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PERSPECTIVE
Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.

Guwahati Refinery exclusively supplies smokeless fuel to Army during Operation Sindoor

GUWAHATI

The Guwahati Refinery (GR) of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has exclusively supplied 19,000 metric tonnes (TMT) of smokeless fuel to the Indian Army during Operation Sindoor, officials said on Thursday. Speaking to journalists, GR Executive Director Sunil Kanti said the refinery is one of the few units in India capable of producing Low Sulphur Low Aromatics SKO (LSLA SKO) and was the sole supplier of the specialised fuel for troops operating in extreme cold conditions. "The Indian Army requested a special fuel that would not emit smoke, to keep soldiers warm in high-altitude areas. All other fuels typically emit smoke when burnt," he said. The refinery's research and development team developed LSLA SKO to meet this requirement. During the operation, the fuel was transported to Misamari, Siliguri, and Agra for onward distribution to Army bases in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and the Ladakh region. "It is a matter of pride that Guwahati Refinery played a crucial role in the country's defence mechanism during Operation Sindoor," Kanti added.

The LSLA SKO produced contains roughly 1 part per million (ppm) sulphur, well below the permissible limit of 10 ppm, 2-3% aromatics against the 4% upper limit, and a 30 mm smoke point. Guwahati Refinery, the country's first public sector refinery inaugurated in 1962, initially had a capacity of 0.75 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA), which was enhanced to 1.2 MMTPA in 2023. About 40% of its crude input comes from Assam, with the remaining 60% imported.

WHO SAID WHAT

Gaurav Gogoi is a Pakistani agent, his wife is also Pakistani and if he has guts, he should file a case against me"
~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM

Tripura in talks to set up bamboo-based ethanol plant to boost industrial growth: CM Manik Saha

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the state government is in discussions with a business group to set up a bamboo-based ethanol production facility, as part of efforts to accelerate industrial growth and attract fresh investment.

The chief minister made the announcement while inaugurating the 36th Tripura Industries and Commerce Fair at the Hapania International Fair Ground. He said bamboo, which is abundantly available in the state, could serve as a key raw material for ethanol production. However, he did not disclose the name of the company involved or a timeline for the proposed project.

Highlighting Tripura's natural resource potential, Saha said the state offers strong prospects for industrial development, particularly in sectors linked to bamboo, cane, pineapple, agarwood and rubber. He noted that Tripura recently signed memoranda of understanding worth around Rs 3,800 crore during a business conclave aimed at attracting new investments.

The chief minister said the Industries and Commerce Fair, organised by



the state's Industries and Commerce Department, will continue until February 12. Several companies that have committed investments in Tripura were felicitated during the inaugural programme.

Saha attributed the rise in investment inflows into the state in recent years to simplified industrial policies, investor-friendly incentives, focused

Manipur targets resettlement of over 10,000 displaced families by March 31



IMPHAL

The Manipur government has set a target of resettling more than 10,000 displaced families, comprising over 40,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), by March 31, State Chief Secretary Dr Puneet Kumar Goel said on Thursday.

Reiterating the government's commitment to the timely and safe rehabilitation of all displaced persons, Dr Goel said efforts are under way to gradually restore stable living conditions and enable the resumption of livelihoods, education and normal community life.

According to an official release, the government has so far released about Rs 124 crore for the resettlement process. "As on today, about 3,700 families consisting of around 16,500 IDPs have been successfully resettled," the release stated.

The Chief Secretary said the government has been regularly updating the public on the progress of rehabilitation. In December last year, the state had informed that around 10,000 IDPs from 2,200 families had already been resettled.

To sustain the momentum, approx-

imately 7,000 houses have been sanctioned under the Special Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) for the reconstruction of fully damaged homes. Construction of these units is currently at various stages, the release said. Manipur has been witnessing ethnic unrest since May 3, 2023, which has claimed more than 260 lives and displaced around 50,000 people. Most of the displaced families are currently staying in relief camps set up across the state, while some have taken shelter outside Manipur.

To oversee the rehabilitation process, the government has constituted a state-level committee chaired by the Chief Secretary, with the Commissioner (Home), Director General of Police and other senior officials as members.

"The primary aim of the government is to gradually and securely rehabilitate IDPs, restore stable living conditions, and enable the resumption of livelihoods, education and normal community life," the release said, adding that the government's vision goes beyond mere relocation from relief camps and focuses on a holistic transition centred on livelihood, education and overall well-being of the displaced.

Assam CM Himanta Sarma welcomes Amit Shah at Dibrugarh

DIBRUGARH

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomed Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Assam at the Dibrugarh airport late Thursday night.

In a post on X, CM Sarma said, "Honoured to welcome Adarniya Amit Shah ji at Dibrugarh airport. His visit will mark key milestones across Upper Assam, spanning development, governance, and cultural celebration. We look forward to his guidance and everlasting support for the people of Assam."

Shah is on a day-long visit during which he will lay the foundation stone for the new Assam Legislative Assembly building and the Wildlife Research Institute.

Reportedly, Shah's visit focuses on development, governance, and cultural celebration in Upper Assam. The Union Home Minister is expected to meet with senior BJP leaders to discuss poll strategies for the upcoming Assembly polls.

In the visit, Shah will partici-

pate in a series of official, cultural and organisational programmes across the state. The visit begins in Dibrugarh, where the Home Minister will lay the foundation stone of the new Assam Legislative Assembly building and the Wildlife Research Institute, marking a significant step towards strengthening the state's legislative infrastructure and wildlife conservation framework.

On the same occasion, Shah will also inaugurate Phase I of Khanikar Stadium, a project aimed at boosting sports infrastructure in Upper Assam. The programme is scheduled to take place at around 10:30 am at Khanikar, Dibrugarh.

State government officials said the new Assembly complex is envisioned as a modern legislative facility equipped with advanced amenities, while the Wildlife Research Institute will play a crucial role in scientific research, conservation and protection of Assam's rich biodiversity.

ISIS-K threat poster in Meghalaya: CoMSO seeks central probe, writes to PM Modi



SHILLONG

The Confederation of Meghalaya Social Organisations (CoMSO) has sought a Central-level investigation into an alleged ISIS-K threat issued against the indigenous Garo community, urging the Union government to treat the matter as a serious national security concern.

In a memorandum submitted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, CoMSO chairman Roypukar Synrem demanded the immediate involvement of central counter-terror and intelligence agencies to carry out a comprehensive probe into the origin, intent and network behind the threat. He also called for strengthened intelligence gathering and visible deployment

of security forces in vulnerable areas to reassure the public.

Synrem further urged swift arrest and prosecution of all those involved under relevant anti-terror and national security laws, stressing zero tolerance for individuals or groups aiding, abetting or shielding extremist activities. He sought a review of border security mechanisms, stronger monitoring and dismantling of radical propaganda networks, and firm measures to protect indigenous land rights and demographic integrity.

The demand follows the appearance of a poster near Tura Law College in West Garo Hills district, allegedly invoking the name of ISIS-K and warning members of the Garo community to vacate their ancestral land by 2027. The poster named several areas, including Phubari, Rajabala, Tikrikilla, Sesla, Garobadha and Tursori, and threatened consequences if the warning was ignored.

Synrem described the poster as a direct threat to internal security, communal harmony and the constitutional rights of indigenous people. "The use of the name of a global terrorist organisation cannot be taken lightly under any circumstances," he said, asserting that the Garo Hills are an integral part of Meghalaya and inseparable from India.

He added that immediate, firm and visible action was necessary in the interest of national security, constitutional values and the protection of indigenous communities.

Meanwhile, Meghalaya Police have launched an investigation after the poster surfaced in Tura on Thursday. Officials said efforts are under way to identify those responsible and ascertain whether the threat has any links to organised extremist networks.

Mawlynnong to bar day tourists on Sundays

SHILLONG

Mawlynnong, the scenic village in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district famed as Asia's cleanest village, will remain closed to single-day tourists on Sundays from January 2026, following a decision taken by the local village council, or Dorbar.

Announcing the decision, the Dorbar said all visitor-related activities in the village will be suspended every Sunday, while Mawlynnong will continue to welcome tourists from Monday to Saturday. As part of the restriction, all tourism-linked services - including restaurants, shops, stalls and public toilets - will also remain closed on Sundays.

Explaining the rationale, the Dorbar said Sunday is primarily observed as a day of worship by the residents, with most villagers attending church services for a large part of the day. This makes it difficult for them to provide hospitality and essential services to visitors, often resulting in inconvenience for tourists.

The village council said the move is aimed at preventing dissatisfaction among visitors, particularly elderly tourists, and avoiding situations that could negatively impact Mawlynnong's reputation as a major tourist destination.

However, the Dorbar clarified that the restriction will not apply to tourists staying overnight in guest houses or homestays during the week and extending their stay into Sunday, or those checking in on Sunday nights. In such cases, the responsibility for providing services will rest with the respective accommodation owners.

Officials noted that Mawlynnong is not the only tourist destination in Meghalaya to adopt such a measure.

Nagaland MP presses Centre in Parliament for early, honourable Naga peace settlement



KOHIMA

Nagaland Lok Sabha MP Supongmeren Jamir on Wednesday urged the Centre to move decisively towards an early and honourable resolution of the decades-old Naga political issue, reminding the Government of India of the commitments it has made to the Naga people through past agreements.

Raising the issue in Parliament under Rule 377, Jamir referred to the 2015 Framework Agreement signed with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) and the 2017 Agreed Position with seven Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs). He said these agreements had generated widespread hope for a lasting political settlement in Nagaland, hopes that remain unfulfilled.

The MP recalled the 2018 slo-

gan raised by civil society organisations - "No Solution, No Election" - and noted that the BJP leadership had assured that the subsequent Assembly polls would be an "Election for Solution". However, he said, despite those assurances, a final settlement has yet to be reached.

Jamir also referred to the statement made on October 31, 2019, by then Governor and interlocutor R.N. Ravi, declaring that the Naga peace talks had been concluded. He said the peace process lost momentum after the interlocutor was replaced, leaving negotiations in a state of uncertainty. Highlighting the seriousness and unity demonstrated by the state, Jamir said Nagaland had even formed an opposition-less government to create a conducive atmosphere for a political solution. Despite this, and despite the signing of formal agreements, he noted that new factions have continued to emerge within the Naga political movement, reflecting growing frustration among the people. Calling on the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister to intervene, Jamir said the Naga people were united in their demand for a resolution. "The Naga people are united in one voice - we want a solution. The time has come for the Government of India to translate its commitments and agreements into a final political settlement without further delay," he said.

SpiceJet Launches Daily Flights to Imphal from Kolkata, Guwahati and Mumbai

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: SpiceJet has announced its entry into Imphal with the launch of daily flight services to the Manipur capital, marking the airline's first-ever operations in the state. The new services will begin from February 10, 2026.

The airline will operate daily flights to Imphal from Kolkata, Guwahati and Mumbai using Boeing 737 aircraft. Flights from Kolkata and Guwahati will be non-stop, while the Mumbai-Imphal service will operate with a short stopover at Kolkata, allowing passengers to travel on the same aircraft without changing planes.

The move is expected to significantly improve air connectivity to Manipur, a state that currently has limited flight options. The new services will benefit residents, students, medical travellers, government officials and business passengers by offering more choice and better access to key cities.

With these routes, passengers from Imphal will also get smoother onward connections to several destinations across India and select



international locations through SpiceJet's network. Debojo Maharshi, Chief Business Officer of SpiceJet, said the launch of flights to Imphal is an important step in expanding the airline's presence in the North-East. He said better connectivity to the region has been a long-standing focus and the new flights will make travel to Manipur easier and more convenient.

Imphal, the capital of Manipur, is known for its rich history, strong cultural identity and scenic beauty. Popular attractions include Kangla Fort, the iconic Ima Keithel or all-women market, Loktak Lake with its floating islands, and Keibul Lamjao National Park, the world's only floating national park and home to the rare Sangai deer. The new flights are expected to give a fresh boost to tourism, trade and people-to-people movement in the state.



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CHINA AND CANADA CONVERGE POST TRUDEAU

PM Carney's statements at the World Economic Forum at Davos are an outcome of the sense of shock and surprise that gripped the world because of Trump's neo-nationalist proclamations on trade and geopolitics around the globe. The reactions from other countries equally shocked by Trump's stance on Greenland has stirred a debate on resuscitating the old adage 'survival of the fittest' which is being moulded and redesigned to fit the current international relation scenario under the 'survival of the Richest' or the Gunboat capitalism narrative. In fact, Carney strongly voiced concerns on how powerful nations were using economic coercion to get what they want at the World Economic Forum at Davos. This shock and awe has significantly pushed Canada to recalibrate its geo-economics and pushed it closer to China, which was reflected in his recent visit to Beijing.

On 14 January 2026 when the Canadian PM Mark Carney visited China, the emphasis was not only on 'strategic autonomy' in bilateral relationships but to move beyond the prison of history that had been woven by Trudeau's blind aping of the US tariff policies. Mark Carney made a significant remark on how the 'old world order was not coming back' and that countries needed to find a new paradigm to engage beyond the traditional system of friends, allies and enemies. Carney acquiesced that "middle powers must act together because if they are not at the table, they are on the menu."

China, for its part, made every attempt possible to wean away Canada from its long-term ally, the US, especially seeking the pretext of the Venezuela crisis. President Xi Jinping proclaimed that China and Canada should chalk out a new path and "be partners of mutual respect, common development, mutual trust and collaboration" in his speech marking Carney's arrival. Despite China emerging as its second largest trading partner in 2024, their bilateral relationship had remained strained by historical misunderstandings and diplomatic feuds with not much scope for transformation. But now with political reversal in Canada, the two sides announced a "new strategic partnership". Both the statements in China and at Davos, reaffirm Canada's choice to uphold long-term strategic commitment rather than adopting a policy shaped by US pressure tactics. At this juncture, it is pertinent to look at the trajectory of the events and the factors responsible for Canada's sudden desire to re-engage with China.

Relations between the two countries had nose-dived in 2018 when the CFO of Huawei company - Meng Wanzhou was detained by Canada in Vancouver on a US warrant on fraud charges related to Iran sanctions violations; on charges of intelligence theft. Subsequently, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, two of alleged Canadian spies were detained by China. More recently, China was accused of meddling in Canada's internal politics, but China has repeatedly denied allegations of foreign meddling. A public inquiry on foreign interference found China's impact in recent federal elections to be minimal.

The visit between 14-17 January 2026 was expected to achieve a rapprochement after Canada and China struggled to forge meaningful ties in the past. It restores a level of prime-ministerial dialogue and marks a big step in the acknowledging China with a major country status, with both countries reinforcing commitment to multilateralism. The choice for Canada was realistic as it cannot reduce its economic dependence on the US until and unless it increases its trade with China. For China also it entailed a diplomatic victory as Canada relented some space in terms of their contacts with the Taiwanese government. Two MPs from Canada were reported to have cut short their sponsored trip to Taiwan ahead of Carney's visit, ostensibly to avoid confusion within its foreign policy though Canada's official position on Taiwan "had not changed." The Canadian PM was also cognisant of the timing to show solidarity with the global South through a third path where "the power of legitimacy, integrity and rules will remain strong, if the nations choose to wield them together" and hence the urgent necessity to come together with China.

Senior Canadian officials have described the trip, the first to China since 2017, as "consequential and historic" and part of a "bold" plan to double Canada's non-US exports over the next decade. This trip marked a reset in the economic ties with cooperation agreements signed on several fronts. For China, Canada is an important trading partner, with trade between the two countries valued at around USD118bn in 2024. The two countries issued a joint statement emphasizing their commitment to enhancing cooperation across various sectors and drafted a China-Canada Economic and Trade Cooperation Roadmap. Canada agreed to cut its steep tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) allowing up to about 49000 EVs at a much lower tariff (6.1%). In return China agreed to reduce tariffs on Canadian agricultural exports such as canola seeds, canola meal, lobsters, crabs and peas.

The deal partly reverses previous protectionist measures and represents a major step toward re-building economic ties. Eight cooperation documents were signed in other areas which include - energy, finance, food safety and related regulations, culture and forestry and crime prevention and public safety frameworks, under which a counternarcotics dialogue is a key part and media. The two sides also decided to reinvigorate the high-level China-Canada Economic and Financial Strategic Dialogue (EFSD) to discuss wide ranging related issues to strengthen bilateral economic relations.

On the cultural front Beijing's foreign ministry said the two countries have "shared interests" and will work to "increase people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges." The two sides decided to restart the China-Canada Joint Committee on Culture. The meetings were elaborate with Carney meeting the Premier of China, Li Qiang, as well as the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, Zhao Leji. Later, the prime minister met Chinese President Xi Jinping, this is their first bilateral effort after the pair met last year on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in South Korea. The US has watched this shift in Canada's foreign policy with much interest and skepticism and strategists like Eric Miller, a Washington DC based trade adviser and president of the Rideau Potomac Strategy Group, commented that the Canadian PM's actions showcase how "Canada has an agency too, and that it's not going to just sit and wait for the United States", which basically meant that US has taken note of Canada's attempt to recalibrate its stance on China. Nevertheless, China has welcomed Canada's prioritisation of its own national interests and has charted a stricter framework for itself vis-à-vis the US. The local media stated how Canada's stance signals "trust in China as a responsible stakeholder in global affairs while

GLOBAL MEDIA AND LEADERS HAIL INDIA-EU FTA



The conclusion of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement has drawn strong and positive reactions globally, cutting across international media, foreign political leadership, global business heads and respected policy experts. The deal is widely being described as historic, strategic and timely, both economically and geopolitically.

International Media Leading global media outlets have highlighted the scale, ambition and strategic timing of the India-EU FTA.

The Telegraph, in an article by James Crisp titled 'Modi is real winner in 'mother of all trade deals' with EU', described the agreement as the "mother of all trade deals", arguing that India has emerged as the real strategic winner. The paper noted that the deal eliminates or reduces tariffs on 96.6% of EU exports to India, while the EU will cut tariffs on 99.5% of Indian goods over seven years.

Bloomberg in an article by Dan Strumpf titled 'All Roads Lead to Modi as World Hedges Trump', said that the "mother of all deals" concluded between India and the European Union is the latest example of an emerging pattern: New Delhi as the go-to partner for countries.

The Wall Street Journal framed the agreement as a response by middle powers to global tariff disruptions, highlighting how India and the EU are expanding alliances amid uncertainty created by U.S. trade policies.

The New York Times stressed that the deal brings together the world's largest economic bloc and the fastest-growing major economy after nearly two decades of negotiations.

The Washington Post called it a historic deal with its headline saying 'India and EU clinch the 'mother of all deals' in a historic free trade agreement'.

The Guardian referred to it as 'Mother of all deals': EU and India sign free trade agreement'.

A similar headline was also reported by BBC - India and EU announce 'mother of all trade deals'.

Bloomberg in another article discussed the possibilities of deeper supply-chain integration, noting that duties on cars will fall as low as 10%, compared to earlier levels of over 100%, and that duties on auto components will be eliminated.

Associated Press highlighted the scale of the deal with its headline saying that 'India and the European Union reach a free trade deal representing a third of global trade'.

The scale was also highlighted

by Al Jazeera, which said "Mother of all deals': How India-EU trade deal creates \$27 trillion market".

Reuters called it a landmark deal saying 'India, EU reach landmark trade deal, tariffs to be slashed on most goods'.

On Fox News, Pakistani journalist Qamar Cheema said India is set to benefit from this agreement, as tariffs will be reduced to zero in several key sectors. He said that neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh will no longer be able to compete with India in the European market.

Foreign Leaders

Several senior political leaders across Europe publicly welcomed the agreement.

Friedrich Merz, Chancellor of Germany, called the conclusion of negotiations a "very positive sign" and urged swift implementation to boost growth and prosperity.

Alexander Stubb, President of Finland, described the India-EU FTA as historic and the largest trade deal ever concluded by either side, saying it would significantly intensify economic and political ties.

Ulf Kristersson, Prime Minister of Sweden, said the agreement marks the launch of a new era of cooperation, strengthening prosperity, competitiveness and security through trade and partnership.

Christian Stocker, Chancellor of Austria, said the deal creates a free trade zone benefiting two billion people, calling it a major step for Europe's resilience in a rapidly changing global order.

Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Foreign Minister of Denmark, extended full support to the agreement, calling it geopolitically crucial and highlighting the first-mover advantage in a combined market of two billion people.

Nicolas Forissier, France's Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness, termed the EU-India accord a major political step, stressing that "this is not an agreement like the others."

Sandro Gozi, Member of the European Parliament, said the agreement clearly reflects the EU's need to diversify partnerships and increase its autonomy and independence. He highlighted India as a major global actor, noting that from a geopolitical and diplomatic perspective, the deal opens up significant opportunities for both Europeans and Indians.

Business Leaders and organizations

European and global business leaders operating in India responded with strong optimism, calling the agreement a

long-awaited breakthrough.

Jürgen Westermeier, President and Managing Director for India and South Asia at Airbus and President of the Federation of European Business in India, described the FTA as a "big moment" after 20 years of discussions and said it would act as an accelerator of opportunities for both sides.

Wouter van Wersch, President of Airbus International, called it a "fantastic day," reiterating Airbus' long-term commitment to Make in India, technology transfer, defence, space and advanced manufacturing.

Jan Noether, Director General of the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, said the agreement brings together two billion people and nearly a quarter of global GDP, describing it as the "mother of all free trade agreements."

President of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce (IHK Berlin), Sebastian Stiezel, described the India-EU FTA as an important step towards opening up in an increasingly tense global situation and India is no longer a future market, but a market of the present, in which Berlin should now seize the opportunities.

Leading industry representatives, including CEOs from key German carmakers such as Volkswagen, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz, praised the deal's potential to boost German exports to India and strengthen global supply chains.

Croatian Employers' Association (HUP) and BusinessEurope called the EU-India FTA one of the EU's most important trade moves amid global protectionism.

Swedish business organisations such as Svenskt Näringsliv and Företagarna have described it as a major opportunity, citing reduced tariffs and better market access.

Irish economic and business bodies have welcomed the EU-India FTA. Chambers Ireland described it as a historic agreement that enhances market access and diversification for Irish exporters, particularly Irish machinery and agri-food sectors.

Other senior business voices including Frank Schlöder (Managing Director, Häfele South Asia), Thomas Wolter (Managing Director, Kronos Machinery India), Lars Eric Johansson (Executive Vice President, Oxea GmbH), Jan-Olof Jacke (CEO, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise) and Fredrik Persson (President, BusinessEurope) welcomed the deal as a strong signal for rules-based trade, supply-chain resilience, SME growth and long-term competitiveness.

International Experts and Think Tanks

Global policy experts and think

tanks described the agreement as substantively strong and strategically well-timed.

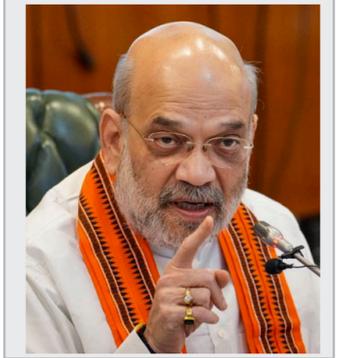
Richard Rossow, Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), said the deal brings together a quarter of the world's population and a massive share of global trade, adding that the positive optics reflect strong substance. He also noted that India's recent FTAs show a clear shift toward deeper and more ambitious trade com-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The Economic Survey 2025-26 attests to the might the Indian economy has acquired under the visionary leadership of PM Shri

@narendramodi Ji, forging ahead vigorously, tossing challenges aside. When the world plunged from the pandemic to economic instability, our economy sailed ahead smoothly over both the hurdles with everyone on board, thanks to our leadership.

~ Amit Shah, Union Home Minister



mitments.

Michael Kugelman, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, called the India-EU FTA the "right deal at the right time," stressing that it goes beyond cushioning U.S. tariffs and instead consolidates a broader, fast-growing strategic partnership.

Velina Tchakarova, geopolitical strategist, called it one of the most consequential geo-economic agreements of the decade, both in scale and in strategic intent.

Kiel Institute for the World Economy said that deeper EU-India integration could boost bilateral trade by 41 to 65 percent, raise real incomes by 0.12-0.13 percent of GDP on both sides.

The European Council on Foreign Relations called the EU-India FTA as one of the largest trade agreements concluded in recent years, covering goods, services, investment, digital trade and regulatory cooperation.

International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) said that India's recent focus on pursuing trade agreements with several partners - signifies a move towards a more open economy and will boost India's chances of achieving its longer-term development goals.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Those attacking me should read SC order”: Assam CM Sarma responds to opposition over ‘Miyan’ remark

GOLAGHAT

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday defended his remarks on “Miya Muslims” amid criticism from the Opposition, stating that the term was not given by him but is used by the community itself.

He said that those attacking him should read the Supreme Court of India’s observation.

Speaking to the reporters, CM Sarma said that those who migrated from Bangladesh refer to themselves as ‘Miya’. “Those who have come from Bangladesh call themselves ‘Miya’. I did not give them that name; it is they who call themselves that.”

The Chief Minister further added, “They only said to call them Miya. They wrote Miya poetry. If we say ‘miya, miya’, they can also call us ‘Assamese, Assamese’; and what is the problem with that?”

In a post on X, CM Sarma said those attacking him for his remarks on “Mi-



yan” should note the Supreme Court of India’s observations on Assam and illegal migration.

“Those who are attacking me for my remarks on “Miyan”—a word used in Assam in the context of Bangladeshi

Muslim illegal migration—should pause and read what the Supreme Court of India itself has said about Assam. This is not my language, not my imagination, and not political exaggeration,” he said. Quoting the apex court, the Chief Minister highlighted its warning on demographic changes in the state. “These are the Court’s own words: “The silent and invidious demographic invasion of Assam may result in the loss of the geostrategically vital districts of lower Assam. The influx of illegal migrants is turning these districts into a Muslim-majority region. It will then only be a matter of time before a demand for their merger with Bangladesh may be made. Loss of lower Assam will sever the entire land mass of the North East from the rest of India, and the rich natural resources of that region will be lost to the Nation,” Assam CM said.

CM Sarma said that acknowledging such concerns cannot be termed communal or hateful.

Tripura Governor urges farmers to scale up allied farming at NABARD meet

AGARTALA

Tripura Governor Indrasena Reddy on Thursday called for scaling up allied farming activities during a Farmers’ Meet and interaction programme organised by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) at the Atharabhola Village Committee premises. The event, held in the morning, focused on beneficiaries of the Piggy Cluster Project and the Tribal Development Fund (TDF). The Governor inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Addressing the gathering, the Governor said NABARD is playing a proactive role in strengthening the state’s farming sector. He said his visit to Atharabhola was to personally assess the project’s implementation at the grassroots level.

He urged beneficiaries of piggy schemes, poultry farmers, and progressive farmers to scale up their operations to maximise profits and improve financial stability.

The Governor also encouraged villagers to adopt duck farming, describing it as a viable pathway towards self-sufficiency and economic independence.

He appealed to residents of Atharabhola to actively pursue allied farming activities such as piggy, poultry, and duckery, and to work toward developing the village into a model village for the state.

During the programme, the Governor interacted with beneficiaries of the Piggy Cluster and TDF schemes and enquired about their projects, progress, and benefits derived from the initiatives.

Among those present were MLA Shri Rampada Jamatia, District Collector Rinku Lather, and other senior officials. Earlier, Sudip Majumdar, Manager of Bagma Agri Producer Company Limited, delivered the welcome address and informed that 70 families had been provided piglets under an initiative of the Animal Resources Development Department (ARDD).

Anil S. Kotmarie, General Manager, NABARD, highlighted various initiatives undertaken by NABARD to support farmers in Tripura and discussed the growing potential of allied agricultural activities in the state.

Tai Centre receives Assam proposal for ST status to six communities

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said it has received the Assam government’s proposal seeking Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six communities in the State.

“The proposal for inclusion of Tai Ahom, Chutia, Matak, Moran, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes has been received from the Government of Assam,” Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Durgadas Uikey informed the Lok Sabha.

Replying to an unstarred question by Congress MP Rakibul Hussain, Uikey said the process of inclusion in the list of Scheduled Tribes follows laid-down modalities and is a continuous exercise. The proposals are first examined by the office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) and subsequently by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), he said.

“In case the proposal is not recommended by the RGI, the State governments are informed of the points raised so that additional information, if any, may be furnished,” the minister said, adding that several proposals often remain under examination at different levels.

Uikey said the Government of India has prescribed specific procedures for inclusion, exclusion or modification of entries in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes lists. As per these norms, proposals must be duly recommended and justified by the State government or Union Territory administration concerned, along with a detailed ethnographic report.

In November 2025, the Assam Cabinet had approved the report of a Group of Ministers (GoM) recommending ST status for the six communities. However, the move has faced opposition, with the Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations of Assam (CTOA) rejecting the GoM’s recommendation based on the views of a consultative group.

Assam Assembly to convene Vote-on-Account session from February 16



GUWAHATI

The final session of the current Assam Legislative Assembly will begin on February 16, during which the state government will present a vote-on-account budget ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections,

according to an official notification issued on January 29. Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya has directed that the House convene at 9.30 am on February 16. A senior Assembly official said the session is expected to run for four days. “A vote-on-account budget will be tabled during these four days. The detailed schedule is yet to be finalised as the Business Advisory Committee has not met,” the official told.

Elections to the 126-member Assam Assembly are likely to be held in March-April this year. At present, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party holds 64 seats, while its allies - the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) and Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) - have nine, seven and three MLAs respectively.

In the Opposition, the Congress has 26 MLAs, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) 15, the CPI(M) one, along with one Independent legislator.

‘Gaurav Gogoi is a Pakistani agent, dare him to sue me’: Himanta Biswa Sarma escalates poll-season attack

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday launched a sharp political offensive against Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, alleging that he is a “Pakistani agent” and claiming that Gogoi’s wife is also a Pakistani. Sarma threw an open challenge to the Congress leader, daring him to file a legal case over the remarks.

The chief minister made the comments while speaking to reporters after distributing financial assistance to around 37,000 women under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Yojana in the Teok Assembly constituency. The event was held at the playground of the Jorhat Institute of Science and Technology, where beneficiaries were given cheques of ₹10,000 each to promote women-led entrepreneurship.

Sarma said details to substantiate his allegations against Gogoi would be made public in February. “The truth will come out. If the allegations are false, they will be proven false; if they are true, the people will know,” he said, without offering



specifics. Hinting at the political roadmap ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, the chief minister indicated that polls could be held before Bohag Bihu. He said the timing would depend on public sentiment and that the Election Commission could announce the schedule

at any time. On ticket distribution, Sarma said candidates have already been finalised in constituencies where there is only one aspirant. In seats with multiple contenders, he said, winnability would be the primary criterion. He also made it clear that recent entrants to the BJP

should not expect tickets, stressing that priority would be given to party workers who have been active on the ground over the past five years.

Taking a swipe at Rajiv Dal leader Akhil Gogoi, Sarma said the latter makes frequent statements “without substance”, while the government, he claimed, speaks with purpose. He also attacked the Congress, describing it as a “dark chapter of history” and accusing the party of settling the Miya community in Assam.

Reacting to remarks by Assam Jatiya Parishad leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi, Sarma said paying tribute to Syama Prasad Mukherjee was not a challenge. He added that if Lurinjyoti Gogoi were to sever ties with the Congress alliance, a statue would be installed in his honour in front of the BJP office. Sarma further alleged that Lurinjyoti Gogoi merely follows Rahul Gandhi and lacks an independent political identity.

The chief minister’s remarks have further sharpened political rhetoric in Assam as the state heads towards Assembly elections.

Mizoram first in Northeast to mark ‘Girls in Aviation Day’, push gender inclusion in sector

AIZAWL

Mizoram on January 29 became the first state in the Northeast to observe ‘Girls in Aviation Day’, taking a significant step towards promoting gender inclusion in the aviation and aerospace sector.

The initiative was aimed at encouraging young girls to explore career opportunities in aviation, a field traditionally dominated by men.

The event was held at the Information and Public Relations Department hall at Lianchhiari Run and was jointly organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Women in Aviation International (WAI). Students from high schools and higher secondary institutions across the region participated, turning the venue into an interactive platform for aspir-



ing pilots, engineers and aviation professionals.

Addressing the gathering, School Education Minister Vanlalhlana said Mizoram’s strategic geographic location places it in an important position in India’s regional aviation

roadmap. He emphasised the need for close collaboration between the government, industry and professional bodies to unlock the potential of the state’s youth, particularly young women, in emerging sectors such as aviation. The programme

featured interactive sessions with industry experts, who spoke on current trends, technological advancements and career pathways in aviation. For many students, the event provided first-hand exposure to the sector and insights into both academic and skill-based opportunities available. Officials said the initiative sought to bridge the gender gap and create a sustainable pipeline of women professionals for the aviation industry. CII executive officer Lalchhuni said the programme was part of a broader effort to strengthen aviation-led development in the Northeast. Women in Aviation International reiterated its commitment to empowering women through awareness programmes, mentorship and leadership opportunities, noting that early exposure and guidance play a crucial role in shaping future careers.

Manipur Police nab three militants, recover arms and IEDs in coordinated operations

IMPHAL

Manipur Police arrested three militants and recovered a cache of arms, ammunition and explosives during coordinated counter-insurgency operations carried out across the state on January 29, officials said.

In Imphal East district, police arrested two active cadres of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP-PC) from the Palace Gate area under Porompat police station. The arrested militants were identified as Akhom David Singh alias Atomba (24) of Ngangkha Lawai Maning Leikai in Bishnupur district and Potshangbam Johnson Singh alias Abungo (25) of Moirang Khutheki, also in Bishnupur. Both were staying at Khumbong Khaidem Awang Leikai under Patsoi police station in Imphal West district. Two mobile phones were seized from their possession.

In a separate operation on the same day, security forces arrested an active cadre of PREPAK (Pro) (G-5) from his residence at Nongada Awang Leikai under Lamlai police station in Imphal East. The arrested individual was identified as Yumnam Panchayaphaba Meitei alias Yaikhomba (30). A mobile phone was recovered and seized during the arrest.

Significant recoveries were also reported from border and hill districts. From the general area of Tarao Lamkhai under Tengnoupal police station, security forces recovered three improvised “Pompi” mortars, one improvised explosive device (IED), three hand grenades and a walkie-talkie set with a charger.

Along the Indo-Myanmar border near Border Pillars 72 and 73, three IEDs recovered from Yangoubung village under Moreh police station were safely neutralised, preventing potential threats in the sensitive border zone.

Meanwhile, a large cache of weapons and explosives was recovered from the Saikul village area under Churachandpur police station. The seizure included one automatic rifle with an empty magazine, one locally made bolt-action rifle, one .22 pistol with magazine, one locally made revolver with six live rounds, three IEDs, five live 7.62 mm SLR rounds and a pair of boots.

Officials said the operations

were part of sustained efforts to dismantle militant networks, recover illegal arms and ensure peace and security, particularly in vulnerable and conflict-prone areas of Manipur, including the international border region.

Tripura to procure EVMs from Madhya Pradesh ahead of TTAADC elections

As preparations intensify for the upcoming elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) will be sourced from Madhya Pradesh, official sources said.

As part of the preparatory process, senior officials of the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission visited Sepahijala district on Friday to assess infrastructure for the storage and security of the machines. Deputy Secretary Sanju Kumari and Under Secretary Priyanshi Bhanwar inspected proposed district-level warehouses and reviewed logistical and security arrangements.

The officials examined access control systems and other safeguards to ensure the EVMs can be stored in a secure and tamper-proof manner.

They also held discussions with the district administration on transportation plans for moving the machines from Madhya Pradesh to Tripura, with an emphasis on safety, coordination and timely delivery to facilitate the smooth conduct of the polls.

The inspection was carried out in the presence of Sepahijala District Magistrate and Collector Sidhartha Shiv Jaiswal and Additional District Magistrate, sources said.

According to officials, the visit was part of broader election preparedness measures aimed at ensuring compliance with prescribed guidelines and strengthening district-level readiness ahead of the TTAADC polls. Further decisions on logistics, warehousing and inter-state coordination are expected following consultations between the concerned authorities.

Elections to the TTAADC are scheduled to be held in April. With the poll date drawing closer, political activities and campaign-related engagements have begun to pick up across the autonomous district council areas.

Mahila Udyamita scheme gains momentum as Rs 10,000 cheques distributed to over 36,000 women in Jorhat

JORHAT

A cheque distribution programme under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Scheme was held in Teok and Sotai in Jorhat district on Wednesday, aimed at empowering women and strengthening their role in family livelihoods and economic development.

Under the scheme, 36,319 women beneficiaries received cheques of Rs 10,000 each to support entrepreneurial initiatives and income-generating activities. The Assam government has launched the initiative to promote women’s self-reliance and economic uplift.

The programme was attended by Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sharma, who addressed the gathering and highlighted the state government’s commitment to women’s empowerment and inclusive development. He said the scheme would help women achieve financial independence and become active contributors to their families and society.



Speaking to the media, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma said, “Today, we have completed 100 Mahila Udyamita Scheme meetings. Till now, around 25 lakh beneficiaries have benefited. In the coming days, cheques under the Mahila Udyamita

Scheme will be distributed in another 26 constituencies. We are trying to cover all 126 constituencies before 26 February.”

The event drew over 37,000 women, underscoring the scheme’s wide reach and growing impact across the district. The

women beneficiaries who received financial assistance expressed gratitude for the government’s support.

Roopjyoti Phukan, a beneficiary from Jorhat, told ANI, “It is a very happy and proud moment for us. With this funding, our women can take steps toward their uplift. This will help in strengthening the village economy and promoting women’s progress.” Another beneficiary, Deepali Das from Jorhat, said, “We are going to use this money for small income-generating activities through which we can earn a livelihood. It may be for fisheries, sewing machines, etc., so that we can create our own identity. I would like to thank the Chief Minister of Assam for providing us with such support to uplift women.”

Rintumoni Dolakakhorria, a beneficiary from Teok, also expressed her happiness, saying, “We are very happy today. Many women have come here to attend the ceremony. I will use the money I receive for my upliftment. As Mama is giving us this money for our welfare, we will also try to do something that will make him happy and proud. Mama Zindabad.”

The Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Scheme aims to empower women across Assam by encouraging their participation in economic activities with confidence and dignity.

Quest!

Hot water is more likely to break thick glass than thin glass. That’s why test tubes are made of thin glass.

Confessional statements without corroboration cannot sustain conviction: Supreme Court



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has set aside the Meghalaya High Court's order convicting a murder accused, holding that confessional statements, without corroboration, are insufficient to sustain a finding of guilt.

A Division Bench of the apex court, comprising Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice K. Vinod Chandran, allowed the criminal appeal filed by Bernard Lyngdoh Phawa and acquitted him, concurring with the trial court's earlier order of acquittal.

"The confessional statements, without corroboration are insufficient to sustain a finding of guilt. There was not a single circumstance available" to incriminate the accused, the Bench observed.

Ajay Sabharwal, counsel for the appellant, argued that the alleged confessions

attributed to the accused could not form the basis of a conviction in the absence of independent and reliable corroboration.

He further submitted that there was no valid evidence supporting the "last seen" theory, that the recoveries and seizures were not proved in accordance with law, and that the confessional statements were either exculpatory, inconsistent, retracted or otherwise unreliable.

Agreeing with these submissions, the Supreme Court held that the alleged confessions of the appellants could not form the basis of a conviction without independent and reliable corroboration.

It noted that there was no valid evidence to support the "last seen" theory, that the recoveries and seizures were not legally proved, and that the confessional statements lacked reliability.

Accordingly, the Supreme Court reversed the High Court's judgment, which had overturned the trial court's acquittal and convicted the appellant for murder and destruction of evidence.

Following the High Court's conviction order, Phawa had approached the apex court by way of a criminal appeal challenging the verdict.

The appellant was represented by Sabharwal, along with Advocate on Record Prabhas Bajaj.

The case dates back to 2006, when a college student in Meghalaya was reported missing and was later found buried in a graveyard.

The police arrested two of his friends, alleging that the victim was last seen in their company, that a rope was allegedly recovered and purportedly used to kill him, and that certain belongings of the victim were allegedly found in the possession of one of the accused. The post-mortem report opined that the cause of death was lack of air, while the examining doctors acknowledged that the possibility of death by suicide by hanging could not be ruled out.

The prosecution further alleged that ransom calls were purportedly made and relied on confessions allegedly attributed to the accused, one of whom was in custody at the time such calls were made.

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged Members of Parliament to work collectively for national growth, a day after President Droupadi Murmu appealed for unity on national issues. Addressing the media at the Parliament complex ahead of the Budget Session, Modi said India's democracy and demography were "a beacon of hope for the world".

Outlining government's roadmap for making India a developed and self-reliant nation by 2047, he said, "Our government believes in reform, perform and transform. The nation is moving rapidly on the Reform Express." Referring to the President's address to the joint sitting of both Houses on Wednesday, Modi said it reflected the self-confidence of 140 crore Indians and articulated the aspirations of the people, especially the youth. "The President's address has laid down guiding thoughts for all honourable MPs," he said, adding that the Budget Session was a crucial one.

The PM said the country had entered a decisive 25-year phase to achieve the goal of a developed India by 2047. "This is the first Budget of the second quarter of this century," he said. He noted that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman would present the Budget for the ninth consecutive time, becoming the first woman finance minister to do so. Modi described it as a moment of pride in India's parliamentary history.

Modi said a self-confident India had emerged as a ray of hope and a centre of attraction



for the world. He described the FTA signed with the European Union as "the mother of all deals" aimed at aspirational youth and a self-reliant India.

Emphasising the importance of quality products and setting benchmarks in India's manufacturing drive, he said, "If we go with top-class quality, we will not only earn revenue from buyers across the EU, but we will also win their hearts."

PM's reply to Motion of Thanks in Lok Sabha on Feb 4

PM Narendra Modi will reply to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address in the Lok Sabha on February 4 during the Budget Session of Parliament. The government has allotted 18 hours in the Lok Sabha for discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address to the joint session of Parliament during the Budget Session. The dis-

ussion will be held on February 2, 3, and 4. The decision was made at a meeting of the Lok Sabha's Business Advisory Committee (BAC) on Thursday. The Rajya Sabha will discuss the Motion of Thanks to the President's address for 16 hours on February 2, 3, and 4. The Upper House will hold a general discussion on the Budget for 16 hours. The decision was taken at a meeting of the BAC of the Upper House.

INTERNATIONAL

Venezuela's acting president signs oil industry overhaul, easing state control to lure investors

CARACAS

Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez on Thursday signed a law that will open the nation's oil sector to privatization, reversing a tenet of the self-proclaimed socialist movement that has ruled the country for more than two decades.

Lawmakers in the country's National Assembly approved the overhaul of the energy industry law earlier in the day, less than a month after the brazen seizure of then-President Nicolás Maduro in a U.S. military attack in Venezuela's capital.

As the bill was being passed, the U.S. Treasury Department officially began to ease sanctions on Venezuelan oil that once crippled the industry, and expanded the ability of U.S. energy companies to operate in the South American nation, the first step in plans outlined by Secretary of State Marco Rubio the day before. The license authorization by the Treasury Department strictly prohibits entities from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea or Cuba from the transactions.

The moves by both governments on Thursday are paving the way for yet another radical geopolitical and economic shift in Venezuela. "We're talking about the future. We are talking about the country that we are going to give to our children," Rodríguez said.

Rodríguez proposed the changes in the days after U.S. President Donald Trump said his administration would take control of Venezuela's oil exports and revitalize the ailing industry by luring foreign investment.

Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez takes part in a rally holding up a copy of a new law after lawmakers approved legislation opening the nation's oil sector to pri-



vatization, at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026.

The legislation promises to give private companies control over the production and sale of oil and allow for independent arbitration of disputes.

Rodríguez's government expects the changes to serve as assurances for major U.S. oil companies that have so far hesitated about returning to the volatile country. Some of those companies lost investments when the ruling party enacted the existing law two decades ago to favor Venezuela's state-run oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela SA, or PDVSA.

The revised law would modify extraction taxes, setting a royalty cap rate of 30% and allowing the executive branch to set percentages for every project based on capital investment needs, competitiveness and other factors.

It also removes the mandate for disputes to be settled only in Venezuelan courts, which are controlled by the ruling party. Foreign investors have long viewed the

involvement of independent courts as crucial to guard against future expropriation.

Ruling-party lawmaker Orlando Camacho, head of the assembly's oil committee, said the reform "will change the country's economy."

Meanwhile, opposition lawmaker Antonio Ecarri urged the assembly to add transparency and accountability provisions to the law, including the creation of a website to make funding and other information public. He noted that the current lack of oversight has led to systemic corruption and argued that these provisions can also be considered judicial guarantees.

Those guarantees are among the key changes foreign investors are looking for as they weigh entering the Venezuelan market.

"Let the light shine on in the oil industry," Ecarri said.

Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez takes part in a rally holding up a copy of a new law after lawmakers approved legislation opening the nation's oil sector to privatization, at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Thursday,

Jan. 29, 2026.

Reviving Venezuela's oil industry: windfall or high-stakes gamble?

Oil workers dressed in red jumpsuits and hard hats celebrated the bill's approval, waving a Venezuelan flag inside the legislative palace and then joining lawmakers in a demonstration with ruling-party supporters.

The law was last altered two decades ago as Maduro's mentor and predecessor, the late Hugo Chávez, made heavy state control over the oil industry a pillar of his socialist-inspired revolution.

In the early years of his tenure, a massive windfall in petrodollars thanks to record-high global oil prices turned PDVSA into the main source of government revenue and the backbone of Venezuela's economy.

Chávez's 2006 changes to the hydrocarbons law required PDVSA to be the principal stakeholder in all major oil projects.

In tearing up the contracts that foreign companies signed in the 1990s, Chávez nationalized huge assets belonging to American and other Western firms that refused to comply, including ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips. They are still waiting to receive billions of dollars in arbitration awards.

From those heady days of lavish state spending, PDVSA's fortunes turned — along with the country's — as oil prices dropped and government mismanagement eroded profits and hurt production, first under Chávez, then Maduro.

The nation home to the world's biggest proven crude reserves underwent a dire economic crisis that drove over 7 million Venezuelans to flee since 2014. Sanctions imposed by successive U.S. administrations further crippled the oil industry.

Trump threatens Canada with 50% tariff on aircraft sold in US, expanding trade war



WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened Canada with a 50% tariff on any aircraft sold in the U.S., the latest salvo in his trade war with America's northern neighbor as his feud with Prime Minister Mark Carney expands.

Trump's threat posted on social media came after he threatened over the weekend to impose a 100% tariff on goods imported from Canada if it went forward with a planned trade deal with China. But Trump's threat did not come with any details about when he would impose the import taxes, as Canada had already struck a deal.

In Trump's latest threat, the Republican president said he was retaliating against Canada for refusing to certify jets from Savannah, Georgia-based Gulfstream Aerospace. Trump said the U.S., in return, would decertify all Canadian aircraft, including planes from its largest aircraft maker, Bombardier. "If, for any reason, this situation is not immediately corrected, I am going to charge Canada

a 50% Tariff on any and all Aircraft sold into the United States of America," Trump said in his post.

Spokespeople for Bombardier and Canada's transport minister didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment Thursday evening.

The U.S. Commerce Department previously put duties on a Bombardier commercial passenger jet in 2017 during the first Trump administration, charging that the Canadian company is selling the planes in America below cost.

The U.S. said then that the Montreal-based Bombardier used unfair government subsidies to sell jets at artificially low prices. Carney says Canada has no plans to pursue free trade agreement with China as Trump threatens tariffs.

The U.S. International Trade Commission in Washington later ruled that Bombardier did not injure U.S. industry.

Bombardier has since concentrated on the business and private jet market

in recent years. If Trump cuts off the U.S. market it would be a major blow to the Quebec company. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent warned Carney on Wednesday that his recent public comments against U.S. trade policy could backfire going into the formal review of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the trade deal that protects Canada from the heaviest impacts of Trump's tariffs.

Carney rejected Bessent's contention that he had aggressively walked back his comments at the World Economic Forum during a phone call with Trump on Monday.

Carney said he told Trump that he meant what he said in his speech at Davos, and told him Canada plans to diversify away from the United States with a dozen new trade deals.

In Davos at the World Economic Forum last week, Carney condemned economic coercion by great powers on smaller countries without mentioning Trump's name. The prime minister received widespread praise and attention for his remarks, upstaging Trump at the gathering.

NEIR Promo Visual Showcased at Parakram Diwas in Historic INA Moirang



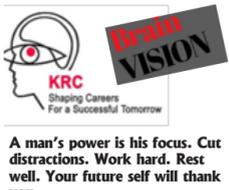
MOIRANG

Moirang, Manipur is not just a town. It is a memory. It is a moment in India's freedom story. On Parakram Diwas, this historic land once again became a place of pride, unity, and vision as the promo visual of the North East Integration Rally (NEIR) was showcased during the national observance.

The NEIR promo was presented at INA Moirang (auditorium), a site deeply linked with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army. The event was organised by INA War Museum cum Library, Department of Art and Culture, Manipur in association with INA Local Advisory Committee, Moirang, Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur (Dance Academy), NEZCC, Ministry of Culture, Government of India (Nodal Agency) and supported by NEIR 2026 (KRC Foundations). It



was here in 1944 that the tricolour was first hoisted on Indian soil by the INA, marking Moirang as a sacred symbol of courage and sacrifice. Hosting the NEIR visual at this location added strong meaning to the message of unity and national integration.



The North East Integration Rally was officially

flagged off earlier on January 4 from Kolkata. From there, it began a long and determined journey across the Northeast.

The rally is covering all eight states of the region, touching cities, towns, and communities that reflect the true diversity of this part of India.

The rally is being organised under the leadership of Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee and CEO of KRC Foundations. The vision behind NEIR is simple yet powerful. To integrate, connect, and unite the Northeast. The re-

gion is home to around 200 different communities, each with its own culture, language, food, music, and history. NEIR aims to bring all of them together under one shared idea of belonging.

At Parakram Diwas in Moirang, the NEIR promo visual stood as a reminder that integration is not new to India's story. The INA itself was made up of people from different regions, religions, and backgrounds, united by one goal. In that sense, showcasing NEIR at INA Moirang felt symbolic. It connected past cour-

age with present purpose.

The rally focuses on people-to-people connection. It highlights harmony, mutual respect, and shared identity. Rather than seeing diversity as a barrier, NEIR celebrates it as strength. Through visuals, interactions, and public engagement, the rally spreads the message that the Northeast is not on the margins but at the heart of India's story.

Biswadeep Gupta has repeatedly stressed that integration does not mean uniformity. It means understanding.

It means listening. It means walking together while remaining proudly different. The NEIR journey across the eight states is designed to do exactly that. It creates spaces for dialogue, cultural exchange, and unity.

The choice of Moirang for showcasing the promo was also a reminder to the younger generation. Many may not fully know the importance of this place. INA Moirang is where history changed direction, even if briefly. It was a bold statement against colonial rule. Linking that legacy with NEIR gave the event emotional depth.

As the rally continues its journey across Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim, the message remains clear. Unity is a journey, not a destination. And the Northeast, with all its voices and colours, deserves to be heard as one.

The NEIR promo at Parakram Diwas was not just a visual presentation. It was a statement. A bridge between history and hope. A reminder that integration begins with respect, and that the spirit of INA still lives on, now in the form of unity, dialogue, and shared progress.

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“Shri Rama in Assam: Exile, Memory, and the Ethics of Command”



COL. (DR.) AKS MACHHREAL MID, VSM (RETD.)

A Cultural, Historical Reflection from a Soldier-Historian's Walk through Kamarupa (Assam).

Abstract.
This study examines the cultural presence of Bhagwan Shri Rama in Assam (ancient Kamarupa) through textual sources, regional traditions, and lived experience. While the Valmiki Ramayana does not explicitly record Rama's visit to Assam during his fourteen-year banwas (exile), Assamese literature, folk memory, sacred geography, and royal inscriptions preserve a continuous remembrance of Rama as an ethical ideal rather than a territorial conqueror.

This paper further integrates the author's on-foot journeys across Assam, undertaken as a soldier, and devotee, to explore how Rama's exile offers enduring lessons in leadership, obedience, restraint, and moral command qualities essential both to kingship and to military life.

1. Rama's Banwas: Exile as Ethical Discipline.

In the Valmiki Ramayana, Rama's exile (vanavasa) is not punishment but chosen obedience. He does not argue law, he fulfils it. When commanded to leave Ayodhya, Rama replies not as a prince defending rights, but as a soldier receiving orders, "I obey."

This obedience transforms exile into moral training, where authority is internalized rather than exercised.

The Ara ya Ka a situates Rama among forests, hermitages, tribal communities, and river systems spaces beyond state control but central to civilizational balance. The epic thus allows Rama's presence to travel beyond named geography into cultural memory.

2. Assam (Kamarupa) in Early Indian Consciousness.

Assam, historically known as Kamarupa, is referenced in early Sanskrit literature as a recognized eastern domain, not a fringe wilderness. Texts such as the Mahabharata and Kalika Purana situate Kamarupa within India's sacred and political geography.

By the early medieval period (7th-10th century CE), Kamarupa had, Structured kingdoms
Brahmanical learning
Strong Shakta Vaishnava synthesis. It is within this milieu that Rama's story was received, adapted, and localized, not imposed.

3. Folk Memory of Rama's Stay during Exile.

Sitajakhala: Where suffering became sacred
At Sitajakhala (Morigaon district), local tradition holds that Sita bathed and rested during exile.

Stone steps descending into water are revered not as monuments, but as witnesses.

As a historian, one must state clearly:

There is no epigraphic proof of Rama or Sita's physical presence here.

Yet as a cultural observer and as one who has stood barefoot at this site the continuity of belief carries anthropological and civilizational weight.

Such places arise not through royal decree, but through women's memory, village ritual, and repeated telling across generations.

Rama among Forest Communities Among Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, and Bodo traditions, Rama appears:

Not as an imperial figure
But as a forest-dweller,
A moral traveller,

A companion of the dispossessed, Karbi oral epics like Sabin Alun narrate a long forest journey that closely mirrors Rama's exile, blending tribal migration memory with Ramayana narrative.

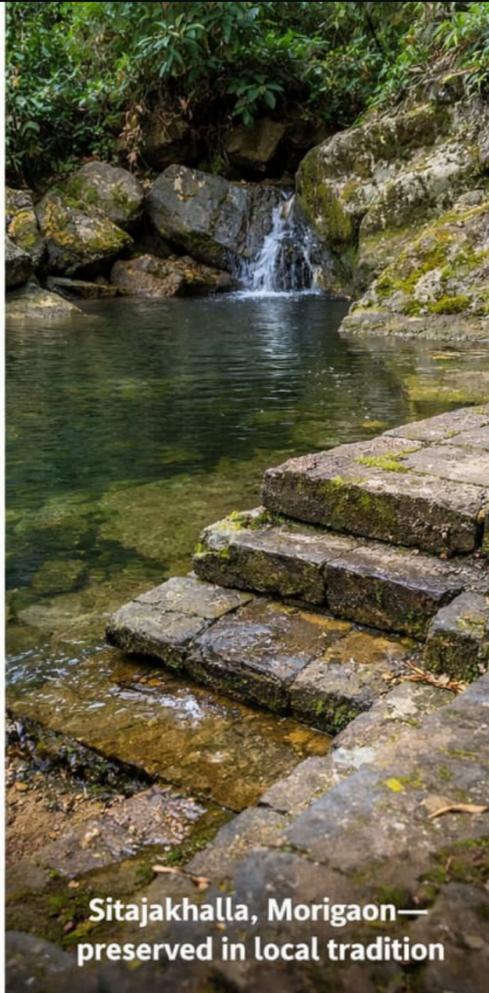
This is not cultural appropriation, it is cultural convergence.

4. Rama and the Old Kingdoms of Assam.

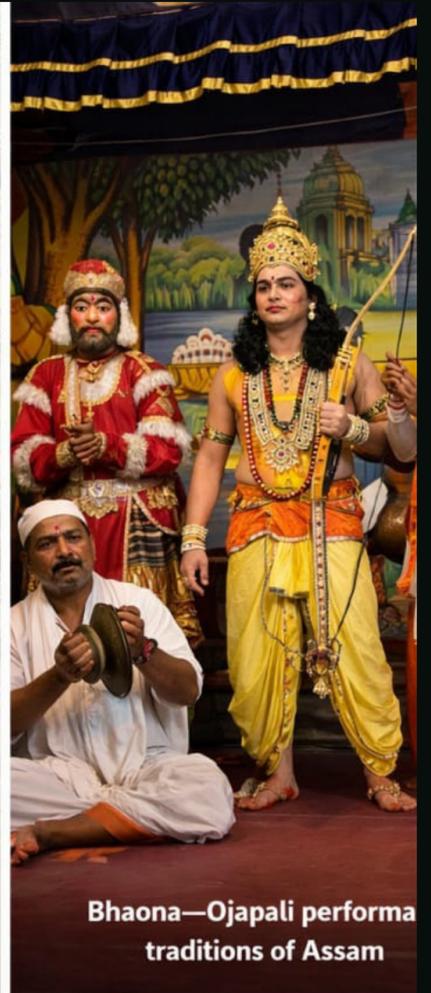
Copper-plate inscriptions of K mar pa kings (notably Bhaskarvarman, 7th century CE) compare rulers to Rama, Dasharatha, and Janaka, indicating Rama's ethical



Brahmaputra at dawn—
feline of ancient Kāmarūpa



Sitajakhala, Morigaon—
preserved in local tradition



Bhaona—Ojapali performance
traditions of Assam

kingship as a political ideal.

Crucially, these references emphasize:

Justice over conquest,
Dharma over expansion,
Protection over domination,
Assamese kings adopted Rama as a model of restraint, not triumphalism.

5. The Assamese Ramayana: Madhava Kandali.

The Saptakanda Ramayana (14th century) by Madhava Kandali marks a decisive moment in Assam's civilizational history. Written in Assamese, it presents:

A human Rama,
A suffering Sita,
A morally tested Lakshmana.
Later refined by Srimanta San-

kardeva and Madhavdev, this tradition ensured that Rama lived not only in scripture, but in village theatre (Bhaona) and public moral discourse.

6. A Soldier's Walk: Personal Pilgrimage and Historical Inquiry.

During my first visit 1992 on postings and later independent study visits to Assam, I walked not ceremonially, but deliberately through:

Riverbanks,
Temple ruins,
Forest paths,
Remote villages.

I did so not as a tourist, but as a curative historian one who believes history must heal, not inflame.

Walking these landscapes on foot clarified one truth,

Rama's exile is remembered in Assam not as arrival, but as alignment.

As a soldier, Rama's life offers three enduring principles:

Obedience without bitterness,
Command without arrogance,
Power restrained by duty.

As a commander, I found in Rama the archetype of leadership:

Who listens before ordering,
Who sacrifices privilege,
Who returns to rule only after proving restraint.

7. Heritage Policy Reflection: Why

This Matters Today.

India's cultural heritage policy must move beyond:

Monumental exclusivity,
Chronological absolutism,
Assam's Rama tradition teaches us that:

Cultural memory can exist without archaeology,
Sacred geography can be non-exclusive,

Faith and history need not compete.

Preserving sites like Sitajakhala, oral traditions, and performance arts is civilizational defense, not mythology management.

8. To sum up, Rama as Commander, Not Conqueror.

Assam does not claim Rama through stone or sword.

It remembers him through, Songs,
Silence,
Forest paths,
Ethical kingship

For those in uniform and those who govern, Rama's exile remains the highest training ground.

A king who cannot obey cannot command.

A soldier who cannot renounce cannot lead.

This is Rama's lesson.
This is Assam's gift to India.

Footnoted References:-
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Romila Thapar, Cultural Pasts.

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Disclaimer:

This article draws upon classical texts, regional literature, folk traditions, and the author's personal field observations in Assam. References to Lord Rama's association with Assam during the period of exile (banwas) reflect cultural memory and regional belief, and are not presented as established archaeological fact unless specifically stated.

Personal reflections are offered from the perspective of a soldier, historian, and devotee of Lord Rama, with the intent of highlighting ethical and cultural values rather than asserting historical finality or political positions. The piece aims to encourage heritage awareness and thoughtful engagement with India's civilizational traditions.



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Barak Festival

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 Musical Night | 11 JAN



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