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PERSPECTIVE

Anger triggers the region of the brain associated with honesty, which is when the truth comes out.

Security Forces Rescue Abducted Moreh Resident, Launch Probe to Trace Suspects

IMPHAL
Security forces in Manipur have successfully rescued a 50-year-old man who was allegedly abducted by suspected militants in the border town of Moreh, bringing relief to his family and local residents.

The rescued individual, identified as Ngamsom Baite, is a resident of B. Bongjang village in Moreh under Tengnoupal district. According to officials, Baite was allegedly taken away from his village by suspected cadres of a proscribed militant outfit, prompting immediate concern among residents and triggering a security response.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs, security agencies launched a coordinated search and rescue operation in and around Moreh. Following extensive searches, the victim was located and rescued from the Gate No. 1 area falling under the jurisdiction of Moreh Police Station.

Officials said the operation was conducted swiftly and efficiently, ensuring Baite's safe recovery without any reported injuries. After being provided necessary assistance, he was reunited with his family members.

The successful operation has been welcomed by residents of the area, many of whom had expressed concern following reports of the alleged abduction. Family members also expressed relief after his safe return.

Security agencies have since launched a detailed investigation to establish the circumstances surrounding the incident and identify those responsible. Authorities are examining possible motives behind the alleged abduction while continuing efforts to track down the individuals or groups involved.

WHO SAID WHAT

The last 12 years have been about economic progress and social transformation. ~ Narendra Modi, PM



SHILLONG

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to begin a two-day visit to Meghalaya on June 19, during which she will inaugurate major infrastructure projects, interact with farmers, artisans and students, and participate in discussions aimed at accelerating development across the Northeast.

One of the key highlights of the visit will be the inauguration of the Northeast's largest organic spice processing plant at Bhoiryombong. Developed by the Eastern Ri Bhoi Organic Farmer Producer Company, the facility has an annual processing capacity of 10,346 metric tonnes and is expected to benefit nearly 5,500 organic farmers in the region.

The plant will process turmeric, black pepper and a range of other spices, significantly boosting value addition in Meghalaya's growing organic agriculture sector. Officials believe the project will enhance farmers' access to larger markets



while strengthening the state's agricultural value chain. Agreements

with private-sector partners are also expected to be signed to facilitate marketing and long-term commercial operations.

Later in the day, Sitharaman will attend the inaugural session of a regional conference on externally aided projects in Shillong. The event, titled "Leveraging Externally Aided Projects in the North-Eastern States," is being organised by the Department of Economic Affairs under the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Meghalaya government. The conference will bring together chief ministers, chief secretaries and senior officials from across the Northeast to explore financing opportunities and improve project implementation mechanisms.

At a separate programme at the U Soso Tham Auditorium, the Finance Minister will lay the foundation stones for four major development projects collectively valued at more than Rs 1,200 crore.

The projects include the Meghalaya Logistics and Connectivity Im-

provement Project, the Meghalaya Ecotourism Infrastructure Development Project, the Integrated Ecotourism and Sustainable Agri-based Livelihood Development Project, and Phase II of the Supporting Human Capital Development in Meghalaya initiative.

A coffee table book chronicling Meghalaya's journey in implementing externally aided projects will also be released during the event.

On June 20, the Finance Minister is scheduled to interact with students at Kiang Nangbah Government College before inaugurating the Jowai-Nartiang-Kdiap-Khanduli road project at Wahajer Football Stadium. Funded by the New Development Bank, the road project is expected to improve regional connectivity, facilitate economic activity and enhance access to essential public services.

The minister will also visit the Shree Maa Jayantee Temple and the Nartiang Monolith Heritage Site, two prominent cultural and heritage

landmarks in the state.

In addition, Sitharaman will meet farmers and artisans associated with Meghalaya's GI-tagged products and interact with black clay pottery artisans in Larnai village, where the traditional craft has been preserved for generations.

The Meghalaya government said the visit underscores the Centre's continued commitment to supporting the state's development agenda. Officials also highlighted that Meghalaya has fully utilised its Rs 5,400-crore allocation under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment scheme, making it one of the country's best-performing states under the programme.

Through a combination of infrastructure launches, development discussions and grassroots engagements, the visit is expected to further strengthen efforts to improve connectivity, boost livelihoods and promote sustainable economic growth across Meghalaya and the wider Northeast region.

Kanad Purkayastha Seeks Revival of Silchar Doordarshan Kendra

SILCHAR

Calling for the revival of one of southern Assam's most significant public broadcasting institutions, Rajya Sabha MP Kanad Purkayastha has urged Prasar Bharati to restore the infrastructure, regional programming and local identity of the Silchar Doordarshan Kendra.

The demand was raised during a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology in New Delhi on Wednesday, where Purkayastha submitted a memorandum outlining measures to strengthen public broadcasting services across the Northeast, with special emphasis on the Barak Valley. The MP also held discussions with Rajeev Kumar Jain, seeking immediate attention to the issues affecting the Silchar centre and broader broadcasting infrastructure in the region. "I have been assured by the Director General of Prasar Bharati that concerns relating to the Silchar Doordarshan Kendra, along with initiatives to strengthen public broadcasting in the Northeast, will be addressed on a priority basis," Purkayastha said.

Expressing concern over the gradual decline of the centre's role and autonomy, Purkayastha said the broadcaster had once served as a vital platform for reflecting the culture, language and aspirations of the Barak Valley and southern Assam.

"The Silchar Doordarshan Kendra was not merely a broadcasting station; it was the voice of the Barak Valley and southern Assam. A centre established to represent the life, language and culture of the region should not be reduced to a passive unit. It must regain its production capabilities, regional programming and distinct local identity," he said.

Established in 1990 at Tarapur in Silchar, the Doordarshan Kendra played a significant role in promoting regional languages, local culture and community issues. Over the years, it produced and telecast programmes in Bengali, Manipuri, tea tribe languages and other regional formats, serving an estimated audience of nearly 50 lakh people across the Barak Valley and adjoining areas.

At present, content linked to the Silchar centre is routed through the Guwahati Kendra, a development that many in the region believe has diminished local representation in public broadcasting.

A major demand placed before Prasar Bharati was the restoration of the Bengali news bulletin that was once broadcast from Silchar. Purkayastha described the bulletin as an important cultural and emotional link for the people of the Barak Valley.

"The Bengali news bulletin from Silchar occupied a special place in the hearts of the people. Its revival is not simply a technical issue; it is closely tied to the cultural identity and aspirations of the Barak Valley," he said.

The MP noted that the initiative was closely associated with the efforts of his late father, Kabindra Purkayastha, who had played a key role in promoting regional broadcasting services in the area.

In addition to the revival of the Silchar Doordarshan Kendra, Purkayastha proposed the modernisation of Doordarshan and Akashvani infrastructure in remote and border regions of the Northeast. He argued that stronger public broadcasting networks would improve access to information, promote regional languages and cultures, and strengthen connectivity in strategically important areas.

Silchar Businessman Files FIR Against Private Lab Over Alleged Wrong Kidney Report

SILCHAR

A Silchar-based businessman and social activist has lodged a police complaint against a private diagnostic laboratory, alleging that an erroneous medical report falsely indicated kidney damage and caused him significant mental distress.

Addressing a press conference on Thursday, Kumar Jeet claimed that a kidney-related test conducted at a private laboratory in Silchar showed abnormalities suggesting impaired kidney function. Questioning the accuracy of the findings, he said he subsequently underwent fresh tests at another reputed hospital, where the results reportedly confirmed that his kidneys were functioning normally.

Jeet further stated that he routinely undergoes kidney examinations every three months at a hospital in New Delhi and that all his previous reports had consistently indicated normal kidney health. According to him, the initial report had a severe emotional impact, leaving him deeply distressed. He alleged that after receiving the findings, he was unable to eat or drink properly for nearly 24 hours due to anxiety over his health condition.

The businessman also claimed that he approached the diagnostic laboratory seeking clarification regarding the report but was dissatisfied with the explanation provided by its officials.

Alleging negligence and mental harassment, Jeet said he has filed a First Information Report (FIR) at Rangirakhari Police Station and has sought a thorough investigation into the matter. He urged authorities to take appropriate action, stressing that inaccuracies in medical reports can have serious consequences for patients and their families.

The diagnostic laboratory has not yet issued any public statement in response to the allegations. Authorities have not commented on the complaint, and further investigation is awaited.

Assam Accelerates Power Infrastructure Expansion to Meet Future Energy Demand



GUWAHATI

Assam is stepping up investments in its power sector with an ambitious expansion plan aimed at meeting rising electricity demand and transforming the state into an energy-surplus region.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said the state government is undertaking large-scale infrastructure development to strengthen the power network and ensure reliable electricity supply to every household across Assam.

Sharing an update on social media platform X, the Chief Minis-

ter highlighted the progress made in expanding the state's transmission and distribution infrastructure. According to him, Assam currently operates 82 substations, supported by a total grid capacity of 10,000 MVA and a transmission network spanning 5,300 circuit kilometres.

To cater to future energy requirements and support economic growth, the state has launched several major expansion projects. These include the construction of 16 new substations, the addition of 6,340 MVA of grid capacity, and the development of 957 circuit kilometres of new transmission lines. Sarma said the government is focused on strengthening every component of the power sector, from substations and transmission networks to overall grid capacity, to ensure uninterrupted and dependable electricity services across urban and rural areas alike.

The planned infrastructure upgrades are expected to significantly enhance Assam's ability to meet growing power consumption driven by industrial development, urbanisation and increased household demand.

Officials believe the ongoing projects will improve grid stability, reduce transmission constraints and help the state move closer to its goal of becoming energy-surplus in the coming years.

The expansion of the power network forms part of the state's broader strategy to build robust infrastructure and support sustained economic growth while ensuring that reliable electricity reaches every corner of Assam.

Guwahati Finalises Ambubachi Mela Arrangements; No VIP Access, Four Control Rooms to Monitor Pilgrim Rush

GUWAHATI

With lakhs of devotees expected to converge on the sacred Nilachal Hills for the annual Ambubachi Mela, the Kamrup Metropolitan district administration and Guwahati Traffic Police have unveiled an extensive operational plan aimed at ensuring smooth crowd management, traffic regulation and pilgrim welfare during the four-day religious congregation.

The arrangements were announced at a press conference held at the Kamakhya Temple premises, attended by Kamrup Metropolitan District Commissioner Swapnil Paul, Traffic DCP Jayanta Sarathi Bora and Kamakhya Temple Chief Pujari Kabindra Sharma.

Officials said the preparations focus on pilgrim accommodation, transportation, drinking water supply, emergency medical services and security management, with special measures introduced to handle the massive influx of visitors expected during the event.

"The administration has made comprehensive arrangements keeping in mind the comfort, safety and convenience of devotees. Our objective is to



ensure that pilgrims can participate in the mela without facing unnecessary difficulties," Paul said.

To accommodate arriving pilgrims, two major transit camps will be established in collaboration with the Tourism Department - one at Kamakhya Railway Station and another near Pandu Port. The camps will provide food, drinking water, medical assistance, resting facilities and luggage storage services.

Officials clarified that transporta-

tion services will operate only between the two transit camps. Pilgrims travelling to the temple will have to proceed on foot through the designated route from the Nursery area to the shrine.

"There will be no transport arrangement from the camps directly to the temple premises. Devotees will access the shrine through the prescribed route, where adequate facilities have been put in place," Paul said.

To ensure real-time coordination and rapid response during the mela,

four round-the-clock control rooms will be set up at key locations, including the Kamakhya foothill area, Nursery point, VIP parking zone near Prashanti Lodge and Banshibagan. Senior officials from multiple departments, including police, public health engineering, public works and electricity, will be stationed at these centres.

Additionally, seven service camps will operate along the pilgrimage route to provide assistance and support to devotees. Given the prevailing heat conditions, authorities have prioritised drinking water arrangements. The Public Health Engineering Department has installed pipelines and water distribution facilities at around 30 locations along the mela route to ensure uninterrupted access to safe drinking water.

Medical preparedness has also been strengthened, with ambulances and emergency response teams deployed round the clock. A dedicated ferry service between Sonaram Field and Kamakhya via Pandu Port will be available primarily for officials and personnel engaged in mela management duties.

The main police camp for the event will function from Naharbari, while

administrative personnel will remain stationed at service camps to assist pilgrims and coordinate emergency responses.

On the traffic front, DCP Jayanta Sarathi Bora announced a series of restrictions and diversions to ease congestion during the mela period. Dedicated parking facilities have been arranged at Adabari Bus Stand, Boripara Playground, ITA Machkhowa, ASTC Machkhowa and Eidgah Field.

Commercial goods vehicles and slow-moving transport will be barred from major roads between 5 am and 11 pm. Restrictions will also be imposed on the movement of long-distance and inter-district buses along key city routes. Roadside parking will be prohibited on Pandu Port Road, Borbaraz Road, DG Road, the Nilachal Flyover and sections of the city's elevated corridor. Authorities have advised air travellers heading to Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport to plan their journeys in advance and use NH-27 wherever feasible.

Local residents will be permitted to use the lower service roads of Nilachal Hill, subject to prevailing traffic conditions, Bora said. Security agencies

are preparing for an unprecedented turnout, with officials estimating that nearly 10 lakh devotees may attend this year's Ambubachi Mela. Extensive surveillance measures, including CCTV monitoring at strategic locations, have been put in place to maintain law and order and identify any suspicious activities. In a significant announcement, Bora stated that no special privileges would be extended to VIPs or VVIPs during the mela.

"There will be no separate arrangements for VIPs or VVIPs. All devotees will be subject to the same rules and regulations," he said.

Chief Pujari Kabindra Sharma appealed to devotees to cooperate with authorities and adhere to the prescribed guidelines to ensure the smooth conduct of the annual festival.

The Ambubachi Mela, one of the country's largest religious gatherings centred around the revered Kamakhya Temple, will begin with the closure of the temple doors from June 23 to June 25. The shrine will reopen on the morning of June 26 following the traditional ceremonial bath of the deity, marking the culmination of the annual observance.



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FRAGILE PEACE ACCORD



The announcement that the United States and Iran have finally agreed to end their 107-day war should be greeted with relief, not celebration. For more than three months, the world watched two nations drag the global economy into chaos and remind humanity, yet again, that conflict resolves nothing; it sets out to achieve. History will likely judge this period as one of the darkest chapters of recent times, not merely for its human cost but for how needless and avoidable the confrontation now appears in hindsight. Consider what these 107 days actually achieved. Washington entered this war with an unstated but widely understood objective: regime change in Tehran. That objective lies in ruins. Iran's top military and political leadership has been decimated, yet power remains firmly in the same hands, governed by the same system that existed before the first strike was launched. The war has demonstrated the limits of military power against a determined state, however battered its leadership may be.

Meanwhile, the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway open and functioning when this war began, became its principal battlefield. One-fifth of the world's oil supply flows through this narrow channel, and its closure, blockade, and reopening have become bargaining chips in a deal that took over three months of warfare to produce. Perhaps the most striking detail buried within this agreement is that Iran has effectively been granted a toll-collection arrangement on ships passing through the strait. Whatever one's view of this provision, it underlines a simple truth: Iran did not merely survive this confrontation; it extracted concessions few would have predicted when the bombing began. The resistance shown by Tehran was, by most accounts, far greater than Washington or its allies had anticipated.

And yet, neither side can credibly claim victory. The economic cost of this war runs into trillions of dollars, borne not only by Iran and the United States but also by economies across the globe, particularly energy-importing developing nations, and for no justification history is likely to vindicate. Refineries damaged during the conflict will take years, not months, to return to full operational capacity. The global energy crisis triggered by this war is far from over; it is merely entering a different phase, one of slow and uncertain recovery rather than acute disruption.

But Israel's absence from the table is the most worrisome aspect of this fragile peace. Israel's Defence Minister has signalled the military will remain in southern Lebanon and has threatened forceful retaliation should Iran strike again. This is a significant caveat. Any unilateral action by Israel, in Lebanon or elsewhere, risks provoking a renewed Iranian response, unravelling an agreement not yet even formally signed. The 19th of June signing in Switzerland marks only the beginning of implementation. A sixty-day negotiation period on the nuclear question and sanctions relief still lies ahead, and Iran has made clear its compliance will mirror, rather than exceed, that shown by Washington. Until Israel is part of this arrangement, the peace announced on Sunday remains conditional.

The most enduring lesson is also the oldest one: war solves nothing that patient diplomacy could not have achieved at a fraction of the cost. Even a nation as powerful as the United States has been compelled to step back from its stated ambitions and settle for far less than it originally sought. For developing economies such as India, which depend heavily on stable energy imports, de-escalation offers welcome and much-needed respite. Renewed efforts can now be directed towards securing reliable supplies of petrol, diesel, and gas, free from recent price spikes and shipping disruptions. Exporters too stand to benefit from a calmer, more competitive logistical environment through Hormuz.

Both Washington and Tehran emerge from this war diminished rather than vindicated, having spent immense resources and inflicted immense suffering to arrive, broadly, where they might have started. But peace, however imperfect, delayed, and fragile, remains infinitely preferable to the alternative the world has just endured. The ink is not yet dry, implementation is yet to begin, and Israel's position remains an unresolved threat to the arrangement. World has to still wait for some more time. Even so, the world is entitled to hope that peace will now prevail.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Opportunity often comes in disguised in the form of misfortune, or temporary defeat. - Napoleon Hill

FTAS BUILDING A NEW TRADE ARCHITECTURE FOR VIKSIT BHARAT



RAJESH AGRAWAL

Achieving the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' requires sustaining a high rate of economic growth over the next two decades. India's massive domestic market is a vital engine for this growth, but relying on it alone may not be sufficient. To achieve globally competitive scale and true technological transformation, India is integrating deeply with the global economy through a network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). While WTO agreements provide the foundation for a rules-based global trading system, FTAs enable willing partners to pursue deeper integration in additional areas of interest, building on the WTO baseline. The 384 notified FTAs in force underscore their utility as critical drivers of economic integration and rule-making customized to partner countries. They are the institutional blueprint for securing crucial market access while protecting Indian businesses from the unpredictable winds of global geopolitical storms.

Access to global economic opportunities is also essential for Indian businesses seeking the scale to emerge as global champions. But the gains are not limited to large businesses; FTAs open vital windows of opportunity for start-ups, MSMEs, farmers, fisherfolk, and Indian talent looking to monetize their skills on the world stage. The binding commitments cover tariffs, services market access, and transparent trade rules, delivering the certainty Indian businesses require to invest for the long term.

India's trade negotiation strategy has matured significantly, focusing on complementary economies that serve as primary export markets for goods and services. A key objective of recent FTAs is securing

a level playing field for Indian exporters in vital markets like the EU, the UK, and Australia. This parity is especially urgent for labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, and footwear, where Indian products have historically faced steep tariffs while competitors enjoyed duty-free access. India is also negotiating Trade Agreements with Canada, Israel, and blocs like the EaEU and MERCOSUR.

Services are central to India's export strategy and a core focus of its FTA negotiations. By locking in commitments on cross-border digital delivery, recent FTAs help drive investor confidence across the rapidly expanding Global Capability Center (GCC) ecosystem, tech start-ups, and digital innovators.

Beyond digitally delivered services, FTAs have allowed India to innovate at the negotiating table, securing binding commitments that enhance mobility for Indian talent, especially its youth. Key achievements include mobility provisions and side-letters for students and professionals, frameworks like the India-UK Double Contributions Convention (DCC) to prevent dual social security taxation on temporary assignments, and mobility rights in niche areas such as yoga.

A hallmark of India's next-generation FTAs is the recognition of the intrinsic link between trade and investment. By providing access to major global markets while easing the import of key manufacturing inputs, this network combined with increasing demand makes India a highly attractive destination for manufacturing and investment.

Recent agreements go further by explicitly linking market access to investment outcomes.

A prime example is the landmark India-EFTA agreement, which conditions market access for EFTA nations on a \$100 billion FDI com-

mitment and one million jobs in India. The India-New Zealand FTA features comparable provisions, leveraging access to India's vast consumer market in exchange for long-term investment commitments.

Modern trade is no longer confined to tariffs; it requires navigating 21st-century dimensions with an equal focus on rules, including Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and Trade Facilitation (TF). India's next-generation FTAs actively engage with these frameworks. Product standards and other regulatory requirements frequently pose greater hurdles to market access than tariffs. Provisions for regulatory harmonization and co-operation within India's FTAs offer structured, institutional mechanisms to mitigate these barriers for Indian exporters.

Environmental and labour standards are emerging as potential barriers to trade, and not engaging with them is no longer an option. India's new FTAs build cooperative arrangements to address these concerns, but not in a manner inimical to Indian interests. They assure global partners that India seeks competitive advantages through genuine innovation and scale, avoiding a "race to the bottom" on standards.

India's FTA policy is not piecemeal or country-by-country. It intentionally targets complementary economies that together represent two-thirds of global GDP and 75% of global import demand.

Crucially, the negotiation of these FTAs relies on continuous stakeholder engagement and a whole-of-government approach. This ensures trade policy is aligned with India's broader imperatives related to industrial development, innovation, and socio-economic progress, with agreements struc-

tured so that vulnerable sectors and populations remain protected.

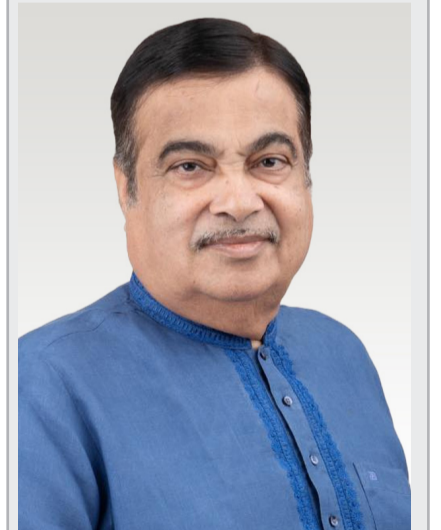
Specifically, FTAs include robust provisions to ensure that opening the Indian market does not cause disruptive shocks to domestic stakeholders. Liberalization in vul-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

"I am giving this speech. This will go on social media, and I will earn money."

"I am getting ₹2,50,000 every month from my social media."

"I donate this money to a cancer diagnosis centre in my mother's name."
~ Nitin Gadkari,
Union Minister of
Road Transport
& Highways



nerable and strategic sectors is phased over an extended period to allow local industries time to adjust. Several key sectors, including agriculture, are excluded judiciously to protect MSMEs and farmers, while safeguard measures stand ready against sudden import surges.

The ultimate goal is a robust, synergistic, rules-based trading ecosystem covering the vast bulk of India's international trade. By developing deeply rooted investment and value-chain linkages, strategic FTAs will liberate Indian businesses to focus on what truly matters: expanding, innovating, and marketing, free from the friction of policy uncertainty and regulatory hurdles.

Nagaland Students to Hold Statewide 'Black Friday' Protest Over Delay in Girls' Hostel Project

KOHIMA

The All Nagaland College Students' Union has announced a statewide "Black Friday" protest on June 19 to press the Nagaland government for the timely construction of a proposed 100-bedded girls' hostel at Kohima Science College (Autonomous).

As part of the protest, black flags will be hoisted in colleges across the state to highlight student dissatisfaction over the continued delay in the project, which the union says is crucial for improving educational infrastructure and ensuring the welfare of female students.

Addressing a press conference in Kohima on Wednesday, ANCSU Assistant General Secretary Imnawabang Longkumer said the union's 20-day



ultimatum to the government had expired without a definitive resolution on the hostel construction.

Longkumer stated that the student body had received assurances from

the concerned department that funds earmarked for the project would neither lapse nor be diverted for other purposes and would remain exclusively reserved for the construction of

the hostel. He described the assurance as an important achievement for the student community but expressed concern over the lack of formal approval required to move the project forward.

According to him, departmental authorities informed ANCSU that they were prepared to initiate the project but were awaiting a written directive from the Office of the Chief Minister, which also oversees the Finance portfolio. "The department is ready to proceed, but the approval is yet to come. We demand transparency and a written resolution regarding the project," Longkumer said.

The union was informed that the department has sought an additional week to secure the necessary approval from the Chief Minister's Office. However, student leaders argued that

the absence of a formal directive has already caused significant delays.

Warning of intensified agitation, ANCSU said the June 19 protest would be the first phase of its movement. If approval for the project is not granted within the promised timeframe, the organisation plans to launch a larger statewide campaign.

ANCSU General Secretary Sotilo Tep said the issue extends beyond the construction of a hostel building and is closely tied to educational opportunities and the future of students in the state.

"When education is delayed, dreams are delayed. When girls are neglected, society is weakened," Tep said, emphasising the importance of adequate residential facilities for female students pursuing higher ed-

ucation. The student body reiterated its demand for accountability, transparency and timely action from the government, maintaining that the hostel project is essential for improving access to education and ensuring a supportive environment for women students. ANCSU further stated that it would continue its campaign until the government fulfils its commitment and provides clear assurances regarding the implementation of the project.

The proposed hostel has long been viewed as a key infrastructure requirement for students at Kohima Science College, with supporters arguing that improved accommodation facilities would help address challenges faced by female students, particularly those coming from remote districts of Nagaland.

Meghalaya Seeks Three-Month Window to Address Coal Mining Concerns as Hunger Strike Continues

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya government has sought a three-month period to engage with the Centre on easing regulatory hurdles facing the state's coal mining sector, even as an indefinite hunger strike by coal miners entered its third week without a breakthrough. Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, who also holds the Home portfolio, appealed to agitating miners to suspend their protest and allow the government time to pursue discussions with the Union government regarding certain provisions governing coal extraction in the state.

The appeal came amid continuing unrest among coal mine owners and workers, particularly in East Jaintia Hills, where miners have been demanding relaxation of regulatory requirements that they say disproportionately affect small-scale operators.

Efforts to resolve the impasse through negotiations on Thursday yielded little progress. A delegation of coal mine owners from the Jaintia Hills region met Chief Secretary Shakil Ahammed and Principal Secretary Fredrick Roy Kharkongor at the state secretariat. However, representatives of the miners later expressed dissatisfaction with the assurances offered by government officials, indicating that no concrete solution had emerged from the talks.

The ongoing hunger strike, spearheaded by Marshall SB Biam, president of the Jaintia Coal Owners, Miners, Suppliers and Workers Association, began on June 1. The protest has drawn increasing attention as concerns grow over the health of the participants. On Tuesday, Biam was admitted to hospital after his condition deteriorated following 16 days without food.

Addressing the situation, Tynsong said Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma had urged all stakeholders associated with the coal industry to exercise patience while the state government pursues negotiations with New Delhi.

Assam Reviews Rollout Strategy for Rs 1,929-Crore VB-GRAMG Scheme Ahead of July Launch

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has stepped up preparations for the implementation of the Centre's ambitious Village-Based Growth and Rural Mission for Gram Panchayats (VB-GRAMG) scheme, with a high-level Cabinet committee reviewing the state's readiness ahead of its scheduled launch on July 1. A meeting of the Cabinet Committee constituted for the programme was held at Janata Bhawan on Thursday, bringing together ministers and senior bureaucrats to assess implementation strategies and ensure coordinated action across departments. The meeting was chaired by Assam minister Atul Bora, who holds the portfolios of Panchayat and Rural Development, Excise, Implementation of Assam Accord, and Border Protection and Development. Officials discussed departmental convergence, institutional arrangements, priority sectors and delivery mechanisms required for the effective execution of the scheme across rural Assam. The review focused on aligning multiple

government departments to ensure that projects are implemented efficiently and benefits reach targeted communities without delays.

The VB-GRAMG scheme is expected to play a significant role in strengthening rural infrastructure, improving connectivity, expanding livelihood opportunities and accelerating socio-economic development in villages across the state. Under the programme, Assam is set to receive an interim allocation of Rs 1,929.70 crore from the Centre. The state government will contribute an additional Rs 200 crore towards the implementation of the scheme. Officials said the substantial financial outlay is expected to provide a major boost to ongoing rural development initiatives and support the creation of durable assets in villages. Addressing the meeting, Bora said the programme has the potential to transform rural Assam by improving infrastructure, enhancing service delivery and generating new economic opportunities for village communities.

Missing Minor Rescued in Cachar Hotel Raid; Doctor Arrested Under POCSO and Anti-Trafficking Laws

SILCHAR

A doctor has been arrested after a minor girl, who had been missing for nearly three months, was rescued along with two other victims during a late-night police raid at a hotel-cum-restaurant in Assam's Cachar district, raising suspicions of a possible organised trafficking network.

The accused, identified as J.P. Das, was taken into custody following an operation conducted by Cachar Police at Parijat Hotel and Restaurant in Lathigram under the jurisdiction of Udharbond Police Station on Tuesday night.

According to police officials, the raid was launched after authorities received information around 10.30 pm regarding suspicious activities and lodging arrangements at the establishment. Acting on the tip-off, a police team carried out a search operation and rescued the missing minor along with two other victims from the premises.

Addressing reporters, Cachar



Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Rajat Pal and Additional Superintendent of Police (Headquarters) Manas Saikia said investigators are examining the circumstances under which the victims were brought to the hotel and whether they were being subjected to exploitation or any other illegal activity.

Based on a complaint lodged by the minor's family, Udharbond Police Station registered Case No.

61/2026 under Sections 96 and 127 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with Sections 4 and 17 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Police have also invoked Sections 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), reflecting the seriousness of the allegations under investigation.

Investigators are also probing whether the hotel management or owners had prior knowledge of the activities taking place on the premises. Officials said inquiries are underway to determine if the case is linked to a wider trafficking racket operating in the region.

"We are examining how the victims reached the hotel, whether they were being exploited and if any organised network was involved. The role of the hotel management is also under scrutiny," Pal said.

During the course of the investigation, police discovered that Das had previously been arrested in connection with a fake doctor case. A chargesheet in that matter

has already been filed, officials said.

Cachar Superintendent of Police Sanjib Saikia described the case as highly sensitive and said investigators are pursuing all leads. He assured that stringent legal action would be taken against those found responsible.

"The rescue of a minor and the invocation of POCSO and anti-trafficking provisions make this a particularly serious case. The investigation is at a crucial stage, and all aspects are being thoroughly examined," Saikia said.

The rescued victims are expected to be provided necessary support and counselling as the investigation progresses. Police have not ruled out further arrests as they continue to probe possible links to a larger trafficking syndicate.

The case has sparked concern in the Barak Valley region, with law enforcement agencies intensifying efforts to uncover the full extent of the network and identify all individuals involved.

Census 2027 Key to Development Planning, Says Nagaland Census Director

KOHIMA

Census 2027 will serve as a critical foundation for policy formulation and development planning in Nagaland and across the country, Director of Census Operations Kenei Miachieo said on Wednesday, while urging citizens to actively participate in the nationwide enumeration exercise.

Addressing a press conference in Kohima, Miachieo outlined the roadmap for the upcoming census and highlighted the importance of accurate and comprehensive data collection in shaping future government programmes and resource allocation.

He announced that the first phase of Census 2027, known as the House Listing Operation (HLO), will be conducted throughout Nagaland from July 1 to July 30, 2026. The second phase, involving population enumeration, is scheduled for

February 2027.

"The upcoming census will mark a significant technological shift, with digital tools being extensively deployed to improve efficiency and accuracy. Households will have the option of self-enumeration through an online census portal, while field enumerators will use mobile applications to collect information. Data processing, compilation and analysis will also be carried out digitally."

According to Miachieo, the integration of technology is expected to streamline operations and enhance the reliability of census data.

He stressed that public cooperation remains essential for the success of the exercise, noting that one of the key lessons from the 2011 Census was the need for greater public awareness to ensure accurate information is provided by respondents.

"Active participation and aware-

ness among citizens are crucial for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the census. Reliable data is the foundation of effective planning and development," he said.

To facilitate smooth implementation, awareness campaigns are being conducted across the state, covering more than 1,600 villages and urban local bodies. The outreach programme aims to familiarise residents with the census process and encourage participation. Officials said the operation will cover all 17 districts, 118 sub-divisions, 39 statutory towns, five census towns, and 1,606 villages across Nagaland. A large administrative network has been mobilised for the exercise. Altogether, 6,461 personnel have been deployed, including 17 principal census officers, 157 master trainers, 130 field trainers, 1,016 supervisors and 5,118 enumerators. Officials described the exercise

as one of the largest administrative undertakings in the state, requiring extensive coordination between government departments and local authorities.

"We are undertaking a massive administrative mobilisation to ensure complete coverage and accuracy throughout the state," an official associated with the census operation said.

The Census is expected to generate crucial demographic, social and economic data that will guide decision-making in sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, housing, employment and welfare programmes. Authorities have appealed to residents across Nagaland to cooperate with enumerators and provide accurate information, emphasising that the quality of census data directly influences future development planning and the distribution of public resources.

Meghalaya Unveils New Shillong Tourism Master Plan Featuring Rs 450-Crore Landmark Tower

SHILLONG

Meghalaya has unveiled an ambitious tourism-led development blueprint for New Shillong, anchored by a proposed Rs 450-crore iconic tower that is expected to become one of the tallest public monuments in India and serve as the centrepiece of a broader luxury tourism and recreation hub.

The proposal was presented during a state-level consultative workshop on the development of globally competitive tourist destinations organised by the state Tourism Department in Shillong on June 17.

At the heart of the master plan is a 123-metre-tall monolith tower, envisioned as a landmark attraction designed to elevate Meghalaya's profile on the national and international tourism map. If completed, the structure would become the country's second-tallest public monument after the Statue of Unity.

The proposed complex will include a skywalk, immersive exhibition galleries, restaurants, cafeterias, souvenir outlets and recreational facilities aimed at attracting both domestic and international visitors. Officials believe the project could become a major draw for high-value tourists and encourage longer stays in the state.

The master plan also envisages the creation of a comprehensive tourism



ecosystem in New Shillong, featuring a luxury resort, a premium hotel, a convention centre and a large event ground. The tourism zone will be integrated with the upcoming football stadium and supported by additional attractions, including a public park, amusement park and a Meghalaya-themed cultural park showcasing the state's indigenous traditions, heritage and sporting culture.

Speaking at the workshop, Meghalaya Tourism Minister Timothy D. Shira described the initiative as a significant turning point in the state's tourism strategy.

He announced plans to establish a dedicated Destination Management Organisation (DMO) to oversee tourism

development, coordinate among departments and ensure effective implementation of tourism projects.

"This represents a pivotal shift in our tourism strategy. Tourism development must be planned, coordinated and sustainable," Shira said.

Emphasising environmental responsibility, the minister stressed that economic growth through tourism should not come at the expense of Meghalaya's ecological and cultural heritage.

"Tourism must not come at the cost of our environment or our cultural identity. Instead, it should strengthen both," he said.

Tourism Commissioner and Secretary Rosetta Mary Kurbah said Megha-

laya currently receives around 18 lakh visitors annually and is now focusing on increasing international tourist arrivals while encouraging visitors to spend more time in the state rather than making short-duration trips.

She noted that achieving this goal would require substantial investments in infrastructure, including improved transport connectivity, reliable water and electricity supply, congestion management and destination beautification initiatives.

The state is also exploring ways to expand hospitality infrastructure while ensuring that local traditions, customs and cultural identity remain central to tourism experiences offered in Meghalaya.

The consultative workshop additionally reviewed plans for transforming Umiam Lake into a world-class tourism destination. Discussions focused on improving infrastructure, enhancing connectivity and implementing environmental safeguards to support sustainable tourism growth in the area.

Officials said stakeholder consultations will continue in the coming months as the government finalises a roadmap for the project. The broader objective is to position New Shillong as a flagship tourism destination capable of driving economic growth, generating employment and strengthening Meghalaya's standing as a premier tourism hub in Northeast India.

The proposed development reflects Meghalaya's strategy of leveraging tourism as a key economic driver while balancing growth with environmental sustainability and cultural preservation.

Politics Alone Cannot Address Northeast's Challenges, Says Pradyot Debbarma



SHILLONG

Emphasising the need for a broader approach to regional development, Pradyot Manikya Debbarma has said that politics by itself cannot resolve the complex challenges confronting the Northeast and that greater attention must be paid to education, employment generation and the protection of indigenous identities.

Speaking to media on the sidelines of the North East India Infrastructure Summit 2026 in Shillong, the Tipra Motha leader argued that public discourse in the region often revolves around political parties and electoral issues, while the deeper foundations of development receive insufficient attention.

"Politicians and politics alone will not be able to solve your problems," Debbarma said, stressing that long-term progress depends on strengthening human capital and creating sustainable economic opportunities.

He maintained that quality education, skill development and job creation should form the cornerstone of development efforts in the Northeast. According to him, economic growth and opportunities for young people must take precedence if the region is to overcome persistent socio-economic challenges.

Debbarma also underscored the importance of safeguarding indigenous cultures, languages and identities while pursuing development. He cautioned that excessive focus on political competition could result in protecting political interests rather than addressing the concerns of communities.

"The focus should not merely be on preserving political parties but on preserving the people, cultures and identities that make the Northeast unique," he said.

The Tipra Motha chief further argued that India's development story is increasingly being shaped by citizens, institutions and grassroots initiatives rather than by political leadership alone. While governments and policymakers provide direction, he said, sustained progress ultimately depends on the active participation of people and communities.

According to Debbarma, economic advancement is likely to continue despite political changes because citizens are increasingly taking responsibility for shaping their own futures through entrepreneurship, education and community-led initiatives.

He also highlighted the need to strike a balance between modernisation and cultural preservation, particularly in a region as diverse as the Northeast, where multiple indigenous communities seek to protect their distinct identities while pursuing economic growth.

Debbarma said the region's future prosperity would depend on its ability to combine infrastructure development, employment opportunities and educational advancement with measures that ensure indigenous traditions, languages and cultural heritage remain protected.

His remarks come at a time when several Northeastern states are witnessing rapid infrastructure expansion and increased investment, alongside ongoing debates over identity, migration, cultural preservation and economic development.

The Tipra Motha leader concluded that sustainable progress in the Northeast would require a people-centric approach that places equal emphasis on development, dignity and the aspirations of indigenous communities, ensuring that future generations benefit from both economic growth and cultural security.

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NTA assures 'safe, secure, fair' exam; urges NEET aspirants to remain calm, enter retest with 'untroubled minds'



NEW DELHI

Days ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 retest, the National Testing Agency (NTA) on Thursday posted a message assuring that the examination will be conducted in a safe, secure and fair manner while urging the aspirants to remain calm and enter the exam hall with untroubled minds.

The NTA, which conducts the medical entrance examinations, has come under fire after it cancelled the NEET-UG 2026 examination conducted on May 3 this year, over allegations of question paper leak and other irregularities.

The matter is under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

A re-examination is scheduled for June 21.

In a message posted on X and addressed to the aspirants appearing for the retest, the

NTA claimed that the decision to cancel the examination was taken in their interest.

"The difficult decision taken on 3rd May was made solely in your interest. The moment a problem was identified, we acted to protect the fairness of the process for every sincere candidate. We have carried those lessons forward and strengthened the system further this time," the NTA said.

Assuring that the retest will be conducted in a "safe, secure and fair" manner, the NTA said extensive arrangements have been made for the same in coordination with "relevant ministries, state governments and security agencies."

"The integrity of this process is our highest priority, and robust, multi-layered safeguards have been put in place. Any attempt at malpractice will be dealt with firmly - because protecting honest, hardworking

students is exactly what this is about," the agency said.

The NTA also warned the aspirants against falling for rumours related to the retest and urged them to remain calm and enter the examination with untroubled minds.

"To every candidate: you have worked hard, you have prepared, and now is the time to trust your effort. Stay calm, rest well, and focus on doing your best. That is all that is asked of you," the NTA said.

"The examination will be conducted as scheduled. Please do not be swayed by rumours of postponement or by the noise on social media. Rely only on official communication from NTA," it added.

The agency also requested the parents and the wider community to help keep the students calm before the examination.

Amit Shah hell bent on making NDA 'National Defectors Alliance,' will not get two-thirds majority in LS: Congress

NEW DELHI

Amid the ever-growing crisis within the opposition ranks, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Thursday slammed BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for trying to break opposition parties, while asserting that he will not succeed in his attempts to get a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha.

Ramesh said Shah suffered a "humiliation" in the Lok Sabha on April 17 this year when he failed in getting the Constitution amendment bill related to delimitation passed, and is now resorting to "dirtiest of tricks" in order to avenge that.

He accused Shah of launching an "assault on the Constitution and democracy."

"He (Shah) had assured the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi). But because of opposition unity and solidarity, the bill didn't pass. They got only 298 and they needed 362, if you go by 543 present and voting. So they felt hugely short of the two-thirds majority. And that was a humiliation. It was a setback for him," Ramesh said, adding the home minister did not expect that.

The Congress leader accused the home minister of orchestrating defections as a response to that "humiliation" of April 17.

Shah has started on this massive programme to destabilise opposition parties, he alleged.

"He's (Shah) is, you know, trying to break all opposition parties. But I can assure you that he's not going to succeed in getting a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. He's trying similar tactics in the Rajya Sabha. But ultimately, it's two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha that matters," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader claimed that all sorts of incentives are being



offered to opposition MPs to defect to the ruling alliance.

"You know, in the mutual fund industry, you offer different products and different schemes catering to the needs of individual investors. So, he's obviously offering a lot of incentives to individual MPs based on their needs and assessments. But, you know, this is an assault on the Constitution. It's an assault on democracy," Ramesh said.

"It is an absolute disgrace that the man who occupies the place that was once occupied by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is indulging in all these dirtiest of tricks in order to avenge the humiliation that he underwent," the Congress general secretary said.

Asked about Uttar Pradesh minister Om Prakash Rajbhar's remarks that a major split in the Samajwadi Party (SP) is on the cards, Ramesh dismissed the comments as "psychological games" that are part of Shah's strategy.

"He (Shah) is the master of sowing confusion. He is a weapon of mass distortion and disinformation - WMD, in the real sense of the term. So he is trying to create a lot

of uncertainty and sow the seeds of dissensions but he is not going to succeed. He can do whatever he wants, he is trying to save his job," Ramesh alleged.

He claimed the Modi government had to suffer "humiliation" for the first time in 12 years on April 17.

"So, there is a lot of bluff and bluster and the home minister is a master in this bluff and bluster. He is trying to create an impression that opposition parties are withering away, but opposition parties are united, there is solidarity, there is ideological and this 'National Defectors Alliance' will not get a majority whenever the Constitution amendment bill is brought into the Lok Sabha," he asserted.

Ramesh stressed that the Congress has ideological clarity and is well aware that it is fighting an ideological battle against the BJP and not merely a political struggle.

"The home minister who does everything with the approval of the prime minister is hell-bent on destroying the Constitution and the foundational principles of our democracy," the Congress general secretary in-charge communica-

tions said.

"You saw what happened on April 17, he came a cropper, he was humiliated and he is now taking revenge, trying to compensate and send a message to the PM that 'I am going to deliver a two-thirds majority for you'," he said.

Ramesh pointed out that Shah comes from the land of Gandhi who taught people that the ends are as important as the means.

However, it is the "dirtiest of tricks" Shah is playing," Ramesh said.

He asserted that the Congress is not just sitting back and is talking to its allies opposition parties.

"Our top leadership, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Rahul Gandhi) or the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha (Mallikarjun Kharge), people like me, are in touch with all the colleagues in the opposition parties.

We are united and we are going to resist this nefarious, diabolical attempts of the home minister to get a two-thirds majority by hook or crook," Ramesh said.

The Congress' attack came with Shiv Sena (UBT) facing an imminent split.

Six of Shiv Sena (UBT)'s nine Lok Sabha MPs skipped its parliamentary party meeting here on Thursday, signalling that a formal crossover to the ruling Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde may be only a matter of time.

Also, 20 rebel TMC MPs have met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and announced their merger with the NCPI, a Tripura-based registered unrecognised political party.

On Wednesday, Ramesh accused Shah of launching an "onslaught" on the opposition and "wrecking" Indian democracy to compensate for his "humiliation" in the Lok Sabha on April 17.

INTERNATIONAL

Taiwan president Lai Ching-te says hopes for \$14 bn US arms sale 'as soon as possible'

總統與國際媒體茶敘

International Press Reception with President Lai



TAIPEI

Taiwan's president said Thursday he hoped the United States would approve a \$14 billion arms sale "as soon as possible", reiterating that the democratic island "rejects unification" with China.

Taipei relies heavily on Washington's support to counter growing pressure from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has not ruled out seizing it by force.

"We hope that the arms purchases can be approved as soon as possible," President Lai Ching-te

told reporters in Taipei.

"Taiwan's efforts to safeguard its national security, uphold its democratic and free way of life, and reject unification and the rule of the Chinese Communist Party should not be seen as a provocation against China or a troublemaker in the region," he said.

The United States formally recognises only China, but is bound by domestic law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, a frequent source of tension between Washington and Beijing.

US Secretary of State Marco

Rubio said earlier this month the proposed \$14 billion package was "under review", while officials said in May they were assessing whether American weapons stockpiles were sufficient for its Iran operations.

Lai's government has vowed to increase overall defence spending to more than three percent of GDP this year.

It has proposed NT\$1.25 trillion (US\$40 billion) for weapons purchases, including US-developed arms as well as Taiwan-made drones and other items.

But Taiwanese lawmakers

have disagreed over how much to spend on improving defence capabilities. Opposition parties, which hold a majority in the legislature, passed a \$25 billion special defence budget last month, slashing by a third the amount sought by Lai's ruling party.

The US's commitment to Taiwan's security "remains unchanged", Lai said, adding both parties "share the goal of strengthening security and accelerating efforts to strengthen Taiwan's self-defence capabilities". Lai also said China "exerted pressure" on Japan and the Philippines during their negotiations over maritime boundaries in waters east of Taiwan.

Tokyo and Manila said late May they would start formal talks to "delimit the maritime boundary" of their exclusive economic zones and continental shelf between them.

China called the talks "illegal" and has also claimed exclusive control over the waters concerned. Taipei rejects Beijing's claims, insisting Taiwan and China are "not subordinate" to each other.

"China is not only pressuring Taiwan, but also other countries in the Indo-Pacific region," Lai said Thursday. China's military expansion in the East and South China Seas and Taiwan Strait had extended to the western Pacific, he said, and its "various forms of coercion continue to increase".

Shared concerns over China's maritime claims have brought Japan and the Philippines closer in recent years.

Like most countries, neither recognises Taiwan's claim to statehood but both maintain close unofficial relations with the island.

European Union has quietly sought to reopen communication with Russia



BRUSSELS

The European Union has reached out to Moscow in a tentative bid to open a line of communication so the continent is not sidelined in any potential talks to end Russia's grinding war in Ukraine, officials said Thursday.

The news emerged as Ukraine launched one of its biggest drone attacks since Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor more than four years ago, Russian officials said Thursday. A major Moscow oil refinery was hit for a second time in a week and commercial flights at Moscow airports were disrupted.

Against the backdrop of conflict, the EU has been quietly seeking to reopen communications with Moscow even as it doubles down on its support for Kyiv. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, has tried to cut out Europe and Kyiv and negotiate Ukraine's future with Washington.

"In the past few weeks, brief contacts were made at diplomatic level to open communication channels but nothing was discussed on substance," an EU official with knowledge of the approach said on condition

of anonymity to discuss the sensitive move. A second official, also speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media on the matter, confirmed the Russia outreach is taking place but declined to comment further.

"In any future scenario, the EU has specific interests that will need to be defended, therefore it is important to have established diplomatic channels with Russia. The EU is not a mediator. It supports Ukraine in its efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace," the first official added.

The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Putin has repeatedly said Europe cannot play any kind of mediation role in settling the conflict but has not ruled out speaking to the EU.

"We have never refused contacts with representatives of the European Union in any format," he said earlier this month. "We are not rejecting contacts. If they want to talk, they know how to reach us. They can pick up the phone and call. If they want to come, they are welcome to do so. It is not Russia that is refusing engagement."

According to the officials, European Council President Antonio Costa "has been coordinating closely with European leaders on possible engagement with Russia and the issues to be discussed when the right moment comes."

News of the moves came as EU leaders were heading to Brussels for their summer summit, where Ukraine will be high on the agenda. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to address the 27 leaders, who are seeking closer ties with Kyiv.

On Monday, Ukraine officially opened negotiations to join the EU, launching a process that will require its government to commit to years of political reforms even as it fights the Russian invasion.

It also closely follows this week's meeting of the world's seven leading industrialized nations in the French spa town of Evian-Les-Bains, where Europeans managed to get Trump to join G7 leaders in offering "unwavering support for Ukraine."

Zelenskyy said his country won key pledges of further support from world leaders attending the G7 summit in France, including the United States.

Mystique Mayong Eco Resort Adopts Practical Waste Management Model to Preserve Nature



BISWADEEP GUPTA

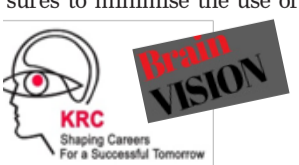
MAYONG: Nestled amidst the pristine natural surroundings of Mayong and in close proximity to Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Mystique Mayong Eco Resort has undertaken a series of practical waste management initiatives aimed at maintaining an eco-friendly environment and promoting responsible tourism.

Recognising that tourism and environmental conservation must go hand in hand, the resort has implemented a comprehensive waste management system designed to minimise its ecological footprint while encouraging sustainable practices among employees, guests and the local community.

At the heart of the initiative is the segregation of waste at source. Colour-coded bins have been installed across the property to separate biodegradable waste, recyclable materials, sanitary waste and non-recyclable refuse. The management believes that effective segregation is the first step towards responsible disposal and recycling.

One of the resort's major focus areas is the management of food waste generated from its kitchens and restaurants. Vegetable peels, left-over food and garden waste are collected separately and converted into organic compost through composting methods. The resulting manure is utilised in maintaining the resort's gardens and landscaped areas, reducing dependence on chemical fertilisers.

In an effort to reduce plastic pollution, Mystique Mayong Eco Resort has also initiated measures to minimise the use of single-use plastics.



One day, you'll just be a memory to some people. Do your best to be a good one.

Guests are encouraged to adopt environmentally conscious practices, while suppliers are advised to reduce unnecessary packaging materials. Dry recyclable waste such

as paper, cardboard, glass bottles and plastic containers is systematically collected and handed over to authorised recycling agencies. Hazardous waste, including batteries, used lighting fixtures and electronic waste, is disposed of only through approved channels to prevent contamination of soil and water resources.

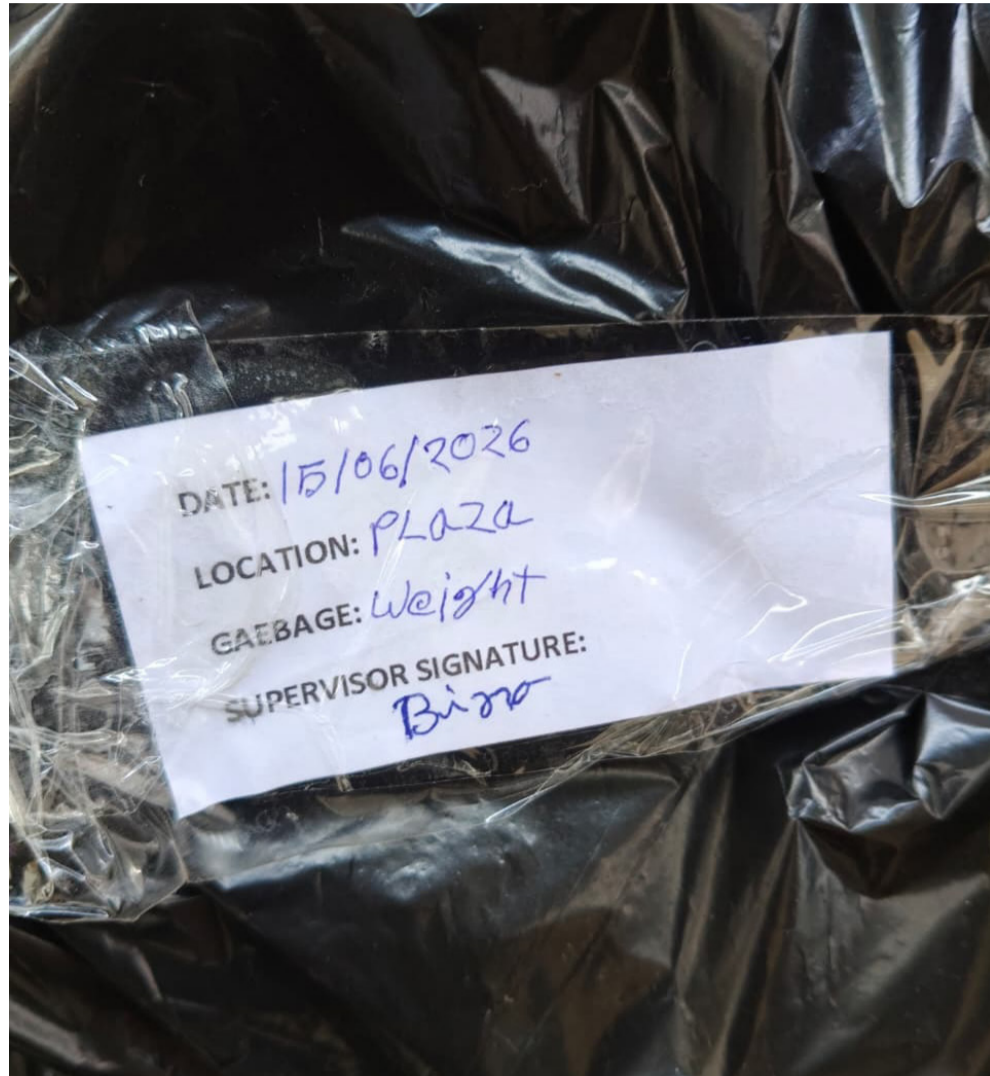
The resort management has further emphasised the importance of employee participation. Regular awareness sessions and training programmes are conducted to educate staff members on waste segregation, safe handling practices and methods to reduce wastage in day-to-day operations. Guests, too, are invited to become partners in conservation through in-room awareness messages promoting responsible consumption, towel and linen reuse, and the avoidance of food wastage.

The entire initiative has been spearheaded by Mriganka Kishore Bora, Operations Manager of Mystique Mayong Eco Resort, whose vision, dedication and hands-on approach have played a pivotal role in transforming the resort's waste management practices into a successful model of sustainability.

Through his constant monitoring, meticulous planning and unwavering commitment, Sri Bora has ensured that waste management is not treated as a one-time activity but as a continuous process embedded in the resort's daily operations. He has personally led staff orientation programmes and conducted regular training and retraining sessions, reinforcing the importance of environmental responsibility among employees at all levels.

His efforts have helped cultivate a culture of discipline and awareness within the organisation, enabling staff members to adopt eco-friendly practices as an integral part of their work routine. The success of the initiative stands as a testament to the impact of strong leadership and sustained employee engagement in achieving meaningful environmental outcomes.

Speaking on the initiative, the management of Mystique Mayong Eco Resort stated, "Eco-tourism extends beyond providing accommodation in natural settings. It is our responsibility to protect the fragile ecosystem that attracts visitors to this destination. Through simple yet practical measures and collective



participation, we aim to preserve nature for future generations." As Assam witnesses growing interest in nature-based tourism, the resort's approach demonstrates that environmental stewardship and hospitality excellence can successfully co-exist. By transforming waste into a resource

through segregation, composting, recycling and community awareness, Mystique Mayong Eco Resort is setting an example of sustainable tourism practices in the region. The initiative reinforces a simple message: tourism should leave behind cherished memories, not environmental burdens.

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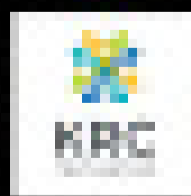


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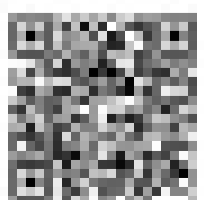


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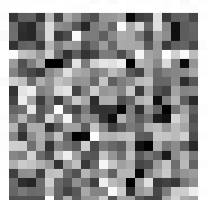


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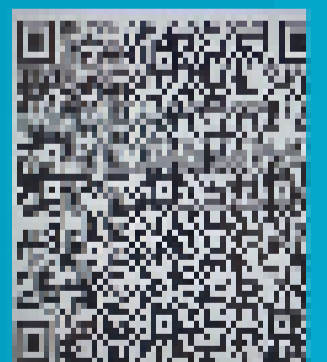
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