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**PERSPECTIVE**

The truth is never as painful as discovering a lie.

**AI-Powered System from Assam University to Predict Floods, Transform Farming Across Northeast**

**SILCHAR**  
In a significant step towards climate-resilient agriculture, Assam University has developed an artificial intelligence-driven system capable of predicting floods and guiding farmers across six Northeastern states with real-time, data-based insights.

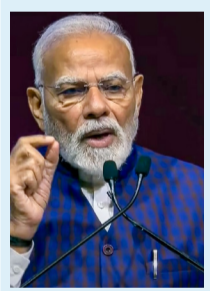
The initiative, led by the university's Department of Computer Science and Engineering, is aimed at addressing the acute vulnerability of agriculture in the region to erratic weather patterns and information gaps. Conceptualised in 2024, the project is funded by the Department of Science and Technology and is being monitored by Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar. Designed for the Barak River Basin and adjoining areas, the system currently covers Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland-regions where farming is often disrupted by floods and extreme climatic events.

At the core of the project is an AI-based early warning system that uses satellite data analytics and machine learning to forecast floods, extreme weather conditions, and even potential river course changes. By delivering location-specific alerts, the system enables farmers to prepare in advance, reducing crop losses and improving resilience.

Project lead Somnath Mukhopadhyay said the initiative seeks to bridge the gap between prediction and action. "Technology in agriculture often stops at advisories. We wanted to go beyond that by linking prediction, access and action into one integrated system," he noted.

Field studies conducted across remote villages revealed that lack of timely information-rather than infrastructure-remains the biggest challenge for farmers in the region. "A farmer may know what to grow, but not where to get quality seeds. Information, not infrastructure, is the real bottleneck," Mukhopadhyay added.

**WHO SAID WHAT**



Received a call from my friend President Donald Trump. We reviewed the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral cooperation in various sectors. We are committed to further strengthening our Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership in all areas. We also discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure.

~ Narendra Modi, PM India

**Scorpions Set for Shillong Comeback, Recall 'Unforgettable' 2007 Concert Ahead of April 21 Show**

**NEW DELHI/SHILLONG**

Legendary German rock band Scorpions is set to return to Shillong on April 21, rekindling memories of its iconic 2007 performance in the hill city, which band members describe as one of their most memorable shows in India.

The upcoming concert is part of the band's "Coming Home" tour, marking their 60th anniversary, with performances scheduled across Shillong, Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai.

Guitarist Matthias Jabs recalled the overwhelming reception during their previous India tour, particularly in Shillong. "We played in Shillong and Mumbai... the audience is fantastic. It's a rock audience and we have the best memories," he said, expressing excitement about reconnecting with fans-both old and new.

Frontman Klaus Meine echoed the sentiment, reminiscing about the electrifying atmosphere of the 2007 concert. He noted that the enthusiasm was so intense that local schools had reportedly declared a holiday, allowing students to attend the performance.

"It was an amazing concert. People were so excited, and we are very much looking forward to coming back," Meine



said, also recalling the distinctive bamboo-built stage that hosted the event.

Founded in 1965 in Hanover by guitar-

ist Rudolf Schenker, the band remains a global rock powerhouse, known for timeless hits such as Wind of Change, Rock

**Himanta Predicts BJP Sweep in Assam and Bengal, Pushes for Border Sealing in Poll Campaign**

**Sarma Rebutts AITC Claims on Food Curbs, Alleges Cattle Smuggling Nexus in Bengal Campaign**

**GUWAHATI/ALIPURDUAR**

Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday projected an emphatic electoral victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming Assembly elections, claiming the party would secure 100 seats in Assam and as many as 200 in West Bengal, while sharpening the party's focus on border security as a central campaign theme.

Addressing a public gathering in Alipurduar district of West Bengal, the Assam Chief Minister said stringent border control measures already implemented in Assam and Tripura should now be replicated in Bengal. "The need of the hour is to seal the border in West Bengal," he asserted, underscoring concerns over cross-border infiltration as a key electoral issue.

Sarma's remarks come amid an intensified BJP campaign in the eastern state, where the party is seeking to expand its footprint in a politically significant contest. As part of the



campaign push, a 50-member delegation of the Assam BJP has been deployed across West Bengal to canvass support ahead of polling.

The elections, scheduled in two phases on April 23 and April 29, are expected to witness extensive outreach efforts by the delegation across multiple constituencies. Sarma, who has already arrived in the state, is slated to address three major rallies on Friday in Cooch Behar, Kalchini and Phansidewa Assembly segments.

Senior Assam ministers and party leaders, including Pijush Hazarika, Jayanta Mallabaruah, Ranjeet Ku-

mar Dass, Bimal Bora, Dr Ranaj Pegu and others, have fanned out across constituencies to spearhead the campaign, alongside MPs and MLAs coordinating local outreach.

The West Bengal elections form part of a broader electoral cycle covering four states and one Union Territory, and are being closely watched for their national political implications. For the BJP, the contest is seen as a crucial test of its ability to consolidate gains in eastern India.

Party leaders maintain that recent political trends indicate a favourable environment for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Assam, while pointing to what they describe as growing momentum for the BJP in West Bengal.

Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday dismissed allegations by the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) that a BJP government would impose restrictions on consumption of meat and fish in West Bengal, asserting that there are no such curbs in BJP-

ruled Assam.

Addressing a poll rally in north Bengal, Sarma said people are free to consume non-vegetarian food in Assam, with the only restriction being on beef. "You can go to Dhubri or Goalpara and eat fish and meat as much as you want; there is no restriction," he said, countering what he described as "misleading claims" by the ruling party in Bengal.

Targeting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Sarma alleged that concerns within the AITC stem from the possibility that a BJP government in the state would curb the beef trade. He further accused sections of the ruling establishment of benefiting from illegal cattle smuggling to Bangladesh.

"The AITC wants cattle smuggling to Bangladesh to continue so that they can fill their pockets," he claimed.

The allegations come amid ongoing investigations by central agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) into suspected cattle

smuggling networks operating along the India-Bangladesh border.

Sarma also raised the issue of illegal immigration, stating that West Bengal requires a government capable of dealing firmly with undocumented entrants. "We have to make the BJP victorious in West Bengal in this election to ensure this," he said.

Drawing comparisons with Assam, he claimed that the BJP government in the state had acted against illegal land encroachments. "We ensured that illegal settlers do not occupy land. We evicted them from encroached areas," he said.

The Assam Chief Minister further highlighted differences in employee benefits, noting that government employees in Assam receive 50 per cent dearness allowance, while their counterparts in West Bengal receive "only 22 per cent".

Polling for the 294-member West Bengal Assembly is scheduled in two phases on April 23 and April 29, with counting of votes slated for May 4.

**'Is Manipur Still Part of India?': Ibobi Singh Flags Worsening Security, Questions Centre's Response**



**IMPHAL**

Former Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh raised serious concerns over the prolonged unrest in the state, questioning whether Manipur is receiving adequate attention from the Union government amid continuing violence.

Speaking to reporters after submitting a memorandum to the Governor, Singh condemned the persistence of conflict and called for urgent intervention to restore peace and normalcy. He noted that the crisis has dragged on for nearly three years, with repeated incidents undermining official claims of improvement.

Highlighting recent developments, Singh referred to a bomb attack in Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district, describing it as evidence of the fragile security situation. He also pointed to emerging tensions in Ukhrul district, where reported clashes between Kuki

and Naga groups have added a new layer of complexity to the ongoing crisis.

The Congress leader observed that while tensions between Meitei and Kuki communities remain unresolved, fresh inter-community conflicts indicate a further deterioration in law and order. He questioned whether a similar situation elsewhere in the country would have elicited a stronger response from the Centre.

Singh also criticised the handling of protests following the Tronglaobi incident, particularly the deaths of three protesters during an agitation near a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp in Gelmol. He said the bomb attack reportedly occurred around 1 a.m. on April 7, while the protest near the security installation took place nearly 10 hours later.

Alleging lapses in crowd management, Singh said timely intervention by state police could have prevented escalation. He questioned why non-lethal crowd-control measures such as water cannons, tear gas, or baton charges were not effectively deployed.

He further raised concerns over reports of firing by the CRPF during the protest, stating that if force was deemed necessary, standard operating procedures should have been followed, including the use of non-lethal targeting methods.

Singh was accompanied by Lok Sabha MP Bimol Akiotjam and several Congress MLAs during the meeting.

The Manipur government has not issued an official response to the remarks so far, even as concerns mount over the evolving security situation in the state.

**AFI Unveils 'Kohima Declaration' to Strengthen Athletics Ecosystem in Northeast**

**GUWAHATI**

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has adopted the 'Kohima Declaration', outlining a comprehensive roadmap to boost athletics in Nagaland and the wider Northeast through targeted policy measures, infrastructure development, and greater integration with the national sports framework. The declaration was finalised following the federation's two-day general body meeting in Kohima, where officials deliberated on strategies to enhance the region's sporting potential and create pathways for young athletes to compete at higher levels.

Addressing reporters, South Asian Athletics Federation president Lalit K. Bhanot said the discussions resulted in key decisions aimed at strengthening athletics across the country, while emphasising the role of sports in fostering national unity and development. As part of the new framework, AFI has made SRY gene testing mandatory for athletes participating in national competitions, with costs to be jointly borne by the federation and the government. Additionally, DNA testing will be conducted on a select pool of around 100 athletes for research purposes, particularly to study performance trends. To expand grassroots participation, the federation plans to restructure district-level units by ensuring broader representation from rural areas. The move is intended to decentralise control and encourage greater involvement from village and block-level institutions. In a bid to promote mass participation, AFI also announced an annual two-kilometre run to be organised across nearly 700 districts on August 30 each year.

Meanwhile, AFI vice-president and World Athletics president Adille J. Sumariwalla said disciplinary action would be taken against underperforming state units. He confirmed that existing bodies in Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh will be dissolved and replaced with ad hoc committees to streamline functioning and improve performance.

**NIA Arrests Five in Bishnupur Blast; Manipur HM Links Accused to Banned UKNLA**



**IMPHAL**

Five suspects have been arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in connection with the deadly mortar blast in Bishnupur district, Manipur Home Minister K Govindas Konthoujam confirmed on Wednesday.

Addressing reporters at the state secretariat in Mantripukhri, Konthoujam said the arrested individuals are members of the United Kuki National Liberation Army (UKNLA), a proscribed group that operates outside the ambit of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with the Centre.

The arrests are linked to the April 7 mortar attack in Bishnupur that killed two children-a five-year-old boy and a five-month-old infant-and left their mother injured, triggering widespread outrage across the state.

The Minister said the state government is maintaining close coordination with the NIA and confirmed that all five accused belong to the Kuki community.

"Interrogation is currently underway," he added.

Konthoujam also addressed a separate incident in Thimungei, where a clash broke out between locals and personnel of the Assam Rifles on Tuesday.

He said the confrontation stemmed from a misunderstanding after a team of Assam Rifles personnel, reportedly in plain clothes, was moving towards Kwakta to recover illegal drugs and weapons based on intelligence obtained from a previously detained trafficker at Imphal Airport. According to the Minister, local residents intercepted the team, suspecting them of carrying illegal arms, which led to a physical altercation and injuries on both sides. During the clash, eight firearms were allegedly taken from the personnel, though all weapons have since been recovered.

Konthoujam urged citizens to cooperate with authorities, stating that the government is aware of public concerns and is taking steps to stabilise the situation.

He also noted that outreach initiatives led by Chief Minister N Biren Singh in hill districts have received a positive response from sections of the Kuki community, with several development projects underway.

Meanwhile, protests demanding justice for the victims of the Bishnupur blast continue across multiple valley districts, keeping tensions high as investigations progress.

**Arunachal Begins Census 2027 Self-Enumeration from April 16; House Listing Phase from May 1**

**ITANAGAR**

The self-Enumeration phase of Census 2027 will commence across Arunachal Pradesh from April 16, with officials urging residents to actively participate in the crucial data-gathering exercise.

According to the Directorate of Census Operations in Arunachal Pradesh, the self-Enumeration window will remain open till April 30, allowing households to submit their details through official digital platforms. Assistant Director (Training) Chaffkhar Rahman described the process as a simple and convenient method for families to provide information related to household composition, housing conditions, and basic amenities. He emphasised that accurate participation at this stage would help ensure timely and reliable data collection. Following the digital phase, the Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO) field operations will begin on May 1 and continue until May 30. During this period, trained enumerators will conduct door-to-door visits across the state to verify and supplement the data submitted online.

Officials said these visits are an integral part of the census process,

ensuring completeness and accuracy of information. Residents have been urged to cooperate fully with enumerators and provide correct details.

The data collected will play a key role in policy formulation, enabling the government to assess population trends, housing patterns, and access to essential services such as water, electricity, and sanitation.

Authorities also assured that all personal information gathered during the exercise will remain confidential and will be used strictly for statistical purposes, with safeguards in place to ensure data security.

Residents have been advised to keep relevant information ready-including details of family members and housing facilities-to facilitate a smooth enumeration process. They have also been encouraged to verify the identity of census officials during visits.

Describing the census as one of the country's largest administrative exercises, the state government has appealed to citizens to treat participation as a civic responsibility, stressing that public cooperation is vital for the success of Census 2027.



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## NARISHAKTI: FROM PROMISE TO POWER

Where women are honoured, there divinity resides. This ancient Sanskrit wisdom is no longer merely a verse from our scriptures – under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, it has become the foundational governing principle of our nation. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam – the Constitution's 106th Amendment Act, also known as the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 – is not merely a piece of legislation. It is the fulfilment of a promise that had been broken time and again by the Congress party, and which the Bharatiya Janata Party has now honoured with unwavering political courage and unshakeable conviction.

Thirty-three percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies – this is not an act of charity. It is a correction of a historical injustice that kept half of India's population excluded from the halls of decision-making for decades. Every delay in advancing women's representation was, in effect, a delay in strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of our democracy. Today, as this Act moves steadily towards implementation, it stands as irrefutable testimony to Prime Minister Modi's extraordinary resolve and his commitment to the principle of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, aur Sabka Prayas' – a commitment visible not in words alone, but powerfully in deeds.

India's women have demonstrated time and again that they are more than ready for leadership. With over 47 crore women voters participating at 65.78% turnout in the 2024 general elections, Indian women have proven their democratic energy and engagement. Yet their representation in Parliament and state assemblies remained disproportionately low relative to their share of the population. Research and experience consistently demonstrate that where women lead – in governance, in panchayats, in institutions – there is better prioritisation of water, nutrition, health and education, and governance becomes more sensitive, more inclusive, and more effective. This structural imbalance is now being corrected, and it is being corrected by a government that genuinely believes in women-led development. The story of women's reservation in India is, at its core, the story of the Congress party's systematic betrayal of Indian women. In 1996, when the United Front government first introduced the Women's Reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha, Congress was providing outside support to that government – yet it made no active effort to build political consensus or use its considerable influence to push the Bill through. As a result, in the absence of political will, the Bill could not be passed. This was the first of many betrayals that Indian women would endure at the hands of the Nehru-Gandhi legacy. When Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee's NDA government introduced the Bill repeatedly in 1998, 1999, and 2003, it was Congress's own political allies who disrupted Parliament and blocked progress. On 13 July 1998, when the NDA government attempted to present the Bill, Surendra Prasad Yadav of the Rashtriya Janata Dal tore up the Bill's copy on the floor of the Lok Sabha. This was the naked face of the Congress-led coalition's anti-women mindset – and the Congress party, rather than disciplining its allies, continued to accommodate them for the sake of political survival. On 22 December 1999, when the then Law Minister Ram Jethmalani attempted to advance the Bill, fierce opposition from the Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, and RJD killed it once again. In 2008, the UPA government introduced the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill in the Rajya Sabha. The Bharatiya Janata Party welcomed this move and pledged its support. However, Congress's own coalition partners – the RJD, SP, and BSP – mounted fierce political opposition. RJD chief Lalu Prasad declared that his party would push for 'reservation within reservation' for OBC and minority women and would continue to oppose the Bill. The Samajwadi Party's members were explicit that they would block the Bill until separate quotas for OBC, Dalit, and Muslim women were guaranteed. The BSP demanded 50% reservation for women, further complicating the consensus. It is worth noting: in each of these cases, it was not the BJP standing in the way – it was Congress's own partners, tolerated and protected by the Nehru-Gandhi establishment for purely electoral reasons.

On 4 June 2008, President Smt. Pratibha Patil addressed a joint session of Parliament and announced that the newly-elected UPA government would pass the Women's Reservation Bill within 100 days. This announcement ignited hope in the hearts of crores of Indian women. What followed? Delay, hesitation, and ultimately, betrayal. In 2010, the Bill did pass the Rajya Sabha – but when the real test came in the Lok Sabha, the Manmohan Singh government backed away. Why? Because preserving power with SP and RJD allies mattered more than delivering justice to women. For five full years – with a comfortable majority and ample parliamentary time – the Congress-led UPA, under Sonia Gandhi's leadership, chose silence over action.

They had the numbers. They had the time. What they lacked was the will. The Bill lapsed. Again. Crores of women who had waited decades were betrayed. Again. For the Nehru-Gandhi family, women's empowerment was never a mission – it was a slogan, deployed with great fanfare when convenient, and abandoned quietly when it threatened political interests. This is the truth that no amount of press conferences or Twitter posts can obscure. And today? When this historic legislation was passed in September 2023, Rahul Gandhi demanded 'immediate implementation.' Mallikarjun Kharge called it a political gimmick. Yet when the law is now moving forward and a special session has been convened to accelerate its implementation, the same opposition is raising the question – why now? Mamata Banerjee, who was once a vocal supporter of women's reservation, now dismisses it simply because it is the BJP government that has delivered it. This rank hypocrisy, this double standard, is Congress's true and enduring identity.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has consistently stood for 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state legislatures since the 1990s. A resolution to this effect was passed at our National Executive in Vadodara in July 1994. In 2007, under the presidency of Shri Rajnath Singh, the BJP's National Executive approved 33% reservation for women across all organisational posts, including national office-bearers. By 2008, this had been extended to all cadre positions. Our commitment to women's representation is not something we discovered recently for electoral purposes – it is a founding conviction of our political philosophy. The NDA fielded 58 women candidates in 2014, 73 in 2019, and 91 in the 2024 general elections – a steady and consistent increase that reflects genuine institutional commitment. The INDIA bloc's constituent parties, on the other hand, fielded 208 women candidates in 2014 – a figure that had collapsed to just 97 by 2024.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

He who knows nothing is closer to the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors. - Thomas Jefferson

# BLOCKADE WITHOUT INVASION: AMERICA'S NEW WAR STRATEGY IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ



COL. (DR.) ASHWANI KUMAR, MID, VSM (RETD.)



Wars are no longer confined to battlefields defined by territory. Increasingly, they are fought across domains where control matters more than conquest. The ongoing confrontation between the United States, Iran, and Israel marks a decisive shift in this direction. With diplomacy faltering and ceasefire talks failing, the centre of gravity has moved away from land and into the waters of the Strait of Hormuz, where a new form of conflict is unfolding.

This is not a war of invasion. It is a war of denial and control, where navies, not armies, are shaping outcomes.

**The Shift from Land to Sea**  
Traditionally, wars have been measured by territorial gains. Today, that paradigm is changing. The United States, despite its overwhelming military capability, has chosen not to enter Iranian territory. Instead, it has established a robust naval posture in the Gulf deploying warships, enforcing maritime control, and ensuring that key shipping lanes remain under surveillance. This shift is not incidental. It reflects a conscious strategic choice: to exert pressure without triggering the consequences of a ground war.

The lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan loom large. Prolonged land engagements, uncertain political outcomes, and high human and economic costs have made policymakers wary of repeating past mistakes. In this context, the sea offers a space where power can be projected without entrapment.

**Hormuz: The World's Most Strategic Waterway**

The Strait of Hormuz is not merely a geographic feature, it is a global economic lifeline. A significant portion of the world's oil supply passes through this narrow corridor. Any disruption here reverberates across continents impacting prices, trade flows, and economic stability.

Iran understands this leverage well. Its strategy has never been to dominate the sea in conventional terms, but to deny its safe usage. Through the deployment of mines, drones, and fast attack craft, Iran can create uncertainty forcing global shipping to reconsider routes and increasing the cost of passage.

The United States, in response, has moved to counter this denial strategy. Naval escorts, mine-clearing operations, and aerial surveillance are being employed to maintain the flow of commerce.

This dynamic denial versus con-

trol defines the present conflict.

**America's Strategy: Blockade Without Occupation.**

What is unfolding is a calibrated strategy best described as "blockade without invasion."

The United States is, controlling maritime access. Monitoring and, where necessary, redirecting shipping. Conducting mine-countermeasure operations.

Maintaining aerial dominance over the Gulf.

Yet, crucially, it is avoiding, Ground deployment inside Iran.

Direct occupation.

Prolonged land engagement.

This approach allows Washington to maintain pressure while retaining flexibility. It signals strength without committing to an irreversible path.

However, it also has limitations. Control at sea does not automatically translate into political resolution.

swift or decisive. It would likely evolve into a prolonged conflict with uncertain outcomes.

Thus, the United States finds itself in a position where it can dominate the maritime domain but chooses to avoid the land battlefield.

This is not hesitation. It is calculation.

**India's Stake: Security Through Stability.**

For India, the developments in Hormuz are of direct consequence.

A substantial portion of India's energy imports transits through this corridor. Any disruption whether physical or psychological affects the following:-

Fuel prices.

Inflation.

Trade balances.

The current situation presents both a warning and an opportunity.

Immediate Concerns as under :-

Rising insurance costs for shipping.

Conflict without decisive closure.

This model reflects both capability and constraint. It allows for sustained engagement without immediate escalation, but it also risks creating open-ended confrontation.

Such wars do not end dramatically. They persist shifting domains, altering intensity, but rarely concluding decisively.

To sum up: Power in Motion, Not Resolution

The Strait of Hormuz has become more than a maritime corridor, it is now the centre of a strategic contest

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**There is no military solution to the crisis in the Middle East.**

**Serious negotiations must resume.**

**The ceasefire must be preserved – and extended as necessary.**

**And international navigational rights & freedoms – including in the Strait of Hormuz –**

**must be respected by all parties. ~ Antonio**

**Guterres, Secretary**

**General, United Nations**



It can constrain an adversary, but it cannot compel long-term compliance.

**Iran's Counter: Disruption as Strategy.**

Iran's response is rooted in asymmetry. It does not seek to match American naval power. Instead, it aims to complicate and disrupt.

Naval mines increase risk perception.

Drone swarms create persistent threat.

Proxy networks expand the battlefield.

This approach ensures that even without direct confrontation, Iran remains a central actor. It turns the Strait into a contested space where uncertainty itself becomes a weapon. In such a scenario, victory is not defined by dominance, but by endurance.

**Why the U.S. Remains "At Sea"**

A critical question arises, why has the United States not escalated further?

The answer lies in the inherent risks of a ground campaign against Iran.

Complex terrain, mountains, urban centres, and vast geography.

A large and motivated population.

Volatility in energy markets.

Supply chain uncertainties.

Strategic Imperatives.

Diversification of energy sources

Strengthening of naval capabilities

Enhanced maritime domain awareness.

India's response must be proactive. Stability in distant waters is not a distant concern, it is a domestic necessity.

**Lessons from Experience: The Limits of Military Power.**

An instructive parallel may be drawn from India's own experience during the Indian Peace Keeping Force. What began as a limited intervention gradually evolved into a complex and prolonged engagement.

Despite superior capability, the absence of a clearly defined political objective led to operational challenges and eventual disengagement.

The lesson remains relevant: military superiority, whether on land or sea, does not guarantee strategic success without clarity of purpose.

In the present context, the United States may control the sea, but the absence of a clear end-state risks prolonging the conflict in different forms.



Deeply embedded defensive networks.

Vulnerable supply lines, especially if maritime routes are contested.

A ground invasion would not be

**A New Model of Warfare**

What we are witnessing is the emergence of a new model:

Control without occupation.

Pressure without invasion

that defines the limits of modern power.

The United States can secure sea lanes, project force, and maintain dominance in the maritime domain. Iran can disrupt, delay, and endure. Israel continues to pursue its security objectives within this broader framework.

Yet, none of these actions resolve the underlying conflict.

This is the paradox of contemporary warfare.

the ability to act decisively does not ensure the ability to conclude effectively.

Author's Note. In the evolving character of war, control of space is increasingly replacing capture of territory. The ongoing crisis in the Strait of Hormuz illustrates this shift with clarity.

However, history reminds us that control without resolution is only a temporary advantage. Without clearly defined political objectives, even the most sophisticated military strategies risk becoming instruments of prolongation rather than closure.

The challenge before global powers is not merely to manage conflict but to define its end. Until then, wars will continue not as decisive events, but as enduring conditions.

Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal.

# SC Stay on Khera Bail Triggers Political Sparring: Himanta Says 'Law Will Take Its Course', Rebukes Rahul Gandhi



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court of India to stay the anticipatory bail granted to Congress leader Pawan Khera in connection with an FIR lodged in Assam, asserting that due legal process must prevail.

Reacting to the development, Sarma said he was in transit when the order was issued but maintained that the earlier relief granted by the Telangana High Court was not appropriate. "For me, the Telangana Court cannot give transit bail to Pawan Khera because he is not a resident of Telangana. The Assam government moved the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court has stayed the bail. The law will take

its course," he said.

The Chief Minister's remarks come amid heightened political tensions between the ruling BJP and the Congress, with the legal proceedings against Khera forming the latest flashpoint.

Sarma also used the occasion to launch a sharp counterattack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his demand for a probe into allegations concerning multiple passports purportedly linked to the Chief Minister's wife.

Rejecting the allegations outright, Sarma challenged Gandhi to substantiate his claims. "If I make 10 allegations against Rahul Gandhi, will he say the same thing? I will bring my passport and my wife's passport before the public-can Rahul Gandhi do the same? Will he tell the country how many countries he has visit-

ed?" Sarma said.

He further urged the Congress leader to exercise restraint in public discourse. "Before saying anything, Rahul Gandhi must understand that he is not God. Neither I nor my family has any golden visa," the Chief Minister added.

The exchange marks a further escalation in the ongoing political confrontation between the BJP and the Congress, triggered by allegations raised by Khera against Sarma's wife, Rinika Bhuyan Sarma, which have been firmly denied by the Chief Minister and his family.

With the apex court's intervention now in place, the legal battle surrounding Khera is set to continue even as the political rhetoric between the two parties intensifies.

## Arunachal Renaming Row: China Says India Policy Unchanged; New Delhi Rejects 'Mischievous' Move

BEIJING/NEW DELHI

China asserted that its policy towards India remains unchanged even as it defended its decision to assign new names to places in Arunachal Pradesh, a move that has drawn sharp criticism from New Delhi.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said Beijing's position on improving ties with India continues to hold, despite the ongoing controversy. "At present, China-India relations are generally stable. China's policy committed to improving and developing China-India relations remains unchanged," he said at a press briefing. Defending the renaming exercise, Guo reiterated China's claim over Arunachal Pradesh-referred to by Beijing as "Zangnan"-stating that it falls within China's sovereignty. He added that the standardisation of place names in the region was an internal matter, noting that China has already released multiple lists of such names in recent years. India, however, strongly rejected the move, terming it an attempt to distort facts. Responding to the development, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "India categorically rejects any mischievous attempts by the Chinese side to assign fictitious names to places which form part of the territory of India."

New Delhi reiterated that Arunachal Pradesh remains an integral and inalienable part of India, asserting that such actions cannot alter the ground reality and may adversely impact efforts to stabilise bilateral relations. The exchange comes amid heightened sensitivities along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), with tensions also linked to developments in Aksai Chin, where China has reportedly established new administrative units.

## Mizoram to Count Refugees, IDPs in Census; Officials Stress 'Enumeration, Not Citizenship'

AIZAWL

Refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh, along with internally displaced persons (IDPs) from neighbouring Manipur currently sheltering in Mizoram, will be included in the country's ongoing census exercise, officials from the Directorate of Census Operations said on Wednesday.

According to data from the state Home Department, nearly 40,000 displaced individuals affected by crises in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Manipur are presently residing across different parts of the state. Addressing a press conference, census officials clarified that all such individuals living in rented accommodations or relief camps at the time of enumeration will be counted. They emphasised that the exercise is strictly aimed at population enumeration and is not linked to citizenship verification. "Since the general census is primarily a population enumeration and not related to citizenship documentation, all refugees taking shelter in Mizoram will be recorded at their respective residences or villages," officials said.

They added that including these populations is crucial for accurately assessing resource use and planning welfare measures in the state. The first phase of the census-covering house listing and housing data-commenced on April 1, alongside the rollout of a digital platform for self-enumeration, which remained open to residents until April 15. Officials said the "censuser method" for this phase will begin on April 16 and continue until May 15, during which enumerators will conduct door-to-door visits using a mobile application. Self-enumeration IDs (SE-IDs) generated online will also be verified during these visits. The second phase, focusing on population enumeration, is scheduled to begin in February next year. This stage will capture detailed demographic data, including age, gender, caste, religion, education, language, and marital status.

Authorities also indicated that a limited window for online self-enumeration may be opened during the second phase as well, as part of efforts to streamline the data collection process.

## Imphal East Villagers Urge CM to Retain Pambeil-Led UNLF Camp Amid Security Concerns

IMPHAL

Residents of 28 Meitei villages in the peripheral areas of Imphal East district have appealed to Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh to retain the designated camp of the Pambeil-led United National Liberation Front (UNLF) at Nungshum village, citing its role in maintaining security and stability in the region.

The appeal follows a protest staged on Wednesday at Nungshum, after which a delegation representing the villagers met the Chief Minister and submitted a memorandum outlining their concerns.

In their representation, the residents highlighted the vulnerability of peripheral areas, particularly along the Khamenlok Hill Range in the Uyumpok-Nongshum belt, which they said have remained severely affected since the outbreak of the ongoing crisis in the state. They alleged that



the presence of armed groups, including factions linked to Kuki militants operating under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) arrangement, has contributed to a deteriorating security environment.

The memorandum also referred to activities from camps such as the so-called Sinai Camp, which villagers claimed have fos-

tered an atmosphere of fear, disrupting normal life in the region.

However, residents noted that the situation improved significantly following the establishment of the Pambeil-led UNLF camp at Nungshum. They asserted that the camp's presence has been instrumental in restoring a sense of safety and stability across the affected villages.

Expressing concern over reports of a possible relocation or withdrawal of the camp, the villagers urged the state government not to take any step that could undermine the fragile security situation.

Responding to the delegation, Chief Minister Singh said the matter is under "careful and serious consideration." In a statement issued after meeting 25 representatives at the state secretariat, he assured that no hasty decision would be taken.

"All aspects will be thoroughly examined to ensure that the safety and protection of the villages are fully safeguarded," he said, underscoring the government's commitment to maintaining peace, stability, and security in the region.

The development comes amid continuing tensions in Manipur's hill and valley areas, where security arrangements remain a key concern for residents in vulnerable border zones.

## Assam Poll Row: Debabrata Saikia Alleges 'Serious Breach' in Strong Room Security, Seeks EC Probe

GUWAHATI

Congress leader and Nazira candidate Debabrata Saikia has alleged major lapses in the handling and security of post-poll materials, urging the Election Commission of India to intervene over what he termed a "serious breach" in strong room safeguards.

In a formal complaint addressed to Assam's Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel, Saikia claimed that designated strong rooms meant for storing election papers were found in a compromised state during his visit to the Material Safety Cell.

According to the complaint, Rooms 11, 12, and 13-housing election materials from the 97 Nazira Assembly constituency and adjoining areas-were not secured as per prescribed norms. Several doors were reportedly loosely fastened, secured with a single lock, or shut



from inside without proper sealing. Of the six entry points, only one was said to have a functional double-lock system. In one instance, a door containing election papers of the Nazira constituency could allegedly be opened with minimal external pressure.

Saikia further alleged the

absence of a dedicated security post near the storage facility. Personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), stationed nearby, reportedly indicated that guarding the strong rooms did not fall within their assigned responsibilities-raising concerns about the adequacy of security deployment.

Citing established guidelines, Saikia noted that strong rooms are mandated to have double-lock systems, continuous security presence, CCTV surveillance, proper sealing procedures, and strict maintenance of entry logs under constant monitoring. He alleged that these protocols were not being followed.

The complaint also highlighted improper storage of sensitive election documents, including statutory forms and sealed packets, which are required to be kept under stringent safeguards.

Describing the alleged lapses as a threat to the transparency and integrity of the electoral process, Saikia has called for an immediate inquiry, reinforcement of security arrangements, and action against those found responsible.

The Election Commission has not yet issued an official response to the allegations.

## AGP Endorses Delimitation Push, Backs Women's



GUWAHATI

Atul Bora voiced strong support for the proposed delimitation exercise, asserting that a revision of constituencies is essential to reflect Assam's growing population.

The Asom Gana Parishad president said the state stands to benefit from the process, noting that constituency boundaries have remained unchanged despite a significant rise in population over the years.

"It will only be good for us. We express our full support for it. We have been saying for a long time that the population has increased, but the constituencies have not," Bora said.

Delimitation, aimed at redrawing electoral boundaries to ensure equitable representation, has gained renewed attention amid broader discussions on electoral reforms across the country.

Bora also backed the push for enhanced political participation of women, underlining the need for reservation to ensure their representation in legislative bodies.

"Reservation for women is necessary," he said, adding that sustained policy support is crucial to translate intent into meaningful inclusion.

Highlighting ongoing initiatives, Bora pointed to welfare and empowerment schemes introduced under the government led by Himanta Biswa Sarma, which he said have contributed to improving the socio-economic status of women in the state.

The remarks come at a time when debates around constituency restructuring and gender representation in governance are gaining momentum, with political stakeholders increasingly articulating their positions on key reform measures.

# You cannot compensate for a human life with ex-gratia, we want justice: Grandfather of children killed in Manipur bomb attack

IMPHAL

Oinam Babuton, grandfather of the two children killed in an alleged bomb attack on the house of a Meitei family in Tronglaobi area of Bishnupur district last week, said on Wednesday that the family has rejected the government's ex-gratia and wants "justice" so that no such incident can ever be repeated in the future.

"The government said that they will give us an ex-gratia payment. But we do not want it. We don't approve of it at all... Police teams, NIA teams, and even forensic teams visited for inspection. But there has been no outcome yet," Oinam Babuton told.

He further informed that the children's mother, who was recently discharged from the hospital, has left for her maternal home. Their mother was discharged from the hospital today and brought back home. She said that she didn't feel like staying here, that her heart was not into it. That's why she has gone to her maternal



home."

"You cannot compensate for a human life with ex-gratia. Rs 10-20 lakh will not bring back someone... We want justice. We want such incidents

to never be repeated in the future..."

Earlier today, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) demanded justice for the victims of the Tronglaobi bomb at-

Quest!

There is a town in Texas called Ding Dong. In 1990, the population was only twenty-two people

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## Opposition should not spread rumours on delimitation: Kiren Rijiju

NEW DELHI

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday said the opposition should not spread rumours regarding the proposed delimitation bill and should not "misinterpret or misconstrue" its objective.

"I have one appeal to make to the opposition parties. Please don't spread rumours on delimitation. On the pretext of delimitation, don't oppose the women's reservation. I have a very specific appeal to all the opposition parties not to spread rumours and mislead the people of South India, and also not to misinterpret or misconstrue the good objective by raising some other issues. Don't make some excuse to defeat the women's reservation," Rijiju told reporters.

"I am very happy that today is a historic day. This bill is a historic piece of legislation that will forever be remembered as the Parliament of India has taken this historic decision to provide 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and in the assemblies of different states.

I am very confident that all the parties are going to support and to ensure that the long-pending women's reservation doesn't get defeated," he added.

The Constitutional Amendment Bill is linked to a population-based delimitation exercise using 2011 Census data, which is expected to alter constituency boundaries and the composition of Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

Opposition parties have raised concerns over the

delimitation proposal, with criticism intensifying after the Centre cleared draft amendment bills to operationalise the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023. They have also objected to the timing of the special Parliament session.

The government has said it plans to implement women's reservation ahead of the 2029 General Elections through amendments to the 2023 Act and a constitutional amendment that separates the delimitation exercise from the 2027 census.

The proposal also envisages increasing the total strength of Parliament to 850 seats, including 815 for states and 35 for Union Territories, from the current 543 Lok Sabha seats.

The Centre has called a special Parliament session from April 16 to 18.



NEW DELHI

Union ministers Arjun Ram Meghwal and Amit Shah on Thursday moved to introduce three bills in the Lok Sabha to amend the women's quota law and set up a delimitation commission, as opposition termed the proposed legislations "anti-constitutional" and an "attack on the Indian federal structure."

Lok Sabha cleared the introduction of the Delimitation bill (131st Constitutional Amendment) Bill, 2026 — to expand its strength from 543 to 850

— after a 207-126 vote, and introduced a bill to amend the women's quota law (106th Amendment Act, 2023) following a 251-185 vote. Congress MP KC Venugopal questioned why proposed changes in the women's quota law were not incorporated when it was earlier passed by Parliament.

"Bills to tweak the women's quota law and set up a delimitation panel are anti-constitutional," he said. "This bill is a fundamental attack on the Indian federal structure. What exactly is the intention of this bill? The parliament

passed the bill in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, ensuring 33% reservation of women," Venugopal added.

In a swift response, Union Home Minister Amit Shah hit back, claiming that Venugopal could not question the merits of the Bills at the stage of introduction and was limited only to raising technical objections.

Shah further said that the government would give a "strong reply" to the Opposition during the debate.

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav questioned the rush to

introduce the bills. "We are in favour... but why do you not want a Census to be conducted?" he asked, while party MP Dharmendra Yadav questioned the move to delink delimitation from the Census and called for women from minority communities and backward classes to be accommodated in the quota for Parliament.

Shah hit back, saying the Census 2027 is on and the Centre has also decided to go for caste enumeration, but reservation based on religion is "unconstitutional."

Opposing the bills introduced by the Centre, DMK's TR Baalu said in the Lok Sabha, "We favour the 2023 women's quota law, but the present bill is aimed at delimitation." DMK members were dressed in black clothes in LS to protest amendments to women reservation law.

Earlier in the day, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin hoisted a black flag and burnt a copy of the proposed Delimitation Bill, intensifying his protest against the Centre's move to table the legislation in Parliament.

According to the draft Constitution amendment bill, Lok Sabha seats will be increased to a maximum of 850 from the current 543 to "operationalise" the women's reservation law before the 2029 parliamentary polls, following a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 Census.

Seats will also be increased in state and Union territory assemblies to accommodate 33 per cent reservation for women. The seats reserved for women in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies "shall be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a state or Union territory", the draft bill circulated among Lok Sabha members said.

Several opposition parties on Wednesday decided to unitedly vote against the delimitation provisions in the Constitution amendment bill in Parliament, while asserting that they are not against reservation for women in legislative bodies.



## INTERNATIONAL

### US optimistic about reaching peace deal with Iran



WASHINGTON

The United States is discussing a possible second round of peace talks with Iran in Pakistan and is optimistic about reaching a deal, US officials said, as Tehran threatened to shut down Red Sea trade unless Washington lifted a naval blockade of its ports.

A Pakistani delegation arrived in Tehran bearing a new message from Washington after US President Donald Trump indicated negotiations could resume this week following last weekend's failed talks in Islamabad.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that further talks "would very likely" be in the Pakistani capital. "Those discussions are being had," Leavitt said, and "we feel good about the prospects of a deal."

The optimism came on the back of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's four-day diplomatic blitz, with the leader meeting Wednesday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman.

US Vice President JD Vance, who led the first round of talks, has said Iran is being offered a "grand bargain" to end the six-week war with Israel and the United States and address the decades-old dispute over Tehran's nuclear program.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel and the US have "identical" goals — enriched material removed from Iran, elimination of enrichment capability and a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

The strait, through which one-fifth of the world's crude oil normally flows, has been choked by Iranian forces since the US-Israeli offensive began and is now the focus of the US blockade.

On the economic front, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva warned of "tough times ahead" for the global economy if the war is unresolved and oil prices stay high, adding that inflation risks could seep into food prices.

Optimism about an accord in the

conflict sent share prices higher on Wall Street, however, with the major stock indices finishing at records on Wednesday while crude prices dropped.

Washington has sought to turn the screws on Tehran with a blockade of its ports, with US Central Command claiming to have "completely halted economic trade going into and out of Iran by sea."

CENTCOM said it had turned back 10 vessels that tried to sail out of Iranian ports during the first 48 hours of the blockade and "zero ships have broken through."

The picture based on recent maritime tracking data in the Strait of Hormuz was less clear-cut, and Iran's Tasnim news agency reported shipping has continued from southern Iran.

The head of Iran's military central command center warned that a US failure to lift the blockade would constitute "a prelude" to violating the two-week ceasefire struck on April 8.

Keeping up the pressure, the United States slapped fresh sanctions on Iran's oil industry Wednesday, which Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said targeted "regime elites."

Unless Washington relents, Iran's armed forces "will not allow any exports or imports to continue in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Red Sea," Ali Abdollahi said.

The military adviser to Iran's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei also warned that Iran would sink American ships in the strait if the United States decides to "police" the key shipping channel.

"These ships of yours will be sunk by our first missiles," Mohsen Rezaei, a former commander-in-chief of Iran's Revolutionary Guards who was named as a military adviser by Khamenei last month, told state TV.

In Tehran, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi welcomed a Pakistani delegation on Wednesday led by army chief Asim Munir that Iranian state television said was to relay a new US message and discuss a second round of talks.

In this photo released by Telegram channel of the Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Gen. Asim Munir steps off the plane upon his arrival in Tehran, Iran, Wednesday, April 15, 2026.

Trump has insisted that any deal with Iran must permanently bar the Islamic Republic from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

He launched the war on February 28, claiming that Tehran was rushing to complete an atomic bomb, an assertion not backed by the UN nuclear watchdog.

Washington has reportedly sought a 20-year suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment program, while Tehran has proposed suspending nuclear activity for five years — an offer US officials rejected.

Tehran insists its nuclear program is for civilian purposes and its foreign ministry said Wednesday that Iran's right to enrich uranium was "indisputable," although the level of enrichment was "negotiable."

The latest signals on the US-Iran talks came as Israel and Lebanon agreed to open direct negotiations after their first high-level face-to-face meeting since 1993 took place on Tuesday in Washington.

Trump said the leaders of the two countries would speak on Thursday. But an official source later told AFP that Lebanon is "not aware" of any upcoming contact with Israel.

Netanyahu on Wednesday spoke of two central objectives in the talks with Lebanon: "First, the dismantling of Hezbollah; second, a sustainable peace... achieved through strength."

The Trump administration is pressing for an end to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, fearing it could jeopardize a broader settlement.

A senior US administration official said Wednesday that Trump would "welcome" an end to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah as part of a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon, but such a deal is not part of peace talks with Iran.

### Iran supreme leader's adviser threatens to sink US ships in Hormuz strait



TEHRAN

The military adviser to Iran's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei on Wednesday warned that Iran would sink American ships in the Strait of Hormuz if the United States decided to "police" the key shipping bottleneck.

The US is imposing a military blockade of the Strait of Hormuz after Iran blocked shipping during over six weeks of war in a conflict which is on hold as a fragile two-week ceasefire remains in place.

"Mr Trump wants to become the police of the Strait of Hormuz. Is this really your job? Is this the job of a powerful army like

the US?" Mohsen Rezaei, a former commander-in-chief of Iran's Revolutionary Guards who was named as a military adviser by Khamenei last month, told state TV.

"These ships of yours will be sunk by our first missiles and have created a great danger for the US military. They can definitely be exposed to our missiles and we can destroy them," Rezaei, wearing his military uniform, told the state broadcaster.

Long regarded as a hardliner even within the Revolutionary Guards, Iran's ideological army, Rezaei said it would be "great" if the United States

launched a ground invasion of Iran as "we would take thousands of hostages and then for each hostage we would get a billion dollars."

He also added, without giving further details: "I am not in favour of extending the ceasefire at all and this is a personal view."

A veteran and high-profile figure in Iran, Rezaei headed the Revolutionary Guards from 1981 to 1997.

The first and so far only round of Iranian negotiations with the US after the outbreak of war were led in Pakistan by parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, a former aerospace forces commander of the Revolutionary Guards.

## NEITC signs MoU with ABTO to boost Buddhist cultural tourism in Northeast; new office bearers take charge



### GUWAHATI

The North East India Tourism Confederation (NEITC) on Monday announced the signing of a strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (ABTO) to promote Buddhist cultural tourism in the Northeast.

NEITC, the apex body representing tourism organisations across the region, said the MoU was formalised during the National Tourism Convention and Familiarisation (FAM) Tour held in March at Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh.

According to NEITC, the partnership aims to facilitate international travel to Buddhist sites across the Northeast by providing structured information access and improving travel coordination for foreign visitors. The collaboration is also expected to support the identification and promotion of lesser-known Buddhist heritage locations in the region.

Speaking at a press conference in Guwahati, Convention Chairman Tsering Wange said the initiative would help expand the scope of Buddhist tourism beyond traditional destinations.

"Till now, international visitors have largely travelled to Both Gaya or Tibet for Buddhist cultural tourism. Through this collaboration, we aim to promote destinations in Arunachal Pradesh, parts of Assam, and Sikkim, while also opening up other areas of the Northeast," Wange said. ABTO has a presence across 25 countries, and NEITC said the partnership would help position the Northeast within the broader global Buddhist tourism circuit.

The organisation added that the MoU is expected to strengthen regional cooperation and create tourism-linked opportunities across multiple states.

Alongside the announcement, NEITC also marked a leadership transition with the formal assumption of charge by its newly elected governing council and the introduction of its executive committee.

The new office bearers are:  
Tsering Wange – President (Arunachal Pradesh)  
Elina Satapathy – Vice President-I (Manipur)  
Jhantu Roy – Vice President-II (Tripura)  
Yangchen Tongden Lepcha – General Secretary (Sikkim)  
Joe RZ Thanga – Joint Secretary (Mizoram)  
Rajkumar Das – Treasurer (Assam)

Addressing the media, the new office bearers said their focus would be to expand the visibility of Northeast India as a tourism destination at both national and international levels.

NEITC said the developments mark a coordinated step towards strengthening institutional leadership, improving collaboration, and advancing long-term growth of the tourism sector in the region.

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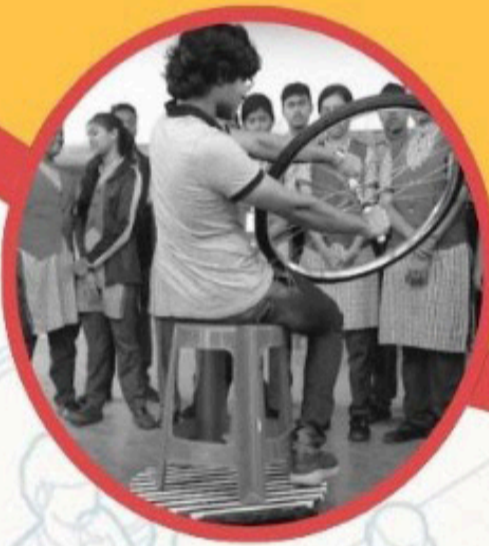


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