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PERSPECTIVE

People who are too happy don't see the warning signs of dangerous people or situations and are more willing to trust when they shouldn't.

Assam extends Chief Secretary Ravi Kota's tenure by six months



GUWAHATI

The Assam government has extended the tenure of Chief Secretary Ravi Kota by six months, according to an official notification issued by the state Personnel Department.

The extension will take effect from May 1 and continue till October 31, 2026. Kota was due to retire from service on April 30, but the state government decided to retain him in office citing administrative requirements. The notification confirming the extension was issued on Sunday.

A 1993-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Ravi Kota assumed charge as Assam's Chief Secretary on April 1, 2024. Since then, he has been overseeing key administrative and policy matters of the state government.

The extension comes at a significant juncture, with Assam expected to go to the Assembly polls in March-April this year. Elections are due in all 126 Assembly constituencies, and continuity in the top administrative post is being seen as important to ensure smooth governance and effective coordination during the election period.

The order, issued by the Personnel Department, has come into immediate effect.

WHO SAID WHAT

I express my sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi Ji; Hon'ble Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah Ji; Shri Nitin Nambini ji National President Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and all the respected BJP Manipur MLAs of Manipur for roping their trust in me by electing me as the Leader of the BJP Legislature Party.

I accept this responsibility with humility and a deep sense of commitment. I shall work with utmost sincerity to honour the trust placed in me and strive towards realising the vision of Viksit Bharat and Viksit Manipur, ensuring peace, dignity, and inclusive development. At the same time, I remain dedicated to fostering empathy, compassion, and harmony among all communities, respecting our diversity while strengthening unity.

- Yumnam Khemchand, CM, Designate, Manipur

IIT Guwahati, UK universities develop machine learning method to design sustainable metal alloys

GUWAHATI

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, in collaboration with scientists from leading universities in the United Kingdom, have developed a machine learning-based approach to design advanced metal alloys without using Critical Raw Materials (CRMs), offering a sustainable alternative to conventional high-performance materials.

The collaborative research involved experts from the London South Bank University, the University of Manchester and the University of Leeds. The innovation is expected to help identify high-performance materials that are less dependent on fragile global supply chains and environmentally intensive mining practices.

In recent years, High-Entropy Alloys (HEAs) - a class of materials containing several metals in nearly equal proportions - have drawn significant interest from researchers and industry due to their superior strength and stability at high temperatures. These alloys fall under the broader category of Multi-Principal Element Alloys (MPEAs). However, many high-performance HEAs rely heavily on CRMs such as tantalum, niobium, tungsten and hafnium, which are expensive,



scarce and difficult to mine. Heavy dependence on such materials increases import reliance, exposes industries to supply chain disruptions and adds environmental stress, making the reduction of CRM usage a key sustainability challenge.

To address this, the research team led by IIT Guwahati developed a machine learning-assisted alloy design framework

focused on identifying CRM-free MPEAs. The researchers first classified critical raw materials into three levels based on supply risk, economic importance and global availability. They then created a database of 3,608 alloy compositions, primarily using elements that are not critically scarce.

Using an Extra Trees Regressor machine learning model combined with

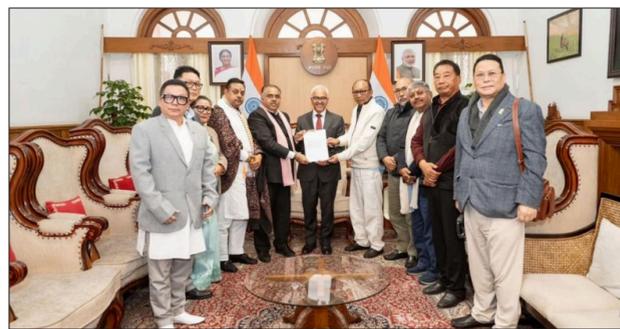
optimisation techniques inspired by natural processes, the team searched for alloy compositions capable of achieving high hardness without relying on CRMs. Through this approach, a CRM-free alloy - Ti-Ni-Fe-Cu - was identified as a promising candidate.

The newly proposed alloy was subsequently developed at laboratory scale at IIT Kanpur. Experimental testing showed that its measured hardness closely matched the values predicted by the machine learning model, validating the effectiveness of the AI-driven design framework.

The findings have been published in Scientific Reports, a journal of the Nature Publishing Group. The paper was co-authored by Prof Joshi of IIT Guwahati, along with Dr Swati Singh of IIT Guwahati, Prof Saurav Goel of London South Bank University, Dr Mingwen Bai of the University of Leeds, and Prof Allan Matthews of the University of Manchester.

Researchers said the approach could significantly accelerate the discovery of sustainable, high-performance alloys for applications in aerospace, energy and other critical sectors, while reducing dependence on scarce and environmentally costly raw materials.

PRESIDENT'S RULE LIFTED IN MANIPUR



IMPHAL

President's Rule in Manipur was revoked on Tuesday, clearing the way for the formation of an elected government in the state after nearly a year of central administration.

According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs and published in The Gazette of India (Extraordinary), President Droupadi Murmu exercised powers under Clause (2) of Article 356 of the Constitution to withdraw the proclamation imposed on February 13, 2025. The revocation has come into effect from February 4, 2026.

President's Rule had been imposed following the resignation of the BJP-led government amid prolonged ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities, which severely affected law and order in the state. During this period, the 60-member Manipur Legislative Assembly was kept under suspended animation, though its tenure continues until 2027.

The decision to revoke central rule comes at a key political juncture, with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) having finalised its leader-

ship to form the next government.

Senior BJP leader Yumnam Khemchand Singh was recently elected leader of the NDA legislature party and is set to take over as the Chief Minister of Manipur.

The state unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party announced that Singh will be sworn in at 6 pm on Wednesday at Lok Bhavan.

Announcing the development on X, BJP Manipur said, "The swearing-in ceremony of Shri YKhemchandSingh as the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Manipur will take place today, 4th February 2026, at 6:00 PM at Lok Bhavan."

Sources indicated that Kuki MLA Nemcha Kipgen and NPF MLA Losii Dikho are likely to be appointed Deputy Chief Ministers.

With President's Rule lifted, the NDA is expected to formally stake claim to form the government before Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla ahead of the swearing-in ceremony.

The move marks a significant step towards the restoration of popular governance in Manipur after months of political uncertainty and direct administration by the Centre.



background and acceptability within the party place him among the leading candidates should the BJP move towards government formation in the state. Sources said senior Kuki leader and former minister Nemcha Kipgen, a woman MLA, is likely to be appointed deputy chief minister in the new dispensation.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislature party chose the 62-year-old Singh at a meeting held at the party headquarters, which was attended by 35 of the party's 37 MLAs. Two legislators

were absent due to illness. The meeting was overseen by BJP central observer Tarun Chugh and attended by the party's Northeast in-charge Sambit Patra, state BJP president A Sharda Devi, and other senior leaders. Kipgen was also selected as deputy chief minister at the meeting.

Later, NDA legislators met at Manipur Bhavan, where BJP MLAs, along with six legislators of the National People's Party (NPP), five of the Naga People's Front (NPF), and three Independent MLAs, unanimously endorsed Singh as leader of the NDA legislature party and Kipgen as deputy leader.

Sources indicated that there is also a proposal to appoint a Naga MLA as an additional deputy chief minister, though no official announcement has been made so far. The NDA is expected to stake claim to form the government by meeting the governor as early as February 4, sources said. Independent MLA Sapam Nishikant Singh, who attended

the NDA meeting, said Y Khemchand Singh was a "natural choice" as he maintains cordial relations with Manipur's three major communities - the Meiteis, Kukis and Nagas.

"There will be good days, and peace will come to Manipur," he said. The political developments come days ahead of the expiry of the second spell of President's rule in the state on February 12. Former chief minister N Biren Singh and Assembly Speaker Satyabrata Singh were present at both meetings. At present, the BJP has 37 MLAs in the Assembly.

In the 2022 elections, the party had won 32 seats, while the JD(U) secured six, five of whose MLAs later defected to the BJP. The current Assembly composition also includes six NPP MLAs, five from the NPF, five Congress MLAs, two from the Kuki People's Alliance, one JD(U) MLA, three Independents, and one vacant seat following the death of a sitting legislator.

Hailakandi eviction drive clears 912 bighas in two days, says Assam CM



GUWAHATI

The eviction drive at Damcherra under the Garmura forest range along the Assam-Mizoram border has cleared 912 bighas of alleged encroached land in just two days, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday.

In a post on social media, Sarma said the reclaimed area in Hailakandi district was "bigger than the campus of IIT Guwahati," underlining the scale of the operation and the state government's determination to reclaim encroached land. He added that the drive reflected the government's commitment to protecting Assam's land and forest resources.

The eviction at Damcherra is part of a larger state-wide campaign to clear forest, government and reserve land of alleged illegal encroachment. The Chief Minister has repeatedly stated that the initiative is aimed at preserving ecological balance and safeguarding the state's indigenous identity.

Officials said the eviction drive, which is scheduled to continue till February 4, initially affected 522 families. However, several households vacated the area voluntarily ahead of the operation, bringing the number of affected families down to 516.

The first phase of the operation, which began on February 2, focused on the removal of betel nut plantations from the reserved forest land. The eviction zone, covering six forest villages, has been divided into seven sectors to facilitate smooth execution of the drive.

On Monday, excavators were deployed in sectors 5, 6 and 7, where large tracts of alleged encroached land were cleared. On Tuesday, eviction activities were carried out in sectors 1, 2, 3 and 4. Divisional Forest Officer (Hailakandi) Akhilesh Dutta said the operation was nearing completion. "If anything remains, it will be completed on the third day after discussions," he said.

Earlier, the Chief Minister had stated that between 2021 and 2025, the Assam government reclaimed over 1,19,548 bighas - around 160 square kilometres - of land from alleged illegal settlers as part of its ongoing eviction and land reclamation drive.

Gaurav Gogoi named chairperson of Congress's Assam Pradesh Election Committee



GUWAHATI

Ahead of the forthcoming Assam Assembly elections, the Congress on February 3 constituted its Pradesh Election Committee for the state, appointing Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi as its chairperson.

The 35-member committee includes several senior party leaders, among them Debabrata Saikia, Rakibul Hussain, Pradyut Bordoloi, Bhupen Kumar Borah, Ripun Borah, Paban Singh Ghatowar, Wajid Ali Chaudhary, Rosi-

lina Tirkey, Jakir Hussain Sikdar, Pradeep Sarkar and Arun Dutta Mazumdar.

In addition to the listed members, the panel will also comprise the APCC general secretary (organisation), heads of all frontal organisations of the APCC, and chairpersons of the Scheduled Caste, Other Backward Classes, Minority, Adivasi Congress Departments, as well as the Tea Garden Cell of the APCC.

The reconstitution of the Pradesh Election Committee is part of the Congress's preparations for the Assembly polls scheduled in Assam in the coming months, as the party looks to mount a strong challenge to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and regain power in the state.

Party leaders said the newly formed committee will be responsible for finalising election strategy, overseeing candidate selection and coordinating campaign activities across Assam as the Congress intensifies its poll preparations.



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BRICS GIVES INDIA STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Trade in today's world is no longer a neutral economic tool. It has become a strategic weapon. Washington has increasingly used tariffs to advance political goals, including against partners it publicly calls allies. India experienced this first hand in 2019 when the United States removed it from the Generalized System of Preferences, a program that had allowed duty-free access for nearly \$5.3 billion worth of Indian exports, affecting sectors such as leather, engineering goods and textiles. The Indian Commerce Ministry estimated the direct annual loss to exporters at around \$190 million. The move was framed as a market access issue but its political intent was clear. Align with U.S. trade demands or face consequences.

That approach has since hardened, with steel and aluminium tariffs remaining in place and repeated threats emerging against Indian pharmaceutical and IT services exports. Trade pressure has become a routine instrument of American diplomacy. New Delhi responded with restraint, entering negotiations and offering limited concessions, yet the structural imbalance persisted. Washington retained leverage while India remained largely on the defensive.

This is where BRICS matters. BRICS today is no symbolic forum. With the expansion of membership, the bloc now accounts for a significantly large share of the global economy, representing an estimated 39-40 percent of global GDP in purchasing power parity terms according to IMF projections of world GDP share. India's trade with BRICS members crossed an estimated \$380 billion in 2023, with China accounting for the largest share but also with steady commerce growth with Brazil, Russia, and South Africa. Energy ties have deepened sharply. India imports more than 85 percent of its crude oil requirements, and Russia has remained a major supplier, accounting for roughly a third to nearly 40 percent of India's total crude imports in recent years according to trade analytics. Payment systems outside the dollar framework have quietly expanded. Every transaction outside the dollar reduces exposure to U.S. financial pressure.

Zongyuan Zou Liu from the Council on Foreign Relations notes that reducing reliance on the dollar is about lowering vulnerability to financial coercion rather than replacing the dollar itself. BRICS is building parallel financial channels. India should play a central role in this process. The BRICS New Development Bank has already approved more than \$35 billion in financing. Over 30 percent of its lending now happens in local currencies, reducing reliance on dominant global financial systems that are tied to U.S. monetary policy. Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan has warned that global trade is deeply intertwined with geopolitics, affirming that economic policy cannot be separated from strategic power considerations. India must adapt to this reality. Washington understands the implications. When BRICS discussed alternatives to existing settlement mechanisms, U.S. officials publicly downplayed the idea, yet concern remained in policy circles. The dollar's influence is anchored in limited alternatives; BRICS is creating those alternatives step by step.

New Delhi has moved carefully, with strategic ties with the U.S. growing through defense cooperation and the QUAD framework while BRICS membership has continued in parallel. Such caution is understandable, yet prolonged restraint carries a cost. Each time India steps back from BRICS exercises and initiatives, it weakens its own bargaining position. Strategic autonomy is built through choices. Professor Harsh Pant from King's College London argues that India's leverage with the U.S. depends on demonstrating independent policy decisions; BRICS offers that space.

We saw how leverage works during the steel tariff episode when India imposed retaliatory duties on 28 U.S. products worth \$1.4 billion, including almonds, apples, and walnuts from California. American farm lobbies reacted quickly, followed by pressure from Congress, showing how economic countermeasures can generate political impact and influence negotiations. A coordinated BRICS economic push could work in a similar way through local currency settlements, preferential trade agreements, energy cooperation, and development financing. Each step would gradually reduce U.S. economic dominance without direct confrontation.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once observed that control over energy, money, and food defines power. BRICS is steadily building influence across all three areas. India must clarify its approach, maintaining engagement with the U.S. while asserting its autonomy rather than accepting a subordinate position. Active participation in BRICS sends a clear message that India has multiple strategic options and intends to engage from a position of confidence.

This approach focuses on building economic and diplomatic buffers that protect national interests. In a world where trade pressure can appear overnight, India requires reliable safeguards and BRICS offers that support. The message to Washington should remain measured and steady, since tariffs may cause short-term strain but pressure also creates space for alternative partnerships that gradually reduce dominance.

India's foreign policy has long valued independence, once described as non-alignment and today expressed through multi-alignment, yet the core principle remains unchanged. Power lies in the ability to choose. BRICS is a strategic tool that New Delhi should employ steadily and purposefully. In geopolitics, leverage carries greater long-term value than loyalty.

And perhaps this moment demands the old wisdom of poet Mirza Ghalib, who understood betrayal long before geopolitics learned its language.

Tum unke vaade ka zikr unse kyun karo, 'Ghalib'

Ye kya ki tum kaho aur wo kahen-yaad nahin.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We can draw lessons from the past, but we cannot live in it."

- Lyndon Johnson

From Risk Management to Dharma Management: An IKS-Based Solution to Climate Litigation



DR ALOK KUMAR DWIVEDI
DR. ANANDKUMAR

Climate change litigation has grown in a manner that has made finance a concern for businesses. There have been close to 3,000 Climate change-related lawsuits filed in over 60 nations. Climate change lawsuits reached a point where they ceased being a symbolic way for people to show dissatisfaction. The lawsuits generate a measurable loss of market value, litigious costs, increase the capital budget, and impact the way businesses think about finance.

As part of PhD research on corporate finance and climate risk, I (Dr Anand Kumar) examine the impact of climate litigation on firm financial defensiveness strategies. Even when cases do not end in conviction, they carry weight. Research reveals that firms targeted by climate litigation suffer an average stock market decline of 0.4%; however, this decline further increases to 1.5% for heavy emitters, which means that the size of emissions, and not just the fact of litigation, matters. Beyond the immediate reputational damage, the financial costs are also significant. For example, simply defending a case costs an average of USD-3 million in legal bills. Yet the real impact is more subtle and far-reaching: climate litigation drives a fundamental shift in how companies manage their cash. Analyzing US-listed companies from 2004 to 2023, reveals that firms involved in climate-related lawsuits

penalties, forced operational changes, or reputational damages.

This phenomenon reveals a deeper crisis that cannot be solved through legal compliance or financial engineering alone. At its core, climate litigation exposes a structural mismatch between

modern corporate logic and ecological sustainability. It is here that Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer not merely an ethical perspective, but a systemic solution.

Climate Litigation as a Symptom, Not the Disease
Traditional policy frameworks view climate litigation as one more manifestation of transition risk, joining the club with carbon pricing and regulatory change. Corporations respond correspondingly, solidifying their legal defenses, building up liquidity, and firming up investment criteria. Yet, all of these responses are symptoms. From an IKS point of view, climate litigation points to a deeper adharmic imbalance, a disturbance of the natural order which is *ta* in Vedic culture. Where economic action disrupts ecological boundaries, social trust is lost and society resorts to courts as agents of rectification. Litigation in this way is a response of society to moral and ecological failure, not merely to illicit non-compliance with the law.

The modern corporate accountability mechanisms work externally - regulation, fines, and litigation. In contrast, the IKS places accountability internally through dharma understood not as religion but *svabhava*-based duty. In Bhagavad Gita Krishna elaborates that the sustainable action is an offshoot of performing one's rightful duty with awareness and restraint. As applied to corporations, this would mean that

wealth. Indian Knowledge Systems offer a broader and more meaningful view of *arth*—not just money, but all resources essential for sustaining life, guided by balance, restraint, and purpose. When businesses accumulate cash out of fear of future penalties, this money becomes a cost of doing business that produces no real value. Idle cash does not drive innovation, nor does it support the green transition. Indian Knowledge Systems challenge this fear-driven behaviour through the principle of *aparigraha*, or non-hoarding. True security, from an IKS perspective, comes not from accumulating excess cash, but from maintaining balance and acting with clarity of purpose.

The definition of Vaishya dharma in the Gita as *Krishhi Gaurakshya Vaaniyam* – Balancing the five mahabhutas, with earth, and Vaishya dharm Swabhawjam – Balancing the definition of Vaishya dharma in the Gita as 'Krishhi gaurakshyavanijyam' – Balancing the Five mahabhis, with earth, and Vaishya dharm Swabhawjam – Balancing the definition of Vaishya dharma in the Gita as 'Krishhi gaurakshyavanijyam' – Balancing the Five mahabhis, with earth, and Vaishya dharm Swabhawjam – Balancing the definition of Vaishya

Dialogue over Disputes: Preventing Litigation through Engagement

IKS traditions prioritise *samvada* (dialogue) above confrontation. Most climate cases emerge as an outcome of the exclusion of communities and stakeholders from the decision-making process. Companies that visibly engage with local ecologies, provide transparent revelations about climate impact, and begin to act in concert with transition planning stand less chance of going to court. Litigation in that sense is a failure of

to consider litigation-driven cash hoarding and its inefficiencies in the macroeconomic context.

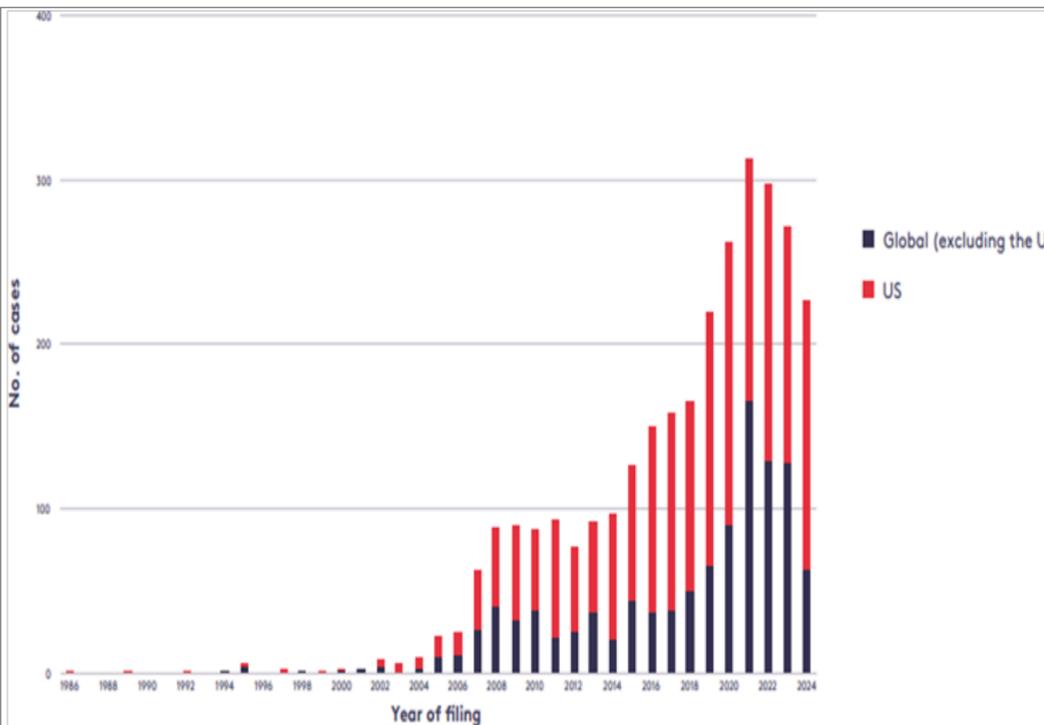
Conclusion: From Risk Management to Dharma Management

"Climate litigation is not aberrational activism gone awry. Rather, it is corrective justice needed due to economic imbalances. This increasing financial defensiveness of companies, which is being expressed by piling up cash, is actually an indication of the absence of trust between the corporate sector and nature and society." Indian

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

This is BIG. For decades, the "Chicken's Neck" has been used as an intimidation tactic by anti-national forces, both within and beyond our borders. The proposed underground rail link marks a major strategic breakthrough, creating a secure and foolproof transportation corridor between the North East and the rest of the country. Thanks to the decisive leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri

@narendramodi Ji and Hon'ble Minister Shri @AshwiniVaishnaw Ji, we are taking a giant step towards mitigating this longstanding strategic vulnerability - one that, in hindsight, should have been addressed much earlier, perhaps even in the aftermath of 1971. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam @RailMinIndia



SOURCE: GLOBAL TRENDS IN CLIMATE LITIGATION, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, 2025

increase their cash holdings by an average of 23 per cent relative to peers. Importantly, this is not a one-off response. The effect persists for up to four years after the lawsuit is filed. Why? Because climate litigation is slow-moving and uncertain and often takes years to resolve (typically taking around three years to reach a decision), with firms unsure whether they will be hit with

companies need to conduct their activities in accordance with their natural purpose in society. Responsibility internalized toward nature, communities, and future generations earns compliance as a product of proper conduct, not an arm-twisted duty.

From Accumulation to Balance: Reimagining Arth
At the heart of corporate cash hoarding is a narrow understanding of *arth* as mere

dialogue. The reinstatement of participatory mechanisms reduces social conflict as well as legal risk.

Beyond that, financial regulators and central banks should look beyond climate litigation as purely a legal or transition risk. It needs to be recognized as an ethical risk with financial consequences. Stress-testing frameworks and disclosure norms, as well as risk assessments, will have

Knowledge Systems provide an avenue out of this impasse. Through the redefinition of *arth*, reinstatement of dharma, and integration of dharma with economic activities, IKS transforms the corporate strategic approach from fear management to resilience through purpose. In the end, the best way to shield oneself from climate litigation risks is not to maintain the kind of balance sheet that is climate-proof, resilient, and strong today, tomorrow, and always, but to build business that is future-proof and strives to live in harmony with both society and nature, not because they fear consequences.

(Dr Alok Kumar Dwivedi, Assistant Professor, KSAS- Lucknow (INADS-USA), Co-Director, Mission Climate Sustainability.)

Dr. Anand Kumar, Assistant Professor at Queens University Belfast & Director, Mission Climate Sustainability

CM Sarma denies communal politics charge, accuses Assam Congress of appeasing illegal migrants



GUWAHATI Sarma rejected allegations that his government was indulging in communal politics, instead accusing the Assam Congress of sheltering "foreign infiltrators" and practising appeasement. Speaking to reporters, Sarma said it was the opposition that was engaging in divisive politics while questioning the state government's efforts to protect Assamese identity. "Foreign infiltrators are sitting in the lap of Assam Congress, and these people have the audacity to say that we are doing appeasement politics?" he said.

Invoking Assam's historical legacy, the chief minister questioned how references to Lachit Borpuhan and the sacrifices of martyrs could be termed communal. "Lachit's hengdang and walking the path of martyrs - how can that be communal? Please explain this to me," Sarma said. He further alleged that the Congress was "appeasing Miyas from Bangladesh," calling such politics communal in nature. Sarma stressed that Assamese identity cuts across religious lines.

"Assamese means everyone - Hindus and Muslims alike. We are talking about protecting Assamese identity," he said, adding that those attempting to "bring foreigners from Bangladesh into the heart of Assam" were, in his view, acting in a manner that was "both communal and anti-national". Linking the issue to the Assam Movement, the chief minister recalled the sacrifices made during the agitation against illegal immigration. "Was it not for this cause that 860 martyrs sacrificed their lives? It was for this very cause that Lachit took up the hengdang," he said, asserting that his government's actions were rooted in that historical struggle and focused on what he described as constructive governance. The remarks come amid an intensifying political debate in Assam over illegal immigration, identity and accusations of communal polarisation, as parties sharpen their positions ahead of forthcoming electoral contests.

Gyanashree Bora resigns as college professor, signals return to politics ahead of Assam polls 2026



GUWAHATI

Gyanashree Bora, a former firebrand leader of Rajgor Dal and an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Goalpara College, has resigned from her government job, signalling a return to active politics ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections. Confirming her resignation on Tuesday, Bora said the decision was taken with a clear intent to contest the upcoming polls. While she did not formally announce her party affiliation, her remarks and sources close to her suggest a likely return to Rajgor Dal, the

regional outfit where she earlier rose to prominence as an outspoken leader. On her electoral plans, Bora said a final decision on the constituency is yet to be taken. However, she indicated that Khumtai in Golaghat district - her birthplace or Makum in Tinsukia district, her matrimonial home, are among the constituencies under consideration. She added that an official announcement would be made in due course. Bora also revealed that several political parties approached her after news of her resignation became public. Despite this, she asserted that her ideological position remains firm. "I will never compromise on regionalism," she said, reiterating her commitment to regional political values. Popularly dubbed Rajgor Dal's "Agni Kanya" during her earlier political stint for her aggressive articulation of regional issues, Bora said clarity on both her party position and electoral roadmap would be provided soon, as political activity intensifies across Assam in the run-up to the 2026 Assembly elections.

CM's vigilance cell re-arrests suspended ACS officer Nupur Bora in land fraud case

GUWAHATI

The Chief Minister's Special Vigilance Cell on Tuesday re-arrested suspended Assam Civil Service (ACS) officer Nupur Bora in connection with an alleged land fraud case, officials said.

The action followed the registration of an FIR with the Chief Minister's Special Vigilance Cell. According to the FIR, Bora, a 2019-batch ACS officer, is accused of facilitating illegal land mutations in violation of established norms during her postings as circle officer in Barpeta and Kamrup districts.

Vigilance officials said investigations have so far identified 524 mutation orders that allegedly contain serious irregularities. "We have found 524 orders which are full of anomalies. The fraud was carried out when Bora was serving as circle officer in Barpeta and Kamrup," an official said.

The vigilance cell has written to the district commissioners of both districts, seeking cancellation of the mutation orders issued by Bora, the official added. As part of the probe, vigilance teams conducted raids at multiple locations and seized several land-related documents linked to different individuals.

A separate case relating to disproportionate assets is also pending against the suspended officer. In September last year, Bora was arrested in the disproportionate assets case while she was posted as circle officer of Goraimari in Kamrup district. During searches at her Guwahati residence at the time, vigilance officials had seized large quantities of cash and jewellery.

Further investigation in the land fraud case is underway, officials said.

HAILAKANDI EVICTION DRIVE MLA alleges selective targeting of Muslims

HAILAKANDI

The eviction drive in Hailakandi's Inner Line Reserved Forest entered its second day on Tuesday, with authorities continuing the removal of alleged encroachments amid heavy security deployment. Officials said approximately half of the identified houses and forest land had been cleared peacefully on Monday. The Forest Department reported that a total of 516 houses were marked for eviction within the Garmura Range. Akhil Dutta, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Hailakandi, said the drive was being conducted strictly according to legal provisions. "Around 50% of the 516 houses were cleared yesterday. The remaining houses across sectors 1 to 4 are under process today, and everything is proceeding peacefully," he said. The DFO clarified that the area falls under the Inner Line Reserved Forest, where commercial and non-forest activities, including betel nut, coffee, tea, and rubber plantations, are prohibited under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. He added that grievance petitions submitted by occupants were examined in line with court directions. Security measures included 11 checkpoints and deployment of police forces, while several occupants vacated voluntarily. "People were aware they were encroaching and left on their own. We ensured they could leave with dignity," Dutta said. Meanwhile, Katicherra MLA Suzam Uddin Laskar (AIUDF) criticised the operation, alleging selective targeting and inadequate rehabilitation measures. "Residents submitted documents during the High Court hearing, but the government did not accept them. The eviction drive is continuing," he said.

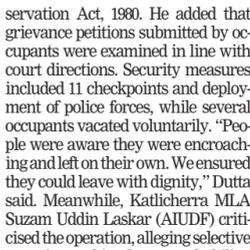
Laskar, citing the area's proximity to the Assam-Mizoram border, said the residents belong to diverse communities, including Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, but claimed that Muslims are being disproportionately affected. He emphasised that the authorities have not faced any obstruction during the operation.

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Manipur RS MP credits Modi government for Northeast growth, slams UPA neglect



NEW DELHI

President's address, Leishemba said the Northeast has received "unprecedented focus" under the present government. He highlighted the Centre's 'Purvodaya' vision - the rise of the East - as a blueprint for inclusive development and long-term stability across the region. "Because of the negligent approach of the then UPA government, the Northeast was pushed towards instability and underdevelopment," he told the Upper House. "But with the vision of

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Vijay Sankalp Meetings Held Across Lakhimpur, Kaushik Rai Lays Foundation Stones for Key Projects



OUR CORRESPONDENT

LAKHIPUR: State Minister and Lakhimpur MLA Kaushik Rai on Wednesday took part in a series of programmes across the Lakhimpur Assembly constituency, focusing on preparations for the 2026 Assembly elections and local development works. Rai attended the Vijay Sankalp meeting at Binnakandi Bagan GP, where he discussed upcoming development projects aimed at the overall growth of the GP. During the visit, the foundation stone for the construction of the Olichhara Durga Mandap was also laid. He sought the blessings and support of local residents and reaffirmed his commitment to development and public welfare in the area. Another Vijay Sankalp meeting was held at Bowali Chengjur GP, where Rai interacted with the public and spoke about future plans, activities, and ongoing development work under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. On the same day, the minister laid foundation stones for several projects at Bowali Chengjur GP. These included the construction of a Nata Ghar at Chengjur (Janki Bazar) with an allocation of Rs 35 lakh, a Nata Ghar at Machkhal Tea Garden with Rs 35 lakh under the Barak Valley Development Department, and a Durga Mandap-community hall at Chengjur

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Former Congress leader Anwar Hussain arrested in Guwahati with cash, cheques worth over Rs. 5 crore



GUWAHATI

Assam Police on Monday arrested former Congress leader and land broker Anwar Hussain after recovering cash and cheques worth more than ₹1.5 crore during a targeted operation in the city. Hussain was apprehended by a team from Basistha Police Station following a raid conducted on the basis of specific intelligence inputs. The operation led to the arrest of four persons, including Hussain. Police seized over ₹50 lakh in cash and cheques amounting to nearly ₹1 crore, reportedly issued in the names of multiple third parties. According to police sources, the arrests were made while Hussain was allegedly en route to facilitate a financial transaction involving the seized money. While the exact charges have not yet been formally disclosed, senior officers said the volume of cash and cheques points to the possible existence of a wider financial network. Hussain is a well-known figure in Lower Assam, particularly in Dhubri district, where he has had a political presence and significant commercial interests. A former Congress leader, he later emerged as a prominent player in the real estate and land brokerage sector, with operations spanning Dhubri and Guwahati.

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'Culture nurtures unity': Bhutan's Queen Mother after receiving 'Soldier of Humanity' award in Assam

KOKRAJHAR

Bhutan's Queen Mother, Gyalum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, on Tuesday highlighted the unifying power of culture and shared values while accepting the 22nd Upendra Nath Brahma 'Soldier of Humanity' Award, 2025, at a ceremony in Kokrajhar.

The award was conferred on the Queen Mother by Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at the Jwhlwao Nileswar Brahma Auditorium of Bodoland University, in recognition of her lifelong contributions to humanitarian service, cultural preservation, women's empowerment and compassionate leadership. Presenting the award, the Governor said the occasion reaffirmed a collective commitment to human dignity, compassion, moral values and social justice. "It is a privilege to welcome the Queen Mother on behalf of the people of Assam," he said.

Accepting the honour, Gyalum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck reflected on the enduring friendship between Bhutan and Assam and underscored the role of culture in



fostering meaningful human connections. She said high-level exchanges, including the visit of the Assam Chief Minister to Bhutan in 2024, have helped strengthen trust and cooperation between the two regions. "Friendships, when nurtured with care, blossom into trust and meaningful collaboration," the Queen Mother said, emphasising that culture plays a central role in nurturing unity and shared purpose.

"Friendships, when nurtured with care, blossom into trust and meaningful collaboration," the Queen Mother said, emphasising that culture plays a central role in nurturing unity and shared purpose.

She also spoke about Bhutan's future vision, particularly the Gephu Mindfulness City project, describing it as an initiative aimed at balancing economic vitality with spiritual harmony. "This city is envisioned as a sacred space where green innovation thrives alongside timeless values, and where young people can pursue their aspirations," she said.

The Queen Mother added that the heritage of the Bodo people and Bhutan's cultural ethos would naturally converge through such initiatives, fostering sustainable prosperity and strengthening people-to-people ties between the two regions.

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Hagrama Mohilary, speaking at the event, said the award went beyond individual recognition and served as a reminder of society's collective responsibility towards human well-being. He noted that Bodoland and Bhutan share deep historical and cultural links, shaped by shared rivers, traditions and mutual respect.

The ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including Gephu Mindfulness City Governor Dasho Dr Lotay Tshering, Assam Handloom and Textiles Minister U G Brahma, former BTC Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro, and other senior officials and community leaders.

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Spin doctors at work but still no details on India-US deal: Congress



NEW DELHI

Attacking the government over the India-US trade deal, the Congress on Wednesday said spin doctors are at work, but any details on it have still not been shared, although it is clear that India has made concessions on liberalising imports of agricultural items. US President Donald Trump on Monday said India and the US agreed to a trade deal. On his part, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was delighted that "made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent". Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal, in a news conference on Tuesday, had said a joint statement will be issued by both countries "shortly", which will have details of the pact.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "36 hours have passed since President Trump said the India-US trade deal was being announced and coming into effect immediately at Mr. Modi's request".

"Spin doctors are at work, but we still don't have any details on the deal - although it is clear that India has made concessions on liberalising imports of agricultural items. There is not even a joint statement," Ramesh said on X.

"It is absolutely clear that Mr. Modi pushed through the announcement. Why? There are at least three reasons," he added.

His remarks come a day after the Congress demanded that the Modi government should take Parliament into confidence on the details of

both the EU and US trade deals, while alleging that Prime Minister Modi has "completely surrendered to appease" US President Trump at the cost of India's farmers.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had alleged that Prime Minister Modi buckled under US pressure to finalise a trade deal and sold out the hard work of the Indian farmers through the agreement.

In a post on X, Gandhi charged, "PM Modi is Compromised. PM is too afraid to let me speak in Parliament about Naravane, Epstein Files and how he has surrendered on Tariffs."

Hitting back at the Congress and Gandhi, BJP MP Anurag Thakur asked whether the Congress and others in the opposition are for India's interest.

Jaishankar meets US Treasury Secretary Bessent, discusses economic partnership and strategic cooperation

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and held discussions on advancing the bilateral economic partnership and strategic cooperation.

"Pleased to meet US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in Washington, DC, today. Had a useful discussion on advancing the India-US economic partnership, and strategic cooperation," Jaishankar said in a post on X on Tuesday.

In a separate post, Bessent said he enjoyed the meeting with Jaishankar. "During our talks, we addressed the importance of securing supply chains, as well as other national and economic security issues of mutual interest," he said.

Jaishankar is on a visit to the United States from February 2 to 4 and will participate in the Critical Minerals Ministerial meeting convened by Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday.

He also held bilateral discussions with Rubio at the State Department, during which the two "welcomed" the trade deal reached through President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and discussed "formalising" bilateral cooperation on critical minerals exploration and mining.

Jaishankar's meetings with both Bessent and Rubio came a day after Trump announced on Truth Social



that India and the United States had agreed to a trade deal under which Washington would reduce the reciprocal tariffs imposed on New Delhi from 25 per cent to 18 per cent.

Bessent has been critical of India's purchases of Russian oil. Last week, in the wake of the free trade agreement between India and the European Union, he

described the Europeans as "very disappointing", saying they were unwilling to join Washington in imposing tariffs on New Delhi over its purchases of Russian oil because of the trade deal.

"The US sanctioned, or imposed a 25 per cent tariff on, India for buying Russian oil. The Europeans were unwilling to join us, and it

turns out this was because they wanted to pursue this trade deal. So every time you hear a European talk about the importance of the Ukrainian people, remember that they put trade ahead of the Ukrainian people. Trade — European trade — was more important than ending the war in Ukraine," Bessent had said.

INTERNATIONAL

India to end purchases of Russian oil, commit \$500bn investment in US: White House



NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

The White House has hailed a new trade agreement with India, stating that the country has committed to no longer purchasing Russian oil, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also agreed to investments worth USD 500 billion across key American sectors.

The remarks were made by White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on Tuesday.

"The President struck another great trade deal with India. He spoke with Prime Minister Modi directly. They share a very good relationship," Leavitt told reporters.

"India is committed not only to no longer purchasing Russian oil, but also to buying oil from the United States, and potentially from Venezuela as well. This will have a

direct benefit for the United States and the American people," she said.

Leavitt added that Prime Minister Modi had also committed to USD 500 billion in investments in the United States, including in transportation, energy and agricultural sectors.

"So this is another great trade deal thanks to President Trump," she said.

Trump said the US cut tariffs on India from 25% to 18%, as India agreed to drop all tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

Earlier, speaking to Fox News about the India-US trade deal, Leavitt said the two leaders had a "great call" on Monday, following which the bilateral agreement was announced.

"When it comes to Prime Minister Modi, I know the President particularly enjoys their relation-

ship and has a deep respect for the Prime Minister and for his country, India," she said.

"They had a great call. It was very productive, and they struck a deal in which India agreed to stop purchasing Russian oil and to buy more American oil, and potentially oil from Venezuela as well."

Leavitt added that Trump and his national security team are "now dictating" Venezuela's oil commerce and sales.

"This directly benefits the American people. In addition, India has agreed to invest more in the United States following President Trump's call to action," she said.

She further noted that India had committed to USD 500 billion in purchases of US energy, transportation and agricultural products.

Leavitt said the US tariff on India would now stand at 18 per

cent, while American exports to India would face zero tariffs, calling it "a great deal and a huge win for American workers, businesses and consumers".

The Trump administration had earlier imposed tariffs of up to 50 per cent on India, including a 25 per cent penalty linked to New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil.

In a Truth Social post on Monday, Trump said the US had agreed to lower its reciprocal tariff on India from 25 per cent to 18 per cent, while India would reduce its tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the United States to zero.

"The Prime Minister also committed to 'BUY AMERICAN' at a much higher level, including over \$500 billion in US energy, technology, agricultural, coal and other products," Trump said.

"Our amazing relationship with India will be even stronger going forward. Prime Minister Modi and I are two people who get things done," he added.

Prime Minister Modi said it was "wonderful" to speak with his "dear friend" Trump.

"Delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent. Big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement," Modi said.

"When two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits our people and unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation," he added.

"President Trump's leadership is vital for global peace, stability and prosperity. India fully supports his efforts for peace, and I look forward to working closely with him to take our partnership to unprecedented heights."

Palestinians wait at border between Gaza and Egypt as uncertainty clouds reopening of Rafah crossing

KHAN YOUNIS

Palestinians gathered on both sides of Gaza's border with Egypt on Tuesday hoping to pass through the Rafah crossing, after its reopening the previous day was marred by delays, interrogations and uncertainty over who would be allowed to cross.

On the Egyptian side were Palestinians who fled Gaza earlier in the Israel-Hamas war to seek medical treatment, according to Egypt's state-run Al-Qahera News television. On the Gaza side, Palestinians in need of medical care that is unavailable in Gaza gathered at a hospital before ambulances moved toward Rafah, hoping for word that they would be allowed to cross the other way.

The office of the North Sinai governor confirmed Tuesday that an unknown number of patients and their companions had crossed from Gaza into Egypt. The bus with about 40 Palestinians that entered Gaza via Rafah on Tuesday arrived at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis early Wednesday morning, where their families welcomed them after spending the entire day waiting.

Though hailed as a step forward for the fragile ceasefire struck in October, it took more than 10 hours for only about a dozen returnees and a small group of medical evacuees to cross in each direction on the first day Rafah reopened.

Three women who crossed into Gaza on Monday told The Associated Press on Tuesday that Israeli troops blindfolded and handcuffed them, then interrogated and threatened them, holding them for several hours before they were

released. The numbers permitted to cross on Monday fell well short of the 50 people that officials had said would be allowed each way and barely began to address the needs of tens of thousands of Palestinians who are hoping to be evacuated for treatment or to return home.

The import of humanitarian aid or goods through Rafah remains prohibited. Evacuation efforts on Tuesday morning converged around a Red Crescent hospital in Khan Younis, where a World Health Organization team arrived and a vehicle carrying patients and their relatives rolled in from another hospital. Then the group of WHO vehicles and Palestinian ambulances headed toward Rafah to await crossing.

As the sick, wounded and displaced waited to cross in both directions, health officials said the small number allowed to exit so far paled beside Gaza's tremendous needs. Two years of fighting destroyed much of its medical infrastructure and left hospitals struggling to treat trauma injuries, amputations and chronic conditions like cancer. In Gaza City, Shifa Hospital director Mohamed Abu Selmiya called the pace "crisis management, not a solution to the crisis," imploring Israel to permit the importing of medical supplies and equipment. He wrote on Facebook: "Denying the evacuation of patients and preventing the entry of medicines is a death sentence for them."

U.N. and WHO officials said the trickle of patients allowed out and restrictions on bringing in desperately needed supplies are prolonging a disastrous situation in Gaza. "Rafah must function

as a real humanitarian corridor so we can have a surge in aid deliveries," said Tom Fletcher, the U.N.'s top relief official.

Palestinian Red Crescent spokesperson Raed Al-Nims told AP that only 16 patients with chronic conditions or war wounds, accompanied by 40 relatives, were brought from Khan Younis to the Gaza side of Rafah on Tuesday — less than the 45 patients and wounded the Red Crescent was told would be allowed.

After days of anticipation over the reopening, hope lingered that it might mark a meaningful first step. In Khan Younis, Iman Rashwan waited for hours until her mother and sister returned from Egypt, hoping others would soon see their loved ones again. Officials say the number of crossings could gradually increase if the system works, with Israel and Egypt vetting those allowed in and out. But security concerns and bureaucratic snags quickly tempered expectations raised by officials who for weeks had cast reopening as a major step in the ceasefire deal. There were delays on Monday over disagreements about luggage allowances. Returnees were carrying more than anticipated with them, requiring additional negotiations, a person familiar with the situation told the AP, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the diplomatic matter.

"They didn't let us cross with anything," Rotana Al-Regeb said as she returned around midnight Monday to Khan Younis. "They emptied everything before letting us through. We were only allowed to take the clothes on our backs and one bag per person."

Budget 2026 bets on tourism to create jobs, revive heritage and spotlight the Northeast

The Union Budget for 2026-27 has placed tourism at the centre of its jobs story. The government sees travel not just as leisure, but as work, skills, culture and local income tied together. From training tourist guides to restoring ancient sites and building green trails, the budget sketches a wide plan to turn tourism into a steady source of employment.

Presenting the Budget in Parliament, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said tourism has strong potential for job creation, foreign exchange earnings and local growth. The proposals aim to spread benefits beyond big cities and reach smaller towns, heritage sites and remote regions.

One of the key announcements is a pilot scheme to upskill 10,000 tourist guides across 20 iconic destinations. These guides will undergo a standardised 12-week training course. The programme will run in hybrid mode and be designed in collaboration with an Indian Institute of Management. The idea is to improve skills, knowledge and communication, while also ensuring better visitor experience.

To support long-term capacity building, the government also plans to set up a National Institute of Hospitality. This will be done by upgrading the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology. According to the Finance Minister, the institute will act as a bridge between academia, industry and the government. It is expected to train professionals who can meet global standards in hospitality and tourism services.

A major digital push has also been announced. The Budget proposes the creation of a National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid. This platform will digitally document places of cultural, spiritual and historical importance across the country. The initiative is expected to open new work opportunities for local researchers, historians, content writers, filmmakers and technology partners. It also aims to preserve knowledge while making it accessible to visitors and planners.

Special attention has been given to the Northeast, a region rich in culture and natural beauty but still underexplored by many travellers. To boost tourism here, the government has proposed the development of Buddhist circuits across several northeastern states. These include Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. The scheme will focus on preserving temples and monasteries and highlighting the region's deep spiritual roots. Officials believe this can attract both domestic and international visitors, while also generating local jobs.

The Budget has also announced plans to develop 15 archaeological sites into vibrant and experiential cultural destinations.

These include well-known sites such as Lothal, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi, Adichanallur, Sarnath, Hastinapur and Leh Palace. Visitors will be able to explore excavated landscapes through curated walkways. Interpretation centres, conservation labs and trained guides will support the experience.



The government also plans to use immersive storytelling tools and new technologies to bring history alive.

Alongside heritage, the Budget has made space for nature and sustainability. It announced the development of eco-friendly tourism trails to offer world-class trekking and hiking experiences. These include mountain trails in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir, trails in Araku Valley in the Eastern Ghats, Podhigai Malai in the Western Ghats, turtle trails along nesting sites on the Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala coasts, and bird-watching trails around Pulicat Lake on the Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border. The focus is on protecting fragile ecosystems while creating livelihoods for local communities.

Despite the ambitious plans, the overall budget allocation for tourism has seen a slight dip. The allocation for 2026-27 stands at 2,438 crore, down from 2,541.06 crore in 2025-26. The revised estimate for 2025-26 was 1,310.30 crore. While the cut is marginal, it has raised some questions within the industry about funding support for large-scale promotion.

The hospitality and tourism industry has largely welcomed the direction of the proposals. Rajiv Mehra, general secretary of the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Industry, said the focus on guide training, adventure trails, use of technology and the reduction in Tax Collected at Source on overseas travel were positive steps. He called them progressive moves for the sector.

At the same time, industry voices pointed to gaps. Mehra said the Budget lacked a clear al-

location for international tourism promotion.

He stressed that stronger global branding and visibility are essential to boost inbound tourism and compete with other destinations in Asia.

Overall, Budget 2026 signals a shift in how tourism is viewed. It

is no longer seen only as travel and hotels, but as a chain of skills, stories, culture and nature.

If the plans are carried out well, tourism could become a steady engine of jobs, especially for youth and local communities, while also helping India protect and present its rich heritage to the world.

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The brain named itself.

NEIR 2026 Showcases Unity of Communities Through Culture and Dialogue



The North East Integration Rally that began on January 4 in Kolkata was more than an event. It was a moving journey. A journey of people, voices, colours, and shared hopes. It carried one clear idea. India grows stronger when it listens to all its parts, especially the North East.

The rally was led by Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee and CEO of the KRC Foundations. Under his leadership, the rally became a living space of integration and communication. It brought together communities from across the North East and the rest of India. Many had never shared a common platform before. Here, they walked, talked, performed, cooked, and laughed together.

Kolkata was a fitting starting point. The city has long acted as a bridge between the North East and mainland India. From January 4 onward, the rally turned streets into meeting grounds. Banners spoke of unity. Songs spoke of memory. Faces spoke of pride. One of the strongest aspects of the rally was communication. Real communication. Not speeches alone, but human exchange. People spoke in many languages. Assamese, Manipuri, Khasi, Mizo, Bengali, Hindi, English, and more. At times, words were few. Smiles did the work. Music filled the gaps. The rally showed the North East not as one single identity, but as many living worlds. There were glimpses of mountains and rivers through stories and images. There were dances that carried centuries of tradition. The beat of the drum, the soft steps of folk dancers, the bright handwoven costumes, all told their own tales.

Food became another bridge. Stalls and shared meals introduced people to flavours often unknown outside the region. Smoked meat, bamboo shoot dishes, rice-based foods, herbs, and simple home-style cooking drew long lines. People asked questions. What leaf is this? How is it cooked? Food opened conversations that books often fail to start.

The presence of nearly 200 communities made the rally rare. Tribal groups, ethnic communities, artists, students, activists, and elders walked side by side. No one stood above the other. This sense of equality was important. It reminded many that integration does not mean losing identity. It means respecting the difference.

Biswadeep Gupta spoke often about this idea. He stressed that integration starts with visibility. For too long, the North East has been spoken about from a distance.

The rally brought it closer. It allowed people to see the region through its people, not through headlines or stereotypes.

Cultural programmes were not treated as performances alone. They were shared moments. After dances ended, performers stayed back to speak to the crowd. They explained the meaning behind movements and songs. Many listeners heard these stories for the first time. It changed how they looked at the region.

The rally also highlighted people. Ordinary people. Craftsmen, farmers, students, women leaders, and young volunteers. Their stories of struggle, resilience, and hope added depth to the celebration. The North East was shown not as a problem area, but as a space of strength and creativity.

Another key theme was connection. Physical and emotional. The rally reminded people that distance is not just measured in kilometres. It is also built by silence and neglect. Events like this break that silence. They create direct contact. Eye to eye. Hand to hand.

Young people played a big role. Many volunteers from different states worked together. They learned from each other while managing events, guiding visitors, and handling logistics. For them, integration was not a theory. It was daily practice.

The rally also used visual displays. Photographs, maps, and art installations showed landscapes, villages, festivals, and daily life of the North East. Many visitors stopped for long moments. Some said they felt they were travelling without moving.

As the rally moved forward from Kolkata, it carried with it new conversations. It left behind questions too. Why do we know so little about each other? Why do we meet so rarely? These questions are important. They push the idea of integration beyond one event.

The North East Integration Rally did not claim to solve everything. Its strength lay in starting dialogue. In opening doors. In reminding people that unity is built through listening, sharing, and presence.

Under the guidance of KRC Foundations and Biswadeep Gupta, the rally showed what inclusive nation-building can look like. It looked colourful. It sounded loud and soft at the same time. It tasted unfamiliar but welcoming. Most of all, it felt human.

In a time of division and noise, the rally offered something simple. Walk together. Learn together. Respect each other. That message stayed long after the procession moved on.



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