

**Barak Festival**  
NE INDIA ADVENTURE SPORTS,  
ART & CULTURE PROMOTION

Barak Valley, Assam | JAN-MAR 2025  
www.krctimes.com  
Phone: 8721838313

**North East Integration Rally**  
Peace | Progress | Prosperity  
2026

Registrations  
**OPEN**

www.northeastintegrationrally.in  
+91 935 083 0085

Get all the latest and updated news of today in the evening. For subscribing to this e-paper contact at -8721838313

**SUBSCRIBE**  
₹300 / year

WhatsApp payment details : 8721838313  
info@krctimes.com

**PERSPECTIVE**  
Stars can't shine without darkness.

## Congress unveils third list of 22 candidates for Assam Assembly polls

**GUWAHATI**  
The Indian National Congress on Thursday released its third list of candidates for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, naming 22 nominees across key constituencies.

Among the prominent candidates in the latest list are Aftab Uddin Mollah (Jaleswar), Jakir Hussain Sikdar (Pakabhetbari), Dr Asif Mohamad Nazar (Laharighat), Dr Durlav Chamua (Nagaon-Batadraba), Roselina Tirykey (Khumtai), and Manik Chandra Brahma (Kokrajhar). The party has also fielded Sapali Marak from Baokhungri, Ashraf Islam Sheikh (Parbatjhora), Baby Begum (Dhubri), Pradip Sarkar (Abhayapuri), Matilal Narzary (Sidli Chirang), Abdur Rahim Ahmed (Chenga), Jagadish Madahi (Baksa), Rafie Daimary (Tamlulpur), Soren Daimari (Udalguri), Sunil Chetry (Naduar), Joyonto Khaund (Ronganadi), Ghana Buragohain (Lakhimpur), Ananda Narah (Dhakuakhana), Sibanath Chetia (Makum), Sanjeeb Teron (Howraghat), and Zubair Anam Mazumder (Algapur-Katlichera). The announcement comes a day after the Congress released its second list of 23 candidates on March 19. The list was issued by party general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal and included the renomination of three sitting MLAs. Those renominated are Wazed Ali Choudhury from Barsing Jarua, Abul Kalam Rasheed Alam from Goalpara East, and Rakibuddin Ahmed from Chamaria. Former Lok Sabha MP Abdul Khaleque, who has also served two terms as an MLA, has been named as the party's candidate from Mandia. With the third list, the Congress has further expanded its slate of candidates as it gears up for a multi-cornered contest in the Assam Assembly elections.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**My objective is that Hindu society remains united. ~ Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam**

## Assam polls: BJP ticket list triggers resignations, dissent among leaders

**GUWAHATI,**

The release of the candidate list by the Bharatiya Janata Party for the April 9 Assam Assembly elections has sparked resignations and dissent within the party, with several leaders alleging sidelining of loyal workers in favour of new entrants.

The first fallout was reported from Dholai, where sitting MLA Nihar Ranjan Das resigned from the party's primary membership shortly after being denied a ticket.

In his resignation letter addressed to the party's state leadership, Das said he had served the party with "honest and sincere" commitment and worked to strengthen its base in the constituency, but his contributions had "not been recognised".

The discontent extended beyond Dholai. Senior BJP leader Jayanta Kumar Das, who was seeking a ticket from Dispur, indicated he may quit the party after the seat was allotted to



Pradyut Bordoloi, a recent entrant from the Congress.

Criticising the leadership, Das alleged that long-time party workers were being overlooked in favour of leaders who had recently joined from other parties. He also questioned the criteria used for candidate se-

lection, particularly internal surveys.

In a pointed remark aimed at Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, he asked why senior leaders were not making way for newcomers in constituencies such as Jalukbari.

Das further alleged the exist-

ence of a "political syndicate" influencing decisions and announced plans to float a new political outfit comprising "deprived and denied candidates" from across the state. He said consultations would begin soon and that he intends to file his nomination on March 23.

**GUWAHATI**

Election activity gathered momentum across Assam on Friday as senior leaders from both the ruling alliance and the opposition filed their nomination papers for the upcoming Assembly elections, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma leading the day's high-profile filings from the Jalukbari constituency.

Sarma arrived at the nomination venue after participating in a massive roadshow that began at Khanapara Veterinary Field and culminated at the district administration office in Hengrabari. The multi-kilometre-long procession drew a large crowd of supporters and party workers.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by his family members, including his wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma and son Nandil Biswa Sarma, as well as BJP MP Bijuli Kalita Medhi.



After filing his nomination, Sarma told reporters that several other candidates from his party are scheduled to complete the process either later in the day or on March 23. Reflecting on his electoral journey, he recalled losing his first contest from Jalukbari in 1996, but noted that he has remained undefeated from the seat since 2001.

Expressing confidence ahead of the polls, Sarma said he expects continued support from voters despite periodic changes in constituency boundaries. He added that he is balancing an intensive statewide campaign schedule with outreach efforts in his home constituency.

On the broader electoral outlook, the Chief Minister said the BJP and its allies are preparing strongly in over 100 constituencies. However, he refrained from making any early predictions, emphasising the need for peaceful and orderly polling.

Sarma is seeking another term from Jalukbari, a seat considered a stronghold for the BJP leader.

Among other key filings on Friday, BJP leader Pijush Hazarika submitted his nomination from Jagiroad and highlighted the government's work over the past decade, expressing optimism about voter support.

Senior leaders including Ajanta Neog, Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Biswajit Daimary and Rama Kanta Dewri also completed their nomination formalities.

From the opposition camp, Rajjor Dal chief Akhil Gogoi filed his nomination from Sivasaagar, appealing to voters for support. Meanwhile, Assam Jatiya Parishad president Lurinjyoti Gogoi and Leader of Opposition Debabrata Saikia submitted their papers from Khowang and Nazira respectively, marking a busy day of political activity across the state.

## Fresh Gunfire Across Ukhrul Raises Alarm Over Renewed Ethnic Tensions in Manipur



**IMPHAL**

A series of gunfights at multiple locations in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Thursday evening has reignited concerns over escalating tensions in the hill district, with security agencies suspecting a coordinated attempt to breach sensitive areas.

According to police sources, the first exchange of fire erupted around 4 pm when suspected Kuki militants, reportedly equipped with heavy weapons, attempted to enter Sirarakhong village, a Tangkhul Naga-dominated settlement. Local village volunteers resisted the incursion, triggering a gun battle that lasted nearly 10 minutes.

Within an hour, violence spread to the Lungter hill range near Sinakeithi village, both falling under the jurisdiction of Litan Police Station. Officials later confirmed a third incident of firing at Mongket Chepu village, raising the possibility of a synchronised escalation across the region.

Security officials said the pattern of attacks and the use of firearms point to a potentially coordinated operation, though the exact groups involved re-

main unverified. "We heard sounds consistent with automatic assault rifles and single-barrel guns. Verification is ongoing," a police official said.

No casualties had been officially confirmed at the time of reporting. However, security forces have been placed on high alert, with reinforcements deployed to prevent further flare-ups. Authorities described the situation as tense, with intermittent firing reported from at least three locations.

Meanwhile, the village authority of Sinakeithi alleged that armed Kuki groups fired from bunker positions that had previously been dismantled, targeting their settlement. The claim could not be independently corroborated. The latest incidents come amid fragile relations between Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities in the district. Tensions have persisted since February 7, when a drunken altercation spiralled into wider clashes, resulting in the torching of more than 50 homes belonging to both communities.

In a bid to restore calm, a high-level meeting was convened last month at Litan Police Station, attended by Losli Dikho, Kimneo Haokip, and Ram Muivah, along with civil society representatives. The meeting concluded that the earlier violence had been triggered under intoxication and warned of strict action against those attempting to incite unrest.

Despite these efforts, Thursday's incidents underscore the continuing volatility in parts of Ukhrul, with authorities closely monitoring the situation to prevent further escalation.

## BPF fields 11 candidates; Hagrama Mohilary's wife to debut from Kokrajhar

**GUWAHATI**

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF), a constituent of the NDA, has announced its candidates for 11 seats in the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, including a debut entry by party chief Hagrama Mohilary's wife, Sewli Mohilary.

Releasing the list on Thursday night, shortly after alliance partners Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) declared their nominees, Mohilary expressed confidence in the alliance's prospects in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

"BPF will contest 11 seats, and along with BJP's four seats in the region, the NDA will win all 15 seats. I am 100 per cent confident," he said. Among key candidates, Cabinet Minister Charan Boro, a two-time MLA, will contest from Mazbat, while senior leader and sitting MLA Rabirama Narzary has been fielded from Dotma. In a significant political move, Sewli Mohilary will make her electoral debut from Kokrajhar, marking the entry of the Mohilary family into electoral politics beyond the party chief himself.

However, the party has dropped one of its three sitting MLAs, Durga Das Boro, from the candidate list.

The BPF has also nominated several former legislators, including Rihon Daimary (Udalguri), Thanesar Basumatary (Manas), Maneswar Brahma (Baksa), and Maheswar Boro (Bhergaon).

Rezaul Karim, former president of the All Assam Minority Students' Union who recently joined the party, has been fielded from Parbojhora. Other nominees include Sabharan Basumatary (Gossaigaon), Rupam Roy (Baokhungri), and Paniram Brahma (Sidli Chirang). The Assam Assembly elections are scheduled for April 9, with counting of votes set for May 4. In the outgoing Assembly, the BJP holds 64 seats, followed by AGP with nine, United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) with seven, and BPF with three MLAs.

## El Niño watch: Forecasts raise concern over weak monsoon in Northeast

**GUWAHATI**

Fresh global climate projections pointing to the possible return of El Niño in 2026 have triggered concerns over below-normal monsoon rainfall and rising temperatures across Northeast India. According to the NOAA Climate Prediction Center, there is a 62 per cent probability that El Niño conditions will develop during June-August this year and persist through the end of 2026.

The World Meteorological Organization has also indicated that the ongoing weak La Niña phase is likely to transition to neutral conditions before potentially shifting to a warming El Niño episode later in the year.

For Northeast India, the forecast comes against the backdrop of a worrying trend. The region has recorded five consecutive years of below-normal monsoon rainfall. In 2025, East and Northeast India logged 1,089.9 mm of rainfall - the second-lowest in 125 years after 2013. El Niño, a periodic warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, is typically associated with disruptions in global weather systems, including weakened monsoons over India. It often brings reduced rainfall and higher-than-normal temperatures during the southwest monsoon season.

In an interaction, Akshay Deoras, Research Scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Science and the Department of Me-

teorology at the University of Reading, said emerging climate model projections are beginning to indicate such a possibility.

"A strong El Niño generally suppresses seasonal monsoon rainfall across India and tends to make the monsoon warmer than usual. It is also linked with an increased likelihood of 'monsoon breaks', which can disrupt rainfall distribution," he noted, adding that this trend could be particularly concerning for the Northeast, where seasonal rainfall has already been declining.

El Niño events, which occur every two to seven years, are part of the broader El Niño-Southern Oscillation cycle. While there is a well-established link between ENSO phases and India's monsoon, experts caution that the relationship is not absolute.

Data from the India Meteorological Department shows that 13 of the 18 drought years recorded in India over the past century have coincided with El Niño events. However, the IMD stresses that monsoon performance is also shaped by other climatic drivers such as the Indian Ocean Dipole, Eurasian snow cover, and regional atmospheric patterns.

Economic implications are also being flagged. In a recent assessment, the State Bank of India warned that a potential El Niño buildup in 2026, combined with global geopolitical uncertainties affecting fertiliser, natural gas and crude oil prices, could exert upward pressure on inflation.

## Assam polls: BJP drops over 10 sitting MLAs, fields fresh faces in 88-member list

**GUWAHATI**

The Bharatiya Janata Party announced its first list of 88 candidates for the Assam Assembly elections, dropping more than 10 sitting MLAs while inducting new faces and effecting key constituency changes.

In a significant move, senior leader Atul Boro was denied a ticket from Dispur, with former Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi fielded in his place.

Former state BJP president Siddhartha Bhattacharya has also been dropped from New Guwahati, where the party has nominated Dipu Ranjan Sarma.

In Palasbari, Hemanga Thakuria has been replaced by Himangshu Shekhar Baishya, while in Bihpuria, Amiya Bhuyan has made way for Bhupen Boro.

Similarly, Ramakrishna Ghosh has been replaced by Shiladitya Dev in Hojai, and Diganta Ghatowal by Munindra Das in Behali.

In Barchalla, Ritu Baran Sar-

mah has been fielded in place of Ganesh Limbu.

The party has, however, retained several senior leaders, with Suren Phukan renominated from Digboi and Prashanta Phukan from Dibrugarh.

In Tinsukia, Pulak Gohain has replaced Sanjay Kishan, who will now contest from Makum.

In Biswanath, Promod Borthakur has been replaced by Pallab Lochan Das, while in Bokajan, Deputy Speaker Nomal Momin has been replaced by Suriya Rongphar.

In Silchar, former MP Rajdeep Roy was fielded, replacing Dipayan Chakraborty.

A key contest is expected in Jorhat, where sitting MLA and former Assembly Speaker Hitendra Nath Goswami will face Gaurav Gogoi. The reshuffle reflects the BJP's strategy of balancing continuity with change while accommodating shifting political alignments ahead of the high-stakes Assembly elections.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 730

## SCIENCE FOR A NEW TRADE ERA

**W**ith the draft text of the India-European Union free trade agreement now public, attention must shift from the headlines to the regulatory architecture shaping India's agricultural engagement with one of the world's most standards-intensive markets. Its provisions span sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, sustainable food systems (SFS), climate action, gender equality, biodiversity and marine resources, signalling deeper integration where systems credibility matters as much as tariffs.

The FTA reflects a shift from production-centric agricultural science to regulatory- and sustainability-oriented science. Competitiveness will increasingly depend on surveillance, traceability, risk-assessment, sustainability metrics and alignment with global benchmarks. For India, this places the agricultural research and innovation system, led by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, at the centre of implementation. Science, in effect, becomes trade infrastructure.

**SPS credibility:** Despite India's price competitiveness in several commodities, access to the EU has often been shaped less by tariffs than by SPS requirements. Concerns over residues, pest status, disease outbreaks and approvals have shaped trade continuity.

The negotiated SPS text responds through clearer regulatory disciplines. Import approvals must rest on transparent risk assessment and scientific reasoning. Surveillance of pest and disease status and review of emergency actions reinforce this evidence-based framework. India's emphasis on regenerative agriculture and natural farming complements this evolving regulatory direction.

**Equivalence** allows different regulatory systems to be accepted if they deliver comparable outcomes, shifting the focus from identical standards to demonstrable regulatory performance supported by reliable monitoring and institutional competence. Technical consultations enable structured engagement where concerns arise, including emergency measures. Their effectiveness will depend on India's capacity to respond with coordinated technical expertise across its agricultural science institutions.

**Sustainability:** The sustainability provisions widen the mandate of agricultural science. The SFS chapter—the first such standalone framework in any FTA concluded by India—establishes cooperation on responsible input use, reduction of food loss and waste, antimicrobial resistance, animal welfare and sustainability across production, processing and consumption. Rather than treating sustainability as a compliance threshold, the FTA embeds dialogue, research exchange and technical cooperation within the trade architecture.

**Trade and sustainable development (TSD)** provisions extend this approach. Climate cooperation promotes mutually supportive trade and climate policies aligned with low-emission and climate-resilient pathways. Agriculture is both climate-sensitive and emission-relevant; stress-tolerant crops, resource-efficient production systems and adaptation across agro-climatic zones increasingly shape competitiveness.

**Provisions on biodiversity and genetic resources** recognise the trade relevance of sustainably managed biological resources, ecosystem valuation and access to genetic material under international frameworks. For an economy rich in plant and livestock diversity, this elevates agrobiodiversity governance, including germplasm conservation, indigenous breeds and seed systems as a trade-relevant scientific function. Cooperation on forest governance similarly highlights traceability, certification and deforestation-linked sourcing within agri-commodity supply chains.

**In fisheries and aquaculture,** the FTA promotes sustainable sourcing, responsible practices, capacity building and research collaboration. Given the importance of marine exports, benchmarks such as stock management, disease control and value-chain traceability increasingly shape market access. India's fisheries research institutions therefore become central to this interface.

**Gender:** Gender provisions encourage cooperation on gender-disaggregated trade data, policy analysis and measures expanding women's access to markets, finance and business networks. In the agri-food economy, where women are central to crop production, dairy, fisheries and rural enterprises, integrating women producers into formal value chains becomes both an equity and competitiveness imperative. This reinforces the importance of gender-inclusive innovation in technology design, value addition, producer organisations and digital advisory systems.

**Monitoring and science:** Across the SPS, SFS and TSD chapters, the FTA establishes mechanisms for technical consultation, monitoring and periodic review. Measures affecting trade are expected to draw on scientific information, international standards and collaborative research. The credibility of engagement will depend on the depth and reliability of scientific inputs, from surveillance systems and laboratories to climate analytics, biodiversity documentation and fisheries assessment.

India's agricultural research system possesses substantial scientific depth. Yet, evolving trade architecture requires this expertise to be systematically integrated into trade implementation rather than engaged episodically. Scientific engagement must move from the margins to the core of decision-making. Institutionalised linkages between research bodies and trade policy processes are essential so regulatory preparedness evolves with global market expectations.

Sustained policy support and continued investment in agricultural research will, therefore, be critical. In that alignment lies the opportunity of the India-EU FTA—not only to expand exports, but to also strengthen the scientific foundations of India's agricultural system for the decades ahead.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Be nicer than necessary to everyone you meet. Everyone is fighting some kind of battle.” - Socrates

# HOW CHINA'S PMSCS ARE REWRITING GLOBAL SECURITY



ALEXANDRIA VIRGINSKI

Chinese private military and security companies (PMSCs) are emerging as a critical, yet underexamined, component of Beijing's global strategy. Firms such as Beijing DeWe Security, Frontier Services Group, and Huaxin ZhongAn Group have provided protection for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, safeguarding Chinese infrastructure and personnel abroad. Unlike their high-profile counterparts such as Russia's Wagner Group or US-affiliated PMSCs like Academi (formerly known as Blackwater), Chinese PMSCs receive far less attention despite their growing role in international affairs.

While US-affiliated PMSCs typically market compliance, legitimacy, and risk management to multinational clients, and Russian firms thrive on visibility in conflict, Chinese PMSCs occupy a different niche. Their business model—low-profile, closely tied to Chinese state-owned enterprises, and tailored to the BRI—introduces a new mode of competition into the global security market. This approach privileges discretion and political loyalty over transparency and reputation, allowing Chinese firms to secure contracts in volatile environments while avoiding the scrutiny that has plagued its Western and Russian counterparts.

The rise of Chinese PMSCs may, thus, fragment the global market into competing geopolitical blocs: Western firms marketing their services as a legitimate business, Russian operators leveraging combat power, and Chinese companies offering quiet, state-linked protection at scale. Far from being a mere regulatory challenge, the expansion of Chinese PMSCs signals a structural transformation in how security is bought, sold, and aligned with state interests across the globe.

Like many other countries, China saw the emergence of private military and security companies (PMSCs) as early as the late 19th century. Although these early entities were far less sophisticated than their modern counterparts, they served similar purposes—protecting goods, personnel, and assets as they moved across a fragmented and often insecure landscape. In 2009, the Executive Meeting of the State Council introduced the Regulation on the Administration of Security and Guarding Services, establishing a domestic licensing regime to oversee PMSC operations both within China and abroad. However, the issuance of licenses also raised growing concerns about the expanding role and oversight of these companies. The passage of the National Security Law in 2015 further broadened the state's approach to defining and safeguarding China's political, economic, and military interests. Although the law does not explicitly refer-

ence PMSCs, its expansive scope clearly extends to private entities whose activities—particularly overseas operations—could have national security implications. Additional laws, including the Counterterrorism Law of 2015 and the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law of 2021, further shape the operational environment of Chinese PMSCs by addressing threats abroad, ensuring international compliance, and safeguarding Chinese interests from foreign interference. Together, these legal instruments provide the foundation for Chinese PMSCs to operate in a manner that supports commercial objectives while simultaneously advancing China's national security objectives. Security is of paramount importance to the BRI, particularly for protecting infrastructure, personnel, and critical operations in regions characterized by political instability and elevated security risks. To address these security challenges, Chinese firms such as DeWe Security and Frontier Services Group have entered the market, offering low-profile, state-aligned protection for overseas investments. DeWe Security, in particular, has gained significant traction for its involvement in protecting BRI backed projects with more than 2,000 forces reportedly stationed in Kenya protecting a nearly \$3.8 billion USD 480km-long Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway system and a \$4 billion USD Chinese LNG facility across Ethiopia and Djibouti. Additionally, DeWe Security has reportedly been responsible for protecting Chinese personnel abroad, evacuating 330 Chinese CNPC oil workers from South Sudan when the country erupted in civil war back in 2016.

Similarly, Frontier Services Group (FSG) has gained recognition in the Chinese PMSC market. While it was originally founded

by Erik Prince—the same entrepreneur who created Blackwater—the company is now fully owned by CITIC Group, a Chinese state investment company. FSG operates primarily in Southern Africa, the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Western Africa. Notably, the FSG allegedly received a payment of \$23 million from South Sudan's Ministry of Petroleum for security at oil production facilities and is supposedly involved in protecting one of China's largest BRI projects—a \$1.36 billion USD investment in South African copper mines. These companies collectively illustrate China's hybrid approach to private security: they provide economically efficient protection while advancing state and military objectives, making them dual-purpose instruments that simultaneously support investment security and national interests.

Chinese PMSCs occupy a unique position in the global private security landscape, representing a hybrid model that integrates the strengths of both US and Russian approaches. US PMSCs like Academi operate primarily on a commercial basis recruiting former military officials and bidding for government contracts with a profit driven mentality. On the other hand, Russian PMSCs, exemplified by the Wagner Group, often act as semi-official extensions of state power, deployed in conflict zones as evidenced by their presence on the battlefield in the Ukraine war or politically sensitive regions such as Venezuela and Syria to advance Russia's strategic and geopolitical interests. Chinese PMSCs combine the advantages of both models: like US firms, they are commercially efficient, capable of deploying large, highly trained teams, and able to operate across multiple regions to protect investments

and similar to their Russian counterparts, Chinese PMSCs are also strategically aligned with state objectives but with less exposure, as this has been used as a means of protecting investments rather than direct military action. This hybrid approach allows China to project both soft and hard power abroad. Within the context of the BRI, the model has proven particularly effective, enabling China to safeguard personnel and assets in high-risk environments while ex-

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Bhubaneswar has been announced as the host city for the World Athletics Indoor Championships 2028, marking a major milestone for Indian athletics and global sporting recognition. This also reflects India's growing stature in international sports infrastructure and its ability to successfully host world-class events.**

~ BJP



tending its geopolitical reach.



## Indigenous communities, youth central to BJP's Assam poll list: CM Sarma

GUWAHATI

Hours after the release of the candidate list for the Assam Assembly elections, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the Bharatiya Janata Party has prioritised representation of indigenous communities, youth and grassroots workers in its selections.

"We have tried to represent all indigenous communities in the state. The workers are very enthusiastic about the candidates," Sarma said, expressing confidence of a decisive victory for the party.

Highlighting the candidate profile, he said the BJP has fielded a significant number of younger faces in line with its earlier commitment to promote youth in politics.



"A number of young candidates have been given tickets this time," he said, referring to constituencies

where new entrants have been nominated. The Chief Minister also underlined the party's emphasis on organisational workers over dynastic considerations.

"We usually do not give tickets based on family background. Those who have worked at the grassroots, including at the party office, have been recognised," he said.

On women's representation, Sarma said statutory reservation is expected to reshape political participation in the coming years.

"By 2029, women will secure 33 per cent statutory representation, marking a decisive shift in India's political landscape," he said, while noting that women candidates have also been included in the current list.

Sarma further said the BJP has left

26 seats for ally Asom Gana Parishad, adding that discussions with other alliance partners are ongoing.

"I had a meeting with the AGP leadership and they informed me they are preparing their list, which will be out soon. The same is the situation with the Bodoland People's Front and the Rabha Hasong Jautho Sangram Samiti," he said.

Responding to questions on candidate selection, including the nomination of Pradyut Bordoloi, the Chief Minister said the decision was taken collectively in the interest of the party. "He has not joined the BJP for personal gain. He still has time left in his tenure as MP. The party has taken this decision collectively," Sarma added, expressing confidence that party workers would support all nominees.

### Fresh Gunfire Across Ukhrul Raises Alarm Over Renewed Ethnic Tensions in Manipur

IMPHAL

A series of gunfights at multiple locations in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Thursday evening has reignited concerns over escalating tensions in the hill district, with security agencies suspecting a coordinated attempt to breach sensitive areas. According to police sources, the first exchange of fire erupted around 4 pm when suspected Kuki militants, reportedly equipped with heavy weapons, attempted to enter Sirarakhong village, a Tangkhul Naga-dominated settlement. Local village volunteers resisted the incursion, triggering a gun battle that lasted nearly 10 minutes. Within an hour, violence spread to the Lungter hill range near Sinakeithei village, both falling under the jurisdiction of Litan Police Station. Officials later confirmed a third incident of firing at Mongket Chepu village, raising the possibility of a synchronised escalation across the region.

Security officials said the pattern of attacks and the use of firearms point to a potentially coordinated operation, though the exact groups involved remain unverified. "We heard sounds consistent with automatic assault rifles and single-barrel guns. Verification is ongoing," a police official said. No casualties had been officially confirmed at the time of reporting. However, security forces have been placed on high alert, with reinforcements deployed to prevent further flare-ups. Authorities described the situation as tense, with intermittent firing reported from at least three locations. Meanwhile, the village authority of Sinakeithei alleged that armed Kuki groups fired from bunker positions that had previously been dismantled, targeting their settlement. The claim could not be independently corroborated.

### No alliance with BJP finalised for TTAADC polls: Pradyot Debbarma



AGARTALA

Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Wednesday said no decision has been taken on an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party for the upcoming elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, countering remarks by a party MLA that hinted at a possible tie-up.

The clarification came hours after Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debbarma suggested that there was a strong possibility of the regional outfit contesting the district council polls in alliance with the BJP.

He had also said that Pradyot was holding meetings with senior BJP leaders, including BL

Santosh and Sambit Patra.

However, Pradyot dismissed reports of a confirmed alliance, stating that media claims of a tie-up were incorrect.

He acknowledged that while there may have been overtures for an understanding, no formal agreement has been reached so far. "As a regional party, Tipra cannot afford to lose the ground built by our warriors. We believe we are the strongest political force in the indigenous areas and will hold on to our base," he said.

He also expressed concern over certain personal remarks made in the context of alliance discussions, terming them "unfortunate" and not conducive to constructive political dialogue.

The development points to a lack of consensus within the Tipra Motha Party even as discussions with the BJP continue ahead of the crucial TTAADC elections.

GUWAHATI

Akhil Gogoi on Thursday expressed dissatisfaction over stalled alliance talks with the Indian National Congress, alleging lack of clarity and approval from the party's central leadership after a prolonged meeting.

Addressing reporters, the Rajior Dal chief said it was "surprising" that the Congress had publicly claimed to have offered 13 seats, while the proposal had not yet been formally approved by the All India Congress Committee.

He claimed that the deadlock persists as the Assam Congress leadership is yet to consult senior leader Rahul Gandhi on the issue.

Gogoi also alleged inconsistencies in the seat-sharing proposal, stating that even within the 13-seat framework, his party was asked to negotiate on certain con-

### Assam polls: UPPL releases third list of candidates for five seats

GUWAHATI

Congress MP Rakibul Hussain on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on former party colleague Pradyut Bordoloi over his defection to the Bharatiya Janata Party, saying the Congress had "nurtured and built" him while his exit raises questions of loyalty.

"Earlier, he did not have a strong base in Nagaon - we brought him in and helped him become an MP," Hussain said, reacting to Bordoloi's move.

Bordoloi joined the BJP in New Delhi on Wednesday in the presence of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and state party president Dilip Saikia, a day after resigning from the Indian National Congress. His departure leaves the Congress with just two of its three sitting MPs from Assam.

Hussain said the shift was particularly striking as Bordoloi had earlier been among the most vocal critics of Sarma within the



Congress. "His language was more forceful than mine. He used to criticise Himanta Biswa Sarma even more strongly," he said.

He also recalled that Bordoloi, as chairman of the Congress Manifesto Committee, had prepared a detailed chargesheet

against the Assam government-later released by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra-targeting issues such as corruption, unemployment, tribal concerns and flagship schemes.

"That document was his own work and strongly targeted the government. But now, he appears

to be siding with Himanta Biswa Sarma - which raises serious questions," Hussain said.

Pointing to Bordoloi's political journey, Hussain said the Congress had backed him even after electoral setbacks. "When he lost in Margherita, he was given another opportunity at someone else's expense. This should not be forgotten," he added.

While Priyanka Gandhi described the defection as "unfortunate" and linked it to dissatisfaction over ticket distribution, Hussain struck a more critical tone.

"Many deserving people did not receive tickets, but did they leave Congress? No. The Congress party nurtured and built all of us," he said.

Bordoloi's exit marks the second major defection from the Congress in Assam in recent weeks, following the departure of former state unit chief Bhupen Kumar Borah, intensifying concerns within the party over ero-

### No alliance yet': Akhil Gogoi criticises Congress over seat-sharing confusion



stituencies. He cited the Gauripur Assembly seat as an example, claiming the Congress had initially indicated willingness to concede it but later expressed reluctance, instead suggesting Mancachar or Algapur as alternative "friendly" seats.

Reiterating his party's stand, Gogoi said Rajior Dal has proposed a total of 15 seats, including Naoboicha and Dhemaji, which remain under discussion.

He added that Gaurav Gogoi had informed them the proposal for 13 seats would be taken up with the AICC, and a final decision on the remaining constituencies would follow after approval.

With key differences unresolved, the proposed alliance between the Congress and Rajior Dal remains uncertain ahead of the Assam Assembly elections, he added.

### Assam polls: First phase of EVM randomisation completed; observers deployed in Kamrup (M)



GUWAHATI

The election machinery in Assam has completed the first randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) across all districts ahead of the April 9 Assembly polls, officials said.

The exercise, carried out on Wednesday across 35 districts covering 126 Assembly constituencies, marks a key milestone in poll preparations. It was conducted at the offices of District Election Officers (DEOs) in the presence of representatives of recognised political parties, in line with guidelines of the Election Commission of India.

The first randomisation involves allocation of EVMs and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) to constituencies through the EVM Management System, a system-driven process designed to eliminate manual intervention and ensure transparency.

Officials said the participation of political party representatives adds an additional layer of credibility, reinforcing con-

fidence in the integrity of the electoral process.

Meanwhile, the ECI has strengthened monitoring mechanisms in key districts. In Kamrup Metropolitan, multiple observers have been appointed to oversee various aspects of the election process, including expenditure and law and order. Pradeep Kumar Krishnarao Dange and Him Shekhar Gupta have been designated as general observers, while Ranjan Prakash and Rajat Sen will serve as expenditure observers. Aslam Khan has been appointed as the police observer. All observers have arrived in Guwahati and assumed charge, officials said.

Authorities have also made public contact numbers for citizens to report poll-related complaints, emphasising participatory vigilance.

With key pre-election processes underway, officials reiterated their commitment to conducting free, fair and transparent polls in accordance with ECI norms.

## Teacher, cultural activist Simantasri Gupta passes away in Kolkata

SILCHAR

Simantasri Gupta, a respected teacher and prominent social and cultural activist, passed away on the morning of March 20 in Kolkata following a massive cardiac arrest and multiple organ failure. She had suffered a cardiac issue and fallen ill on the evening of March 18 and was rushed to a private hospital in Barasat where she remained on ventilation.

She had been residing in Kolkata at Navadarsha Cooperative Housing Society for the last couple of years after the demise of her late husband.

Originally from Bhanga Kalibari, Malugram, Silchar, she was widely known for her lifelong dedication to education and cultural activities.

About 30 years back in Nagaland she founded Vision Art and Cultural Centre. She was its President. Was associated with St. Montessori School and St. John's School as teacher and Principal of Eden Garden School.

She was a regular contributor to Dainik Jugasankha, a leading Bengali daily of the region.

She was actively involved in various socio-cultural activities like Laughing Club, Birati, SBI Ladies' Club, Dimapur, Dimapur Music College, Art competition, cultural activities and run a pre-school in Dimapur under VACC. She also organised Shyama Rehman night in Silchar G.C. College auditorium.



She is survived by her sons Biswadeep Gupta and Souradeep Gupta, daughters-in-law Jyotsree Sinha Gupta and Prathiba Gupta, grandson Krish Gupta, brother-in-law Arijit Gupta, family members, and well-wishers. Teacher, cultural activist Simantasri Gupta passes away in Kolkata.

Simantasri Gupta, a respected teacher and prominent social and cultural activist, passed away on the morning of March 20 in Kolkata following a massive cardiac arrest and multiple organ failure.

She had suffered a cardiac issue and fallen ill on the evening of March 18 and was rushed to a private hospital in Barasat where she remained on ventilation.

She had been residing in Kolkata at Navadarsha Cooperative Housing Society for the last couple of years after the demise of her late husband.

Originally from Bhanga Kalibari, Malugram, Silchar, she was widely known for her lifelong dedication to education and cultural activities.

About 30 years back in Nagaland she founded Vision Art and Cultural Centre. She was its President. Was associated with St. Montessori School and St. John's School as teacher and Principal of Eden Garden School.

She was a regular contributor to Dainik Jugasankha, a leading Bengali daily of the region.

She was actively involved in various socio-cultural activities like Laughing Club, Birati, SBI Ladies' Club, Dimapur, Dimapur Music College, Art competition, cultural activities and run a pre-school in Dimapur under VACC. She also organised Shyama Rehman night in Silchar G.C. College auditorium.

Quest!

Sharks kill an average of 12 people per year - humans kill 11,417 sharks per hour.

**5E for SUCCESS**

**Register @**

**KRC PLACEMENTS**

**APPLY NOW**  
Send your resume for a free profiling session at e-mail: [Seforsuccess@gmail.com](mailto:Seforsuccess@gmail.com)

**Registration FREE**  
A division of KRC Foundation  
*"Connecting the unconnected"*

**For more information schedule an online appointment**

## 'No LPG distributor is facing dry-out,' says Petroleum Ministry amid nationwide delivery review



NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on Thursday stressed that no LPG distributor in the country is currently facing a dry-out situation, with domestic supplies and cylinder deliveries continuing as scheduled.

Speaking at an inter-ministerial briefing on recent developments in West Asia, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said that while the overall regional situation remains a matter of concern, domestic consumer services remain stable and uninterrupted.

"On the issue of LPG, I would like to reiterate that the situation still remains a matter of concern. However, no LPG distributor is facing a dry-out situation at present... LPG supplies and cylinder deliveries for all domestic

consumers are continuing as usual," Sharma said.

The Ministry reported significant progress in digital transitions, noting that nearly 94% of cylinder bookings are now being made online, while the delivery authentication code system has reached 76% efficiency.

Regarding commercial operations, Sharma noted that supplies were initially completely halted but have since been partially restored. "In the context of commercial LPG, allocation orders have been issued by about 17 state governments, and commercial LPG supplies have been provided to all states and union territories," she said.

To further stabilise the market, the central government proposed providing 10% additional commercial LPG and urged state governments to cooperate in the expansion of PNG networks. These

initiatives have resulted in approximately 1.25 lakh new domestic, commercial, and industrial connections over the last two weeks.

"The Government of India has asked all state governments to extend cooperation in the expansion of PNG networks and has proposed providing 10% additional commercial LPG. Due to all these initiatives and efforts, around 1.25 lakh new domestic, commercial, and industrial connections have been provided in the last two weeks," Sharma noted.

The Ministry also confirmed a growing shift toward alternative fuels, as more than 5,600 domestic LPG users have shifted to PNG connections in the last three days.

Sharma emphasised that the government is making "every possible effort at all levels to ensure LPG is available to domestic consumers" and urged the public to rely only on official information to curb panic.

The Centre has also recently issued a directive to state governments to take stringent action against black marketing and hoarding. Sharma stated that control rooms have been established in approximately 31 states and union territories, with district-level monitoring committees active in about 25 regions. Several states have already conducted raids, registered FIRs, and made arrests related to black marketing.

"I request all consumers please do online booking and wait for your turn; there is no need to visit gas agencies unnecessarily," Sharma said. She noted that while panic booking has decreased, queues are still being seen at some distributors.

NEW DELHI

The Union Government on Thursday launched the RELIEF (Resilience and Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation) scheme with an outlay of Rs 497 crore to support Indian exporters facing disruptions due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

According to a notification issued on March 19 by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the scheme has been introduced under the Export Promotion Mission to address rising risks in exports caused by geopolitical tensions in the Gulf and West Asia maritime corridor.

"In exercise of powers conferred by Section 3 and section 5 of the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992, read with paragraphs 1.02 and 2.01 of the Foreign Trade Policy 2023, as amended from time to time, the Central Government hereby notifies a time limited Support for Indian Exporters, Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation (RELIEF), under the Export Promotion Mission (EPM). Details of the said intervention are submitted at Annexure enclosed. Effect of the Notification: A time-limited RELIEF intervention under the Export Promotion Mission, to be implemented through the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC), is operationalised to address elevated export risks arising from geopolitical disruptions in the Gulf and West Asia maritime corridor," the notification stated.

The scheme will be implemented by the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) and will cover consignments meant for delivery or trans-shipment to countries including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel and Yemen.

RELIEF consists of three main components aimed at easing the burden on exporters. The first component provides automatic extension of export obligations for Advance Authorisations and EPCG authorisations that are due between March 1 and May 31, 2026, extending them until August 31, 2026

## Centre launches Rs 497 crore RELIEF scheme to support exporters amid West Asia crisis



without penalty. It also protects shipments already insured by ECGC during the period from February 14 to March 15.

The second component focuses on encouraging ECGC coverage for upcoming export consignments over a three-month period from March 16 to June 15.

The third component is designed to support MSME exporters who are not covered under ECGC. It offers partial reimbursement of increased freight and insurance costs during the period from February 14 to March 15.

The estimated government support under this component is Rs 282 crore. The total expenditure of Rs 497 crore for the RELIEF scheme will be met from the existing budget under the Export Promotion Mission and will be released based on actual requirements, subject to verification and budget availability. The Export Promotion Mission Steering Committee may review the scheme based on evolving geopolitical conditions and recommend changes, extensions or withdrawal of any component if required. Speaking to the media in New Delhi, Secretary in the Commerce Ministry Rajesh Agarwal said, "We are announcing a new scheme under the

export promotion mission, especially focused upon exporters exposed to these 17-18 geographies which have been impacted by the conflict to assuage some of the challenges that our exporters are facing."

He also said that an inter-ministerial group (IMG), including representatives from various departments such as the commerce ministry, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ports and Shipping, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of External Affairs, the RBI and CBIC, has been formed. The group meets daily to monitor the situation based on cargo movement. Ranjit Singh Jossan, Vice President of the Basmati Rice Millers and Exporters Association, welcomed the move and thanked the government for its support during the crisis.

"At a time when exporters were facing unprecedented uncertainty and rising logistics costs, the Government of India has stood firmly with us and ensured that the industry is not left to face these challenges alone," he said. He said that the scheme provides enhanced

support for exporters already insured under ECGC for shipments between February 14 and March 15, including coverage of up to 100 per cent of losses due to war and political risks without any increase in premium, supported by an allocation of about Rs 56 crore. For new exporters, he said, the scheme offers up to 95 per cent loss coverage for shipments between March 16 and June 15, with premiums kept at pre-disruption levels and backed by an estimated Rs 159 crore.

Jossan also highlighted the provision for MSME exporters not covered under ECGC. He said the scheme provides up to 50 per cent reimbursement of additional freight and insurance costs, or losses under FOB contracts, with a cap of Rs 50 lakh per exporter and a total allocation of Rs 282 crore. "The total allocation of around Rs 497 crore under the Export Promotion Mission reflects the government's strong commitment to sustaining exports, reducing the burden of extraordinary costs, preventing order cancellations, and protecting employment and supply chains," he said.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Oil, natural gas prices soar as Iran attacks Gulf energy facilities; Brent crude nears USD 114

BANGKOK

Global oil and natural gas prices soared Thursday after Iran attacked a key natural gas facility in Qatar that can supply one-fifth of the world's gas as well as two oil refineries in Kuwait.

The attacks added to fears the energy crisis triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to tanker traffic may be longer and more extensive than feared, with lasting damage to oil and gas production.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, rose to near \$114 per barrel, up from under \$73 per barrel on the eve of the war.

The European TTF benchmark for natural gas prices traded 24% higher on Thursday.

The Iranian attack hit the Ras Laffan terminal for shipping out liquefied natural gas in Qatar. Qatar normally supplies some 20% of the world's consumption of LNG, which can be carried by ship. The facility shut down after a drone attack. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz to most tanker traffic has left the gas with nowhere to go.

World shares retreated after stocks on Wall Street slumped as oil prices resumed their climb.

U.S. stocks also sagged due to a report that said inflation was primed to worsen even before the war with Iran sent oil and gas prices spiking. That, and comments from the head of the Federal Reserve, led investors to expect there's less chance of getting the lower interest rates that they crave.

U.S. futures were little changed, while Treasury yields pushed higher, lending still more strength to the U.S. dollar, which has gained against other major currencies since the war began.

Oil prices have soared because the war has disrupted the Persian Gulf's energy industry.

Iran is intensifying its attacks on its Gulf Arab neighbors' energy infrastructure as it hits back following an Israeli attack on its main natural gas field.



If the disruptions keep oil and gas prices high for long, they could create a debilitating wave of inflation for the global economy.

U.S. benchmark crude oil gained 1.1% to \$96.45 a barrel early Thursday, while the Henry Hub future contract, the benchmark for U.S. natural gas, gained 3.3%.

In Asian share trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 fell 3.4% to 53,372.53 as the Bank of Japan opted to keep its benchmark interest rate on hold at 0.75%, citing the war with Iran as one factor.

In its monetary policy statement the BOJ said that "in the wake of increased tension in the Middle East, global financial and capital markets have been volatile and crude oil prices have risen significantly; future developments warrant attention."

Higher oil prices are a heavy burden for Japan, which like South Korea and

Taiwan depends on imports of most raw materials for industries that rely heavily on oil and its derivatives.

The Kospi in Seoul lost 2.7% to 5,763.22. In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng slipped 2% to 25,507.89, while the Shanghai Composite index shed 1.6% to 3,996.44.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 1.7% to 8,497.80 and Taiwan's TaieX fell 1.9%. In India, which has also suffered from shocks to supplies of oil and gas, the Sensex lost 2.3%. "The combination of higher oil, rising U.S. yields, and a stronger dollar is acting as a macro wrecking ball across Asian assets and currencies," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

On Wednesday, the S&P 500 fell 1.4% to 6,624.70, flipping to a loss for the week so far. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 1.6% to 46,225.15, and the Nasdaq

composite slid 1.5% to 22,152.42.

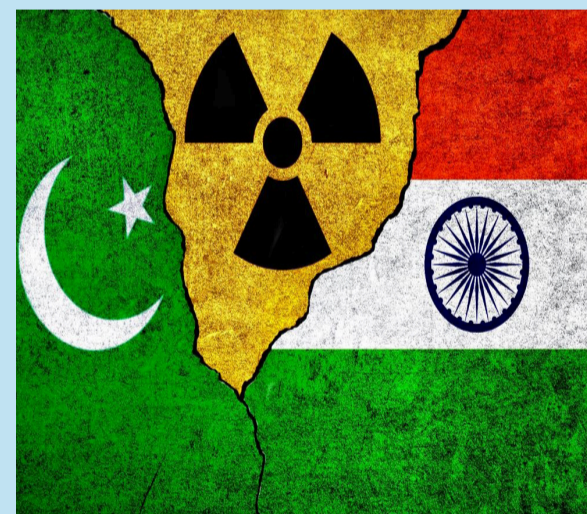
The losses deepened after the Fed decided to keep its main interest rate steady, instead of resuming cuts meant to give the job market and economy a boost.

"We just don't know," Fed chair Jerome Powell said about what will happen with oil prices, along with how long President Donald Trump's tariffs will take to work their way fully through the system.

A report released Wednesday morning showed inflation pressures were already building before the war began. It said inflation at the U.S. wholesale level unexpectedly accelerated last month to 3.4%.

In other dealings early Thursday, The U.S. dollar fell to 159.71 Japanese yen from 159.88 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1467 from \$1.1453.

### India-Pakistan ties 'remain at risk' of nuclear conflict: US intel report



NEW DELHI

India and Pakistan relations remain at risk for nuclear conflict, according to the Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community presented to the US Senate on Wednesday.

According to the 34-page report, though India and Pakistan do not seek to open conflict, conditions exist for terrorist actors to continue to create catalysts for crises.

The 34-page report noted that while both countries aim to avoid escalation, the presence of terrorist actors keeps the region vulnerable to sudden crises.

"India-Pakistan relations remain a risk for nuclear conflict given past conflicts where these two nuclear states squared off, creating the danger of escalation. The terrorist attack last year near Pahalgam, in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, demonstrated the dangers of terrorist attacks sparking conflict," the document said.

"President Trump's intervention de-escalated the most recent nuclear tensions, and we assess that neither country seeks to return to open conflict, but that conditions exist for terrorist actors to continue to create catalysts for

crises," it said.

On South Asia, the document said that ISIS-K (Islamic State Khorasan Province) maintains a foothold in the region and aspires to conduct external attacks, but the Taliban is improving its security services and has taken aggressive action against it.

"The Taliban has conducted extensive raids against ISIS-K targets, probably thwarted some attacks, and driven some ISIS-K leaders to relocate to neighbouring countries," it said.

The assessment report also raised concerns over Pakistan's advancing missile capabilities, as it stated that Pakistan continues to develop Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM's) normally classified at a range greater than 5,500 kilometers. This means Pakistan will have the capability to strike targets beyond South Asia and if these trends continue, ICBMs that would threaten the US.

"Relations between Pakistan and the Taliban have been tense, with intermittent cross-border clashes, as Islamabad has become increasingly frustrated with anti-Pakistan terrorist groups' presence in Afghanistan while

Islamabad faces growing terrorist violence," it states.

The document said on February 26, the Afghan Taliban launched strikes against Pakistani military positions along their shared border, claiming retaliation for prior Pakistani airstrikes.

Pakistan responded within hours by bombing Afghan border provinces and the capital Kabul the first time Pakistan has struck Afghanistan's urban centres, it said.

"The fighting has continued since it erupted. Pakistan's army chief warned this month that lasting peace requires the Taliban to sever ties with militants targeting Pakistan. The Taliban's public posture has been to call for dialogue, but it has denied harboring anti-Pakistani militants," it added.

The report also noted that China and India remained the primary source countries for illicit fentanyl precursor chemicals and pill-pressing equipment. "Following a meeting in October 2025 between the U.S. President and Chinese President Xi in Busan, South Korea, Beijing agreed to halt the flow of fentanyl precursor chemicals to North America, issued an industry advisory notice to China-based companies, and established a new requirement for export licenses for certain fentanyl precursor chemicals," it stated.

The report further added that India has increased counternarcotics efforts during the last year. In January 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Indian officials signaled a willingness to deepen engagement with the U.S. on counternarcotics. Despite these actions, Mexico-based drug traffickers continue to circumvent international controls through mislabeled shipments and the purchase of unregulated chemicals.

## ICAR Intervention in Utilisation of Rice Fallows: Unlocking Assam's Hidden Rabi Potential



BISWADEEP GUPTA

GUWAHATI

One of the most noticeable weaknesses of agriculture in Assam is the prevalence of monocropping, dominated by the cultivation of mere Sali rice. Following the harvest of Sali rice, each year, a lion's share of the cultivated area remains barren or fallow, which incurs economic loss of huge sums of money and valuable human and land resources, which would otherwise contribute a lot to enhancing the income of its farmers and the development of the agricultural economy in the particular region. For a long time, the issue of the prevalence of rice fallow land after the harvest of Sali rice has been a very hot topic of discussion and great concern at various institutional and policymaking levels in Assam. In this regard, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has come forward and constituted "One Team One Task", to address the effective and sustainable utilization of the rice fallow areas in the country, for crop intensification, especially in the Eastern and North-Eastern parts of India, with due involvement of scientific and commercial motive for the greater benefit of rice farmers in the states, to enhance farmer's income and encourage economic development besides contributing satisfactory standard of living.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-ATARI), in convergence with crop specific Institutes, Assam Agricultural University (AAU), and State departments, Govt. of Assam, targeted to cultivate 30,000 hectare of rice fallow land in the current rabi season across the state with very suitable and remunerative crop cultivation viz Toria 17000 hectare, maize 7000 hectare, potato 4000 hectare and lentil 2000



hectare, for which quality seeds of high yielding proven crop varieties were given to farmers free of cost in due space and time through its constituent network of 26 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) of Assam.

Toria has been prioritised to address the state's edible oil deficit by providing farmers with improved, high-yielding varieties such as TS 36, TS 38, and TS 67. We provided timely capacity-building training, agro-advisory services, and field demonstrations, along with regular field visits and systematic monitoring, to ensure the programme benefited rice farmers. As a result, production is expected to increase by approximately 50,000 tonnes of maize, 32,000 tonnes of potato, and 2,000 tonnes of lentil. These outcomes indicate the programme's overall success, further supported by crop-cutting experiments that have revealed highly encouraging yields. The initiative is expected to generate additional income for farmers cultivating suitable crops in rice fallow areas and to motivate other farmers to adopt similar practices. The concerned institutes have jointly implemented a com-

prehensive approach, including structured capacity-building programmes for farmers, awareness campaigns, distribution of critical inputs, regular field monitoring, and demonstration activities across various districts of Assam.

With a geographical area of 7.83 million hectares and only 2.76 million hectares under net-sown area, expanding cultivation horizontally in the state is challenging. Therefore, increasing productivity through vertical intensification by introducing an additional crop on existing farmland, which is mostly barren, offers a practical pathway for growth. Even partial utilisation could significantly enhance farmers' incomes, generate rural employment, and strengthen nutritional and food security in Assam. By promoting suitable crops, providing timely seed supplies, and running extensive field demonstrations, ICAR-ATARI is turning previously idle fields into productive assets, supporting sustainable agricultural growth and improved livelihoods across the state.

### SPACE FOR YOU ONLY

Rs. 150/- per day

#### PLACEMENT

Fresher, job seekers can register with KRC Placements. Send resume to - 5eforsuccess@gmail.com To source candidates, organisation can contact KRC Placements at info@krccfoundation.org For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/krccplacements Apply here: https://bit.ly/KRCPlacementForm

#### VOLUNTEERS REGISTERS @ NEIR 2026

We are looking for volunteers across NE & West Bengal Interested candidates (College students, youths) can register at https://northeastintegrationrally.in/Volunteer\_Registration.aspxor, send an email: neintegrationrally@gmail.com

#### BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Business establishments, educational institutions, individual service providers etc. can enlist themselves or advertise their products or services at the most reasonable cost in InfoCom Diary. Send your details to InfoCom Solutions at: info@krccfoundation.org Submit Here: https://bit.ly/InfoComDiaryForm

#### STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP

Students can apply for a three-months internship with KRC Foundation. During the internship the student can get an opportunity to work on a live project. On successful completion the student is awarded a certificate. Apply to 5E for Success: 5eforsuccess@gmail.com For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/krccstudentinternship or www.krccfoundation.org/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship

#### NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

Participate in NE India Writing Star Contest and get your writings published. Eligibility: From Class VI onwards. Each participant receives a digital participation certificates. Send articles at: info@krccfoundation.org For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest www.krccfoundation.org/campaigns-csr/ne-india-writing-star-contest

#### CONNECT@ KRC TIMES



#### KRC TIMES

To engage with KRC TIMES, please use the following e-mails and WhatsApp Nos: For News: krctimes@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313 For Advertisement: info@krccfoundation.org / WP: 9330830083 For Subscription: krctimes@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313 Editor: biswadeep.gupta@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313

**Brain VISION**  
KRC  
Shaping Careers For a Successful Tomorrow

A real friend is someone who sees the pain in your eyes while everyone else still believes the smile on your face.

At Brain Vision Classes, We Provide What You Don't get in your Study Books...

[Know More](#)

Career building tools developed by:  
www.krccfoundation.org  
https://bit.ly/KRCBrainVision

info@krccfoundation.org  
+91-8721838313