

BIREN CALLS FOR TARGETED MOVE ON MILITANT CAMPS

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT: The escalating ethnic violence in Manipur between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has prompted Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to call for targeted action against militant camps and hold multiple meetings with the Governor, as fresh clashes since September 1 have resulted in further deaths and heightened tensions in the state.



Manipur CM Calls for Targeted Action on Militant Camps

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh met Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal on Sunday for the second time in 24 hours, urging Central security forces to launch targeted operations against militant camps in the hills. A top source reported that the CM emphasized the need for a "professional approach" in addressing the escalating crisis, exacerbated by a September 1 drone attack in Imphal West. Singh also advocated for bringing in more "subject experts" to manage the situation.

Closed-Door Meeting and Memorandum

Accompanied by several National Democratic Alliance

(NDA) Ministers and MLAs, Singh held a closed-door meeting with the Governor and submitted a memorandum, though its contents were not disclosed. The meeting aimed to present a unified front in handling the situation amid rising public pressure. A source dismissed any speculation about the CM's resignation, stressing that this was not the time for uncertainty.

Rising Violence Since September 1

The ongoing ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has intensified since September 1, with at least nine people killed in drone attacks and gunfights. Security Adviser Kuldiep Singh has been leading the unified command overseeing security operations since May 30, 2023. However, BJP MLA Rajkumar Imo Singh, the CM's son-in-law, wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah on September 2, urging the Union government to hand control of the unified command back to the Manipur government, as the current setup has failed to curb violence.

Calls for Clarity in Security Arrangements

Several MLAs expressed concerns about the limited control they have over security decisions due to the existing chain of command. The Governor was informed that clearer coordination between the Army, Manipur Police, and the 198 companies of Central armed police forces is needed. The ongoing ethnic violence, which erupted on May 3, 2023, has claimed 235 lives and displaced more than 60,000 people.

Fresh Violence in Jiribam and Imphal

On Saturday, the CM met the Governor after six people were killed in gunfights between Kuki-Zo and Meitei "village volunteers" in Jiribam district. Additionally, drone bombs and long-range rockets, allegedly fired by Kuki-Zo extremists, killed three and injured over 15 in attacks on villages in Imphal West and Bishnupur districts between September 1 and 6.

STATISTICS PANEL DISSOLVED AMID 'DISSENT' OVER CENSUS

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Standing Committee on Statistics Dissolved

The Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has disbanded the Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS). The decision comes amidst concerns raised by the committee members about the delay in conducting the decennial census.

The SCoS, headed by economist Pronab Sen, was formed in July 2023 to advise the government on survey methodology and data tabulation. However, the ministry has decided to dissolve the committee, citing overlapping responsibilities with the recently formed Steering Committee for National Sample Surveys.

Dr. Sen and other committee members expressed dissatisfaction with the decision. They argue that the SCoS had a crucial role to play in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of statistical data. The committee had held several meetings and discussed various issues related to survey methodology.

The delay in conducting the census has been a major concern. While the pandemic initially disrupted the process, the government has yet to announce a new schedule. The dissolution of the SCoS further raises questions about the government's commitment to statistical data collection and analysis.

VENEZUELA'S OPPOSITION PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FLEES FOR ASYLUM IN SPAIN

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Opposition Leader Flees to Spain

Edmundo González, Venezuela's opposition presidential candidate, fled to Spain on Sunday after receiving asylum. His departure dealt a significant blow to millions who supported his campaign to end two decades of single-party rule under President Nicolás Maduro. González had been regarded by Venezuela's opposition and several foreign governments as the legitimate winner of the July presidential election, although official results declared Maduro the victor.

Government Grants Safe Passage

Venezuelan Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez announced González's departure, stating the government had granted him safe passage to help restore "political peace." Just days earlier, an arrest order had been issued against him.

Threats and Blackmail

Opposition leader María Corina Machado explained that González feared for his life, citing threats, legal actions, and blackmail attempts by Maduro's regime. Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares confirmed that González requested asylum and praised him as a "hero" Spain would support.

Criminal Investigation

Attorney General Tarek William Saab, an ally of Maduro, sought González's arrest for alleged electoral sabotage.



"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."

—Benjamin Franklin

BANGLADESH-INDIA RELATIONS SHOULD BE BASED ON EQUITY AND FAIRNESS: YUNUS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



CONTEXT: Bangladesh's interim Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus emphasised the need for equitable and fair relations with India while calling for the revival of SAARC, following the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and amid discussions on regional stability and cooperation between the two nations.

Yunus Calls for Equitable Relations with India

Bangladesh's interim Chief Adviser, Muhammad Yunus, emphasized on Sunday that while Dhaka seeks to maintain good relations with India, these ties must be grounded in equity and fairness. His remarks came during a meeting with students who had participated in the recent revolution that ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, according to state-run BSS news agency.

Mutual Respect and Regional Cooperation

Yunus, 84, highlighted the importance of mutual respect in relations with neighboring countries. He also stressed the need to revive the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to foster enhanced regional collaboration.

Criticism of India's Stability Narrative

Last week, Yunus expressed a desire for good ties with India but urged New Delhi to move away from the narrative that only Hasina's leadership guarantees Bangladesh's stability.

Foreign Affairs Adviser's Response

Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser, Md Touhid Hossain, expressed surprise over Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's recent remarks, asserting that there is no immediate threat of conflict between the two nations.

PERIODIC RESET

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India needs to engage with ASEAN consistently on trade and security

The importance of India's consistent engagement with ASEAN on trade and security, especially in light of the recent bilateral visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Brunei and Singapore.

India's Renewed Focus on ASEAN: A Strategic Imperative

Strengthening Bilateral Ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visits to Brunei and Singapore mark a significant step in India's renewed engagement with ASEAN. This increased focus aligns with the government's "Act East" policy, aiming to foster stronger ties with Southeast Asia.

Expanding Economic Cooperation

While India's trade with ASEAN has grown substantially, there is room for further expansion. The potential for cooperation in sectors like semiconductors and rare earths offers mutual benefits. India can leverage Singapore's expertise and investment, while Singapore can mitigate its rising costs.

Addressing Geopolitical Challenges

Beyond economic relations, India's engagement with ASEAN is crucial for addressing regional security concerns. India's commitment to ASEAN centrality is a positive step, but closer coordination on issues like Myanmar, the South China Sea, and Quad engagement is essential.

Overcoming Past Hurdles

India's withdrawal from the RCEP in 2019 was a setback. To strengthen its economic ties with ASEAN, India should

consider updating existing trade agreements like AITIGA and CECA.

A Periodic Reset

India's historical ties with Southeast Asia span centuries. To ensure continued relevance, periodic reassessments and policy adjustments are necessary. The "Look East" and "Act East" policies have served as valuable frameworks, and similar initiatives should be pursued in the future.

INDIA'S MILITARY DIPLOMACY IN TOP GEAR WITH BACK-TO-BACK EXERCISES

DEFENCE & SECURITY



India's Military Diplomacy in Full Swing

India has ramped up its military diplomacy with a series of back-to-back exercises across all three branches of its armed forces. One of the major upcoming events is the India-U.S. bilateral Army exercise, Yudh Abhyas, set to take place at the Mahajan field firing ranges in Rajasthan. Simultaneously, Phase-II of the Indian Air Force's largest multilateral exercise, Tarang Shakti, is underway in Jodhpur, with eight countries participating and 17 nations observing.

Tarang Shakti Brings International Presence

For the first time, the iconic A-10 Thunderbolt close air support aircraft from the U.S. are flying in Indian airspace, alongside

F-16 jets. Nations deploying aircraft for the exercise include Australia, Greece, Japan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the UAE, and the U.S. Bangladesh, which was scheduled to send a C-130 transport aircraft, withdrew due to recent domestic events.

Upcoming Naval and Army Exercises

The Malabar naval exercise, involving India, Australia, Japan, and the U.S., is scheduled to take place off the coast of Visakhapatnam in early October. Following this, the Indian Army's mechanized infantry will participate in a bilateral exercise, Indra, with Russia.

Largest U.S. Contingent for Yudh Abhyas

This year's Yudh Abhyas will feature one of the largest U.S. contingents yet, with around 600 personnel participating. The U.S. Army will deploy Stryker infantry vehicles and M142 HIMARS systems. India is currently testing Stryker vehicles and may procure variants, including those equipped with Javelin anti-tank guided missiles. Talks on the licensed manufacture of these vehicles are in the early stages.

Other Major Exercises

In August, India conducted the 10th edition of the bilateral exercise Mitra Shakti with Sri Lanka at the Army Training School in Maduru Oya.

ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE BEGINS MAIDEN VISIT TO INDIA

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, arrived in New Delhi on Sunday for his first official visit to India, aimed at strengthening bilateral ties across various sectors, including energy and connectivity, amid rising tensions in West Asia.

Warm Welcome in New Delhi

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal received the Crown Prince at the airport, where he was given a ceremonial welcome. The visit underscores the importance of India-UAE relations. "A new milestone in a historic relationship," tweeted Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for the External Affairs Ministry, marking the significance of the visit.

High-Level Delegation Accompanying the Crown Prince

Sheikh Khaled is accompanied by several UAE Ministers and a business delegation, signaling the focus on expanding economic cooperation between the two nations.

Business Forum in Mumbai

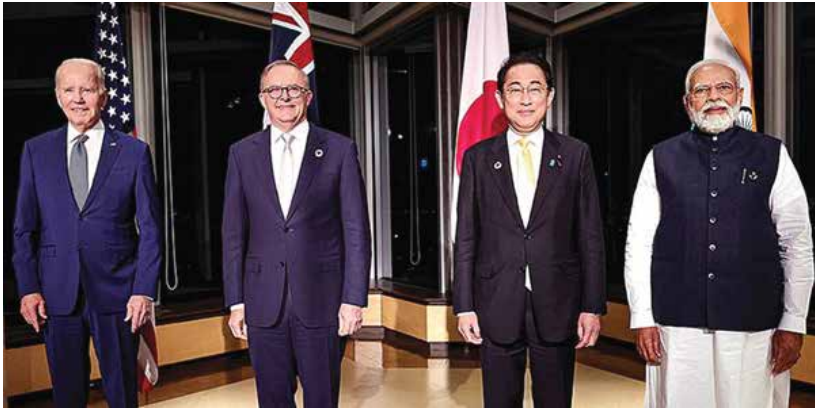
After completing his engagements in Delhi, the Crown Prince will head to Mumbai to participate in a business forum on Tuesday. The forum will bring together top business leaders from both countries to explore new avenues of collaboration.

Strengthening India-UAE Relations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sheikh Khaled are scheduled to hold talks on Monday. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, this visit will deepen the already strong ties between India and the UAE, while exploring partnerships in emerging areas of mutual interest.

INDIA, U.S. AGREE TO SWAP TURNS, BIDEN TO HOST QUAD SUMMIT IN HOME STATE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Quad Summit Venue Swap: India to Host in 2025

India and the United States have decided to switch hosting duties for the upcoming Quad Summit. The summit will now be held in Delaware, USA, allowing President Biden to meet with Prime Minister Modi, Australian Prime Minister Albanese, and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida.

In return, India will host the Quad Summit in 2025. This means that the new U.S. President, either Donald Trump or Kamala Harris, will visit India next year.

The summit will take place on September 21. Following this, Prime Minister Modi will address a diaspora event in New York on September 22. He will also participate in the "Summit of the Future" at the UN.

Due to the earlier-than-planned trip to the U.S., Prime Minister Modi has decided to postpone his address to the UN General Assembly. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will now represent India at the General Debate on September 28.

REDEVELOPMENT RISKS DAMAGING HERITAGE VALUE OF COONOOR STATION

HERITAGE AND CULTURE



For over 125 years, Coonoor railway station has been a timeless relic of the Nilgiris' colonial past, part of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR). However, it's undergoing a major transformation under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, with the Southern Railway investing ₹14.7 crore to renovate the station alongside the Udhagamandalam station.

While the upgrades aim to enhance passenger amenities and beautify the stations, the renovation of Coonoor station has sparked criticism. Heritage enthusiasts argue that the colonial architecture, integral to the station's historical charm, is being compromised. K. Natrajan of the Heritage Steam Chariot Trust expressed distress, advocating for preservation rather than transformation.

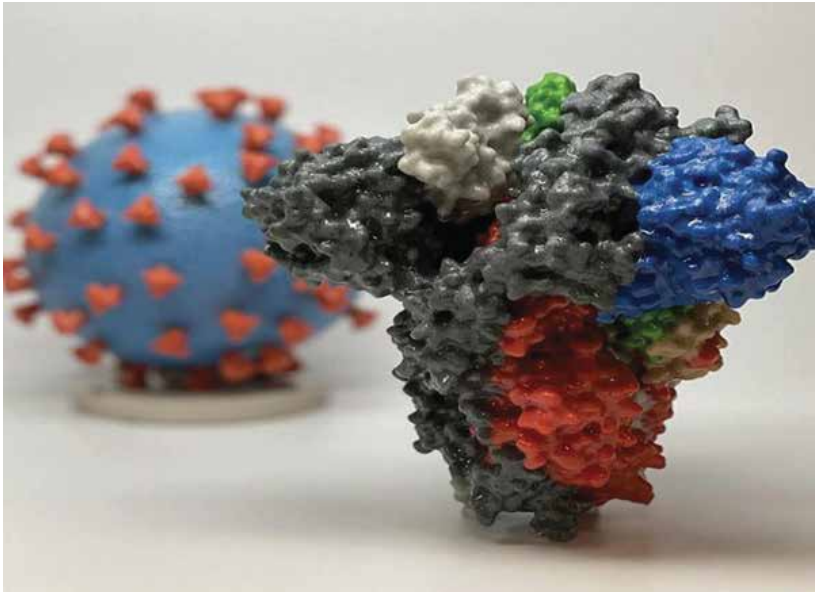
The planned work includes re-tiling the roof and walls, expanding parking facilities, and general beautification. Critics, however, argue that the station's existing facilities were sufficient and that the modifications disregard the station's historical

significance. Local heritage experts were initially promised consultation but were later excluded from the decision-making process.

A Southern Railway official stated, "We are aware of the concerns and are working to address them."

STUDY IN MICE IDENTIFIES POSSIBLE 'TRUE' CAUSE OF LONG COVID

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



In scientific circles, SARS-CoV-2 is recognized as a vasculopathic agent, damaging blood vessels and causing respiratory issues due to clotting and inflammation in the lungs. Its severe complications, including neurological ones like strokes, are also linked to this vasculopathy.

Persistent thrombo-inflammation contributes to long COVID, affecting millions even as severe cases decline. Notably, blood thinners have been crucial in managing these complications, but researchers have discovered that these issues are not necessarily correlated with the initial severity of COVID-19.

A recent Nature study offers a new perspective, revealing that fibrinogen and fibrin, key components in blood clotting, play a role in COVID-19 complications. Instead of just responding to inflammation, fibrinogen and fibrin actively bind to the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, exacerbating inflammation

and complications in the lungs and brain.

The study used a mouse model to show that the spike protein binds strongly to fibrinogen, leading to abnormal clot structures that resist dissolution and trigger inflammation. This process continues even after the active infection clears, contributing to long COVID. Importantly, the study clarifies that these findings are unrelated to clotting issues associated with adenovirus vector-based COVID-19 vaccines.

The research suggests a potential therapeutic approach using the monoclonal antibody 5B8, which binds to fibrinogen and could prevent complications without affecting normal clotting. This antibody is now in phase I clinical trials. However, the study's conclusions are based on preliminary animal research, and further studies are needed to confirm these findings and their implications for long COVID treatment. Additionally, some researchers have conflicts of interest, as they are involved with companies developing related therapies.

WEST BENGAL STRUGGLES WITH UNEMPLOYMENT AND ANTI-INDUSTRY IMAGE

INDIAN ECONOMY

Recent tragedies involving migrant workers from West Bengal highlight the severe employment crisis in the state. The Coromandel Express crash in Odisha in June 2023 killed 103 West Bengal residents, and an August 2023 bridge collapse in Aizawl claimed 22 lives from Malda district. The Wayanad landslides also reportedly affected several workers from West Bengal.

Thousands of West Bengal workers migrate across the country due to a lack of local job opportunities. While specific migration data is missing, over 28 lakh workers have registered with the Karmasathi Parijaye Shramik portal. Many villages in West Bengal lack younger residents due to widespread migration.

Economist Abhirup Sarkar attributes the problem to a shortage of qualification-based jobs and a stagnation in major investments. With higher wages available in southern states for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, many young people leave for better-paying positions, including roles such as housemaids and waiters. The high population density in West Bengal also



suppresses wage levels.

The National Statistical Office reports West Bengal lost three million jobs in unincorporated enterprises from 2015-16 to 2022-23. Additionally, the halt of MGNREGA schemes since December 2021, due to allegations of misappropriation, has further impacted employment.

Recruitment issues plague government positions, particularly in state-run schools, where hiring has been frozen since 2016 due to recruitment scandals. The lack of new teacher appointments has driven many B.Ed graduates to seek jobs in other states. West Bengal's higher education institutions enroll over 27 lakh students, exacerbating the competition for jobs.

Contractual employment, such as civic police positions, has not significantly addressed the employment crisis. Saikat Sinha Roy from Jadavpur University describes this situation as "disguised unemployment," where many are engaged in low-quality or gig work. The state's difficulty in attracting private investment continues to hinder job creation, with lingering effects from Tata Motors' 2008 exit from Singur due to land acquisition protests.

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