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**PERSPECTIVE**

**Hardest question to answer: "Describe yourself?"**

**Assam tea exports surge by 40 million kg after 25 years**

**GUWAHATI**  
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday announced a sharp revival in the state's tea sector, stating that tea exports from Assam have gone up by 19 million kilograms, reflecting improved domestic and international demand. The Chief Minister also highlighted the performance of the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC), where the sale of orthodox tea has doubled. "Earlier, 4.19 million kg of orthodox tea was sold at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre. This time, 9.15 million kg has been sold - an increase of nearly 100 per cent," he said. Sarma attributed the surge in exports and production to favourable trade agreements and targeted policy support. Expressing optimism about future growth, he said recent trade agreements with the United Kingdom and the European Union, along with the India-US tariff agreement, are expected to open new opportunities for Assam tea in global markets. "After the trade agreement with the EU, UK and US, I am very confident that the golden era of Assam tea will come. Finally, we have reached a position where we are seeing rising exports and increasing orthodox tea production. Assam is regaining global leadership in tea," he said.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**The development of Taksing as a Buddhist spiritual destination is not only a step toward boosting tourism, but a meaningful journey toward cultural and spiritual revival. ~ Pema Khandu, CM, Arunachal Pradesh**

**Manipur CM Launches SpiceJet Direct Flights Connecting Imphal with Guwahati, Kolkata and Mumbai**

**IMPHAL**  
Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Tuesday flagged off SpiceJet's new direct flight services linking Imphal with Guwahati, Kolkata and Mumbai, describing the move as a major boost to connectivity, economic integration and mobility for the state. The inaugural ceremony was held at Bir Tikendrajit International Airport, Imphal, in the presence of elected representatives, senior civil and police officials, and airport authorities. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said enhanced air connectivity is central to the broader vision of building a "Viksit Manipur" in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of a Viksit Bharat. He noted that given the prevailing circumstances, air travel has increasingly become the most dependable and preferred mode of transportation for people travelling outside the state. "With improved direct connectivity to major cities like Guwahati, Kolkata and Mumbai, passengers from Manipur will have better access



to economic, educational and healthcare opportunities across the country," he said. Highlighting the importance of affordability, Singh urged SpiceJet to periodically review its airfare structure to ensure that tickets remain accessible to the common public. He stressed that enhanced connectivity should translate into tangible bene-

**Ukhrul unrest: Manipur govt engages stakeholders; search on for those behind Litan violence**

**IMPHAL**  
The Manipur government has initiated consultations with community leaders and key stakeholders in an effort to defuse tensions in violence-hit Ukhrul district, even as security agencies continue their hunt for those allegedly involved in the recent arson and firing incidents at Litan. Deputy Chief Minister L. Dikho on Tuesday said the government was working on multiple fronts to stabilise the situation, while acknowledging that an immediate resolution may not be feasible given the prevailing circumstances. "The Chief Minister, the government, security forces, civil society groups and other stakeholders are involved in finding a solution. We are trying to meet everyone and help them understand the situation. There are positive signs," Dikho, a senior leader of the Naga People's Front, said. He admitted that the situation remains sensitive but expressed hope that sustained engagement and coordinated security measures would lead to improvement. Dikho said investigations are underway to identify those responsible for the violence at Litan. "Earlier, there was some



confusion following the firing and burning of houses. Now the situation is much clearer," he added, without divulging further details. The fresh spell of violence erupted over the alleged assault of a member of the Tangkhul Naga community in Ukhrul. Police said several abandoned houses were set ablaze and shots were fired on

Tuesday morning, intensifying tensions in the district. In response, the state government suspended internet and data services across Ukhrul district for five days as a precautionary measure. Authorities cited concerns that anti-social elements could misuse social media platforms to circulate inflammatory images, videos or posts capable of aggravating the law and order situation. The internet suspension has also been extended for five days in the Lungtung sub-division of Kangpokpi district and the Phungyar sub-division of Kamjong district. In a statement, the Home Department said the decision was taken in view of apprehensions that online content could incite public passions and have serious repercussions on peace and stability in the state. Security forces remain deployed in vulnerable areas, and patrols have been intensified to prevent further incidents. Officials said the situation is being closely monitored, even as efforts continue to restore normalcy through dialogue and administrative intervention.

**In first since ethnic clashes, Manipur CM visits Jiribam, reaches out to Kuki-Zo and Hmar leaders**



**IMPHAL**  
In a significant peace-building outreach, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand on Wednesday visited Jiribam district and held meetings with leaders of the Kuki-Zo and Hmar communities, marking the first visit by a sitting Chief Minister to the district since the outbreak of ethnic violence in the state. The visit is being seen as an important step towards restoring normalcy in a region deeply affected by the 2023 ethnic clashes. Officials described the Chief Minister's trip as part of a broader government initiative to rebuild trust and promote dialogue among communities. During his visit, Khemchand met community leaders and residents from both the Meitei and

Kuki-Zo-Hmar groups. Stressing the need for reconciliation, he appealed for unity and mutual understanding. "First and foremost, we are all human and we are all Indians," the Chief Minister said, urging people to move ahead in a spirit of "forgive and forget" to ensure lasting peace in the state. Khemchand visited Kalinagar, where he interacted with internally displaced persons (IDPs) belonging to the Kuki-Zo and Hmar communities who have been living in relief camps since the violence. He later met Meitei IDPs taking shelter at Jiribam Higher Secondary School and enquired about their living conditions and ongoing relief measures. The Chief Minister also travelled to Jairalpokpi, a Kuki-Zo-Hmar village that witnessed extensive arson and destruction during the ethnic unrest in 2023. Officials said the visit was aimed at assessing the ground situation and reassuring residents of the government's commitment to rehabilitation and security. The outreach comes amid continued efforts by the state government to facilitate dialogue between affected communities and ensure the safe return and resettlement of displaced families. Officials said further confidence-building measures are being planned as part of the administration's strategy to restore peace and stability across violence-affected districts.

**Naga Peace Talks Closed, Cannot Be Reopened**

**KOHIMA**  
The Working Committee of the Naga National Political Groups (WC-NNPGs) has asserted that the Naga peace talks with the Centre have been formally concluded and cannot be reopened, urging the Government of India to move towards the final signing of a political agreement in line with the negotiated terms. In a statement issued on February 10, the WC-NNPGs said the Framework Agreement and the subsequent Agreed Position signed with the Centre already provide for a comprehensive political settlement addressing the core concerns of the Naga people, including issues relating to their ancestral homeland. The committee maintained that all substantive matters had been deliberated upon during the course of negotiations and that any attempt to revisit or dilute the agreed terms would be "inconceivable" and contrary to the aspirations of the Naga people. Referring to the Agreed Position signed with the Government of India on November 17, 2017, the WC-NNPGs said the agreement envisages the formation of a Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNATA), a long-standing demand of the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO). The proposed FNATA, it said, is aimed at addressing decades of perceived neglect and marginalisation of eastern Nagaland and represents a "timely correction of historical injustice." According to the committee, the arrangement seeks to realign governance structures, establish inclusive administrative mechanisms and ensure transparent implementation so that the agreement translates into tangible economic and developmental benefits.

**'Permanently Shifted' Voters in Assam Can Seek Re-Enrolment Under RP Act: Officials**

**GUWAHATI**  
Eligible voters whose names were deleted from Assam's electoral rolls during the recent Special Revision (SR) exercise on the ground of having "permanently shifted" can reapply for inclusion under provisions of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1950, election authorities said on February 10. Officials said that several electors who relocated from their earlier places of residence owing to eviction drives, displacement or other administrative actions found their names removed from the rolls of their previous polling stations or constituencies. In cases where such individuals were unable to apply for transfer before deletion, they are now permitted to seek fresh inclusion at their current address. An official from the election department stated that these voters may submit applications in Form 6 after publication of the final electoral roll following the Special Revision. The State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has issued detailed instructions to all District Election Officers (DEOs) outlining the procedure to be followed. "In view of recent displacements in Assam due to various reasons or administrative actions, some electors were removed from the rolls as 'permanently shifted' but were unable to submit applications for shifting, as only one form can be processed during a single revision," the CEO said in a communication to district authorities. The letter refers to Section 24 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, which allows an elector to file an appeal before the DEO against deletion of their name within the prescribed period. It also permits submission of Form 6 for inclusion of a name in the electoral roll during summary revision or continuous updation. Election officials clarified that although Form 6 is generally used for new voter enrolment, it may also be used in cases where an elector's name was deleted from the previous roll and they could not file Form 8 (used for correction or shifting) because a Form 7 - objection to inclusion or deletion request - was already under process against them during the revision cycle. "To prevent duplication and ensure only eligible voters are reinstated, the CEO has directed DEOs to undertake rigorous scrutiny of all such Form 6 applications. Applicants must submit a copy of their previous EPIC (Elector Photo Identity Card) along with standard supporting documents required under Form 6. Under the prescribed mechanism, the district where the applicant currently resides - termed the "Receiving District" - will forward the application to the "Verifying District" where the elector was previously enrolled for cross-checking. Applicants will also be required to appear in person before the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) for a hearing and produce necessary documents.

**Supreme Court Clears Assam Panel to Identify Illegal Occupants in Golaghat's Doyang Reserve, Mandates Due Process**

**NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI**  
The Supreme Court has permitted the Assam government to constitute a committee to identify alleged unauthorised occupants in the Doyang Reserved Forest and adjoining villages in Golaghat district, while directing that strict procedural safeguards be followed before any eviction is carried out. The order, passed on February 10, allows the state to proceed with the identification exercise but makes it clear that no eviction can take place without adherence to due process. Observing that forests are among the country's most vital natural resources, the apex court said encroachment on forest land has emerged as one of the gravest challenges to environmental governance. The bench underscored that forests are not merely repositories of timber but complex ecological systems essential for maintaining environmental balance. As part of the process, the court directed that the committee to be formed by the state must issue notices to those alleged to be unauthorised occupants and provide them an opportunity to explain the basis of their occupation before any coercive steps are taken. The bench clarified that eviction proceedings can be initiated only after encroachment is conclusively established. If land under notice is found to fall within revenue limits and outside the notified forest area, the matter will be decided by the revenue department in accordance with law. However, where unauthorised occupation is established within a notified reserve forest, authorities must pass a speaking order detailing the grounds for eviction. Such an order must be served on the occupant, granting 15 days' time to vacate the land. The court further directed that removal of alleged encroachers can be carried out only after the expiry of the 15-day notice period. Until a speaking order is passed and the notice period lapses, all parties have been asked to maintain status quo on the land in question.

fits for ordinary citizens, including students, traders and patients travelling for medical treatment. As part of the ceremony, the Chief Minister handed over the boarding pass to the first passenger of the SpiceJet flight bound for Guwahati, marking the formal commencement of operations on the new routes. The event was attended by Lok Sabha MP Dr Bimol Akoijam, Thanga MLA Tongbram Robindro Singh, Chingai MLA Khashim Vashum, Additional Chief Secretary Anurag Bajpai, Director of Transport Khumanthem Diana and Superintendent of Police (Imphal West) Ksh Shivakanta Singh. Senior officials from the Airports Authority of India were also present. The programme featured ceremonial candle lighting, ribbon cutting and cake cutting, underscoring the significance of the new services for Manipur's aviation and transport landscape. With the addition of direct flights to key metropolitan hubs, the state government expressed hope that the improved connectivity would stimulate tourism, trade and investment while easing travel for residents.



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## BUDGET AMID FISCAL CONSTRAINTS

**T**he Rs 1.13 lakh crore budget for 2026-27 reflects a careful attempt to balance welfare expansion, economic growth ambitions and severe fiscal limitations. The financial roadmap comes at a time when J&K continues to recover from a difficult year marked by a major terror attack, subsequent security operations and widespread flood devastation that collectively impacted economic activity, tourism and revenue generation. The structural challenge is evident in the fact that J&K generates only about 25 per cent of its total budget requirement through its own tax and non-tax revenues, while nearly 60 per cent of expenditure is already committed towards salaries, pensions and debt servicing. This leaves barely 40 per cent of the budget available for development and welfare spending, severely restricting the Government's ability to undertake large-scale expansionary initiatives.

Within these constraints, the budget clearly prioritises targeted welfare, healthcare strengthening, employment generation and revival of growth-driving sectors, particularly tourism. Welfare measures such as free LPG cylinders for the poorest households, fee waivers for students from economically weaker families and financial assistance for orphan children reflect an attempt to provide social cushioning to the most vulnerable sections without expanding universal subsidy burdens. Health emerges as a prominent focus area, with major emphasis on upgrading diagnostic infrastructure, establishing emergency medicine departments, strengthening trauma care facilities, expanding medical education seats and improving emergency response systems in border districts. These investments address long-standing systemic gaps and are likely to yield long-term productivity gains.

Employment generation has been given significant attention through fast-tracked recruitment across multiple categories, offering much-needed relief to unemployed youth. Simultaneously, expansion in higher education, nursing colleges, skill development initiatives and the push for private universities indicate a strategic shift toward building a skilled workforce capable of supporting a modern service-driven economy. Tourism continues to remain the most important economic growth engine, especially after suffering heavy setbacks during the previous year. Renewed investments in tourism infrastructure, pilgrimage connectivity, heritage restoration and destination development are expected to generate multiplier effects across transport, hospitality, handicrafts and local employment sectors. The focus on Amarnath Yatra track strengthening and power infrastructure reflects the importance of pilgrimage tourism in the overall economic ecosystem. Support for local industry, MSMEs and entrepreneurship has been included, though fiscal space limits the scale of such interventions. The projected economic growth target of around 9.5 per cent, compared to roughly 7.5 per cent last year, is ambitious but not entirely unrealistic if certain conditions hold. Infrastructure-led growth through higher capital expenditure is expected to stimulate investment and improve logistics efficiency. A strong rebound in tourism after last year's disruption could provide a base-effect-driven growth boost. Continued central financial assistance remains crucial for sustaining capital investment momentum, while the dominance of the service sector in J&K's economy means that even a moderate revival in trade, tourism and services can significantly push overall growth numbers. Despite the broad development narrative, fiscal compression is visible across several sectors. Budgetary constraints appear to affect areas such as disaster management, relief and rehabilitation, agriculture, horticulture, power, education, and culture. This is particularly concerning given the dependence of a large population on agriculture and horticulture for livelihoods. Limited visible investment in sewage treatment plants and solid waste management infrastructure also highlights the growing pressure on urban civic systems. With nearly 36% of expenditure already committed to salaries and pensions amid fiscal constraints, the Government finds itself in a difficult situation to absorb thousands of daily wagers into regular workforce structures.

The budget also attempts to maintain regional balance, though perceptions of uneven allocation may continue to exist given the diverse aspirations across the Jammu, Kashmir, Pir Panjal and Chenab regions. Importantly, the budget avoids excessive populism and limits large-scale freebies, reflecting fiscal prudence. Welfare benefits remain targeted toward the poorest and most vulnerable sections. Perhaps the most realistic aspect of the budget is the open acknowledgement of fiscal limitations and structural challenges. The Government has clearly highlighted the dependence on central assistance, limited revenue generation capacity and the burden of committed expenditure. Ultimately, the success of this budget will depend less on announcements and more on implementation. Historically, gaps between policy projections and ground-level execution have remained a major challenge.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

“People don't have to like or support you, so you always have to say thank you.” - Ruben Studdard

# Installing a Popular Ministry in Manipur Is Welcome



R SINHA

Barring any last-minute political disruption, sustained efforts by the Union government and the Bharatiya Janata Party's central leadership to restore an elected ministry in violence-hit Manipur appear set to bear fruit within days. The familiar constitutional process—revocation of President's Rule and revival of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, which has remained under suspended animation for nearly a year—is expected to be completed shortly. While early signs of dissent have emerged within the Kuki-Zo group of MLAs, the numbers involved are unlikely to derail the formation of a new government.

Intensive political consultations in New Delhi, involving a majority of NDA legislators from Manipur and parallel administrative initiatives by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs earlier this month, helped crystallise a workable arrangement. Under this framework, senior BJP leader Y. Khemchand Singh, a Meitei legislator with wide experience as a former Speaker and minister, has emerged as the most acceptable choice to lead the legislature party and assume the chief minister's office. Khemchand Singh, who also holds a graduate degree in martial arts, is regarded within party circles as a consensus-builder at a time when Manipur remains deeply fractured along ethnic and geographical lines.

Equally significant is the reported decision to appoint Nemcha Kipgen, a Kuki BJP MLA, former minister and one of the few prominent women politicians in the state, as deputy chief minister. Of the 10 Kuki MLAs in the Assembly—seven of whom belong to the BJP—only five attended the crucial meeting with central leaders, an absence that hinted at divisions within the Kuki-Zo political bloc. Yet, even this visible lack of unanimity is not expected to pose a numerical challenge to the BJP-led coalition. There is also a strong possibility that the National People's Party (NPP), an NDA ally, may be offered the post of a second deputy chief minister. The NPP, which plays a significant role in Manipur politics, is also the ruling party in neighbouring Meghalaya under the leadership of Conrad K. Sangma. Founded in 2013 by the late P. A. Sangma—veteran parliamentarian and former Lok Sabha Speaker—the NPP has sought to project itself as a regional force capable of balancing ethnic aspirations across the Northeast. Its inclusion at a senior level in the Manipur government would underline the coalition's intent to broaden representation and reinforce stability.

The emerging leadership combination—Khemchand Singh as

chief minister, Nemcha Kipgen as deputy chief minister, and a possible second deputy from the NPP—invites several political interpretations. For Khemchand Singh, the elevation is widely seen as recognition of his efforts over the past several months to reach out to communities beyond the Imphal Valley, particularly the Kuki-Zos. On December 8, 2025, he visited two villages—Litan in Ukhrul district and Chassad in Kamjong district—both located in the hill areas and home largely to Naga and Kuki populations. During that visit, he also interacted with displaced Kuki families at the relief camp housed in the Litan Sareinkhong Baptist Church, an outreach that was noted by both supporters and sceptics as an attempt to rebuild bridges amid lingering mistrust.

Equally important, and politically more consequential, is the BJP's apparent decision to draw a line under the leadership of former chief minister N. Biren Singh. A Meitei stalwart who had dominated Manipur politics for years, Biren Singh has not been considered for a return to the chief minister's post. This decision reflects, at least in part, the deep resentment harboured by Kuki-Zo civil society organisations towards his style of governance. These groups have long accused Biren Singh of centralising power, marginalising hill communities and promoting a narrative that portrayed Kuki-Zos as illegal immigrants from neighbouring Myanmar. Such perceptions, whether entirely fair or not, hardened ethnic fault lines and fed into the persistent Kuki-Zo demand for a separate administrative arrangement—often articulated as a Union Territory with a legislature. Within BJP circles, there was reportedly an attempt some months ago to explore alternative leadership options from within the Meitei community. The name of the current Assembly Speaker, Thockchom Satyabrata Singh, figured prominently in internal discussions. However, prevailing ground realities—marked by deep social polarisation and fragile law and order—were not considered conducive for that option to move forward. Nemcha Kipgen's likely elevation to the post of deputy chief minister is widely seen as a deliberate move to placate an aggrieved Kuki-Zo constituency. It also allows the BJP to project a progressive image by placing a woman in a position of real political authority in a state that has traditionally lagged behind on gender representation in governance. Symbolism aside, Kipgen's inclusion signals an attempt to convey that the new dispensation will not be Valley-centric alone.

The possible appointment of a second deputy chief minister from the NPP would further

reinforce this message. For the BJP, accommodating coalition partners at senior levels is a pragmatic step to ensure numerical stability and reduce the risk of internal dissent. More broadly, it reflects a conscious effort to give the new ministry a representative character, balancing ethnic identities and party affiliations in a state still struggling to heal.

Manipur today is only gradually inching towards normalcy. While incidents of large-scale violence have declined, the trust deficit between the Meiteis of the Valley and the Kuki-Zos of the hill districts remains deep. Even routine movement along national highways continues to pose challenges for the administration, underscoring the fragile nature of peace. Against this backdrop, the formation of an elected government is being projected by New Delhi as a necessary step towards restoring political accountability and administrative confidence.

In the 60-member Manipur Legislative Assembly, one seat is currently vacant. The BJP commands 37 MLAs, including 10 Kuki legislators, seven of whom are from the party itself. NDA allies include the NPP with six members and the Naga People's Front with five. On paper, the numbers provide the BJP-led coalition a comfortable majority.

President's Rule was imposed in Manipur on February 13, 2025, four days after N. Biren Singh resigned from office. With violence continuing and reconciliation efforts yielding limited results, the Union government sought and obtained parliamentary approval on August 5 to extend President's Rule by another six months. Under the Constitution, such rule can be extended for a maximum of three years, subject to parliamentary sanction every six months, provided the extraordinary circumstances justifying it continue to exist.

By moving now to install a popular ministry, the Centre and the BJP leadership appear keen to avoid another extension of President's Rule, which carries both political and administrative costs. Yet, the experiment is not without risks. Signs of dissent within the Kuki-Zo MLA group remain visible, and there are murmurs of dissatisfaction within the NPP as well. The reported launch of a splinter outfit—styled as NPP (Tera Lal)—by former Manipur deputy chief minister and ex-NPP president Y. Joykumar Singh on February 2 points to underlying churn within the regional party.

Adding to the complexity, the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) has reiterated that it had collectively decided at a meeting in Guwahati on January 13 not to participate in the formation of any new ministry. The Council has made it clear that if any Kuki-Zo MLA

chooses to join the government, they would do so in their individual capacity. The KZC has explicitly stated that it would not be responsible for any consequences arising from such unilateral decisions, a warning that underscores the fragile relationship between political representatives and civil society bodies in the hills.

Meanwhile, the Congress has chosen to challenge the constitutional validity of the process that led to President's Rule in the first place. Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee president K. Meghchandra Singh has moved the Manipur High Court, alleging unconstitutional exercise of power by Governor Ajay Bhalla in February 2025. In his

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court has empowered Assam to effectively fight encroachments in forests. A committee will be constituted to determine whether an area is forest or revenue land—once that determination is done, evictions can begin in just 15 days. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM Assam**



petition, filed on January 29, Meghchandra Singh has sought dissolution of the remainder of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly under Article 174(2) of the Constitution, adding a legal dimension to an already complex political situation.

Taken together, these developments suggest that the impending formation of a new ministry in Manipur is as much an experiment as it is a necessity. For the BJP's national leadership and the Union government, it represents an attempt to restore democratic governance, balance ethnic representation and stabilise a sensitive border state. For Manipur's people, exhausted by months of uncertainty, displacement and distrust, the return of an elected government—however imperfect—offers at least the promise of dialogue, accountability and a path back to normalcy. Whether this experiment succeeds will depend less on numbers in the Assembly and more on the new leadership's ability to rebuild trust across communities that remain painfully divided.

# PMO Clears Vande Bharat Service, Major Rail Infrastructure Upgrade for Dibrugarh

## DIBRUGARH

In a significant development for Upper Assam's transport network, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has confirmed the introduction of a new Vande Bharat Express service from Dibrugarh along with a comprehensive upgrade of key railway infrastructure in the city.

The assurance came in response to a letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 21, 2025, by Dibrugarh-based youth leader Parag Dutta, who sought enhanced railway facilities and modern connectivity for the region. In its reply dated February 9, 2026, the PMO outlined a broad roadmap of projects aimed at strengthening Dibrugarh's railway network.

New Vande Bharat Terminus Planned

According to the communication, one of the major projects includes the

establishment of a dedicated Vande Bharat Express terminus at Dibrugarh Railway Station (DBRG), equipped with national-level facilities. The move is expected to elevate the station's status and position Dibrugarh as a key rail hub in Upper Assam.

Railway sources have indicated that a Vande Bharat Express service connecting Dibrugarh and Guwahati is currently in the planning stage under the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR). Once operational, the semi-high-speed train is expected to significantly reduce travel time between the two cities, providing a faster and more comfortable alternative to existing services.

The introduction of the Vande Bharat service is being viewed as a major step forward for Upper Assam, which has historically seen limited ac-

cess to modern train services compared to other parts of the country. Known for advanced safety features, improved passenger amenities and reduced journey times, Vande Bharat trains are considered a flagship initiative in India's railway modernisation drive.

Workshop Upgrade to National Standards

Another key component of the development plan involves the upgrade of the Dibrugarh Railway Workshop (DBWS) into a national-level facility. The workshop will be modernised with advanced machinery and equipment, strengthening its capacity for maintenance and technical operations.

The upgrade is expected to generate employment opportunities and establish Dibrugarh as a significant railway maintenance and servicing centre in

the Northeast. Officials believe that improved technical infrastructure will not only enhance operational efficiency but also support long-term expansion of rail services in the region.

Modernisation of Dibrugarh Town Station

The PMO communication also confirmed the development of the Dibrugarh Town (DBRT) Railway Station building with national-level passenger amenities. The modernisation project aims to improve the overall travel experience for thousands of commuters who use the station daily.

Upgraded facilities are expected to include improved waiting areas, sanitation infrastructure, digital information systems and enhanced accessibility, in line with national standards for passenger convenience.

Housing Projects for Railway Employees

Addressing long-standing accommodation concerns, the plan includes the construction of new residential complexes for railway employees at Gabharupathar, Naliapool Kadmoni and Chiring Gaon Colony in Dibrugarh. These housing projects are intended to improve living conditions for railway staff and support the expanding workforce associated with the upgraded infrastructure.

Boost to Connectivity and Economy

Welcoming the PMO's response, Parag Dutta described the development as a "historic moment" for Dibrugarh, stating that enhanced connectivity would stimulate eco-

nomics growth, business activity and tourism in Upper Assam.

The projects align with the Centre's broader push to strengthen railway infrastructure across the Northeast, a region that has witnessed accelerated investment in recent years. Improved rail connectivity is seen as a critical component in integrating the Northeast more closely with the rest of the country, while also unlocking local economic potential.

With the proposed Vande Bharat service and large-scale infrastructure upgrades, Dibrugarh is poised to emerge as a more prominent node in Assam's railway network, marking a new phase in the region's transport and development trajectory.

## NGT Takes Suo Motu Cognisance of Meghalaya Illegal Coal Mine Blast That Claimed 30 Lives

### SHILLONG

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report detailing a fatal explosion at an allegedly illegal rat-hole coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district, where 30 miners lost their lives.

The Tribunal registered an original application after taking note of a news report published on February 6, 2026, which highlighted the blast and flagged possible violations of environmental laws and earlier judicial directives.

The move signals the NGT's intent to examine not only the immediate circumstances of the tragedy but also the broader regulatory and environmental compliance issues surrounding coal mining in the region. According to the report cited by the Tribunal, the explosion occurred around 11 a.m. at an illegal rat-hole mine in the Mynsyngat area. The blast was allegedly triggered by dynamite, resulting in multiple fatalities and leaving several workers trapped underground. Rescue operations were subsequently launched, but the scale of the disaster has drawn nationwide attention to the persistence of banned mining practices in Meghalaya.

Rat-hole mining, a hazardous and unscientific method involving narrow tunnels dug into hillsides, has long been a contentious issue in the state.

The practice had previously been banned due to safety risks and severe environmental damage, including deforestation, land degradation and water pollution.

Despite the prohibition and repeated warnings from environmental authorities, reports suggest that illegal operations have continued in certain pockets. A bench comprising NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Expert Member A.

## Women, Youth Lead Assam's Growth, Says Kaushik Rai at Lakhimpur Conferences



OUR CORRESPONDENT

LAKHIMPUR: Barak Valley Development Department Minister Kaushik Rai on Tuesday said the rise of women power and youth energy is shaping a stronger Assam and a prosperous India.

He was speaking at two major events organised by BJP Mahila Morcha and Yuva Morcha under the Lakhimpur Assembly constituency.

Around 6,000 women attended the Mahila Conference organised by the Lakhimpur Mahila Morcha. Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia was present at the programme along with Minister Rai.

Rai said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr Him-

anta Biswa Sarma, women in Assam are now more aware of their rights and are playing an active role in development, society building, and nation building. He added that the trust and affection of women towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and the Bharatiya Janata Party is growing stronger day by day.

He said the awakening of women power is the foundation of a strong Assam and a developed India in the coming days.

Later, nearly 5,000 youths took part in a Yuva Conference organised by the Lakhimpur Yuva Morcha. Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia, BJP Yuva Morcha state president Rakesh Das, and national spokesperson Prem Shukla attended the event along with Minister Rai.

Addressing the gathering, the speakers said youth power is the real strength of the nation and called upon young people to actively contribute to the progress of the state and the country.

## Encroachment in Assam Down to 20 Lakh Bighas After Regularisation, Eviction Drives to Continue: Himanta Biswa Sarma

### GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said nearly 20 lakh bighas of land would remain under encroachment in the state after the regularisation of forest land in favour of eligible indigenous and tribal communities, asserting that eviction drives against unauthorised occupation of government and forest land would continue.

His remarks came a day after the state government carried out an eviction drive in Karimganj district on February 10 as part of its ongoing campaign to clear alleged encroachments.

Addressing reporters, Sarma said that at present an estimated 26 to 27 lakh bighas of land across Assam are under encroachment. However, he maintained that the actual area requiring eviction would reduce significantly once forest pattas are granted to eligible indigenous people occupying forest land.

"If you see, around 26-27 lakh bighas of land are under encroachment. But when indigenous people are granted forest pattas, their land will be regularised. That will bring down the eviction exercise to around 20 lakh bighas, as tribal people will get pattas," the Chief Minister said.

He underlined that the government is differentiating between alleged encroachers and indigenous or tribal families who are eligible for land titles under existing legal provisions, particularly in forest areas. According to him, the ongoing exercise seeks to reclaim land from what the government describes as illegal occupation, while at the same time securing land rights for protected communities.

The Chief Minister's statement comes amid heightened legal scrutiny over eviction measures in forest areas. On February 10, the Supreme Court allowed the Assam government to constitute a committee to

identify unauthorised occupants in the Doyang Reserved Forest and adjoining villages in Golaghat district.

While granting permission, the apex court laid down safeguards to ensure adherence to due process before any eviction is carried out. Observing that forests are among the country's most critical natural resources, the court noted that encroachment on forest land has emerged as one of the most serious challenges facing environmental governance.

The bench directed that the proposed committee must issue notices to alleged unauthorised occupants and provide them with an opportunity to present their case before any action is taken. Eviction proceedings, the court clarified, may be initiated only if encroachment is conclusively established.

In cases where land under notice falls within revenue limits and outside the notified forest area, the matter will be referred to the revenue

department for further decision. However, if unauthorised occupation is found within a reserve forest, authorities must pass a speaking order detailing the grounds for eviction and serve it upon the occupant, granting 15 days to vacate the land.

The state government's eviction drives over the past few years have targeted alleged encroachments in forest reserves, grazing reserves, and government land across multiple districts. Officials have maintained that the objective is to reclaim public land, protect forest cover, and curb illegal settlements.

At the same time, the government has initiated steps to distribute land pattas to eligible tribal and indigenous families, particularly those residing in forest areas for generations. The administration argues that regularisation of such holdings would both reduce the scale of eviction and ensure legal protection for recognised communities.

## Manipur: KSO Leader Denies Communal Angle in Ukhrul Violence, Attributes Clash to Drunken Scuffle and Rumours

### UKHRUL

The Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO), Ukhrul district, has rejected claims that the recent violence in Litan village had a communal dimension, asserting that the incident originated from a minor altercation involving a few intoxicated individuals and was later misrepresented, leading to escalation.

Speaking on February 10, KSO Ukhrul vice president Mercy Khongsai said the episode began as a small scuffle between three or four drunk men and should not be construed as a clash between communities.

"It is not a communal thing

at all. However, some anti-social elements or people with such a mindset are trying to portray it as a communal issue," Khongsai said, expressing concern that misinformation and deliberate misinterpretation aggravated tensions on the ground.

According to her, efforts were made to defuse the situation through dialogue. A meeting was convened on Monday involving representatives of the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) and the Deputy Chief Minister in an attempt to resolve the matter.

"Unfortunately, we could not arrive at any understanding. It is very disheartening that immediately after the

meeting, some Tangkhul people started burning three or four houses," Khongsai alleged, adding that what began as a minor dispute spiralled into violence due to escalation and provocation. Eyewitness accounts from Litan village echoed similar claims. Hegin Baite, a resident whose house was reportedly set ablaze, said the initial quarrel appeared to be a drunken brawl and was expected to subside quickly.

"We thought it was a small matter and peace would prevail. But they escalated the issue and attacked us with stones. They even burnt our house," Baite said.

Describing the aftermath,

he said families were forced to flee amid fear and chaos. "We had to cross the river with our family at night. We did not start this," he said, denying that his community had initiated the violence. The incident has once again drawn attention to the fragile security environment in parts of Manipur, where localised disputes risk being framed along communal lines, complicating reconciliation efforts and straining inter-community relations.

Authorities have not officially characterised the nature of the clash, and tensions remain high in the area as community leaders call for restraint and peace.

## Tangkhul Naga Long Declares Emergency in Ukhrul Following Inter-Community Tensions



### UKHRUL

The Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) has declared an emergency in areas affected by recent disturbances at Sharkaphung/Sikibung Kha village in Ukhrul district.

The declaration follows incidents of conflict involving members of the Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities, which reportedly resulted in violence, destruction of property, and serious threats to peace and harmony. After a careful review of the situation, the TNL noted that the prevailing tension has the potential to escalate further, disrupt normal life, and endanger public safety.

In order to prevent further violence and to maintain peace and order, an emergency has been imposed in the affected areas. During the emergency period, strict measures will be enforced, and all concerned authorities, village leaders, and members of the public have been directed to cooperate fully.

The Tangkhul Naga Long has warned that any act likely to aggravate the situation or disturb peace will be dealt with strictly under the emergency declaration until normalcy is restored.

The emergency declaration was issued and signed by Sword Vashum, President, Tangkhul Naga Long.

## Mizoram Governor Inaugurates LESDE Kut 2026, Calls for Entrepreneurship-Led Growth



### AIZAWL

Mizoram Governor General Vijay Kumar Singh on Tuesday inaugurated "LESDE Kut 2026," a five-day mega festival aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, skill development and employment generation across the state, underscoring the need to create sustainable livelihoods for youth and marginalised communities.

Organised by the state's Labour, Employment, Skill Development and Entre-

preneurship (LESDE) Department, the event is being held from February 10 to 14 at Lam-mual Ground in Aizawl. The festival seeks to bring together entrepreneurs, job seekers, MSMEs, workers, and policymakers on a common platform to foster innovation and expand employment opportunities.

Launch of Welfare Initiatives

During the inaugural ceremony, the Governor launched two new initiatives under the Mizoram Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (MBOCW-WB).

The first initiative, "Eizawna Kailawn," is a skill development programme designed for registered construction workers and their dependents. The second, "Rahbi Chhertu," aims to create new career pathways and expand livelihood options for families engaged in the construction sector.

Officials said the schemes are intended to enhance employability, promote upward mobility and provide structured support to one of the state's most vulnerable workforce segments.

Focus on Youth, Women and Rural Communities

Addressing the gathering, Governor Singh emphasised that Mizoram's economic progress hinges on the creation of new livelihood avenues, particularly for young people. He stressed the importance of equipping youth with market-relevant skills and ensuring that women and rural communities are meaningfully included in development initiatives.

"The future of the state lies in empowering its youth through skill development and

entrepreneurship," he said, adding that inclusive growth must remain at the heart of policymaking.

Highlighting the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector as a key driver of national economic growth, Singh noted that India has earned global recognition as one of the world's fastest-growing economies. He urged stakeholders to expand MSME activities beyond urban centres and into remote villages, ensuring that development reaches the grassroots.

Harnessing Local Potential

Describing Mizoram as a land rich in cultural heritage, skilled craftsmanship and agro-based potential, the Governor called for coordinated efforts to harness these inherent strengths.

He said the accompanying job fair at LESDE Kut serves as a crucial bridge between employers and job seekers, enabling young people to explore career opportunities and industry linkages within and beyond the state.

In a rapidly evolving, technology-driven economy, Singh observed that continuous skill upgradation is essential. He urged government officials and implementing agencies to provide active support to entrepreneurs, prioritise sustainability and quality standards, and ensure effective implementation of central government schemes.

Minister Calls for Market-Linked Skills

LESDE Minister Lalghinglova Hmar, who also addressed the event, said innovation stems from identifying and addressing local needs through new enterprises and services. He described the LESDE Depart-

ment as being closely connected to the everyday livelihoods of the people.

Hmar stressed the importance of "hand-holding" support for budding entrepreneurs and the need to provide market-linked training to ensure that Mizo youth secure sustainable employment.

Expressing confidence in the newly launched initiatives, he said "Eizawna Kailawn" and "Rahbi Chhertu" would significantly improve the quality of life for construction workers and their families. He also appealed to eligible individuals to register with the welfare board to access available benefits.

Platform for Collaboration and Growth

LESDE Kut 2026 is being positioned as a flagship initiative of the Mizoram government, showcasing the services, programmes and achievements of the LESDE Department and its affiliated boards and institutions.

The event aims to enhance awareness, facilitate networking and create new opportunities in employment, skill development and entrepreneurship. By bringing together MSMEs, workers' representatives, entrepreneurs and policymakers, the festival seeks to build stronger institutional linkages and encourage collaborative growth.

Aligned with national initiatives such as "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat," LESDE Kut also promotes local products and strengthens ties between Mizoram's small enterprises and central ministries, reinforcing the state's push toward self-reliance and inclusive economic development.

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## MHA guidelines on Vande Mataram: All six stanzas to be sung before National Anthem in govt events, schools



NEW DELHI:

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued a detailed notification directing that that India's National Song, Vande Mataram, shall be sung first when played with the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana.

The notification outlined comprehensive guidelines for the observance of the National Song, in honour of the 150th year of Vande Mataram, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The official composition is approximately three minutes and ten seconds long.

The MHA stated that "whenever the National Song and the National Anthem are sung or played together at official or public events, Vande Mataram must be rendered first."

The directive seeks to ensure uniformity and clarity in ceremonial practices across the country.

The MHA specified occasions when the official version of the National Song is to be played. These

include civil investiture ceremonies; the arrival and departure of the President at formal State functions and other government-organised events and immediately before and after the President addresses to the nation on All India Radio or television.

It is also to be played on the arrival and departure of Governors or Lieutenant Governors at formal State functions within their respective States or Union Territories. The song is also prescribed to be sung when the National Flag is brought on parade and on any other occasion as may be directed through special orders issued by the Government of India.

The notification also details the protocol for band performances. When rendered by a band, the National Song must be preceded by a drum roll lasting seven paces in slow march, rising to peak volume before softening, followed by a single beat of rest before the commencement of the song. Alternatively, another clear musical sig-

nal, such as a fanfare, may be used.

The ministry has identified specific instances where the National Song should be accompanied by mass singing. These include the unfurling of the National Flag at cultural or ceremonial functions other than parades, and the arrival and departure of the President at government or public functions that are not formal State ceremonies. On such occasions, the official version must be coordinated with collective singing.

The notification further states that Vande Mataram may be sung at other significant gatherings attended by ministers or dignitaries, even if they are not strictly ceremonial, provided it is rendered with due respect and decorum.

Schools have been encouraged to begin the day with community singing of the National Song and to promote respect for the National Anthem and the National Flag among students.

The MHA reiterated that audiences must stand to attention whenever the National Song is sung or played. An exception has been made for instances where it forms part of a newsreel or documentary film, as standing in such cases could disrupt the screening and cause disorder.

The government said the consolidated instructions aim to ensure uniform practice, dignity and respect in the observance of national symbols at official functions, educational institutions and public ceremonies across the country.

BARABANKI

In a stern warning to those "dreaming" of rebuilding the Babri masjid, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday asked them to live by following rules as the day of 'Qayamat' (doomsday) will "never come".

Speaking at an event in Barabanki, the district neighbouring Ayodhya, Adityanath said, "We had said that 'Ram Lalla, hum aayenge, mandir wahi banaayenge' (Ram, we will come and build the temple right there). Has the temple been built? Is there any doubt?" The audience responded by chanting "Jai Shri Ram".

"The day of 'Qayamat' (doomsday) will never come and hence the Babri structure will never be rebuilt. Those who are dreaming of the day of 'Qayamat' will rot away, that day will never come," he said.

He warned that if someone breaks the law, the path only leads to hell, not heaven.

Adityanath's comments come in the backdrop of office bearers of a right wing group embarking on a "Chalo Murshidabad Yatra" from Lucknow to protest against the proposed construction of a replica of Babri Masjid in West Bengal's Murshidabad district.

Two weeks ago, suspended Trinamool Congress MLA and now Janata Unnayan Party chief Humayun Kabir had declared that the construction of Babri 2.0 will begin at noon on February 11.

Following this, the Hindutva fringe group Vishwa Hindu Raksha Parishad had called on the people of Uttar Pradesh to march to Murshidabad.

The organisation's office bearers from Bababanki, Gonda, Balrampur, Jaunpur, Varanasi, etc. will join the yatra and proceed to Murshidabad, its president Gopal Rai said.

Adityanath was taking part in religious rituals organised at Ram Janaki Temple in Dulhadepur



Kuti, Barabanki, in the memory of late Mahant Baba Harishankar Das Maharaj, according to a statement from the Uttar Pradesh government.

Speaking in Barabanki, Adityanath said that after 500 years, the "glorious moment" of Ram temple construction took place in Ayodhya.

"In these 500 years, many kings and emperors have come, many governments have come. India gained independence in 1947 and after the first elections in 1952, governments were formed. But why didn't the idea of building a temple for Lord Ram at his birthplace ever occur to them?" he asked.

Adityanath was taking part in religious rituals organised at the Ram Janaki Temple in Dulhadepur Kuti, Barabanki, in the memory of late Mahant Baba Harishankar Das Maharaj, an official statement said.

Taking a jibe at opposition parties, he said there is no place for Ramdrohis, or traitors of Lord Ram, anywhere.

"Some people adopt an opportunistic attitude. They remember Ram when a crisis strikes and forget him later. So, Lord Ram has also forgot-

ten them now. There is no place for Ramdrohis anywhere," he said.

Intensifying his attack, Adityanath said, "We want to tell those who were firing on Ram devotees, obstructing Ram's work, and those who are still dreaming of the Babri structure: the day of doom will never come. Don't live for the doomsday, learn to live according to the rules in India."

He added that every Indian must work with a positive mindset for the vision of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' (One India, Better India).

"Every saint's spiritual practice is for his country. His 'dharma' (moral duty) is also dedicated to the country. Both complement each other. One is the body and the other is the soul, the two cannot be kept apart," Adityanath said.

He said India cannot be separated from Sanatan Dharma.

"That is why you see that Sanatan Dharma, India and Indianness are being attacked from all over the world. We must be vigilant against attacks from within and outside. Because those who don't like India's progress, those who cannot digest the resolve of Viksit Bharat, are engaged

in a conspiracy," Adityanath said.

He said people must brace themselves to stop three types of evil mindsets - "the one that is conspiring, the one falling prey to this conspiracy, and the one selling themselves out and working for that conspiracy".

The fractious Babri Masjid issue dates back to more than a century. A Supreme Court verdict had settled the issue on November 9, 2019, by backing the construction of a Ram temple by a trust at the disputed site in Ayodhya and ruling that an alternative five-acre plot to be found for a mosque in the Hindu holy town.

Hindus had been contending that the erstwhile Babri Masjid, a three-domed mosque built by or at the behest of Mughal emperor Babur, was erected by the invading Muslim armies after razing the existing Ram temple.

It turned into a legal dispute in 1885 when a mahant went to court seeking permission to build a canopy outside the mosque. The plea was dismissed. In December 1949, unidentified people spirited a Lord Ram idol into the mosque. The structure was destroyed by a large mob of kar sevaks on December 6, 1992.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Bangladesh elections: Over 50% polling centres considered 'risky', CCTV installed at most stations



DHAKA

More than half the polling centres have been identified as "risk-prone" for the general elections in Bangladesh, as officials said 90 per cent of them will be under CCTV surveillance, with many policemen deployed in the capital, Dhaka, wearing body cameras.

Bangladesh will hold parliamentary elections on February 12

- the first since the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in massive country-wide protests in August 2024.

Officials said the Election Commission's security system is based on risk assessment.

"Security deployment is being made based on local sensitivity assessments," Election Commissioner Abul Fazal Mohammad Sanaullah told a media

briefing late Tuesday.

EC officials said the elections would witness the largest-ever deployment of law enforcement personnel and the most extensive use of technology in the country's electoral history.

Sanaullah said the poll body expected law enforcement agencies to ensure a peaceful atmosphere for voters during polling and after elections.

He said the EC was largely satisfied with the current law-and-order situation and "compared to any time in the past, we are in a better position now".

His comments came hours after the police Inspector General Baharul Alam said they found 24,000 out of nearly 43,000 polling centres across the country were "high" or "moderate" risk-prone election stations.

Police said they provided a list of risk-prone polling centres to the EC, which showed that out of 2,131 polling centres in Dhaka, 1,614 were risk-prone.

However, the army, in a media briefing earlier, said they have identified two centres in Dhaka city to be "risky".

Officials said policemen would use body-worn cameras for the first time at these specific locations.

EC data showed that first-time voters made up some 3.58 per cent of the total 1,27,700,597 voters.

The polls are being held simultaneously along with a referendum on a complex 84-point reform package.

The contest is mainly between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its once ally, Jamaat-e-Islami.

Chief adviser Muhammad Yunus' interim government last year disbanded deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and barred it from contesting the polls.

A series of pre-poll surveys conducted in the past two months by consulting firms, research organisations and think tanks suggest that the BNP was the frontrunner and that its new chairman, Tarique Rahman, is in pole position to be the next prime minister.

Hasina's Awami League government was ousted in a student-led violent street protest, dubbed the July Uprising, on August 5, 2024.

### White House removes 'certain pulses' from revised India trade deal fact sheet



WASHINGTON

The White House has deleted "pulses" from the list of US goods for which it had earlier said India would eliminate or reduce tariffs, according to a revised fact sheet on the interim trade agreement.

On Monday, the White House issued a fact sheet on "The United States and India Announce Historic Trade Deal (Interim Agreement)," days after the two countries, in a joint statement, announced the framework for an interim agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade.

The fact sheet had outlined the key terms of the agreement, stating that India would eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and several American food and farm items.

These included dried distillers' grains, red sorghum, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruits, "certain pulses", soybean oil, wine and spirits, among other products.

The fact sheet had also said that India is "committed" to buying more American products and purchasing over USD 500 billion of US energy, infor-

mation and communication technology, agricultural, coal, and other products.

However, the revised fact sheet released on Tuesday removed the reference made regarding pulses and changed the word committed used for India to "intends".

"India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.

"India intends to buy more American products and purchase over USD 500 billion of US energy, information and communication technology, coal, and other products," the revised fact sheet said.

This update comes in the backdrop of several farmers' organisations, including the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), and the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), criticising the India-US trade deal and announcing nationwide protests for February 12.

The joint statement issued last week on the trade deal had

made no mention of "pulses" in items on which India will eliminate or reduce tariffs for American products.

The joint statement had also maintained that "India intends to purchase USD 500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal over the next 5 years."

The agreement between the two countries will see India slash tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of farm products, while Washington applies a reciprocal 18 per cent tariff on Indian goods but commits to removing those duties on key sectors such as generic pharmaceuticals, gems and diamonds, and aircraft parts once the pact is concluded.

Earlier Two US lawmakers had urged President Donald Trump to seek favourable provisions for pulse crops in any future trade deal with India, saying American producers face a "significant competitive disadvantage" because of what they described as "unfair" tariffs imposed by New Delhi.

# Nagaland University study provides benchmark data on land use change and river flow in North Eastern Himalayas

## GIS-based hydrological research offers new insights into runoff patterns, flood risks and sustainable water management in fragile hill ecosystems



LUMAMI

Nagaland University Researchers have completed a pioneering GIS-based hydrological study that scientifically examines how geo-ecological conditions and human activities influence runoff and river flow in the North Eastern Himalayan hill region, an area long marked by data gaps and global scientific debate.

The research addresses a critical and contested question in Himalayan science - the true hydrological impact of land use change on river discharge, floods and environmental degradation.

Beyond advancing scientific understanding, the study proposes a practical four-zone runoff classification—low, moderate, high and very high runoff zones—to support water resource planning, flood mitigation and integrated watershed management.

A Video of Prof. M. S. Rawat, Department of Geography, School of Sciences, Nagaland University, explaining the research can be viewed and downloaded from the following link - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RWEIhfyY-T6iwSeZMEumZNZkyp6QAaPd/view>

The methodology and findings are expected to benefit policymakers, planners and local communities, while also serving as a transferable model for similar fragile regions across the Himalaya and India.

Emphasising the role of the university in researching topics of vital importance to the local community and the entire North East, Prof. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Vice Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, "I congratulate the research team of Nagaland University for producing this important GIS-based hydrological study that provides benchmark data on land use change and river flow in the North Eastern Himalayas. This work is timely and significant, as it enhances our understanding of runoff patterns, flood risks, and sustainable water management in fragile hill ecosystems. Such research not only strengthens scientific knowledge but also supports



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gion's environmental security and resilience"

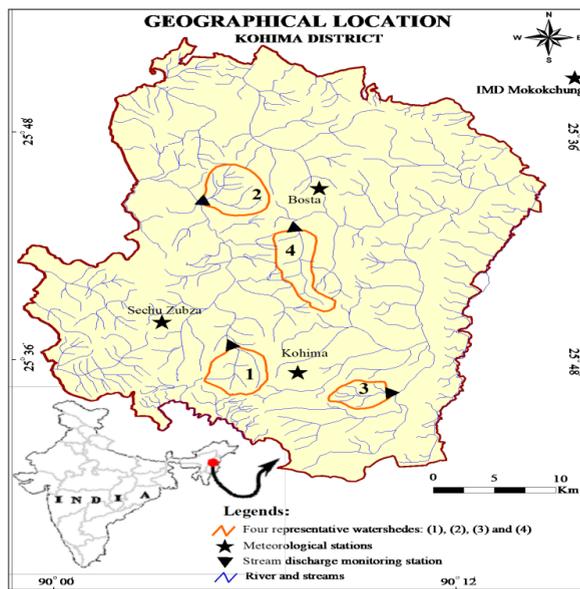
The study, titled 'GIS Modeling to investigate geo-ecological and anthropogenic impacts on runoff and river flow in the North Eastern hilly region of India', was conducted by Dr. K. Belho and Prof. M. S. Rawat from Nagaland University, along with Dr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat from Asian International University, Imphal. The research was funded by Nagaland University through a Non-NET Fellowship and supported by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

The findings were published in International Journal of Geographic Information System Research and Development ([https://doi.org/10.34218/IJGIS-RD\\_03\\_02\\_001](https://doi.org/10.34218/IJGIS-RD_03_02_001)), a peer-reviewed academic journal that publishes original research and applied studies on GIS theory, technologies, spatial analysis, and geospatial applications across disciplines.

Elaborating on the technical aspects of the Research, Prof. M. S. Rawat, Department of Geography, School of Sciences, Nagaland University, said, "We focused on four experimentally monitored watersheds in Kohima district. Our research team combined advanced geospatial techniques with systematic field-based hydrological measurements, which is an approach rarely attempted in the Indian Himalayas. The study generated continuous stream discharge data across contrasting land-use systems, including dense forests, open forests, agricultural lands and urban landscapes, creating one of the first benchmark hydrological datasets for the North Eastern Himalayan region."

Further, Dr. K. Belho, Department of Geography, School of Sciences, Nagaland University, said, "Our findings reveal stark contrasts in runoff behaviour across geo-ecological systems. Dense, undisturbed forest landscapes showed a strong capacity to absorb rainfall and sustain sub-surface flows during non-monsoon months, while urban and heavily modified landscapes generated high monsoon runoff and significantly reduced lean-season flows."

The researchers quantified these differences through runoff ratios, clearly demonstrating how increasing anthropogenic stress amplifies flood risks while



weakening water availability during dry periods.

Further, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat, Consultant Professor, Asian International University, Manipur, said, "Our study underscores the urgent need for more instrumented experimental catchments and long-term

hydrological monitoring stations across the Himalayan region. The researchers note that such infrastructure is essential for reliable flood forecasting, environmental hazard assessment and evidence-based sustainable development in one of the world's most sensitive moun-

tain ecosystems."

**ABOUT NAGALAND UNIVERSITY:** Nagaland University, the 13th Central University and the only Central University in Nagaland was established based on the Act of Parliament of India and received the assent of the President of India on 20th October 1989 as The Nagaland University Act 1989. The University came into being on September 6, 1994 having jurisdiction over the entire state of Nagaland

At present the University has three campuses, viz. (i) Headquarters at Lumami in Zunheboto district (ii) Kohima Campus at Meriema in Kohima district (iii) Medziphema Campus (School of Agricultural Sciences) at Medziphema in Dimapur district.

There are 43 departments offering Undergraduate and Postgraduate and Ph.D. programmes in different disciplines of Arts, Commerce, Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Engineering & Technology and Management streams. There are 76 colleges from all over the state of Nagaland currently affiliated to Nagaland University.

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# Eight States, Endless Wonders: Discovering the Northeast



**N**ortheast India feels like a different world. The air smells fresh. Hills roll on and on. Rivers move slow and wide. Clouds sit low over green

Sela Pass, covered in snow for most of the year, looks magical. Madhuri Lake reflects the sky like a mirror. The journey to Tawang is long, but every turn shows a new view.

Shillong, Meghalaya



The roads are neat. People smile easily.

Tsomgo Lake changes colour with the sky. Nathula Pass stands near the India-China border. Rumtek Monastery offers silence and calm.

On a clear day, you may catch a glimpse of Mount Kanchenjunga shining bright.

Loktak Lake, Manipur Loktak Lake looks unusual. It has floating islands called phumdis. They move slowly on the water.

Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating national park in the world,

Dzukou Valley, Nagaland Dzukou Valley lies between Nagaland and Manipur. It is known for its seasonal flowers. In summer, the valley turns bright green with blooms.

Trekkers love this place. The walk is not easy, but the view at the top makes it worth it. The sunrise here feels pure and wide.

A Region of Many Stories Northeast India is not just about views. It is about people. About festivals. About food. About quiet mornings and long conversations.

From Assam's tea gardens to Mizoram's rolling



valleys. Life here is calm, yet full of colour. Every state has its own story. Every road leads to a surprise.

Kaziranga National Park, Assam

Kaziranga is the pride of Assam. It is known across the world for the one-horned rhinoceros. When you enter the park early in the morning, you see mist over tall grass. Rhinos walk slowly. Deer run in groups. Wild elephants move quietly.

The park is also home to tigers and many rare birds. A jeep safari here feels like stepping into a wildlife film. Nature feels raw and real.

Best time to visit is from November to April.

Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh

Tawang sits high in the mountains. Snow covers the land in winter. Prayer flags fly in the wind. The Tawang Monastery is one of the largest in India. It stands calm and grand against the hills.

Shillong is called the Scotland of the East. The weather stays pleasant most of the year. Pine trees line the roads. Music flows through the city.

Umiam Lake looks wide and peaceful. Elephant Falls draws visitors with its clear water. Police Bazaar stays busy with shops and street food. Shillong is where nature meets city life in a gentle way.

Cherrapunji, Meghalaya Cherrapunji is known for heavy rainfall. Clouds hang low. Waterfalls fall from great heights. Nohkalikai Falls is one of the tallest in India.

The living root bridges are special. Local people have shaped tree roots into strong bridges over years. It shows patience and harmony with nature.

Caves like Mawsmai add mystery to the land.

Gangtok, Sikkim

Gangtok is clean and organised. It feels peaceful.



lies here. It is home to the rare Sangai deer. Sunset at Loktak feels soft and golden. The lake looks endless.

Unakoti, Tripura Unakoti is full of ancient rock carvings. Huge faces of Lord Shiva are carved on stone hills. No one knows clearly who made them or when.

The site feels sacred and quiet. Walking there feels like walking through his-

hills, from Sikkim's snowy peaks to Tripura's temples, each state has its own rhythm.

This region still feels untouched in many ways. It does not rush. It invites you to slow down. To look around.

To listen.

And once you visit, a part of you stays back in those hills and rivers.



## BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

**ACTIVITY PROGRAM**





**10 JAN**  
**NE Cultural Fest**  
 Any Form of Art and Cultural showcase can be showcased here.  
 The Top performances will be invited to perform in the Main Event.  
 Schools, Colleges, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.



**11 JAN**  
**Adventure Sports**  
 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.  
[www.krcfoundation.org](http://www.krcfoundation.org)



**11 JAN**  
**Barak Valley Conclave**  
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations.  
 Includes: MOCA, and D-governance and reform for rural & urban areas, etc. Registration is through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



**12 JAN**  
**River-Climate Conclave**  
 Climate change will accelerate on Global Change, pollution and over-exploitation. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Barak, Planning & Geography, environmental and sustainable River Barak, Climate Change.

**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 Awards, Workshops, and the Film, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.  
 Welcome your news channels, journalists, media & corporate PR, sponsors, guides, speakers, members.

## Barak Festival

Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion




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**NE CULTURAL FEST**  
**E-SPORTS**  
**FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION**  
 BOOK CLUB | AWARDS & CONFERENCES

Event: 10-12 JAN 2025  
 Venue: KRC Foundation, Silchar  
 Registration: Free (Early Bird: 1000/-)  
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 WP: 0721300019

**10-12 JAN**  
**Science Studio**  
 Real a glimpse of Science to its new heights. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents.  
**Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.**

**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



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**10-12 JAN**  
**E-Sports**  
 Full-Blown Demos | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



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

**10-12 JAN**  
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 #NoOneLeftBehind Campaign | Book Bank | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

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