



# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED



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### PERSPECTIVE

When You Start Making Good Money, Do This: 1. Buy fewer clothes, but wear the highest quality. 2. Eat premium food, not junk. 3. Hire a helper for household chores. Buy back your time. 4. Upgrade your mattress. Sleep changes everything. 5. Invest in experiences, not just stuff. 6. Upgrade your financial adviser. The one who got you here won't get you to the next level. 7. Surround yourself with high-value people. Small shifts. Big impact.

## "No plan to bring them to Delhi": Assam CM on surrender of ULFA-I heavyweight

GUWAHATI

As the top leader of a banned militant group surrenders, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) heavyweight Arunodoy Dohutia may be brought to Guwahati to meet the Director General of Police (DGP).

He said that Dohutia and another ULFA-I cadre will be in Assam's Tinsukia and may come to Guwahati, but there were no plans to bring them to Delhi. "There is no plan to bring them to Delhi. They may come to Guwahati to meet the DGP," Sarma said.

A top leader of the banned militant organisation ULFA-I on Sunday surrendered before the security forces along the Indo-Myanmar border, police said.

A senior official of Assam police told over the phone that Arunodoy Dohutia, a top leader of Paresh Baruah-led ULFA (I), surrendered before a joint team of Assam Police and Assam Rifles in a remote place of the Indo-Myanmar border on Sunday morning.

"Arunodoy Dohutia, along with another ULFA (I) cadre, surrendered before the security personnel, and they deposited war-like stores," a senior police official of Assam police said.

Earlier, sources said that the top ULFA (I) leader would be taken to Delhi for further investigation.

### WHO SAID WHAT



**On Lachit Diwas, we remember Lachit Borphukan, a symbol of courage, patriotism and true leadership. His heroism continues to inspire generations. He played a key role in safeguarding the exemplary culture of Assam.**

~ Narendra Modi, PM

## Assam state cabinet approves MRO Policy 2025, education reforms

GUWAHATI

The Assam state cabinet has taken key decisions, including approval of the Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) Policy of Assam, 2025, aimed at positioning Assam as the leading aviation MRO hub of Northeast India by 2030 and strengthening Assam's education framework.

In a post on X, CM Himanta Biswa Sarma stated, "In today's meeting of the Assam cabinet, we resolved to the Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) Policy 2025. High-Powered Investment Committee for Rs 10,000+ crore projects. Strengthening Assam's education framework. Tabling of the Mehta Commission Report at ALA. Decriminalising of minor offences."

The Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) Policy of Assam envisions the establishment of at least three world-class MRO facilities catering to both civil and defence aviation sectors, attracting cumulative investments of around Rs 1,500 crore and generating over 1,000 skilled

jobs by 2030.

The State Government has approved to constitute a high-powered Investment Committee headed by the Chief Minister for high-value investments of Rs 10,000 crore and above to serve as the apex mechanism for policy-level facilitation, expedited clearances, customised incentive structuring where required, and continuous support for such strategic projects.

The State Cabinet has approved the Assam Non-Government Educational Institutions (Regulation of Fees) (Amendment) Bill, 2025, aimed at strengthening the regulation of fees charged by private educational institutions and ensuring that all non-government educational institutions, including those established and managed by minorities under Article 30(1) of the Constitution of India, are subject to transparent registration, fee fixation, and periodic renewal as mandated by law.

These measures aim to promote equity and affordability in education, ensuring that all private in-

stitutions operate within a fair and regulated framework, protecting the interests of students and parents, the state government said in a press release.

The State Cabinet has approved the Assam Education (Provincialisation of Services of Non-Teaching Staff of Venture Educational Institutions) (Amendment) Bill, 2025 to provide for annual enhancement of fixed monthly salaries of provincialised non-teaching staff working in venture educational institutions, introducing a provision for six per cent annual enhancement.

This amendment is intended to offer financial relief and career progression to non-teaching employees, addressing long-pending demands for salary revision and improving their morale and service motivation.

The State Cabinet has approved placing the Mehta (Unofficial) Judicial Commission of Enquiry Report on the incidents related to the 1983 Assam Election violence before the Assam Legislative Assembly in the upcoming session.

## Imphal East Tense as IDPs Clash with Security Forces During Attempt to Return Home

IMPHAL

Tension flared in Imphal East district on Monday after hundreds of internally displaced people (IDPs) from valley-based relief camps attempted to return to their abandoned villages near the foothills bordering Kangpokpi district, leading to clashes with security forces.

According to officials, groups of IDPs from Ekou, Dolaitabi and Yengkhuman - villages located along the volatile fringe classified as "Red Zone" - began marching towards their homes early in the morning despite repeated warnings from security agencies.

The areas lie close to Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi, where sporadic gunfire and hostility have continued for months following the ethnic violence that began last year.

Security personnel intercepted the groups at multiple points in Pukhau and near the Dolaitabi Dam, but the crowds continued to swell as the day progressed. Barricades were erected along the approach roads; however, several groups reportedly bypassed restricted stretches, prompting a forceful

response. Officers said tear-gas shells were fired to disperse the advancing protesters. Many of the displaced families argued that with the ongoing Sangai Festival showcasing Manipur's return to "peace and normalcy," they too should be allowed to rebuild their lives. Most of the IDPs are farmers whose livelihoods were cut short when they were forced to flee their villages during the peak of the unrest. "We are mostly farmers. Our economic livelihood has been completely cut off after we were forced to flee our homes," said S. Kumarjit Meitei, one of the protest leaders. "Now that the government says normalcy has returned, we demand to go back. How long do we stay confined in relief camps? Why can't the security forces deal with the militants instead of forcing us to remain displaced?" Officials reiterated that movement into the foothill belt remains restricted due to continued security threats and the risk of fresh confrontations. No major injuries were reported, but the situation in the area remained tense late into the evening as additional forces were deployed to prevent further escalation.

## Guwahati journalist found dead inside office



GUWAHATI

A tragic incident unfolded in Assam's Guwahati on Monday morning when staff members of a digital news portal found the body of a young woman inside their office at Christian Basti.

The deceased, Ritumoni Roy, was found in the premises of Sach The Reality, where she worked. Police said she appeared to have died by suicide. Investigators recovered a short handwritten note from the scene that read: "It is for the good of everyone. Sorry."

According to police, Ritumoni had reported for duty on November 23 but never returned home after completing her shift that night.

Her colleagues made the grim discovery when they arrived for work the next morning. Sources said Ritumoni had previ-

ously worked with several other digital media outlets before joining her current organisation.

Friends and co-workers have been left stunned, especially because Ritumoni was preparing for her wedding, scheduled for December 5, and invitations had already been distributed.

She had attended a pre-wedding gathering at a friend's home the previous night before heading back to the office.

Early inquiries suggest she may have been coping with significant personal and financial pressure. Some close to her believe anxiety related to her upcoming wedding and possible lack of family support may have intensified her emotional burden.

Police have launched a detailed investigation to uncover the circumstances surrounding her death. More updates are awaited as the probe continues.

## Women key to Atmanirbhar Tripura, Atmanirbhar Bharat, says Tripura CM Saha

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday said that women's economic progress and socio-economic development are among the key goals of the government, and that the role of women in the Atmanirbhar Tripura, Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is very important. Saha said this while addressing a meeting organised by the BJP Mahila Morcha of Bardowali Mandal at Muktaadhara Auditorium in Agartala. While addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister said that Atmanirbhar Bharat is a national mission of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"It started in May 2020. Now this program will continue again from September 25 to December 25. The main objective of this program is to improve India's economic condition, defence system, infrastructure, and technology sector. These issues became clear during the Covid period, which our Prime Minister understood well. It was realised then that no one will help us if we are not atmanirbhar ourselves. That is why the Prime Minister repeatedly says 'Vocal for Local'. We are also giving the slogan of Vocal for Local in Tripura - Har Ghar Swadeshi, Har Ghar Swadeshi," he said.

The Chief Minister said that to build an Atmanirbhar Bharat, everyone must contribute to making an Atmanirbhar Tripura.

"Only if every state is atmanirbhar, then Atmanirbhar Bharat will be achieved. On the occasion of the 100th



anniversary of the country's independence, the Prime Minister is talking about a Viksit Bharat by 2047. That is why every state has to be developed. Today, Tripura is progressing in terms of health services. Starting from the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, we also have the Chief Minister Jan Arogya Yojana here. The health system is gradually improving," he said. Saha said that he often sees many people going to private hospitals for treatment. "However, if you go to the district hospital or state hospital despite a little difficulty, you can still get good treatment. Similarly, many people book tickets in advance and go to Kashmir, Bangalore, Silkin, and other places for sightseeing. In this case, our money goes out. Yet there are many beautiful tourist centres in Tripura. Wherever we go within the state, our money stays here. So we must first make ourselves self-reliant and strong," he said.

In the discussion, the Chief Minister also said that women are an important part of society.

"Our current government has

given special importance to the overall development of women. We should be aware of the benefits and rights that the government has provided to women. Women played a significant role in the recent Bihar elections. We achieved a huge victory there because of them. About 50 per cent of the population is women. Women are the driving force of the family. They are coming forward in running society and the country. From driving trains to flying airplanes, women are working with expertise everywhere. Along with doctors and engineers, women are also going on space missions. The role of women in the Atmanirbhar Tripura, Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is very important," he added.

The meeting was attended by Agartala Municipal Corporation Mayor and MLA Dipak Majumdar, Sadar Urban District President Asim Bhattacharya, Sadar Urban District President Jhuma Biswas, Baradowali Mandal President Shyamal Kumar Deb, and other public representatives and party leaders.

## Arunachal Woman Alleges 18-Hour Detention at Shanghai Airport After Chinese Officials Reject Indian Passport

GUWAHATI

A woman from Arunachal Pradesh has alleged that she was detained, harassed, and prevented from boarding her connecting flight at Shanghai Pudong International Airport after Chinese immigration officials refused to recognise her Indian passport, claiming her birthplace-Arunachal Pradesh was "part of China."

Pema Wang Thongdok, who was travelling from London to Japan on November 21 with a three-hour transit halt in Shanghai, detailed the incident in a series of posts on X. She said Chinese immigration and China Eastern Airlines personnel held her for over 18 hours, insisting that her Indian passport was "invalid."

According to Thongdok, officials repeatedly told her she could not travel because she was "born in Arunachal Pradesh," a state Beijing claims as part of its territory. "They called my Indian passport invalid, as my birth-



place is Arunachal Pradesh, which they claimed is Chinese territory," she wrote.

Thongdok said her passport was confiscated and she was barred from boarding her onward flight to Japan, despite holding a valid visa. She alleged that several immigration officials and

airline staff mocked her, advising her to "apply for a Chinese passport." During the ordeal, she said she was denied access to food, airport facilities, and any official updates about her status.

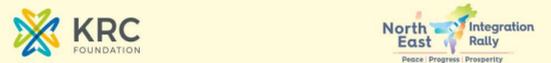
Unable to move freely within the transit area or rebook flights, Thongdok said she suffered significant finan-

cial losses due to missed connections and hotel bookings. She claimed her passport was returned only after she agreed to purchase a new ticket exclusively on China Eastern Airlines.

With no progress and her situation deteriorating, Thongdok contacted the Indian Consulate in Shanghai through a friend in the UK. Consular officials intervened, enabling her to finally exit the airport late at night and continue her journey.

Describing the episode as a "direct insult to India's sovereignty," Thongdok appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the issue with Beijing. She urged the government to seek accountability, compensation, and assurances that no Indian citizen-particularly those from Arunachal Pradesh-faces similar treatment abroad.

There has been no immediate response from Chinese authorities or China Eastern Airlines regarding the allegations.



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## TEENS AND TECHNOLOGY

While experts say that parents should remain skeptical of the notion of internet addiction, however, they also argue that parents should be alert and aware of the hazards that technology offers our teens and preteens – from cyber bullying to sexting, and from information beyond their maturity levels to cyber predators. Not only that, but screen time can encourage a sedentary lifestyle, which may lead to obesity or other health problems. There is ample evidence that intense social media use and excessive gaming – spending two-thirds or more of free time – is correlated with negative mental health outcomes, including higher incidence of anxiety, depression and substance use, impairment with cognitive functioning and decreased learning ability.

Some parents may feel like there's nothing they can do about technological dangers. After all, teens seem so much more tech-savvy than their parents these days. Can't kids get around any barriers parents set up? In fact, there are several strategies recommended by expert psychologists that parents can adopt to monitor their child's technology use and guide them in using it appropriately.

First of all, keep in mind that educating your child about technology begins long before the teen years. Not only that, but it should be an ongoing conversation with your child, not one quick sit-down talk. It's the same thing as talking to kids about friendships, relationships, drugs, or anything else. That means bringing it up as you go along. Talk to your children about their online interests, ask them who they like to talk to online and what they talk about, and give some advice about internet safety.

Keep in mind that the questions you ask to them – are not supposed to sound like an interrogation, rather should help in opening the lines of communication with your children on the subject of technology, and letting them know that you're interested in talking to them about it. As they get older, keep on talking to them so that they'll feel comfortable coming to you if they're not sure what to do, or if they feel they're getting in over their heads.

Sometimes you have to fight fire with fire, and sometimes you have to use technology in order to keep your child's relationship with technology healthy. For example, if you see that your child is using her cell phone late at night and therefore doesn't get enough sleep, you can arrange for your provider to automatically turn off her phone at a given time at night. You can also become a site administrator on your child's social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.

For younger children who might accidentally mistype a site address and encounter age-inappropriate material, you can organize a bookmark history so that they can click on the links of any games or activities that they usually play. You can also put blocks on the search engines and on YouTube.

One less-known option you have is to have all of the texting history from your child's phone mailed to you. Don't worry – that doesn't mean you have to read all of their texts. In fact it is an advise to the parents not to read any texts at all, unless you have a strong reason to suspect that your child may be experiencing cyber bullying, sexting, or any other dangerous side of texting.

Knowing your kids is also one major step towards making sure that they are using technology safely. Take the time to get to know who their friends are, how their school days are going, and where they spend a lot of their time. Also, keep in mind that some kids are more susceptible to technological dangers than others. Here are some questions that you can ask yourself about your kids to determine whether they have any of the risk factors for falling prey to the dangers of technology: Does your child lack friends? Has your child seemed to withdraw recently? Does your child spend all of her time online? Has your child been bullied or depressed?

Keep in mind that the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) recommends no more than two hours of screen time – or time in front of a television, computer, cell phone, or other electronic screen – each day. As a parent, you can set the rules about how long your children stay online or on their cell phones, but you'll be a lot more successful if you give children positive activities to replace screen time. Play games as a family or one-on-one, encourage them to read, and keep a variety of interesting activities around the house. With a bit of work on your part, you can help your child have a healthy relationship with technology.

Research shows the impact of TV on children and teens is mostly negative. Violence on TV has been linked to real-life aggressive or violent behaviour by kids. Many studies have also shown that the more TV kids watch, the more likely they are to become obese. Obesity is linked to several major health problems, including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and sleep apnoea (a sleep disorder) among young people. In addition, kids who watch a lot of TV are likely to read less than other students. They are more likely to get lower grades in school. They may also be more likely to smoke, use alcohol or drugs, have a poorer body concept and self-image, and be sexually active as teens.

Parents can shape how TV affects their kids by setting limits on how much they watch and what they watch, by talking to them, and by setting a good example.

Set rules on how much TV they can watch. The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends no more than 1 to 2 hours a day of quality programming (and no TV for kids under 2). Avoid letting children watch large blocks of TV (i.e. 4 hours straight) by having them choose specific programs to watch.

Set rules about when they can watch TV. For example, no TV until homework or chores are finished; no TV late at night or on a school night; no TV during dinner, etc.

Set limits about what they can watch. Teens can handle more serious programs than younger kids can. But it is still important to limit the amount of violent, sexual, or stereotyping material they are exposed to. Get to know the TV rating system or use the TV guide to help you decide what is okay. When you can, watch shows with your teen and discuss what they are seeing with them. Help them balance TV with other activities. Don't just tell them to watch less. Encourage them to spend time finding and doing other activities they enjoy such as: reading, music/arts, sports, hobbies, outdoor play, social activities, family activities, etc.

Know what they are watching. Pay attention to what is on the screen. Also, be aware of what your teen is watching when you are not around. Many teens and pre-teens report that they watch different shows when they are away from their parents.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

We all have a tendency to think that the world must conform to our prejudices. The opposite view involves some effort of thought, and most people would die sooner than think – in fact they do so. - Bertrand Russell

# NEW ERA OF NUCLEAR POWER CONFLICTS



DR SUDERSHAN KUMAR

In October 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump sent jitters across the globe, when he announced irrevocable initiation of nuclear arsenal testings after more than three decades of self imposed moratorium. He proclaimed that "Because of other countries testing programme, I have instructed the department of war to start testing nuclear weapons on equal basis. That process will begin immediately". The ramifications of this decision extends far beyond Washington's fire control orders. These initiations have sent shock waves through arm-control regimes, rattled reassuring assumptions of nuclear restraints, provoked rival powers to reconsider their own posture, and inject fresh momentum into a dangerous era of nuclear power competition. This moment comes at a time of heightened strategic rivalry. China's arsenal is rapidly expanding and Russia continues to test advance nuclear capable systems. Against that backdrop, the U.S decision can be understood as both declaration of intent and a signal of deterrence yet also a potential destabilization of global order. Critics warn that the move could trigger a "chain reaction of nuclear testing by its adversaries and blow apart the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime." In short at a time, when the world hopes to edge towards disarmament or at least stable deterrence, this announcement risks capitulating it into renewed arms competition.

This also heightened the risk of miscalculation and fracturing the decades old international architecture of nuclear restraints. Therefore, it is utmost important to know and analyze as to what promoted Donald Trump to make such big announcement regarding the restart of nuclear weapon tests and their delivery systems especially at a time when world is changing from unipolar dominance to multi polar competition. Prior to that, it is equally essential to know about the history of nuclear weapons and the efforts made so far for nuclear disarmament through Non-Proliferation-Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) and many other agreements. Besides one must also know about its repercussions in technology era especially when the countries around the globe have inspirations and capability to develop their own nuclear weapons. The history of nuclear weapons is characterized by rapid technological advancement and escalating globe tension, particularly during cold war. In early 1940's research on nuclear fission initiated primarily through the secret U.S led Manhattan Project (in collaboration with United Kingdom and Canada), culminated in the first successful nuclear test commonly known as the "Trinity" test on 16th July 1945. The United States then used two atom bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the only use of nuclear weapons in war time in the history of mankind. Parallely

the Soviet Union (now Russia) also developed its first nuclear weapon in the year 1949, initiating a nuclear arm race with the U.S during cold war. The U.K. (1952), France (1960) and China (1964) followed suit, becoming the first recognized nuclear weapon states. Besides both the United States of America and the USSR (now Russia) also developed far more powerful fusion weapons (called Hydrogen bombs) in 1950's. The U.S. first tested a fusion bomb in 1952 ("Ivy Mike") and the Soviet Union in 1953 tested its first thermonuclear (Hydrogen) bomb known as RDS-65. The Soviet Union later tested the "Tsar bomb" in 1961, the most powerful weapon ever detonated so far. It is also worth while to mention that India conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, followed by Pakistan in 1998. Israel is widely considered to possess nuclear weapons, though it maintains a policy of deliberate ambiguity and never publicly tested one. North Korea has also conducted multiple nuclear weapon tests since 2006. Knowing the harmful effects of atomic weapons on man kind, the international efforts began immediately after World War II, leading to several key treaties and organizations. Notably among them are i) United Nation's Atomic Energy Commission (UNEC): The UNEC established in 1946 for international control of atomic energy. This agency failed in its mission due to the U.S. Soviet tensions. ii) International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) established in 1957 under President Eisenhower's "atom for peace program." The IAEA promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy, while also implementing safeguards to prevent the diversion of nuclear material to weapon programs. iii) Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) of 1963 was promoted by public concern over radioactive fallout. One of the unique features of treaty was to impose ban on conducting nuclear tests in the atmosphere in outer space and in under water, permitting only underground tests.

iv) Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty of 1968 has three main pillars: non proliferation (preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations), disarmament (working towards total elimination by nuclear armed state) and right to peaceful use of nuclear technology. India, Pakistan and Israel are non signatories. v) Strategic Arm Limitation Talks (SALT I, & II). Strategic Arm Reduction Treaty (START I & II), Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT), and New START. A series of bilateral treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union (now Russia) aimed to limit and then reduce the number of strategic offensive arms and delivery systems during and after cold war. vi) Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1996: This treaty bans all nuclear explosions in all environment for both military and civilian purposes. Though widely signed, it has not yet entered into force because several key nations (including the U.S, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Iran and Israel) have not ratified it. vii) Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) of 2017. This

treaty which enters into force in 2021 is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons with ultimate goal of their total elimination. No nuclear armed state has joined this treaty. It is utmost important to mention here that these efforts along with regional nuclear weapon free zones (such as Latin America, Africa and South Pacific), have created a strong international norm against nuclear testing and proliferation, even if universal adherence to all treaties has not been achieved. It is disheartening to note that the sudden and impulsive decision of Donald Trump will back fire at the time, when the world is passing through the turmoil. The situation around the globe is fluid due to regional conflicts. Besides rogue nations with the support of non state actors are bent upon in creating unrest around the globe. Also some are pursuing their expansionist's agenda.

The resumption of testing could embolden not just the U.S. but other states to expand and modernize their nuclear capabilities. This would raise the risk of miscalculation, arm race spirals, and even crisis that could quickly escalate.

The fragile balance that held in the post cold war may give up to more volatile unpredictable global security landscape. Moreover, as nuclear tensions rise global attention may shift more to state to state deterrence and less on nuclear security infrastructure and non proliferation safeguards. This could create governance gaps that non state actors may try to exploit. Moreover in a highly technological era, innovations in AI, autonomous systems, cyber warfare, and advanced delivery platforms are rapidly changing the nature of conflict. Therefore, the restart of nuclear testing could have profound implication.

i) New Delivery Technologies: innovations like hyper sonic missile, noble warheads or unmanned platforms could benefit from renewed testing. As nuclear weapons become more sophisticated, their use could become more precise (or appear so), lowering the psychological barrier to deployment.

ii) Cyber Vulnerabilities: Highly networked nuclear systems are potentially vulnerable to potential cyber attacks. With more active testing and deployment, the window for cyber exploitation or sabotage widens.

iii) Autonomous and AI: AI enabled command and control systems, autonomous delivery vehicles, or drones complicate decision making. Risk of misinterpreting signals or rapid escalations could increase. Besides, the renewed testing will certainly undermine mutual trust, raise environmental concerns and health risk for local populations. Also the multi polar order may become interestingly unstable if nuclear competition intensifies, particularly emerging powers like China expanding their arsenal.

The author is of the opinion that Donald Trump's announcement to restart U.S. nu-

clear weapon testing is a strategic gamble with far reaching consequences. In a world transitioning from unipolar dominance to multi-polar competition, more risks can trigger new arm race, destabilize established non-proliferation norms and undermine global security.

When layered on the top of rising terrorism and accelerating pace of technological change, the decision becomes even more unsettling. The nuclear weapons are no longer just about states and deterrence. They intersect with complex emerging threats in the age of cyber warfare, AI assisted autonomous systems and asymmetric conflicts.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Most people don't know that Tesla has had an advanced AI chip and board engineering team for many years. That team has already designed and deployed several million AI chips in our cars and data centers. These chips are what enable Tesla to be the leader in real-world AI. The current version in cars is AI4, we are close to taping out AI5 and are starting work on AI6. Our goal is to bring a new AI chip design to volume production every 12 months. We expect to build chips at higher volumes ultimately than all other AI chips combined. Read that sentence again, as I'm not kidding. These chips will profoundly change the world in positive ways, saving millions of lives due to safer driving and providing advanced medical care to all people via Optimus. Send an email with three bullet points describing evidence of your exceptional ability to AI Chips@Tesla.com. We are particularly interested in applying cutting edge AI to chip design. Thanks, Elon**



## The Illusion of Innocence in a Political World

DR RIZWAN RUMI

There comes a time in every society when silence begins to sound like surrender, when neutrality starts to smell like consent. We live in such an age – an age where many wear apathy as armour and indifference as virtue. "Politics is a dirty game," they say, "better to stay away." But how can one stay away from the very force that shapes the air we breathe, the roads we walk, the laws that guard or fail us?

Politics is not merely the contest for power – it is the conversation of a civilization with itself. It is the mirror where a society examines its conscience. Whether we like it or not, every decision that touches our lives – from the price of bread to the promise of freedom – is born out of politics. To say we are apolitical is to deny that we live in community, to imagine an island in a storming sea.

In truth, there is nothing more political than the decision to remain silent when injustice reigns. Every silence is a vote. Every retreat creates space for the corrupt, the cruel, and the cunning. When the wise withdraw, the foolish rule; when the good grow weary, the greedy grow strong. As Plato warned

centuries ago, "The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men."

We forget that politics, at its heart, is not filth but philosophy – the philosophy of living together. The ancient Greeks called it polis, the art of organizing community life. Every act of civic responsibility, every protest for the voiceless, every call for justice – all are acts of politics in its purest sense. To be political is to be human; to care for the collective destiny of one's people is the highest expression of citizenship.

Yes, modern politics often wears the mask of greed. It is tainted by deceit, factionalism, and arrogance. But corruption is not cured by distance – it is cured by participation. The answer to dirty politics is not withdrawal; it is cleansing through conscience. If honest hearts stay away, who will redeem the system? If those with vision fall silent, who will speak for the voiceless?

History itself offers us reminders. The great souls who shaped humanity – from Socrates to Gandhi, from Nelson Mandela to Martin Luther King Jr. – were deeply political beings. Their politics was not the politics of ambition, but of awakening. They redefined it as moral action, as the exten-

sion of ethics into public life. Gandhi once said, "Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." For him, politics was the means through which compassion translated into justice.

Even prophets were not apolitical. They confronted tyrants, challenged unjust structures, and spoke for the marginalized. Every revelation carried a demand for social transformation. To care for the orphan, the widow, the poor – these are political acts rooted in moral responsibility.

To be apolitical, then, is not innocence – it is withdrawal from duty. It is to stand by as injustice walks freely. In democratic societies, the power of governance is the collective shadow of public participation. When citizens sleep, democracy decays. When youth mock politics, they unknowingly mock their own future.

Every generation has two choices: to complain or to contribute. Complaints are easy – contribution demands courage. We cannot reform politics by cursing it from a distance; we can only redeem it by entering it with integrity. The real struggle is not to escape politics, but to elevate it – from deceit to dialogue, from division

to dignity.

Politics should not be left to the corrupt; it should be reclaimed by the conscious. It is not the exclusive domain of leaders and legislators – it is the shared responsibility of every thinking, feeling, moral human being. When citizens begin to see politics as service rather than power, reform begins not in parliaments but in hearts.

So, when someone says, "Stay away from politics," we must gently reply, "Then who will stay for it?" Who will mend its broken promise and remind it of its sacred purpose – to serve the people, not to rule them?

Let us not be apolitical: let us be awake. For apathy is the slow poison of freedom, and silence, the soft accomplice of tyranny. We are political beings – sculptors of our collective destiny. To withdraw is to surrender. To engage, even in small ways – by voting, by questioning, by standing with truth – is to honour the very meaning of being human.

Politics, at its purest, is a prayer for justice spoken in the language of public life. Let us not abandon that prayer. Let us refine it, live it, and pass it on – as the moral heartbeat of every free and fearless society.

# Non-Human' Photos Trigger Alarm: EC Directs Assam to Recheck Voter Database

GUWAHATI

The Election Commission has instructed its field teams in Assam to scrutinise the state's electoral rolls after reports from Bihar alleged that photos of cats and dogs had appeared in the voters' list.

The EC has asked officials to identify every "non-human," "black-and-white," "not as per specification," and "no image" entry and replace them with correct photographs of actual voters.

In its directive to the Assam Chief Electoral Officer, the Commission emphasised that software-generated reports must flag all problematic images. It further directed booth-level officers (BLOs) to physically verify such cases and collect updated photographs and



Form-8 applications from affected voters. The EC also asked BLOs to maintain a detailed record of every correction made. Officials added that BLOs may take fresh photographs of electors if required.

The Commission also set guidelines for cleaning up logical errors and potential duplicate entries before the publication of the draft rolls. It ordered

field officials to standardise addresses, ensure image quality, and eliminate discrepancies. Addressing concerns over the use of "notional house numbers," the EC clarified that these temporary numbers do not alter the legal status of any property. Their purpose, the Commission explained, is to ensure that voters belonging to the same household are assigned to the same polling station during rationalisation.

BLOs must also record prominent landmarks to ensure easy identification of households during verification.

The controversy over inaccurate entries gained attention after claims circulated on social media that some individuals had inserted photographs of animals during Bihar's special intensive

voters' list revision to highlight loopholes in the system.

On November 17, the Election Commission announced a Special Revision of electoral rolls in Assam.

Officials will publish the final voter list on February 10, 2026, and they have fixed January 1, 2026, as the qualifying date. Officials described the ongoing process as an upgraded version of the annual special summary revision. Instead of relying on enumeration forms, BLOs will conduct verification using pre-filled registers. A senior official explained that the Commission chose a Special Revision (SR) instead of a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) because the Supreme Court-supervised citizenship verification in Assam is nearing completion.

AGARTALA

The founder of Tipra Motha, Pradyot Kishore Debbbarman, on Sunday (November 23, 2025), accused a Tripura government Minister of inciting violence to create divisions between his party and the BJP.

He also alleged that the Minister is receiving money from vested interests to sow discord among the indigenous population.

Debbbarman did not name the Minister but suggested that he belongs to the BJP and is part of the indigenous community, warning that he may reveal the individual if the situation continues.

During a visit to a site in West Tripura recently affected by clashes between BJP and Tipra Motha supporters, which involved ransacked houses, vandalized party offices, and damaged

vehicles, Debbbarman urged leaders to prioritize unity within the indigenous community and resist sectarian groups targeting them.

He mentioned speaking by phone with Chief Minister Manik Saha, whom he described as a "gentleman," following the recent violence.

Saha also visited one of the affected locations on Friday (November 21, 2025).

Debbbarman added that Tipra Motha's upcoming mass rally in Agartala on November 27 aims to serve as a platform for regional political parties in the Northeast to come together and raise a unified voice.

Leaders from various northeastern states, including Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, are expected to attend.

## Dilip Saikia reviews 2026 poll strategy at Dima Hasao BJP meet in Haflong

HAFLONG

The Bharatiya Janata Party's Assam state president, Dilip Saikia, on Sunday attended the Dima Hasao BJP's organisational meet held at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan in Haflong.

During the meeting, several challenges and strategies for the upcoming 2026 Assam Assembly election were discussed.

Autonomous District MP Amarsing Tisso, Minister Nandita Gorlosa, NCHAC CEM Debolal Gorlosa, and other dignitaries and senior leaders also attended the meeting.

During the session, Dilip Saikia interacted with party leaders and workers, sharing valuable insights on strengthening the organisation, improving ground-level outreach, and enhancing coordination among karyakartas to serve public interest effectively.

Speaking to the media, BJP state president Saikia said that the BJP is committed to strengthening its organisation and ensuring continued service for the welfare and development of the people of Dima Hasao.

He added that in the upcoming election, the BJP aims to retain the maximum number of seats and continue its "Triple-Engine Government" in Dima Hasao district, the state government, and the Centre, for the overall development of the nation and its people.

## AICSU condemns Tinsukia monk's alleged murder, demands high-level probe

GUWAHATI

The All India Chakma Students' Union (AICSU) has condemned the death of the head monk of Inthem Buddhist Monastery in P.S. Pangree, Margherita Sub-Division in Assam's Tinsukia district, in what is considered a suspected murder case. The monk was found dead under suspicious circumstances, causing widespread grief and concern among local residents and the Buddhist community. Describing the incident as a "barbaric assault" on the sanctity of Buddhist monastic life, AICSU expressed sorrow and extended solidarity to the monks of the monastery and the broader Buddhist community.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the organisation urged the Assam government and law enforcement agencies to take immediate and decisive action.

It demanded the swift identification and arrest of all individuals involved in the killing and called for a high-level, impartial, and time-

bound investigation led by senior police officials.

AICSU also stressed the need for a special monitoring committee to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the investigation process.

The organisation further requested that the accused be tried in a designated fast-track court, with the strictest punishment handed down. It emphasized the importance of enhancing security measures at Buddhist monasteries and other religious institutions in the region to prevent similar incidents. Additionally, AICSU highlighted the need for psychological counselling and community support for monks and the families affected by the tragedy to help maintain peace and harmony.

AICSU concluded by urging the public to remain calm and united while ensuring that justice is delivered swiftly and fairly, adding, "May the departed soul attain eternal peace."

## UNLF-K slams govt over 'unchecked illegal migration,' citing demographic threat

IMPHAL

The proscribed United National Liberation Front-Koireng group (UNLF-K) has accused the government of allowing unchecked illegal migration that has disturbed the demographic balance of Manipur, placing its indigenous communities at risk.

On the occasion of its 61st foundation day on Sunday (November 23, 2025), the UNLF-K issued a statement signed by M. Shak-Hen, Secretary of Publicity.

It alleged that "illegal migrant Kuki armed groups" were being used to destabilise the region and that the violence had helped the Centre entrench deeper divisions, confining the Meitei population to the valley and adopting a "colonial strategy" involving demographic alteration.

The UNLF-K further claimed that the 2023 ethnic conflict was not spontaneous but a "planned



and sponsored operation" aimed at damaging social ties between the hill and valley communities. The outfit also accused cen-

tral security forces of bias, stating that their role during the movement of displaced persons and in operations against armed

groups reflected what it called "partisan involvement."

Addressing the youth, particularly those who had taken part in "defensive actions" during the 2023-24 conflict, the UNLF-K urged them to rise above immediate anger and recognise a larger historical responsibility. It also called for protecting Manipur's territorial integrity, which it described as a "duty" that must be carried out by an aware and committed younger generation.

The outfit encouraged youths to join its organisation and said their courage and resilience, demonstrated during the recent conflict, must be channelled into a disciplined political movement.

The UNLF-K is a separatist Meitei insurgent group active in Manipur and aims to establish a sovereign and socialist Manipur.

The outfit was founded on November 24, 1964.

## Naga Students' Federation pushes for stricter inner line controls at key entry points

KOHIMA

The Naga Students' Federation has called for immediate establishment of Inner Line Permit checkpoints at Dimapur Airport and Railway Station, highlighting what it describes as critical gaps in the state's immigration monitoring system.

During a coordination meeting with the Angami Public Organization and its affiliated bodies on November 19 at APO Okeing in Kohima, NSF President Mteising stressed that strengthening Inner Line Regulation mechanisms represents "not merely an administrative requirement but a historical and moral imperative to protect the rights, land and future of the Naga people."



NSN Lotha, Chairman of the Inner Line Regulation Committee, presented detailed recommendations to the Nagaland government, emphasising that Dimapur's airport and railway station remain major entry points for non-indigenous individuals entering the state without adequate monitoring. The meeting brought together representatives from the Angami Women Organization and Angami Students' Union, both pledging

support for enhanced enforcement of the Inner Line Permit system.

APO President Theja-o Vihienuo revealed that his organisation has formed a Core Committee on ILP to address regulation concerns more systematically. However, he also highlighted the need for a broader approach, stressing "the necessity of youth empowerment and sustainable livelihood opportunities so that dependency on migrant

labour can be significantly reduced." Angami Students' Union President Diezevisie Nakhro praised the NSF for taking proactive measures, reiterating his organisation's commitment to preserving indigenous identity and security. The coordination meeting, chaired by K Andrew Yhome of the ILRC, concluded with all participating bodies expressing their commitment to collaborate on strengthening Inner Line Regulation enforcement across Nagaland. The NSF's campaign comes amidst growing concerns over what the federation describes as an unchecked influx of illegal immigrants into Naga territories, with demands for stricter monitoring and robust enforcement mechanisms at state entry points.

## Assam ranks 2nd in rural food expenditure share, 4th in urban: HCES data

GUWAHATI

Assam continues to remain among the states where families spend the largest share of their household budget on food, even though this proportion has slowly decreased over the past decade.

The latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023-24 shows clear shifts in spending habits when compared with the 2011-12 data.

The survey reports that rural households in Assam had spent 61.3% of their Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) on food in 2011-12—the highest in the country at that time, much above the national rural average of 52.9%.

By 2023-24, the share dropped to 53.2%, yet Assam still holds the second-highest position after Ladakh. This indicates that food continues to take up a dominant portion of rural spending.

Urban families in Assam show a similar pattern. In 2023-24, they allocated 47.4% of their MPCE to food items, ranking the state fourth nationally after Lakshadweep, Ladakh, and Bihar.

The figure remains signif-

cantly higher than the national urban average, signalling structural constraints that keep food expenditure comparatively high in the state.

The survey further highlights a consistent trend across northern, eastern, and northeastern states, many of which have historically spent a larger share of household budgets on food.

While the proportion has reduced since 2011-12, the overall regional pattern continues.

In contrast, Assam records some of the lowest spending on durable goods such as furniture, appliances, and long-term household items.

Economists say this gap between essential and non-essential spending underscores a financial reality: Assam's households still devote most of their income to basic needs, leaving limited scope for investment in durable or discretionary goods.

They added that although a fall in the food expenditure share generally points to rising incomes, Assam's continued place among the top spenders shows that essential consumption still dominates family budgets.

## With a score of around 76%, Assam tops in implementing new criminal laws

GUWAHATI

With a score of around 76 per cent compared to the national average of 44 per cent, Assam has ranked number one position across the country in implementing the new criminal laws, said Special DGP (CID) Munna Prasad Gupta on Sunday.

Assam leads the country in various parameters, including administrative reforms, efficiency, and ICT integration.

Gupta told that Assam has ranked number 1 in the country in different parameters in implementing the new criminal laws.

"As we are aware that three new criminal laws, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA) came into effect from 1st July 2024, replacing the erstwhile Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act (IEA). These three reforms were brought in to ensure quicker delivery of justice in a citizen-friendly manner. We have been



implementing these laws since July 1, 2024, and we have fully implemented these laws. We are happy to share that the Ministry of Home Affairs has evaluated the states on various parameters, including Operational Efficiency, Administrative Reforms, use of Information and Communication Technology, and Integration of ICJS. On these parameters, we have been evaluated and ranked number 1 in the country. This has helped us in terms of knowing what the areas are in which we still need to improve so that we can further improve our performance in implementing the new criminal laws and delivering quicker justice to the citizens," Gupta said.

He further said that various parameters have been evaluated, weightage has been provided, and marks have been assigned.

"The national average is around 44 per cent, but in Assam, we have scored almost 76 per cent as of today, and we ranked first. It is a dynamic process; it is not a time process. This data is continuously collected from the ICJS and CCTNS systems, and the states are continually evaluated. The rank could change depending on our performance. As of today, we are number 1, and we will strive to improve further so that we can do justice and carry out investigations and prosecutions in a timely manner. Our police personnel

are working very hard, and the credit goes to them all. We have been helped by the Government of India, MHA and other agencies for training our personnel and also building up the required infrastructure," Gupta said.

The conviction rate in Assam has increased to 66% under the new laws, a significant rise from around 25% previously. The new laws are designed to be more victim-centric, incorporating provisions such as "zero FIRs" and mandatory use of technology during investigations and videography of search and seizure operations.

India's new criminal laws, which came into effect on July 1, 2024, replace the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Indian Evidence Act with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, respectively.

The new laws aim to create a more modern, victim-centric, and justice-oriented system by increasing the use of technology for evidence, streamlining procedures to expedite trials, and strengthening protections for women and children. Key features include mandatory forensic evidence collection for serious crimes, video-graphed evidence, electronic service of summons, and new offences like sexual intercourse on false promises of marriage.

Quest!

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# PM Modi returns to Delhi after concluding G20 Summit in South Africa



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi returned to the national capital on Monday morning after wrapping up his South Africa visit for the G20 Summit.

During his official visit to Johannesburg from November 22-23, PM Modi attended multiple summit sessions and engaged with several world leaders.

Despite the US boycott, leaders approved the G20 declaration, signalling renewed alignment on development, climate goals and reforms in a multipolar world. The attending nations endorsed a 122-point document centred on global equity, multilateral restructuring and sustainable development.

Among his key bilateral meetings was one with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, where both

sides adopted the India-Italy Joint Initiative to Counter Financing of Terrorism, reaffirming their shared commitment to combat terrorism.

Sharing details of the meeting, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on X that the two leaders discussed strengthening cooperation in trade, investment, technology, AI, defence and security, space, research, innovation and culture.

He added that both leaders expressed satisfaction over progress on the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-29 and noted PM Meloni's strong support for the AI Summit India will host in 2026.

PM Modi also addressed the third session of the G20 Summit, which focused on ensuring a fair and just

future for all.

In a post on X, he said the discussions centred on critical sectors such as critical minerals and AI, and stressed India's belief in promoting technology that is "human-centric, global and open source" rather than finance-driven or exclusive.

He highlighted India's approach to AI, built on equitable access, population-scale skilling and responsible deployment.

He said India's AI Mission aims to ensure that the benefits of AI reach every district and language, and called for creating a global compact to prevent the misuse of AI, including for deepfakes, crime and terrorism.

Looking ahead, PM Modi said India is preparing to host the AI Impact Summit in February 2026 under the theme 'Sarvajana Hitaya, Sarvajana Sukhaya'—wellfare and happiness for all.

He emphasised the need to shift from thinking about "jobs for today" to building "capabilities for tomorrow," and expressed hope that the G20 will develop a global framework for talent mobility in the coming years to boost innovation and benefit youth worldwide.

# SIR is not a new thing: Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Congress' decision to hold December 14 rally

HUBBALLI

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Saturday questioned the Congress party's decision to organise a rally on December 14 over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, asserting that the exercise is not new and has been undertaken several times in the past.

He said the Congress itself had demanded the revision after alleging the presence of ineligible voters following the Maharashtra Assembly elections.

Joshi said the Election Commission initiated SIR only after Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi wrote to the poll body expressing concerns over alleged discrepancies in the voters' list. He added that similar revisions have been carried out earlier as well, including in Karnataka in 2008, when the names of about 40 lakh voters were removed during a routine updating exercise.

"SIR (Special Intensive Revision), as our party and many of our ministers have said many times, is not a new thing. This has happened many times. SIR was started only after the demand of the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi. He wrote after the Maharashtra elections and said that there are many people who are not eligible, but they are in the voters' list... After that, the Election Commission decided for SIR... Wasn't this (Special Intensive Revision) done before? When the revision was done in Karnataka in 2008, the names of about 40 lakh voters were removed... This is an ongoing process," Joshi told.

Echoing his remarks, Union Minister Ramnath Thakur criti-



cised the Congress leadership, particularly its Bihar unit, for levelling what he described as unfounded allegations of "vote theft" against the Election Commission.

He noted that despite Congress leaders raising the "Vote Chori" charge during their Bihar Yatra, no local protests occurred when all three Election Commissioners visited the state.

"Before the elections, 2 young princes did a Yatra in Bihar and made allegations on the Election Commission. This was the very issue they raised, 'Vote Chori'. All three Election Commissioners were in Bihar for 3 days, but no one in the state protested against them. Then how does the rally that

they (Congress) are holding now hold significance?" Thakur said.

Meanwhile, Congress leader KC Venugopal announced the party's "Vote Chor Gaddi Chhod Maha Rally" scheduled for December 14 at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi, aimed at sending a "message across the nation" against alleged manipulation of the electoral process.

"The spectre of Vote Chori is the biggest danger looming over our democracy today. To send a message across the nation against these attempts to destroy our Constitution, the Congress will be holding the Vote Chor Gaddi Chhod Maha Rally on December 14th (1.30 pm onwards)

at Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi," KC Venugopal posted on X.

He said that the rally will mark Congress's fight to "reclaim Indian democracy from the clutches of the Vote Chors!"

Meanwhile, Mahagathbandhan suffered a major defeat in the Bihar Assembly election, securing only 35 seats.

The NDA registered a historic landslide victory in the 2025 Bihar assembly polls, winning 202 of the 243 seats. The ruling alliance secured a three-fourths majority in the 243-member Bihar Assembly, marking the second time the NDA crossed the 200-seat mark in state polls. In 2010, it had won 206 seats.

# INTERNATIONAL

## In Geneva, US and Ukraine officials report progress on ending Russia's war but offer few specifics

GENEVA

Top U.S. and Ukrainian officials said Sunday they'd made progress toward ending the Russia-Ukraine war but provided scant details after discussing the American proposal to achieve peace that has sparked concerns among many of Washington's European allies that the plan is too conciliatory to Moscow.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said high-stakes talks in Geneva were "very worthwhile" and constituted the most productive day in "a very long time."

"I feel very optimistic that we can get something done," Rubio said.

But he offered very little information on what was discussed. He also downplayed a Thursday deadline set by President Donald Trump for Ukraine to respond to the plan, saying simply that officials want to see fighting stop as soon as possible and that officials could keep negotiating Monday and beyond. He said that higher-level officials may eventually have to get involved.

"This is a very delicate moment," Rubio said of what still needed to be worked out. "Some of it is semantics, or language. Others require higher-level decisions and consultations. Others, I think, just need more time to work through."

The 28-point blueprint drawn up by the U.S. to end the nearly four-year war has sparked alarm in Kyiv and European capitals. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said his country could face a stark choice between standing up for its sovereign rights and preserving the American support it needs.

The Ukrainian leader has vowed that his people "will always defend" their home.

The proposal acquiesces to many Russian demands that Zelenskyy has categorically rejected on dozens of occasions, including giving up large pieces of territory.

In a subsequent statement Sunday

night, the White House said the Ukrainian delegation "affirmed that all of their principal concerns—security guarantees, long-term economic development, infrastructure protection, freedom of navigation, and political sovereignty—were thoroughly addressed during the meeting."

It added that the Ukrainians "expressed appreciation for the structured approach taken to incorporate their feedback into each component of the emerging settlement framework." The White House said changes made to the proposal now reflect "their national interests" and provide "credible and enforceable mechanisms to safeguard Ukraine's security in both the near and long term."

But language of such positive steps came only after concerns about the original, Trump-endorsed deal intensified. A bipartisan group of U.S. senators said Rubio told them Saturday that the plan had originated with Russia and was actually a "wish list" for Moscow, rather than a serious push for peace.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that he'd spoken to Trump and made clear there were some parts of the plans key European nations could agree on but others where they could not.

"I told him that we are fully in line with Ukraine, that the sovereignty of this country must not be jeopardized," Merz said in an interview with DW.

Rubio called the U.S. proposal a "living breathing document" that would continue changing. He also made, clear though, that any final product—once it's ready—will still have to be presented to Moscow: "obviously, the Russians get a vote here."

The head of the Ukrainian delegation, presidential chief of staff Andrii Yermak, said of the talks, "We have made very good progress and are moving forward to a just and lasting peace," he said.

The rosy assessment of what was discussed defied Trump himself. Before

talks began, the president blasted Ukraine for a lack of gratitude for U.S. military assistance while shying away from criticizing Russia.

Trump has set a Thursday deadline for Ukraine to respond to the plan but also suggested it could slide if there was proof of real progress. He also said that the plan was not his final offer—without offering further details on what that meant.

"UKRAINE 'LEADERSHIP' HAS EXPRESSED ZERO GRATITUDE FOR OUR EFFORTS, AND EUROPE CONTINUES TO BUY OIL FROM RUSSIA," Trump posted on his social media site Sunday morning.

After Trump's post, Zelenskyy cheered U.S.-led efforts on security while also stressing that "the crux of the entire diplomatic situation is that it was Russia, and only Russia, that started this war."

"Ukraine is grateful to the United States, to every American heart, and personally to President Trump," Zelenskyy wrote in a post on Telegram, adding, "We thank everyone in Europe."

"It is important not to forget the main goal—to stop Russia's war and prevent it from ever igniting again," he added.

Before convening with U.S. officials, Yermak and his team also met with national security advisers from the U.K., France and Germany. The allies have rallied around Kyiv in a push to revise the plan. Alice Rufo, France's minister delegate at the Defense Ministry, told broadcaster France Info before the talks began that key points of discussion would include the plan's restrictions on the Ukrainian army, which she described as "a limitation on its sovereignty." "Ukraine must be able to defend itself," she said. "Russia wants war and waged war many times in fact over the past years."

On Sunday, Zelenskyy said that there was an understanding the U.S. would take into account "a number of elements" in a peace deal that are impor-

tant for Ukraine, but did not elaborate further.

"There have already been brief reports from the team about the results of the first meetings and conversations," he said. "There is now an understanding that the American proposals may take into account a number of elements based on the Ukrainian vision and are critically important for Ukraine's national interests."

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Sunday that Warsaw was ready to work on the plan with the leaders of Europe, Canada and Japan, but also said that it "would be good to know for sure who is the author of the plan and where was it created."

Some U.S. lawmakers said Saturday that Rubio had described the plan as a Russian "wish list" rather than a Washington-led proposal. A U.S. State Department spokesperson said that account was "blatantly false." On his way to Geneva, Rubio then took the extraordinary step of suggesting online that the senators were mistaken, even though they said he was their source for the information.

The top Democrat on the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Mark Warner, told ABC's "This Week" that the peace plan appeared to be "almost a series of Russian talking points," had made Europeans "feel like they've been totally left high and dry" and had led to "ferocious pushback."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that he would hold a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday. He said he would talk to Putin about reviving a previous deal from July 2022 that allowed Ukraine to safely ship exports of grain via the Black Sea.

The agreement stayed in place until the following year, when Putin refused to extend it, saying that a parallel agreement promising to remove obstacles to Russian exports of food and fertilizer hadn't been honored.

## Mamdani stands by Trump criticism despite friendly White House meeting



WASHINGTON

New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani didn't back down in an interview that aired Sunday from past criticism that President Donald Trump acted like a despot and a fascist after a surprisingly friendly White House meeting between the two men.

The newly elected democratic socialist and the Republican president have fiercely criticized each other in the past. Trump called Mamdani a "100% Communist Lunatic" in a social media post following the incoming mayor's election victory, and Mamdani has said Trump was attacking democracy. Yet the two political foils emerged smiling after the meeting Friday and spoke of shared goals.

Pressed about his past criticism during a "Meet the Press" interview conducted Saturday, Mamdani said his

views remained unchanged.

"Everything that I've said in the past, I continue to believe," Mamdani said. "And that's the thing that I think is important in our politics, is that we don't shy away from where we have disagreements, but we understand what it is that brings us to that table, because I'm not coming into the Oval Office to make a point or make a stand. I'm coming in there to deliver for New Yorkers."

Trump had brushed aside Mamdani's criticisms Friday and even jumped in on his defense several times. When a reporter asked if Mamdani stood by his comments that Trump is a fascist, Trump interjected before Mamdani could fully answer the question.

"That's OK. You can just say yes. OK?" Trump said. "It's easier. It's easier than explaining it. I don't mind." Asked about the fascist

criticism on "Meet the Press," Mamdani said, "That's something that I've said in the past. I say it today."

Kevin Hassett, director of the National Economic Council, said on CNN's "State of the Union" talk show that Trump wants to work with everybody who cares about the future of the American people.

"We're at times disagreeing about policies," Hassett said, "but I think that the objective of making life better for everybody is something that a lot of people share on the Democratic and Republican side."

Though far apart politically, the White House meeting offered potential political benefits for both men. The incoming mayor was able to meet one-on-one with the president, and Trump got to talk about affordability, an issue that is increasingly important to voters.

## Nagaland University-led multi-institute study warns of rapid soil degradation in Dhansiripar Region of the State

Researchers call for immediate sustainable land management as their study finds strongly acidic soils, declining structural stability and sharp variations in nutrient availability across six villages



Ms Reshinaro Tzudir, PhD scholar in the lab of Dept of Soil & Water Conservation, Nagaland University, analysing soil samples collected from Dhansiripar

### LUMAMI, NAGALAND

Nagaland University scientists were part of a multi-institute research team that conducted an extensive study on how diverse land use practices are transforming soil health in Dhansiripar region of the State. Their study sheds new light on the urgent need for sustainable land management to protect agricultural productivity and environmental stability.

The research team assessed soil across six villages - Amaluma, Dhansiripar, Doyapur, Kiyeto, Melongmen and Razhaphe, capturing the complex interactions between local farming systems and soil characteristics.

The study not only contributes to scientific understanding but also has wide societal implications, from informing local farming practices and supporting policy development to enhancing environmental conservation and boosting long-term food security.

The researchers aim to generate data-driven insights that help farmers improve crop yields, support sustainable agriculture, enhance local livelihoods and contribute to national goals of environmental resilience.

The team examined how rapid agricultural expansion, urbanisation and forest conversion are impacting essential soil properties, including soil acidity (pH), bulk density, porosity, water-holding capacity, organic carbon and nutrient availability. The team found that prevailing practices in the region are contributing to soil degradation, declining fertility and heightened erosion risks-issues that farmers themselves raised during initial field surveys.

The research was undertaken by Nagaland University jointly with researchers from ICAR-Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute, University of California San Francisco, Dibrugarh University, Tocklai Tea Research Institute and Diphu Medical College and Hospital.

The findings were published in Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-025-14699-8>), an international peer-reviewed journal brought out by the global academic publisher Springer that focuses on scientific methods, tools and data used to track environmental quality.

Highlighting the need for such studies, Prof. Jagadish K Patnaik, Vice Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, "Nagaland University today announced findings from a multi-institute, university-led study revealing rapid soil degradation in the Dhansiripar region of the State. The research team reports strongly acidic soils, declining structural stability and sharp variations in nutrient availability across six surveyed villages. The University urges immediate adoption of sustainable land-management practices to prevent further deterioration and safeguard the region's agricultural productivity and environmental health"

A major focus of the study was understanding how soil properties differ among lowland paddy fields, cultivated agricultural plots, orchards and forest areas. Researchers employed advanced tools such as multivariate analysis of variance, principal component analysis and cluster analysis to quantify variations and pinpoint the underlying causes.



A person that truly loves you will never let you go, no matter how hard the situation is.

Strongly to moderately acidic soil conditions, ranging from pH 4.9 to 5.9, were documented across sites. Organic carbon content ranged between 0.45 and 3.69 percent, indicating substantial vari-

ation in organic matter turnover. The team also reported notable differences in macronutrient availability and cation exchange capacity, underscoring the need for tailored nutrient management approaches.

Highlighting the important findings of this research, Co-author Prof. Manoj Dutta, Department of Soil and Water Conservation, School of Agricultural Sciences, Nagaland University, said, "This study meticulously examines a diverse array of land use systems, encompassing lowland paddy fields, cultivated agricultural plots, flourishing orchards, and verdant forest areas. By adopting this comprehensive approach, the research facilitates a nuanced exploration of how various land management practices impact soil properties. This methodology allows for specific and insightful comparisons that are often absent in contemporary peer-reviewed studies."

Further, Prof. Tanmoy Karak, Department of Soil Science, School of Agricultural Sciences, Nagaland University, said, "We found that soil in Dhansiripar is particularly vulnerable to erosion and fertility loss, with the Soil Structural Stability Index showing signs of degradation in low-land paddy zones. These findings reinforce the need for land-use-specific conservation strategies and sustainable farming interventions. Our research also integrates the perspectives of local farmers, whose concerns and observations have helped shape the study's long-term objectives."

Emphasising the critical findings of the research, Ms. Reshinaro Tzudir, PhD Scholar, Department of Soil and Water Conservation, School of Agricultural Sciences, Nagaland University, said, "Our study highlights the significant variability in soil properties across different regions and the alarming susceptibility of these soils to erosion and fertility loss under prevailing agricultural practices. This raises urgent concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of our ecosystems. By focusing on the extensive degradation observed across many areas, we underscore the pressing need for innovative, sustainable management strategies. This emphasis is particularly timely and resonates with the growing global efforts to combat soil degradation, ensuring the preservation of our natural resources for future generations."

Dr. Ranjit Kumar Paul from the ICAR-Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute in New Delhi, added, "The study employs advanced multivariate statistical methods to deliver a comprehensive quantitative analysis of soil characteristics. This rigorous methodological approach not only enhances the reliability of the results but also facilitates stronger conclusions regarding the interactions between land use and soil properties."

According to the team, the research stands out due to its focus on a region that has been largely absent from detailed soil health assessments. Its comparative approach across multiple land-use systems, combined with rigorous statistical modelling, offers a holistic picture of soil dynamics that is rarely available in the North East.

### FUTURE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Looking ahead, the researchers plan to undertake longitudinal studies to monitor how soil properties evolve, and implement them, such as agroforestry and improved crop rotations. They also plan to collaborate with local communities to integrate traditional knowledge.

The researchers also aim to engage policymakers to promote evidence-based land-use planning and to explore soil biological properties for a fuller understanding of soil health. Comparative studies with similar regions and community awareness programs are also proposed as part of the future roadmap.

### MULTI-INSTITUTE STUDY

The study was carried out by Miss Reshinaro Tzudir, Prof. Manoj Dutta, Dr. Alongba

Jamir, Mr. Sorenthung Patton, Dr. Rizongba Kichu, Mr. Haigupeung Hieme, Miss Angela Pidenro, Dr. Sewak Ram, Mr. Debobrata Mondal, Prof. C. S. Maiti, Dr. Animesh Sarkar, Dr. Pankaj Neog and Prof. Tanmoy Karak from the School of Agricultural Sciences, Nagaland University, Medziphema. Collaborators include Dr. Ranjit Kumar Paul and Dr. Md. Yeasin from ICAR-Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute, New Delhi; Dr. Saumik Panja from the University of California San Francisco; Dr. Jiban Saikia from Dibrugarh University; Dr. Harisadhan Malakar from the Tocklai Tea Research Institute, Jorhat; and Dr. Sagarika Das from Diphu Medical College and Hospital, Assam.

ABOUT NAGALAND UNIVERSITY: Nagaland University, the 13th Central University and the only Central University in Na-

galand was established based on the Act of Parliament of India and received the assent of the President of India on 20th October 1989 as The Nagaland University Act 1989. The University came into being on September 6, 1994 having jurisdiction over the entire state of Nagaland

At present the University has three campuses, viz. (i) Headquarters at Lumami in Zunheboto district (ii) Kohima Campus at Meriema in Kohima district (iii) Medziphema Campus (School of Agricultural Sciences) at Medziphema in Dimapur district.

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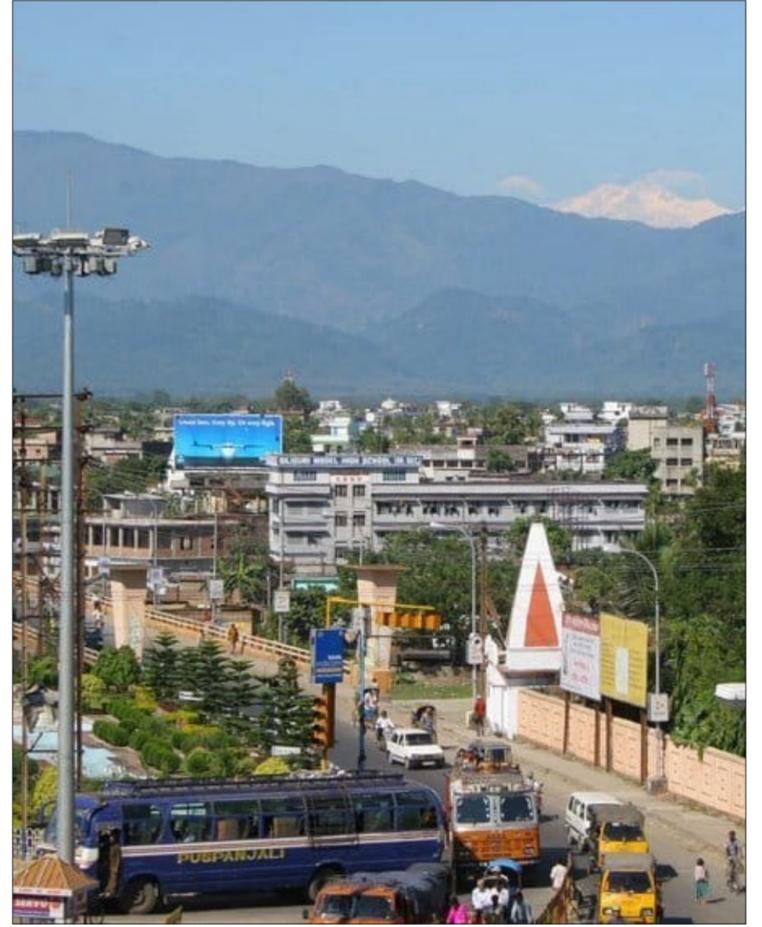


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# SILIGURI: TEA, TIMBER AND TOURISM



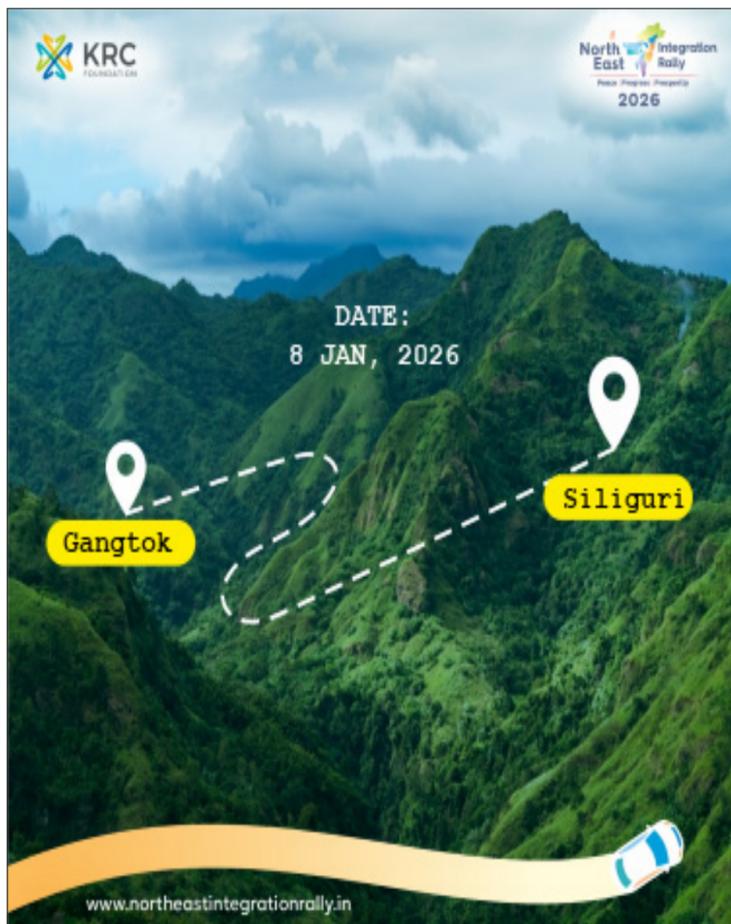
**T**he NEIR 2026 touches Siliguri en route to other places (Kokrajhar, among others) on the 8th of January. We know that

Siliguri is known for tea, timber and tourism. Siliguri doesn't wait for you to warm up to it. The city comes at you fast—traffic, markets, flyovers, tea gardens, army convoys, students, traders, buses heading toward the hills, the plains, the borders. You stand in the middle of it all and realise this isn't a place that grew for beauty. It grew for purpose. And that purpose has shaped everything about its character.

Here's the thing. Siliguri isn't defined by what it looks like. It's defined by what it connects. This city is a hinge that links the North-east, the plains of Bengal, the hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, the Dooars, Sikkim, Nepal, Bangladesh, even Bhutan through trade routes and shared histories. You feel that the moment you step into its rhythm. Everyone here is either going somewhere, coming from somewhere, or carrying stories shaped by movement.

Start with geography. Siliguri sits at the edge of the Terai, where the land is flat enough to breathe but close enough to the mountains to feel their shadow. The Mahananda River cuts through the city, sometimes calmly, sometimes with a monsoon temper. The Coronation Bridge, not far away, feels like a gate to the hills. On a clear day, the outline of the Himalayas appears faintly above the skyline, reminding you that the hills are never too far, even when the city feels overwhelmingly urban.

The place grew because it had to. Partition pushed trade routes eastward. The emergence of Sikkim and North Bengal as tourism centres increased its importance. The opening of international borders, the expansion of the Indian Army's presence, the rise of tea and timber industries—all of these forces pulled Siliguri outward. The city didn't



expand through planning. It expanded through necessity.

What this produced is a city with layers that don't blend neatly. Hill culture sits next to plains culture. Nepali rubs against Bangla, Hindi, Marwari, and languages shaped by migration. You can see it in the markets. Hong Kong Market carries everything from cheap electronics to imported clothes that somehow made their way through Nepal or Bangladesh. Bidhan Market sells everything from local produce to hill spices. Sevoke Road feels like a different city altogether—wide, busy, and modern with malls, multiplexes, and restaurants that cater to a growing middle class.

Walk deeper into the residential neighbourhoods and the pace shifts. Pradhan Nagar, Ashram Para, Hakimpara, Deshbandhu Para—each pocket has its own identity. Old houses, narrow lanes, families who've lived here for generations, shops that haven't

changed in decades. Siliguri isn't trying to become a metro. It's becoming something else—a hybrid city shaped by transit, commerce, and the constant negotiation between old and new.

The tea gardens around the city remind you of what the region once was. Some are active, some struggling, some slowly giving way to development. Drive through them early in the morning and the mist still hangs low. Workers move in small groups, plucking leaves with the same practiced precision that has defined the region's economy for more than a century. The tea gardens don't just decorate Siliguri. They frame its history. They explain why labour politics matter here. They reveal how dependent the region still is on global markets.

Then there's the wildlife corridor. The city sits dangerously close to elephant pathways that connect forests across North Bengal. Anyone who has lived here long enough has heard sto-

ries of elephants walking through outskirts like Naxalbari or Matigara at night. This uneasy relationship between expanding urban life and shrinking wild spaces defines much of Siliguri's environmental tension.

But the heart of Siliguri is its crossroads nature. Buses to Gangtok, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jaigaon, Cooch Behar, Guwahati—they all begin here. The New Jalpaiguri railway station (NJP) is one of the busiest in eastern India. Bagdogra Airport lies just outside the city, pulling in travellers heading toward the mountains. You stand at NJP and see pilgrims going to Bhutan, trekkers heading to Sandakphu or Dzongu, families from Assam stopping for a night, army officers preparing to move toward forward areas, migrant workers on their way to Delhi or Punjab.

This constant churn shapes the city's economy. Hotels thrive because people rarely stay long. Transport companies dominate entire stretches of the city. Cafes fill with students from nearby colleges and coaching centres who treat Siliguri as their stepping stone toward bigger dreams. Small eateries run by Nepali, Tibetan, Bengali, and North Indian families feed the city's hunger at all hours. You'll find momo stalls next to dosa counters, and noodle bars sitting comfortably beside shops selling litti-chokha. Siliguri doesn't choose a single identity. It takes all of them.

Here's what people often miss. Siliguri may feel chaotic, but beneath the noise is a kind of order that works on its own logic.

Traffic looks wild, but drivers follow an unspoken rhythm shaped by years of adjusting to bad roads, sudden rains, and unpredictable movement of trucks and army vehicles. Markets seem messy, but traders know exactly where everything is and how fast it moves. Residents complain about infrastructure, but they also know the city's growth came faster than any planning department could handle.

The city carries anxieties too. Flooding is a real concern. Rapid construction strains drainage systems. The pressure on public services grows every year. The border economy brings opportunity but also tension. Illegal trade isn't a secret. Political movements from the hills often spill into the city. And yet Siliguri continues to hold its ground, partly because people here are used to navigating uncertainty.

Still, the city isn't all transit and commerce. Look closer and you'll find moments of calm that make the place feel unexpectedly intimate. Morning walkers crowd into Surya Sen Park. Families take evening strolls along Sevoke Road. Students gather at tea stalls near North Bengal University debating everything from football to films. In winter, the city softens.

The fog settles low. The markets fill with oranges from the hills and vegetables from the Dooars. Even the traffic seems to pause.

What this really means is that Siliguri isn't a city you admire from a distance. You understand it only when you move through it. It's a place made by footpaths, bus stands, railway stations, tea gardens, riverbanks, border routes, and the relentless everyday energy of people who keep the city in motion.

Siliguri is the city that holds North Bengal together. It's the connector, the messenger, the passageway, the marketplace, the waiting room, the dispatch centre, the threshold between plains and mountains. It doesn't pretend to be picturesque. It doesn't need to be. Its identity comes from purpose, resilience, and the sheer volume of life that passes through it every hour.

And once you spend time here—really spend time, not just pass through—you begin to see the city not as a stopover, but as a force. A place that shapes journeys long before people realise it. A city that knows how to move, how to adapt, and how to stay essential in a region defined by change.



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