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PERSPECTIVE
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Shillong-bound IndiGo flight placed in isolation bay in Kolkata airport after bomb threat

KOLKATA

A Shillong-bound aircraft was moved to the isolation bay at Kolkata airport on Saturday after the discovery of a handwritten note claiming that a bomb had been placed in the plane, an official statement said.

The discovery was made before passengers boarded the IndiGo flight 6E3074.

During boarding, crew members found the piece of paper inside the aircraft's toilet. Immediately after the note was discovered, passengers were removed from the aircraft.

"Bomb scare in Kolkata to Shillong IndiGo 6E3074, which was scheduled to depart at 9:15 AM, from Kolkata Airport. The aircraft has been moved to the isolation bay. During boarding, crew members found a piece of paper inside the aircraft's toilet compartment, which stated that there was a bomb inside the aircraft. Immediately afterwards, passengers were removed from the aircraft. The checking process is going on," the NSCBI director said.

The aircraft is being thoroughly searched, but nothing has been found so far, an AAI spokesperson said.

"The aircraft has been moved to the isolation bay, and all precautionary measures as per standard operating procedure are being taken," the statement added.

WHO SAID WHAT



"Stress primarily comes from not taking action over something that you can have some control over." — Jeff Bezos, Founder Amazon

Declared Dead, Cremated - Then He Returned: Meghalaya Mine Worker's Shock Reappearance Sparks Identity Mystery

SIRBHUMI



were still underway, Sinha walked back into his home - alive.

The dramatic reappearance has left relatives stunned, triggered emotional scenes in the village, and raised serious questions about the identity of the body cremated in his name.

Sinha was among more than 30 workers reportedly present when a powerful explosion ripped through an illegal coal mine in the Chutunga area of Thangsku on February 5. The operation was allegedly functioning despite a 2014 ban on rat-hole mining imposed by the National Green Tribunal.

Rat-hole mining - a hazardous method involving narrow, manually dug tunnels - was prohibited by the tribunal over environmental damage and grave safety concerns, including the absence of ventilation and structural safeguards.

Following the explosion, several workers were killed and many injured. The latest confirmed fatality occurred days later when an injured labourer succumbed at a Guwahati hospital. Search and rescue

operations were called off on February 9 after assessment teams concluded that no survivors remained trapped underground.

According to family members, Sinha had travelled to Meghalaya about a month ago in search of work. When he went missing after the blast, relatives waited anxiously for news. After several days without contact - and based on information allegedly provided by local sources and authorities - the family accepted that he had died.

A body was identified as Sinha's and handed over to his relatives. Funeral rites were performed in Lengtarpar village under Ratabari police station in Sirbhumi district.

Three days later, he returned. Villagers initially struggled to believe what they were witnessing. Once it was confirmed that the man standing before them was indeed Shyambabu Sinha, grief turned to disbelief, then to celebration.

"It felt like someone had returned from the dead," a local resident said.

The extraordinary development

has now sparked a pressing question: whose body was cremated in Sinha's name?

Authorities are under mounting pressure to determine how the misidentification occurred and to establish the identity of the deceased person whose remains were handed over to Sinha's family.

The incident has intensified scrutiny of post-blast procedures, including victim identification protocols, communication between authorities and families, and the handling of remains.

Officials have yet to publicly clarify the circumstances that led to the apparent mix-up.

Meanwhile, the wider investigation into the explosion has gathered pace. Meghalaya Police have constituted a nine-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to examine how the illegal mine continued operations despite the longstanding ban.

Director General of Police Idashisha Nongrang announced the formation of the SIT, calling for a "fair, impartial and expeditious in-

vestigation into the circumstances leading to the incident."

Deputy Inspector General Vivekanand S Rathore will head the team, which has been tasked with:

• Determining the cause of the explosion

• Identifying violations of court and tribunal directives

• Establishing responsibility for allowing the mine to operate

• Completing the probe within a fixed timeframe

"The SIT will ensure that the investigation is carried out in a time-bound manner so as to bring the case to its logical conclusion and ensure delivery of justice in accordance with law," the official order stated. Four arrests have been made so far in connection with the illegal mining operation. Authorities have seized several thousand metric tonnes of illegally extracted coal, dismantled labour camps, and intensified raids across coal-bearing regions.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has also announced

the formation of a judicial inquiry commission to fix responsibility for the disaster.

The 2014 ban on rat-hole mining was imposed after the tribunal cited severe environmental degradation and serious safety hazards. However, recurring accidents in recent years have raised concerns about enforcement gaps and the persistence of illegal operations.

For Sinha's family, the return of a man they believed dead has brought immense relief. Yet the joy is tempered by the unsettling reality that another family may have unknowingly lost a loved one whose identity remains unconfirmed.

As authorities attempt to unravel both the blast and the mistaken cremation, the incident has exposed not only the dangers of illegal mining but also potential lapses in crisis response and victim identification. What began as a tragedy has now become a mystery - one that investigators must resolve swiftly to ensure accountability and justice for those truly lost in the February 5 explosion.

PM Modi makes historic landing at North East's first emergency landing facility in Assam

PM Modi inaugurates Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu, Northeast's first extradosed bridge across Brahmaputra

MORAN

An ordinary stretch of national highway in Moran has been transformed into a fully functional Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Assam on February 14, drawing widespread attention and excitement across Upper Assam.

What typically serves as a busy corridor for trucks, buses and daily commuters was cleared, secured and meticulously prepared to host fighter jets and military transport aircraft. As part of a high-intensity defence drill, aircraft successfully executed take-offs and landings on the highway strip, demonstrating the operational readiness of the Indian Air Force to convert civilian infrastructure into emergency airbases at short notice.

Residents gathered along designated viewing points to witness the rare spectacle. As jets descended and touched down on the asphalt, the



roar of engines reverberated across the area, with many locals describing the moment as "unforgettable." Children perched on their parents' shoulders while others captured the event on mobile phones.

Speaking to reporters at the site, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Prime Minister would travel from New Delhi to the Chabua Air Force Station and then board a C-130 transport aircraft



to land directly on the newly prepared airstrip at Moran before proceeding to Guwahati.

Around 16 IAF aircraft are expected to participate in a 30-minute aerial exercise. According to Sarma, advanced fighter platforms including the Dassault Rafale and the Sukhoi Su-30MKI will take part in the demonstration, with several jets also scheduled to land on the highway strip. He described it as the

first such elaborate exercise on an Emergency Landing Facility in the region.

Security has been tightened across the Moran sector, with vehicular movement regulated and access points sealed to facilitate the operation.

Officials said the drill is designed to test rapid deployment capability, logistical preparedness and coordination between defence forces and

civil administration.

The successful execution of take-offs and landings on a public highway underscores India's focus on developing dual-use infrastructure capable of serving both civilian and strategic needs.

Calling the event "very rare," the Chief Minister said students from schools, colleges and universities in Dibrugarh and Charaideo districts have been invited to witness the demonstration. He expressed hope that the exercise would inspire young people to consider careers in the Indian Air Force.

Sarma clarified that only the aircraft landing demonstration will be held at Moran and that no public meeting or speech is scheduled at the venue. Nonetheless, for residents, the transformation of their familiar highway into a temporary airbase represents a striking blend of development, defence preparedness and national pride in the heart of Upper Assam.

Amit Shah's Barak visit sparks buzz; Natunpur gears up for major rally



SILCHAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's proposed visit to the Barak Valley has generated significant political excitement, with preparations underway for a major public meeting in Natunpur village under Katigorah. According to sources, Shah is scheduled to arrive in the Barak Valley on February 21. Upon reaching Natunpur - a village located near the India-Bangladesh international border - he will spend around half an hour at a programme organised by the Border Security Force (BSF). He is then expected to address a large public gathering in the area.

Senior leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) along with district administration officials have conducted multiple inspections to review preparedness for the high-profile event. Security has been significantly tightened, particularly given Natunpur's proximity to the international border, with BSF personnel increasing vigilance in the region.

The visit has sparked enthusiasm among party workers and supporters,

who have intensified mobilisation efforts across the Barak Valley. Residents of Natunpur have described the event as historic, noting that it is the first time since Independence that a senior Union minister will address a public meeting in the locality on such a scale.

However, alongside the excitement, longstanding developmental concerns have resurfaced. Locals highlight persistent gaps in education, healthcare, drinking water supply, and communication infrastructure. In cases of medical emergencies, residents reportedly travel 60-70 kilometres to access hospital facilities.

Many in the region are hopeful that the Home Minister's visit will pave the way for concrete development initiatives. There is growing demand for the establishment of a manufacturing hub in Natunpur and adjoining areas to generate employment opportunities for youth in the border belt.

Attention is now focused on whether the visit will translate into tangible progress for this frontier region of the Barak Valley.

Manipur CM Urges Centre to Resume Imphal-Silchar Flight Under UDAN



OUR CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh has written to Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu seeking early resumption of the Imphal-Silchar-Imphal air service under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (UDAN).

In his letter, the Chief Minister pointed out that the route, earlier operated by Alliance Air, has remained suspended since November 2025.

He noted that during its operation, the Imphal-Silchar sector maintained passenger load factors above 80 percent. This showed strong demand and proved the service was useful for the public.

The Chief Minister said the flight acted as a key lifeline for many in Manipur, especially residents of Jiribam district. Many people there depend on Silchar airport to reach Imphal and connect to other parts of the country.

He said the suspension has caused serious hardship. Students, patients, officials and businesspersons earlier relied on this route for quick and affordable travel.

The Chief Minister also mentioned that the present law and order situation in the state makes the air link even more important.

He requested the Union Minister's personal intervention to restart the service at the earliest, preferably under the UDAN scheme, to improve connectivity and ease travel for people in the region.

Supreme Court of India Seeks CBI Status Report on Manipur Violence Cases in Two Weeks

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of India on directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to file a status report within two weeks on its probe into 11 FIRs linked to the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur, while also indicating that monitoring of the trials may be entrusted to the jurisdictional High Courts instead of the apex court.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said the monitoring of trials and related proceedings could be undertaken either by the Manipur High Court, which now has a new Chief Justice, or the Gauhati High Court, or jointly by both courts.

The court also asked the Centre and the Manipur government to ensure the implementation of the recommendations made by the Justice Gita Mittal Committee on the rehabilitation and welfare of victims of the ethnic violence.

The committee, headed by former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Justice Gita Mittal and comprising former judges Justice Shalini P. Joshi of the Bombay High Court and Justice Asha Menon of the Delhi High Court, has submitted several reports outlining measures for relief, rehabilitation and compensation to those affected.

The violence in Manipur erupted on May 3, 2023, following a 'Tribal Solidarity March' organised in the hill districts to protest the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Since then, over 200 people have been killed, hundreds injured and thousands displaced in one of the worst ethnic conflicts the State has witnessed in decades. At the outset of the hearing,

senior advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for a deceased victim, sought substitution of the woman's mother in the proceedings. She alleged that the CBI had failed to inform the victim about the filing of a charge sheet in her rape case.

Grover told the court that the Kuki woman had died last month from an illness allegedly linked to the trauma she endured after being gang-raped during the violence. She further alleged lapses in the conduct of the trial.

"I have accessed the trial court report. The man accused are not appearing. The CBI is not present. The casualness with which it is happening is shocking," she submitted.

Responding to the allegations, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said there could be no opposition to concerns raised about victims' rights.

"Nobody can oppose what Grover is saying. The victim's rights cannot be affected," he said, adding that the CBI was prepared to address the issues either before the apex court or the Manipur High Court. The Chief Justice suggested that the monitoring aspect could be entrusted to the Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court. When counsel Nizam Pasha pointed out that the Gauhati High Court was already monitoring certain trials, the bench said such an arrangement was "perfectly alright" given the surcharged atmosphere that had prevailed in the State.

The court asked counsel to seek instructions on whether the jurisdictional High Court in Manipur, the Gauhati High Court, or both courts could undertake coordinated monitoring, and to revert within two weeks.



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BLACK DAY: REMEMBER- ING BEYOND RITUALS

World over, nation states have had certain days in their long history of evolution that would always be etched in the collective psyche of their being. An 'inflection point' which fundamentally altered the manner in their way of conduct of worldly affairs to include foreign/defence policy as also its domestic governance. Such momentous events when time seemed to pause, when grief so overwhelming that transcended the physicality of their geographical boundaries to numb the humanity into a deafening silence. Such grief has always been connoted cum associated with 'Black colour'. The symbolism of black colour represents directly absence of life or devoid of any colour as also its capacity to absorb all other colours in the spectrum of visible colours (VIBGYOR). The symbolism of 'Black September' in Israel has not been lost on the world when during 1972 Munich Olympics the BSO (Black September organization) a terrorist organization murdered 11 Israeli Olympic team members. Similarly for the US the daring 'Pearl Harbour attack' in 2 WW by the Japanese and the infamous 'Siege of Stalingrad' in Russia by the German army are some of the major inflection points that fundamentally altered both super power's outlook on worldly affairs. For India, 14 February stands out one such moment of reckoning that commemorates a 'Black day' when humanity plummeted to its nether end; forcing India for ever to shed its pusillanimous handling of terrorists operating from the foreign soil/bases for decades long. The ruthless snuffing out of lives of innocent CRPF Jawans on 14th February 2019 at Pulwama by terrorists would go down in the Indian history that tantamount to challenging the very concept of India's sovereign identity. An attack so deadly and macabre that still has its evil reverberations echoing the four corners of the sub-continent. The Pulwama attack happened when India was in the throes of changing the socio-economic cum security milieu of J&K by initiating hard as well as soft options which were a combination of strict policing actions and a liberal dosage of economic assistance. The CRPF convoy carrying more than 40 of its personnel from Jammu to Srinagar were blown to smithereens with a calculated brutality that seldom finds parallel in Indian history till today. The sheer scale of the explosion and the site littered with mangled steel and human body parts testified the adage in its entirety: 'A picture is worth more than thousand words'. No words however condemnable and strong could remove the acrid smell of burning flesh, steel and a deafening silence that followed the explosion.

In the immediate aftermath, India witnessed an unprecedented wave of unity, a typical quality of ours. Political differences faded as the nation spoke in one voice against terrorism. This unity was not performativity in its very being. It translated into a renewed public discourse on national security, intelligence coordination and counter terrorism preparedness. 'Black day' of 14th February thus became a catalyst - not just for remembrance, but for reform. Pulwama attack had far reaching consequences beyond emotion. It redefined India's approach to terrorism emanating from across the borders. The subsequent 'Balakot air strikes' marked paradigm shift in strategic posturing of India-signaling that acts of terror would invite decisive responses. Though countless articles and discourses from national as well as international pulpits have been the order of the day on the said subject, it remains to be seen that the commemoration efforts towards such a solemn event are not reduced to an annual extravaganza. In fact 'Pulwama attack' and 'Balakot air strikes' as a consequence to the former that occurred in 2019 have surpassed their severity when seen under the telescope of last year's 'Pahalgam attack' in which innocent civilian tourists were gunned down. The subsequent punitive actions undertaken by India in the form of 'OP Sindoor' and abrogation of 'Indus water treaty' between both India and Pakistan are visible manifestations of India's steely resolve to wipe out this scourge of terrorism from the face of our neighbouring countries. I would be wasting precious space of Daily excolesior if I revert back and reinvent the wheel in terms of raking up the age old intelligence failure, lack of coordination between plethora of security agencies cum forces and similar such steps in tackling the menace of four decades old problem of militancy in Jammu & Kashmir. All and sundry by now are aware of the actual 'casus belli' aka point of conflict in J&K.

The importance of observing such a solemn occasion is lost when the same is seen from the prism of a ritualistic evil, which has to be gotten over sooner or later. As stated by me above, the true purpose of observing 'Black Day' lies in maintaining its solemnity. Schools, universities, and civil society institutions increasingly use the day to discuss the broader impact of terrorism - on democracy, human rights and social cohesion. By engaging the younger generation in a dialogue, Black day becomes educational as well as commemorative. For those of us in uniform or even who had their uniform shed after retirement, 'Black day' carries a deeper resonance.

It is a moment of quiet reflection - a reminder of the unpredictable dangers inherent in service. Yet it also reinforces the ethos of duty without bitterness. In Jammu & Kashmir, the presence of security forces is not episodic - it is woven into the daily lives of the locals who day in and out bear witness to convoys, checkpoints, patrols and the ilk.

Due to the above activities, the people of J&K often find themselves caught between competing narratives - security concerns on one side and the aspirations for normalcy on the other. For traders along the highway, farmers in countless villages of both Jammu as well as Kashmir divisions, students in Srinagar, and pilgrims in Jammu, the aftermath of such incidents bring heightened security restrictions, and economic loss. The Srinagar-Jammu national highway is more than a road, it is the artery that sustains J&K. The Pulwama attack along this highway was not one random act of violence; it was executed to target mobility, logistics, and unhinge the cocoon of serenity that prevailed upon in general area Pulwama. Jammu & Kashmir has lived through decades of internecine conflicts. Its people-across regions, religions, and communities have experienced curfews, shutdowns, encounters, and uncertainty.

The Pulwama attack was the proverbial 'inflection point' in Indian security planners' minds, who otherwise were sweetly ensconced in their silos only to be shaken up delivered by the rude reality which unfolded on that frosty morning of 14 February 2019. The bitter fact that the infamy of Pulwama doesn't die too soon was all the more evident when last November, the wires of 'Red fort car blast' were again traced back to it, chastening our security experts that the embers of Pulwama are still simmering and have the capacity of incapacitating our best of efforts towards normalization of environment in the country.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Never ask a barber if you need a haircut." - Warren Buffett

US SLAPS 16% HIGHER TARIFFS, GETS WIDER ACCESS TO INDIA



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The US tariff cut is supposed to be positive for Indian trade and markets. The US administration is propagating it as a great favour to India. The drumbeats announce that a 50 percent tariff is cut to 18 percent. That looks great. The reality is far away from it.

Yes, President Donald Trump imposed a 25% tariff and warned of an additional 25% penalty if India continued buying Russian oil. The penalty remained only a threat, as New Delhi moved quickly to comply. The Trump administration has approached trade talks like a hard-nosed corporate negotiator—using threats as leverage and extracting concessions without necessarily enforcing them.

Trump has effectively raised tariffs on Indian goods by about 16 percentage points compared with the 2024 baseline. Indian exports faced average levies of just 2.4% in 2024. Now, even after a nominal 7-point reduction from the proposed 25 percent rate, the revised tariff still stands at 18 percent. In effect, Indian goods will face an additional 15.6-16 percentage points over the 2024 level — a steep increase disguised as a concession. Plus, all goods

delivering for our American farmers. The new US-India deal will expand exports of American farm products to India's vast market, lifting prices and pumping cash into rural America." She noted that the US faces a \$1.3 billion agricultural trade deficit and sees India's growing population as a critical opportunity for American producers.

How would Indian farmers gain or suffer remains the big question. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal says that there would not be any dairy product entry. If so, a small relief. In short: India gains more on sentiment and sectoral export competitiveness, while the US secures broader market access and strategic leverage. The deal is beneficial, but not a clear, unilateral victory. The reset has strengthened the rupee but not the stock market sentiments.

The tariff cut does not improve pricing competitiveness for Indian exporters in the US market, especially in labour-intensive industries like textiles, gems and jewellery, and engineering goods, which were hit hard by the 50 percent levies.

Effectively, Indian exports would be highly expensive. The exporters would have to sweat hard to keep products compet-

itive. Would new duties help Indian products compete better against regional rivals such as Vietnam, Bangladesh and Indonesia, where US tariffs are effectively lower?

The deal reportedly involves India reducing its own barriers on US imports and committing to purchase large volumes, \$

500 billion, of American energy, technology, agricultural and other products. This quid pro quo could widen India's trade deficit with the US over time and narrow India's policy space on tariff policy. Presently India has a trade surplus of \$ 42 billion.

India's total imports are at \$700 billion. India has FTAs with many countries including the UK and EU. The EU deal is described as a gold mine. It would be a magical trick if it could really import such large volumes from the US, including the poor crude from Venezuela, at a high shipment cost. Still, with the new tariff rate, India is believed to now enjoy a relative advantage over some Asian competitors in the US market because its goods face lower duties than those from certain peers. While the tariff is reset to 18 percent, some specific product tariffs (like steel, aluminium and certain auto components) may remain high or unchanged due to ongoing US trade rules (Section 232 duties), limiting relief for those sectors. Also, tariff cuts mainly help goods exports, which make up a modest share of India's overall GDP and exports to the US (services, such as IT, are often outside tariff regimes). This means the macro-economic windfall may be more limited than headlines suggest.

India's commitment to halt Russian oil purchases represents a significant geopolitical shift that may have cost implications. Russian oil had been a source of relatively cheaper energy; switching sources could raise import bills and impact the current account if not managed carefully. Many specifics of how tariff cuts will be phased, what products they apply to, and how India will liberalise its own markets have yet to be fully detailed.

While analysts have suggested modest GDP lifts (e.g., up to 0.3 percent from restored export flows), such gains are modest relative to India's overall economic size and may not offset domestic weaknesses such as investment hesitation or hinterland distress.

It is said that there are some other considerations as well. On January 23, when the US SEC sought court approval to issue summons directly to Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani, the shares of the Adani group companies plunged between 3.54 and 14.54 percent.

When the share market opened on February 3, after Trump's trade deal and the

shares of the group companies have jumped up in both BSE and NSE indices. All companies have registered huge gains, with Adani Energy Solutions leaping up by an average of 10+ points, Adani Enterprises by 10.72, Adani Green Energy by 10.82, Adani Ports & SEZ by 9.06, Adani Power by 7.58, Adani total Gas by 4.89, Ambuja Cement by 3.3% and Sanghi Industries by 5.28 percent in BSE index.

For India, the benefits are

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Today, as Adarniya @narendramodiji touched down on the Moran Emergency Landing Facility, built on the Dibrugarh-Moran Highway, it marks a PARADIGM shift in how Bharat is decisively securing the North East Frontier, where the wounds of 1962 are etched in many of our memories. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



real but limited: short-to medium-term export relief, improved price competitiveness, firmer investor sentiment, and some easing of currency pressures, along with closer long-term alignment with a major market. The gains are incremental rather than transformational.

For the US, the advantages are broader. Lower tariffs benefit American consumers and firms that source Indian goods, while India's commitment to buy more US energy, technology and agricultural products directly supports American producers.

In practice, the US may emerge the larger strategic gainer. It secures more reliable access to Indian goods and capital, opens India's market wider for American exports, and reinforces its geopolitical push to reshape global energy and trade flows. India, meanwhile, regains competitiveness and market confidence but at the cost of some policy flexibility on tariffs and energy sourcing, and with the likelihood of higher imports from the US.



from the US, as per the announcements, would have duty-free entry to India. These include American farm goods.

Opening India's market to US agricultural imports has been welcomed by US Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, who said, "Thank you for once again

itive. Would new duties help Indian products compete better against regional rivals such as Vietnam, Bangladesh and Indonesia, where US tariffs are effectively lower?"

The deal reportedly involves India reducing its own barriers on US imports and committing to purchase large volumes, \$

Meghalaya Sets Up SIT to Probe Illegal Coal Mine Blast That Killed 32

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya Police has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the illegal coal mine explosion at Thangsku in East Jaintia Hills district that has claimed 32 lives so far.

The February 5 blast occurred at an allegedly illegal rat-hole mining site in the Chutunga area of Thangsku. The death toll rose after an injured worker succumbed to his injuries at a hospital in Guwahati days later, prompting renewed scrutiny over continued illegal mining despite a long-standing ban.

Director General of Police Idashisha Nongrang, in an official order, announced the formation of



the nine-member SIT with immediate effect.

"In view of the recent coal mine accident that occurred at Thangsku, East Jaintia Hills District, Khliehriat and in order to ensure a fair, impartial and expeditious investigation into the circumstances leading to the incident, the DGP, Meghalaya is pleased to constitute a special investigation team (SIT) with immediate effect," the order stated.

The team will be headed by Deputy Inspector General of Police (Eastern Range) Vivekanand S Rathore.

The SIT has been tasked with: "Ascertaining the cause and circumstances of the explo-

sion

Conducting a comprehensive investigation into the illegal mining operation

Identifying violations of court and National Green Tribunal directives relating to rat-hole mining

"The SIT will also ensure that the investigation is carried out in a time-bound manner so as to bring the case to its logical conclusion and ensure delivery of justice in accordance with law," the order added.

Search and rescue operations at the blast site were called off on February 9 after assessment teams concluded there was no further

possibility of locating survivors trapped underground.

The tragedy has once again drawn attention to the 2014 ban imposed by the National Green Tribunal on rat-hole mining and transportation of coal in Meghalaya. The tribunal had cited severe environmental degradation and serious safety risks, including lack of ventilation and structural safeguards in narrow mining tunnels.

Four persons have been arrested so far in connection with the illegal mine. Authorities have seized several thousand metric tonnes of illegally extracted coal and intensified raids in coal-bearing regions while dismantling labour camps linked to unauthorised operations.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has announced a judicial inquiry commission to examine the circumstances leading to the blast and fix accountability.

The state government has also informed the Meghalaya High Court that strict action will be taken against those found responsible.

The focus of the probe now centres on how an illegal operation continued nearly a decade after a blanket ban, and whether lapses in enforcement or collusion allowed the mine to function unchecked.

With 32 lives lost, the incident has intensified demands for accountability and stricter monitoring of mining activities in the state's

Manipur lifts internet suspension in Ukhrul, Kangpokpi and Kamjong

IMPHAL

The Government of Manipur on Friday lifted the temporary suspension of internet services in select parts of the state following a review of the prevailing law and order situation.

The order applies to Ukhrul district, Lhungtin sub-division of Kangpokpi district, and Phungyar sub-division of Kamjong district.

Joint Secretary (Home) Mayengbam Veto Singh stated that the decision was taken after assessing the ground situation.

The suspension had been imposed at 11:30 am on February 10 as a preventive measure in the interest of public order.

In its latest order, the government said all forms of internet suspension in the affected areas have now been withdrawn. It noted that the earlier curbs were imposed in good faith to prevent the spread of unrest and maintain peace.

Authorities have advised internet users to refrain from activities that could disrupt services or incite tension. Officials said the situation will continue to be closely monitored.

The suspension had been enforced following a fresh wave of violence in the Litan area of Ukhrul district, where clashes reportedly resulted in large-scale arson. More than 50 houses were said to have been destroyed.

The violence was reportedly triggered by a drunken altercation between individuals from two communities on February 7.

Manipur Helicopter Service Moves Toward Online Booking, Boosts Regional Connectivity



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: In a major push to strengthen regional air links, the Manipur Helicopter Service run by the state government is fast emerging as a lifeline across difficult terrain. The service connects Imphal with Jiribam, Tamenglong, Chura-chandpur, Aizawl, and Ukhrul through regular daily operations from morning till evening.

Officials said the service has

earned public trust for its steady focus on safety, security, and passenger comfort. It has also played a key role in linking remote hill districts with the state capital, cutting travel time that often takes hours by road. In a fresh step toward better passenger access, the service is now in its final stage of shifting from offline ticketing to a fully online reservation system. The move is expected to make booking simpler and more transparent for travelers. The initiative is being rolled out in coordination with Airports Authority of India and Imphal International Airport. Authorities believe the new system will help improve travel planning and strengthen links between Manipur's districts and the rest of the country.

The online booking portal is expected to go live soon at: www.helicopter.manipurtransport.gov.in

The transition marks another step toward improving access and mobility in one of India's most challenging regions.

Gauhati High Court Clears Assam's Move to Grant Land Rights to Tea Garden Workers

GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has allowed the Assam government to proceed with its decision to grant land ownership rights to tea garden workers, declining to stay an amended law challenged by the Indian Tea Association (ITA).

The matter was heard on February 4, with counsel for both the ITA and the state government presenting arguments on the amendment passed during the winter session of the Assam Assembly.

Court Declines to Stay Amendment

Advocate General Devajit Saikia informed that the ITA opposed the amendment, arguing that it would "change the structure of the tea gardens". The planters' body also contended that the move could hamper tea production and disrupt the functioning of estates.

However, the high court did not grant a stay on the legislation. According to Saikia, the court observed that the initiative falls



within the state's welfare framework and permitted the government to continue implementing the process.

Under the policy, workers residing in labour lines within tea estates will be granted ownership rights upon payment of Rs 500 per bigha.

850 Estates, 707 with Labour Lines
Saikia said Assam has around

750 tea estates, with labour lines present in 707 of them.

"Generations of workers have lived in these lines with no rights over their land. The Assam government started the process of granting land rights to them and ownership will be transferred to the workers living in the labour lines inside the tea gardens," he said.

The move follows the Assam

bly's passage of the Assam Fixation of Ceiling of Land Holdings (Amendment) Act, 2025, which enables the distribution of land in labour lines for housing ownership. The state cabinet had earlier approved the policy decision before it was tabled in the House.

"Historic Correction", Says CM
Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has described the amendment as an attempt to correct a "historic mistake", stating that tea garden workers - brought to Assam during the colonial era - have been toiling in plantations for nearly two centuries without land rights. The government maintains that granting ownership will provide long-overdue security and dignity to lakhs of tea garden families across the state.

With the court declining to intervene at this stage, the state is now set to move ahead with implementing the land rights policy - a decision that could significantly alter the socio-economic landscape of Assam's tea belt.

Tripura approves 555 new posts, clears Ayurvedic and Homeopathy colleges



AGARTALA

The Tripura government on February 13 approved the creation and filling up of 555 posts across multiple departments and cleared the establishment of new Ayurvedic and Homeopathy medical colleges

and hospitals in the state.

Cabinet spokesperson Sushanta Chowdhury said the decisions were taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Manik Saha.

Key recruitment decisions
110 Veterinary Officers (Group B) under the Animal Resource

Development Department to be appointed through the Tripura Public Service Commission.

100 Multi-Purpose Workers (50 male, 50 female) under the Health and Family Welfare Department to be recruited through competitive examination.

8 Multi-Tasking Staff posts in the Directorate of Prosecution under the Home Department to be filled through the Joint Recruitment Board of Tripura.

7 Lower Division Clerk posts to be filled in the Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency under the Power Department.

330 new posts created under the Tripura Information Technology Service, marking a major expansion of the state's IT cadre.

Boost to medical education
The Cabinet approved the establishment of:

A 60-seat Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital at Tepania in Gomati district, to begin from the 2026-27 academic session. A temporary campus will function from Chandrapur in the same district.

A 60-seat Homeopathy Medical College and Hospital at the Netaji Subhas State Home Hospital in Agartala, West Tripura.

House Rent Allowance for Tripura State Rifles personnel posted in New Delhi enhanced from 24% to 27% with effect from November 2024. Boarding house stipend under the Tribal Welfare Department increased from ₹80 to ₹100 per day.

The decisions are expected to strengthen public service delivery, expand healthcare education infrastructure, and generate fresh employment opportunities across Tripura.

Mizoram opens Northeast's first fish canning plant in Zawlnuam

AIZAWL

In a major boost to agro-based industrialisation, Mizoram on February 13 inaugurated the Northeast's first fish canning facility, marking a key milestone in value-added fisheries production in the region.

The plant, established at Zawlnuam in Mamit district, is expected to strengthen farm-to-market linkages and enhance income opportunities for local fish farmers by enabling processing and packaging within the state.

The facility was inaugurated by Fisheries, Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Lalrinliana Vanlalruata, who described the project as a "new milestone" in Mizoram's industrial landscape. He said the initiative would bridge longstanding market gaps by allowing farmers to move beyond raw fish sales and adopt modern preservation and canning techniques. This, he noted, would improve shelf life, maintain quality standards, and ensure better price realisation for producers. The minister stressed the importance of strict quality control and consumer-focused practices to build brand credibility and sustain demand. He reiterated the state

government's commitment to strengthening infrastructure supporting farmer welfare and food processing industries.

As part of broader agricultural diversification efforts, a nut processing unit is also being developed in Zamuang village, while expansion of palm oil cultivation is underway in Mamit district, identified as an aspirational district for agriculture-led growth.

The fish canning project was proposed by the Cooperation Department to the Centre in July 2024 following sustained follow-up by local representatives, including an opposition legislator from Zawlnuam under the Mizoram National Front. Funded under the Integrated Cooperative Development Project (ICDP), the facility was developed at a cost of ₹65 lakh - ₹40 lakh for machinery and ₹25 lakh for construction. Officials stated that the plant can process 50 kilograms of fish per batch and produce approximately 120 cans in a two-hour production cycle. The initiative is expected to reduce post-harvest losses, provide a reliable processing outlet close to farmers' doorsteps, and advance Mizoram's push toward sustainable, value-driven agricultural growth.

United Naga Council condemns Manipur violence ahead of Lui-Ngai-Ni

IMPHAL

The United Naga Council (UNC) has expressed grave concern over recent violent incidents in Manipur, even as the Naga community prepares to celebrate the Lui-Ngai-Ni seed-sowing festival on February 15.

In a statement issued on February 13, UNC Information and Publicity Secretary H. James Hau condemned attacks on Starling Shimray of Shakarphai and Azan Abonmai at K Lungwiram village. The incidents, which occurred on February 7 and in the early hours of February 9, reportedly triggered unrest in Ukhrul, Litan, and surrounding areas, leading to houses being burnt and properties destroyed.

The council alleged the open presence of Kuki militants in uniform and armed with sophisticated weapons, claiming they fired near Indian security forces. It further accused security personnel of facilitating the burning of Naga homes in Litan.

Reiterating its long-standing position since the ethnic conflict erupted on May 3, 2023, the UNC stated that the Nagas in Manipur maintain a stance of neutrality - "without fear or favour" toward either the Meiteis or the Kuki-Zo-Hmar groups - in the interest of peace and normalcy.

Quest!

There is a mathematical equation that can accurately determine whether a married couple will divorce with 90% accuracy.



While committing to peaceful and long-term resolution of land ownership disputes linked to the incidents, the council warned that any further aggression threatening Naga history, culture, land, and identity would be met with "resolute actions."

Despite the tense situation, the UNC confirmed that Lui-Ngai-Ni celebrations will proceed as scheduled in Ukhrul. The festival, marking the sowing of seeds, is being positioned as a symbol of renewal, fraternity, and reconciliation.

The council called upon all communities to respect Naga rights and dignity and to participate in what it described as a "mean-

ingful and restorative celebration" of Lui-Ngai-Ni 2026.

Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton has appealed for restraint and peaceful resolution after a violent mob attack devastated Maova Village in Chumoukedima district on February 13.

Nearly 1,000 youths mobilised under the banner of the Chakhroma Youth Organisation reportedly entered the village around 10:00 am, vandalising and setting fire to private properties. The Maova Village Council described the attack as "a calculated and unjustifiable act of collective violence" arising from a private land dispute.

Police reports stated that approximately 2,000 people had gathered, with the situation escalating into stone pelting and physical scuffles by 10:30 am. One NAP (IR) personnel sustained a serious head injury and was hospitalised.

The destruction was extensive:
"Nine houses and three shops vandalised
"Eight shops, one community hall, one youth office, and one council guest house torched

Over 30 LPG cylinders exploded
Twenty-one vehicles damaged, including three completely burnt

Additional losses included roadside shops, council property, private vehicles, and heavy machinery. The village council emphasised that the damaged properties belonged to ordinary residents unrelated to the dispute.

The council criticised the alleged involvement of Chathe Prayer Centre and expressed concern that community organisations had allowed themselves to be used as platforms for mass mobilisation leading to destruction.

Security forces led by the DCP of Chumoukedima brought the situation under control by around 11:30 am with reinforcement and fire tenders.

Deputy Chief Minister Patton urged all organisations to step back from confrontation and rely on dialogue, customary law, and district administration mechanisms. He assured swift and impartial action, continued security deployment, and cooperation with ongoing investigations.

The Maova Village Council has lodged FIRs demanding:

"Identification and prosecution of organisers
"Full compensation for damaged properties
"Continued security presence

Police have appealed for restraint and cautioned against spreading rumours on social media, while urging civil society and community leaders to help maintain peace.

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“Promoting nation’s inclusivity and pluralism”: AIMIM chief Owaisi reiterates “hijab-clad woman as PM” remarks



NEW DELHI

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday defended his remark that a woman wearing a hijab could become the Prime Minister of India, calling it his “dream” and a reflection of the country’s inclusivity and pluralism.

In an interview, Owaisi said there was nothing wrong with such a vision. “What is wrong with it? I am promoting the nation’s inclusivity and pluralism...It is my dream (that a hijab-clad woman become India’s PM)...”, he said.

Earlier this year, while campaigning in Solapur during the Maharashtra local body elections, Owaisi had said that one day a woman wearing a hijab would become the Prime

Minister. His remark triggered a political row in Maharashtra and drew criticism.

In response to Owaisi’s remarks Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnis had said in response to Fadnis asserting that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) mayor will be “from Mahayuti, will be a Hindu, and a Marathi”. The Maharashtra CM had made these remarks while addressing a gathering in Worli during the election campaign for the recently concluded BMC polls.

On the Babri Masjid issue in Murshidabad, Owaisi reiterated that he believes the Supreme Court of India’s verdict was wrong. He said disputes had now been raised in places such as Sambhal, Kashi and Mathura, and cited former

Chief Justice JS Verma’s observation that the Supreme Court is supreme but not infallible.

“I still believe that the verdict of the Supreme Court on Babri Masjid was wrong... Now Sambhal, Kashi, Mathura, Madhya Pradesh has also been opened up... Justice J. S. Verma rightly said that the Supreme Court is supreme but not infallible,” Owaisi said.

Responding to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s “qayamat” remarks on Babri mosque, Asaduddin Owaisi said that at least the CM had to use an Urdu word, and asked what the Hindi word for “qayamat” would be.

“At least he had to speak an Urdu word, what would be a Hindi word for ‘qayamat’. Ask him,” he said.

“18% tariff vs 0%”: Rahul Gandhi targets Centre over India-US trade deal, flags impact on cotton farmers and textile sector

NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government of misleading the country over tariff provisions in the India-US interim trade agreement, alleging that the deal would adversely impact India’s cotton farmers and textile exporters.

Gandhi said that while Indian garments face an 18 per cent tariff in the United States, Bangladesh is being given a zero per cent tariff benefit on garment exports on the condition that it imports American cotton.

Questioning the policy framework, he alleged that importing American cotton would harm domestic farmers, while not importing it would harm the textile industry.

He further claimed that Bangladesh was signalling a possible reduction or halt in cotton imports from India, which, he said, could worsen the situation for Indian producers.

In a post on X, the Congress MP wrote, “18% Tariff vs 0% - Let me explain how the expert liar Prime Minister and his cabinet are spreading confusion on this issue. And how they are cheating India’s cotton farmers and textile exporters through the India-US trade deal. Bangladesh is being given 0% tariff benefit on garment exports to the US -- the only condition is that they import American cotton. After the announcement of 18% tariff on Indian garments, when I raised the question in Parliament about the special concession being given to Bangladesh, the reply from a minister of the Modi government was: ‘If we also want the same



benefit, we will have to import cotton from America.” Why was this fact hidden from the country till now?”

He said that the agreement would push millions towards unemployment and economic distress.

He also criticised the government’s handling of the negotiations, stating that a deal in the national interest should have safeguarded both cotton farmers and textile exporters.

“And what kind of policy is this? Is this really any kind of choice -- or is it a trap designed to push us into a ‘well in front, ditch behind’ situation? If we import American cotton, our own farmers will be ruined. If we don’t import it, our textile industry will lag behind and get destroyed. And now Bangladesh is also giving signals that it may reduce or even

stop importing cotton from India,” the post read.

“The textile industry and cotton farming are the backbone of livelihood in India. Crores of people’s daily bread depend on these very sectors. Attacking these sectors means pushing millions of families into the pit of unemployment and economic crisis. A visionary government that thinks in the national interest would have negotiated a deal that protects and ensures the prosperity of both cotton farmers and textile exporters. But exactly the opposite has happened - Narendra ‘Surrender’ Modi and his ministers have made an agreement that is likely to inflict deep damage on both sectors,” the post further read.

The India-US Interim Agreement, announced last week, is intended as a framework for a

reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade pact between the two countries.

The agreement will involve the elimination or reduction of tariffs on US industrial goods and a wide range of food and agricultural products, including dried distillers’ grains, red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.

In return, the United States will apply a reciprocal tariff of 18 per cent on selected Indian goods, including textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, plastics, rubber, organic chemicals, home decor, artisanal products, and certain machinery. Upon full implementation, US tariffs on items such as generic pharmaceuticals, gems and diamonds, and aircraft parts will be removed.

INTERNATIONAL

US spent \$40 million on roughly 300 deportations to third nations, Democratic report finds

WASHINGTON

The Trump administration spent at least \$40 million to deport roughly 300 migrants to countries other than their own as immigration officials expanded the practice over the last year to carry out President Donald Trump’s goals of quickly removing immigrants from the U.S., according to a report compiled by the Democratic staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The Democrats on the Foreign Relations panel, led by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, criticized the practice of third country deportations as “costly, wasteful and poorly monitored” in the report and call for “serious scrutiny of a policy that now operates largely in the dark.”

The State Department, which oversees the negotiations to implement the programs, has stood behind the practice of third country deportations and defended it as a part of Trump’s campaign to end illegal immigration.

“We’ve arrested people that are members of gangs and we’ve deported them. We don’t want gang members in our country,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio responded when asked about some of the third country deportations at a Senate hearing last month.

The report, which is the first congressional review of the agreements, found lump sum payments ranging between \$4.7 million and \$7.5 million to five countries — Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, El Salvador, Eswatini and Palau — to deport migrants to those nations. El Salvador has received about 250 Venezuelan nationals in March last year, while the other nations received far fewer deportees, ranging from 29 sent to Equatorial Guinea to none sent to Palau so far, according



to the report.

The nations examined in the report are just a fraction of the Trump administration’s overall work to deport migrants to third countries. According to internal administration documents reviewed by The Associated Press, there are 47 third-country agreements at various stages of negotiation. Of those, 15 have been concluded and 10 are at or near conclusion.

The administration is also negotiating agreements with countries that

will accept U.S. asylum seekers while their asylum claims are processed, according to the internal documents. There are 17 that are at various stages of negotiation, including 9 that have formally taken effect, although the administration claims that the agreements do not necessarily need to be concluded for people to be sent there.

Immigration advocacy groups have criticized the “third country” policy as a reckless tactic that violates due process rights and can

strand deportees in countries with long histories of human rights violations and corruption.

During a visit to South Sudan, Democratic committee staff found a gated house with armed guards where deportees were held, including migrants from Vietnam and Mexico.

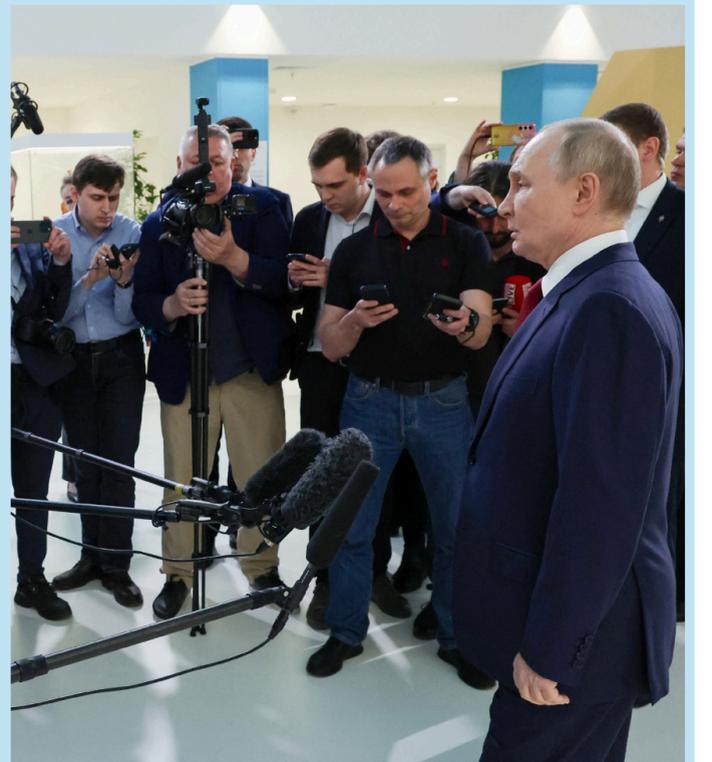
The Democrats also largely take aim at how wasteful and ineffective the policy may be. It details several instances of migrants being deported to a third country, only for the U.S. to later pay for another flight to return the migrant to their home country.

“In many cases, migrants could have been returned directly to their countries of origin, avoiding unnecessary flights and additional costs,” said Shaheen in a statement also signed by Democratic Sens. Chris Coons, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Jack Rosen and Chris Van Hollen. It also remains unclear what benefits the countries may receive — or expect — in return for accepting third-country nationals.

After an agreement was in place last year, South Sudan sent a list of requests to Washington that included American support for the prosecution of an opposition leader and sanctions relief for a senior official accused of diverting over a billion dollars in public funds, according to diplomatic communications made public by the State Department in January.

Shaheen has also questioned a \$7.5 million payment sent to Equatorial Guinea that came at the same time the Trump administration was developing ties with the country’s vice president, Teodoro “Teddy” Nguema Obiang. He is notorious among world leaders accused of corruption for a lavish lifestyle that has attracted the attention of prosecutors in several countries.

Russia, Ukraine to hold talks in Geneva on February 17-18



KYIV

Russia and Ukraine will hold US-brokered talks on February 17-18 in Geneva, both countries said Friday, announcing the next leg in fraught negotiations seeking to end the four-year war.

US President Donald Trump is pushing to end the conflict, unleashed when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, but two previous rounds of US-mediated talks in Abu Dhabi have not yielded any signs of a breakthrough.

Both sides said publicly the discussions were productive, but Moscow and Kyiv remain far apart on the key issue of territory.

“The next round of talks on the Ukrainian settlement will be held in the same trilateral

Russia-US-Ukraine format, on February 17-18 in Geneva,” Russia’s state-run RIA Novosti news agency cited Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying.

An aide to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky later confirmed to journalists that its delegation was preparing for the negotiations next week. Moscow has stuck to its demands for sweeping territorial and political concessions from Ukraine -- rejected by Kyiv as tantamount to capitulation.

Russia is pushing for Ukraine to pull out of the eastern Donetsk region -- around one-fifth of which Kyiv’s forces still control.

Ukraine has rejected a unilateral pull-back and wants robust Western security guarantees

to deter Russia from re-launching its offensive following any ceasefire.

Peskov said Moscow’s delegation to Geneva will be headed by Vladimir Medinsky, a hawkish ex-culture minister who led previous failed talks in Turkey, in a switch from the senior military officials who led two previous rounds in Abu Dhabi.

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and tens of thousands of civilians have been killed in the four-year conflict, Europe’s deadliest since World War II.

Russia occupies around one-fifth of Ukrainian land -- including the Crimean peninsula it seized in 2014 and areas that Moscow-backed separatists had taken prior to the 2022 invasion.

Northeast Is Not Loud Romance



RAJKUMMAR

Here are places where love feels simple and real. Shillong – Slow Love in the Hills
In Shillong, romance moves slowly. Soft rain falls without warning. Pine trees whisper in the wind. Small cafés glow at dusk.
A quiet boat ride at Umiam Lake feels like time has paused. An

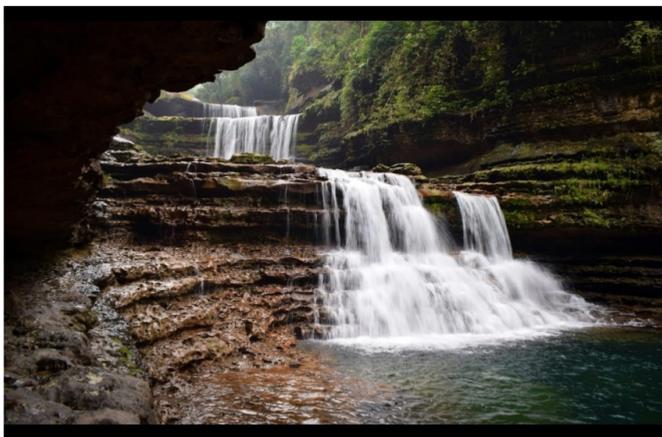
green. You walk hand in hand across living root bridges. No rush. No noise. It feels unreal. Like a shared dream. Mawlynnong – Peaceful Romance Mawlynnong is

flect a pale sky. Long drives through clouds feel endless. Romance here feels almost spiritual.

Ziro Valley – Quiet Intimacy Ziro is calm. Pine trees line the horizon. Rice fields glow in soft light. No chaos. No

crowd. Just silence and stars. Perfect for those who want to be away from everything. Dawki – Floating Love
In Dawki, the water looks like glass. Boats float on the Umngot River as if in air. You can camp by the river. At night, the sky feels closer than usual. Dzukou Valley – Wild Romance
Dzukou Valley asks for effort. You trek together. Flowers bloom across the hills. Clouds touch the ground. When you reach the top, the world feels far away. And for a moment, it is only the two of you.

In the Northeast, love does not perform. It simply stays. Quiet. Steady. Real.



evening walk around Ward's Lake feels like a shared secret. It is a hill town that breathes gently. Not loud. Not rushed. Cherrapunji – Love in the Clouds
In Cherrapunji, clouds do not stay above. They come down. They touch your face. Waterfalls like Nohkai Falls fall into endless

small. Flowers line the paths. Bamboo homes sit quietly under the sky. You walk. You talk. Then you say nothing. And still, it feels full. At night, stars do the rest. Tawang – Love in the Snow
In Tawang, silence feels sacred. The great Tawang Monastery rises in mist. Snow peaks stand still. Frozen lakes re-

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BRAHMAPUTRA: THE RIVER THAT CALLS YOU BACK



ASHK MACHHANVI



In the high silence of the trans-Himalayan plateau, where wind moves like prayer and mountains hold the memory of creation, a thin silver stream is born near the Angsi Glacier close to the sacred region of Mount Kailash.

At first it is only a whisper of water. The monks of the highlands call it Yarlung Tsangpo, the river from the upper world. It travels quietly across Tibet, watching centuries pass like drifting clouds. It does not yet know that it will become one of the greatest rivers of Asia.

When it enters India through the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, it gathers strength. It is called Siang, then Dihang. By the time it reaches the vast plains of Assam, it has become something else entirely, wide as a sea, restless as a warrior, ancient as myth. Here it receives the name that will stay with it forever:

Brahmaputra River the Son of Brahma.
The River Born of the Creator.

Ancient sages believed no ordinary origin could explain such a river.

They said Lord Brahma released sacred waters from his kamandalu to nourish the eastern lands. Thus came the Brahmaputra, a rare river in India with a masculine identity, powerful and unpredictable.

It was also called Lauhitya in old scriptures, the red river of dawn. Monks believed its waters carried purification. Warriors believed it guarded the frontier of dharma.

And then came a story from the age of Rama.

When Rama Stood by the River.

In the traditions of the eastern hills, it is said that after defeating Ravana, Lord Rama journeyed through distant lands before returning to Ayodhya. When he reached the roaring eastern river, sages requested his blessing. Rama stood at dawn, facing the rising sun, and offered prayers. The waters calmed.

From that day, people believed the river would remain fierce but protective, a guardian of the eastern lands.

Even now, small lamps float on its waters during festivals, carrying prayers as if still answering Rama's call.

The Lovers of the Two Banks.

Long before bridges spanned the river, when it was known as Lauhitya, a hill princess named Anindita lived on its northern bank. Across the waters lived Devavrata, a young warrior-scholar.

They met only once at a spring gathering. But once was enough.

They began sending messages through the river, small bamboo tubes carrying palm-leaf notes.

"Are you well?"

"The river is calm today."

"I saw the same moon you must have seen."

Then one monsoon, the river flooded beyond memory. Weeks passed with no message. Believing him lost, the princess crossed the raging Brahmaputra at night. The boat nearly overturned, but she refused to turn back.

"Even if the river takes me," she said, "it will carry me where my heart already lives."

She reached the opposite bank at dawn



and found him alive, though wounded. Their reunion became legend. A sage who witnessed them declared:

"This river separates only the uncertain. For the steadfast, it becomes a bridge."

The kingdoms united.

Their story lived on in whispers along the banks. Even today, elders tell young couples that love tested by the Brahmaputra becomes unbreakable.

The River of War.

Centuries later, the river would again choose its side. In 1671, during the Battle of Saraighat, the Ahom kingdom faced a powerful Mughal fleet. The commander Lachit Borphukan knew the river like a living ally. The battle was fought on water. Currents, channels, and courage turned the tide. The

Ahom forces prevailed. Many believed the river itself had fought for them.

To this day, Lachit is remembered as a hero and the Brahmaputra as his silent companion in victory.

The River of Islands and Faith.

In Assam, the river spreads into vast channels. It creates and destroys land at will. On its banks lies Majuli, one of the world's largest river islands, home to monasteries where monks sing ancient hymns.

Floods come. Villages shift. Yet life continues. Fishermen cast nets at dawn. River dolphins surface briefly, then vanish. The Brahmaputra feeds millions while reminding them of nature's power.

An Episode from a Soldier's Memory.

There is a story often told among soldiers

posted in the North-East.

One monsoon night, a convoy needed to cross the Brahmaputra by ferry. The river was swollen, currents fierce. Halfway across, the engine failed. Silence fell except for the sound of water striking metal. An old soldier folded his hands and whispered: "Let us cross safely. We will return with respect."

Within minutes, the engine restarted. The ferry moved again. They reached the opposite bank safely.

Later the old soldier said, "This river listens. But it remembers. Once you cross it, you belong to it."

From that day, a belief spread among the troops:

If you cross the Brahmaputra once, you must cross it seven times. Otherwise, it will call you back with another posting.

Many laughed. Yet over the years, postings returned them again and again to the same river.

The River's Journey to the Sea.

From Assam, the Brahmaputra enters Bangladesh, where it is called Jamuna. It merges with the Ganga and Meghna and finally empties into the Bay of Bengal after nearly 2,900 kilometers.

Its waters that began as Himalayan ice end in the vast ocean, carrying with them stories of gods, lovers, warriors, monks, and soldiers.

Author's Note.

I first met the Brahmaputra as a young soldier posted in the North-East in April 1992. We crossed it in ferries, boats, and bridges sometimes in calm, sometimes in danger.

Among soldiers there is a quiet belief, Cross it once, and you will cross it seven times. Otherwise, you will be posted there again.

In my own service, I returned to its banks more than once. Each time felt less like coincidence and more like a summons.

Standing by the river at dawn, mist rising, one feels history flowing past, Rama's blessing, lovers' courage, Lachit's battle, and the silent prayers of soldiers.

For me, the Brahmaputra is not just a river.

It is a companion.

A witness.

A river that calls you back.

And somewhere in its endless journey from glacier to sea, it carries every story it has ever touched without forgetting a single one.

Disclaimer:

This is a literary narrative blending history, folklore, mythology, and personal reflections. Some episodes are creative interpretations for storytelling. References to the Brahmaputra River and the Battle of Saraighat are broadly based on known sources, views expressed are the author's personal and not official.



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



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Register your name, submit your proposals, poster & contribute for sponsors, guides, speakers, members.



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BARAK FESTIVAL 2025
 PAINTING CARNIVAL
 NE CULTURAL FEST
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 FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION
 BOOK CLUB | AWARDS & BOOK
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10-12 JAN
Science Studio
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DEC'24-JAN'25
Photography
 Online Photography Contest: River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture
 Real-Time Photography Contest of 'Barak Festival 2025'

Barak Festival
Band Night 10 JAN
Musical Night 11 JAN



10-12 JAN
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11 JAN
film festival
 Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Member Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W & Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet



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10-12 JAN
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Book Club
 Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books

Painting Carnival
 Water Colour and Oil and Saw Paper Campaign