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PERSPECTIVE

My apologies for frustrations with the X algorithm. We are working hard to fix the problem. ~ Elon Musk

Massive fire destroys 10 houses in Moreh town

IMPHAL



A massive fire gutted 10 houses in Moreh town of Tengnoupal district, Manipur, on Saturday. Officials said the fire reportedly originated from an electrical short circuit at the residence of Ethem Khan in Ward No. 5 and quickly spread to nine neighboring houses.

Thankfully, there were no casualties, although all affected houses were completely destroyed. Firefighters from the Moreh Fire Sub-Station responded immediately, and the team was later reinforced by the Tamu Fire Service from Myanmar to contain the flames.

Authorities said the combined efforts of firefighters, Assam Rifles personnel, state police, and local residents prevented the fire from spreading to other nearby homes.

A case has been registered, and investigations are ongoing to determine the exact cause of the fire.

WHO SAID WHAT

This 31st October will be special because we will mark Sardar Patel's 150th Jayanti. I also call upon all of you, especially my young friends, to take part in 'Run For Unity' programmes across India.
~ Narendra Modi, PM

IMPHAL

Manipur is set to make a significant mark on the global rice trade as the state's Agriculture Department prepares to participate in the first annual Bharat International Rice Conference (BIRC) 2025, scheduled to be held at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, on October 30 and 31.

The event, organised by the Indian Rice Exporters' Federation (IREF) in collaboration with APEDA, aims to position India as a global leader in the rice supply chain. Over 1,000 foreign buyers from more than 80 countries, along with 3,000 farmer organisations and 2,500 exporters, millers, and allied industries, are expected to participate in the conference.

Manipur will be represented by four Farmer-Producer Companies (FPCs), two entre-



preneurs, and senior officers from the Agriculture Department. During the event, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese delicacies will be prepared using Manipur's famous Chakhao Black Rice and Chakhao White Rice to promote these unique varieties in international markets. In a major development,

the Department of Agriculture, Government of Manipur, will sign an MoU with APEDA for the trial export of 20 metric tonnes of Chakhao White Rice to Japan during November-December 2025.

The department is also planning area expansion for both black and white Chakhao

rice varieties from Kharif 2026 onwards, particularly in regions suitable for double paddy cropping. Farmers will be provided with subsidised inputs and hi-tech milling facilities to minimise post-harvest losses and improve quality.

Officials said the state is working closely with APEDA to ensure that farmers receive better remuneration through exports of these premium rice varieties. The department has also advised farmers, especially those practicing double paddy cropping, to cultivate Chakhao Black and White Rice, which have high demand in international markets and promise higher income potential. The initiative marks a major step toward boosting Manipur's agri-export profile and strengthening the global identity of its indigenous rice heritage.

KRC TIMES

STAY-ENRICHED

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Manipur Police Issue Stern Warning Against Hate Content on Social Media

IMPHAL

The Manipur police have warned they will take legal action against anyone spreading hateful information on social media to intimidate individual police officers and their families.

The warning comes in a statement condemning threats and intimidation directed at officers who are discharging their duties for the welfare of the people.

Threats made online are taken seriously by law enforcement, and officers are using advanced computer forensics and coordination with social media companies to investigate.

The Director General of Police (DGP) in Manipur ordered a crackdown on anti-social elements, including those who promote criminal activity on social



media. This action came after reports of threatening calls from gangsters in Churachandpur district.

The Manipur police morning bulletin issued on Sunday states that an incident has come to light wherein a senior officer of Churachandpur police and his family were threatened online by certain anti-social elements.

Manipur Police strongly



condemns such acts and has taken the matter very seriously.

A case has been registered, and an investigation is in progress to identify and take strict legal action against those involved.

Any attempt to intimidate or obstruct police officers in the discharge of their lawful duties will not be tolerated.

Citizens are urged not to share or amplify such unlawful online content. Misuse of social media to spread fear or threats will invite stern legal consequences.

Manipur Police reaffirms its unwavering commitment to uphold the law and ensure the safety and security of all citizens.

The statement further warned that the strictest measures will be taken against anyone who commits any illegal act intended to obstruct police officers in the performance of their duties. Such acts to hinder law enforcement in any way are subject to prosecution, it said.

DGP reviews security in Upper state after rebel strikes

TINSUKIA

Assam Director General of Police (DGP) Harmeet Singh on Saturday said that six security review meetings and one high-level coordination meeting were held across Upper Assam to assess the ground situation and strengthen inter-agency cooperation.

The visit by the state's top police official comes amid heightened tension following a recent attack on an Indian Army base camp at Kakopather in Assam's Tinsukia district and another attack in Manmao area of Changlang district in Arunachal Pradesh.

In separate operations, security forces neutralized a ULFA (Independent) rebel in Namsai district, while the Assam Police arrested seven linkmen and recovered arms and ammunition in Tinsukia.

Addressing the media at the Tinsukia Superintendent of Police (SP) office on Saturday evening, DGP Singh said

the reviews involved multiple security agencies, including the Indian Army, to ensure swift, coordinated, and effective responses to any emerging threats.

"These recent incidents underscore the need for robust coordination among all security forces," Singh said. "I have reviewed the preparedness at six key locations in Upper Assam and also chaired a coordination meeting to strengthen joint operational responses."

Urging insurgent groups to shun violence and join the path of peace, the DGP said, "The Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, has been repeatedly appealing to all rebel organizations to come forward for dialogue. Assam belongs to everyone—there is no significance in continuing with activities that are detrimental to society."

Singh further emphasized that Assam has entered a new era of growth and stability.

Himanta: Congress talked Rs 1,000 cr for Barak, BJP delivers Rs 1,000 cr for Silchar alone

Assam CM confirms completion of Dholoo airport processes by year-end

SILCHAR

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on October 24 said that while the previous Congress government in Assam had merely announced Rs 1,000 crore for the development of the entire Barak Valley, his government has now rolled out projects worth the same amount for Silchar city alone.

Addressing a gathering in Silchar, Sarma recalled that during the tenure of former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, the Congress government's announcement of Rs 1,000 crore for Barak Valley had made headlines. "I was a minister in the Congress government when Tarun Gogoi was the Chief Minister. At that time, the announcement of Rs 1,000 crore for the development of Barak Valley was seen as revolutionary. Whether we actually received the full amount or not is another matter," he said.

The Chief Minister contrasted that symbolic announcement with the present government's tangible progress. "Today, under our government, in a single day we



are laying the roadmap for projects worth over Rs 1,000 crore for Silchar city alone," Sarma said. He detailed key upcoming projects in Silchar, including a Rs 300 crore project at Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH), a Rs 100 crore bridge at Madhura Ghat, and an additional major fly-over project in the city.

"Together, these add up to more than Rs 600 crore, and with the rest of the ongoing

and upcoming works, the total investment surpasses Rs 1,000 crore — specifically for Silchar," he added.

The Chief Minister's statement underscores the BJP government's renewed focus on infrastructure development in the Barak Valley, signaling a significant push for urban transformation in Silchar and surrounding areas.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has announced that all processes related to the new airport in Dholoo will be completed by the end of this year, paving the way for a modern airport in Silchar in the near future.

Speaking on the project, the Chief Minister stated that the Dholoo Airport has already received clearance from the Airport Authority of India.

"Now it will go to the Standing Finance Committee, and thereafter to the Cabinet," he added, outlining the final steps before construction and operationalisation.

The new airport is expected to significantly improve connectivity in the region, boosting trade, tourism, and overall development for Silchar and the surrounding areas.

Manipur to export Chakhao rice to Japan

Assam tea finds its place at the Nobel Prize Museum

GUWAHATI

Assam's world-famous tea has once again travelled far beyond the lush gardens of the Brahmaputra Valley — this time to the very heart of Stockholm, where it has found a place of honour at the Nobel Prize Museum, one of Sweden's most iconic cultural institutions. The museum, located in Stockholm's Old Town, recently unveiled "The Nobel Tea Blend - A Cosmopolitan Blend Inspired by the Life of Alfred Nobel," a unique creation that pays tribute to the inventor, scientist, and philanthropist whose name is synonymous with the world's most prestigious awards. "Alfred Nobel was a true cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world. He was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1833, but moved to St. Petersburg, Russia when he was nine years old. At the age of 17 Alfred could speak and write in Swedish, Russian, French, English and German. Alfred Nobel travelled extensively in his adult life, maintaining companies in various countries in Europe and North America, keeping a permanent home in Paris, France from 1873 to 1891. Alfred Nobel died



in San Remo, Italy on December 10, 1896. In honour of our distinguished scientist, we have composed a special tea blend, celebrating his work and what it stands for," officials at the Nobel Prize Museum say. What makes this blend truly special for tea lovers in Assam is that its robust, full-bodied base draws from the region's famed Assam tea, celebrated for its malty flavour and rich character. The Assam component forms the backbone of the blend, which is artfully combined with Chinese Keemun tea from Qimen County in Anhui Province — a meeting of two great tea cultures that symbolize Nobel's global spirit.

To reflect Alfred Nobel's cosmopolitan life, the blend is further refined with Sicilian bergamot, sweet raspberries, and a hint of fresh orange, creating a sophisticated harmony of depth and freshness. The

resulting flavour, museum curators say, pairs beautifully with the museum's signature Nobel chocolate coins. The tea's packaging, shaped like a stick of dynamite, is both a playful nod to Nobel's most famous invention and a statement in design innovation. It mirrors the packaging of the museum's chocolates, creating a visual connection between invention and indulgence. The blend's association with excellence was cemented when it was officially served at the Nobel Banquet in 2013, a tradition that continues to highlight the cultural and culinary sophistication of tea. Staff from The Tea Centre of Stockholm, which collaborated on the project, oversaw the brewing to ensure perfection. The response has been good to the tea, officials said. For Assam's tea industry, this is another quiet moment of pride — a reminder that the strong, malty leaves plucked from the rolling estates of Assam continue to enchant the world's finest palates. From the tea tables of London to the Nobel halls of Stockholm, Assam tea remains a symbol of strength, warmth, and global connection.



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LOOKING BACKWARD, MOVING FORWARD

Yesterday, I did something uncharacteristic. Stepping away from the familiar bustle of London, I wandered into Rotherhithe. In the churchyard of St. Mary's, I encountered a statue that made me stop in awe.

Carved from weathered sandstone, set upon a plinth shaped like a ship's prow, stood the statue of Christopher Jones, captain of the Mayflower, the ship that carried English Pilgrims to America in 1620. It's a voyage every American schoolchild learns about. He's rendered as St. Christopher, the patron saint of travellers, carrying an infant.

What struck me was the tension in that stone. Jones's face is furrowed, etched with worry, his gaze fixed backward toward England, the Old World he's leaving behind. The infant in his arms gazes forward with blissful hope, looking towards America. The captain bears the weight of departure; the child embodies the lightness of arrival.

I wandered through the graveyard, afterwards. The graves were recent: beloved husbands and wives, siblings, babies, sons and daughters. Dew glistened on the flowers laid on them. Time hit me sharply. Lives fully lived, lives cut short. I felt emotional, confronted by the brevity of our roles.

The word 'roles' lingered with me. Because isn't that what we all carry? The roles assigned to us, often in childhood, that we perform well into adulthood, often to our graves?

Our families unwittingly write our scripts long before we become adults. One becomes the 'funny one,' another the 'responsible one,' another forever remains the 'baby of the family.' These early roles often turn into patterns we subconsciously repeat in every relationship we form.

Family therapists have identified numerous roles that emerge, which we enact as adults: the golden child who can do no wrong yet shoulders crushing expectations; the scapegoat blamed for everyone's problems; the parentified child forced to nurture when they should be nurtured; the clown deflecting tension with humour; the lost child who shrinks into invisibility, and the peacemaker who sacrifices their needs to maintain harmony. Some roles seem benign such as the cheerleader, the nurturer, the thinker. But they limit our full expression. Even positive roles become cages.

Virginia Satir, the 'Mother of Family Therapy,' once wrote: 'I am Me. In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me. Everything that comes out of me is authentically mine, because I alone chose it.' Yet the fact remains that we cannot choose our families, nor the roles first thrust upon us. However, what we can choose is whether to remain trapped.

Friendships shift, bodies age, perspectives evolve. Yet many of us cling to old roles simply because they are familiar. Our loved ones expect us to stay the same, and stepping outside feels like betraying the person we've always been.

Ironically, growth demands precisely the opposite: the willingness to honour our past while breaking free of its shackles. We must learn to hold both the backward glance of understanding and the forward vision of becoming. Like the statue of Captain Jones, we must learn to look backward with awareness while moving forward with intention. This requires honest self-reflection, painful introspection, and the courage to seek help when needed. Captain Jones couldn't reach the New World by clinging to the Old. Neither can we.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Laughter is not at all a bad beginning for a friendship, and it is far the best ending for one.

- Oscar Wilde

GST Reforms and the New Dawn of Indian Tourism



GAJENDRASINGH SHEKHAWAT

Tourism in India has always been more than leisure-it is a dialogue between civilizations, a carrier of heritage, and a catalyst for inclusive growth. Yet for decades, despite our extraordinary diversity from Ladakh's monasteries to Kanyakumari's shores-its full potential remained constrained by fragmented taxation and high costs. The recent reforms in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) have begun to change that story.

For years, India's tourism and hospitality industry bore the weight of a complicated tax regime. A patchwork of levies-service tax, VAT, luxury tax-created confusion and inflated travel costs. The introduction of GST brought simplification, but the recent rationalisation of rates has been decisive in making Indian tourism more competitive.

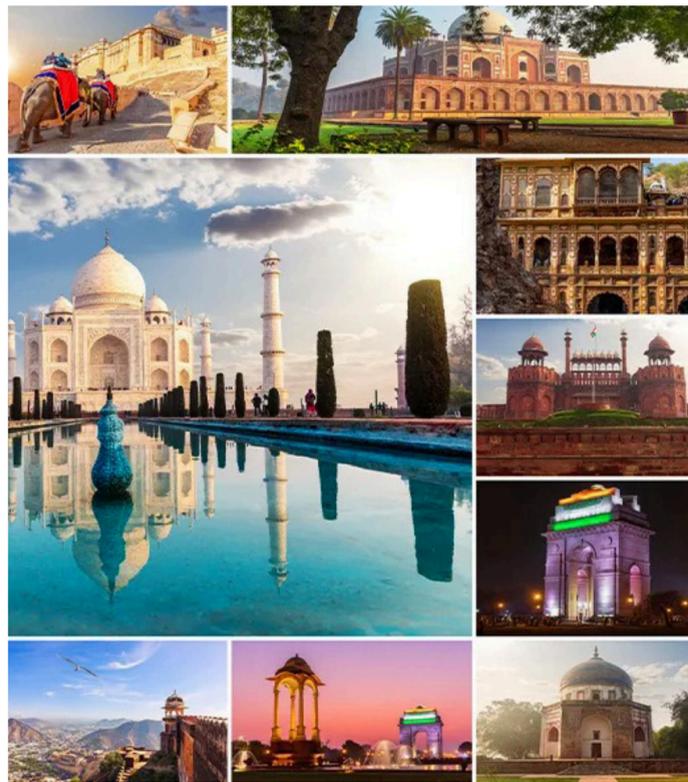
The reduction of GST on hotel rooms priced under ₹7,500 from 12% to 5% has been particularly transformative. Travel has become more affordable for middle-class families and budget travellers-the backbone of domestic tourism. Higher occupancy rates, longer stays, and greater local spending are direct outcomes. For small entrepreneurs and homestay owners, lower compliance costs have improved viability and encouraged formalisation. It is a quiet but profound shift towards scale and sustainability.

Tourism thrives on connectivity. The reduction of GST on passenger transport-especially on buses carrying more than ten passengers-from 28% to 18% is a crucial enabler. It has made intercity and group travel more accessible for pilgrims, students, and families. Heritage circuits, eco-tourism parks, and rural destinations are seeing fresh momentum.

This reform goes beyond cheaper tickets-it is about linking regions, democratizing travel, and giving small tour operators a chance to expand. For India, where tourism is a powerful vehicle for regional equity, affordable mobility is economic empowerment.

India's appeal lies not only in its monuments but also in its living traditions. Reducing GST on art and handicraft products from 12% to 5% has boosted a sector that sustains millions of artisans. Every handmade artifact sold in a local market carries the imprint of India's cultural continuity.

Lowering taxes here is not merely an economic gesture-it is a cultural investment. Tourists today seek authenticity, and when they take home a handwoven Kanchipuram saree or a carved sandalwood figurine, they carry a piece of India's creative economy. This reform empowers artisans, strengthens craft clusters, and



makes heritage part of the growth narrative.

Perhaps the most enduring benefit of GST is clarity. Small hotels, homestays, and travel agencies now operate within a single, predictable framework instead of a maze of state-specific taxes. This improves compliance, boosts investor confidence, and creates space for innovation.

Formalisation also unlocks access to credit, insurance, and digital payments for thousands of small operators who once functioned informally. For a sector that employs more women and youth than most others, this integration is transformative. Tourism becomes not just a leisure industry but a driver of entrepreneurship and livelihoods.

Globally, price competitiveness determines where tourists travel. For years, India lagged behind Southeast Asian destinations such as Thailand and Vietnam, which offered low hotel taxes and simplified levies. The recent GST recalibration has narrowed that gap. India now offers world-

class experiences-from Ayurveda retreats to heritage hotels-at globally competitive rates.

The results are visible. Domestic tourism has surged to record highs, and foreign tourist arrivals are steadily recovering. Niche segments such as cruise, wellness, film, and spiritual tourism are expanding rapidly. The government's integrated push through programmes like Swadesh Darshan 2.0, PRASHAD, and Vibrant Villages is further aligning infrastructure, policy, and community participation.

Tourism currently contributes about 5% to India's GDP and supports over 80 million livelihoods. With sustained reforms and infrastructure investments, this could easily double by 2030. Every percentage point increase in tourism activity generates exponential benefits-jobs, local enterprise, women's empowerment, and cross-cultural understanding.

The GST reforms are not isolated fiscal measures; they represent a philosophy that

taxation should enable, not inhibit. They make travel more affordable, enterprise more viable, and destinations more attractive. They bring the economy's pulse closer to the people.

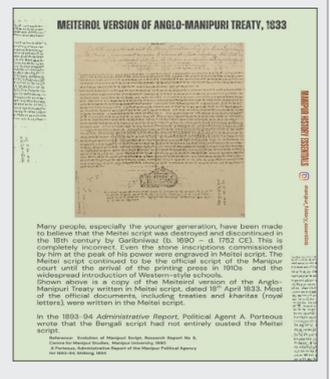
As India looks ahead to its centenary of independence, the vision of Viksit Bharat will be incomplete without a globally competitive and culturally confident tourism ecosystem. The world is rediscovering India-not just as a destination, but as an experience that harmonises tradition with modernity, economics with empathy.

With a rationalised GST, improved connectivity, empowered artisans, and a confident industry, India's tourism story is set to become one of the defining success narratives of this decade-a story where reform meets renaissance, and every journey becomes part of the making of New India.

(The author is the Union Minister of Culture and Tourism)

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

In a significant revelation concerning the history of our language, there is apparently a Meiteilon or Manipuri version of the Anglo-Manipuri Treaty, 1833 written in the Meitei Mayek script. Such a finding unequivocally challenges and overturns narratives such as this venerable script had been deliberately eradicated and abandoned during the eighteenth century under the rule of Garibniwaz (1690-1752). This remarkable evidence ought to awaken within us a profound feeling of pride and respect for our ancestors who took dedicated steps to ensure the survival of this script, which carries the essence of our history and identity and is still being used to this day. At present, the script has undergone a substantial revival with the collective efforts of various sections. Shri N Biren Singh also contributed immensely in its conservation and widespread use by overseeing the publication and distribution of key governmental materials such as the Constitution itself along with various statutes pertaining to criminal law, all rendered in the Meitei Mayek format. We ought to welcome this renewal of our cultural legacy with support and enthusiasm. ~ Sanajaoba, Research Scholar, Department for South-East Asian Studies, Manipur University



SKIPPING THE GAZA PEACE SUMMIT

HARSHA KAKAR

PM Modi skipped the Gaza peace summit in Sharm el-Sheikh despite personal invitations from both hosts, US President Donald Trump and his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. This was considered by some as India missing a major opportunity on the global stage. Shashi Tharoor in a tweet termed it as 'Strategic restraint or missed opportunity?' He added, 'India's choice could be seen as signalling a preference for strategic distance, which our statements don't convey.'

India was represented by minister of state for external affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh, who was irrelevant compared to the presence of global leaders, unofficially referred to as Trump's fan club, which includes Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif. Simultaneously, India had welcomed the Gaza accord with PM Modi tweeting on it for days, praising both Trump and Israeli PM Netanyahu. Hence it was expected he would attend.

Even Netanyahu was missing from the summit as was the Iranian president. They were both aware of what could unfold in such a gathering. Netanyahu claimed it was too close to the holidays to attend, though the reality is that he himself doubts whether the agreement would hold. Trump, a co-host, arrived two hours late, delayed in Tel Aviv while addressing the Israeli Knesset.

Apart from the Egyptian PM and Trump, the summit had leaders from UK, Canada, France,

Hungary, Italy, Pakistan, Turkey and Qatar, amongst others. US, Egypt, Turkey and Qatar signed the agreement as guarantors. Neither Israel nor Hamas, the two main protagonists inked the agreement. The deal thus far only includes release of prisoners and hostages as also an end to the fighting. Nothing else.

Major issues including disarming of Hamas and pull back of Israel have still to be cleared. There are already cracks emerging in the deal. The agreement has been officially called 'Trump Peace Agreement,' to satisfy his ego and enhance his chances of gaining a Nobel award. It appears similar to the ceasefire agreed to in Oct last year and breached in Jan this year. Will this hold, despite major issues yet to be agreed upon, is questionable.

Trump, as expected, used the occasion to grab media limelight projecting himself as the global peacemaker, whereas peace is still afar. He termed the agreement as 'the historic dawn of a new Middle East?' In his second and final tenure, Trump, like most US Presidents, is desperate to leave behind a legacy. His address highlighted the number of wars he claims to have stopped, many of which remain fantasies. He forgets that his dream of obtaining a Nobel award is now a global joke.

Trump, keen to listen to praise and needing an ego boost, invited Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif to speak, mentioning 'say what you said to me the

other day,' and Shehbaz, like an obedient child happily obliged. He, in his about five minutes address, termed 'Trump as a 'man of peace' and 'most eligible candidate for the Nobel peace award', even mentioning 'I would like to salute you for your exemplary leadership.' Trump, aware of what Shehbaz would mention mockingly responded, 'Wow! I didn't expect that. Let's go home - there's nothing more I have to say.'

Shehbaz was subsequently roasted in Pakistan. His words were termed as 'nauseating' and he was described as 'an embarrassment for Pakistanis across the world.' A Pakistani even tweeted, 'Not sure about Trump, but if there is a Nobel Prize for bootlicking, Shehbaz Sharif is the biggest contender for it.' At one stage Trump mentioned that his favourite field marshal is Asim Munir. He went on to add 'I think Pakistan and India are going to live very nicely together,' and looked at Shehbaz and mentioned, 'right.' Sharief had no option but to nod his head like a trained pet.

This was not the end. Trump embarrassed most world leaders present individually when he addressed some of them from the stage, calling a few forward to shake hands, ignoring others. Many wondered just why did they come. After all, they were treated as extras on a set. Most world leaders who were present on the stage are facing flak at home for their presence as Trump's fan club.

Had PM Modi been there, Trump would have

attempted to get both him and Shehbaz Sharief to shake hands on the stage while announcing he brought about peace. He had done the same with the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan some time ago. The absence of PM Modi as also the foreign minister Dr S Jaishankar, prevented India from being embarrassed on a global platform with Trump's outrageous actions. Now it is Shehbaz Sharief who is facing the wrath from his own nation. Trump had attempted a similar game when PM Modi was returning from the G7 where the two could not meet due to Trump having to return early. PM Modi in a tele conversation had categorically told him that Operation Sindoor ended with Pak requesting India for a ceasefire and not because of his involvement.

But this never stopped Trump, who invited Modi to halt in the US on his return which was rejected as the PM was visiting Croatia. That was the same time when Asim Munir was joining Trump for lunch at the White House. The Armenia-Azerbaijan incident could have been repeated, embarrassing Modi. Trump, despite being told off on a number of occasions continues to harp on resolving the conflict.

The Indian leadership has been reading Trump well. They are well aware of his idiosyncrasies, need for regular ego massaging, which his fan club has been doing, as also his desperation to be credited for stopping Operation Sindoor.

Woman found dead in Guwahati flat amid allegations of drug abuse, love triangle

GUWAHATI

Police have launched a detailed investigation after discovering the body of a young woman in a rented accommodation in Hatigaon's Lakshmi Nagar area of Guwahati. The deceased, identified as Riya Rajbongshi, was found wrapped in a blanket on a bed late at night on October 24. The discovery was made by Banjita Rabha, who had returned from her native village in Boko after a week-long absence. Upon finding the body, she immediately alerted authorities. Police have arrested Rohan Kashyap, also known as Nayan Das, who allegedly brought Rajbongshi to the residence at No. 12, Lakshmi Nagar, whilst Rabha was away. The accused, reportedly a married man with children, had been in a live-in



relationship with Rabha at the property for approximately six weeks. Officers discovered a considerable quantity of drugs, drug containers, and cash exceeding Rs 1.5 lakh at the scene. A forensic team and the Criminal Investigation Department conducted a thorough examination, whilst a post-mortem was performed at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital under magisterial supervision, with proceedings video-recorded for legal documentation. Initially absconding, Das was apprehended and claimed that both he and the deceased had consumed drugs together. "We both consumed drugs. She collapsed due to an overdose. I did not kill her. I have been using drugs since the lockdown. I am only a user and not involved in trafficking," he told media personnel.

However, investigators are examining whether his involvement extends beyond personal drug use to potential trafficking activities. Authorities are also determining whether the death resulted purely from an overdose or involved foul play. During questioning in Dispur PS Case No. 868/2025 under Section 103(1) BNS, 2023, Das disclosed he had hidden the victim's mobile phones at Maa Kamakhya Hotel in Ulubari's Sarabhata area. A subsequent search of Room No. 206 led to the recovery of two mobile phones and approximately 13 grams of suspected brown sugar concealed in a soap box. All evidence was seized in the presence of witnesses. Rabha remains in custody for questioning as police work to establish a complete timeline of events. The investigation continues.

Tripura rolls out food support for tuberculosis patients

AGARTALA
Tripura Governor Indra Sena Reddy Nallu launched a Food Basket Distribution initiative for tuberculosis (TB) patients under the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan's Nikshay Mitra Campaign at Sukanta Academy Auditorium on October 25. The programme, jointly organised by the National Health Mission (NHM), Tripura, and the Rotary Club of Agartala, aims to provide nutritional support to TB patients, improve recovery rates, and encourage community participation in the fight against tuberculosis. Governor Reddy highlighted the importance of collective responsibility in achieving a TB-free India and commended the NHM and the Rotary Club for their contributions to public health welfare.



DIMAPUR
In a swift operation, the Dimapur Police rescued a local fish wholesaler who had been abducted from his residence on Friday afternoon, October 24. The rescue followed prompt action by the police after receiving specific information about the kidnapping incident around 2:35 pm on October 24. According to a press release from the Office of the Commissioner of Police, Dimapur, a search operation was launched immediately, resulting in the arrest of five accused persons and the successful

Businessman rescued, five arrested in Dimapur abduction case

rescue of the victim from the Dubagaoon area. The vehicle used in the abduction was also seized. The arrested individuals have been identified as Antu Mech, a resident of Padumpukhuri and reportedly associated with NSCN (Wangtin) as SS Tatar; Nagato Sumi, from Aghuba village and an SS Rajapeyu of NSCN (Wangtin); David Chishi, a resident of VK Town; Amento Swu, from Pughoboto and currently residing in Diphupar A. Chumoukedima; and Ruksana Begum, originally from Moirabari and residing at Neisato Colony, Khermahal, Dimapur. A case has been registered at Dimapur East Police Station, and an investigation is underway to uncover the motive behind the abduction and any possible larger network involved. Police officials said the swift response and coordinated effort ensured the victim's safe recovery within hours of the abduction.

Public anger mounts over alleged JJM scam in Senapati district

IMPHAL
The Senapati district has come under intense public scrutiny following explosive revelations about alleged large-scale corruption in the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).



A public talk show organised by The Times of Senapati in collaboration with Youth Rise for Change at the DRDA Conference Hall brought the issue to the forefront, drawing a packed audience and sharp criticism of local authorities. Social activist R. K. Paul Chawang presented compelling evidence, including photographs and data, exposing a massive gap between official reports of "Functional Tap Household Connections" (FTHC) and the actual ground reality, where most households reportedly remain without water supply.

"The people of Senapati deserve clean water and transparency in governance," Chawang said, demanding that the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) release audited statements, utilization certificates, and bills for both JJM and NDB projects. Former NEC Director (HRD) Kh. Siile Anthony condemned the

entrenched corruption plaguing the system, describing it as a "rot that continues to harm the lives of the rural poor." He urged collective action to dismantle corrupt structures at both state and district levels. Meanwhile, PHED Executive Engineer Gajinlung Thamei acknowledged discrepancies in

the project and assured that corrective steps would be taken by November 2025. However, his assurances were met with scepticism from the audience, which demanded full accountability and transparency in the project's execution. The event concluded with unanimous calls for an independent investigation, strict punishment of those responsible, and immediate steps to ensure honest implementation of government schemes in the district. **Key Demands:** Independent inquiry into the alleged JJM scam. Disclosure of audited financial records and utilization certificates. Strict action against officials involved. Greater transparency and accountability in water supply projects.

AASU warns of downstream disaster risks as Subansiri Lower HEP nears commissioning

DHEMAJI
The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) in Dhemaji has renewed its strong opposition to the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project (HEP), warning of serious consequences for communities downstream as the country's largest hydroelectric venture moves closer to commissioning. Expressing frustration over what they describe as years of neglect and disregard for scientific cautions, AASU member Dipak Sarma said, "AASU has been saying from the beginning that this hydroelectric project will endanger the lives of the people of Assam and disrupt Assam's culture. Scientists warned against building the dam here, but the government ignored those suggestions. Any lives lost downstream will be the government's responsibility."



He also criticised the timing of the final construction phase, noting that work progressed aggressively during sensitive periods—first amid the COVID-19 pandemic and now while Assam mourns the passing of cultural icon Zubeen Garg. Meanwhile, the 2,000 MW Subansiri Lower HEP, located at Gerukamukh along the Assam-

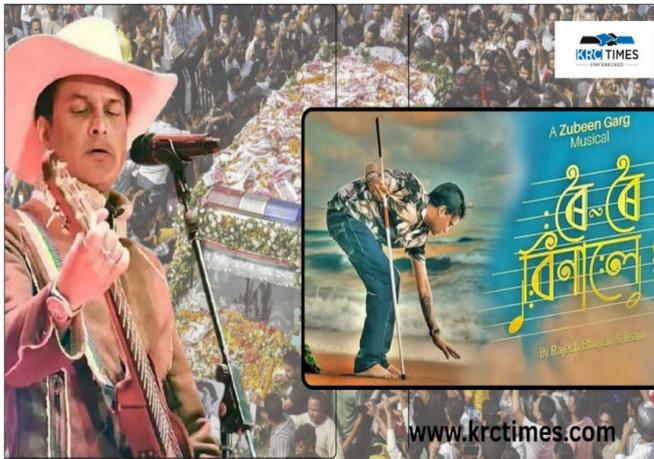
Managing Director Bhupender Gupta, along with senior officials, attended the commissioning ceremony. Once all eight units are operational, the Subansiri Lower HEP will become India's largest hydroelectric installation, significantly contributing to national energy security. Launched in January 2005, the project faced staunch protests and environmental objections, resulting in an eight-year halt between 2011 and 2019 over concerns about downstream impacts. Construction resumed after NHPC implemented enhanced safety and mitigation measures. Despite this progress, residents and activists in Assam's riverine districts remain concerned. AASU has emphasised that the government must be held accountable for any disasters arising from the dam's operation.

Meghalaya: Judges call for balanced use of technology to strengthen rule of law

SHILLONG
Judges and legal experts from across eastern India have called for a careful and equitable integration of technology in the justice system, warning that unchecked digital advancement could risk creating a "digital apartheid." The concerns were raised during the East Zone-II Regional Conference on Advancing Rule of Law through Technology: Challenges and Opportunities, organised jointly by the National Judicial Academy (NJA), the High Court of Meghalaya, and the Meghalaya State Judicial Academy.

and AI-assisted research could enhance transparency and public trust, but warned of persistent challenges, including privacy concerns, misinformation, ethical dilemmas, and the loss of human empathy in judicial processes. NJA Director Justice Aniruddha Bose urged the judiciary to develop technological capacities without deepening social divides. He highlighted India's progress in using technology to democratise access to justice—from the introduction of computers and digital evidence to the live-streaming of court proceedings—but cautioned that artificial intelligence and digital evidence must be handled with rigour to prevent manipulation and misuse. Sessions on the first day covered themes such as bridging the digital divide, managing electronic and digital media, and leveraging technology in alternative dispute resolution. The conference concluded with participants reaffirming the judiciary's role in ensuring that innovation supports, rather than undermines, the rule of law.

Assam Turns Emotional as Zubeen Garg's Final Film 'Roi Roi Binale' Becomes a Movement of Love and Tribute



Roi Roi Binale—the final film of late singer-actor Zubeen Garg—on October 31, fans are transforming theatres into spaces of remembrance, reverence, and collective celebration of a cultural icon. Pre-booking for the film opened on Thursday evening, and within hours, tickets vanished from major theatres across Guwahati. By Friday morning, most shows across Assam were sold out, with only a few seats left in smaller towns. For fans, this isn't just a movie release—it's a farewell to the man whose voice became the soundtrack of their lives. Social media is flooded with tributes, emotional posts, and calls to make the film a historic success. Hashtags and messages such as "Let's make this an all-time blockbuster for Zubeen Da" have spread across platforms, uniting people from every corner of the state. From college students to elderly fans, everyone is deter-

mined to turn Roi Roi Binale into a cinematic celebration of Garg's legacy. For many, the film is a deeply personal experience. "It's not just about watching a movie—it's about saying thank you," said a fan outside a packed Guwahati theatre. Several admirers have even booked multiple shows, calling each screening an act of remembrance. In towns and villages alike, local clubs, youth groups, and fan associations are organising collective viewings and tribute events. Theatres are expected to echo not just with applause, but with emotion, as Assam comes together to honour the artist who gave it voice, pride, and melody. Bottom line: Roi Roi Binale has become more than a film. It's a movement—one of love, nostalgia, and unity—marking the final curtain call of a legend whose spirit continues to define Assam's cultural soul.

Quest!
An octopus has three hearts.

GUWAHATI
What began as a routine film release has turned into an emotional wave sweeping across Assam. As the state prepares for the release of

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India's air pollution crisis now full-blown assault on brains, bodies: Congress



NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday said that India's worsening air pollution crisis is not just a respiratory issue but a "full-blown assault" on the country's brains and bodies.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said air pollution has become a "public health catastrophe and a national security threat" that endangers India's society, healthcare system, and future workforce.

Citing the State of Global Air 2025 report, Ramesh noted that nearly 2 million deaths in India in 2023 were linked to air pollution, a 43 per cent rise since 2000. He said nearly 90 per cent of these deaths were caused by

non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, lung cancer, diabetes, and even dementia.

India records 186 air-pollution-related deaths per 100,000 people, more than ten times the rate in high-income nations, he said.

Air pollution contributes to about 70 per cent of COPD deaths, 33 per cent of lung cancer deaths, 25 per cent of heart-disease deaths, and 20 per cent of diabetes deaths in the country.

Ramesh also warned that prolonged exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) is now linked to brain damage and cognitive decline, with nearly 626,000 dementia deaths globally in 2023 tied to air pollution.

"Our current PM2.5 standard is eight times high-

er than the WHO's annual exposure guideline and four times higher for 24-hour exposure," Ramesh said on X (formerly Twitter).

"Despite the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) launched in 2017, PM2.5 levels continue to rise, and every single Indian now lives in areas exceeding WHO limits."

The former environment minister demanded that the government radically revise the NCAP and update the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which were last revised in November 2009.

"India's air pollution crisis is now a war on public health and productivity," he said. "The time for half-measures is over."

Maharashtra woman doctor's suicide: Main accused sub-inspector arrested

MUMBAI

Police Sub-Inspector Gopal Badane, the main accused in the rape and harassment case linked to the suspected suicide of a lady doctor in Maharashtra, surrendered on his own at Phaltan rural police station on Saturday late at night.

The suspended PSI is the main accused in this case. He was on a run for the last 36 hours. His last location was traced at Pandharpur in Solapur district. He will be produced in the court today.

The Satara Police had on Saturday, early morning, arrested a techie, Prashant Bankar, the second accused. The Phaltan court granted the police custody of the accused till October 28.

Gopal Badane was on night duty at Phaltan police station when the rape and suicide of the doctor surfaced. Following a public outrage, Badane ran away and was absconding for the last 36 hours. It was alleged that the police were helping Badane to be in safe locations.

Following the incident and public outrage, Satara district police had formed two teams, one of which arrested Prashant Bankar from a friend's farmhouse in Satara on Saturday morning.

A 26-year-old woman doctor in Phaltan, Satara district, Maharashtra, died by suicide after leaving a seven-line note on her palm.

A 26-year-old woman doctor in Phaltan, Satara district, Maharashtra, died by suicide after leaving a seven-line note on her palm. In it, she accused police sub-inspector Gopal Banade of repeatedly raping and sexually exploiting her, and alleged that her landlord's son, Prashant Bankar, harassed and tortured her.

She stated that both mentally tortured her for four months. She also alleged in her earlier statement before an inquiry committee that she was pressurised to change medical reports and give fake fitness certificates.



Meanwhile, Bankar's family members refuted all allegations, claiming he is innocent and was framed in this case. They said they are confident that once the case is probed fairly, the truth will come out.

The suicide note stated that PSI Gopal Badane raped her four times. It also alleged that, besides being sexually assaulted by the police officer, she was pressured by powerful individuals, including an MP and his aides, to issue fake medical fitness certificates for the accused. She wrote that the harassment escalated when she refused to comply.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis called the incident "very painful." The doctor had to write on her palm before committing suicide; it is a shameful incident, he said.

He added that the government will not spare anyone, and all the guilty will be arrested and punished. "Oppositions should not play politics over this tragic issue. They should respect the sentiment," said Fadnis.

Ambdas Danve, Shiv Sena (UBT) MLC and leader of the Opposition, state legislative council, sharing the complaint letter of the lady doctor on the social media platform X, said that the lady doctor has ended her life due to the failed and corrupt system. The letter shared by Danve revealed that despite repeatedly complaining to senior officers by the deceased lady doctor to the Superintendent of Police (SP) and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), no action was taken against the culprit.

He said that the lady doctor had complained several times about how she was harassed and tortured by being called and pressuring her to change postmortem reports and giving fake fitness certificates.

"The local Lok Sabha MP and BJP MLA are also harassing this lady doctor; therefore, the call records of this doctor and their conversation have to be probed to get the truth and facts of this case. The call records' details will reveal many things. But Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and his deputies are busy in politics and buying votes by distributing lollipops and chocolates. The ruling party beats drums about their Laddi Bahin scheme, but no sister is safe and secure in Maharashtra; this is the harsh reality of the state," Danve alleged.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump kicks off Asia tour with Malaysia summit ahead of Xi meeting



KUALA LUMPUR

US President Donald Trump arrived in Malaysia on Sunday on the first leg of an Asian tour that will include high-stakes trade talks with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. Trump is set to meet Xi in South Korea on the last day of his regional swing in a bid to seal a deal to end the bruising trade war between the world's two biggest economies.

As he left Washington, Trump added to speculation that he could meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for the first time since 2019 while on the Korean peninsula, saying he was "open to it".

The US president will also visit Japan on his first trip to Asia since returning to the White House in

January in a blaze of tariffs and international dealmaking.

Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One that he hoped for a "comprehensive deal" with Xi, adding that he expected China to make a deal to avoid further 100 per cent tariffs that are due to come into effect on November 1.

In Malaysia on Sunday, Trump is due to attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit - a meeting he skipped several times in his first term.

He is also set to sign a trade deal with Malaysia, and will witness the signing of a ceasefire agreement between Thailand and Cambodia.

"We will be signing the Peace Deal immediately upon arrival," Trump said

on social media of the truce he helped broker after the deadliest clashes between Thailand and Cambodia in decades.

Trump said he expected to meet Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit to improve ties with the leftist leader after months of bad blood.

During a refuelling stop in Qatar on the way from Washington, the US president met with leaders of the Gulf emirate, which is among the guarantors of the Gaza ceasefire deal spearheaded by Trump.

After Malaysia, Trump is expected in Tokyo on Monday, where the following day he will meet Japan's new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

The US leader said he had heard "great things about her" and hailed the fact that she was an acolyte of assassinated former premier Shinzo Abe, with whom he had close ties.

Takaichi said she told Trump in a phone call on Saturday that "strengthening the Japan-US alliance is my administration's top priority on the diplomatic and security front".

Japan has escaped the worst of the tariffs Trump slapped on countries around the world to end what he calls unfair trade balances that are "ripping off the United States".

The highlight of the trip is expected to be South Korea, where Trump will meet Xi for the first time since his return to office.

Trump is due to land in the southern port city of Busan on Wednesday ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, and will meet South Korean President Lee Jae Myung.

On Thursday, global markets will be watching closely to see if the meeting with Xi can halt the trade war sparked by Trump's sweeping tariffs, especially after a recent dispute over Beijing's rare-earth curbs.

Trump initially threatened to cancel the meeting and announced the fresh 100 per cent tariffs during that row, before saying he would go ahead after all.

South Korea's reunification minister has said there is a "considerable" chance that Trump and North Korea's Kim will also meet.

The two leaders last met in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas during Trump's first term.

Trump slaps Canada with 10 per cent extra import tax for not pulling down anti-tariffs ad sooner



WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump announced Saturday he will impose an additional 10 per cent tariff on Canadian goods, citing an anti-tariff television advertisement aired by Ontario's provincial government that he called "a fraud."

The ad, which used remarks from former U.S. President Ronald Reagan to criticize American tariffs, aired during the opening games of the World Series. Trump said Ontario Premier Doug Ford had agreed to remove it immediately but allowed it to run through Saturday, prompting the tariff hike.

"Their advertisement was to be taken down IMMEDIATELY, but they let it run last night during the World Series, knowing that it was a FRAUD," Trump wrote on his Truth Social account while en route to

Malaysia aboard Air Force One. "Because of their serious misrepresentation of the facts, and hostile act, I am increasing the Tariff on Canada by 10% over and above what they are paying now."

The White House did not immediately clarify when the tariffs would take effect or whether they would apply across all Canadian exports.

Canadian Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc responded by noting that trade relations are managed by Canada's federal government, not the provinces. "Progress is best achieved through direct engagement with the U.S. administration," LeBlanc said in a statement.

Canada's economy has been heavily affected by Trump's tariffs. Prime Minister Mark Carney has been seeking to ease trade tensions, as more than three-quarters of Canadian exports go to the US, with

about C\$3.6 billion (US\$2.7 billion) in goods and services crossing the border daily.

Many Canadian products already face tariffs of up to 35 per cent, while steel and aluminum are hit with 50 per cent duties. Energy products are taxed at 10 per cent, though most trade remains covered by the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which Trump has recently criticized despite having negotiated it during his first term.

Trump and Carney are both attending the ASEAN summit in Malaysia, but Trump told reporters he has "no intention" of meeting the Canadian leader there.

Trump also accused Ontario's ad makers of attempting to sway the U.S. Supreme Court ahead of hearings next month on whether he exceeded his authority in imposing earlier tariffs. Afghanistan does not officially recognise.

Land, Dignity, and Justice: Assam's Landmark Reform for Tea Garden Workers

For over two centuries, Assam's lush tea gardens have symbolised both prosperity and paradox. Behind the rolling emerald hills and the world-renowned brew lies an untold story of bondage—of communities whose sweat built the foundation of Assam's economy, yet who have lived generation after generation without a title to the very land they nurtured. Now, in a move poised to rewrite history, Assam is preparing to grant long-denied land rights to its tea garden workers, finally recognising their labour as ownership, their toil as belonging, and their presence as permanent.

A Century of Labour, Without Land
The story of Assam's tea workers begins in the 19th century, when the British brought thousands of Adivasi labourers—Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, and others—from central India to work in the newly established tea estates. Many were recruited under exploitative contracts that bound them to plantations, where they lived and died without freedom or recognition. Over generations, their descendants became inseparable from the landscape of Assam's tea gardens—but not from its legal or economic benefits.

Today, an estimated 4.5 million tea garden workers live across Assam's 800-odd estates. They pluck leaves, prune bushes, and sustain an industry that contributes more than 10,000 crore annually to the state's economy and supplies over half of India's tea exports. Yet, most still live in housing provided by garden managements, often without proper sanitation, drinking water, or electricity. Devoid of land titles, they remain excluded from formal financial systems, unable to access bank loans or government schemes.

This historical injustice—economic, social, and emotional—is what Assam's new legislation seeks to rectify.

A Promise of Justice
On October 19, 2025, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced at the 19th Biennial Conference of the Assam Tea Tribes Students Association (ATTSA) that his government would introduce a landmark bill in the upcoming Winter Session of the Assam Legislative Assembly on November 25.

The proposed legislation, he said, would transfer ownership of land occupied by tea garden workers for generations from private managements to the workers themselves. "The time has come to correct a historical wrong," Sarma declared, promising that the government would ensure each eligible family received legal ownership of their homestead land.

Calling the move "a turning point in the socio-economic history of Assam," Sarma described it not as charity, but as justice—a step toward dignity, self-respect, and empowerment for a community long treated as peripheral to the state's progress.

What the Bill Proposes
The proposed Tea Garden Workers' Land Rights and Welfare Bill—as officials have tentatively titled it—goes beyond mere land redistribution. It envisions a comprehensive socio-economic package that seeks to integrate the tea tribes and garden workers into the broader administrative, educational, and political fabric of Assam.

Among its key provisions:

1. **Land Ownership:** Workers will receive legal titles to the land on which their houses stand within tea garden estates. These plots, expected to range between 1 to 1.5 kathas per family, will grant them heritable ownership rights for the first time.

2. **Job Reservations:** A 3% reservation quota will be introduced in the Assam Civil Service (ACS), Assam Police Service (APS), and other first- and second-grade government positions specifically for youth from tea garden communities.

3. **Administrative Representation:** The government plans to create magistrate and Deputy Superintendent of Police posts dedicated to tea garden regions, ensuring responsive and community-oriented governance.

4. **Welfare Initiatives:** Complementary measures will include access to clean drinking water, healthcare, education, skill development, and self-reliance programs.

5. **Monitoring Mechanism:** A dedicated Tea Garden Land Commission is to be established to oversee implementation, resolve disputes, and ensure transparent documentation.

The bill thus combines social justice with structural reform—recognising that land alone is not liberation unless accompanied by opportunity, education, and representation.

The Power of Ownership
The symbolic and material power of land cannot be overstated. Ownership changes everything—it transforms dependency into agency, and labour into legacy. For Assam's tea workers, land means a home that no manager can evict them from, an address that opens doors to loans, scholarships, and government schemes, and a sense of identity that anchors generations.

Land titles will also provide collateral for microcredit, enabling families to invest in education, small enterprises, and agriculture beyond the tea estates. "When a worker becomes an owner, the cycle of poverty breaks," says Dr. Anupam Gogoi, an economist at Gauhati University. "It's not just a matter of rights; it's about creating a multiplier effect for development."

For many families, the move also restores dignity. "My great-grandfather came here with nothing but a promise of work," says Rina Murmu, a plucker from Dibrugarh district. "Now, my children will have a place that belongs to them. For us, that is freedom."

Challenges and Complexities

Despite the enthusiasm, the path to implementation will not be without challenges. The tea industry is Assam's economic backbone—employing millions, contributing to exports, and shaping the state's identity. Balancing workers' welfare with the operational stability of estates

will require delicate planning. One major question is land availability. Much of the estate land is under lease from the state to private managements, and identifying portions suitable for transfer without disrupting production will be complex. Legal experts warn that incomplete land records, overlapping claims, and outdated maps could delay the process.

Moreover, the industry's response remains cautious. Some tea garden owners have expressed concern that land transfers might erode management control or reduce cultivable area. "We are not opposed to workers' rights," said a senior representative of the North Eastern Tea Association (NETA), "but the process must ensure that tea productivity and employment remain unaffected."

Government officials, however, maintain that only residential areas—not plantation land—will be transferred. "No worker will lose a job, and no estate will lose its core area," clarified a senior revenue department officer.

A Shift in Governance and Representation
The proposed job reservations and administrative posts mark another significant shift. For decades, tea garden communities have been underrepresented in state institutions, both bureaucratic and political. Despite constituting nearly 17% of Assam's population, their voices in policymaking have been limited.

By creating a pathway for educated youth from these backgrounds to join the civil services and police, the government hopes to bring governance closer to the grassroots. Local officers familiar with the culture, dialects, and social realities of the tea gardens can bridge the longstanding gap between administration and community.

"This isn't just about jobs; it's about belonging," explains ATTSA president Manoj Tanti. "When our people occupy decision-making positions, policies will reflect our lived realities. That is true empowerment."

Economic and Social Ripple Effects
If implemented effectively, the bill could unleash wide-ranging benefits beyond the immediate recipients. Economists suggest that land ownership will increase financial inclusion, household investment, and community stability. Social scientists point out that it could also reduce intergenerational migration and school dropout rates by giving families a permanent base and long-term stake in development.

Politically, the move is likely to consolidate the tea tribes—historically a swing constituency—toward the ruling government, which has courted their support through various welfare schemes in recent years. Programs like "Mission Basundhara", which digitises land records, and the "Assam Tea Tribes Welfare Board" have already laid groundwork for inclusion. The new legislation adds the missing piece—ownership.

From a broader social perspective, the bill also redefines the narrative of Assam's tea industry—from one of exploitation to one of partnership. It acknowledges that the prosperity of the state owes as much to the hands that pluck its leaves as to the markets that buy them.

Between Promise and Reality
Yet, as with any transformative reform, execution will be the true test. Land titling in India has often been plagued by bureaucratic red tape, corruption, and disputes. Ensuring transparency in identifying beneficiaries will be crucial to avoid political patronage or manipulation. The gov-

ernment's ability to coordinate between revenue departments, tea managements, and local bodies will determine the pace of implementation.

Resistance from estate owners, delays in verification, or legal battles over leasehold rights could slow progress. Civil society groups have urged the government to maintain open communication channels and establish grievance redress mechanisms to build trust.

Still, optimism prevails. "This is not a welfare scheme—it's structural reform," says Sociologist Dr. Madhurima Hazarika. "The land bill has the power to reshape Assam's social contract, recognising those who built its economy as rightful citizens with agency."

A Step Toward Historical Reconciliation
The story of Assam's tea workers is, at its heart, a story of survival and resilience. Torn from their ancestral lands and subjected to harsh conditions, they built new lives in foreign soil, blending their languages and traditions into Assam's cultural mosaic. Yet, their identity remained trapped between two worlds—neither fully indigenous nor fully assimilated.

By granting them land rights, Assam is not merely distributing property; it is extending recognition—acknowledging the tea workers as integral to the state's history and future. It is a step toward healing a colonial wound that persisted long after independence.

The significance of this moment lies in its symbolism as much as its substance. A piece of land, however small, signifies more than shelter—it represents belonging. For the tea garden worker, it is a declaration that they are no longer labourers in someone else's estate, but citizens with roots, rights, and responsibilities.

Looking Ahead
As the Assam Legislative Assembly prepares to debate the bill on November 25, anticipation runs high across the tea belt—from Tinsukia to Biswanath, Dibrugarh to Jorhat. For millions, it could mark the beginning of a new chapter—where land becomes legacy, and fields of labour turn into fields of freedom.

If executed with fairness and vision, the bill could stand as one of independent India's most progressive land reforms, merging economic pragmatism with social justice. But its success will depend on the government's ability to balance aspiration with accountability—to ensure that promises made under the open skies of Assam's tea country are fulfilled with honesty and inclusivity.

For now, hope brews anew in the gardens where generations once toiled without ownership. The tea worker, long the invisible backbone of Assam's prosperity, stands on the brink of transformation—from labourer to landowner, from marginalised to empowered.

As one elder worker in Golaghat put it simply, watching the sunset over the tea fields: "After two hundred years, maybe the land will finally know our names."



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MLA Meghalaya A.L. Hek Emphasises Unity, Cultural Pride Ahead of NEIR 2026



SHILLONG:

The North East India Rally (NEIR) 2026 is fast emerging as more than just an event—it is shaping up to be a celebration of the Northeast's rich diversity and a platform for regional cohesion. Meghalaya MLA and patron of the rally, A.L. Hek, underscored this vision at the rally's pre-launch ceremony, held on October 17 at the scenic Mebaai Resort in Shillong.

Speaking passionately about the significance of NEIR 2026, Hek described the rally as a symbol of shared progress and unity across the northeastern states. "This rally is not just an event; it is a celebration of our diversity and a reflection of the aspirations of the people of the Northeast," he said, highlighting how such initiatives can bring the region together around common goals.

Hek praised Biswadeep Gupta, the founder of KRC Foundations, for conceptualising the rally, calling it a meaningful step

toward deeper regional integration and collaboration. According to him, NEIR 2026 is an opportunity to showcase the Northeast on a national stage, demonstrating both the region's cultural wealth and its potential for collective development.

"This rally will showcase the diverse cultures of the Northeast region. Meghalaya alone has many things

to offer. The integration of all the states' cultures will be a joyous moment for us. All the tribes of Meghalaya will also come together through this rally," Hek added, his excitement evident as he spoke about the forthcoming celebrations.

Beyond his support for NEIR 2026, Hek provided updates on his development initiatives in Meghalaya. He

announced plans for the Mebaai Resort in Umtrew, Ri-Bhoi, a wellness-focused facility on land acquired in 2011. Scheduled for completion by 2026, the resort promises to be a multi-dimensional destination with boating facilities, a lake, cycling tracks, a swimming pool, and three amphitheatres designed to host cultural and recreational activities.

Hek also highlighted ongoing healthcare initiatives, revealing that his team is currently running a hospital in Jorabat, part of a broader wellness and development program aimed at improving the quality of life in the region.

For Hek, NEIR 2026 represents more than just cultural display; it

is a vehicle to inspire stronger inter-state collaboration, encourage sustainable development, and foster a sense of belonging among the people of the Northeast. "I am super excited for the rally," he said, emphasizing that the event is as much about building bonds as it is about celebrating heritage.

The Northeast India Rally has consistently sought to highlight the region's unique traditions, crafts, and communities while encouraging dialogue and cooperation among states. NEIR 2026, under Hek's patronage and Gupta's vision, is poised to set a new benchmark in cultural celebration, serving as a catalyst for economic, social, and cultural growth across the region. With preparations underway and enthusiasm building among participants and spectators alike, NEIR 2026 promises to be a milestone event—one that celebrates diversity, promotes unity, and reflects the collective ambition of the Northeast to stake its claim on the national stage.





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11 JAN
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11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders.
 Includes: MOUs, and 20 general discussion sessions for various stakeholders. Limited to 50 members and presenters only. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competitive and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.



11 JAN
5E For Success Conclave
 The 4th 5E Success Conclave is going to be held on the theme: "From School to Campus to Corporate". Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.
 Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & Colleges, Extension School, Public Speaking (College). In the online event, former students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.

JAN'25
Online Global Fest
 All can participate online and send a video clip on Poems, Songs and Dance Performances, Bengali, English, Hindi & Manipuri. Last Date: 31st December 2024.



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Awards, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the "Barak Festival 2025". Theme: "One for All, All for One".
 Media Conclave: Media Awards, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the "Barak Festival 2025". Theme: "One for All, All for One".



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10-12 JAN
E-Sports
 Full-Blown! Don't miss! | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #GoGreen Campaign Book Bank Drive | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

Book Club
 Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books

Painting Carnival
 Water Colour and Paint and Draw with Campaign

Barak Festival
 Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion



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PAINTING CARNIVAL
NE CULTURAL FEST
E-SPORTS

FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION
 BOOK CLUB | WORKSHOP | BOOK | RAW SCIENCE | RECORDS LIVE



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DEC-24-JAN'25
Photography
 Online Photography Contest
 River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture
 Real-Time Photography Contest of "Barak Festival 2025"



11 JAN
film festival
 Award-Giving (one month) | Film from Mizoram
 Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W & Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet



Barak Festival
 Band Night | 10 JAN
 Musical Night | 11 JAN



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