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# Six injured in Imphal as protests intensify over NRC demand ahead of Census 2027

## IMPHAL

Protests linked to the Just Fair Delimitation (JFD) movement intensified in Manipur on Wednesday, leaving at least six people injured after police dispersed demonstrators near the historic Ima Keithel in Imphal. The agitation comes amid growing opposition from several groups demanding the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the conduct of the upcoming Census of India 2027.

Officials said the injured included five women and one man who were part of a demonstration organised by members of the Campaign for Just & Fair Delimitation (JFD). The protesters had gathered near the bustling Khwairamband Bazaar and were demanding that the census exercise be deferred until illegal immigrants are identified and the NRC is updated in the state.

Police intervened after demonstrators allegedly attempted to block roads and disrupt normal movement in the area. Security personnel deployed in large numbers moved in to disperse the crowd, during which six individuals sus-



Protesters in Imphal demanding the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the conduct of the upcoming Census of India 2027.

tained injuries. The injured were later provided medical attention.

The protest caused temporary disruption to market activities around noon, with several shops shutting down briefly as tensions escalated in the area.

Naorem Malemba, Assistant Organisation Secretary of the Campaign for Just & Fair Delimitation, said the protest was aimed at opposing what the group described as ongoing preparations for both the census and a future delimitation exercise.

"We demand deferment of the ongoing census process until the identification of illegal immigrants is completed with reference to the 1951 census," Malemba said while addressing reporters.

He argued that conducting the census

without first identifying illegal immigrants could disturb the existing demographic balance of the state.

"If the census is conducted, it will pose challenges to our societal balance. So before conducting the census we demand updation of NRC and census later," he added. Malemba further alleged that preparations related to the census were being carried out at two locations in Imphal - the State Institute of Training and the Ima Keithel area.

Several women vendors from the iconic Ima Market joined the demonstration alongside other supporters, amplifying the scale of the protest.

Sources said protesters had initially planned to gherao the Manipur Legislative Assembly by mobilising a large crowd at Ima Keithel, taking advantage of the ongoing Assembly session. However, police intervened and dispersed the demonstrators before they could proceed towards the Assembly complex.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Students Alliance of Manipur staged a separate protest the same day by locking down the State Institute of Training at Takyel. The

student body alleged that training programmes related to the upcoming census were being conducted at the institute.

DESAM convenor M. Somorjit Meitei said the protest was part of the broader JFD movement seeking the implementation of the NRC before the census and any subsequent delimitation exercise. "We have come here today because the government is trying to conduct the census without taking into consideration the aspirations of the people of Manipur," Somorjit told reporters.

"As part of the Just Fair Delimitation movement, we strongly condemn the government's initiative to start census training for government employees. Such actions will not be tolerated," he said. Somorjit warned that conducting delimitation without first detecting illegal immigrants could have serious political consequences for the state.

"Without detecting illegal immigrants first, conducting a delimitation exercise in the state will have fatal consequences. Many Assembly constituencies will go out of our reach, and this will have a huge impact on the people of Manipur,"

he added.

Referring to the ongoing Assembly session, the student leader urged the state government to adopt a formal resolution against delimitation without the implementation of the NRC. "At present the Assembly session is going on, and therefore we request the honourable Chief Minister to take up a resolution in the House stating that no delimitation exercise should be conducted without the implementation of NRC," he said.

The protest at the training institute remained peaceful, with DESAM members reiterating their demand that NRC be implemented before any census-related activities are undertaken in Manipur.

The demonstrations took place against the backdrop of preparations for the 16th national census. The Union Cabinet of India, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had approved the proposal to conduct the Census of India 2027 on December 12, 2025.

The census, originally scheduled for 2021, had been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is now expected to be conducted in 2027.

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## PERSPECTIVE

Real beauty is the beauty of the soul

## Dibrugarh University PG students launch hunger strike, demand apology from Ranoj Pegu

### DIBRUGARH

The Postgraduate Students' Union of Dibrugarh University on Wednesday launched a 36-hour hunger strike, intensifying protests over admission-related concerns, a recent fee hike, and alleged remarks by Assam Education Minister Ranoj Pegu that students claim were disrespectful to the legacy of the Assam Movement. Led by union president Asish Bhushan Gogoi and general secretary Madhurjya Bora, the protesters staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the university's main gate. During the protest, students also burned an effigy of the education minister and demanded that he clarify his alleged statement and issue a public apology.

According to the students' union, members had earlier visited the minister's residence to raise concerns regarding the admission process and the withdrawal of fee concessions that were reportedly announced during the admission period.

"We were told that there would be a 50 per cent fee concession for undergraduate and postgraduate courses, along with free admission for the five-year integrated course. But these benefits were later withdrawn," Gogoi said.

He added that many students enrolled at Dibrugarh University come from economically weaker backgrounds and are now finding it difficult to cope with the revised fee structure.

"Many students come from humble backgrounds and are struggling to afford the fees after the concessions were withdrawn," he said.

### WHO SAID WHAT



**India remains committed to supporting global food and nutritional security ~ Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry**

## No place for 'jihadi infiltrators' from Bangladesh in Tripura: CM Manik Saha



### AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on March 10 said that while the state government is committed to inclusive development for all communities, it will maintain a firm stance against extremist elements, particularly those allegedly infiltrating from neighbouring Bangladesh.

Addressing a gathering in Agartala, the chief minister said the government

believes in taking every community along the path of development but will not tolerate individuals involved in extremist or "jihadi" activities.

"We must take all communities along with us, but no place will be given here to jihadis who have come from Bangladesh," Saha said, reiterating the government's zero-tolerance policy towards activities that could threaten law and order in the state.

The chief minister also highlighted several welfare initiatives introduced by the Government of India aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of minority communities across the country. According to him, these programmes are intended to ensure equitable development and expand access to opportunities for marginalised groups.

At the state level, Saha said the Government of Tripura has launched its own scheme for minority communities to ensure they receive direct support and benefits.

He said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to inclusive governance and socio-economic upliftment while ensuring that development efforts reach all sections of society.

Saha added that development, social harmony and national security must go hand in hand. While the government will continue to promote minority welfare and community development, he said authorities will remain vigilant against any threat posed by extremist or anti-national elements.

## Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurates Assam's first Science City near Guwahati

### GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on March 10 inaugurated the state's first Science City at Sonapur on the outskirts of Guwahati, describing the project as a major step toward encouraging scientific thinking and innovation among young people. Spread across 82 acres, the facility has been developed at a cost of ₹300 crore and is aimed at promoting science education, public engagement with scientific ideas, and innovation in Assam.

Speaking at the inauguration, Sarma said the Science City would serve as an important hub for students and science enthusiasts, offering interactive exhibits and learning spaces designed to stimulate curiosity and creativity. According to the chief minister, the campus houses major attractions such as Eureka and Space Odyssey, which are expected to become key highlights of the centre. He also said the facility is larger in scale than the well-known Science City Kolkata. "Assam gets its own Science City and it will be one of the best in the country. Built on the outskirts of Guwahati, this project has several unique features and will inspire young minds towards scientific thinking," Sarma said in a social media post.

He added that additional facilities would be introduced in the coming months to expand the campus further. Planned additions include a Science Innovation Centre and a Science Park aimed at strengthening the ecosystem for hands-on learning and experimentation.

Officials said the project has been developed through a collaboration between the Assam government and the National Council of Science Museums, which functions under the Ministry of Culture.

On the same occasion, Sarma also virtually inaugurated five district-level science centres located in Amingaon, Majuli, Silchar, Kalabor and Bongaigaon. The departments will oversee the operationalisation of the changes through the state's online teacher transfer portal.

## NEC releases Rs 67.41 crore to support development projects across Northeast

### NEW DELHI

The North Eastern Council (NEC) released ₹67.41 crore in February 2026 to support a range of development initiatives across the northeastern region, with funds allocated to state governments, regional institutions and implementing agencies.

The financial assistance, provided under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), will support projects spanning infrastructure development, agriculture, research, tourism and livelihood generation across the eight north-eastern states.

A portion of the funding has been earmarked for projects in Nagaland aimed at strengthening community institutions, promoting local agricultural products and preserving cultural heritage.

Capacity-building programmes will be conducted in the districts of Phek district, Kiphire district and Noklak district to enhance local skills and encourage sustainable community development.

The council is also supporting initiatives to promote Naga chilli, an indigenous agricultural product of the region, with the aim of strengthening value chains and improving market access for farmers.

In addition, funds have been allocated for the construction of a museum-cum-library and guest house at Chungliymti to help preserve local heritage while

boosting tourism and academic research.

Of the total amount released in February, ₹30.07 crore has been allocated to regional institutions and implementing agencies working across the Northeast.

The funds will support projects related to sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurship development, including AI-based farming, infrastructure creation, sports facilities, tourism promotion and research initiatives.

Key institutions involved in implementing these programmes include the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Indian Institute of Management Shillong, North Eastern Space Applications Centre, North East Handicrafts and Handloom Development Corporation and the North East Region Community Resource Management Society, along with other universities and specialised institutions.

During the same period, the council also supported several academic, cultural and youth engagement programmes across the region. These included conferences, skill development workshops, tourism initiatives and cultural festivals designed to promote collaboration and knowledge exchange among institutions and communities.

Among the programmes supported were the Ashtalakshmi Darshan Youth Exchange Programme hosted at the Nagaland University campus in Medzipheema from February 1 to 14.

# PM Modi to visit Assam on March 13-14, launch projects worth over Rs 32,000 crore

### GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a two-day visit to Assam beginning March 13, during which he is scheduled to inaugurate, dedicate and lay the foundation stones for multiple development projects across the state worth over Rs 32,000 crore.

Announcing the itinerary after a state Cabinet meeting, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Prime Minister's tour will include visits to Kokrajhar, Guwahati and Silchar, covering a range of infrastructure, power and welfare initiatives.

"The Prime Minister will arrive in Kokrajhar on March 13 where he will dedicate and lay the foundation stone for several projects specifically meant for the region," Sarma said while briefing reporters.

Later in the evening, Modi will travel to Guwahati to participate in a series of programmes, including the release of an instalment under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi.

According to the Chief Minister,



one of the key highlights of the Guwahati event will be the launch of a major initiative aimed at granting land rights to tea garden communities in the state.

"Tea garden communities have been living in Assam for nearly 200 years, yet many of them have not received land rights till today. During this visit, the Prime Minister will hand over the first land patta to a deserving tea garden worker," Sarma said.

He added that the symbolic distribution by the Prime Minister would mark the beginning of a wider programme to grant land ownership certificates to eligible families residing in tea estates across Assam.

"Following the symbolic distribution, the land ownership distribution programme will be rolled out across the state so that tea garden families can finally receive legal rights over the land they have been living on for generations," the Chief Minister said.

During the Guwahati programme, the Prime Minister will also dedicate the 150 MW Kopili Hydropower Project to the nation. In addition, develop-

ment projects worth around Rs 10,000 crore will be inaugurated or dedicated during the event.

On March 14, Modi is scheduled to travel to Silchar where he will lay the foundation stone for the proposed Silchar-Guwahati Expressway.

According to Sarma, the expressway will be built at an estimated cost of Rs 22,000 crore and is expected to significantly improve connectivity between the Barak Valley and the rest of the state. "The Silchar-Guwahati expressway will reduce travel time and strengthen economic integration within the state," he said.

The Chief Minister also informed that the Prime Minister will address three major public meetings during the visit at different locations across Assam.

"There will be three public meetings where the Prime Minister will interact with people and highlight the development initiatives being undertaken in the state," Sarma said.

Following the programmes in Silchar, Modi will depart for Kolkata, concluding his two-day visit to Assam.



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## INDIA'S T20 HAT-TRICK

India's captain Suryakumar Yadav and teammates celebrate with the trophy during the presentation ceremony after winning the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, at Narendra Modi Stadium, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on Sunday. UNIPHOTO 2U RAKESH GANDHI

India's emphatic triumph in the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup is a defining moment in the evolution of modern Indian cricket. By clinching their third T20 World Cup title and, remarkably, becoming the first team in history to win back-to-back championships, the Indian cricket team has reaffirmed its position as the undisputed powerhouse of the shortest format. The comprehensive 96-run victory over New Zealand in the final at Ahmedabad was a statement of dominance, depth, and belief. For a nation where cricket is next only to faith, this achievement resonates far beyond the boundary ropes. Indian cricket today shines like a polar star—steady and radiant in both sunshine and moonlight—symbolising consistency, resilience, and excellence.

A significant share of credit for this remarkable transformation must go to the leadership of Jay Shah and his administrative team. Over the past decade, the Indian cricket administration has focused not only on financial strength but also on infrastructure development, grassroots talent identification, and professional management. The IPL has been the cornerstone of this transformation. More than a tournament, the IPL has evolved into a global talent incubator where young cricketers are exposed to international standards of competition, pressure situations, and high-performance environments. The league has provided a platform for uncapped and relatively unknown players to rub shoulders with the world's best, learning from them while showcasing their own skills. The current Indian T20 squad is perhaps the finest example of the IPL's success story. Players like Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson, Rinku Singh, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Kishan, Axar Patel, and Jasprit Bumrah are all products of this vibrant cricketing ecosystem. Each of them has honed his craft through years of high-intensity IPL competition. Today, they represent a generation of cricketers who are fearless, technically sound, and mentally prepared for the biggest stages.

What makes the 2026 World Cup triumph even more remarkable is the fact that India achieved it without several stalwarts who were part of the victorious 2024 squad. The absence of experienced names such as Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Mohammed Shami, and Ravindra Jadeja could have weakened any team. Instead, it opened the door for a new generation of cricketers to rise and claim their moment. This generational transition was not without challenges. During the group stage of the tournament, India suffered a significant defeat at the hands of South Africa. The loss not only dented confidence but also placed the team under pressure due to concerns over net run rate. In a short tournament like the T20 World Cup, even a single defeat can threaten qualification prospects. The early exit of traditional giants like Australia and Pakistan's inconsistent performances during the tournament serve as reminders that sporting supremacy is never permanent.

However, the setback proved to be a blessing in disguise. The defeat served as an early wake-up call, forcing the team management to reassess strategies and strengthen the players' resolve. Coach Gautam Gambhir and the support staff resisted the temptation to make sweeping changes. Instead, they demonstrated faith in the players who had been selected after careful deliberation. That decision proved decisive. The players responded with remarkable determination, displaying the character that defines champions.

Perhaps no story in this World Cup is more inspiring than that of Sanju Samson. For years, Samson's immense talent had often been overshadowed by inconsistency and intense scrutiny from fans and critics alike. At one stage during the tournament, his place in the side appeared uncertain. Yet when the team needed him the most, Samson rose to the occasion spectacularly. His explosive performances in the last three matches, including a breathtaking innings in the final, turned him into the standout performer of the tournament and silenced his detractors. Abhishek Sharma's journey mirrored a similar narrative. After struggling through much of the tournament, he produced a scintillating performance in the final when it mattered the most. His fearless strokeplay during the powerplay set the tone for India's mammoth total and effectively put the match beyond New Zealand's reach. Another bold call by the team management was to persist with Varun Nair despite fluctuating performances. Such decisions underline the importance of trust in team-building. Ishan Kishan's return to the national setup also became one of the highlights of the tournament. Having been sidelined for nearly two years, Kishan justified his selection with consistent performances at the top of the order.

Yet this World Cup triumph was never about individual brilliance alone. It was a classic example of collective effort and team synergy. Axar Patel's sharp fielding and match-turning catches, Tilak Verma's stability in the middle order, Shivam Dubey's late-innings acceleration, Hardik Pandya's all-round contributions, and Arshdeep Singh's disciplined bowling all played vital roles in India's campaign. Jasprit Bumrah, however, remained the spearhead of the bowling attack. His extraordinary figures in the final once again demonstrated why he is regarded as one of the greatest fast bowlers in modern cricket. Bumrah's ability to deliver pinpoint yorkers under pressure has become almost legendary.

The final against New Zealand showcased India's dominance in its purest form. Despite New Zealand's impressive semifinal victory over South Africa, the Kiwis were simply overwhelmed by India's relentless intensity. The Indian top order—Samson, Abhishek, and Kishan—virtually decided the contest within the first ten overs. Shivam Dubey's powerful finishing touches ensured that the target became insurmountable.

Interestingly, India's journey to the title was not flawless. The team recorded the highest number of dropped catches during the tournament, including two in the final itself. Yet what truly distinguishes champions is the ability to overcome imperfections and rise when it matters most. The victory also shattered the long-standing jinx associated with the Ahmedabad venue for Indian cricket. Another defining feature of this Indian side is its exceptional team bonding. The unity among the players was visible throughout the tournament.

Indian cricket today possesses an extraordinary depth of talent. It is often said that India now has the talent pool to field three competitive international teams simultaneously. Young cricketers from every corner of the country—including emerging regions like Jammu and Kashmir—are knocking on the doors of the national team. With the BCCI investing heavily in infrastructure, coaching systems, and grassroots development, the future of Indian cricket appears secure and even more promising.

As celebrations begin across the nation, with prize money announcements and victory parades expected in the coming days, the pride of over a billion cricket-loving Indians is palpable. Yet the cricketing carnival is far from over. In just a few days, the IPL season will begin again, bringing with it another wave of excitement, opportunity, and discovery. For India, cricket never truly pauses—it simply evolves.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Don't choose the better person, choose the person who makes a better you” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

# THE HORMUZ HEART ATTACK: INDIA'S FRAGILE HINGE IN A TIME OF IRAN WAR



T N ASHOK

For PMO and foreign ministry in New Delhi, the geography of the Persian Gulf has long been a source of both sustenance and anxiety. But as of this week, that anxiety has curdled into a full-blown systemic shock. The coordinated strikes by the United States and Israel against Iranian targets have effectively turned the Strait of Hormuz—the 21-mile-wide throat of global energy—into a no-go zone.

For India, the world's third-largest oil consumer, this is not a distant geopolitical skirmish. It is a direct assault on the “arithmetic of its existence.” With roughly 55% of its crude imports and an even higher percentage of its Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) transiting through the Strait, India finds itself more exposed than its peer economies, notably China, which has spent the last decade building a strategic reserve far superior to India's estimated 20–25 day commercial buffer.

The most immediate casualty of the conflict is India's carefully curated energy basket. In 2024 and 2025, New Delhi performed a delicate balancing act, pivoting between discounted Russian Urals and Middle Eastern grades. However, under renewed pressure from Washington in early 2026, Indian refiners had begun shifting back toward Gulf suppliers—specifically Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

The timing could not have been worse. Approximately 2.5

to 2.7 million barrels per day (mbpd) of Indian crude is now trapped behind the Iranian “clutch.”

**Supply Delays:** With the Strait effectively closed by Iranian naval patrols and VHF warnings to commercial shipping, tankers are dropping anchor in the Gulf of Oman.

**The Cape Detour:** Vessels rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope face a 14-day delay and a 15-20% surge in freight and war-risk insurance premiums. LPG Vulnerability:

Unlike crude, which can be sourced from the US or West Africa at a premium, India's LPG supply is geographically tethered to the Gulf. A prolonged blockade threatens the “Ujjwala” social stability, as cooking gas prices are expected to track the spike in Brent, which analysts warn could hit \$120-\$150 per barrel if the stalemate persists. The Indo-Iranian economic relationship was already a shadow of its former self before the first missiles flew last week. US sanctions had systematically choked the \$13.5 billion trade peak of FY19 down to less than \$1.5 billion by 2025. What remains, however, is critical. India's exports to Iran are now dominated by “humanitarian” and essential commodities—primarily Basmati rice, tea, and pharmaceuticals. Conversely, India's imports from Iran have shifted from crude oil to niche petrochemicals and agricultural products. Table 1: India-Iran Trade Profile (Estimated 2025-2026)

Category—Key Items—

Annual Value (USD Million) Impact of War—

Indian Exports—Basmati Rice, Tea, Vaccines—\$1,3— High: Logistics collapse; Rice exporters advised to halt CIF contracts.

Indian Imports: Methanol, Bitumen, Dry Fruits—\$1,100 High: Supply chain severing; 25% US tariff threat on intermediaries.

The “Hormuz Shock” is cascading through the Sensex with clinical cruelty. While the energy sector is the obvious epicentre, the secondary effects are arguably more dangerous for India's 2026 growth targets.

**Chemicals & Petrochemicals:** Manufacturers of detergents, paints, and plastics rely on Iranian methanol and intermediate chemicals. With the Strait blocked, “landed costs” for these raw materials have spiked by 30% in 48 hours.

**FMCG:** Crude derivatives account for roughly 25-40% of input costs for Indian soaps, shampoos, and packaging. Margins in the fast-moving consumer goods sector are expected to evaporate by Q3.

**Aviation & Tourism:** IndiGo and Air India have already begun rerouting flights to avoid Iranian and Israeli airspace, leading to fuel surcharges and a 7-14% drop in carrier stock prices this week.

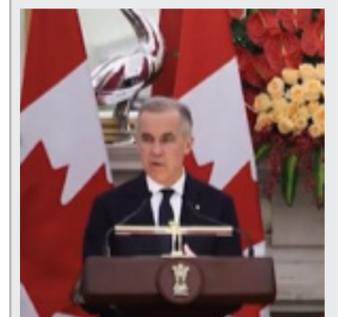
**Agriculture:** Iran is the largest buyer of Indian Basmati. The Indian Rice Exporters Federation has issued a “quiet panic” advisory, warning members that without insurance coverage, shipments to the Gulf are effectively unviable.

Diplomatically, India is in a familiar, albeit increasingly uncomfortable, position. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has called for “restraint” and “dialogue,” a linguistic middle path that satisfies neither Washington nor Tehran.

**The Washington Factor:** The US remains India's largest trading partner and a critical technology ally. However, the Trump administration's threat of 25% tariffs on any nation “doing business with Iran” has placed Indian banks in a state of paralysis.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**India's energy demand is increasing faster than anywhere else in the world. As an energy superpower, Canada is well-positioned to seize this opportunity.**  
~ Mark Carney, PM Canada



**The Tehran Factor:** Despite the collapse in oil trade, India views Iran as its gateway to Central Asia via the Chabahar Port. A regime collapse or total war in Iran would render India's multi-billion dollar investment in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) a “stranded asset.”

India's vulnerability is an “arithmetic of geography.” While China has the reserves to wait out a storm, India's “just-in-time” energy model is being tested to its breaking point. If the Strait of Hormuz remains a theatre of war for more than 30 days, the Indian government will be forced to choose between a massive fiscal blowout to subsidize fuel or an inflationary spike that could derail its domestic recovery.

In London and Singapore, the “war-risk” is being priced into the dollar. In New Delhi, it is being priced into the very fiscal stability of the nation.



# Himanta Biswa Sarma attacks Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi, Rakibul Hussain, calls them 'destructive politicians'



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the state leadership of the Indian National Congress, accusing its senior leaders Gaurav Gogoi and Rakibul Hussain of damaging the party's prospects in the state.

Addressing the media, Sarma described the two leaders as "destructive politicians" and claimed their continued presence in the party would ultimately weaken the Congress in Assam.

"I have never seen such destructive politicians in my life," the chief minister said, adding that their leadership was politically advantageous

for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

Drawing a parallel with national politics, Sarma said the BJP's dominance would continue both at the Centre and in Assam under the current opposition leadership.

He remarked that just as Narendra Modi would remain prime minister as long as Rahul Gandhi remained a key figure in the Congress, the BJP would continue to retain power in Assam while Gogoi and Hussain led the party in the state.

The chief minister also criticised the Congress for its approach toward regional allies, specifically referring to the Rajiv Dal led by Akhil Gogoi. Sarma said the Congress

had failed to accommodate the regional party in its political strategy. According to him, the electoral contest could have been stronger if the Congress had allotted at least two seats to Rajiv Dal.

The remarks come amid escalating political exchanges between the BJP-led government and the opposition Congress in Assam, with both parties stepping up their rhetoric ahead of the next electoral cycle in the state.

Political observers say the comments reflect the increasingly sharp tone of political debate in Assam, where the ruling BJP and opposition parties continue to clash over leadership, alliances and electoral strategy.

## Mukul Sangma lodges police complaint against ex-MLA Esmatur Mominin

SHILLONG

Former Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma has lodged a police complaint against former legislator S. G. Esmatur Mominin, accusing him of making inflammatory remarks that could trigger communal tension ahead of the elections to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC). According to the complaint filed on March 10 with the Officer-in-Charge of the Phulbari Police Station, Sangma alleged that a video circulating on social media shows Mominin delivering a speech that could incite hostility in the already sensitive political atmosphere in the Garo Hills region. The alleged speech was reportedly delivered on the evening of March 9 following an earlier incident in which Mominin claimed he was physically assaulted. The alleged assault occurred at the office of the Deputy Commissioner in Tura, where Mominin had gone to submit his nomination papers for the upcoming GHADC elections.

In the complaint, Sangma stated that the speech included what he described as "vitriolic election rhetoric" at a time when tensions remain high over the participation of non-tribal candidates in the district council polls. He warned that such statements could deepen divisions and provoke conflict among communities in the politically sensitive Garo Hills area. Sangma further alleged that during the address, Mominin invoked his name and those of two other public figures, suggesting that they had tacitly endorsed his nomination and supported the participation of non-tribal candidates in the GHADC elections. Sangma categorically denied any such discussion or approval, calling the claims "entirely untrue."

He maintained that the statements amounted to the spreading of rumours that could potentially fuel communal discord. While the exact size of the gathering could not be independently verified from the video, Sangma noted in his complaint that several voices could be heard responding during the speech, indicating that more than ten people were likely present at the gathering.

## Assam transfers Rs.3,600 crore to over 40 lakh women under Orunodoi 3.0 ahead of polls

GUWAHATI

The Government of Assam has transferred ₹3,600 crore to nearly 40 lakh beneficiaries under the flagship Orunodoi Scheme 3.0, providing advance financial assistance to economically vulnerable women across the state.

Assam minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass said the government decided to release a lump sum payment of ₹9,000 per beneficiary to ensure that women dependent on the scheme continue to receive financial support ahead of the upcoming elections. Under the welfare programme, widows, differently-abled women, unmarried women and divorcees receive ₹1,200 per month through direct benefit transfers to help meet essential household expenses. However, with elections approaching, the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct could potentially delay the regular monthly payments. To avoid disruption in the livelihoods of beneficiaries, the state government opted to release

the amount in advance as a single instalment. "This is not only in Assam, but perhaps the first time in India that such a large transfer has been made at one go," Dass said, describing the move as being taken with "a very bona fide intention."

He explained that if beneficiaries were unable to receive their monthly support during the election period due to restrictions imposed by the election code, it could severely affect their day-to-day lives. "That is why, as the Chief Minister has said, the government has decided to provide ₹9,000 in one go so that their lives are not disrupted until a new government is formed," the minister added.

The Orunodoi Scheme remains one of Assam's key social welfare initiatives aimed at strengthening financial security for women from economically weaker households, and has been credited with improving household welfare across both rural and urban areas of the state.

## No arrests in recurring Dzukou Valley fires; Nagaland government details new prevention strategy

KOHIMA

The Dzukou Valley forest fire incidents have not led to any arrests so far, Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio informed the Nagaland Legislative Assembly on March 10, while outlining a series of preventive measures the state government plans to implement to curb future outbreaks.

Responding to a starred question on the fourth day of the eighth session of the 14th Assembly, Rio said that authorities have not been able to identify any individual responsible for the recurring fires that have periodically ravaged the ecologically sensitive valley.

The chief minister also noted that the government is yet to receive the final bills related to the most recent deployment of helicopters from the Indian Air Force to assist in firefighting operations. Because of the pending invoices, the state government is currently unable to provide a complete assessment of expenditure incurred on aerial firefighting efforts car-



ried out between 2023 and the present.

Dzukou Valley, known for its unique seasonal blooms and fragile grassland ecosystem, has witnessed repeated wildfire incidents in recent years, prompting growing concern among environmentalists and local communities about the long-term ecological impact.

Rio told the House that the state government has begun strengthening preventive and response mechanisms to reduce the risk of large-scale fires in the future. As part of these efforts, the forest department conducted a training programme for commu-

nity volunteers from Western and Southern Angami areas. The programme was organised in collaboration with the Angami Youth Organisation and was held at Khonoma from March 3 to 9, 2025.

The training focused on equipping local volunteers with practical skills in wildfire detection, containment and coordination during emergency response situations. Officials believe community participation is critical because many parts of the valley remain difficult to access quickly during emergencies.

Rio further stated that the forest department plans to establish watchtowers in high-risk zones to

enable early detection of fires. The initiative is aimed at improving surveillance in vulnerable areas, particularly during the dry season when the risk of wildfire increases significantly.

The government also plans to procure additional firefighting equipment to strengthen ground-level response capabilities. This includes traditional fire beaters, drones for aerial monitoring, and water backpacks that allow responders to tackle flames in terrain inaccessible to vehicles.

In addition to equipment upgrades, authorities will focus on creating and maintaining fire lines—strategically cleared strips of land designed to prevent the spread of flames across grasslands and forested areas.

To improve emergency readiness, the government intends to establish specially trained Rapid Response Teams capable of reaching remote locations quickly. These teams will work alongside local volunteers and forest officials during fire emergencies.

## Assam Cabinet allots land for Zubeen Garg memorial

GUWAHATI

The Assam Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, approved a series of decisions on March 10 covering cultural recognition, infrastructure development and administrative measures, including the allotment of land for a memorial dedicated to late Assamese singer Zubeen Garg.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Sarma said the government has allotted 10 bighas of land to the state's Department of Cultural Affairs for the establishment of the "Zubeen Garg Samadhi Kshetra." The memorial will honour the celebrated artist whose music and cultural influence have left a lasting impact on Assam.

In another major decision, the



Cabinet approved Rs 1,367 crore for the South East Guwahati Water Supply Project, aimed at improving access to safe drinking water in several parts of Guwahati that

continue to face supply shortages. The project is expected to strengthen urban infrastructure and ensure reliable potable water for thousands of households in the expanding metropolitan areas of the city.

The government also announced that Ali-Aye-Ligang, the harvest festival of the Mising community, will now be observed as an official state holiday, recognising the cultural traditions of one of Assam's prominent indigenous groups.

Another key decision taken by the Cabinet was the renaming of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College and Hospital in Barpeta as Barpeta Medical College and Hospital. Sarma said the government would honour former President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed in a different way by dedicating

another institution in his name.

"Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was the President of India and the first President from Assam. The government will dedicate another institution in his name as a mark of respect," the chief minister said.

Separately, Sarma handed over a Grade III government appointment letter to Upasana Bokolia Gogoi, the wife of noted folk artist Rajib Sadiya. The appointment in the state's Revenue Department was formally presented at Lok Sewa Bhawan, which houses the chief minister's office.

Officials said the Cabinet decisions reflect the state government's focus on strengthening infrastructure while also recognising cultural icons and indigenous traditions across Assam.

## Mizoram plans to operationalise upgraded schools from 2026-27 academic session



AIZAWL

The Government of Mizoram is preparing to operationalise several recently upgraded schools beginning with the 2026-27 academic session, School Education Minister Vanlalhlana informed the state Assembly on March 10.

The minister said the institutions meet the necessary legal and eligibility requirements and are expected to become fully functional from the upcoming academic year.

Vanlalhlana also noted that the previous government led by former chief minister Zoramthanga of the Mizo National Front (MNF) had upgraded 180 schools during its tenure.

He said the current administration led by the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has already approved the upgradation of 100 schools to lump-sum grant-in-aid status earlier in February. These include 44 higher secondary schools, 44 high schools and 34 elementary schools.

According to the minister, the government is currently completing the required administrative and logistical preparations to

ensure that the upgraded institutions begin functioning effectively from the next academic session. A notification regarding the upgradation of additional schools is also under process, he added.

Vanlalhlana further informed the Assembly that the government is addressing the shortage of teachers across the state. The School Education Department has sought approval from higher authorities to fill vacant posts in primary schools and plans to recruit teachers on a contract basis for middle schools. As part of the recruitment effort, the process is underway to appoint 20 casual teachers in Science and Mathematics for high schools and 15 casual teachers for higher secondary schools. In addition, permission has been granted to recruit 57 regular teachers, with the recruitment process currently in progress.

The minister also said that several vacant posts under the Samagra Shiksha scheme will be filled in phases as part of the government's broader efforts to strengthen the education system in the state.

## Gaurav Gogoi accuses Speaker Om Birla of bias while moving removal resolution in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on March 10 defended the opposition's decision to move a resolution seeking the removal of Om Birla, saying the move was necessary to "protect the dignity of the House and save the Constitution."

Initiating the debate in the Lok Sabha, the Jorhat MP accused the Speaker of displaying partisan conduct and allowing repeated interruptions of the Leader of the Opposition during a key parliamentary debate earlier this year.

Explaining the rationale behind the motion, Gogoi said the Leader of the Opposition had been repeatedly obstructed while speaking during the motion of thanks to the President's address in February.

"We stated that in February, when the LoP wanted to speak on the motion of thanks to the President's address, he was interrupted 20 times by the Speaker, members of the chairpersons' panel and senior members of the treasury benches," Gogoi said, alleging that the interruptions occurred in a "premeditated manner".

According to him, the Speaker did not allow the Leader of the Opposition to present several issues of public importance that were intended to be raised during the debate.

Gogoi said the opposition leader had sought to refer to remarks reportedly made by former Army Chief M M Naravane in his unreleased book. The former officer allegedly wrote that the

country's leadership told him, "Jo uchit samjho wahi karo".

At this stage of the proceedings, Jagdebamba Pal, who was presiding over the House at the time, asked Gogoi to restrict his remarks to the grounds for moving the resolution against the Speaker.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju also intervened, stating that the discussion was about the Speaker and that unrelated issues should not be brought into the debate. In response, Gogoi said a review of parliamentary records would show that Rijiju had interrupted opposition members most frequently during debates.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah then remarked that while Rijiju might have interrupted the most, "there has never been an opposition like the current one".

Resuming his speech amid repeated interruptions, Gogoi said the Leader of the Opposition had also intended to raise an investigation underway in the United States involving a businessman that reportedly mentioned an Indian minister.

He added that questions were also to be raised regarding trade negotiations between India and the United States. According to Gogoi, the opposition wanted to know why India was allegedly rushing into a deal that could lead to concessions detrimental to Indian farmers.

"The question was what made India rush into a deal and make concessions to the US that would be detrimental to our farmers," Gogoi said.

He further alleged that while the Speaker had asked for authentication of the claims being raised - something the Leader of the Opposition

agreed to provide - members from the treasury benches repeatedly objected and disrupted the speech.

Gogoi also referred to the Supreme Court's observations in the Nabam Rebia case, which state that the Speaker must demonstrate "a sense of elevated independence, impeccable objectivity, irreproachable fairness and above all absolute impartiality".

Questioning the procedure followed during the debate, the Congress MP asked who had decided that Jagdebamba Pal would preside over proceedings related to the resolution against the Speaker.

Despite his criticism, Gogoi emphasised that opposition members maintained cordial personal relations with Birla.

"But it is our responsibility to protect the dignity of the House and save the Constitution," he said.

The resolution was moved by Congress MPs K Suresh, Mallu Ravi and Mohammad Jawed. More than 50 members stood in support of the motion, leading to its admission in the House.

Under parliamentary rules, a Speaker can be removed if the House passes a resolution with a simple majority. The Constitution allows the Speaker to defend himself or herself during such proceedings.

The opposition resolution accuses Birla of acting in a "blatantly partisan" manner and of "abusing" the constitutional office while conducting the business of the House.

Historically, three Lok Sabha Speakers - G V Mavlankar in 1954, Hukam Singh in 1966 and Balram Jakhar in 1987 - faced similar no-confidence motions, though all were ultimately defeated.

Quest!

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## Centre eases FDI norms for China, other countries sharing land border with India



NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved changes to India's foreign direct investment (FDI) policy governing investments from countries that share land borders with India, introducing a clearer framework for determining beneficial ownership and a definitive timeline for approvals in critical sectors.

The decision, taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aims to streamline investments that currently require government approval under Press Note 3 (2020) while safeguarding national interests.

Under the revised guidelines, investments from land-bordering countries with non-controlling beneficial ownership of up to 10% will be permitted through the automatic route, subject to applicable sectoral caps and conditions. The beneficial ownership test will be applied at the level of the investor entity, using definitions aligned with

the Prevention of Money Laundering Rules, 2003.

The Cabinet has also introduced an expedited approval mechanism, under which investment proposals from such countries in specified manufacturing sectors will be processed within 60 days.

The fast-track window will initially apply to sectors including capital goods, electronic capital goods, electronic components, and polysilicon and ingot-wafer manufacturing.

In these cases, the investee company must remain majority-owned and controlled by resident Indian citizens or Indian entities controlled by them at all times, the government said.

The policy changes seek to address concerns raised by global investors and venture capital funds that the restrictions introduced during the pandemic were hampering capital flows. In April 2020, the government tightened FDI rules through Press Note 3 (2020) to prevent opportunistic takeovers of Indian firms

during the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since then, all investments from entities in countries sharing land borders with India—or where the beneficial owner is based in such countries—have required government approval.

Officials said the revised framework would improve clarity for investors and support India's manufacturing push, particularly in sectors linked to electronics and renewable energy supply chains.

The Committee of Secretaries under the Cabinet Secretary will have the authority to revise the list of sectors eligible for the 60-day clearance. The government expects the changes to boost FDI inflows, facilitate technology partnerships and strengthen India's integration with global supply chains, while supporting domestic manufacturing and the broader "ease of doing business" agenda.

## EC committed to peaceful Bengal polls, says CEC Gyanesh Kumar

KOLKATA

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar on Tuesday assured that the upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal will be conducted in a free, fair and violence-free manner.

The election dates and the number of phases will be announced in Delhi.

"Our only priority is to hold elections in the state that are free, fair and peaceful, without violence or fear. No violence will be tolerated. There will be mandatory, absolute non-partisan conduct by every polling personnel throughout the entire election process," the CEC told reporters during a press conference in Kolkata's New Town area.

"We have directed each officer, including district magistrates and superintendents of police, to enforce the rule of law without fear or favour. They must act with complete impartiality, and this is mandatory for them," Kumar said.

The CEC assured stern action, including departmental proceedings, if any officer is found negligent or showing partiality while performing duties related to conducting elections without violence or fear.

"Not a single genuine voter will be deleted from the electoral rolls. Every eligible voter will be able to cast their vote. The final list after the post-SIR exercise was published on February 28, but a large number of cases are still awaiting decisions by judicial officers as per the directive of the Supreme Court," the CEC said.

According to him, democracy runs very deep in West Bengal. Voting percentages in the state have remained very high, and electors and the public at large respect the Constitution and believe in peaceful and participatory elections.

Highlighting the scale of the electoral exercise, he said West Bengal has around 80,000 polling stations, of which about 61,000 are located in rural areas. Kumar also announced that the Election Commission would implement



100 per cent webcasting in all polling stations across the state.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has also banned the use of mobile phones by voters inside polling booths. Voters will have to keep their mobile phones outside the booth before entering to cast their votes.

Any candidate contesting the polls can request a recheck of EVMs within seven days after the counting. Home voting facilities will also be available for voters aged 85 and above. Bengal has around 3.78 lakh voters in this age group.

The full bench of the Election Commission — comprising the CEC and Election Commissioners SS Sandhu and Vivek Joshi — addressed the media after holding a series of meetings on poll preparations with political parties and senior officials, including state Chief

Secretary Nandini Chakraborty, the Home Secretary, the Director General of Police (DGP), commissioners of police from different commissionerates, officials from the RBI and the excise department, and Booth Level Officers (BLOs). The Commission was on a two-day visit to the state to review the situation related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls.

The full bench also held separate meetings with major political parties on Monday at a private hotel in New Town to hear their concerns and suggestions regarding the conduct of elections in the 294 Assembly constituencies of West Bengal.

The ruling Trinamool Congress and the CPI(M) expressed concerns over what they described as "unbearable" harassment faced by common citizens during the Special

Intensive Revision hearings. They also raised issues about more than 60 lakh voters being placed "under adjudication" status, urging the Commission not to conduct elections without finalising proper voter lists with genuine electors.

The main opposition BJP remained silent on the SIR issue but demanded that the elections be conducted in a peaceful, violence-free environment.

Almost all political parties, including the Congress, demanded that the Election Commission hold the elections in one or two phases. The 2021 Assembly elections in West Bengal were conducted in eight phases, while the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in the state were held in seven phases. However, the Trinamool Congress did not clearly state its position on the number of phases.

## INTERNATIONAL

## Iran rebuffs Trump, vows to fight on as IRGC warns of Gulf oil export blockade



TEHRAN

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday his country would keep fighting as long as necessary, casting doubt on US President Donald Trump's insistence that the conflict would be over "soon."

The remarks from one of Iran's top leaders, who also ruled out negotiations with Washington, came as Tehran launched a new wave of attacks on US-allied Gulf nations hours after Trump's assurances of a swift end to the rapidly widening conflict.

In an interview Araghchi told PBS News "the firings continue, and we are prepared. We are well prepared to continue attacking them with our missiles as long as needed and as long as it takes."

And Araghchi effectively ruled out negotiations with Washington,

saying Tehran had "a very bitter experience of talking with Americans."

Recalling previous US attacks during earlier negotiations, he said: "I don't think talking with Americans anymore would be on our agenda."

Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) also responded to Trump that they would "determine the end of the war."

IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini said on Tuesday that Iranian forces will not allow the export of oil from the region to allies of the United States and Israel as long as the war continues. He said any change would take place based on the conditions of the conflict.

"The Iranian armed forces... will not allow the export of a single litre of oil from the region to the hostile side and its partners until further notice," said Naini, according to a

report from Iran's Tasnim news agency.

US President Donald Trump speaks at a news conference, Monday, March 9, 2026, at Trump National Doral Miami in Doral, Fla.

"Then who knows?" Trump says will waive some oil sanctions as Iran war roils markets

Tehran's response comes after Trump told a news conference in Florida on Monday that the war "is going to be ended soon, and if it starts up again they'll be hit even harder", after telling US lawmakers that the campaign would be a "short-term excursion."

Trump's comments helped reverse the stock market slumps and oil price jumps of a day earlier, with markets in Tokyo and Seoul opening strongly, and oil prices down as much as five percent, a day after benchmark crude rocketed past \$100 a barrel. The US presi-

dent also threatened an attack of "incalculable" size if Tehran blocks oil supplies. "We will hit them so hard that it will not be possible for them or anybody else helping them to ever recover that section of the world, if they do anything."

Iran has responded with drone and missile strikes targeting Israel and US interests across the region.

Shipping traffic through the strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20 percent of a world's crude oil usually transits, has been severely disrupted.

Iranian forces have repeatedly targeted oil tankers passing through the strategic waterway since the war began.

Oil prices have since risen dramatically to over \$100 per barrel — the highest since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 — before reversing course Monday after US President Donald Trump said military operations would be ending soon.

"Their efforts to reduce and control the price of oil and gas will be temporary and fruitless," IRGC spokesman Naini said. "Trade in war conditions is hinged on security."

The Revolutionary Guards late on Monday urged countries to expel their US and Israeli ambassadors to gain passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

"Any Arab or European country that expels the Israeli and American ambassadors from its territory will have complete freedom and authority to pass through the Strait of Hormuz starting tomorrow," the Guards said, as quoted by Iranian state TV.

DUBAI

One of the world's largest refineries in the UAE was shut as a "precaution" after a drone attack nearby, a source said, while Saudi giant Aramco warned of the war's devastating consequences on oil.

Aramco CEO and president Amin H. Nasser warned the war could have "catastrophic consequences" on oil markets, and called for reopening the Strait of Hormuz — which normally carries about 20 percent of global oil supplies but has been closed by the conflict.

Tehran appears to be attempting to knock major Gulf refineries offline as it tightens its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz in a quest to inflict maximum pain on the global economy.

"The Ruwais refinery has halted operations out of precaution," the source said, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Earlier, the Abu Dhabi Media Office said a drone attack caused a fire in Ruwais Industrial City in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Neither the source nor the authorities said whether the refinery had been hit. State-owned oil company Adnoc describes its Ruwais facility as "the world's fourth-largest single-site refinery."

The Middle East war has now severely destabilised supplies. Iran has fired at energy installations across the Gulf, including Aramco's sprawling Ras Tanura facility, which halted some operations.

The massive complex on the Gulf coast is home to one of the Middle East's largest refineries and is a

cornerstone of the Saudi energy sector.

Saudi oil fields have also been targeted. A driver working at the Ruwais industrial complex told AFP he was picking up staff who were ordered to evacuate.

"Just as we were about to leave, we saw two more bursts of fire rising from the complex, with loud sounds like explosions," he said, requesting not to be named.

The Abu Dhabi Media Office said a drone attack caused a fire in Ruwais Industrial City in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

"The disruption has caused a severe chain reaction in not only shipping and insurance but there's also a drastic domino effect on aviation, agriculture, automotive and other industries," Nasser told a media call to announce Aramco's 2025 earnings.

"There would be catastrophic consequences for the world's oil markets the longer the disruption goes on, and the more drastic the consequences for the global economy.

The oil-rich Gulf has borne the brunt of Iran's attacks in response to US-Israeli strikes that sparked the Middle East war, with Tehran targeting US assets but also civilian infrastructure, including energy facilities and airports.

"While we have faced disruptions in the past, this one by far is the biggest crisis the region's oil and gas industry has faced."

"It's absolutely critical that shipping resumes in the Strait of Hormuz," Nasser said.

Oil prices have swung wildly over supply disrup-

tions, rocketing 30 percent on Monday before plunging again on comments from US President Donald Trump that the war may soon end.

"The Gulf energy sector is getting whacked from multiple angles," said Robert Moglewicz, a non-resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute.

"Energy facilities being targeted, export capability though the strait is hampered, and storage capacity filling up," he added.

Iranian attacks have already forced state-owned QatarEnergy, one of the world's largest producers of liquefied natural gas, to halt production last week and declare force majeure.

Energy producers in Kuwait made similar declarations, which are a warning that events beyond their control may lead them to miss export targets.

Nasser was speaking as Aramco reported a 12.1 percent decline in net income in 2025 after higher supply, US tariffs and other economic headwinds weighed on revenues.

The Saudi giant, which launched a record initial public offering in 2019, also announced a first-ever share buyback programme of up to \$3 billion over 18 months.

Also Tuesday, Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majeed al-Ansari warned that attacks on energy facilities "on both sides, are a dangerous precedent... it will cause repercussions throughout the world."

Throughout last year, the oil alliance OPEC+ — of which Saudi Arabia is a key member — oversaw an increase in production, eroding prices.

## IIT Guwahati Leads North East Region- Japan Collaboration with Letter of Intent Signing at Indo-Japan Symposium

A total of 22 institutions from the NE region including 8 NITs, 2 IIITs, NERIST, AIIMS Guwahati, NERIWALM, Tezpur University, Gauhati University, Cotton University, Assam Engineering College, among others, signed this Lol to explore academic and research collaborations with Japanese institutions.



from the two countries attended the inaugural event.

Speaking during the inaugural event, Prof. Devendra Jaliha, Director, IIT Guwahati, said, "Today marks a new beginning, as institutions across states unite to form a unique consortium that brings together engineers, medical professionals, scientists, and policy-

Consortium. This LoI will serve as a gateway for India's Act East Policy towards ASEAN and East Asia, and establish a platform for NE institutions to collaborate with Japanese institutions to explore academic and research partnerships. A total of 22 institutions from the NE region signed this LoI.

Under this collaboration, IIT Guwahati will

GUWAHATI

With an aim to strengthen North East India's academic, research and industry collaboration with Japan, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati conducts the Japan-NE Academia-Industry Cooperation Symposium 2026 (JNTCS 2026) on 9th and 10th March 2026, jointly organised with Gifu University, Japan. The two-day event provided a platform for academic, research and business organisations across the Northeast region to interact with their counterparts from Japan with a vision to come together to solve global problems such as food security, healthcare, environment, sustainable energy, and clean water. Additionally, the initiative paved the way for global exposure and education



for students and researchers in the Northeast. This will include multilateral collaborations in numerous disciplines spanning

across science, technology and medicine.

As Japan has designated Northeast India as a strategic priority since 2022 (MEXT Inter-University Exchange Project), this joint exercise will facilitate 5,000 students from Northeast Indian institutions visiting Japanese universities, and an equal number coming to India within the next five years. Prof. Devendra

Jaliha, Director, IIT Guwahati; Prof. Kazuhiro Yoshida, President, Gifu University; Dr Yashawant Dev Panwar, Counsellor S&T, Embassy of India, Tokyo; Dr Ravi Kora, IAS, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Assam; representatives from different Japanese organisations including JETRO, JST, JICA and JSPS, and members of academia and industry

makers—groups who rarely have the chance to interact. We believe such collaborations will accelerate the region's growth and drive its industrial transformation."

A key milestone of the symposium was the signing of a Letter of Intent (LoI) for participation in the North East Region-Japan International Academic and Research

be the nodal institution on the Indian side, and Gifu University will be the coordinating institution on the Japanese side. Speaking during the event, Prof. Kazuhiro Yoshida, President, Gifu University, said, "The four pillars of an academic institution - education, research, technology transfer, and societal service - define our core commitments. I am confident that this consortium will help us advance each of these goals in a meaningful and collaborative way." Speaking about JNTCS 2026, Prof. Sumana Dutta, Dean, Alumni and External Relations, IIT Guwahati, said, "IIT Guwahati is proud to bring the Eight Sisters of the Northeast onto a shared platform, fostering a consortium that supports collective growth and cross-border collaboration. Through this effort, we hope to reinforce Indo-Japan partnerships and advance the vision of India's Act East Policy." This launch of the Northeast India-Japan International Academic and Research Consortium opens up opportunities for global exposure and education for students and researchers in the Northeast.

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