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# KRC TIMES

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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 631 | SILCHAR WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2025. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com , www.krctimes.com

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### PERSPECTIVE

For everything you have lost, you have gained something else. Without the dark, you would never see the stars.

## Manipur boxer M. Jadumani Singh wins silver at World Boxing Cup 2025

IMPHAL



Manipur's M. Jadumani Singh secured the silver medal in the men's 50 kg category at the World Boxing Cup 2025, held recently in Greater Noida.

On Friday, Jadumani called on Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Raj Bhavan, Imphal, to share his achievement. He was accompanied by renowned boxer Laishram Sarita Devi, Superintendent of Police (Sports). Governor Bhalla congratulated him and encouraged his preparations for the upcoming Asian Games and Commonwealth Games 2026.

Jadumani lost 4-1 to Uzbekistan's Asilbek Jaliyov in a hard-fought final. Around 130 boxers from 18 countries competed across 20 weight categories in the tournament.

Former Manipur Chief Minister also congratulated him on X, saying, "Your determination shone brightly as you battled valiantly. India and Manipur are proud of you."

Jadumani said he will now focus on dedicated training for the upcoming Games.

### WHO SAID WHAT

**We're leading the 'charge..'**  
Creating a high-speed EV charging backbone, one 180 kW charger at a time. Now inaugurating the first two CHARGE IN stations, with a commitment to set up 1000 charging points by the end of 2027.

~ Anand Mahindra, Chairman, Mahindra Group.

## Dengue spreads into new zones as Manipur's climate shifts; health officials urge united response

IMPHAL

Health authorities in Manipur have raised fresh concerns over the rapid spread of dengue into previously unaffected areas, linking the surge to changing weather patterns marked by erratic rainfall and rising temperatures. Joint Director (Planning) of the Health Services Directorate, Dr. Y. Premchandra Singh, said on Tuesday that the state is now witnessing "clear and measurable health impacts" of climate change.

He was speaking at an interaction programme for media fellows reporting on climate issues, organised by the Directorate of Environment and Climate Change. Addressing journalists, Dr. Premchandra outlined how Manipur's climate vulnerabilities are increasingly manifesting in the public health sector.

According to him, extreme rainfall events, warmer months, flooding, humidity spikes, and climate-induced anxiety are emerging as key stress factors that amplify disease risks. While climate change does not directly create illness, he said it "creates path-



ways that worsen health risks," particularly by enabling mosquito-borne diseases to flourish. High humidity and stagnant water have fuelled ideal conditions for Aedes mosquitoes, allowing dengue

transmission to continue even at the tail end of November - a period when cases usually subside.

Beyond dengue, Dr. Premchandra highlighted a spectrum of health challenges tied to chang-

ing climate patterns. Heatwaves, he said, are already driving up incidents of heat stroke, dehydration, and cardiac strain. Flooding, meanwhile, is contaminating water sources and accelerating waterborne infections. Air pollution spikes are worsening asthma and COPD cases, while unpredictable weather is increasing the risk of food and water insecurity.

The official also underscored the particular vulnerability of diabetic patients, calling them "highly climate-sensitive." He explained that high temperatures raise dehydration levels and blood glucose, while disasters disrupt refrigeration required for insulin storage. Floods, heatwaves and power outages frequently cut off access to medicines and routine monitoring, placing diabetic individuals at heightened risk.

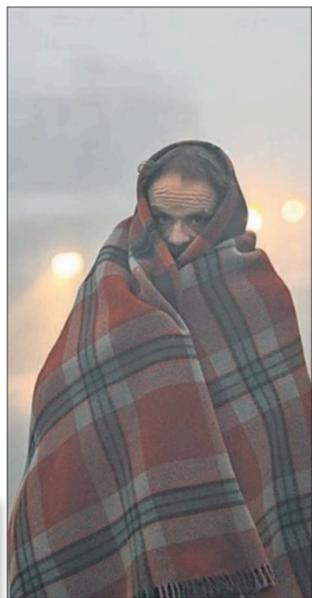
With climate stresses becoming unavoidable, Dr. Premchandra appealed for both public participation and institutional preparedness. He said the Health Department is prepared to take up mitigation and adaptation measures wherever possible to shield communities from worsening health impacts.

Echoing similar concerns, Director of Environment and Climate Change T. Brajakumar described climate change as one of the most significant threats to human health in the century. Its impact, he said, is both direct - through heatwaves, extreme weather and floods - and indirect, through air pollution, shifting disease patterns, unsafe water, food shortages, inadequate shelter and rising psychological stress.

Brajakumar stressed the urgency of developing an indicator-based vulnerability index for Manipur's health sector, using the IPCC's risk assessment framework. Such an index, he said, would help identify district-wise hotspots and guide targeted health interventions. The ongoing workshop also aims to strengthen the capacity of media fellows to report effectively on the growing intersections between health and climate change.

The programme drew participation from senior editors and veteran journalists from across the state, reflecting the growing recognition that climate-linked health issues are emerging as a major public concern in Manipur.

## Tripura blanketed in early fog as IMD issues yellow alert for low visibility



AGARTALA

Tripura is witnessing an unusually early onset of winter-like conditions this year, with dense fog engulfing large parts of the state since mid-November and reducing visibility in

some areas to below 50 metres.

Fog of this intensity is typically recorded only from mid-December, but this year's early arrival has advanced the season by nearly a month, officials said.

Dr. Patha Roy, Head Scientist at the Meteorological Centre in Agartala, said winter in Tripura normally sets in between December and February, with similar foggy spells recorded last year only after December 15.

"We had predicted a normal winter this year, and the current downward trend in temperature suggests people may start experiencing distinct winter conditions soon," Roy said.

Although the IMD had earlier forecast normal temperatures for November, recent observations show the mercury dipping to around 15-16°C - close to the seasonal average but noticeably cooler than what is usually expected at this time of November.

Meteorologists said the number of foggy days this winter is likely to be typical for the region, though dense fog may become more frequent as the season progresses.

Taking note of the prevailing conditions, the IMD has forecast dense fog during the night and early morning in isolated pockets of Tripura on November 25 and 26. A yellow alert has been issued, advising residents - particularly motorists - to exercise caution due to sharply reduced visibility.

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court asked the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to submit a status report on its probe into the deaths of ten Kuki-Zo men killed by security personnel at a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp in Manipur's Jiribam district on November 11, 2024.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Jyoti Basu, along with Justices Jyoti Basu and Atul S. Chandel, issued notices to the NIA and the Manipur government, seeking details of the ongoing investigation. The report has been made returnable by January 12, 2026.

The order came during a hearing on a plea filed by family members of the victims, represented by advocate Vishwajeet Singh.

According to the petition, the ten men - all from the Hmar tribe of the Kuki-Zo community - had travelled from Churachandpur as "relief volunteers" for discussions with CRPF officials about the security of nearby villages. They were shot dead as they were leaving the CRPF premises at Borobekra police station, the families alleged.

The petition claims a Manipur police commando opened fire first, followed by a CRPF soldier wielding a light machine gun, killing all ten.

The Manipur government, however, has maintained that the men were suspected militants who were killed during a coordinated

## SC Seeks NIA Status Report on Alleged Manipur 'Fake Encounter' That Killed 10 Kuki-Zo Men



attack on the Borobekra police station and the adjacent Jakuradhor CRPF post around 3 pm the same day. A CRPF constable, Sanjeev Kumar, was injured in the exchange of fire.

The petitioners sought a court-monitored Special Investigation Team (SIT), arguing that they could not safely approach the Manipur High Court due to being part of a minority community facing ongoing threats. The bench declined the request, noting that the NIA was already investigating the case and describing it as "one of the

best agencies" for such probes.

The case comes against the backdrop of the Supreme Court's earlier intervention in Manipur's ethnic violence cases. On August 7, 2023, the court appointed a committee of three former women judges to oversee investigations by the CBI and 42 state-constituted SITs, including inquiries into prominent FIRs such as the parading of two women.

The court had then said the oversight was aimed at restoring public confidence amid continuing tensions in the state.

## Assam Approves MRO Policy 2025, Aims to Emerge as Northeast's Aviation and Defence Hub

GUWAHATI

Assam has approved the Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) Policy 2025, setting in motion an ambitious plan to position the state as a major aviation servicing centre and a rising military-industrial hub in eastern India by 2030.

Unveiled on Tuesday, the policy envisions Assam becoming the Northeast's leading destination for civil and defence MRO operations, backed by an estimated investment inflow of ₹1,500 crore and the creation of more than 1,000 skilled jobs.

Three World-Class MRO Facilities Planned

The policy outlines the establishment of three advanced MRO units equipped to service aircraft, engines, avionics, UAVs and critical components to international standards. Officials say the facilities will help reduce operational costs and turnaround time for aircraft operating across the region.

Generous Incentives to Attract Operators

To woo domestic and global aviation



players, the state has rolled out a sweeping package of financial incentives. These include:

- 25% capital subsidy, capped at ₹100 crore per unit
- 75% lease rental reimbursement for three years
- Power subsidy of ₹2 per unit
- 2% interest subsidy on working capital loans for up to five years
- One-time employment incentives: ₹50,000 for female and transgender employees
- ₹30,000 for male employees
- 2% export revenue incentive for five years

- Skill-development support of up to ₹1.5 lakh per trainee
- Aviation engineering institutes set up by MRO operators will receive additional benefits.
- ₹1,458-Crore Outlay Over Five Years

With a financial commitment of ₹1,458 crore, the government expects the policy to accelerate industrialisation and attract major OEMs and aviation service providers to Assam.

Officials said the policy is designed to strengthen the state's aerospace ecosystem, build specialised technical manpower and prepare Assam for a larger role in India's defence manufacturing landscape.

Push for High-Tech Industrial Growth  
The MRO Policy 2025 marks one of the state's most aggressive drives towards high-technology and self-reliant industrial expansion. By creating a robust MRO corridor, Assam hopes to cement its position as a strategic aviation and defence hub in the Northeast.

## 'When Northeast speaks together, Delhi must listen': Pradyot

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma has said the Government of India will be compelled to take the Northeast seriously if the region speaks in a unified voice, stressing that the challenges facing the states stem from "decades of discrimination and neglect".

Speaking to the media ahead of a mass rally scheduled on November 27 at Swami Vivekananda Maidan, Pradyot alleged that the party's event had faced repeated administrative hurdles. "It was supposed to be held on the 7th, but permission was denied. Then it was shifted to the 15th, which was also cancelled. Now it will be held on the 27th. The ground will finally be handed over to us tomorrow at 10 pm," he said, calling the delays "strange" when rallies by the CPI(M) and Congress received approval without difficulty.

Positioning the upcoming event as a show of regional solidarity, Pradyot said the rally was not directed against any political party but aimed at amplifying collective concerns. "This time, we are not alone. Meghalaya

Chief Minister Conrad Sangma will attend to speak for regional parties-not against BJP or CPI(M). From Nagaland, former minister and BJP national spokesperson Mmholungo Kikon, who resigned recently, will also join us. Leaders from Manipur, Gorkhaland, Dima Hasao, the Tai Ahom community of Assam, and others will gather on one platform," he said. He also claimed attempts were being made to block mobilisation by influencing vehicle owners not to provide transport for party supporters. "They think that by doing this, the Tiprasa will bow down. We will not bow down. This is 2025. Today's Tiprasa may have less money, but we have courage," he asserted.

Calling the gathering a "One North East" rally, Pradyot said the objective was to unite the region on common issues. "Our problems are the same-we have been discriminated against and looked down upon. When the entire Northeast speaks together, the Government of India will have to take us seriously. That's why we have decided to come under one platform to speak for our people."



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 631

## POST-COP30 GLOBAL CLIMATE ORDER

The last couple of days at the 30th Conference of Parties (COP30) in Brazil witnessed intense battles—between the legitimate demand of the developing world to enhance financial support for the energy transition and adaptation, and the push on climate ambition as perceived by the developed world.

At every COP, the developed world seems a lot more concerned about its own industry, jobs, and the climate impact on its communities and ecosystems. It pushes the developing world to accelerate emission mitigation, even in the absence of adequate financial support. The same script repeated itself in the push for a 'fossil fuel transition roadmap', down to the last minute, at COP30.

COP is a platform where countries come together to give some and take some in the spirit of 'global mutirão', or community action, as framed by the Brazilian presidency. When so many countries come together to make difficult choices, there are two potential ways to ensure action. Either create a tight, legally-bound architecture where countries that don't act on climate are penalised, or have a bottom-up voluntary architecture based on trust and accountability. The Copenhagen COP (COP15) showed the world that top-down would not work. The Paris Agreement was built on the latter, a voluntary framework, and has already bent the emissions curve.

By bringing real-world constraints, such as development barriers and lack of adequate finance, and workable pathways to the fore, the developing world helped chart a more honest course at COP30. It delivered meaningful wins—a long-awaited breakthrough on adaptation finance; real progress on just transition by recognising that countries will chart diverse, development-linked pathways; and, despite a difficult geopolitical year, a deal that kept the multilateral process intact.

Enhancing mitigation ambition means difficult choices. This is when the spirit of mutirão is tested. The big question is: would this bottom-up architecture, where countries undertake actions based on their national circumstances, work?

The text coming out of COP30 emphasises the criticality of multilateralism to give a message to the world: it is important to not be swayed by what is happening to the global order. Trust is the bedrock of multilateralism. It will only be created if there are spaces for honest conversations on issues close to parties' national interests.

The COP30 presidency took a significant step in this direction by allowing some core issues to be discussed, even if it was impossible to put these on the formal agenda. Parties were heard, a critical first step to rebuild trust.

However, continuous backsliding on the core principle of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, constant denial of the means of implementation, and implementation of unilateral trade measures don't bode well for the future of the Paris Agreement.

As research by the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water has highlighted for years, the transition to a net-zero world is an economic transformation. Countries whose economies are critically dependent on fossil fuels either for economic or energy security and access are bound to resist hard in the absence of meaningful and mandatory financial support.

So the key question now is: which direction are we going post-COP30? The Global South is already acting on many fronts—simply because it cannot afford not to. CEEW research shows India's current climate policies could cut about 4 billion tonnes of CO2 between 2020 and 2030—1.6 times the EU's 2023 emissions.

The developing South will further accelerate transition if low-cost, predictable, and meaningful financial support is available—the required quantum of which is far beyond what developed countries have so far been willing to support. Most likely, the desired finance will never come. But the developed world, especially the EU, is deeply committed to the idea of global ambition.

There are potentially two directions from here. First, countries in the developed world will ramp up unilateral trade measures under the guise of environmental integrity. Second, the idea of 'climate coalitions', where a group of large countries can come together to act themselves, and incentivise or penalise others outside the club, will start gaining ground. The former is already in motion, spurred by the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. Many other countries in the developed North are thinking about the same. The latter idea has been gaining traction, with the Brazilian presidency proposing a climate coalition based on carbon pricing, supported by many others including China. Countries will assess their incentives for joining a climate coalition, and take a call based on that.

To safeguard its development and climate goals, India, like many other countries, must now play smart across all arenas. It can continue enhancing its ambition through its domestic resources, something it has already been doing for long now; it may retaliate through its own version of CBAM or other trade measures; and it can assess the implications of being a part of climate coalitions.

India should realise that the game is no longer being played solely at the UNFCCC platform. It has to meaningfully assess and devise strategies to engage in the other two arenas as well, committing equal intellectual investment. It has to somehow balance between principles and realpolitik. The outcome of COP30 shows that the task has become more complicated, but so is India's capacity to shape it with clarity, confidence, and real solutions.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Life's trials will test you, and shape you, but don't let them change who you are."

- Aaron Lauritsen

# SHRAMEV JAYATE UNLEASHED

TARUN CHUGH

2025 will be remembered as a watershed year for India's workers. The New Labour Laws enacted this year mark a golden chapter in our nation's journey, bringing dignity and security to those who toil day and night to build India. Empowerment of workers is essential for an empowered, prosperous and Aatmanirbhar India. After decades of neglect, India is witnessing a revolutionary pro-worker transformation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Even after 73 years of Independence, 90% of our work force toiled in the unorganized sector without access to basic social security. For the first time, a Government has stepped up to care for all workers—organized or unorganized—and their families.

In the past, the working class was entangled in a web of 29 disparate and often conflicting labour laws. Successive regimes only discussed change but did little to actually help workers; the result was a stagnant system that failed to protect labour rights or encourage job creation. By 2014, both workers and industry were frustrated: the worker wondered why his rights were invisible, while the honest entrepreneur wondered why doing business was so difficult. This indifference ended when Narendra Modi's Government charted a different course. He vowed that neither the policy nor the intention would falter and gave India a new work ethic: Reform, Perform, Transform—implement real changes, deliver results, and thereby transform the country.

Indeed, the most sweeping labour reforms in independent India have now been realized: the consolidation of 29 archaic labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes. This isn't just a merging of statutes on paper—it represents a fundamental reconstruction of India's work culture, geared towards ensuring security, respect, health and welfare for every worker.

These New Labour Laws 2025 focus entirely on the rights and dignity of the worker while boosting the nation's development. The Code on Wages guarantees every worker across the country the right to a fair, minimum wage, ending regional disparities. For the first time, this right extends to all 50 crore workers in both organized and unorganized sectors. No longer is a fair wage a privilege; it is now a legal entitlement—a constitutional promise that every worker's sweat will be rewarded with due respect. As Prime Minister Modi often says, "a poor man's income may be small, but the pain of poverty is not small. By establishing a national floor wage, the Government has acknowledged that pain and acted to alleviate it. Crucially, the new laws also mandate timely payment of wages, protecting workers from the indignity of delayed salaries.

The Social Security Code extends the umbrella of protections to unorganized workers who were never formally recognized before. Gig workers, platform delivery personnel, app-based drivers, domestic helpers, construction laborers—the very people who drive India's new economy—are now, for the first time, assured social security benefits. From provident fund and pension to medical insurance, every worker can now access these benefits regardless of their industry or job title. To support this expansion, a dedicated social security fund is being created for the 40 crore unorganized workers, including gig and platform workers. This unprecedented inclusion means a Zomato food delivery agent or an Uber driver can finally say, "We too are nation-builders—and now we have security."

To ensure fairness and harmony in the workplace, the Industrial Relations Code modernizes the framework for resolving disputes and promoting dialogue. It provides trade unions a statutory right to recognition, ensuring workers have an institutional voice. The new rules encourage negotiation so that strikes and lockouts become a last resort rather than a first response. By ending arbitrariness and delays in dispute resolution, this code brings stability for employers and dignity for employees. As PM Modi has observed, "where there is dialogue, solutions come on their own. That philosophy is now embedded in law, fostering a climate where labour and industry grow together instead of being at odds.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code prioritizes workers' well-being like never before. It mandates safe working environments and basic facilities, recognizing that workers' safety and health are paramount. This change isn't just about flexibility—it is a bold statement of women's empowerment in the workplace of New India. The OSH Code also makes it compulsory for employers to provide free annual health check-ups to their workers, so that those who toil to build the nation are cared for. In a humane touch, employers must even provide interstate migrant workers an annual paid journey home to visit their families—acknowledging the sacrifices of those who travel far for work. Importantly, the new laws require that every worker receive a written appointment letter, formalizing their employment and preventing exploitation through casual hiring. These provisions together deliver safer working conditions, better healthcare, and a new level of dignity and security for India's labor force.

In parallel, the Government has leveraged technology to empower workers. It launched the e-Shram portal, which has become the largest national database of unorganized workers with over 29 crore (290 million) workers already registered. Thanks to this, no worker remains invisible—every hand that contributes to the economy is now counted, and can be reached with social benefits and emergency aid. Alongside this, the decades-old 'Inspector Raj' has been decisively dismantled by digitizing compliance and inspections. Where businesses once had to maintain 50+ registers and endure frequent arbitrary inspections, now a unified online system, random computerized checks, and self-certification have replaced bureaucracy with transparency. Honest enterprises are freed from harassment, and workers' rights are enforced more effectively. No longer will files crawl through offices—now the nation moves forward at speed, boosting investment, employment and growth.

These reforms are already laying the foundation for a more robust and inclusive economy. Simplified, worker-centric laws are attracting record investments and accelerating industrial expansion. India has witnessed all-time high Foreign Direct Investment inflows, a manufacturing boom, and strengthened MSMEs—developments that translate directly into lakhs of new jobs for our youth. Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat are no longer mere slogans, but a global reality, as the world recognizes that India's rise is being powered by its empowered workforce. As a testament, institutions like the World Bank, OECD, and the ILO have praised India's labour reforms as one of the most effective models of the 21st century. The narrative around India has changed—where once it was seen as a nation of "potential," it is now hailed as a nation of "potential realized," a dynamic reality.

Crucially, the 2025 labour reforms are not an isolated initiative, but the latest milestone in the Modi Government's long-standing commitment to worker justice and dignity. From day one in 2014, this Government set out to uplift

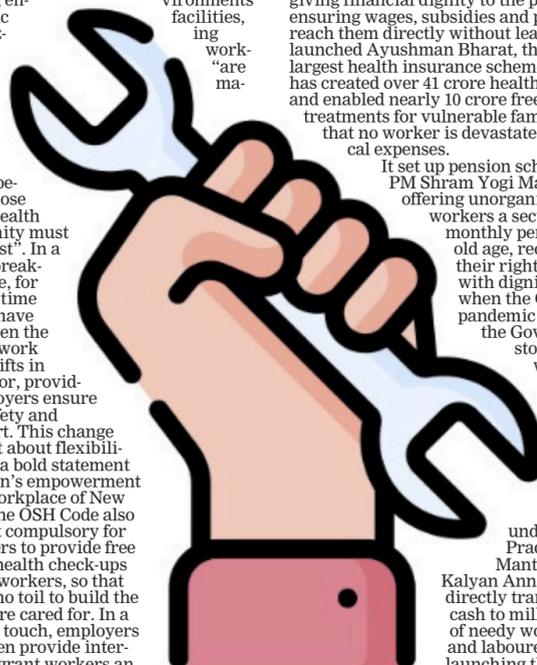
the common worker and ensure India's growth includes the poorest. It opened bank accounts for over 55 crore unbanked citizens under Jan Dhan Yojana, giving financial dignity to the poor and ensuring wages, subsidies and pensions reach them directly without leakage. It launched Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme, which has created over 41 crore health ID cards and enabled nearly 10 crore free hospital treatments for vulnerable families—so that no worker is devastated by medical expenses.

It set up pension schemes like PM Shram Yogi Maandhan, offering unorganized workers a secure monthly pension in old age, recognizing their right to retire with dignity. And when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the Government stood by workers: providing free food grains to about 81 crore people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, directly transferring cash to millions of needy women and labourers, and launching the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan to employ migrant workers near their homes. Every budget, every policy—whether building affordable housing, giving out Ujjwala gas connections, or expanding the social safety net—has put the welfare of the labouring poor at the center.

The Modi Government's push for skill development and apprenticeships has further boosted employment opportunities. Through the Skill India mission and National Apprenticeship programs, millions of youth have gained vocational skills and on-the-job training, helping transform India's workforce for the modern economy. This focus on skilling is moving India from a labour-driven economy to a skill-driven economy, opening pathways for higher productivity and incomes.

Job creation under the Modi Government has not been left to corporate boardrooms alone—it has become a people's movement. By unleashing the entrepreneurial energy of ordinary citizens, the Government has catalyzed millions of livelihoods. Take the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana: since 2015, over 52 crore collateral-free loans worth ₹32.6 lakh crore have been sanctioned to small and micro entrepreneurs, fueling a nationwide wave of grassroots enterprise. Business growth is no longer confined to big cities—it is spreading to small towns and villages, as people who once only sought jobs are now becoming job creators for others. Likewise, the Startup India initiative has firmly established India as the world's third largest startup ecosystem. As of 2024, more than 1.5 lakh Government-recognized startups have generated over 16.6 lakh direct jobs across the country. This startup revolution—supported by schemes like Stand-Up India and a culture of innovation—has opened new frontiers of growth and employment for the youth.

India's growth story is incomplete without justice for those who are the engine of that growth—the workers. The New Labour Laws 2025 affirm that economic development and labour welfare are not opposing goals, but complementary pillars of nation-building. They show that our nation's progress is measured not just in GDP figures or corporate profits, but in the dignity and security of its working people. While opposition parties remained content with the status quo or paid lip service to labour rights for decades, the Modi Government has made worker welfare a cornerstone of national policy. By delivering these historic reforms, Prime Minister Modi has proven to be the guardian of India's workers—a



leader who has given voice, visibility and value to those at the base of our economy.

For this Government, passing laws is not about headlines, but about building trust. Today, an ordinary Indian worker can proudly say, "I am not just a labourer—I am a nation-builder," and an industrialist can confidently say, "India is becoming the easiest place to do business". This simultaneous empowerment of labour and industry is the hallmark of the Modi model of governance—Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas.

The New Labour Laws of 2025 stand as a testament to that ethos. They proclaim that India's rise will be truly meaningful only when it uplifts those who toil in its factories, fields and offices. Under Narendra Modi's leadership, India has shown that ensuring labour justice is nation-building in its purest form. And indeed, this is just the beginning—the foundation has been laid, and India's workers can stride into the future with newfound hope, pride and security.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**I am deeply shocked by the unacceptable treatment of Ms. Prema Wangjom Thongdok, a proud Indian citizen from Arunachal Pradesh, by Chinese immigration authorities at Shanghai Pudong Airport. Subjecting her despite a valid Indian passport to humiliation and racial mockery is appalling. Arunachal Pradesh is, and will always be an integral part of India. Any insinuation otherwise is baseless and offensive.**

**Such conduct violates international norms and is an affront to the dignity of our citizens. I am confident that the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India will take up this matter urgently that such incidents are not repeated.**

~ Pema Khandu, CM, Arunachal Pradesh



## Before dissent, need playfulness in nationalism

Whenever I try to balance between the esoteric and the everyday, my mind tends to go back to the memory of my teacher, Ramchandra Gandhi.

He was a remarkable philosopher, an authority on mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. I still remember the way Ramu would come to class and quote Whitehead's lecture at Harvard. Whitehead had apparently once walked into the classroom, banged his head gently, and said, "Gentlemen, I have disturbed the most distant star," referring to the interconnectedness of the cosmos.

For Ramu, communication and connectivity were part of everyday life. The way he linked them reminds me of the way he used to talk about nationalism. For Ramchandra Gandhi, nationalism was a filigreed moment—full of nuances, a dissenting imagination that created a pluralistic world.

For him, deep down inside, nationalism was a different way of looking at reality—a dream world that created a sense of alternatives. Within this context, he pointed out that the world of nationalism was not actually an invention of the nation-state. For India, and in fact for many nationalists, the dream of nationalism was a dream of inventing an alternative childhood.

Childhood, in fact, was the focus of many nationalist moments. It's best captured in Rabindranath Tagore's statement: "Every child born today is an indication that god is not yet tired

of man." In this sense, Tagore captured the essence of the Indian national movement.

Childhood was a dream of flexibility. Childhood was a dream of freedom. And childhood brought about a sense of playfulness. This sense of play—with the capacity to imagine and inhabit alternatives—is something we have lost today. The dream of playfulness is caught in many ways in how we learn to live with uncertainty and celebrate plurality. It is this sense of play that we have lost in our nationalist movement, which has become more monologic, more uniform. We have created a monopoly of ideas, which now come as dictates rather than dialogues. Playfulness—the politics of play—is something our politics has forgotten.

The first thing we have to understand is that the emphasis on the nation-state is misleading. For many nationalists in India—from Tagore to Patrick Geddes to Maria Montessori—it was their childhood that was the basis of the dream world. Childhood, in a way, was an articulation of alternatives. And this is what we must begin by emphasising that the nation-state was not so much a political economy as a pedagogic construct—a new way of understanding reality, teaching it, and communicating it. What marked childhood, and what marked nationalism in particular, was a certain sense of playfulness. This can be brought out by a series of examples.

One of the first things one thinks of is Mahatma Gandhi's own work on the charkha. The charkha, he said, was not just an instrument; it is a weave of

playful ideas. In this context, he said the charkha could be used to teach Pythagorean ideas and mathematics—a pedagogic tool, an invention to teach through play.

Gandhi emphasised again and again the sense of fun that nationalism and play brought about. I am reminded of the time when industrialist Jammalal Bajaj gave Gandhi a Ford Motor car. It ran in the ashram for a week or two, then broke down. Gandhi had it pulled by a set of oxen, and playfully introduced it to visitors as "my Ox-Ford".

It is this sense of playfulness, this sense of alternatives, this openness to interpretation that made nationalism not only a dissenting imagination, but a dream of alternatives—something we have lost today. As Ramu pointed out, nationalism was a dream of childhood, a dream of playfulness. And connecting the two was a deep sense of alternatives.

I still remember my father telling me that during his school days, he worked on vacation with the Raman group in science at Bengaluru. He was still at school, but was invited to the discussions. Because he took part in them, he obtained his first publication in the journal Nature while still a schoolboy.

National playfulness, then, was the possibility of the unexpected, the uncertain, the plural—and it is this playfulness that we lack today. Play was not just a rule-bound game. Play was an attempt to create a different kind of creative imagination. One can think of this in two contexts—in the debates between Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi wanted the charkha to be an instrument of daily discipline. He pointed out that merely creating a charkha in an imitative sense was not enough. One needed to create a sense of diversity. And it was in this context that he emphasised that the erotic must be part of the everyday.

Tagore's critique of Gandhi, then, was about how to bring the erotic—the sensuous and the creative—into the everyday. And this could be done only through a notion of playfulness.

Gandhi went further. He pointed out that colonialism cannot be seen only as a dreary ethic of protest and resistance. Anti-colonialism, he felt, must contain playfulness. In this context, Gandhi said one of the deep tasks of India was to "rescue the West from its dreariness".

It is here that play becomes central to the Indian national movement.

So what Ramu Gandhi analysed was that the Indian national movement was plural, playful, a dream of childhood—and, in this context, it provided a structure of alternative thought. Ramu pointed out that it is precisely what we miss today. Distinctiveness lies in being playful, serious, plural—in creating an alternative world of imagination.

The Indian national movement was full of different dreams of childhood. One can think of Montessori, of the occult child of whom Jiddu Krishnamurti was an example, or of Tagore's dream of Shantiniketan, where childhood became an anchor for an alternative world.

# 'One killed Zubeen, others assisted': CM

GUWAHATI

Citing cultural icon Zubeen Garg's death as an "irreparable loss" for Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Tuesday, declared that the artiste's death was a case of murder, as the Assembly took up the adjournment motion on the opening day of the five-day winter session.

Speaking in the House, Sarma said the government had termed it murder from the third day of the Special Investigation Team's (SIT) probe, which began on September 23.

"It's a plain and simple case of murder from Day 3. All accused are under BNS Sections 61, 105 and 106, and the government urged the Gauhati High Court to add Section 103 (former IPC 302). Preliminary investigation assured that it was not negligence and it's a plain murder. If we did not add 103, then all accused would have been out on bail," he told the Assembly.

Sarma said the final verdict



would come from the Court but asserted confidence in the SIT's findings.

"We have found many things that no one else in the state knew. The term 'murder' is on record. I have taken permission today, and one has killed while a few others have assist-

ed," he said, adding that the inquiry would be expanded even after filing the charge sheet to ensure everyone responsible is brought into custody.

Earlier, the Chief Minister listed the measures taken by the Assam government following the artiste's death.

"We accepted all the demands—be it for a second post-mortem at Guwahati Medical College and Hospital, with an AIIMS Guwahati doctor also part of the committee. On October 10, the viscera sample was sent for toxicological examination. The GMCH post-mortem was received on October 3, and the final report on October 5," he said.

Sarma informed the House that witness examination and investigation into the motive had progressed, adding that seven people had been arrested.

He noted that the Ministry of External Affairs and the High Commissioner in Singapore were involved in securing documents from abroad. "Assam Police visited Singapore on October 21 and on November 13, we received documents from Singapore through diplomatic channels," he said.

He added that digital forensic examinations were underway, with findings forming part of the case diary

under provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSS).

Explaining the legal framework, Sarma said BNSS Section 208 allows an offence committed on foreign soil to be treated as if it were committed in India, making a case registrable here after obtaining prior sanction from the Centre.

He said the SIT had convinced the Ministry of Home Affairs on November 18, clearing the way for the charge sheet under BNS Section 103.

"On December 8, we will submit the charge sheet with all evidence and documents. We will urge the High Court to designate a judge for fast-track proceedings. A special public prosecutor will be appointed," Sarma said, adding that a "fool-proof inquiry" had been carried out.

"Otherwise, the Home Ministry would not have approved it. We have confidence in the quality of the

enquiry conducted by the SIT," he added.

Referring to a petition filed by accused Shyamkanu Mahanta seeking a CBI probe, Sarma said the plea was based on distrust in the Chief Minister.

He alleged that the Opposition was defending the accused and referred to issues relating to transit remand and the use of evidence secured through diplomatic channels under Section 77F of the Indian Evidence Act.

The Chief Minister also said the proposal to confer the Bharat Ratna posthumously on Garg should not be dealt with through an adjournment motion. He suggested that all MLAs sign the proposal and dedicate a full day in the Assembly to discuss Garg's body of work.

Meanwhile, during the discussion, Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi was suspended from the House by Speaker Biswajit Daimary for interrupting the proceedings.

## Congress claims 'powerful force' behind Zubeen Garg murder, questions CM's role

GUWAHATI

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), on Tuesday, launched a sharp attack on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, alleging political interference in the probe into the death of cultural icon Zubeen Garg.

At a district review meeting organised by the party in Biswanath Chariali, senior Congress leaders, including APCC president Gaurav Gogoi and former state presidents Ripun Bora and Bhupen Kumar Bora, alleged that a "powerful and invisible force" is behind Garg's murder and accused the Chief Minister of withholding crucial information despite speaking in the Assembly.

Gogoi questioned the manner in which the Chief Minister hinted at a mastermind behind the killing while the Special Investigation Team (SIT) is yet to file its chargesheet.

"We will wait for a few days to see if the SIT reveals the truth, but the Chief Minister did not disclose everything in the Assembly," Gogoi said.

He added, "The accused named so far are not the only culprits. There is a powerful person directing events from behind the scenes, and that information has not been made public."

Gogoi further claimed that public trust in the Chief Minister was eroding. "People in villages tell themselves they do not believe the Chief Minister will ensure justice. Knowing his credibility is declining, he is trying to create confusion," he said. Former APCC president Ripun Bora also questioned Sarma's public remarks on the probe. "How did the Chief Minister speak as if he is part of the SIT? If he already knows everything, why was the SIT formed? We now doubt whether the investigation is free from influence," he asked.

Bhupen Borah said Garg's death has united people across the state and that the Congress represented that sentiment.

## 417 join Congress in Peren, accuse Nagaland government of 'showmanship politics'

KOHIMA

The Nagaland Congress received a significant boost on Monday after 417 people, led by former Independent candidate Tumda Newme, formally joined the party in Peren district.

Newme, a founding member of the NDDP's Peren division, hosted the induction programme at his Jalukie residence under the banner of the Peren District Congress Committee. The Congress described the mass joining as a sign of shifting political sentiment in the district.

Addressing supporters, Newme said he chose the Congress due to growing "public disillusionment" with the state government, accusing it of engaging in "showmanship politics" while neglecting everyday hardships. "The rich are becoming richer while the poor suffer," he said, adding that he wanted to align with a party committed to service and equity.

NPCC president and Lok Sabha MP S. Supongmeren Jamir wel-

comed the new entrants and urged them to work cohesively ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections. He said the joining of all three former candidates from the Tening Assembly constituency under the Congress banner signalled a united push for public interest. Jamir also urged voters to reject monetary inducements and support leaders working on real development.

NPCC working president Khriedi criticised the BJP-led government, alleging misuse of democratic institutions, including the Election Commission, for political gain. Such practices, he warned, undermine the state's democratic framework.

Senior leaders including NPCC general secretary Rosy Thomson and district functionaries were present at the event.

The Congress said the developments in Peren reflect growing demand for an alternative political voice in Nagaland, and reaffirmed its commitment to justice, equality and inclusive development.

## Govt focuses on last-person development in rural areas: Tripura CM Manik Saha

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said that the state government is working diligently to ensure that the benefits of various central and state government development projects reach the last person in society.

According to the Tripura Chief Minister's Office (CMO), the state has received a total of seven Panchayat Awards at the national level for good work in the Panchayat, and the government always thinks about the overall development of rural Tripura.

CM Saha said this while inaugurating several projects of the Rural Development Department at Pragya Bhavan in Agartala today.

These include the Chief Minister Gram Sampak Yojana, the Chief Minister Tripura Gram Samridhi Yojana 2.0, Mega Griha Pravesh, the launch of achievement booklets, and the awarding of districts and blocks that have made special contributions in the field of work.



Speaking at the event, CM Saha said that the state government is constantly implementing programs like the Chief Minister Gram Sampak Yojana, Chief Minister Tripura Gram Samridhi Yojana 2.0, and Mega Griha Pravesh.

"One of the objectives of such programs is to work for the common man. It is very important to ensure that the benefits of government projects reach the last person in society. The Rural Development Department works as a nodal department to implement various schemes of the central and state governments. They also implement various externally

aided schemes. The Rural Development Department undertakes important work in various fields, including employment generation, sanitation, capacity building, infrastructure development, and socio-economic development of women. These works are implemented by the District Magistrates. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly emphasised the importance of development reaching the last person," he said.

The Chief Minister said Tripura has received a total of 7 Panchayat Awards at the national level, with prize money of about Rs 10 crores. "This time, while attending the

oath-taking ceremony in Bihar, I heard praise about Tripura. And that is possible because of the efforts of all of you," said Tripura CM.

At the event, the Chief Minister also said that it is now possible to provide a roof over the heads of common people due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Along with this, this government is committed to ensuring the social status and future of the people of the rural hills. Seventy-five per cent of the main base of Tripura's population lives in rural areas. I have spoken to tribal officers before and discussed various important issues related to the development of the state with them. More attention should be paid to the development of the people of rural areas," said CM Saha.

Chief Secretary J.K. Sinha, Secretary of the Rural Development Department Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary Kuntal Das, Director of the Panchayat Department Prasun De, and others were present.

## AI push gains ground in Manipur's academic circuit as universities debate future of research



IMPHAL

The buzz around Artificial Intelligence is steadily filtering into Manipur's higher education spaces, with universities and colleges beginning to navigate what the technology means for teaching, learning, and research. That curiosity took centre stage on Tuesday as Dhanamanjuri University's College Development Council (CDC), in collaboration with the Department of Home Science, hosted a one-day lecture programme titled "Generative

AI: Transforming the Landscape of Academic Research" at GP Women's College. The event drew senior scholars, faculty members and students who packed into the college library hall to discuss how Generative AI tools—fast becoming ubiquitous across global academia—are reshaping research approaches, pedagogy and the ethics of knowledge creation. Opening the session, Dr. Kh. Robindro Singh, Head of Computer Science at Manipur University, said the rapid evolution of AI demands a recalibration of higher

education. "We need to rethink the emerging trends," he noted, adding that generative models are already influencing research design and methodology across disciplines ranging from life sciences to humanities. Prof. L. Hemchandra Singh, Dean of Life Sciences at DMU, acknowledged that for many in academia, AI-driven learning remains unfamiliar terrain. He underlined the need for young scholars and new faculty members to gain foundational understanding of the technology to strengthen both classroom delivery and research output.

But alongside the enthusiasm came words of caution. Prof. H. Sorojini, Director of the CDC, reminded participants that although AI has permeated "every domain in the 21st century," scholars must guard against allowing automated tools to overshadow critical thinking. "Dependence on AI for research material can weaken original-

ity," she warned. Echoing that balance, GP Women's College Principal Prof. L. Rajen Singh described AI as a powerful assistive tool—useful for accelerating routine tasks and expanding access to information—but stressed that it cannot replace traditional academic rigour.

"Judicious use is essential," he said, encouraging students to treat AI as an aid rather than an authority. The day-long programme is part of a broader shift within Manipur's academic ecosystem, where institutions are beginning to hold workshops, discussions and training sessions to prepare educators and researchers for an AI-driven future.

As universities grapple with the promise and pitfalls of the technology, Tuesday's event signalled that the debate is no longer theoretical—the revolution may already be underway in Manipur's classrooms and research halls.

## Nagaland launches first Gender Resource Centre to combat violence against women

KOHIMA

Nagaland on Tuesday marked the start of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence with the launch of the state's first Gender Resource Centre, a move officials described as a significant step toward creating safer spaces for women and girls.

The centre was inaugurated by Social Welfare Advisor and MLA Wangpang Konyak, who said the initiative symbolises a shared resolve to eliminate violence that continues to impact millions of women around the world.

Addressing a programme held on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, he noted that one in three women globally still experience abuse in some form.

Konyak raised concern over recent reports of rising crimes against women in Kohima, pointing out that Mission Shakti units, One Stop Centres and the 181 Women Helpline continue to receive numerous distress calls — many from survivors who remain anonymous due to social stigma.

He appealed for a broader societal response, stressing that gender-based violence "is not a woman's issue alone but a human issue" that erodes the dignity of communities.

Calling for stronger male participation through efforts such as the HeForShe campaign, he said, "Real

men do not raise their hands against women — they raise their voices with women."

Konyak also recognised the work of Mission Shakti personnel and the support of the Ministry of Women & Child Development.

Congratulating the Nagaland State Rural Livelihoods Mission (NSRLM) for expanding Gender Resource Centres to seven additional RD blocks — Kiphire, Longleng, Mon, Changlong, Pflusero, Wokha and Satakha — he said the new facility will not only act as a safe space for survivors but also help train local institutions, including police, churches and youth groups, to respond more effectively to cases.

He reiterated the government's commitment to support women facing violence, envisioning a future where every woman in Nagaland can "study, work and walk without fear."

Social Welfare Secretary Limawabang Jamir also addressed the gathering, underscoring the crucial role of men in preventing violence and ensuring accountability.

He said One Stop Centres across all 17 districts have provided assistance in 1,703 cases so far, including shelter, legal services, medical support and counselling.

Meanwhile, the 181 Women Helpline and 1068 Child Helpline have together handled 3,396 calls since 2016.

## "Quite natural that border can be changed," Assam Deputy Speaker

GUWAHATI

Assam Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker Numal Momin on Monday strongly backed Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's recent remarks on Sindh, stating that it is "quite natural that the border can be changed."

Numal Momin further asserted that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and certain areas of Bangladesh "should be taken back".

Momin said, "Because Pakistan and Bangladesh were a part of India, it is quite natural that the border can be changed. I strongly support Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's remark, and it is now high time we change the border. We should take back the PoK and take back the part of Bangladesh where we can introduce another portion for minority people who were persecuted in the name of religion."

His remarks came a day after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, while addressing the Sindh Samaj Sammelan in New Delhi, recalled former



Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani's statement that borders can change and suggested that "tomorrow Sindh may return to India again."

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had said, "This is Advani's (Lal Krishna Advani) quote. Today, the land of Sindh may not be a part of India, but civilisationally, Sindh will always be a part of India. And as far as land is concerned, borders can change. Who

knows, tomorrow Sindh may return to India again."

"Our people of Sindh, who hold the Indus River sacred, will always be our own. No matter where they are, they will always be ours," he added.

Sindh region, known as the homeland of the Sindh people, has been a significant part of India's civilisation. It was also the centre of the Indus Valley Civilisation. The region became

part of Pakistan with the partition in 1947.

Additionally, BJP leader Numal Momin also slammed Congress over their opposition to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. He said that Congress MP Rahul Gandhi should've backed SIR, but he "never thought about a brighter future for our country."

"Narendra Modi took a very strong step, and the Election Commission of India is doing the right thing for the first time to identify legal voters and omit the illegal voters. Congress was habituated with the illegal voters, banking on them, and winning in the previous elections," he said.

"Congress is afraid that if SIR is implemented in the 5 assemblies, where elections will take place very soon, the result will be like Bihar... He should have supported SIR... But he never thought about a brighter future for our country... He always tried to malign India's image abroad. That's why, naturally, SIR is not in his favour," he added.

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is currently underway in nine states and three Union Territories. The first phase was conducted in Bihar ahead of the state assembly elections.

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## PM, HM 'subverting constitutional principles in calculated manner': Jairam Ramesh



NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at the RSS-BJP on Constitution Day, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday alleged that the Sangh's role was to attack and undermine it, and that role had been taken forward by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah "who have been subverting constitutional principles in a calculated manner".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the RSS "had no role whatsoever" in the making of the Constitution "On Saturday, November 26 1949, the Constituent Assembly met at 10 AM with Dr. Rajendra Prasad in the Chair. Before formally putting the motion for the adoption of the draft Constitution of India that had been moved by Dr. Ambedkar the previous day to the vote, Dr. Rajendra Prasad made his remarks," Ramesh recalled.

"In his speech explaining the background to and highlights of the Draft that was soon to be adopted, Dr. Rajendra Prasad recalled: 'The method which the Constituent Assembly adopted in connec-

tion with the Constitution was first to lay down its 'terms of reference' as it were in the form of an Objectives Resolution which was moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (on Dec 13 1946) in an inspiring speech and which constitutes now the Preamble to our Constitution."

"It then proceeded to appoint a number of committees to deal with different aspects of the Constitutional problem. Dr. Ambedkar mentioned the names of these Committees.

Several of these had as their Chairman Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru or Sardar Patel to whom thus goes the credit for the fundamentals of our Constitution.'" Ramesh said quoting Prasad.

"Dr. Rajendra Prasad ended his speech thus: 'I have realised as nobody else could have, with what zeal and devotion the members of the Drafting Committee and especially its Chairman Dr. Ambedkar, in spite of his indifferent health, have worked.

We could never make a decision which was or could be ever so right as when we put him on the Drafting Committee and made him its Chairman.

He has not only justified his selection but has added lustre to the work he has done,'" he said.

Just as the Constituent Assembly was adopting the Constitution, Governor-General of India C. Rajagopalachari was in Guwahati, replying to the address of welcome from the people of Assam, Ramesh recalled.

"In the course of his brief remarks, Rajaji reminisced warmly: 'Dr. Ambedkar's leading part in steering, on behalf of the Indian National Congress, the Constitution of Independent India is the greatest triumph of non-violence. Regarding this entrustment of responsibility to Dr. Ambedkar to the end of my days I shall proudly cherish the memory of my own initiative in the matter when I was not Governor-General, which received the most generous and most large-hearted and immediate acceptance by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,'" he recalled.

This is all part of the history of Constitution making in which the RSS had no role whatsoever, Ramesh said.

"In fact its role after the Constitution was adopted was to attack and undermine it, a role taken forward by the present PM and HM who have been subverting Constitutional principles, provisions, and practices in a calculated manner," the Congress leader said.

Since 2015, Constitution Day, or Samvidhan Diwas, has been celebrated on November 26 to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949.

AYODHYA

Ayodhya witnessed a historic turning point in India's cultural consciousness. The entire nation, and indeed the world, is filled with the spirit of Ram. Every devotee feels an unparalleled sense of satisfaction, boundless gratitude, and immense spiritual joy. After hoisting the Dharmadhvaj (saffron flag) on Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this while addressing the huge gathering. He added that centuries-old wounds are being healed, long-standing pain is finding rest, and a centuries-old vow is finally being fulfilled. Today marks the culmination of a 500-year-long yajna (yagya), a yajna that remained steadfast in faith and unwavering in belief. The divine energy of the sanctum sanctorum of Shri Ram Temple has now been enshrined in the form of the Dharmadhvaj atop this magnificent temple.

The ceremony took place atop the Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Temple in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RSS chief (Sarsangchalak) Dr. Mohan Bhagwat. After offering salutations to the saffron flag, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath presented mementoes to the Prime Minister and RSS chief.

The ceremony was graced by Governor Anandiben Patel, President of the Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust Mahant Nriya Gopal Das, Treasurer Swami Govind Dev Giri, along with saints and dignitaries from across the country. The ceremony was conducted by Champat Rai, Secretary of the Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

Modi said on the occasion that the Dharmadhvaj is more than a flag; it is a symbol of the renaissance of Indian civilization. Its saffron hue, the glory of the Suryavansh, the Om symbol, and the Kovidara tree inscribed upon it represent the ideals of Ram Rajya.

This flag embodies determination, struggle, and ultimate success. It is the realization of a dream nurtured for centuries, the culmination of the spiritual efforts of saints, and the devotion of society at large. For centuries to come, this Dharmadhvaj will uphold the ideals of Lord Ram. It will proclaim that truth alone triumphs over falsehood, that dharma is founded on truth,



and that promises must always be kept, 'Praan jaaye par vachan na jaaye'. It will inspire action and duty, 'Karma Pradhan Vishwa Rachi Rakha', and pray for a society free from discrimination, suffering, and hardship, where peace and happiness prevail, the Prime Minister said.

He added, the Dharmadhvaj signifies the temple's purpose. Even those unable to visit in person can derive spiritual merit. This flag allows a glimpse of Ram Lalla's birthplace from afar, conveying his message and teachings to humanity for generations. Modi expressed heartfelt gratitude to millions of devotees, philanthropists, laborers, planners, and architects who contributed to the Ram Temple's construction. He said that Ayodhya is the land where ideals are transformed into conduct. This is the city where Shri Ram began his journey.

It demonstrated to the world how a person becomes the ideal human through societal values and guidance. When Shri Ram went into exile, he was Prince Ram; upon his return, he emerged as the embodiment of virtue. The wisdom of Maharishi Vashista, the guidance of Maharishi Vishwamitra and Maharishi Agastya, the friendship of Nishadraj, the devotion of Maa Shabari and Hanuman, and countless others shaped him into the most virtuous man.

The Prime Minister emphasized that the Ram Temple's divine courtyard is becoming a beacon of India's collective strength. It houses seven temples, including those of Maa Shabari and Nishadraj Guhya, alongside shrines of Maa Ahalya, Maharishi Valmiki, Maharishi Vashista,

Maharishi Vishwamitra, Maharishi Agastya, and Saint Tulsidas. Here, along with Ram Lalla, every sage and devotee is honored. Even the statues of Jatayu and the humble squirrel reflect how every small effort contributes to achieving great goals. Modi said, the temple empowers values of faith, friendship, duty, and social harmony. Shri Ram connects with us not by birth or status but by devotion and virtue." He valued cooperation over power, principles over salvation. Today, India carries forward this spirit. Over the past 11 years, every segment of society, women, dalits, backward classes, tribal communities, the deprived, farmers, labourers, and youth, has been central to development. By empowering every individual and region, India moves together toward a developed nation. By 2047, as India celebrates 100 years of independence, it will realize a vision of development shaped by the collective efforts of all its people.

The Prime Minister said that if India is to achieve holistic development and empower its society by 2047, we must awaken the Ram within ourselves. There can be no better day than today to take this resolution.

November 25 marks yet another historic moment of pride in India's heritage. Referring to the Kovidara tree depicted on the flag, Modi said it symbolizes the importance of staying rooted. When a civilization forgets its roots, its glory is lost in history. He recalled how, when Bharata reached Chitrakoot, Lakshmana recognized the army of Ayodhya from afar by seeing a flag resembling a huge, radiant tree, bearing the auspicious Kovidara symbol. Today,

the reinstallation of the Kovidara in the Ram Temple grounds signifies not only the return of the tree but also the revival of memory, identity, and self-respect. The Kovidara reminds us that forgetting our identity leads to weakness, while reclaiming it restores the nation's confidence. True progress requires pride in our heritage and liberation from the mindset of subjugation.

He asserted that if India resolves to free itself from this mindset in the next ten years, a new flame of confidence will be ignited. The nation will march forward with such determination that nothing will be able to halt the realization of the dream of a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Modi stated that India's foundation will be truly strengthened for the next thousand years only when Macaulay's legacy of mental slavery is completely uprooted within the next decade. He added, "The Ram Lalla temple complex in Ayodhya Dham is becoming increasingly magnificent, and the beautification of Ayodhya is progressing continuously. Today, Ayodhya is once again emerging as a city that will set an example for the world. While the Ayodhya of the Treta Yuga gave humanity the gift of ethics and values, the Ayodhya of the 21st century is offering a new model of development. Then, Ayodhya was the center of dignity; today, it is becoming the backbone of a Viksit Bharat. The Ayodhya of the future will be a confluence of mythology and modernity, where the sacred waters of the Sarayu River will flow alongside the stream of development, creating a harmonious blend of spirituality and technology, including artificial intelligence.

The Prime Minister said that the coming decades of the 21st century are critical. In the 70 years since independence, India has become the 11th largest economy in the world, and the day is not far when it will emerge as the third largest.

These times are full of new opportunities and immense possibilities. Even during such a crucial period, the ideals of Lord Ram remain our guiding light. When Shri Ram faced the formidable challenge of defeating Ravana, he said that courage and patience are the wheels of the chariot needed to overcome obstacles. "Truth and righteousness serve as its flag, while strength, wisdom, restraint, and altruism are the horses. Forgiveness, compassion, and equality are the reins that keep the chariot on the right path", he added.

## INTERNATIONAL

## Trump says he's sending envoys to see Putin, Ukrainians after fine-tuning plan to end war

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said Tuesday his plan to end the war in Ukraine has been "fine-tuned" and he's sending envoy Steve Witkoff to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Army Secretary Dan Driscoll to meet with Ukrainian officials.

Trump suggested he could eventually meet with Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but not until further progress has been made in negotiations. Speaking to reporters on Tuesday evening aboard Air Force One, Trump said resolving the war was difficult, and described what had been a 28-point plan as a work in progress. "That was not a plan—it was a concept," Trump said.

Trump's plan for ending the nearly four-year war emerged last week. It heavily favored Russia, prompting Zelenskyy to quickly engage with American negotiators. European leaders, fearing for their own future facing Russian aggression but apparently sidelined by Trump in drawing up the proposal, scrambled to steer the negotiations toward accommodating their concerns.

Trump said he believed Witkoff would be meeting with Putin next week in Moscow, with his son-in-law Jared Kushner potentially joining the meeting. "People are starting to realize it's a good deal for both parties," Trump said.

The president played down the element of his plan that would require Ukraine to cede territory to Russia, suggesting that Russian forces were already likely to seize the land they're seeking.

"The way it's going, if you look, it's just moving in one direction," Trump said. "So eventually that's land that over the next couple of months might be gotten by Russia anyway."

At the center of Trump's plan is the call on Ukraine to concede the entirety of its eastern Donbas region, even though a vast swath of that land remains in Ukrainian control. Analysts at the

independent Institute for the Study of War have estimated it would take several years for the Russian military to completely seize the territory, based on its current rate of advances.

Trump made his comments after Driscoll held talks late Monday and throughout Tuesday with Russian officials in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, to discuss the emerging proposal.

"The talks are going well and we remain optimistic," Lt. Col. Jeff Tolbert, spokesman for the Army secretary, said in a statement. Witkoff, a real estate developer turned diplomat, has been Trump's chief interlocutor with Putin, while Driscoll, who is close to Vance, has stepped up his involvement in the administration's peace push in recent days.

As the talks were taking place, Russia launched a wave of overnight attacks on Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, with at least seven people killed in strikes that hit city buildings and energy infrastructure. A Ukrainian attack on southern Russia killed three people and damaged homes, authorities said.

Trump spoke to reporters after Bloomberg News published a transcript of an Oct. 14 call between Witkoff and Putin's foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov where Witkoff coached his counterpart on how Putin should handle a call with Trump.

Trump downplayed Witkoff's reported approach as "a very standard form of negotiation."

But U.S. Rep. Don Bacon, a Nebraska Republican who has been critical of Trump's approach to Ukraine, said the transcript showed Witkoff favors the Russians. "He cannot be trusted to lead these negotiations. Would a Russian paid agent do less than he? He should be fired," Bacon said on social media.

Bloomberg said it reviewed a recording of the call, but did not say how it obtained access to the recording. The

Associated Press has not independently verified the transcript.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Tuesday that peace efforts are gathering momentum and "are clearly at a crucial juncture."

He spoke after senior U.S. and Ukrainian officials met in Geneva on Sunday and a virtual "coalition of the willing" meeting of Ukraine's European allies took place on Tuesday. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio took part in both gatherings.

"Negotiations are getting a new impetus. And we should seize this momentum," he said during the video conference meeting of countries, led by France and the U.K., that could help police any ceasefire with Russia.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said of the talks: "I do think we are moving in a positive direction and indications today that in large part the majority of the text, (Zelenskyy) is indicating, can be accepted."

Oleksandr Bezv, one of the Ukrainian delegates at the Geneva talks, however, cautioned that it was "very premature to say that something is agreed upon."

In an interview with The Associated Press in Kyiv late Tuesday, he declined to discuss the specifics of any amendments to Trump's plan, but said the U.S. was aware that the strength of security guarantees for Ukraine would "define the sustainability of the deal" and was "the part making this deal real and enforceable."

Bezv earlier told the AP that the number of points in the proposed settlement was reduced, but he denied reports that the 28-point U.S. peace plan now consisted of 19 points.

"(The document) is going to continue to change. We can confirm that it was reduced to take out points not relating to Ukraine, to exclude duplicates and for editing purposes," Bezv said, adding that some points relating solely to relations between Russia and the U.S.

were excluded.

Zelenskyy said late Monday that "the list of necessary steps to end the war can become workable." He said he planned to discuss "sensitive" outstanding issues with Trump.

Rustem Umerov, a senior adviser to Zelenskyy, posted on X on Tuesday that Zelenskyy hoped to finalize a deal with Trump "at the earliest suitable date in November."

Russian officials have been reserved in their comments on the peace plan. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Tuesday that Moscow is in touch with U.S. officials about peace efforts.

"We expect them to provide us with a version they consider an interim one in terms of completing the phase of coordinating this text with the Europeans and the Ukrainians," Lavrov said.

European leaders have cautioned that the road to peace will be long.

Russia fired 22 missiles of various types and more than 460 drones at Ukraine overnight, Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram. The strikes knocked out water, electricity and heat in parts of Kyiv. Images showed a large fire spreading in a nine-story residential building in Kyiv's eastern Dniprovsykyi district.

Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said 20 people were wounded in Kyiv. The Russian Defense Ministry said it targeted military-industrial facilities and energy assets. The strikes were a response to Ukrainian attacks on civilian objects in Russia, the ministry said.

Liubov Petrivna, a 90-year-old resident of a damaged building in the Dniprovsykyi district, told the AP that "absolutely everything" in her apartment was shattered by the strike and "glass rained down" on her.

Petrivna said that she didn't believe in the peace plan now under discussion. "No one will ever do anything about it," she said. Russian President Vladimir Putin "won't stop until he finishes us off."

## Bangladesh envoy recalls shared sacrifices



NEW DELHI

Amid strain in bilateral ties, Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India, Riaz Hamidullah used the occasion of Bangladesh Armed Forces Day to honour the sacrifices made by both nations during the 1971 Liberation War and to underline the enduring strength of the relationship.

Speaking at a reception at the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi on Monday, marking the day in 1971 when Bangladesh's Army, Navy and Air Force formally came into being, Hamidullah recalled the coordinated push against Pakistani forces.

India was represented by Lt Gen Manish Luthra, Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), who attended as chief guest. Members of the diplomatic community and several Indian veterans of the 1971 war were also present.

The envoy said: "I do recall the valued contributions of the 1,668 Indian soldiers who made the supreme

sacrifice during the 1971 war. I acknowledge the surviving war veterans of India. No less should we pay homage to countless ordinary women, men and families in India, especially in Tripura and West Bengal, who endured so much and shared millions of Bangladesh's agony during the war.

"Highlighting the foundations of the partnership, he described Bangladesh-India relations as "deep and multi-layered, bound by shared history, shared culture, shared geography. Our two people are tied just organically. It's a relationship that's embedded in mutual respect and trust, not to be driven by a zero-sum game."

While acknowledging that challenges had emerged, the envoy stressed Dhaka's preference for dialogue and pragmatism. "Bangladesh has consistently relied on conversation and negotiation, believing in a shared future," he said. "It is what I and my colleagues across India engage in practically, to secure peace, stability and prosperity in Bangladesh and

India." Hamidullah also noted expanding defence engagement, saying he was satisfied with the "multifaceted cooperation" between the two armed forces.

These interactions, he added, "ought to continue and flourish, to the mutual benefit of our people."

He also spoke about Bangladesh's contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, noting that 168 Bangladeshi peacekeepers had lost their lives, and said troops were now assisting civil authorities ahead of general elections expected in early 2026.

"Dhaka has relied on conversation and negotiation" While acknowledging that challenges had emerged, the envoy stressed Dhaka's preference for dialogue and pragmatism. "Bangladesh has consistently relied on conversation and negotiation, believing in a shared future," he said. "It is what I and my colleagues across India engage in practically, to secure peace, stability and prosperity in Bangladesh and India."

## BEYOND ROADS AND RESORTS: Why Building Infrastructure Won't Fix Nagaland's Real Development Deficit



**T**he Northeast's development debate remains stuck on highways, hotels and "potential", while the deeper fault lines-inequality, policy incoherence and environmental fragility-continue to trap the region in a cycle of promise without progress.

For over two decades, the Northeast has been marketed with unwavering zeal. Successive governments, visiting dignitaries, and investment summits have all repeated a familiar refrain: the region is a "gateway", a "hub", a "future growth corridor" poised to transform India's development trajectory. Tourism potential, mineral wealth, agricultural diversity, waterways, youthful talent-almost every imaginable asset is held up as evidence that the Northeast is standing on the edge of an economic breakthrough.

And yet, here we are in 2025, still speaking the language of "potential". Not achievement. Not outcome. Not transformation. The same talking points that dominated seminars in the early 2000s continue to animate government brochures and podium speeches today.

The uncomfortable truth is this: the Northeast's developmental stagnation has never been about the absence of roads, hotels, airports, or power lines. It has always been about what comes after the infrastructure. Because infrastructure, by itself, neither ensures equitable access nor guarantees economic dynamism. And nowhere is this more evident than in Nagaland.

The Mirage of "Game-Changing" Infrastructure

When India's political leadership describes the region as a future "epicentre" of economic growth, the underlying assumption is that connectivity-physical, digital, or commercial-will automatically trigger development. Huge investments in education, health, research, highways, and urban expansion are repeatedly held up as indicators that the Northeast is on the cusp of a structural shift.

But the NITI Aayog's periodic assessments, along with independent national and global studies, have said something stark: these investments overwhelmingly serve the already advantaged sections. Growth is not distributed. Improvements in social indicators remain lopsided. Regional imbalances have deepened. In many cases, infrastructure amplifies inequality instead of reducing it.

The rich get richer. Certain districts get all the attention. The benefits of mobility or market access accrue to a narrow elite. And for all the talk of "double-engine" acceleration, the development engine sputters whenever it tries to carry the entire population along.

Nagaland illustrates this paradox: massive highways coexist with crumbling village roads. Private schools flourish while government schools struggle. Advanced hospitals in urban pockets contrast



Eating watermelon can help reduce acne breakouts and keep skin healthier.

sharply with primary health centres that lack doctors. Infrastructure exists-but only for some. This is why the "game" has not changed.

Because the game itself-who participates, who benefits, who gets left out-remains untouched.

Tourism: A Case Study in Misplaced Expectations

Nothing captures the Northeast's development illusions better than tourism. It is repeatedly presented as a magic bullet: eco-tourism will bring sustainable prosperity, cultural tourism will generate jobs, adventure tourism will draw global attention.

But tourism is not a self-contained economic engine. It does not thrive on scenery alone.

Tourism needs an ecosystem. The Northeast has fragments.

High-quality roads, reliable transport, accessible accommodation, safety assurances, trained manpower, robust communication networks, predictable weather systems, responsive governance-tourism depends on all of these. The Northeast possesses many attractions, but not the supporting ecosystem.

Even at its best, tourism is seasonal, volatile, and vulnerable. Climate change is redrawing weather patterns. Landslides, flash floods, and glacial events-as Sikkim recently witnessed-can erase entire segments of the tourism calendar. Political disruptions, such as the conflict in Manipur, can destroy tourist confidence overnight.

In this landscape, Nagaland tries to do what it knows best: lean heavily on one brand, one event, one spectacle-the Hornbill Festival.

The Hornbill Trap  
The festival epitomises both the power and the limitations of tourism-driven development.

For ten days, Kohima transforms. Thousands of domestic and international visitors arrive. Hotels overflow. Cultural troupes perform. Local entrepreneurs thrive.

But once the tents come down, Nagaland's tourism calendar goes silent again.

A recent study by the Urbaltour Project-a collaboration between The Highland Institute, Kohima, and the French Institute of Pondicherry-laid bare this dependence. Kohima's tourism is overwhelmingly seasonal, heavily skewed, and structurally fragile.

The festival does not generate year-round income. It does not build permanent employment. It does not develop a tourism culture. It does not trigger a broader transformation of the service sector.

Reliance on Hornbill has become a form of stagnation disguised as success.

Kohima-Centric Tourism and the Neglect of the Rest

Tourism in Nagaland is excessively concentrated in Kohima, leaving vast districts-Mokokchung, Phek, Longleng, Kiphire, Mon-with negligible investment or attention. Where tourism does exist, it is largely because of private initiative: homestays built without government support, trekking routes maintained by local youth, village councils investing in small-scale ecotourism.

Meanwhile, the state government prefers "grand projects" and "destination branding", as seen in its recent proposal: a ₹250-crore project to develop Dzukou Valley into a world-class eco-tourism spot complete with luxury hotels.

This is not development-it is ecological vandalism.

Dzukou Valley is among the most fragile ecological zones in the Northeast. Introducing large-scale construction is not just

environmentally irresponsible; it betrays a deeper misunderstanding of what sustainable tourism actually means. Imported ideas from global tourism markets-glamping resorts, luxury villas, concrete viewing decks-do not suit mountainous, biodiversity-rich, disaster-prone landscapes.

Nagaland does not need "five-star nature". It needs policies rooted in local knowledge, environmental ethics, and long-term community benefit.

Why "Potential" Has Become the Region's Biggest Burden

The Northeast is stuck not because it lacks talent or resources, but because development thinking is trapped in templates. Governments repeatedly attempt to rep-

licate ideas from across the world-Alpine tourism models, Southeast Asian adventure circuits, hill-town retail hubs-without recognising the region's ecological and social specificities.

A one-size-fits-all developmental imagination cannot work in a region where:

- “ terrain varies sharply,
- “ ethnicities and governance structures are diverse,
- “ infrastructure gaps are extreme,
- “ political histories shape policy acceptance,
- “ land ownership is community-driven,
- “ and the environment is intensely vulnerable.

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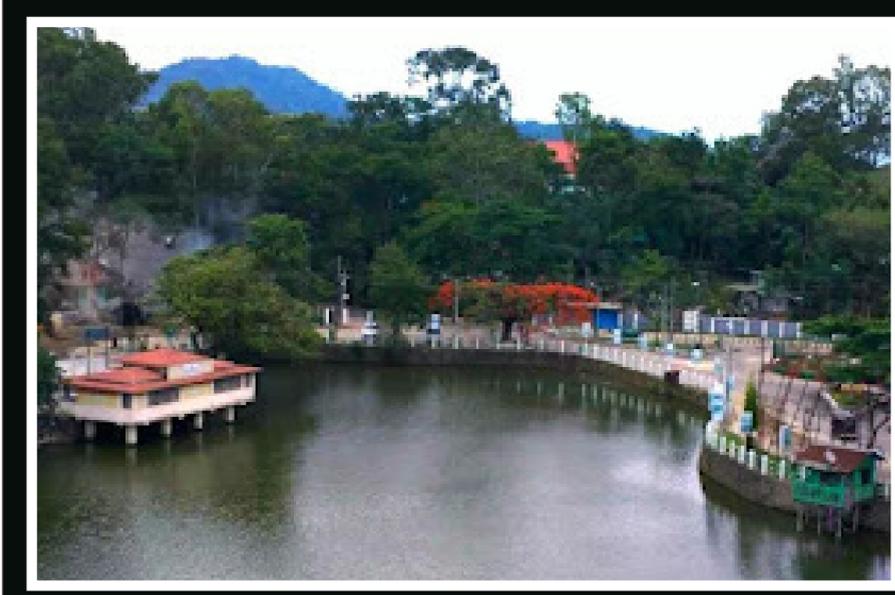
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# Haflong: A hill town that lives between mist and memory



**T**he much-awaited NEIR 2026 will be flagged off from Dharmanagar (Agartala) for Haflong on January 29. On January 30, it will have its activities in the beautiful Haflong. The first thing you notice when you reach Haflong is the silence. Not the absence of sound, but the kind that settles around you like a long exhale. Cars keep moving, people go about their day, shops open and shut, but the town carries a quiet rhythm of its own. It sits 680 meters above sea level, on a ridge in Dima Hasao district, and holds on to that rhythm even as change nudges it from all sides.

Haflong is not a postcard hill station built for tourists. It is a living town with layers of history, identity, and contradiction. The views are stunning, yes. The hills roll into each other like soft green dunes, and the sky widens in a way the plains rarely allow. But if you stop at the scenery, you miss its real story.

Walk through the main market, and the first thing that strikes you is how many worlds share space here. Dimasa traders selling vegetables, Bengali shopkeepers running old storefronts, Hmar and Zeme women walking in from nearby villages with baskets of greens, Nepali tea shop owners serving hot milk tea, and people from across the district mingling through the day. Haflong's diversity isn't something you need to look for. It is present in every conversation, every shop sign, and every courtyard.

Over the years, this coexistence has survived political shifts, ethnic tensions, and long stretches of neglect. What this really means is that the town has learned to build community in small, practical ways. Locals often say that Haflong functions because people understand each other's space. You see this in everyday gestures that outsiders may miss. The way shopkeepers speak four or five languages without thinking twice. The way festivals overlap. The way the same hill can host a church service in the morning and a community gathering of another group in the evening.

If you want to understand Haflong, start with the land itself. The hills shape everything here. Roads twist around slopes that crumble during heavy rain. Landslides are not unusual, and every monsoon tests the town's resilience. Despite that, Haflong never feels desolate. The clouds play hide and seek across the valley. The mornings are crisp. The evenings bring a gentle chill. And somewhere around five, the light softens into a colour you rarely see in the plains — a muted gold that stays for a moment and then slips away.

Haflong Lake sits at the centre of town, a calm oval of water that reflects the sky on a good day and gathers fog on others. Decades ago, locals say, the lake was much clearer. Over time it has struggled with encroachment and pollution. Yet it remains the town's anchor. Elderly residents walk around it. Young people sit on the steps in groups. Visitors take the routine boat ride. The lake isn't postcard perfect, but it holds the town together in ways that go beyond beauty.

Take a short drive out, and Ha-



flong opens up even more. Villages sit on ridges and slopes, each with its own language, customs, and food. Bamboo groves line the road. Pineapple fields appear without warning. Streams cut across the hills in flashes of silver. Life here moves at a pace shaped by terrain, weather, and tradition. People often travel long distances for school, work, or basic supplies, and that distance becomes part of their everyday life.

Then there's the railway line. The old metre-gauge track that once connected Lower Assam to Barak Valley through Haflong still lives in memory. Those who travelled on it recall the tunnels, the slow climb, and the way the train seemed to float along impossible cliffs. Today the broad-gauge line cuts through the hills with more efficiency, but the magic of that older route remains part of local lore. For many, the railway was their first window beyond the region.

If you walk around the town's quieter lanes, you'll notice a kind of

architectural patchwork. Old timber houses with sloping roofs. Assam-type homes with raised plinths. Government quarters from another era. New concrete buildings rising between them. Haflong has expanded over the last two decades, but the old neighbourhoods still carry a slower, familiar air. Children play in small courtyards. Dogs sleep on verandas. Neighbours lean on wooden railings to talk.

Tourism often paints Haflong as a hill station with blue hills, orchids, and cool weather. And while it has all of that, the real interest lies in the everyday life of the town. The smell of smoked meat from a Dimasa household. The sound of church choirs floating out on Sundays. The market stalls full of wild herbs, fermented bamboo shoots, and homemade dried fish. Small eateries serving chai and samosas next to shops selling traditional shawls. Policemen chatting with shopkeepers in the evening. College students gathering near the

lake. These details give Haflong its character.

There's another side to the story. Haflong has seen conflict, mistrust, and long stretches of administrative challenges. People talk about earlier periods when fear shaped daily movement. Many still worry about infrastructure that doesn't match the town's potential. Healthcare gaps. Limited higher education options. Roads that need more than patchwork repairs. A railway line that occasionally suffers disruptions. The town stands at an awkward crossroads between aspiration and reality.

But talk to residents long enough and you hear something else: a quiet belief that Haflong can grow without losing its core. They want better roads, stronger schools, more jobs, improved public spaces. They want tourism that respects the land instead of exploiting it. They want development that listens. Haflong doesn't need outside glamour. It needs steady attention and thoughtful

ful planning.

The heart of this town lies in its sense of balance. The way modern shops stand next to old houses. The way quick conversations slip between three or four languages. The way people gather for community decisions. The way the hills surround everything, holding the town in a kind of natural bowl. Haflong is not trying to be a big city. It is holding on to its identity while reaching for something better.

Haflong leaves an impression not because it overwhelms you, but because it stays with you quietly. Maybe it's the light on the hills at dusk. Maybe it's the sound of a guitar drifting out of a hostel room. Maybe it's the morning fog rolling over rooftops. Or maybe it's the simple fact that life here still has space to breathe.

Haflong is a town that asks you to slow down, look closely, and listen. If you do, you begin to understand why people who grow up here carry it with them long after they leave.

