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PERSPECTIVE

DON'T LISTEN TO YOURSELF; LISTEN TO THE ADVICE THAT YOU GIVE OTHERS. - MICHAEL LOTNER

Preserve Textile Heritage, Power Growth: Giriraj Singh

GUWAHATI
Union Minister for Textiles Giriraj Singh on Thursday, January 8, underscored the Centre's commitment to preserving India's rich textile heritage while accelerating industrial growth, as he inaugurated the National Textiles Ministers' Conference 2026 in Guwahati.

Addressing delegates from across the country, Singh said India's textile sector must strike a balance between tradition and modernity-protecting handloom and handicraft legacies while expanding production, innovation and global competitiveness. "Strengthening our heritage and ensuring progress must go hand in hand," he said.

Along with Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, the Union minister also inaugurated a handloom and handicraft exhibition organised alongside the conference.

The exhibition features traditional textiles and crafts from different states, highlighting the cultural depth of India's artisanal sectors and their growing economic potential. Union Minister of State for Textiles Pabitra Margherita was also present.

The two-day conference, hosted by Assam, brings together textile ministers and senior officials to deliberate on investment promotion, infrastructure development, employment generation, innovation, skill development and inter-state collaboration.

Key discussions will focus on handlooms, handicrafts, modern and technical textiles, ready-made garments, and export expansion, with the objective of driving holistic growth in the sector.

WHO SAID WHAT



Pained by the passing of former MP and Union Minister Shri Kabindra Purkayastha Ji. His commitment to serving society and contribution towards Assam's progress will always be remembered. He played a vital role in strengthening the BJP across the state. My thoughts are with his family and admirers in this sad hour. Om Shanti.
~ Narendra Modi, PM

Manipur IDP Resettlement Delay Sparks COCOMI Agitation on Jan 12

IMPHAL

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), along with valley-based Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), will launch an agitation on January 12, demanding time-bound and effective measures for the resettlement and rehabilitation of families displaced by the ongoing crisis in the state.

COCOMI convenor Khuraijam Athouba said on Wednesday that a delegation of IDPs had met the Manipur Chief Secretary on Tuesday to discuss issues related to rehabilitation and resettlement. He expressed hope that the government would respond to their demands before the January 12 deadline but noted that no concrete assurances had been made public so far.

"Our representatives met the Chief Secretary, and we expect the government to place the necessary information before the people as per our demands before January 12," Athouba said on the sidelines of the



launch of COCOMI's official website in Imphal.

As part of the agitation programme, COCOMI has proposed a march towards Lok Bhavan to highlight the prolonged displacement of families who have been living in relief camps since violence erupted in Manipur.

The organisation has consistently called for immediate steps to ensure the safe, dignified and permanent resettlement of all affected families.

On December 8, a COCOMI team led by Athouba visited Leimaram Waroiching Leikai, an area where displaced families are expected to return. Local leaders from Waroiching village were present during the inspection. Athouba raised serious concerns over the condition of abandoned homes, many of which are kutcha structures that have remained unattended for more than two-and-a-half years.

During the visit, the team conducted house-to-house inspections

to assess structural damage and reviewed the government's preparedness for resettlement. COCOMI Publicity In-Charge L Jayanta said the organisation has submitted several suggestions to the government, particularly regarding homes that have been deemed uninhabitable.

Meanwhile, the Manipur government has maintained that the resettlement process is being carried out cautiously to ensure safety, dignity and long-term stability for returning IDPs. On December 31, the state government said over 10,000 IDPs from more than 2,200 households have been resettled across Manipur.

The government said the resettlement drive is being implemented under a ₹23-crore Resettlement and Rehabilitation Package announced in the Manipur Budget 2025-26. So far, ₹35.46 crore has been released for the construction of new houses and ₹9.26 crore for repairs to partially damaged homes, with around 4,000 houses currently under construction at various stages.

Congress Brings in Heavyweights to Steer Assam Poll Campaign



GUWAHATI

The Congress has moved to strengthen its organisational machinery ahead of the Assam Assembly elections by appointing senior leaders D K Shivakumar, Bhupesh Baghel and Bandhu Turkey as observers for the state.

The decision, announced on January 7 by All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal, signals a more hands-on approach by the party leadership as Assam prepares for polls to its 126-member Assembly, expected in March-April.

The three observers have been tasked with overseeing ground-level coordination, campaign management and alliance-related issues, at a time when the Congress is attempting to consolidate opposition unity

against the ruling BJP-led coalition. Shivakumar, Baghel and Turkey are considered close to Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and are expected to play a significant role in candidate selection and strategic planning.

Their appointment comes close on the heels of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra being named chairperson of the Congress screening committee for Assam, underlining her central role in shaping the party's electoral strategy in the state.

Assam's political landscape ahead of the elections is marked by a complex alliance structure. Last month, the Congress forged a pre-poll alliance with a range of parties, including the CPI(M), Rajiv Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad, CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation, Jatiya Dal-Asom and the Karbi Anglong-based All Party Hill Leaders Conference, in an effort to mount a unified challenge to the BJP.

Currently, the BJP holds 64 seats in the Assembly, with its allies - the Asom Gana Parishad (nine seats), United People's Party Liberal (seven) and Bodoland People's Front (three) - bolstering its majority. The opposition comprises 26 Congress MLAs, 15 from the AIUFD, one CPI(M) legislator and an Independent. By deploying senior national leaders as observers, the Congress is signalling its intent to tighten coordination, sharpen campaign messaging and translate opposition unity into electoral gains in a state where it has struggled to regain lost ground in recent elections.

Supreme Court orders forensic examination of full leaked audio in Manipur violence case

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered a forensic examination of the entire 48-minute leaked audio recording that allegedly points to the role of former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh in the ethnic violence that erupted in the state in 2023.

A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and K Vinod Chandran directed that the complete audio recording, along with admitted voice samples of the former chief minister, be sent to the National Forensic Science University (NFSU), Gandhinagar, for detailed forensic analysis. The court also asked the NFSU to expedite the examination and submit its final report in a sealed cover.

"The entire 48 minutes of the conversation in question along with the admitted voice recordings of the former Manipur chief minister are available. All the voice recordings furnished by the petitioner shall be forwarded to the National Forensic Science University, Gandhinagar, for forensic examination," the bench said in its order.

The court was hearing a petition filed by the Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR), which has sought an independent special investigation team (SIT) probe into the leaked audio clips that surfaced in connection with the Manipur violence.

Senior advocate Prashant



Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, told the court that the matter had been listed multiple times and submitted that the petition itself contained the transcript of the full 48-minute conversation. He said the complete audio recording had also been supplied to the authorities.

Appearing for the Manipur government, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati said the state had received the full recording only after the previous hearing.

The Supreme Court's latest direction follows its earlier observation, made on December 15 last year, questioning why only select portions of the leaked audio clips had been sent for forensic examination. The bench had expressed concern over an affidavit filed by the petitioners on November 20, 2025, which indicated that only selected clippings were examined earlier.

In previous proceedings, the NFSU had stated that the leaked audio clips provided to it showed signs of tampering and were not scientifically fit for forensic voice

comparison. The court had noted that the forensic report suggested the clips were edited and manipulated. Bhushan, however, had referred to a separate forensic assessment claiming that at least one of the recordings was unedited.

On earlier occasions, the apex court had sought sealed forensic reports from both the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) and the NFSU to determine the authenticity of the leaked audio clips. On May 5 last year, the court examined one such report and asked the Manipur government to file a fresh status report on the probe.

N Biren Singh resigned as Manipur chief minister on February 9 last year amid internal dissent within the BJP and growing political pressure in the aftermath of the violence.

The ethnic clashes between the Imphal valley-based Meitei community and the hill-based Kuki groups erupted in May 2023 and have since claimed more than 260 lives, displacing thousands across the state.

Scorpions to Launch India Comeback Tour in Shillong After Nearly Two Decades

SHILLONG

Legendary German rock band Scorpions will kick off their India tour in Shillong on April 21, marking their return to the country after nearly 20 years and making the Meghalaya capital the first Indian city to host the band on its Coming Home 2026 tour. The opening concert will be held at JN Stadium, a choice that underlines Shillong's long-standing association with rock music and its reputation as India's rock capital. Meghalaya Tourism is supporting the Shillong leg of the tour, with The Circus partnering as the event organiser.

Produced by BookMyShow Live, the four-city India tour will subsequently move to Delhi-NCR's HUDA Grounds on April 24, Bengaluru's NICE Grounds on April 26, and conclude in Mumbai at Jio Gardens, Bandra Kurla Complex, on April 30.

Expressing excitement over the band's return, frontman Klaus Meine said the group was looking forward to reconnecting with Indian fans after a long absence. Guitarist



Rudolf Schenker described the India leg of the Coming Home concert series as especially meaningful, noting

that it comes six decades after the band was formed in 1965.

Tickets for the concerts will be

released in phases. An artist pre-sale will begin on January 14 at noon IST, followed by an exclusive pre-sale for Kotak Mahindra Bank credit card holders on January 15 at noon. General ticket sales will open on January 17 at 1 pm IST, exclusively via BookMyShow.

The tour is part of Bandland On Tour, an extension of BookMyShow Live's platform dedicated to rock and alternative music. BookMyShow officials described the Scorpions' India return as a landmark moment for the country's live rock music scene. With a career spanning six decades, Scorpions have sold more than 120 million records worldwide and performed in over 80 countries. They are best known for global hits such as Rock You Like a Hurricane, Still Loving You and Wind of Change, as well as iconic albums including Love at First Sting and Crazy World. The concerts follow the release of what the band has indicated may be its final studio album, adding a sense of occasion and nostalgia to the India tour for generations of fans.

Welcome SOURAV PAUL

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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 670

Non alignment to Multi alignment

The creative destruction of India's foreign policy from non-alignment to multi alignment has made India assertive in international affairs. This transition got a good test in 2025 with renewed diplomatic engagement with China on the one hand and defying America's dictates on the other. India continued to acquire energy from Russia despite America's tariff bomb. India a country of 1.4 billion people, 4th-largest economy – with projection to become the third-largest by 2028, leading voice for the Global South, can neither be mute spectator to international happenings nor anyone can take it for granted. It contributed in the formation of multipolar world for global prosperity, conveyed eloquently to the world that it can't be cowed down by any country, howsoever, powerful it may be. Its purchase of oil from Russia at the cost of American annoyance conveyed Trump administration that India of 2025 is different from its earlier perception. India overcame its challenges for energy, security and resilient supply chain through trade agreements / blocs like BRICS, SCO, and Quad etc. Its multi-alignment approach has helped it to navigate the geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges stemming from the unpredictable policies of the Donald Trump administration. China, although India's long-term rival yet New Delhi has managed its relationship with Beijing with diplomatic subtlety and strategic foresight. Indian leaders are engaging with world with the spirit of world as one family "Vasudev kutumbkam" and expect the same for others.

It has firmly conveyed the world that India is sovereign to pursue its own agenda. It forcefully raised the issue of terrorism in various forums and showed clear defiance by not signing the final draft in SCO defence ministers meet at Shanghai for not including pahalgaon massacre. India at present is pursuing a calibrated engagement with U.S., China and Russia to secure its national interests and also hints to India's commitment for shaping a stable and multipolar world order. The two main reasons for India's assertiveness have been its fast-growing national economy with a sound international profile and the proactiveness of its leadership in projecting its ambition to be a leading power on the world stage by 2047. Today it cannot talk about foreign policy without referring to de-globalisation, supply chain resilience, critical minerals, digital transformation, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), climate change, terrorism etc, if it wants to make Vikshit Bharat possible.

The transition from non-alignment to multi alignment is not confined to India only but the whole world order is currently undergoing a significant reorganization from a unipolar, Western-led system to multi polar order. Multipolarity has replaced America's unipolar moment during 1990's and the bipolarity of the Cold War era. Multi-alignment is going to shape a more equitable economic environment to enhance global prosperity. This tectonic shift is characterized by the decline of traditional Western dominance and the rise of the Global South with new power centres like China and India. Power is diffusing among several influential nations, rather than getting concentrated in one or two superpowers. This is leading to more complex alliances and rivalries, where countries increasingly pursue multi-alignment rather than aligning with a single dominant bloc. Nations in the Global South, especially major economies like China and India, are asserting greater influence in global affairs, challenging the existing norms and institutions that were primarily established by Western powers. The current period is also marked by simultaneous, interconnected crises, including ongoing conflicts between Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas, climate change, cyber warfare, global terrorism and economic volatility etc are straining the existing global governance mechanisms. The Post-World War II multilateral institutions like the UN and WTO are seen as outdated and less effective in managing contemporary global threats and challenges. This has spurred the creation and strengthening of alternative regional and sub-regional organizations such as BRICS, SCO, QUAD etc.

Emerging powers like India called for a multipolar world initially to balance US hegemony, but increasingly acknowledge the growing diversity within the West itself. The strength given to India's foreign policy by multi alignment gets reflected in the following spheres:

Strategic Autonomy: Growing India can't remain dependent on any single country or bloc for its trade, independent decisions in defence and foreign policy matters. Strategic autonomy carries an important place for India, the concept has deep historical roots, going back to colonial subjugation and free India's determination never allowed anybody else to decide our place in the world for us. From Nehru's non-alignment during the Cold War to the Modi government's "multi-alignment" in the current era, successive governments have sought to preserve India's freedom of action while adapting to changing geopolitical realities.

The strategic autonomy offers a middle path between rigid bloc politics and passive disengagement. In practice, it demands serious diplomacy, institutional resilience, and a clear-eyed understanding of national interest. It is a balancing act – sometimes precarious, often imperfect, but essential for a country such as India that aspires to have global leadership rather than becoming a client state.

Participation in institutions India being the world's largest democracy with highest economic growth rate can't act as subservient, to countries much less in population and economic size, for all times. It shall get due place in international bodies like UNSC, BRICS, SCO, and G20 etc. Multi alignment will be a stepping stone in this direction. India is a founding member of the UN and a major contributor of troops to UN peace keeping mission, often contributes nearly twice as many peace keepers as P5 countries but still lacks permanent membership of UNSC. This long overdue membership is sheer neglect of nearly one fifth of world population. It is worthwhile to point out that most P5 nations, including the US, UK, France and Russia have expressed support for India's bid for a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council. India is also part of G4 group which includes Japan, Germany, Brazil all of these countries support each other's bid for permanent seat in UN. India also actively participated in the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) to push for comprehensive UNSC reforms.

The primary obstacle to India's permanent membership is the requirement of an amendment to the UN Charter, to be adopted by a two-thirds vote in the General Assembly and ratified by two-thirds of the member states, including all five current permanent members. China has historically been hesitant or has stonewalled efforts that would include India and Japan as permanent members, largely due to regional rivalries.

Economic Diversification: Multi alignment with lead to expansion of market for Indian goods and strengthen India's role in global supply chains under the China+1 policy currently being adopted by various business organisations. The friction between US and China has led to political instability besides COVID-19 highlighted vulnerabilities of single-source reliance. It will also help us to use cost advantage to our benefit.

Security purpose: India being surrounded by enemy countries needs to upgrade its security setup. The multi-alignment with Russia, US, Europe, and Indo-Pacific, will ensure access to diverse defence technologies. India China came on table in SCO conference but can China be trusted is a big question in itself? India has to be cautious about Pakistan – China nexus and fuel to fire has become visible by the presence of both in Bangladesh.

There is no doubt that trade by its nature should be multipolar as it reduces dependence on one country / bloc but the problem lies with defence exercises, intelligence sharing, terrorism etc. The multipolarity will be a real test of our diplomacy.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Mistakes are proof that you're trying" - Ernest Hemingway

Budget boosts needed in 2026 for Viksit Bharat by 2047



CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE

Developing human capital will be at the heart of India's journey towards a Viksit Bharat at 2047. As we approach the Union Budget for 2026-27, a coherent strategy linking education, health, employment and skill development is essential. These pillars form the architecture of a productive, resilient and inclusive society, one that can sustain high growth and global competitiveness over the coming decades.

A healthy and skilled population is central to realising India's potential as a knowledge-driven, innovation-led economy. Strengthening the health system is a natural starting point. A more decentralised, outcome-linked financing model where central transfers are tied to measurable improvements would allow states greater autonomy while ensuring accountability and real-time monitoring. This approach can help ensure that every rupee spent on health yields tangible results on the ground.

Equally important is addressing the acute shortage of healthcare professionals. Enforcing quality standards under the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010 through certified professionals supported on an interim basis by the central health regulators NABH and

ing, where routine clinical responsibilities are reassigned to trained doctors, nurses, and allied health practitioners can alleviate specialist shortages. This should be complemented with civil services-recognised upskilling routes and expanded opportunities for senior secondary students and graduates to enter the healthcare ecosystem through clear progression ladders. Modernising regulatory frameworks is also essential. A single national licence for online healthcare players covering e-pharmacies, e-diagnostics, and digital clinics would bring long-needed clarity. Updated provisions under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act for telemedicine and digital therapeutics, alongside tax parity for e-hospitals, will ensure that India's evolving health-tech ecosystem is supported by contemporary rules.

On the education front, India needs a predictable, long-term expenditure roadmap. A phased increase in public spending from 4.6 percent of GDP in 2026-27 to 6 percent by 2030-31 would provide the financial foundation needed to strengthen schools, teacher training and research. A national task-force on education technology and inclusion can accelerate the adoption of public-private partnership models for platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM, while also helping modernise

to self-declare adherence to regulatory guidelines can promote autonomy and global best practices. India should also move decisively to facilitate the entry of foreign university campuses through streamlined approvals, stronger industry linkages, and scholarship-backed access for students replicating Gujarat's GIFT City education hub model in other regions.

Creating jobs at scale will require fresh thinking in employment and skilling. A comprehensive national policy for the gig economy can help extend social protection, strengthen worker registration systems, and ensure continuity of benefits across platforms. Pilot urban employment guarantee programmes in select cities can provide short-term work opportunities while boosting civic infrastructure.

Expanding apprenticeships is another high-impact lever. A service sector apprenticeship programme covering hospitality, logistics, retail, healthcare, and financial services can offer 12-18 month fixed-term pathways combining on-the-job training, digital skills modules and recognised certification. Industry-led consortia can help smaller businesses to participate effectively by offering curriculum support and shared training facilities.

For the long term, India must prepare its workforce for

Cluster-based integrated skill development centres aligned to regional industry needs can serve as the backbone of this mission.

Women's economic participation remains one of India's biggest untapped opportunities. Investments in childcare, safe and reliable transport, and affordable accommodation can help bring millions of

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

ANOTHER BRUTAL ASSAULT ON SANATAN DHARMA IN MAMATA'S JUNGLE RAJ! Around 50-60 Kali and Saraswati idols, painstakingly crafted by potter Jayanta Das, were viciously vandalised outside his workshop, in front of Loknath Temple near Matal Garh, Shantipur. The miscreants struck in the morning, smashing these sacred idols meant for puja, a direct attack on Hindu faith and the livelihood of artisans. This is the latest episode in TMC-ruled Bengal's rising wave of anti-Hindu hatred: a Maa Kali idol beheaded in Sarshuna, a Jagaddhatri idol decapitated in Mandirbazar, and now Saraswati idols destroyed. Under modern-day Suhrawardy Mamata Banerjee, radicals thrive while the police shield them and Hindus bleed. Paschim Bangladesh reality: idols are being vandalised and temples are being torched, all to appease the "milch-cow" vote bank. Bengal's Hindus are awake and furious. 2026 will deliver justice. Sanatan will rise. Mamata's radical empire is destined to crumble. ~ Amit Malviya, Member National Executive, BJP



women into the workforce and strengthen household incomes and productivity. Finally, a universal labour information management system linked to the National Career Service can serve as a unified employment-intelligence layer. When combined with an integrated skilling dashboard, drawing real-time data from state missions and government portals, it can allow policymakers, employers, and workers to navigate labour markets with unprecedented precision. As India stands at a defining moment in its development journey, the upcoming Union Budget provides a crucial opportunity to act on these priorities that the Confederation of Indian Industry has submitted in its pre-budget proposals. By linking health financing to outcomes, investing in education and research, and empowering women and youth through skills, we can lay the foundation for a globally competitive, equitable and future-ready workforce—one capable of driving the nation towards Viksit Bharat @ 2047.



NHA can help raise standards nationwide. At the same time, India must make healthcare careers more aspirational. Structured pathways for task-shift-

curriculums and expand high-quality digital content. Higher education, too, warrants a shift from prescriptive regulations to principle-based advisory. Allowing institutions

future industries. A Future Skills 2047 Mission to train or reskill 10 million youth annually in areas such as AI, robotics, clean energy, biotechnology and semiconductors will be crucial.

Ahead of 2026 polls, CM Sarma says Congress has lost mass base in Assam

GUWAHATI

Ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday launched a sharp attack on the Congress, questioning the party's relevance in the state and claiming it has lost its mass support.

Speaking to reporters in Lakhimpur after attending a seed-capital distribution programme under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyomita Abhijan (MMUA), Sarma said he was surprised that the Congress continued to be treated as a serious political force.

"After 75 years, I am surprised that people still take the Congress seriously and that the media keeps asking questions about them. What relevance does the party really have today?" he said.

Targeting the Congress's record



on welfare delivery, the chief minister referred to interactions with women beneficiaries and alleged that many had not received benefits during earlier Con-

gress governments.

"When we speak to women beneficiaries today, they tell us they received nothing when the Congress was in power.

That itself exposes the reality of their governance," Sarma claimed.

The chief minister further alleged that the Congress no longer represents the aspirations of indigenous Assamese people. "Who votes for the Congress today? It is largely illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Beyond that, the party has no real support or relevance," he said.

Accusing the Opposition of being disconnected from the ground, Sarma contrasted its current role with his party's conduct when it was not in power. "When we were in the Opposition, we were constantly among the people and on the streets. Today's Opposition is nowhere to be seen. I see no influence because I see no work on the ground," he added.

In another pointed remark, Sarma said minority communities were being

politically exploited. "I feel pity for the miyas. They are made to give money and votes to the Congress and are then left to face eviction. This politics of false promises has harmed them the most," he alleged.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister laid foundation stones for several development projects in Lakhimpur. These included a 4 million litres per day (MLD) sewage treatment plant costing Rs 9.90 crore under the Swachh Bharat Mission, which will cover all 21 wards of Lakhimpur town and enable scientific wastewater management and reuse of treated water for public spaces.

He also laid the foundation stone and performed the bhoomi puja for a new integrated district commissioner's office complex, to be built over 20 bighas at a cost of Rs 15.62 crore. The multi-storey

complex is expected to bring key government offices under one roof, improving administrative efficiency and public access.

In the education sector, Sarma dedicated the Joyhing campus of the Model Residential School under North Lakhimpur University.

Spread over 32 bighas and built at a cost of over Rs 30 crore, the campus includes modern classrooms, hostels and academic facilities aimed at expanding access to quality education.

Additionally, the chief minister laid the foundation stone for the Na-Ali-Kalita Gaon Chariali road under the Asom Mala 3.0 scheme. The Rs 40.44 crore project is expected to improve connectivity between Dhakuakhana, Dhemaji and Majuli, reduce travel time and boost regional mobility and economic activity.

Tea workers across Brahmaputra Valley strike for wage hike, warn of statewide agitation

DIBRUGARH

Tea workers across Assam's Brahmaputra Valley on Wednesday staged a one-hour strike, demanding an immediate revision of daily wages and warning of a larger statewide agitation if their demands continue to be ignored.

The protest, led by the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS), brought plantation operations to a complete halt across several tea estates during the demonstration period.

In Dibrugarh district, workers from the Rajabari Tea Estate in Moran joined hundreds of labourers from other gardens. Raising slogans and carrying banners, the protesters highlighted the worsening economic distress faced by tea plantation families.

After the demonstration, workers submitted memorandums to garden managements, seeking their intervention in forwarding the demands to the state government. The central demand is an immediate hike in daily wages to ₹351.

At present, tea workers are paid ₹250 per day. ACMS leaders said the stagnant wage structure, combined with rising prices of essential commodities such as food, fuel and medicines, has pushed workers and their families into severe financial hardship. "A daily wage of ₹250 is no longer sustainable. Despite repeated appeals, the government and the Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations have failed to act. This one-hour strike is a warning. If our demands are not met, we will be forced to intensify our movement across the state," senior ACMS leader Lakheshwar Tanti said while addressing workers near Moranhat.

The union reiterated that it remains open to dialogue but stressed that further delay in wage revision would inevitably lead to stronger collective action by tea workers across Assam.

Major conspiracy underway': Himanta flags surge in extremist activity ahead of Assam polls

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on January 7 alleged that a "major conspiracy" was underway to destabilise the state ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, claiming that fundamentalist organisations have become active after years of relative calm.

Speaking to reporters, Sarma said he had discussed the emerging security concerns with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, pointing to what he described as a sudden spike in religious extremist activity in the region. "There is a major conspiracy going on in Assam," the chief minister said, referring to the detention of several individuals who had allegedly crossed into the state from Bangladesh. He linked the developments to the deteriorating situation in the neighbouring country, where violence against Hindu minorities has intensified in recent months.

Sarma noted that Assam had

remained largely peaceful over the past four-and-a-half years, making the recent incidents particularly alarming. The renewed activity, he suggested, appeared aimed at disturbing communal harmony during the politically sensitive pre-election period. "Until the elections are over, we have to remain extremely vigilant. Everyone must maintain unity and harmony," he said, without naming any organisation or political party directly. While the chief minister refrained from offering specific evidence or explicitly linking the alleged activities to any political formation, his remarks have triggered political speculation, especially as parties gear up for a high-stakes electoral battle in the state. Assam is expected to go to the polls in the coming months, with security agencies on alert amid concerns that attempts may be made to exploit regional and communal fault lines during the election season.

BJP demands special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Assam

GUWAHATI

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday demanded a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Assam, similar to the exercise currently being carried out by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in several other states and Union Territories.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, state BJP president Dilip Saikia said an SIR was necessary to ensure the preparation of an accurate voter list ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

"We welcome the Special Intensive Revision being conducted in different states and demand that it be carried out in Assam as well. An SIR is essential to ensure that only genuine Indian citizens are included in the voter list and that the names of suspected persons are removed," Saikia said.

He stressed that a correct and error-free electoral roll is fundamental to the

democratic process. While acknowledging that a Special Revision (SR) is currently underway in Assam, Saikia said the BJP believes a more comprehensive exercise is required.

"At present, only Special Revision is being conducted. Unfortunately, discrepancies were noticed even during the NRC updation process, which is why we rejected the NRC data. During the Congress regime, lakhs of suspected people were enrolled in the voter list. Having one's name in the voter list does not automatically make someone an Indian citizen," he said.

Saikia claimed that the voter list still contains names of deceased persons and individuals who have shifted away long ago. "There are cases where votes are being cast in the names of people who have been dead for 30 years. Such anomalies must be corrected," he added.

He also pointed out that nationwide intensive revisions of electoral rolls have

ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) on Thursday raised concerns over the growing influx of goods from Bangladesh and the unchecked presence of foreign brands in local markets, warning that the trend is severely impacting local traders, MSMEs and indigenous entrepreneurs across Arunachal Pradesh.

While reaffirming its support for lawful international trade and regional cooperation, the chamber said unregulated and excessive market penetration by imported goods is creating unfair competition for local businesses. ACCI president Tarh Nachung said local traders face significantly higher transportation and operational costs, making it difficult for them to compete with low-priced imported goods.

"The unchecked inflow of such goods threatens local employment, traditional trades and small enterprises, and runs contrary to



the national vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Vocal for Local," Nachung said in a statement.

Expressing concern over the expanding footprint of foreign brands in the state, the ACCI announced that its teams would conduct surprise inspections in markets across Arunachal Pradesh to identify violations of market rules and statutory norms. The chamber said action against violators could include recommendations

for cancellation of trade licences.

Highlighting the strategic and economic sensitivity of the Himalayan region, Nachung urged policymakers to adopt a region-specific approach while framing trade and market-access policies. He said the unique geographical and logistical challenges faced by local traders must be taken into account to ensure a level playing field.

The chamber also directed

distributors of identified foreign brands operating in the state to surrender their licences immediately. Retailers have been asked to sell or dispose of existing stocks within one week, failing which they may face action.

The ACCI placed several demands before the authorities, including regulation of market access for foreign brands across the 12 Himalayan states and regions; strict monitoring of quality, pricing and statutory compliance of imported products; policy protection and incentives for local traders and MSMEs; stronger promotion of Indian and local brands; and mandatory consultation with the chamber before granting any trade relaxations.

Emphasising that its stand is constructive and non-confrontational, the ACCI said it does not oppose international trade but is calling for fair trade practices that safeguard local livelihoods and promote sustainable economic growth in Arunachal Pradesh.

Mizoram cabinet rules out extension of Governor's rule in Chakma Autonomous District Council

AIZAWL

The Mizoram Cabinet has concluded that there are no grounds to extend Governor's rule in the Chakma Autonomous District Council (ADC), asserting that the council does not face any political instability at present.

The Council of Ministers met on January 7 to consider a reference from the Governor on whether the six-month Governor's rule, imposed in July last year, should be continued and whether a fresh inquiry into the functioning of the ADC was required.

After deliberations, the cabinet rejected the need for a new inquiry commission, stating that sufficient assessments already exist to evaluate the situation. These include the report of an earlier inquiry commission, a comprehensive study led by the chief secretary covering all three autonomous district councils in Mizoram, and a report submitted by the Lawngtlai deputy commissioner on the ADC.

On the issue of Governor's rule, the cabinet noted that a single party currently enjoys a clear majority in the 20-member council, with 16 elected members. "There is no justification, on grounds of political instability or otherwise, to extend Governor's rule for another six months," the cabinet observed.

The ministers also recalled that when Governor's rule was imposed in July 2025, the state government had recommended allowing the party with the requisite majority to form the next

executive committee, a suggestion that was not accepted at the time.

Governor's rule was imposed on July 7, 2025, by Governor Vijay Kumar Singh following prolonged instability in the council after the removal of BJP leader Molin Kumar Chakma as chief executive member through a no-confidence motion on June 16. Chakma had assumed office on February 4, heading the first BJP-led executive in the ADC since its formation in 1972, but his government collapsed within four months amid mass defections.

In June, 12 BJP members, including then council chairman Lakhman Chakma, resigned from the party and joined the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM). In July, 16 ZPM members led by Lakhman Chakma staked claim before the Governor to form the next executive committee. The ADC has witnessed frequent leadership changes and defections, with the anti-defection law not applicable to the council.

Meanwhile, the Zoram People's Movement has renewed its demand for the immediate restoration of an elected executive. State supply minister and ZPM media chairman B. Lachhanzova said the party enjoys the support of 16 elected members and urged the Governor to allow it to form the executive committee in keeping with democratic and constitutional principles.

ZPM president Lalliansawta has also written to the Governor, seeking a floor test to enable the party to formally prove its majority in the council.

Tripura tops national business reforms ranking; investors line up Rs 15,000 crore

AGARTALA

Tripura has emerged as the top-performing state in India on industrial and business reforms, with investors expressing interest worth nearly Rs 15,000 crore, according to a senior state government official.

The official said Tripura secured the first position among 36 states and Union Territories for reforms in land management, construction, services, and the implementation of a Single Window System for industry and trade.

Data from the Department of Industries and Commerce show that investor interest has translated into concrete outcomes, with more than Rs 4,000 crore already invested across 68 projects in the past year.

The recognition was announced during the fifth Conference of Chief Secretaries, held in New Delhi from December 26 to 28 and chaired by the Cabinet Secretary in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Tripura Chief Secretary J K Sinha presented the state's reform roadmap and implementation strategy at the conference, which officials said drew appreciation from other states.

"Several states have been advised to



study and emulate Tripura's reform model to improve their own business environment," the official said, adding that the state's approach was highlighted as a best practice at the national level.

The official attributed the achievement to the leadership of Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha, citing his emphasis on simplifying procedures, improving ease of doing business, and promoting investor-friendly policies.

Following the national recognition, the Bihar government has invited Tripura officials to share insights and experiences from its reform journey. A meeting between officials of the two states is scheduled to be held at the Old Secretariat in Patna to explore the adoption of similar

business reform measures in Bihar.

State officials expressed confidence that sustained reforms and growing investor confidence would further strengthen Tripura's industrial growth and employment generation in the coming years.

Assam's NRL to supply 1.8 lakh tonnes of diesel to Bangladesh by December

Guwahati: Bangladesh has approved the import of 1.8 lakh tonnes of diesel from Assam-based Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) by December 2026, strengthening cross-border energy cooperation between India's Northeast and the neighbouring country.

The decision was cleared by Bangladesh's Advisory Committee on Government Purchase at a meeting held in Dhaka

on January 6, chaired by Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed. The state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) will procure the diesel under a long-term supply arrangement, with payments to be made through a mix of direct settlement and bank financing.

Officials familiar with the deal said the import price was finalised following negotiations with NRL, a subsidiary of Oil India Limited. The transaction is valued at around 14.62 billion Bangladeshi taka, approximately \$119.13 million, based on a premium of \$5.50 per barrel over a base price of \$83.22 per barrel. The final cost will be adjusted in line with prevailing international oil prices at the time of delivery.

Bangladesh's Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan told reporters that the supply is being carried out under a 15-year long-term agreement signed during the tenure of the previous government.

NRL operates its refinery at Numaligarh in Assam. The diesel will be transported from the refinery to Siliguri in West Bengal through the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline, which became operational in December 2022.

Officials said the deal underlines the growing role of Assam and the wider Northeast in regional energy trade and logistics connectivity between India and Bangladesh.

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CM Mamata alleges ED trying to seize TMC's internal data during I-PAC chief raid



KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday alleged that ED officials were attempting to seize TMC's hard disks, internal documents and sensitive organisational data during a search operation at the residence of I-PAC Chief Prateek Jain here.

She described the raid at the residence of Jain as politically motivated and unconstitutional. I-PAC also looks after the IT cell of the Trinamool Congress.

Banerjee made the allegations after emerging from Jain's Loudon Street residence here, where searches have been underway since Thursday morning.

Search operations were also being conducted at the office of the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), the consultancy firm Jain heads.

Claiming that the ED was trying to access the ruling party's internal strategy, candidate lists and confidential digital material, Banerjee said such information had no link to any financial probe.

"They are trying to take our party's hard disk, strategy and plans. Is it the duty of the ED to collect political parties' documents?" the chief minister asked, launching a sharp attack on Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"Calling the exercise an act of intimidation," Banerjee said, "This is not law enforcement, this is political vendetta. The home minister is behaving like the nastiest home minister, not someone who protects the country."?

The exact nature of the searches and details of the case being probed were not immediately clear.

There was no official statement from the ED or the I-PAC till the filing of this report.

Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly Suwendu Adhikari termed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's visit to I-PAC chief Pratik Jain's house during the ED raid on Thursday as "unconstitutional and interference" in the central agency's probe.

He said that the ED should take steps against the chief minister.

"I feel that the chief minister and the Kolkata police commissioner's visit was unethical, unconstitutional and direct interference in the central agency's investigation," Adhikari told reporters soon after they visit Jain's residence at Loudon Street here, as an Enforcement Directorate (ED) raid was going on there.

Department of Posts, Agriculture Ministry sign MoU to enable pan-India logistics for testing farm inputs

NEW DELHI

In a move aimed at strengthening quality control of agricultural inputs, the Department of Posts (DoP) and the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a nationwide logistics mechanism for the transportation of pesticide, seed and fertiliser samples to designated laboratories across India.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya M. Scindia and Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Speaking at the event, Scindia said that guided by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Viksit Bharat", the Department of Posts has evolved into one of the world's most comprehensive logistics and distribution networks. He highlighted that India Post operates more than 1.60 lakh post offices, nearly 1.40 lakh of them in rural areas, and handles lakhs of deliveries every day, including around six lakh parcel deliveries during peak festive periods, underlining its unmatched reach and operational strength.

The collaboration is part of the PAN-India Online Pesticide, Seed and Fertiliser Quality Management System being developed by the Centre for Research and Industrial Staff Performance (CRISP). The technology-driven system aims to improve transparency, strengthen quality control and ensure timely testing of agricultural inputs through an integrated digital workflow.

Under the MoU, India Post will provide end-to-end logistics support for the secure, traceable and time-bound movement of samples collected by pesticide,



seed and fertiliser inspectors. Leveraging its extensive postal network and last-mile connectivity, including in remote and rural regions, the Department of Posts will ensure reliable transportation of samples across the country.

The services will include designated booking and consolidation points, specialised handling and packaging protocols for sensitive samples, and QR code-based address masking with digital tracking to ensure confidentiality and end-to-end traceability. For select samples, temperature conditions required for preservation will also be dig-

itally monitored. Addressing the gathering, Chouhan said that fake and substandard pesticides, seeds and fertilisers cause significant financial losses and distress to farmers. He said the MoU would help protect farmers by ensuring faster and more dependable testing of agricultural inputs and strengthening enforcement mechanisms against spurious products.

According to the ministry, the improved logistics and digital tracking system will significantly cut transit time, with samples that earlier took 10-15 days to reach laboratories now expect-

ed to be delivered within 48 to 72 hours. This will enable quicker testing, timely corrective action and greater confidence among farmers in the quality of inputs supplied to them.

The Ministry said that the partnership underscores the government's focus on inter-departmental coordination and on leveraging India Post's logistics capabilities to support national programmes. The initiative is expected to enhance regulatory oversight, improve quality assurance in the agriculture sector and safeguard farmers from losses caused by fake agricultural inputs.

INTERNATIONAL

India in firing line as Trump greenlights US bill proposing 500% tariffs on buyers of Russian oil



WASHINGTON

A proposed US Congressional bill that would impose steep tariffs and secondary sanctions of up to 500% on countries importing Russian energy could place India and China in Washington's crosshairs, after US President Donald Trump appeared to give it the green light.

The move follows comments by Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who said he met Trump at the White House on Wednesday, where the president approved the long-pending Russia sanctions legislation.

Senator Graham said the bill could be put to a vote as early as next week, though its prospects in Congress remain uncertain. "This will be well-timed, as Ukraine is making concessions for peace and Putin is all talk, continuing to kill the innocent," Graham said in a statement, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The bipartisan legislation, titled the Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025, has been spearheaded by Senator Graham and Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal. It would authorise the US to levy punitive tariffs and secondary sanctions on countries — including India and China — that continue to purchase Russian oil, gas, uranium and other exports.

The legislation has dozens of co-spon-

sors in the Senate, as well as a companion bill in the House of Representatives.

Supporters of the bill say the measures are intended to choke off funding for Russia's military operations by targeting revenues from energy exports, which have remained resilient despite earlier Western sanctions.

Senator Graham had previously suggested that Trump backed the proposal, though it faced delays and resistance.

A White House official has now confirmed that the president supports the sanctions legislation. The White House had previously insisted on revisions to the sanctions package, including greater flexibility for Trump, though the official on Wednesday did not say whether any changes had been secured.

US President Donald Trump speaks to House Republican lawmakers in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026.

Introduced in the US Senate in January last year, the Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025 outlines a set of punitive measures linked to Russia's near-four year war in Ukraine. The bill would apply if the US president determines that the Russian government, or people acting on its behalf, are refusing to negotiate a peace deal with Ukraine, violating any agreement reached, launching a new invasion, or attempting to undermine or overthrow Ukraine's government.

In such cases, the legislation requires the US to impose visa bans and asset freezes on specific individuals. These include the Russian president, senior military commanders and any foreign person found to be knowingly supplying defence equipment to the Russian armed forces.

The bill also calls for steep tariffs on Russian imports. It mandates duties of at least 500% on all goods and services imported into the United States from Russia. In addition, the same level of tariffs would apply to imports from countries that knowingly trade in Russian-origin uranium and petroleum products.

The legislation further directs the US Treasury Department to impose asset-blocking sanctions on financial institutions set up under Russian law and owned wholly or partly by the Russian state. It would also target financial institutions that carry out transactions with those entities.

Finally, the bill requires the US Commerce Department to ban the export, re-export or transfer of US-produced energy and energy-related products to or within Russia.

India has sharply increased its purchases of discounted Russian crude since the start of the war in Ukraine, turning Russia into one of its largest oil suppliers. At times, Russian oil has accounted for around 35-40% of India's total crude imports, up from about 0.2% before the conflict.

Trump has repeatedly criticised India's continued purchases of Russian oil. In August, his administration imposed an additional 25% levy on Indian imports, taking total US tariffs on Indian goods to 50% — among the highest imposed on any major trading partner.

India has defended the imports, saying they are essential to meeting domestic energy demand and shielding consumers from price volatility. New Delhi also maintains that its approach is guided by national interest.

Meanwhile, Russian crude continues to flow into India despite US sanctions on two

major Russian oil companies, Rosneft and Lukoil, though volumes have fallen from earlier levels. Supplies have been sustained largely by India's private refiners, which have adjusted operating strategies, as well as by sourcing oil from entities not directly sanctioned.

According to commodity analytics firm Kpler, India imported about 1.2 million barrels per day of Russian crude in December 2025, the lowest level since December 2022.

Under the proposed US legislation, countries found to be knowingly importing Russian-origin petroleum products could face tariffs of up to 500% on their exports to the United States. That could leave Indian exporters exposed to punitive trade measures.

Any decision by Washington to enforce such secondary sanctions could further strain India-US relations, which have deepened in recent years across trade, defence and strategic cooperation.

However, ties have faced turbulence in 2025, as trade disputes, immigration restrictions and geopolitical tensions have tested the relationship in ways not seen for decades.

India and China — the two largest buyers of discounted Russian crude — would be directly in the firing line. Their continued purchases have provided Russia with a crucial economic lifeline, helping to sustain military operations in Ukraine even as Western sanctions have tightened.

The wider economic impact could be significant.

A 500% tariff on Chinese goods, which make up a large share of US consumer imports, could drive up prices, disrupt already fragile global supply chains, and risk higher inflation and job losses in the United States.

India, meanwhile, could face reduced access to the US market at a time when it is seeking to expand exports in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, information technology and textiles.

Japanese nuclear official loses phone with confidential data in China



TOKYO

An employee of Japan's nuclear regulator lost a smartphone, possibly in China, containing a confidential list of contacts, an official and local media reports said.

The case became public this week as China continues to raise pressure on Tokyo after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggested in November that Japan may react militarily if Taiwan were to come under an attack.

Beijing claims the self-ruled island as part of its own territory and has not ruled out seizing it by force.

The news also came as Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO), which operated the crippled Fukushima atomic plant, moves to restart the world's biggest nuclear plant later this month.

A Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) employee has lost a work-issued smartphone,

used during disasters such as major earthquakes, an agency official told AFP Thursday on the customary condition of anonymity.

The incident was reported in November to a Japanese body that governs proper handling of personal information, he told.

The device is primarily used for telephone calls and texting, and not for accessing nuclear data at the agency, he added.

The smartphone contained the names and contact details of staff members in the authority's nuclear security division, according to major media, including Kyodo News and the Asahi Shimbun newspaper.

Information on staff in the division is not made public due to the sensitivity of their work, local media said.

The employee is believed to have lost the smartphone at an airport in Shanghai on November 3 while taking items

out of carry-on luggage during a security check, Kyodo said, citing unnamed sources.

The person realised the phone was missing three days later but was unable to locate it, Kyodo added.

Remotely locking or erasing the data on the phone was also not possible as it was out of range, according to Kyodo.

The NRA is currently evaluating TEPCO's application to restart the world's biggest nuclear plant, Kashiwazaki-Kariwa.

Japan pulled the plug on nuclear power after a colossal earthquake and tsunami sent three reactors at the Fukushima atomic plant into meltdown in 2011.

However, the resource-poor nation now wants to revive atomic energy to reduce its heavy dependence on fossil fuels, achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and meet growing energy needs from artificial intelligence.

NEIR Team Briefs Sikkim Governor's Secretary on NEIR Movement

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OUR CORRESPONDENT
SIKKIM: THE NEIR TEAM ON JANUARY 7 MET JITENDRA SINGH RAJE, SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR OF SIKKIM, AND BRIEFED HIM IN DETAIL ABOUT THE OBJECTIVES AND PROGRESS OF THE NEIR MOVEMENT.

The delegation outlined the movement's vision, its core demands, and the issues it seeks to address across the region. The meeting focused on creating awareness about the NEIR initiative and its broader social and developmental concerns. Raj received the team warmly and listened attentively to their presentation. He assured the delegation of all possible support to the NEIR Movement in the coming days, expressing

appreciation for their efforts and engagement. The NEIR team described the interaction as positive and encouraging, stating that the assurance has strengthened their resolve to continue the movement's activities.

Dharmanagar: North Tripura's Historic Gateway, Commercial Nerve Centre, and Cultural Heart



Dharmanagar sits quietly in the northern edge of Tripura, but its importance has never been quiet. This is a town shaped by history, geography, trade, and belief. It is the administrative heart of North Tripura district and the second largest urban centre in the state after Agartala. More than size, Dharmanagar matters because of where it stands and what it connects.

Located close to the India Bangladesh border, Dharmanagar has long functioned as a gateway. To the north lies Moulvibazar of present day Bangladesh. Karimganj district of Assam stretches to the east, Mizoram lies to the south, and Kailashahar subdivision of Unakoti district borders it on the west. The Juri River flows through the town, shaping both its landscape and its seasonal rhythms. Green surroundings, low hills, and water bodies give Dharmanagar a character that feels open and lived in rather than crowded.

Historically, Dharmanagar is believed to be an ancient settlement once known as Faticuli. While its exact boundaries in ancient times are not clearly documented, several sources suggest that the town once held far greater political and geographical importance. Accounts indicate that parts of Sylhet, now in Bangladesh, were once linked to Dharmanagar. What was once considered a capital of Tripura has, over centuries, been reduced in size and political status. Yet traces of that older prominence still linger in the town's cultural confidence and regional influence.

Today, Dharmanagar functions as one of Tripura's most important commercial hubs. It serves not only North Tripura but also nearby regions of Assam and border areas of Bangladesh. Trade, transport, and small scale commerce drive the local economy. Markets remain active throughout the day, drawing traders, farmers, and buyers from surrounding rural areas. Its role as a district headquarters further strengthens its administrative and economic position.

The town's population, estimated at around 32,900 in the mid 2000s, reflects a largely homogeneous social fabric with space for diversity. According to the 2011 Census, Hinduism is followed by over 92 percent of the population, while Islam accounts for nearly 7 percent. Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, and other religions together form a small but visible presence. This demographic balance has contributed to Dharmanagar's reputation as a relatively peaceful town with strong community ties.

Literacy levels in Dharmanagar are higher than the national average, standing at over 73 percent. Male literacy exceeds 81 percent, while female literacy is above 65 percent. These figures point to gradual social progress, though gaps remain. Educational institutions, both government and private, play a steady role in shaping the aspirations of the town's younger population.

Climate defines daily life here. Dharmanagar enjoys a generally moderate and pleasant environment for much of the year, though summers can be harsh. Heat, humidity, sudden rainfall, and thunderstorms are common during the warmer months. Winter arrives towards the end of November and lasts until February, bringing cooler temperatures that



are often described locally as biting cold. The monsoon begins early, around April, during the Bengali month of Baishakh. Heavy rainfall frequently leads to flooding, especially when local rivers overflow, disrupting daily routines and transport.

Connectivity has always been central to Dharmanagar's identity. The town holds a special place in Tripura's railway history. In 1964, Dharmanagar became the first railway station in the state to be connected to the national rail network. Even today, it remains a crucial rail junction. Trains from Dharmanagar link Tripura to the rest of India, including major cities such as Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Bhopal, and Firozpur. Services like the Tripurasundari Express, Rajdhani Express, Kanchanjunga Express, Humsafar Express, and others ensure that the town remains well connected beyond the Northeast.

Road connectivity is equally vital. Daily bus services operate from Dharmanagar to Guwahati and Shillong via National Highway 8. Frequent buses connect the town to Agartala and other parts of Tripura and Assam. For many residents, buses remain the most reliable and affordable mode of transport.

Air connectivity has seen changes over time. Kailashahar Airport was once the nearest airfield but is currently abandoned. Recent surveys by the Airports Authority of India and commitments from the state government to acquire land have revived hopes of its redevelopment. Until then, Silchar and Agartala airports serve Dharmanagar, along with a local helipad used for emergency travel and official movement.

Beyond commerce and

devotional and festive.

Temples form an important part of the town's identity. Kalibari, Hari Mandir, Office Tilla Kalibari, Shib Bari, Ramakrishna Seba Samiti, and Choto Kalibari attract devotees throughout the year. These spaces function not only as places of worship but also as centres of community life.

Tourism around Dharmanagar draws heavily from its natural and archaeological surroundings. Kali Dighi, a scenic lake within the town, offers a quiet space for relaxation. Its evening fountains and calm setting make it a popular local attraction. Nearby lies Rowa Wildlife Sanctuary, a protected forest area that adds ecological value to the region.

A short distance away stands Unakoti, one of Tripura's most remarkable heritage sites. Known for its massive rock cut images and stone carvings dating back to the 7th to 9th centuries, Unakoti is both a religious site and an archaeological wonder. The colossal image of Lord Shiva dominates the landscape, drawing pilgrims, historians, and tourists alike. Though technically located in the Kailashahar subdivision, Unakoti remains closely tied to Dharmanagar's cultural and tourism circuit.

Dharmanagar today is a town shaped by contrast. It carries memories of a larger past while managing the realities of a district headquarters. It faces challenges from floods, infrastructure gaps, and changing economic patterns, yet it continues to hold its ground as a regional centre. What defines Dharmanagar is not spectacle, but continuity. Trade flows through it. Trains stop here. Festivals return every year. History sits quietly beneath everyday life.

Dharmanagar may not seek attention, but it remains essential. In Tripura's northern landscape, it stands as a town that connects borders, preserves memory, and keeps moving forward, one season at a time.





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11 JAN
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10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
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10 JAN
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 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
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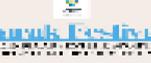
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Barak Festival
 Band Night | 10 JAN
 Musical Night | 11 JAN

10-12 JAN
E-Sports
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11 JAN
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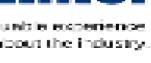
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