Rules Out Strong Opposition



AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has expressed confidence that the BJP will win all 21 urban local bodies in the state in the upcoming elections, claiming that the party faces no serious electoral challenge from its political opponents.Addressing a BJP rally at Sonamura on November 16, Saha said the response to his recent door-to-door campaign reflected strong public support for the ruling party and its development-oriented governance.

Elections to the 21 urban local bodies, comprising the Agartala Municipal Corporation, municipalities and Nagar Panchayats, are scheduled for November 27. The newly established Bishramganja Nagar Panchayat is also part of the electoral exercise. Counting of votes will take place on December 2.Referring to the 2021 urban local body elections, the Chief Minister said the BJP had won 20 of the 21 bodies and was confident of improving its performance this time.

Saha argued that the party had managed to counter the usual anti-incumbency sentiment associated with governments remaining in power by focusing on development and continuous public service.

"For us, the BJP means development and continuous work," he said, adding that the government was following the path laid down by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Appealing to voters to give the BJP a mandate across all 21 urban local bodies, Saha said the electoral outcome would also reflect public confidence in Modi's leadership.

The Chief Minister maintained that the BJP's principal competition was with its own past performance rather than other political parties. He said the organisation was focused on delivering more for the people instead of engaging in political confrontations.

Saha also stressed the importance of taking all communities along in the state's development process. He said minority communities and people from different social and tribal backgrounds had an important role in building a new Tripura.

National Press Day 2026 Observed Under The Theme "Journalism: Populist Or Responsible"

BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL: National Press Day, 2026, cum Workshop on the theme "Journalism: Populist or Responsible" was observed today at the DIPR Auditorium Complex, in Imphal. The programme was organised by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Government of Manipur.

Rajeev Singh Thakur, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Manipur; Neeta Arambam, IAS, Secretary (IPR), Government of Manipur; and Dr. Th. Charanjeet Singh, MCS, Director (IPR), Manipur, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, President and Guest of Honour, respectively. The observance also featured presentation of the prestigious Manipur State Journalist Awards, 2026 to distinguished journalists for their outstanding contributions across various categories.

Speaking at the programme, Rajeev Singh Thakur, IAS Chief Secretary stated that press freedom has become increasingly important in today's digital era, where news spreads rapidly through social media and electronic platforms. He emphasised the need for transparency, accuracy and integrity in news reporting, urging the government, concerned authorities and media organisations to work together responsibly. Highlighting the prevailing situation in Manipur, he stressed that collective efforts are essential to build and sustain peace and promote harmony among communities. He also called upon journalists and media professionals to rededicate themselves to upholding press freedom and their responsibility towards society.



Neeta Arambam highlighted the significance of National Press Day and this year's theme, "Journalism: Populist or Responsible", emphasising the need to balance popular appeal with responsible, factual and credible journalism in the digital age. She acknowledged the media's vital role in keeping society informed and bringing public concerns to the government's attention. She also highlighted government initiatives for the welfare and recognition of working journalists, including the Manipur Working Journalists Welfare Scheme and State Journalist Awards 2026. Congratulating the award recipients, she appreciated the dedication of journalists and stressed the importance of greater cooperation between DIPR and the media fraternity.

Dr. Th. Charanjeet Singh stated that the observation has been made to recognise the freedom of the press and the responsibility that comes with it.

He added that freedom of the press is guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India as part of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression. This freedom is extremely important for strengthening and safeguarding our democracy, as media is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy, he added. Dr. Charanjeet further stated that no freedom can be absolute. While enjoying and valuing our freedom, we must also uphold our responsibilities. We cannot exercise our freedom at the cost of the national integrity and security of our country. Our freedom should never be used to incite violence or create public disorder. In this regard, our Constitution also provides for reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2). On this important occasion, he urged the media fraternity to exercise the freedom of the press responsibly and uphold the values of truth, integrity and accountability.

The State Journalist Awards, 2026 were conferred upon 8 distinguished journalists from various media firms of the State. The awards include a cash prize, citation and a shawl each.

Financial assistance was also distributed to seven beneficiaries under the Manipur State Working Journalists Welfare Scheme (MSJWS).

Following the observance, a workshop was held on this year's theme "Journalism: Populist or Responsible". The workshop was moderated by Shri Pradip Phanjoubam, Senior Journalist and Editor of Imphal Review of Arts and Politics. The resource persons included Rupachandra Yumnam, Chief Editor of Impact TV, K. Sarojkumar Sharma, Senior Journalist.

An interactive session and discussion were also held as part of the programme.

Quest!

By the year 2100, 77% of countries will be poorer as a result of lost productivity caused by hotter global temperatures, a study shows.



NATIONAL

'I told my girlfriend let's go to Varsity restaurant... where my parents met': Rahul Gandhi



NEW DELHI

The Gandhis, as a family, are known for guarding their privacy. But at the launch of Sonia Gandhi's memoir, "Belonging", that veil briefly lifted. The leitmotif of the evening was emotion. It was not Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, who delivered the final speech, but Rahul Gandhi, the son. Taking the audience on a walk down memory lane, he stuck to orders to "say nothing on politics". This was personal, a family story unfolding on a brightly-lit stage.

In trying to explain his mother, Rahul was also revealing something of himself. Until his father's death, his childhood seemed almost like a fairytale, with his parents deeply in love with each other.

Whenever the family sat down for a meal, his mother would be sitting on his father's lap. It was such a familiar sight that he assumed all parents were like that, until he visited his friends' homes and discovered otherwise. Rahul recalled his mother as an extrovert until the day Indira Gandhi, their "anchor", was assassinated.

When Rajiv was "blown to pieces", in Rahul's words, an even bigger anchor was gone. Sonia withdrew into herself. Until then, she had an almost perfect memory. "But if you ask her what happened when Papa died, she has no memory of it." The extrovert was gone; in her place was the Sphinx we know. Even now, Sonia cannot remember it.

What appears in the book has been pieced together by Sonia and Priyanka. "The book belonged to my father, and she belonged to him." Then the fun-loving, smiling mother he had known seemed to disappear. Until the "people said she belonged to them."

The evening clearly belonged to Rahul too. He recalled his parents meeting at the Varsity restaurant in Cambridge and decided to revisit the famous setting of their romance with his girlfriend. The waiter remembered his parents. Rahul asked for the best dish on the menu, and was recommended chicken chasseur. They ordered two. "If you ever want to fall in love, go to Varsity restaurant. Just don't order the chicken chasseur. It is horrible," he joked.

For one shining moment, the man who is so often seen as Parliament's street fighter and Narendra Modi-baiter was neither the Leader of the Opposition nor a political combatant.

Rahul was simply a son, remembering his parents and the life they had shared for decades. That was what made the Gandhis different that day. And what made the evening different, too.

'Blatant, intentional': India slams Turkiye over exclusion from UNGA draft consultations on UN-OIC cooperation

NEW DELHI



India has strongly objected to Turkiye's "blatant and intentional" move to exclude New Delhi and other member states from consultations on a draft resolution on cooperation between the UN and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and voted against the draft in the General Assembly.

The draft resolution 'Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation', introduced by Iraq, was adopted Monday by a recorded vote, with 112 nations voting in favour, six against, and 39 countries abstaining.

India, along with Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Israel and the United States, voted against the resolution. Turkiye was the resolution's facilitator.

Apart from India, other countries, including Cyprus and Greece, also called out Ankara's "lack of transparency and inclusivity" throughout the draft's negotiation process.

India's Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Yojna Patel said the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC chose to exclude the Indian delegation and a number of other countries when circulating successive drafts of the resolution.

Delivering the explanation of vote, Patel strongly called out the working methods adopted by the resolution's facilitator, describing it as a "concerning matter" and calling for an investigation into the process.

"My delegation has voted against this resolution not only because of its substantive aspects, but also for an even more concerning matter regarding the working methods adopted by the facilitator who convened negotiations on the same," Patel said.

Strongly criticising the lack of inclusive intergovernmental negotiations over the resolution, she expressed her "deep dismay" that the "Permanent Observer Mission" of the OIC "chose to exclude not only my delegation but a number of other countries when circulating successive drafts of the resolution.

"This is not only shocking but also sets a bad precedent of delegations excluding specific member states to enable their agendas."

Patel further said that despite some delegations registering their objections in subsequent rounds, the "facilitators still chose to not include select countries." Other basic procedures such as acknowledging inputs were also "blatantly disregarded, indicating that it was done by design rather than by mistake.

She said it was "unfortunate that there are member states who publicly profess commitment to multilateralism and completely turn a blind eye to its core guiding principles."

Underlining that the UN was founded on the principles of sovereign equality, inclusivity and multilateral cooperation, Patel said differences of position among member states are inherent to multilateral diplomacy and "cannot, in themselves, justify blatant and intentional exclusion from the consultations on matters before the General Assembly."

"My delegation strongly objects to such working methods that try to hoodwink excluded delegations into believing that this was just a technical update, which it was not," she said.

India has called on the UN General Assembly President "to investigate this and prevent its recurrence."

Questioning the substance of the resolution, New Delhi further said the draft claimed to foster solutions to other conflicts. "The rationale for seeking to extend the role of OIC in this manner is unclear. The OIC is not a regional organisation," Patel said.

India expressed concern over a reference in the resolution about the ninth session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Women held in July this year in Islamabad. During that conference, a declaration was adopted that made references to Jammu and Kashmir. Patel said that India "rejects" the declaration and the omnibus resolution adopted at the conference.

"The resolution contains reference to documents and statements that have unwarranted and factually incorrect references to my country. Such documents, unfortunately, reflect the continued misuse of the OIC platform for narrow political ends. The OIC has no locus standi to comment on India's internal affairs," Patel said.

In a thinly veiled reference to Pakistan, India voiced regret that the OIC has "once again allowed itself to be systematically misused by one Member State to weaponise OIC resolutions and declarations against India through false and baseless allegations.

Pakistan is a founding and prominent member of the 57-member OIC.

"India calls upon the OIC to uphold the principles of objectivity, constructive dialogue, and mutual respect, and to ensure that its outcomes do not become a vehicle for the pursuit of narrow political agendas," Patel said.

India "believes that sovereign member states take care of the interests of their citizens regardless of their faith. We do not recognise that only co-religionists can protect the interests of adherents of their faith. Such regressive views have no place in today's world, and especially at this forum," Patel said.

India's Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN, Ambassador Yojna Patel.

In its explanation of vote, Cyprus voiced deep regret over the "lack of transparency and inclusivity by Turkiye as the facilitator of this resolution throughout the negotiation process."

"We strongly regret that Cyprus has been repeatedly excluded from the communication on this process and subsequently from the negotiation process of this resolution.

Despite our best efforts and requests, inclusion of all UN Member States in this negotiation process is not a matter of political discretion of the facilitator, but a principle enshrined in the UN Charter," the Cyprus delegate said.

Greece also raised "serious concerns" regarding the conduct of negotiations under Turkiye's facilitation.

"Throughout the process, the European Union submitted comments and amendments in good faith, which were neither meaningfully addressed nor accompanied by substantial explanations for their rejection. Furthermore, revised drafts were circulated without adequate consultation," Greece's delegate said.

Greece also objected to its exclusion, along with certain delegations, from the circulation of draft texts. "Such practices fall short of the transparency, inclusivity and good faith expected in General Assembly negotiations. We strongly believe they are not representative of our member states." The US hoped that future versions of the OIC resolution "will eliminate excessive and redundant language and contentious issues and instead focus on direct and concrete areas of cooperation that can achieve consensus." Ireland, delivering the explanation of vote on behalf of the European Union, said the bloc and its member states regret the "lack of transparency and inclusivity throughout the negotiation process, despite requests to be included in the consultations.

"The EU and several of its member states were excluded from relevant communications and were consequently not afforded a meaningful opportunity to participate in the negotiations," it said.

INTERNATIONAL

At COP31, Nepal pushes for billions to help disaster survivors. So far, $20 million is promised

NUWAKOT



Villagers whose families prayed for generations at a local temple now gather around the mound of dirt where it once stood, unsure whether it will ever be rebuilt. Farmers who once grew rice to feed their families and earn a living now sit in makeshift shelters, wondering if they'll ever own land again.

In Nuwakot and surrounding areas of Nepal, where deadly floods in August washed away entire villages and left thousands dead or missing, life has ground to a halt.

Along the Trishuli River, power lines, solar panels, cars and homes remain partially buried in the mud, while broken bridges leave communities cut off from neighboring towns. Survivors sleep in makeshift metal shelters, relying on donations for drinking water and food as they wait to see how, where and when they can get back on their feet.

"God knows how long we will have to stay here," 45-year-old Lakchin Bahadhur Tamang, a hydropower plant worker, told The Associated Press on a recent morning. "I fear that once these aid organizations and helping hands leave, we will be left helpless, without even enough drinking water."

Meanwhile, thousands of miles away at the U.N. climate summit in Turkey, known as COP31, leaders from Nepal and other mountain countries are warning the world there is no time to wait, as they sound the alarm about future disasters from global temperature rise, including the collapse of Himalayan glaciers.

They and other climate activists are calling for discussions on the heightened peril that people face from a warming planet, caused mainly by the burning of gas, coal and oil.

They are focusing in particular on a fund established three years ago to compensate developing nations hit hard by climate-fueled disasters. The fund doesn't have nearly as much money as needed and is mired in bureaucracy. Experts say more funding and faster disbursement are essential to prepare for more efficient recovery as climate disasters become more frequent and severe.

Nepal and other mountain countries are pressing negotiators to make the dangers facing their communities a lasting priority.

While Nepal and Bhutan sought a dedicated negotiating agenda item on warming in mountain regions at the start of the summit, their proposal did not make the cut.

Nepal's foreign minister, Shisir Khanal, said the country wants a dedicated program on mountains and climate change so mountain risks are reflected in international climate action, including funding decisions.

"After the disaster, we received an outpouring of sympathy. This is the time to put sympathy into the system," Khanal said when speaking at the climate talks last week.

The stakes extend far beyond mountain villages. Glaciers and snow in the Hindu Kush Himalaya feed rivers that nearly 2 billion people depend on for drinking water, farming and electricity, according to the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, or ICIMOD.

Warming can destabilize mountain slopes as glaciers retreat and frozen ground thaws. Floods carrying rock, ice and debris can cross borders within minutes, leaving little time to warn people downstream, especially as early warning systems face funding cuts.

Over the next years, global average temperatures are set to surpass 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming compared to the early 1800s, a threshold that delegates set during the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Amid that stark reality, many discussions focus on how and when the world can lower the global average temperature rise and go back below that threshold, which would require massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that the world has not been able to achieve.

Pam Pearson, director of the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative, warned against treating the temperature rise as something that can be easily reversed. Snow and ice can disappear rapidly, while recovery can take centuries or millennia, she said. "There is no negotiating with the melting point of ice," Pearson said.

Monitoring unstable slopes and dangerous glacial lakes, sharing information across borders in real time, coordinating early warning systems and finding global funds are imperative, said climate experts at COP31.

US intel indicates Iran is drawing up plans for potential 'dirty bomb' attack in Washington: Report



WASHINGTON

Fresh American intelligence indicates that Iran is formulating strategies to target high-ranking Trump administration figures in Washington, DC, using a "dirty bomb" or chemical weapon, CNN has reported, citing multiple US officials.

The sources cited in the report noted that the intelligence showed no signs of an imminent attack, with Iranian actors instead mapping out plans to secure alternative options should they choose to move forward. Nonetheless, the plotting is reportedly highly detailed, identifying specific locations and targets, thereby triggering US contingency preparations.

"Whether they actually have the personnel in place to execute is a matter of debate," one of the sources told CNN.

According to information provided to the cable network by a source, US intelligence has intercepted Iranian claims concerning bomb-making materials allegedly concealed inside the United States.

CNN reported that while authorities remain divided over the validity of the intelligence, they largely agree that it would be entirely straightforward and plausible for Tehran to have stashed nuclear or chemical substances within the US that could be packaged alongside conventional explosives to form a so-called dirty bomb.

"Any weapon like that is a weapon of terror, not a weapon of precision, just like a suicide bomber blowing themselves up," one of the sources said. "They can make people really sick and certain areas uninhabitable."

According to information provided to the cable network by a source, US intelligence has intercepted Iranian claims concerning bomb-making materials allegedly concealed inside the United States.

Amid these rising regional tensions, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani on Monday (local time). A statement issued by the US Department of State noted, "The Secretary condemned Iran's attacks on Bahrain and reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to the security of Bahrain and all our Gulf partners."

The statement added that "the Secretary and the Foreign Minister also reaffirmed the long-standing US-Bahrain strategic partnership, anchored by Bahrain's designation as a Major Non-NATO Ally and the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA)."

Meanwhile, US Vice President JD Vance on Monday (local time) assured that the ongoing conflict involving Iran would not turn into a prolonged war, stating that the United States does not intend to maintain a long-term military commitment in the region.

Vance described Iran's nuclear programme as a threat to the US but ruled out an extended engagement, stating that Washington would not remain involved for 10 or 15 years, or even two years, Fox News reported.

"The Iranian nuclear programme is a threat to the United States of America," he said, as reported by Fox News, adding, "But we are not gonna allow this to become a 10 or 15-year commitment or frankly, even a two-year commitment." He further expressed confidence that President Donald Trump would bring the conflict to an end with favourable results, reiterating the administration's commitment to avoiding a prolonged war.

India's Drug Crisis Needs a New Strategy: Target the Money, Protect the Vulnerable

Rising seizures and arrests across the Northeast have failed to establish that the drug trade is shrinking. From Myanmar's expanding narcotics economy to Manipur's ethnic fault lines and Assam's street-level addiction, the region needs a strategy that goes beyond policing.

The sight of adolescents openly sharing a packet of suspected drugs on a busy footpath in Guwahati should prompt a difficult question about India's campaign against narcotics. If drugs remain accessible to young people in public spaces despite years of raids, arrests and record seizures, is the strategy addressing the real structure of the trade?

The Northeast's drug crisis is often presented as a border-security problem. Its proximity to Myanmar and the wider Golden Triangle makes cross-border trafficking a serious challenge. But geography alone does not explain why the market continues to survive. The persistence of addiction, the reach of trafficking networks, allegations of protection and the absence of adequate rehabilitation point to a deeper governance and public-health crisis.

The measure of success cannot simply be the quantity of drugs seized or the number of people arrested. It must be whether the supply network is being dismantled, its financial backers are facing prosecution and vulnerable communities are being protected.



The supply chain is expanding beyond the border

Myanmar's political and security crisis has intensified the challenge for India's northeastern states. Since the 2021 military coup, prolonged conflict and weakened state control have created conditions in which armed groups and criminal networks can profit from illicit economies.

According to UNODC figures cited in recent reports, opium-poppy cultivation in Myanmar rose 17 per cent in 2025 to around 53,100 hectares. Cultivation also increased in Chin State, which borders India's Northeast. Alongside heroin, synthetic drugs, including methamphetamine tablets, have become a major concern.

The figures reported by Indian states reflect the scale of the problem. Mizoram reported seizures worth more than Rs 846 crore between January and August 2026. Assam has reported narcotics seizures worth over Rs 3,253 crore since 2021. Manipur has continued operations against poppy cultivation and drug trafficking.

These figures demonstrate enforcement activity, but they do not automatically establish success. A large seizure may indicate effective policing; it may also reveal the scale of the supply attempting to reach the market. Without information on the size of trafficking networks, convictions, financial investigations and the disruption of distribution channels, seizure figures offer only a partial picture.

Drug enforcement often reaches those who are easiest to identify: couriers, small-time sellers, transporters and users. The people financing the trade, controlling distribution and benefiting from the proceeds are considerably harder to reach.

The controversy surrounding former Manipur police officer Thounaojam Brinda illustrates the importance of this distinction. In 2018, a team led by Brinda seized heroin, 280,200 suspected methamphetamine tablets and cash during a raid at the residence of former Chandel Autonomous District Council chairman Lhukhosei Zou. Several people were arrested.

Brinda later alleged that she had faced pressure to weaken the case and claimed that politically influential figures had intervened. The allegations were denied by those named. In December 2020, a special NDPS court acquitted Zou and six others. The state subsequently appealed against the acquittal. These allegations should not be treated as established facts. But neither should questions about possible political or official interference be left unresolved. An independent and transparent inquiry would help establish the truth and protect the credibility of law enforcement.

A campaign that appears tough on street-level offenders but fails to investigate allegations involving influential networks risks losing public confidence.

In Manipur, the narcotics issue has become entangled with the state's wider ethnic conflict. The campaign against poppy cultivation, launched in 2018, has involved the destruction of thousands of acres of crops. Yet enforcement has increasingly been interpreted through competing ethnic and territorial claims.

Some Meitei organisations have linked poppy cultivation in the hills to illegal migration and what they describe as narco-terrorism. Kuki-Zo organisations have, in turn, criticised forest evictions and anti-poppy operations as discriminatory measures against hill communities.

This polarisation benefits neither law enforcement nor the people affected by drugs. Trafficking networks are not confined to one community. Blaming an entire population allows influential individuals from different backgrounds to hide behind identity politics, while poor farmers, couriers and people struggling with addiction bear the consequences.

Destroying illegal crops may be necessary, but crop eradication without viable alternatives is unlikely to deliver lasting results. Farmers need access to credit, roads, assured markets and alternative livelihoods. Otherwise, cultivation can simply move to more remote areas or across the border.

Assam has pursued a high-profile campaign against narcotics, with public destruction of seized drugs and repeated enforcement operations. The state government's commitment to tackling trafficking deserves recognition. But the continued availability of drugs in urban neighbourhoods raises questions about the impact of the campaign on the market itself.

The problem is not a lack of police action alone. It is the absence of a comprehensive approach that connects enforcement with prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

An adolescent using drugs should not be treated merely as a criminal statistic. Addiction requires medical intervention, counselling, education and opportunities to rebuild a life. Punitive action against users without accessible treatment can push vulnerable people further away from support.

The use of force in policing also requires scrutiny. Alleged offenders must be dealt with through due process. The rule of law cannot be strengthened by allowing enforcement to bypass judicial safeguards.

A strategy built around acA more effectiveregionalresponseshouldbeginby changing what governments measure. First, financial investigations must become central to narcotics enforcement. Authorities should trace the proceeds of trafficking, identify benami assets and investigate shell companies and other channels used to move illicit money. Arresting a courier may disrupt one delivery; dismantling a financier's assets can weaken an entire network

Second, governments should publish data that measures outcomes rather than activity. Conviction rates, assets seized, financiers prosecuted, investigations into official complicity and the number of people rehabilitated would offer a more meaningful assessment than seizure and arrest figures alone.

Third, allegations of political or administrative protection must be examined through independent mechanisms. Whistle-blowers, journalists and community activists also need protection from intimidation and retaliatory legal action.

Fourth, addiction must be treated as a public-health concern. Harm-reduction services, treatment facilities, opioid substitution therapy, counselling and community-based rehabilitation should be expanded, particularly in districts facing high levels of substance dependence.

Fifth, alternative livelihoods must accompany action against poppy cultivation. Farmers cannot be expected to abandon an income source without reliable economic alternatives.

Finally, India needs sustained cooperation with relevant actors and regional partners to address trafficking routes originating in Myanmar. Domestic enforcement cannot permanently contain a supply chain whose sources and networks remain active across the border.

A completely drug-free Northeast may remain an unrealistic goal while Myanmar is engulfed in conflict and international trafficking networks continue to operate. But reducing the influence of the narcotics economy is achievable.

The real test is not how many tonnes of drugs are displayed at public destruction ceremonies. It is whether young people can access treatment before addiction takes hold, whether farmers have a viable alternative to poppy cultivation, whether powerful financiers face the law and whether citizens can report trafficking without fear.

A drug campaign that reaches only the bottom of the supply chain can continue indefinitely while the market survives. India needs to move beyond the politics of spectacular seizures and build a system that targets the money, investigates the protectors and helps people recover.

The Northeast does not need a louder drug war. It needs one that can demonstrate results where they matter most: in dismantled networks, accountable institutions and lives reclaimed from addiction.

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