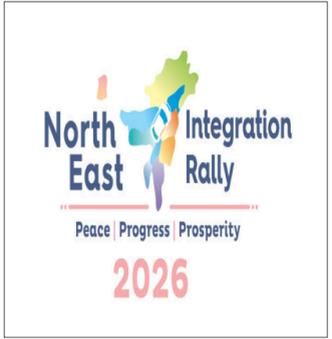




# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED



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### PERSPECTIVE

Once the rain is over, an umbrella becomes a burden to everyone. The fact of life is "loyalty ends when benefits stop". - Motilal Oswal, Co-Founder, Motilal Oswal group

**JJM dues pile up: Meghalaya awaits Rs 695 Cr in contractor payments from Centre**

**SHILLONG**  
Meghalaya received Rs 405.64 crore under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) for 2024-25, Public Health Engineering Minister Marcuse N Marak told the state Assembly, on Thursday.

Replying to a starred question, the minister said the funds were sanctioned by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation. He, however, said that the ministry is yet to release funds for 2025-26.

Marak said pending bills as of August 31, 2025, amounting to Rs 695.01 crore for contractors under JJM, are still to be received from the Centre.

Education minister Rakkam A Sangma told the Assembly that the physical progress of Ampati Engineering College stood at 25%, with Rs 15 crore already spent.

He assured that the government would complete both Shillong and Ampati engineering colleges "on a war footing".

The assurance came after Leader of Opposition Mukul Sangma urged the government to expedite the project, while Ampati MLA Miani D Shira flagged the absence of an approach road.

The minister said a temporary road exists but often gets washed away during rains and promised that the government would take up the matter for a permanent solution.

Sangma expressed disappointment at not being invited to the inauguration function of Shillong Engineering College, Meghalaya's first engineering college.

"I am a little bit aggrieved. I requested the government to please invite all of us so that we can share the joy of the initiative," he told the House.

### WHO SAID WHAT



**Charlie Kirk was murdered for speaking truth and defending freedom. A lion-hearted friend of Israel, he fought the lies and stood tall for Judeo-Christian civilization. I spoke to him only two weeks ago and invited him to Israel. Sadly, that visit will not take place. We lost an incredible human being. His boundless pride in America and his valiant belief in free speech will leave a lasting impact. Rest in peace, Charlie Kirk**

- Benjamin Netanyahu, PM Israel

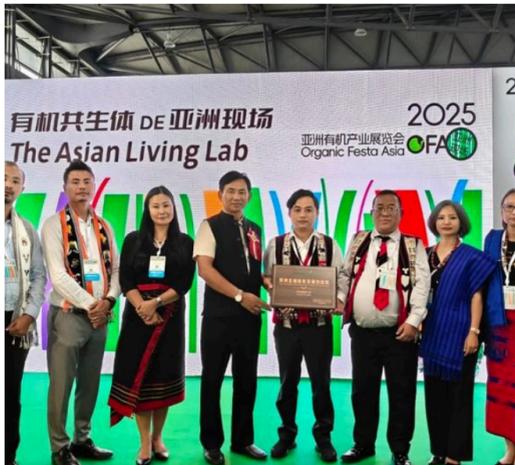
## Nagaland wins global recognition for organic farming initiatives

**KOHIAMA**

Nagaland has received the Distinguished Holistic Organic Developments Award 2025 at the Organic Festa Asia, held in Shanghai, China, from September 3 to 5. The event, organised by IFOAM-Organics Asia in partnership with Messe Düsseldorf, highlighted the state's efforts in promoting sustainable farming and organic produce.

The award was accepted on behalf of the state by officials from the Departments of Industries & Commerce and Horticulture. It acknowledged Nagaland's progress under the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for the Northeast Region (MOVCDNER) and ongoing state-led initiatives to strengthen organic agriculture.

Entrepreneur and or-



ganic farming advocate Lanuakum Imchen played a pivotal role in securing this

recognition. Founder of Cold Mountain Organics and head of multiple organic initiatives

in food processing, marketing, and farmer welfare. Imchen also serves as Director of Cooperation and Networking (India) for IFOAM-Organics Asia and Co-Chair of the Young Organics Global Network. Nagaland has taken significant steps to align with global organic movements. Under Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio's leadership, the state signed an MoU to join the Asian Local Governments for Organic Agriculture (ALGOA) in 2022, strengthening cooperation with international organic networks. Contributions from Nagaland Organic Connect (NOK), led by Dr. Akali Sema with Imchen as a founding member, were instrumental in securing this membership.

The state has also partnered with Cold Mountain Organics through a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to boost branding and market-

ing of organic food products. Officials from the Industries & Commerce Department recently represented Nagaland at the 3rd Organic Districts World Congress in Shanxi Province, China, further expanding its international engagement.

At Organic Festa Asia, Nagaland showcased its organic enterprises under the Nagaland India Pavilion. Participants included government departments, cooperatives, and youth-led organisations such as Cold Mountain Organic Farmers Welfare Foundation, YouthNet, Barn's Vision Foundation, Agricool Refrigeration, and Landlo.

The 15-member delegation from Nagaland benefited from field visits and exposure trips arranged by IFOAM-Organics Asia, with subsidies provided to support entrepreneurs and exhibitors.

## BJP MLAs hold closed-door meet with Sambit Patra ahead of PM's likely Manipur visit

### AHEAD OF PM MODI VISIT, SEVERAL BJP LEADERS RESIGN

**IMPHAL**

At least 27 BJP MLAs convened a closed-door meeting at the party's state headquarters on Wednesday to discuss preparations ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's likely visit to Manipur.

The meeting, which lasted nearly an hour, was attended by several senior legislators, including former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and Assembly Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata. None of the attendees responded to media queries regarding the agenda of the meeting.

According to a post on X by BJP Manipur, "State President Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi presided over a joint organisational meeting of the party's MP, MLAs, and state office bearers, in the presence of MP and NE States Prabhari Dr. Sambit Patra, and MP and State Prabhari Dr. Ajeet Gopchary."

A party functionary told that the gathering focused on key is-



ssues, including the party's strategy in the state and other significant political developments. Preparations and implications

of the Prime Minister's expected visit were also discussed.

Meanwhile, in a parallel development, the Coordination

Committee (CORCOM) - an umbrella group of six banned militant outfits, including the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) - announced a boycott of the Prime Minister's expected visit. The BJP meeting comes amid heightened political activity in Manipur, as the state prepares for the PM's visit, with security and organisational arrangements being closely coordinated by party leadership.

Several key office bearers and grassroots leaders from BJP's Phungyar Mandal stepped down from the primary membership of the party before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to the state.

The resignations were submitted by members of the 43-Phungyar BJP Mandal and its affiliated Morchas.

The move was led by Ngachonmi Ramshang, Special Invitee of BJP Manipur, with senior active members and primary members of the party.

Among those who resigned

are the 43-Phungyar BJP Mandal President, the Mahila Morcha President, Yuva Morcha President, Kishan Morcha President, ST Morcha Executive, and 53 Booth Presidents, signaling a large-scale withdrawal of grassroots leadership from the organisation. The irate members said dissatisfaction with the party's internal functioning was the primary reason for their resignations. They also alleged a lack of consultation, inclusiveness, and respect for grassroots leadership in the decision-making process. "Our loyalty to the party and its ideology has always been unwavering. However, we are deeply concerned over the present state of affairs within the party. We reaffirm our commitment to work for the welfare of our community and the people of Manipur," the members said in their statement.

The mass resignation is a jolt to the BJP's organisational strength in the hill districts, particularly at the grassroots level.

## New criminal laws will restore faith in justice system: Tripura CM



**AGARTALA**

Tripura Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha on Wednesday, September 10 inaugurated a state-level exhibition on the newly introduced criminal laws at the Indoor Exhibition Hall, Hapania, Agartala. The event, organized by the state government, was attended by several distinguished dignitaries and highlighted Tripura's proactive approach in creating public awareness about the new legal framework.

The three new laws—Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA)—came into effect nationwide on July 1, 2024, replacing the Indian Penal Code (1860), the Code of Criminal Procedure (1973), and the Indian Evidence Act (1872), respectively. These laws aim to modernize India's criminal justice system, speed up judicial processes, and strengthen protections for women, children, and vulnerable sections of soci-

ety. Unlike the 511 sections under the old IPC, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita now has 358 sections, streamlining the code. Notably, provisions for community service as a form of punishment for six categories of crimes have been introduced, along with seven new categories of offences under BNS-2023.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Saha, who also serves as the Home Minister of Tripura, stressed the transformative potential of these reforms. "If work is not done on time and justice is delayed, people lose faith in the system. These new laws will play a crucial role in restoring confidence and efficiency within the judiciary," he said.

He further noted that citizens are already seeing benefits from the implementation of the laws and highlighted Tripura's unique distinction as the only state in the country to organize an exhibition on the new criminal laws.

Recalling discussions held in Guwahati in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Dr. Saha said Tripura had presented its effective measures for implementation of the laws during that meeting. "Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, these groundbreaking reforms came into effect, and Tripura has been at the forefront of adopting them," he added.

The Chief Minister emphasized that Tripura's efforts underline its commitment to legal reforms and its proactive role in ensuring justice for all.

**GUWAHATI**

Security agencies have intensified vigil along the Assam-West Bengal border in Dhubri district following intelligence inputs about possible infiltration attempts by jihadi and fundamentalist groups from Bangladesh.

Officials believe the volatile political situation in Nepal has pushed several operatives, who had earlier taken refuge there, to explore re-entry into India through the sensitive border stretches of Dhubri and Cooch Behar.

According to highly-placed sources, these outfits are part of a nexus engaged in drug trafficking and counterfeit currency circulation, with the aim of destabilising India's northeastern states. The groups are said to have established a well-entrenched network through the Dhulabari-Nepal route, via Panitanki in Siliguri, West Bengal.

Intelligence reports suggest that counterfeit notes of Rs 500, Rs 200, and Rs 100 denominations are being smuggled into India from Bangladesh, with Dhubri acting as a key transit corridor. The fake currency is routed through the riverine areas of South Salmara-Mankachar, particularly Pakirganj, before spreading to

## Manipur gov't bans air guns in Churachandpur ahead of PM Modi's likely visit

**IMPHAL**

The Manipur government has banned air guns in Churachandpur district in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's likely visit on September 13.

An order issued by District Magistrate Dharun Kumar has banned the "use, carrying, and brandishing" of air guns in the Churachandpur district with immediate effect and until further orders.

The ban was issued under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which grants authorities the power to take preventive action in urgent cases to maintain public safety.

"VVIP is scheduled to visit Churachandpur district, and elaborate security arrangements are being made to ensure smooth conduct of the programme. It has been observed that the carrying, use or brandishing of air guns may cause alarm, con-



Nidanpur and Tikrikilla in Meghalaya.

Investigators say the racket thrives on a system of exchanging counterfeit notes at a discounted value for genuine currency, enabling large-scale circulation across the Northeast. Meghalaya and parts of West Bengal have already reported instances of such fake notes surfacing.

A recent seizure underlined the scale of the menace. On September 4, Golakganj police in

Dhubri recovered fake notes of Rs 200 and Rs 500 during a raid at Halakura market. One accused, Abu Taher Ali, was arrested in connection with the haul.

Authorities have since stepped up deployment along border outposts and increased surveillance over ferry points and vulnerable stretches of the Brahmaputra, amid fears that the ongoing unrest in Nepal may trigger renewed infiltration attempts by these groups.

fusion or pose a potential security threat during the VVIP movement," the order said on Wednesday.

"Any person found violating this order shall be liable for action under the relevant provisions of law, and the Superintendent of Police, Churachandpur, shall ensure strict enforcement of the order," it said.

PM Modi is likely to arrive in the state from Mizoram, but there has been no official announcement regarding it, either from New Delhi or Imphal. Several preparatory meetings have been held in the state in view of the visit.

This would be Modi's first visit to Manipur after ethnic violence broke out between Kukis and Meiteis in May 2023. Over 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless as a result of the violence.

Churachandpur is the stronghold of the tribal Kuki community.



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## INTENTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Important boundaries and lines of the world encompass a diverse array of demarcations that hold immense significance in shaping global politics, geography and historical narratives. These lines though appearing to a lay man on the map as just a set of designs are in fact 'markers' separating nations, defining disputed territories and symbolizing ideological divisions. From the heavily fortified '38th parallel' in the case of Korean peninsula to the 'Durand line' between Pakistan and Afghanistan and the live wire of LOC (Line of Control) between India and Pakistan these boundaries represent complex geopolitical landscapes. Rather lines / boundaries between nations encapsulate the intricacies of global affairs, deciding fates of millions of people living on both sides of these demarcations leaving an indelible mark on the regional as well as world peace and stability. Borders serve as the physical manifestation of a nation's sovereignty, marking the territory under its control. Sovereignty grants a country the authority to rule its citizens and make decisions as per the national writ that are bound to be respected in its entirety. By marking territorial distinctions on ground as well as on the map by way of cartographic reach these distinctions symbolize the beginning and end of a nation state's authority which are respected by the world bodies without any compunction. Any transgression of these boundaries is taken as a sign of international breach of peace and stability in the region.

India, by its very unique disposition in the the world, commands a special place that is bound to ruffle feathers of many a powerful country. China is one such power that has been for times immemorial proving the proverbial 'thorn in the flesh' for India. Notwithstanding the age old historical cum cultural ties between the two Asian giants, Chinese as a race has been known to profess openly a policy of hegemony bound by the tenets of 'power mongering'. This brazen display of power mongering came to the fore more so after the culmination of the 'cultural revolution' in 1949. With the departure of colonial powers of the western world from most of the Asian continent post the 2WW, the power vacuum so left was bound to be filled in by an equally powerful emerging nation aka 'The PRC (People's republic of China). Cartographic aggression followed by a physical nibbling of the Indian land became the 'sine quo non' of de facto Chinese stance that finally resulted in the typical 'War in the high Himalayas' in 1962 from which India still has not been able to emerge fully. Post 1962, both India and china adopted a policy of a relative NWN (No war no peace) on its northern frontiers abutting the Tibetan plateau with minor aberrations in their boundary dispute ostensibly owing to differing in perceptions the way LAC (Line of Actual Control) ran between the two Asian giants. The decades of late 1950s right till the end of 60s was marked by a heightened sense of disquiet on the Sino-Indian border front. With the debacle of 1962 still chasing like a 'Himalayan apparition' the body politic of India and both our western and northern adversary leaving no stone unturned to put the sub-continent in a pincer, the aggressive Chinese stance adopted during the 1965 between India and Pakistan left no doubt in the Indian minds of a lingering 'two-front war'. This 'two-front war' albeit in a more tacit way was in its full manifestation during the current and ongoing 'OP Sindoar' when China brazenly supported Pakistan not only diplomatically, psychologically but also materially in its war efforts. It's a different matter that these efforts were stymied from their fruition by India's aggressive CNP (Comprehensive national power). The Chinese aggressive diplomatic stand during the Indo-Pak war of 1965 directing India to vacate certain Himalayan passes notably the Nathu La and Jelep La was guided by three fold objectives. Firstly to lend tacit support to its friend Pakistan, secondly to put indirect pressure on India to open up a second front and finally to test India's resolve to guard its northern front post 1962 drubbing. China more or less coincided its sabre rattling on India's vacating Himalayan passes with the time line of progression of Indo-Pak war in 1965. From 7th to 12th September 1965 with the Indo-Pak conflagration in full swing, the 'Chinese demarche' issued to India accused the latter of building military infra deep inside the Chinese territory (Nathu La and Jelep La). China sent overnight demarches both at our diplomatic mission in Peking (Beijing) as well as New Delhi saying these two positions were well within the Chinese territory. On 16th September 1965 China issued a 72 hour ultimatum to India demanding immediate dismantling of its military infra on these two passes failing which 'grave consequences' awaited India. From 19th to 20th September 1965 China warned of an armed action against India. The Chinese bluster was torn asunder by the Shastri administration with India steadfastly guarding its frontiers on the Sikkim front. Cut to more recently 2025 post OP Sindoar exactly 58 years later the blasting of Chinese military hardware respectively became an abiding symbol of Chinese military and diplomatic 'grandstanding' that sent ripples across both sides of the international date line. The summary disposal of Chinese military hardware in terms of their missiles, drones, radars, and front line fighter aircrafts by India that were gifted to their bosom friend Pakistan just before and during 'OP Sindoar' was a big 'Déjà vu' for the combined duo of present generation and the older lot of Indians.

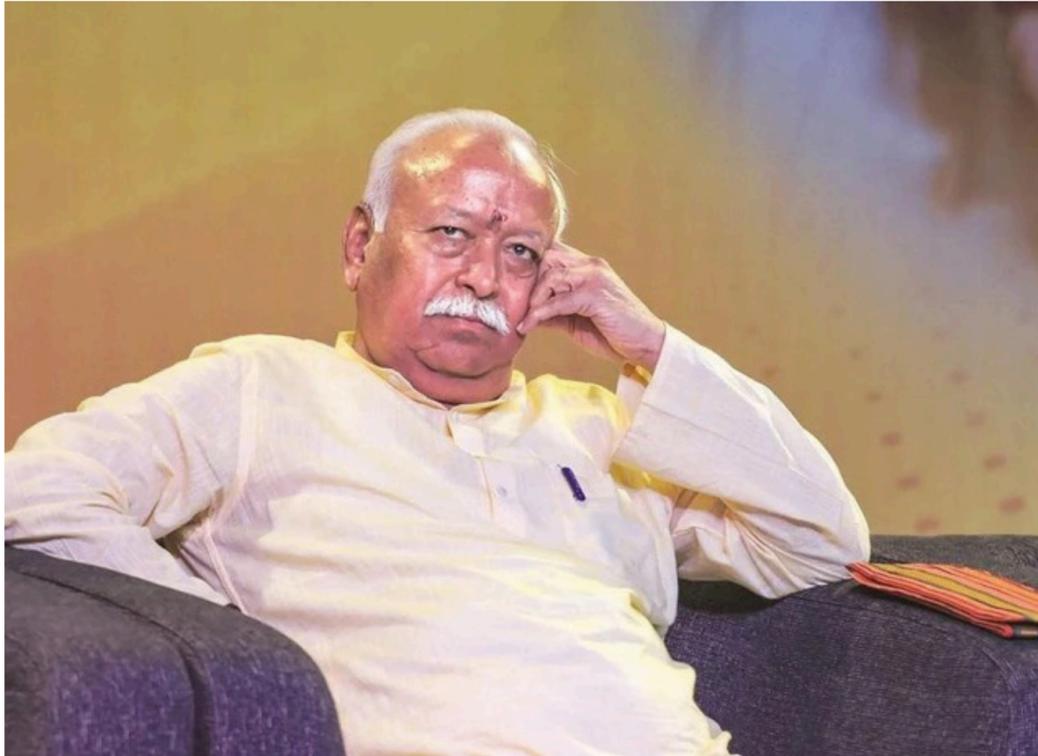
Calling the bluff of Chinese hegemony which was riding high on victory gained during the 1962 border skirmishes, the politico-military combine of 1967 of India took the battle straight into the enemy camp when on 11th September 1967, the army gave a bloody nose to the PLA much to their chagrin. The synergy that was on display i.e both the politico-military combine during 1967 clash on the watershed in the form of Major Generals Sagat Singh and Lt General Jagjit Singh Arora who were at the helm over there along with Mrs Gandhi heading the central government is reminiscent of the present set up in the form of PM Modi and a resolute tri command of army, navy and the IAF. Both of these incidents happened in 1967 and 2025 just five years after the 1962 war and the infamous Galwan clashes of 2020. Both were triggered due to sheer intransigence shown by China and Pakistan respectively. Though the latter one at Pahalgam was a direct consequence of decades of Pakistani perfidy that it has been now professing to no end. Both the incidents restored Indian army's confidence which was on a low ebb after the 1962 debacle and the repeated Pakistani attempts to destabilize the nation state of India by its state sponsored terrorism respectively. Two diametrically disparate situations, though having the commonality of undermining country's sovereignty.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The best revenge is not to be like your enemy."

-Marcus Aurelius

# BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE TO MOHAN BHAGWAT JI



NARENDRA MODI

Today is September 11th. This day evokes two contrasting remembrances. The first dates back to 1893, when Swami Vivekananda delivered his iconic Chicago address. With the few words, "Sisters and Brothers of America," he won the hearts of thousands present in the hall. He introduced the timeless spiritual heritage of India and the emphasis on universal brotherhood to the world stage. The second is the gruesome 9/11 attacks, when this very principle came under attack thanks to the menace of terrorism and radicalism.

There is something else about this day which is noteworthy. Today is the birthday of a personality who, inspired by the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, has dedicated his entire life to societal transformation and strengthening the spirit of harmony and fraternity. For lakhs of people associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, he is respectfully referred to as Param Pujya Sarsanghchalak. Yes, I am referring to Shri Mohan Bhagwat Ji, whose 75th birthday is, incidentally, falling in the same year when the RSS marks its centenary. I would like to convey my best wishes to him and pray for his long and healthy life.

My association with Mohan Ji's family has been very deep. I have had the good fortune of working closely with Mohan Ji's father, the late Madhukarrao Bhagwat Ji. I have written extensively about him in my book, Jyotipunj. Along with his association with the time line, he devoted himself to nation-building. He played a pivotal role in strengthening the RSS across Gujarat. Such was Madhukarrao Ji's passion towards nation-building that it groomed his son, Mohanrao, to work towards India's regeneration. It is as if Paramsmi Madhukarrao prepared another Paramsmi in Mohanrao.

Mohan Ji became a Pracharak in the mid-1970s. Upon hearing the word 'Pracharak', one may mistakenly think it refers to someone who is simply doing Prachar or campaigning, propagating ideas. But, those familiar with the working of the RSS understand that the Pracharak tradition is at the core of the organisation's work. Over the last hundred years, thousands of young people, inspired by a patriotic zeal, have left their homes and families to dedicate their lives to realising the mission of India First.

His early years in the RSS coincided with a very dark period of Indian history. This was the time the draconian Emergency was

imposed by the then Congress government. For every person who cherished democratic principles and wanted India to prosper, it was natural to strengthen the anti-Emergency movement. This is exactly what Mohan Ji and countless RSS Swayamsevaks did. He worked extensively in rural and backward areas of Maharashtra, especially Vidarbha. This shaped his understanding of the challenges faced by the poor and downtrodden.

Over the years, Bhagwat Ji held various positions in the RSS. He performed each and every one of those duties with great dexterity. Mohan Ji's years as the head of the Akhil Bharatiya Sharirik Pramukh during the 1990s are still fondly remembered by many Swayamsevaks. During this period, he spent considerable time working in the villages of Bihar. These experiences further deepened his connect with grassroots issues. He became Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh at the turn of the 20th century. In 2000, he became the Sarkaryawah and here too, he brought his unique way of working, handling the most complex of situations with ease and precision. In 2009, he became the Sarsanghchalak and continues to work with great vibrancy.

Being Sarsanghchalak is more than an organisational responsibility. Extraordinary individuals have defined this role through personal sacrifice, clarity of purpose and unshakable commitment to Maa Bharti. Mohan Ji, in addition to doing full justice to the enormity of the responsibility, has also brought to it his own strength, intellectual depth and empathetic leadership, all of which is inspired by the principle of Nation First.

If I can think of two attributes Mohan Ji has held close to his heart and imbibed in his work style, they are continuity and adaptation. He has always steered the Organisation through very complex currents, never compromising on the core ideology we are all proud of and at the same time addressing the evolving needs of society. He has a natural connect with the youth and thus, has always focussed on integrating more youngsters with the Sangh Parivar. He is often seen engaging in public discourse and interacting with people, which has been very beneficial in today's dynamic and digital world.

Broadly speaking, Bhagwat Ji's tenure will be considered the most transformative period in the 100-year journey of the RSS. From the change in uniform to the modifications in the Shiksha Varg (training camps), several significant changes occurred under

his leadership.

I particularly remember Mohan Ji's efforts during the COVID period, when humanity battled a once in a lifetime pandemic. In those times, continuing the traditional RSS activities became challenging. Mohan Ji suggested increased usage of technology. In the context of the global challenges, he remained connected with global perspectives while developing institutional frameworks.

At that time, all Swayamsevaks made every possible effort to reach out to those in need, while ensuring the safety of themselves and others. Medical camps were organised in several places. We also lost many of our hardworking Swayamsevaks, but such was the inspiration of Mohan Ji that their determination never wavered.

Earlier this year, during the inauguration of the Madhav Netra Chikitsalaya in Nagpur, I had remarked that the RSS is like an Akshayavat, an eternal banyan tree that energises the national culture and collective consciousness of our nation. The roots of this Akshayavat are deep and strong because they are anchored in values. The dedication with which Mohan Bhagwat Ji has committed himself to nurturing and advancing these values is truly inspirational.

Another admirable quality of Mohan Ji's personality is his soft-spoken nature. He is blessed with an exceptional ability to listen. This trait ensures a deeper perspective and also brings a sense of sensitivity and dignity to his persona and leadership.

Here, I also want to write about the keen interest he has always shown towards various mass movements. From Swachh Bharat Mission to Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, he always urges the entire RSS family to add vigour through these movements. In order to further social well-being, Mohan Ji has given the 'Panch Parivartan', which includes social harmony, family values, environmental awareness, national selfhood and civic duties. These can inspire Indians from all walks of life. Every Swayamsevak dreams of seeing a strong and prosperous nation. To realise this dream, what is required is both clear vision and decisive action. Mohan Ji embodies both these qualities in abundance.

Bhagwat Ji has always been a strong votary of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', a firm believer in India's diversity and the celebration of so many different cultures and traditions that are a part of our land.

Beyond his busy schedule, Mohan Ji has

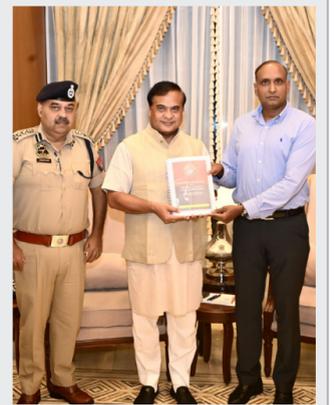
always found time to pursue passions like music and singing. Few people know that he is very versatile in various Indian musical instruments. His passion for reading can be seen in several of his speeches and interactions.

This year, in a few days from now, the RSS turns 100. It is also a pleasant coincidence that this year, Vijaya Dashami, Gandhi Jayanti, Lal Bahadur Shastri Jayanti and the RSS centenary celebrations are on the same day. It will be a historic milestone for lakhs of people associated with the RSS in India and the world. And, we have a very wise and hardworking Sarsanghchalak in Mohan Ji, steering the organisation in these times. I will conclude by saying that Mohan Ji is a living example of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, showing that when we rise above boundaries and consider everyone as our own, it strengthens trust, brotherhood and equality in society. I once again wish Mohan Ji a long and healthy life in service of Maa Bharti.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**On 17th February, 2025 the Assam Cabinet constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate the anti-India activities of one Pakistani national, Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, and his associates. During the course of this exhaustive investigation, the SIT has unearthed startling facts which point towards a larger conspiracy aimed at undermining the sovereignty of our nation. The SIT has also established the involvement of a British national - who is also married to an Indian Member of Parliament - in the larger nefarious activities of Ali Tauqeer Sheikh. Furthermore, the investigation also sheds light on how the Ministry of Interior, Govt of Pakistan facilitated the visit of an Hon'ble Member of Parliament from Assam in their country. The Assam Government will now examine the report of the SIT in detail and place it before the State Cabinet. Once the matter is discussed in the Cabinet, the information gathered during the enquiry will be made public.**

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma,



## Assam's New SOP on Illegal Migration: Policy Shift or Political Calculus?

When the Assam Cabinet on Tuesday unveiled a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to operationalise the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared it a decisive moment in the State's decades-long struggle against illegal migration. For supporters, the move represents long-overdue action to protect Assam's cultural and demographic balance. For sceptics, it smacks of political theatre—timed conveniently with elections less than a year away.

The question is stark: is this a genuine policy shift, or an electoral calculus dressed up as law-and-order reform?

What the SOP Says  
At the heart of the Cabinet decision is a framework empowering District Commissioners (DCs) to initiate expulsion proceedings against suspected foreigners. The process is straightforward on paper but fraught with legal and human consequences:

- Suspected individuals will be served a 10-day notice.
- Within this period, they must furnish valid proof of Indian citizenship.
- Failure to comply allows the DC to order removal to a holding centre, where they will await deportation under the custody of the Border Security Force (BSF).
- In cases where the DC cannot conclusively determine status, the matter may be referred to the Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs), institutions already central to Assam's fraught citizenship landscape.

Sarma justified the measure by pointing to recent

Supreme Court judgments. While the apex court upheld Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955—the contentious clause born out of the Assam Accord (1985)—it also reaffirmed the validity of the 1950 Act, most notably in the landmark Sarbananda Sonowal vs. Union of India verdict. That ruling described unchecked illegal migration as "external aggression" undermining the nation's sovereignty.

The government's message, therefore, is clear: the legal mandate exists, and Assam is ready to act.

The Deep Roots of Assam's Migration Dilemma  
To understand the resonance—and controversy—of this SOP, one must revisit Assam's unique history. Migration is not a recent issue; it is interwoven with the State's very fabric.

Colonial Roots  
In the 19th century, the British East India Company transformed Assam into a hub of tea cultivation. To meet labour demands, it imported large numbers of Bengali-speaking workers, primarily from present-day West Bengal and parts of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). This influx marked the first major wave of demographic change, as the sparsely populated Brahmaputra Valley became a magnet for settlers.

Partition and After  
The upheaval of Partition in 1947 brought another surge of migrants, many fleeing communal violence in East Pakistan. By the 1950s, migration had become a political flashpoint. The 1961 Census estimated that over 2.2 lakh migrants had entered Assam illegally.

Alarmed, New Delhi launched the Project Prevention of Infiltration of Pak Nationals (PIP) in

1962. By 1964, official records claimed 1.7 lakh individuals had been "pushed back." The campaign sparked international criticism, with Pakistan even raising the matter at the United Nations, accusing India of human rights violations.

The Assam Agitation and Accord  
By the late 1970s, resentment over unchecked migration exploded into the Assam Agitation (1979-1985), a mass movement led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU). The agitation culminated in the Assam Accord of 1985, signed between the student leaders and the Rajiv Gandhi government.

The Accord drew a line in time:  
• Migrants who entered Assam before 1 January 1966 would be regularised.  
• Those arriving between 1966 and 24 March 1971 could stay but would lose voting rights for ten years.  
• Anyone entering after 24 March 1971 was to be detected and expelled.

This compromise birthed Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, but its implementation has remained patchy and politically contested.

The Legal Landscape  
The Assam Accord's legal architecture was supposed to resolve the issue, but decades later, the question lingers unresolved. Several attempts to streamline detection—such as the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 (IMDT Act)—collapsed under judicial scrutiny.

In 2005, the Supreme Court struck down the IMDT Act, calling it ineffective and biased in favour of suspected foreigners. The court's Sonowal judgment then

elevated illegal migration to a national security threat, providing the foundation for today's actions.

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise, concluded in 2019, was meant to be the final word. Yet it too left over 19 lakh people excluded, creating new humanitarian and legal uncertainties. Many are still fighting their cases in Foreigners' Tribunals, while the State struggles to manage holding centres.

It is in this maze of unfinished legal experiments that the Assam government now resurrects the 1950 Act as a sharper tool.

Potential Risks and Challenges  
While the SOP looks decisive on paper, implementation could prove fraught.

1. Risk of Misuse:  
Empowering DCs to issue expulsion orders could lead to arbitrary decisions. Without rigorous safeguards, there is a danger of wrongful targeting, particularly of poor and marginalised communities with weak documentation.
2. Pressure on Foreigners' Tribunals:  
The FTs are already overburdened, handling tens of thousands of unresolved cases. The new SOP could flood them with fresh referrals, prolonging rather than resolving disputes.
3. Diplomatic Hurdles:  
Deportation depends on Bangladesh's willingness to accept individuals. Historically, Dhaka has denied the presence of Bangladeshi nationals among those labelled as illegal migrants in Assam. Without bilateral cooperation, the SOP risks creating a limbo of detainees stuck in holding centres.

# Dhubri shuts down as Koch Rajbongshi Students' Union announces 12-hour bandh

## POLICE OFFICERS SUSPENDED AFTER KOCH-RAJBONGSHI RALLY IN ASSAM'S DHUBRI TURNS VIOLENT

GUWAHATI:

Normal life came to a standstill in Dhubri district, Assam on Thursday, September 11 as the All Assam Koch Rajbongshi Students' Union (AARKSU) enforced a 12-hour bandh to press for its long-standing demands.

Reports from across the district confirmed that the shutdown was near total and passed off peacefully. One of the most striking impacts was seen in the education sector, with schools and colleges remaining shut. At Agomani Higher Secondary School, AARKSU supporters prevented teachers and students from entering the premises, sending them back home in the morning hours.

"We regret the inconvenience caused to students and parents, but this bandh is essential to make our voices heard," a union member told reporters.



The bandh also disrupted transportation, with both public and private vehicles staying off the roads. National and state highways passing through Dhubri wore a deserted look, affecting daily commuters and small traders alike.

AARKSU has been spearheading agitations for several years, demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the Koch Rajbongshi community and the creation of a separate Kamatapur state. Thursday's bandh was the latest in

a series of protests aimed at intensifying pressure on the government to address these demands.

The suspension of two police officers following alleged excesses on demonstrators in Assam's Dhubri district has sparked outrage, prompting the All Koch-Rajbongshi Students' Union (AKRSU) to call a 12-hour bandh on Thursday.

The bandh disrupted normal life in parts of Dhubri as the AKRSU protested against alleged police actions on a group of people who had taken out a rally in Golakganj on Wednesday evening, demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and a separate state for the Koch-Rajbongshi community.

After the incident, the government suspended the officer-in-charge of Golakganj police station and "reserve-closed" the officer-in-charge of Gauripur police station.

Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, who rushed to Dhubri on the direction of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, expressed regret over the episode.

"I am here at the direction of the chief minister to find out what exactly happened. I met the injured in the hospital. They are all stable. The incident occurred due to misunderstanding," Baruah told the media on Thursday.

He added, "The police officer-in-charge of Golakganj was reserve-closed and then suspended, while an order has been issued to reserve-close the police officer-in-charge of Gauripur. We also received complaints against three other officers – the district senior superintendent of police and two deputy superintendents of police. The DIG is here and we have directed him to conduct a probe and submit a report within five days."

The demonstrators, who were taking

out a torch rally from Chilarai College towards Golakganj Bazaar, were stopped by police and paramilitary personnel. A scuffle ensued, leading to a lathicharge. Locals claimed that over 100 people, including women, were injured.

The AKRSU expressed regret for the bandh but said the step was necessary to make the voices of the Koch-Rajbongshi community heard.

Six communities in Assam – Koch-Rajbongshi, Tai-Ahom, Chutia, Matak, Moran, and Tea Tribes – have long been demanding ST status. In addition, the AKRSU is pressing for the creation of a separate "Kamatapur" state.

On 6 September, thousands of people from the Moran community staged demonstrations in upper Assam's Margherita, demanding ST status and autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

## Nagaon Bengali youth body demands withdrawal of 'D' voter cases, repeal of CAA

NAGAON

The Nagaon District Committee of the All Assam Bengali Youth Students' Federation staged a late-night protest in Kaliabor's Ambagan, voicing sharp opposition to the BJP government.

Hundreds of participants joined a massive torchlight procession demanding the withdrawal of "D" voter cases against Hindu Bengalis, the granting of citizenship rights, and the repeal of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

The march began from the Federation's office at Ambagan and proceeded to Amar Chari Ali, with protesters chanting slogans and filling the night streets with resounding calls for justice. In a strong warning, the Nagaon District Committee declared that failure to address their demands promptly would invite a decisive response in the 2026 elections.

The Federation further asserted that the BJP government in Assam owes its existence to the support of Hindu Bengali voters. Leaders claimed that without the overwhelming backing of the community—who they said cast "100 percent" of their votes for the BJP in previous elections—the party could not have formed the state government. They cautioned that if their concerns remain unaddressed, the community would no longer extend its political support in the upcoming polls.

## Himanta Biswa Sarma: Gaurav Gogoi 'Pak links' report to be released after my review

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he would first review the report submitted by the SIT, which is probing the alleged Pakistani links of state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi and his family, and only then would it be made public.

The SIT submitted the report in the evening.

"I will receive the report after returning to Guwahati. I will go through the report. After that, the government will inform the people about the report and the future course of action. This is a serious inquiry and is related to the nation's security. After going through the report in detail, a decision will be taken on the action to be taken," he said.

Meanwhile, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on Wednesday accused Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of fabricating

allegations and attempting to mislead the public.

Speaking to the media, Gogoi said, "He thinks that people of Assam are foolish enough to believe his wild allegations. He does not respect the intelligence and the wisdom of the people of Assam."

Gogoi alleged that the Chief Minister has created a "fabricated story" to cover up what he called the "corrupt rule" of his government, claiming that Sarma has used his office to enrich his family and amass illegal wealth.

"People of Assam have already decided that no matter what Himanta Biswa Sarma says, there will be a strong wind of change and a new government will come to power," Gogoi asserted. He added that the electorate seeks a government focused on the health and education of the poor, employment generation, and the development of local industries and artisans.

## Meghalaya CM assures genuine citizens won't face harassment in voter roll revision



SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on September

10 assured that the government will maintain a balance in the upcoming electoral roll revision, ensuring genuine citizens are not

## Doctors' strike brings Arunachal's TRIHMS to halt after attack on physicians



SHILLONG

The Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMS), the only medical college in Arunachal Pradesh, wore a deserted look on September 11 as doctors went on strike following a violent attack on two of their colleagues

inside the hospital premises.

Outpatient Departments (OPDs) remained closed, and the normally busy campus appeared empty, with patients forced to return without treatment.

Panic spread through the hospital after unidentified assailants stormed into the Child

and ENT wards on two consecutive days and attacked doctors on duty.

One of the attackers was reportedly an attendant of a patient and was armed with a knife. Two doctors—a woman and a man—were injured in the incidents.

Police later confirmed that one person has been arrested in connection with the assaults. Investigations are ongoing to trace other culprits.

Addressing the protesting doctors, TRIHMS Director Dr. Moji Jini condemned the attacks and urged restraint while highlighting the challenges faced by the institution. "We are already short-staffed. TRIHMS is overburdened with patients coming from all 26 districts of the state. We also face an acute shortage of nurses. Despite repeated appeals, the state government has not fulfilled our recruitment de-

mands," he said.

Dr. Jini also urged the medical fraternity to keep the medical fraternity to keep the media away from the internal controversies of the college while maintaining solidarity in demanding safety and security at the workplace.

The strike has left hundreds of patients without medical care, creating a health crisis in the capital region where TRIHMS serves as the primary referral hospital.

The protesting doctors have demanded the immediate arrest of all those involved in the attack and strict security measures to ensure the safety of medical professionals.

Hospital authorities have appealed to the state government to step in urgently to resolve the crisis, as the strike continues to cripple health-care services in the only medical college of the state.

## Manipur urges United Naga Council to withdraw highway blockade

AIZAWL

The Manipur government has appealed to the United Naga Council (UNC), the apex Naga body in the state, to call off its indefinite economic blockade along the National Highways in Naga-dominated areas.

In a letter addressed to the UNC president on Wednesday, Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel said the Ministry of Home Affairs has been engaging with the UNC on the contentious issue of border fencing along the India-Myanmar boundary in Naga-inhabited areas. He assured that the Centre has taken note of the concerns raised by the UNC and other stakeholders, and will hold prior consultations before proceeding with fencing works.

"The next tripartite meeting with the UNC will be held on a mutually convenient date and venue," Goel wrote, urging the council to withdraw all forms of agitation "in the larger public interest."

Also Read: Manipur: Security forces arrest 3 insurgents in coordinated operations across state, seize arms and ammunition

The appeal came two days after the UNC launched an indefinite trade embargo to protest the border fencing and the scrapping of the Free Movement Regime (FMR).

According to officials, more than 100 goods trucks and fuel tankers carrying essential commodities remained stranded on National Highway 2 (Imphal-Dimapur) and National Highway 37 (Imphal-Silchar) in Senapati and Tamenglong districts. Over 70 trucks were also held up at Jiribam, along the Assam border.

Protesters reportedly blocked Imphal-bound vehicles at Taphou in Senapati district on Wednesday, even offloading supplies from some trucks. Police sources added that several vehicles carrying essentials were turned back from Mao Gate, the border town with Nagaland.

UNC leaders had earlier met with a team led by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, during which they were urged to reconsider their decision. However, the blockade continues to affect the supply of essential commodities across the state.

## Three schools in Mizoram's Lunglei get cosmic classrooms

AIZAWL

In a major boost to science education, three state-run schools in Lunglei district of Mizoram have been equipped with cosmic classrooms designed to nurture curiosity about space and astronomy among students.

School Education Minister Vanlalhlana on Wednesday inaugurated the facilities at Leitlangpui High School, Lungsen Higher Secondary School, and Tlabung Middle School. Speaking at the event, he said the initiative was part of the state's vision to align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

"The cosmic classrooms will allow students to learn about stars, planets, galaxies, and the mysteries of space through interactive lessons, igniting their imagination and scientific spirit," the minister said.



Alongside the cosmic classrooms, several other educational initiatives were launched, including an English language foundation programme, a financial literacy campaign, and an awareness drive to break taboos surrounding menstruation. Vanlalhlana lauded the Lunglei district administration and the School Education Department for their efforts, expressing hope that these projects would bring meaningful transformation in the lives of young learners.

Deputy Commissioner Navneet Mann underlined that the new measures represent a holistic approach to education. "It is not just about academics but also about building life skills, awareness, and a scientific outlook among students. Community participation will be key to sustaining these efforts," she said. According to officials, the cosmic classrooms aim to provide hands-on learning experiences, encouraging children to think critically about science and space exploration. With these interventions, Mizoram hopes to strengthen its education ecosystem and inspire the next generation of scientists and innovators.

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Amid cross-voting talks, TMC downplays issue; emphasizes focus on more pressing matters



KOLKATA

Amid talks of cross-voting in the Vice Presidential election, the Trinamool Congress on Thursday sought to shift the focus away from the surprise margin of the NDA-backed winner, highlighting what it called the "real numbers that matter", including the prime minister not answering a single question in Lok Sabha for over 4,100 days.

TMC MP Derek O'Brien, addressing reporters, dismissed concerns over the 15-odd opposition votes believed to have swung in favour of NDA candidate C.P. Radhakrishnan, who won with 452 votes against the opposition's Sudhanshu Reddy's 300.

"Instead of focusing on 15

votes here or there, let's talk about the 15 days since the US imposed a 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods, 862 days of violence in Manipur, 1,282 days of MGNREGA funds being withheld from Bengal, and 4,117 days since the prime minister last answered a question in Lok Sabha," said O'Brien.

"These are the numbers the Modi government must be held accountable for," he added.

Radhakrishnan's win exceeded the NDA's projected strength in Parliament. The BJP-led alliance, including support from the YSR Congress and smaller parties, was expected to secure 438 votes, yet Radhakrishnan secured 452, sparking claims of cross-voting from at least 15 opposition MPs.

BJP leaders were quick to celebrate the wider-than-expected margin. BJP MP Sanjay Jaiswal claimed that "nearly 40 opposition MPs" voted, either directly or through invalid ballots in favour of the NDA candidate, calling it a show of "conscience and acceptance" of Radhakrishnan.

In contrast, the Opposition had projected unity, with all 315 MPs reportedly backing Reddy. The outcome, however, hinted at internal dissent, with some MPs likely casting invalid or pro-NDA votes.

TMC's O'Brien said, "This obsession with 15 votes is misplaced. Let's talk about the 2,278 days of no Deputy Speaker in Lok Sabha. Let's ask why the government is not accountable on real issues."

## "No matter how much Opposition speaks or abuses, people of Bihar won't be misled": Piyush Goyal

PATNA

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal, on Thursday, targeted the opposition, saying that they have completely failed, and no matter how much Congress leader Rahul Gandhi or RJD leader Tejashwi speak or abuse, the people of Bihar won't be misled.

Speaking at a press conference in Patna, Goyal said, "The Opposition is looking for a reason to defeat us. I strongly condemn Rahul Gandhi for abusing PM Modi's mother. I want to tell Rahul Gandhi and Tejashwi Yadav that no matter how much you speak or abuse, the people of Bihar won't be misled; the people of Bihar are intelligent."

The row began after a viral video purportedly showed derogatory remarks against PM Modi and his late mother at a rally in Darbhanga during Rahul Gandhi's 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar. The Darbhanga Police had arrested the accused person, and an investigation is underway.

Goyal further said that under the leadership of Nitish and PM Modi, the NDA government is ready to serve Bihar, and with full confidence. "The NDA will take Bihar to new heights," he added.

Moreover, Piyush Goyal also praised the new GST reforms, saying that as things become cheaper, demand will increase, and this will lead to a boost in the business industry.

"Recently, the Central government have done the work of making almost every daily item cheaper by making a big change in GST. Toothpaste, oil, clothes,



watches, shoes, and stationery for school-going children all have become cheaper... Making many things available at 0% GST," he said.

He further said that there are GST slabs in education, health and insurance facilities. "Today, by making all the things like refrigerators, TVs, and ACs in houses cheap, a new enthusiasm has been brought into the lives of these people; enthusiasm for good things. As things will become cheaper, demand will increase, then busi-

ness will flourish," he added.

Goyal further stated that due to GST slabs, people will have more employment opportunities, as the availability of cheaper products will increase their demand, leading to an expansion of the industry.

On the government providing employment opportunities, Goyal said that the Central government and state government have given jobs to lakhs of people. "I believe that India is moving towards rapid development, and what is

happening is the result of positive thinking. Under the leadership of PM Modi and CM Nitish ji, Bihar is progressing, the country is progressing," he added.

Goyal also extended his wishes to the people of Bihar for the upcoming festivals such as Navratri, Dussehra, Diwali, Bhai Dooj, and Chhath Puja.

Recently, the 56th GST council meeting decided to rationalise GST rates to two slabs of 5 per cent and 18 per cent by merging the 12 per cent and 28 per cent rates.

The 5 per cent slab consists of essential goods and services, including food and kitchen item like butter, ghee, cheese, dairy spreads, pre-packaged namkeens, bhujia, mixtures, and utensils; agriculture equipment; handicrafts and small industries; also medical equipment and diagnostic kits. The 18 per cent slab consists of a standard rate for most goods and services, including automobiles such as small cars and motorcycles (up to 350cc), consumer goods like electronic items, household goods, and some professional services, a uniform 18% rate applies to all auto parts.

Additionally, there is also a 40% slab for luxury and sin goods, including tobacco and pan Masala, products like cigarettes, bidis, and aerated sugary beverages and on luxury vehicles, high-end motorcycles above 350cc, yachts, and helicopters.

Moreover, some essential services and educational items are fully exempted from GST, including individual health, family floaters and life insurance; also, certain services related to education and healthcare are GST-exempt.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Three dead in clashes in Nepal prison, over 15,000 inmates escape from different jails amid unrest

KATHMANDU

At least three inmates died during clashes with security personnel in a Nepal jail on Thursday while more than 15,000 prisoners escaped from more than two dozen prisons across the country since the violent anti-government protests erupted in the Himalayan nation.

These latest deaths take the number of inmates who died during clashes with security forces to eight since violence erupted on Tuesday as part of the massive anti-government demonstrations led by Gen Z group across Nepal.

The violent agitation forced prime minister K P Sharma Oli to resign on Tuesday, following which the Nepal Army imposed restrictions due to a serious law and order situation across provinces.

On Thursday morning, three inmates were killed and 13 others injured after a violent clash broke out between prisoners and security personnel at the Ramechhap district prison in Madhesh province, the police source said.

The confrontation began when inmates attempted to break out of the facility by causing an explosion using a gas cylinder. Security forces opened fire to regain control when three of the inmates were killed, the source said. The injured were taken to Ramechhap District Hospital, police said.

Since the violence erupted on Tuesday, more than two dozen prisons across the country witnessed clashes and breaks with mass escapes with thousands of inmates fleeing amid arson attacks and riots, a media report said Thursday.

The jailbreaks began when youth protesters stormed multiple prison facilities, setting administrative buildings ablaze and forcing open prison gates.

By Wednesday evening, preliminary reports confirmed that over 15,000 inmates had fled from more than 25



prisons, with only a fraction returning voluntarily or being rearrested, newspaper The Kathmandu Post said, quoting police.

In Gandaki province, the Kaski District Prison which saw 773 escapees, jailor Rajendra Sharma said among the escapees were 13 Indian nationals and four other foreigners.

The Department of Prison Management stated that it was still compiling final figures from all provinces, the news report said.

Director General Lila Prasad Sharma confirmed that security forces, including the Nepal Army, Armed Police Force, and Nepal Police had been deployed nationwide to re-arrest escapees and restore order.

We are mobilising all available resources to re-arrest them as quickly as possible, the Kathmandu Post quoted DG Sharma as saying.

Earlier, five juvenile inmates died

in a clash with security personnel at the Naubasta Correctional Home in Naubasta Regional Jail located in Bajinath Rural Municipality-3 of Banke in western Nepal on Tuesday night.

The five juvenile inmates were killed and four were seriously injured when police opened fire during a clash that broke out when inmates tried to take over the weapons of security personnel of the correctional home, the Naubasta Juvenile Correctional Home office said.

Among the major prison escapees listed by the newspaper were the Banke Juvenile Reform Centre (122), the Banke District Prison (436), and Kathmandu Valley's Central Jail in Sundhara (3,300), Nakkhu Prison in Lalitpur (1,400) and Dillibazar Prison (1100).

Other facilities included Mahottari's Jaleshwar Prison (575), Jhumka Prison in Sunsari (1,575),

Chitwan (700), Kapilvastu District Prison (459), Kailali Prison (612), Kanchanpur (478) and Sindhuli Prison (500), the news report added.

Meanwhile, India's paramilitary force, Sashatra Seema Bal (SSB), on Thursday took control of 13 prisoners near Baiganiya check point as they were trying to cross over the southern border, according to the Nepal Police source. They were among the scores of prisoners who broke the Gaur prison in Rautahat district near the India-Nepal border. They will be handed over to the Nepal Police after following due process, the source said.

Out of the 291 prisoners who were serving their sentences, almost 260 broke from the jail in the wake of the Gen Z protests.

Police brought back only 31 of them, 13 were apprehended by the Indian forces and remaining 216 are still absconding, the source added.

### North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's daughter, Kim Ju Ae, 'likely successor': Seoul



SEOUL

South Korea's spy agency said Thursday that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's daughter, Ju Ae, who recently accompanied him on a high-profile visit to Beijing, is understood to be his recognised successor.

The teenager drew global attention earlier this month when she made her first official overseas trip with her father, as he met with China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin.

Analysts have long seen her as Kim's likely successor, though some have suggested Ju Ae has an older brother who is being groomed in secret as the isolated and nuclear-armed country's next leader.

South Korea's spy agency "assesses that she (Ju Ae) secured sufficient 'revolutionary narrative' needed to strengthen her position as a

likely successor," following her China trip, lawmaker Lee Seong-kweon told reporters after being briefed by the agency.

"The agency perceives Kim Ju Ae as the recognised heir and sees her participation in the China visit as part of completing that succession narrative."

She was publicly introduced to the world in 2022, when she accompanied her father to the launch of an inter-continental ballistic missile.

North Korean state media have since referred to her as "the beloved child," and a "great person of guidance" -- "hyangdo" in Korean -- a term typically reserved for top leaders and their successors.

Before 2022, the only confirmation of her existence had come from former NBA star Dennis Rodman, who made a visit to the North in 2013 and claimed he had met a baby daughter of Kim's named Ju

Ae. Seoul had initially indicated that Kim and his wife Ri had their first child, a boy, in 2010, and that Ju Ae was their second child.

But in 2023, Seoul's unification minister said that the government was "unable to confirm for sure" the existence of Kim's son.

Kim Jong Un inherited power after his father's death in late 2011 and has overseen four nuclear tests on his watch, with the latest one conducted in 2017.

MP Lee said Thursday that rumours Kim has another child besides Ju Ae, including one with a disability or studying abroad, are "not considered credible".

"In particular, in the case of studying abroad, the NIS noted that no matter how much one tries to conceal such a fact, it would inevitably become known, and thus the possibility is considered very low," he added.

# Act Swiftly to Safeguard the Future of Assam's Tea Industry: ATPA

The Assam Tea Planters' Association (ATPA), one of the oldest and most respected organisations representing the interests of indigenous tea planters in India's North East, has sounded an alarm that the tea sector in Assam and North Bengal stands at a critical crossroads. Unless urgent reforms are undertaken, the industry—once regarded as the pride of India's agricultural exports—risks sliding into long-term decline. In a strongly worded press statement, Samudra P. Baruva, Chairman of the ATPA, emphasised that the very survival of the industry depends on a decisive shift toward quality-oriented production. He warned that continuing the current trajectory of unchecked quantity-based output, declining compliance with food safety norms, and collapsing price realisations could leave both large plantations and small growers in financial ruin.

A Legacy Industry in Crisis  
Founded in 1935 during the pre-Independence era by a group of indigenous Assamese tea planters, ATPA has historically represented the interests of communities who fought against colonial monopolies and established their rightful place in India's tea economy. Over the decades, Assam's tea has built an enviable reputation worldwide for its strong liquor, briskness, and unmatched malty flavour.

However, the recent crisis has shaken this legacy. The glut of poor-quality teas in the market has severely eroded Assam's reputation, leading buyers and global packeteers to turn away. According to Baruva, excessive cropping in recent months has "flooded the market with standard produce," resulting in what he called "crippling price realisations" at auctions.

The fixed costs of running tea plantations—which include labour wages, housing, healthcare, and welfare obligations—have made the current price crash particularly devastating for North Indian producers. Unlike in some southern states, estates in Assam and West Bengal cannot easily scale down their workforce or reduce welfare expenditure, since statutory obligations bind them to long-term commitments.

Food Safety Concerns and Buyer Exodus  
Compounding the price issue is a deeper structural problem: non-compliance with food safety standards. Baruva cited findings from the Federation of All India Tea Traders' Associations (FAITTA), which revealed that many teas listed at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) and the Siliguri Tea Auction Centre (STAC) this year failed to meet Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) norms.

This failure has had immediate repercussions. Large packeteers, wary



of legal liabilities, have reduced procurement from Assam and West Bengal, choosing instead to buy from South India or even import teas from Kenya, Rwanda, and other African producers. "The major packeteers are losing interest in Assam and West Bengal teas, which is an alarming trend," Baruva warned.

The credibility of Assam tea—once a benchmark for quality—is thus under serious threat. Unless standards are enforced and maintained, the erosion of buyer confidence may become irreversible.

The Call for Quality Over Quantity  
At the heart of ATPA's recommendations is a simple but urgent shift: focus on quality, not volume.

Baruva stressed that quality is not merely about taste but also about compliance with FSSAI standards and international expectations. "Quality is the only way forward," he declared, noting that improving compliance would both restore market trust and secure better price realisations for growers.

One of the central proposals is the introduction of a minimum price of ₹25 per kilogram for green leaf, provided the leaf contains at least 40 percent fine plucking. This benchmark would serve multiple purposes. It would ensure that growers are adequately compensated for producing high-quality leaf, while simultaneously discouraging the sale of coarse or immature plucking.

At this price point, Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs)—which rely heavily on leaf sourced from small growers—would be compelled to reject poor-quality leaf, thus raising the overall standard of processed tea. "If the system rewards quality, everyone will adapt," Baruva argued.

Mapping and Regulating Leaf Sources

ATPA has also urged the Tea Board of India to intervene more decisively. In particular, Baruva highlighted the need for mapping and regulating the quality of green leaf being sourced from Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Bihar, regions whose unchecked expansion has contributed significantly to the supply of low-quality

teas. By enforcing quality parameters across these emerging tea-growing belts, the Tea Board could help stabilise prices and protect the reputation of Assam and North Bengal teas, which often get diluted in blended consignments.

Supporting Small Tea Growers  
While much of Assam's tea comes from traditional estates, the role of Small Tea Growers (STGs) has expanded dramatically in recent decades. Today, STGs account for nearly half of Assam's production. However, without access to modern equipment and knowledge, many STGs continue to deliver leaf that compromises quality.

ATPA has therefore recommended that the Tea Board prioritise funding for quality enhancement programmes targeting STGs. Subsidies for battery-operated plucking machines, training in best practices, and incentives for fine plucking could transform the sector's grassroots. "Supporting STGs is essential," Baruva noted, "because they are now the backbone of Assam's production."

The Export Imperative  
For over a century, tea exports were India's pride, with Assam teas commanding premium value in London, Moscow, and the Middle East. But in recent years, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and even newer entrants like Rwanda have eaten into India's market share by offering consistent quality at competitive prices.

Baruva has called for a renewed focus on exports, backed by government incentives. He suggested transport subsidies to reduce logistical costs from the North East, as well as enhancements in the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RODTEP) scheme. "Exports must be incentivised to protect India's global market share," he stressed. Without such support, Indian tea risks being edged out in markets where buyers are increasingly sensitive to both quality and price.

Tackling Imported Teas  
Another pressing concern is the influx of imported teas, ostensibly brought in for re-export but often diverted into the domestic market. This "leakage" un-

dermines local growers, as imported teas are typically cheaper and not always subject to the same compliance scrutiny.

ATPA has demanded that the government enforce stricter regulations on such imports, ensuring they are not allowed to distort domestic prices or erode the position of Indian teas in local markets.

Promoting Indian Tea at Home and Abroad

Beyond regulation, ATPA sees the need for a unified promotional strategy. Baruva argued that the industry must do more to educate domestic consumers about the difference between premium quality teas and lower-grade products. "When consumers understand why premium teas cost more, they will be willing to pay for them," he said.

Such campaigns could replicate the success of branding drives in other sectors, such as Darjeeling's "Geographical Indication" (GI) status. Assam tea, with its global reputation, deserves a similar push that

emphasises heritage, quality, and authenticity.

Self-Regulation and Industry Reforms

In defending recent reforms within the industry, Baruva pointed to measures such as 100 percent dust auctions and early season closures introduced last year. Though controversial, he described them as necessary self-regulation mechanisms to improve quality and compliance. "These measures may face initial resistance," he acknowledged, "but they are vital for the long-term health of the industry." By aligning production cycles and auction practices with quality benchmarks, the industry can rebuild trust among buyers.

A Heritage at Stake

The ATPA chairman ended his appeal with an emotional reminder that the tea industry is not merely an economic sector but also an integral part of Assam's identity and heritage. Millions of livelihoods—spanning growers, estate owners, and ancillary industries—depend

on tea. "If we fail to act now, we are not just risking economic losses; we are endangering the cultural heritage of Assam," Baruva said. He urged all stakeholders—government agencies, growers, traders, and packers—to work in unison.

The Road Ahead: Balancing Tradition and Change

The debate triggered by ATPA's statement highlights the difficult balance between tradition and change. On one hand, Assam's tea industry is steeped in a legacy that cannot be compromised. On the other, the sector must adapt to global market realities, stricter food safety norms, and the rise of new competitors.

Experts believe that the path forward will require:

1. Strict enforcement of quality norms at both estate and small grower levels.

2. Economic incentives that reward compliance rather than quantity.

3. Greater investment in technology, from mechanised plucking to modern manufacturing units.

4. Unified marketing strategies that strengthen the Assam tea brand.

5. Policy support from both state and central governments to sustain exports and regulate imports. Only by aligning these elements can Assam reclaim its rightful place as the gold standard of global tea.

The Time to Act is Now

The call from ATPA is both urgent and clear. Assam cannot afford to delay reforms any longer. With plummeting prices, wavering buyers, and growing global competition, the industry's survival depends on decisive measures today.

For Assam, tea is more than an industry—it is the lifeblood of its economy, culture, and international identity. The future of millions hangs in the balance.

As Baruva concluded, "This is not just about economics; it's about preserving the identity and heritage of Assam. The time to act is now."

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### NAME CHANGE

I. M. GunadonSingha, S/o. Purnachand B Singha, R/o. House No. 33, New Link Road, ADC Colony, Rongpur Part-IV, Silchar Pin Code - 788009, Cachar, Assam have changed my name to GunadonSingha for all future purposes.

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# 2026

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