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Northeast States to Launch Joint Anti-Drug Strategy Within 10 Days

KOHIMA
Police forces across the Northeast are set to roll out a coordinated anti-drug strategy within the next 10 days, aimed at strengthening inter-state cooperation and curbing the movement of narcotics across the region.

Nagaland Director General of Police Rupin Sharma said the initiative is being developed jointly by Directors General of Police and heads of anti-narcotics task forces from all northeastern states.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on Friday, Sharma said law enforcement agencies had recently met to formulate a common framework to tackle drug trafficking networks operating across state borders.

"In the past two weeks, all the DGPs of North East states and the anti-narcotics task force heads have come together. We are trying to develop a common concerted strategy for checking drug trafficking," he said.

According to Sharma, the proposed mechanism will enhance intelligence-sharing, surveillance and operational coordination among states, making it more difficult for traffickers to exploit jurisdictional boundaries.

He explained that drug traffickers moving narcotics from states such as Manipur or Mizoram into Nagaland would face coordinated monitoring not only within Nagaland but also in neighbouring states, including Assam. Similarly, individuals attempting to source narcotics from Assam, Nagaland or Manipur would come under greater scrutiny through the integrated enforcement framework.

"The strategy is already being made, but it will take concrete shape in the next 10 days or so, and we will see better results in future," Sharma added.

WHO SAID WHAT



"Crisis brings clarity. Even at full speed, we cannot outrun climate change. Adaptation is essential."
~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary General, UN

NIA Charges 11 for Alleged Bid to Expand JMB Network in Assam, Tripura and West Bengal

GUWAHATI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against 11 individuals accused of conspiring to expand the network of a banned terror outfit across Assam, Tripura, West Bengal and other parts of the Northeast.

The chargesheet was submitted before the NIA Special Court in Guwahati on Friday under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, in connection with an alleged conspiracy linked to an offshoot of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

According to the NIA, investigations revealed that the accused were associated with



Imam Mahmud Kafil (IMK), an organisation allegedly formed by senior JMB operative Imam Mahmud Habibullah to further the activities of the proscribed outfit in India.

The agency alleged that the group was working to spread JMB's extremist ideology by radicalising vulnerable youths, expanding its organisational network and disseminating an-

ti-India propaganda across West Bengal and several northeastern states.

Investigators claim that the accused conducted secret meetings, organised religious indoctrination sessions, circulated extremist materials and used digital platforms to recruit new members and encourage allegiance to the leadership of both IMK and JMB.

Among those named in the chargesheet, Nasimuddin has been identified as the alleged head of IMK's operations in Assam, while Jagir Mia is accused of leading the outfit's activities in Tripura.

The NIA said its probe uncovered evidence suggesting coordinated efforts to strengthen the organisation's presence in the region. During searches and investigations, officials reportedly seized documents, electronic devices and digital records that the agency claims support the allegations outlined in the chargesheet.

The case is part of the NIA's broader efforts to identify and dismantle extremist networks operating within the country and prevent the spread of radical ideologies. Officials said the

investigation focused on the alleged attempts by the accused to recruit supporters and build organisational infrastructure for the banned group.

With the filing of the chargesheet, the matter will now proceed through the judicial process, where the allegations made by the NIA will be examined and tested in court. The accused are presumed innocent unless proven guilty through due process of law.

The development comes amid continued efforts by security agencies to monitor and counter extremist activities in the Northeast and eastern India, regions that have remained under close surveillance due to concerns over cross-border terror links and radicalisation networks.

Joint Nagaland-Manipur Delegation Meets Amit Shah, Pushes for Progress on Naga Peace Process

NEW DELHI/IMPHAL

A joint delegation of Naga leaders from Nagaland and Manipur, led by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi to discuss the long-pending Naga peace process and the prevailing situation in Manipur.

Describing the discussions as "positive and fruitful," members of the delegation said the meeting focused on advancing efforts toward a comprehensive settlement of the Naga political issue while also addressing concerns arising from the ongoing unrest in Manipur.

The delegation included Nagaland Deputy Chief Ministers T. R. Zeliang and Yanthungo Patton, Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, and senior Naga People's Front leader and Tamei MLA Awangbow Newmai.

According to delegation members, discussions centred on the Naga peace process and issues



concerning Naga-inhabited areas spread across state boundaries. The leaders reiterated the

need for continued dialogue and a lasting political solution to the decades-old Naga issue.

The meeting assumes significance as negotiations between the Centre and Naga groups continue more than a decade after the signing of the Framework Agreement between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak-Muivah in August 2015.

Despite several rounds of talks over the years, a final peace accord remains elusive. Naga civil society organisations, tribal bodies and youth groups have repeatedly called for an early and time-bound resolution to the political issue.

The meeting also took place amid heightened tensions involving Naga communities in Manipur. Several apex Naga organisations have in recent months urged the Centre to review and revoke the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreements with Kuki militant groups, citing security concerns in Naga-inhabited

areas. The issue gained further prominence following the abduction of 18 Naga civilians from the Leilon Vaiphei area in Kangpokpi district in May. The subsequent recovery of the bodies of six abducted civilians triggered widespread outrage, protests and renewed demands for justice from Naga organisations across the region.

While no official details of the discussions were released, the meeting is being viewed as part of ongoing efforts by Naga leaders to keep the peace process on track and ensure that concerns relating to security, governance and political representation are addressed in any future settlement.

The Naga peace process remains one of the longest-running political negotiations in the Northeast, with stakeholders continuing to seek a mutually acceptable solution that can bring lasting peace and stability to the region.

Japan Reaffirms Commitment to Deepen Assam Partnership After Talks with Himanta

GUWAHATI

Japan has reiterated its commitment to strengthening its partnership with Assam under India's Act East Policy, with Japanese Ambassador to India, Ono Keiichi, assuring continued cooperation in key sectors during a telephonic conversation with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The Chief Minister said on Friday that the discussion, held on Thursday evening, focused on expanding collaboration in areas such as electronics, semiconductors, infrastructure, manufacturing and entrepreneurship, signalling Japan's sustained interest in the state's economic development agenda.

Sharing details of the conversation on social media, Sarma said Ambassador Ono reaffirmed the Japanese government's commitment to deepening its engagement with Assam and supporting the state's growth under the framework of India's Act East Policy.

"Delighted to have received a phone call from H.E. Ono Keiichi, the Ambassador of Japan to India last evening. He reaffirmed the Japanese Government's commitment to deepen its ongoing partnership with Assam under India's Act East Policy," the Chief Minister wrote.

According to Sarma, both sides agreed to further strengthen cooperation across several strategic sectors, including electronics and semiconductor manufacturing, which have emerged as priority areas for investment and industrial expansion.

The discussions also covered infrastructure development, manufacturing and entrepreneurship, with Assam seeking to attract greater Japanese participation in projects aimed at boosting economic growth and employment generation.

The Chief Minister said the state government looks forward to engaging with Japanese businesses and institutions in the coming months to explore fresh investment opportunities and deepen economic ties.

The renewed assurance from Japan comes at a significant time, shortly after the proposed visit of Japan's Prime Minister to Assam was cancelled. Despite the cancellation, the latest interaction between the Assam government and the Japanese envoy indicates that bilateral engagement and investment-related cooperation remain on track.

Japan has been a key partner in several infrastructure and development initiatives in India's Northeast, with Assam increasingly positioning itself as a gateway to Southeast Asia under the Act East Policy. The state government has been actively courting foreign investment in sectors ranging from electronics and manufacturing to logistics and technology, with Japanese participation viewed as crucial to these efforts.

Dimapur Declares Thahekhu Block-7 ASF Infected Zone After Confirmed Cases in Pigs

DIMAPUR

The Dimapur district administration has declared Thahekhu Block-7 an infected zone following the detection of African Swine Fever (ASF) cases in pigs, prompting authorities to enforce strict containment measures to prevent the disease from spreading further.

According to Dimapur Deputy Commissioner Tinojongshi Chang, the district's Chief Veterinary Officer reported laboratory-confirmed cases of ASF in pigs at Thahekhu Block-7 on Thursday.

ASF is a highly contagious viral disease that affects domestic and wild pigs and can cause significant losses to the livestock sector. Although it does not pose a risk to human health, the disease can spread rapidly among pig populations, necessitating swift containment action.

Following the confirmation of the cases, the district administration declared the affected premises and the surrounding Thahekhu Block-7 area as an infected zone in line with Government of India guidelines for controlling African Swine Fever outbreaks.

Under the containment measures, the movement of pigs, piglets, pork, pork products, animal feed, equipment and other materials that could potentially carry the virus has been strictly regulated within and beyond the affected zone.

The Chief Veterinary Officer has been directed to carry out surveillance, sample collection, disinfection and other disease-control measures. Authorities have also been authorised to undertake culling operations where required under prescribed protocols to prevent further transmission. The district administration has instructed the police and other concerned departments to ensure strict enforcement of the containment measures and monitor compliance in the affected area.

Kuki-Zo Council Admits Killing of Six Naga Hostages, Apologises and Seeks Independent Probe

IMPHAL

The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) has acknowledged that six Naga civilians abducted during the ongoing Naga-Kuki conflict were killed by members of the Kuki-Zo community, issuing a public apology and calling for an impartial investigation into all incidents of violence linked to the unrest.

Addressing a press conference at Churachandpur district headquarters on Thursday, KZC chairman Henliethang Thanglet admitted the community's involvement in the killing of the six hostages and described the act as an emotional response amid escalating tensions.

"I admit the Kuki-Zo community made a great mistake in killing the six Kutchha Naga civilians. It was done out of emotion. I strongly criticise it and apologise on behalf of my people," Thanglet said.

He said the incident had damaged the image of the Kuki-Zo community and expressed regret over the loss of civilian lives. According to Thanglet, tensions between the communities intensified following a clash that reportedly began with a drunken altercation in Ukhrul district earlier this year.

The KZC chairman alleged that 14 Kuki-Zo individuals were killed and several houses were set ablaze during subsequent violence, fuelling anger and resentment within the community. He also raised concerns over what he described as restrictions on access to essential commodities for Kuki residents in certain Naga-majority areas of Ukhrul district.

Thanglet urged the government to ensure uninterrupted access to food, medicines and other basic necessities for affected residents.

KZC spokesperson Ginza Vualzong called for a comprehensive and impartial investigation into all incidents connected to the conflict. He said the probe should cover not only the killing of the six Naga civilians but also the deaths of 14 Kuki civilians and the reported burning of Kuki villages.

Vualzong further demanded strict action against armed groups involved in attacks on civilians and sought investigations into locations allegedly used to shelter perpetrators of violence.

The six Naga civilians were abducted from Leilon Vaiphei village in Kangpokpi district on May 13. Their bodies were later recovered on June 10 from an area near a Kuki-Zo village, sparking outrage and deepening tensions between the two communities.

The Kuki-Zo Council also appealed to authorities to reopen blocked routes passing through Naga-dominated areas and ensure the free movement of health-care services, food supplies, medicines, fuel and other essential commodities to conflict-affected regions.

The latest statement marks the first public admission by the KZC regarding the killings and comes amid growing calls for accountability, reconciliation and measures to prevent further escalation of ethnic tensions in the state.

Assam Firmly Committed to Protecting Youth Through Anti-Drug Drive: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday reaffirmed the state government's commitment to combating drug abuse and trafficking, saying the ongoing anti-narcotics campaign is aimed at safeguarding the future of Assam's youth.

Marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the Chief Minister highlighted the government's sustained efforts to curb the menace through enforcement measures and public awareness initiatives.

In a message shared on social media, Sarma said the state administration was closely monitoring the growing challenge posed by drug abuse and was continuing its crackdown on narcotics-related activities.

"Today, we mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, a subject which our Govt is working on very closely with a relentless crackdown against drugs," he

said. The Chief Minister stressed that the anti-drug campaign is not only a law enforcement initiative but also a social mission aimed at protecting young people from addiction and its long-term consequences.

"We remain committed to preserve the future of our youth and save them from this social destruction," he added.

Over the past few years, Assam Police have intensified anti-narcotics operations across the state, conducting regular raids, intercepting drug consignments and arresting alleged traffickers. The government has repeatedly maintained that the campaign is part of a broader effort to dismantle drug trafficking networks operating within and across the state's borders.

Officials say the crackdown has resulted in the seizure of significant quantities of suspected narcotic substances and the arrest of numerous individuals allegedly involved in the illegal drug trade.



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WHEN POLITICIANS CHANGE COLOURS

The recent spate of political defections across India has reignited an old debate about loyalty, mandate and the health of democratic institutions. What began with the departure of several Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha members has now extended to lawmakers from the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal and the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) in Maharashtra. While political defections are hardly new to Indian politics, the scale and frequency of these developments suggest something more significant than routine party-hopping. For decades, defections have been a recurring feature of India's political landscape. Governments have collapsed because of them, parties have fractured, and elected representatives have often shifted allegiances in pursuit of power or political survival. Yet the current trend appears different. Rather than isolated incidents driven by individual calculations, it increasingly resembles a broader political strategy aimed at expanding influence beyond electoral victories.

Supporters of such developments often describe them as examples of astute political management. The Bharatiya Janata Party's leadership, in particular, is frequently credited with possessing exceptional organisational skills and an ability to attract leaders from rival parties. These moves are projected as evidence of political strength, strategic foresight and effective governance. There is little doubt that such tactics can yield immediate political dividends. The more pressing question, however, is whether they strengthen India's democratic foundations or gradually weaken them. Political success alone cannot be the sole measure of democratic health. Democracies are judged not only by who wins power but also by how faithfully political outcomes reflect the will of the people.

Every election represents a contract between voters and those seeking to represent them. Citizens do not merely vote for individual candidates; they vote for parties, ideologies, policy agendas and alliances. In a parliamentary democracy, much of a candidate's legitimacy stems from the political platform under which they contest an election.

When elected representatives switch sides after securing victory, the implications extend far beyond personal ambition. A mandate obtained under one political banner effectively gets transferred to another. Voters who cast their ballots to strengthen a particular party or alliance may suddenly find that their support has indirectly benefited a political formation they deliberately sought to oppose.

Such shifts alter the meaning of electoral outcomes without seeking fresh approval from the electorate. The judgement expressed by voters at the ballot box is effectively reinterpreted after the election. In doing so, the crucial link between public choice and political representation is weakened. Defenders of defections often argue that elected representatives should enjoy the freedom to change their political affiliations. Legally, that argument carries weight. Democracies cannot function through coercion, and political beliefs are not immutable. Legislators may genuinely believe that another party better reflects their convictions or serves the interests of their constituents.

Yet democracy is more than a legal framework; it is also a moral relationship between citizens and their representatives. The central issue is not whether lawmakers have the legal right to switch sides, but whether repeated and large-scale realignments respect the spirit of democratic representation.

The growing frequency of defections raises uncomfortable questions. When political parties increasingly expand their influence by attracting elected representatives rather than persuading voters, the significance of elections themselves begins to diminish. Electoral contests are intended to be the primary means through which political power is acquired and transferred. If legislative arithmetic can be dramatically altered after the voting process concludes, then the role of the electorate inevitably comes into question. Perhaps the greatest casualty of this trend is public trust. Democratic systems depend not only on institutions but also on citizens' faith that their participation matters. Voters must believe that their ballots carry meaning and that election results broadly reflect the choices they make. Repeated defections risk undermining that belief. Citizens begin to wonder whether ideology still matters, whether campaign promises have any value, and whether voting can truly influence political outcomes. Such doubts may not immediately threaten democratic institutions, but they slowly erode the democratic culture that sustains them. Over time, cynicism can weaken the legitimacy of electoral outcomes and diminish confidence in governance. While India's democratic framework remains robust, the danger lies in allowing public disillusionment to deepen unchecked. The most troubling possibility is not institutional collapse but growing voter apathy—a situation where citizens begin to question the very purpose of elections.

The concern becomes even more significant in a country as diverse as India. One of the strengths of Indian democracy has been its ability to accommodate a wide spectrum of political voices, regional aspirations, linguistic identities and ideological traditions. Regional parties, in particular, have played a crucial role in strengthening federalism and ensuring that local concerns find representation in national politics. Large-scale defections threaten this pluralistic balance. They do not merely weaken individual parties; they can reshape the broader structure of political competition. When opposition parties are systematically depleted, democratic contestation becomes less vibrant. While democracy requires effective governments, it also depends on credible and robust opposition. History offers numerous examples of political systems that retained the outward appearance of democracy while gradually losing its substance. Elections continued to be held, legislatures remained functional and constitutions stayed intact. Yet the ability of citizens to meaningfully influence political outcomes steadily diminished. Democratic erosion often occurs gradually, not through dramatic ruptures but through the weakening of norms and institutions that give elections their significance.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Success is a science; if you have the conditions, you get the results. - Oscar Wilde

INDIA BLOC IS FACING UNCERTAINTY ON ITS FUTURE



NITYA CHAKRABORTY

The opposition INDIA bloc which completed its three years on June 23 is passing through a critical period when the very foundation of this alliance, the strong regional parties, are shattered by defections and splits backed by the ruling party BJP. Mamata Banerjee who gave the name of the alliance at the founding conclave in Patna on June 23, 2023, is out of power from West Bengal in the recent state assembly elections. What is more damaging is that most of the MPs and MLAs of her Trinamool Congress have disowned her virtually making her a non entity in politics.

TMC with its 28 Lok Sabha members in Lok Sabha was a major regional party engaged in fighting the BJP at the national plane. The marginalization of Mamata and her TMC has immensely affected the power of the INDIA bloc vis a vis BJP at national level. Both the dissident MPs and the legislators of TMC are presently being guided by the BJP. They are expected to function as the B team of the BJP in both Lok Sabha and in the West Bengal assembly.

Along with marginalization of Mamata, UBT Shiv Sena supremo Uddhav Thackeray is also facing a similar situation as six rebel MPs of his party joined the Eknath Shinde led Shiv Sena on Monday reducing his party's number in Parliament to three. Shinde's Sena is a part of NDA, so the BJP will get the support of another six members in Parliament. Only last month, seven MPs of AAP defected to the BJP. AAP is not attending INDIA bloc due its differences with the Congress but the AAP is committed to fight BJP on national plane along with INDIA bloc parties.

After the political setbacks to the two major INDIA bloc partners TMC and UBT Sena, the central BJP is focusing on splitting the powerful Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh which has 37 seats in Lok Sabha. UP is going for state assembly polls in early 2027. UP is politically very important for BJP. All sorts of reports are coming from Lucknow about nocturnal meetings organized by the state BJP for some SP Lok Sabha members, but still now, no SP MP or MLA has indicated any intention in public. SP President Akhilesh Yadav is alert. He has refuted all reports about split in the SP. But the central leadership of BJP is determined to organize the split before the assembly polls. So the INDIA Bloc partners Congress and the SP have to be very vigilant.

As regards Tamil Nadu, the loss of DMK for the INDIA Bloc has also its adverse impact on the total unity of INDIA Bloc. DMK supremo M K Stalin has been a consistent fighter against the BJP till the state assembly results were out on May 4 and the Congress extended support to Vijay for chief ministership without having any talks with the party's long time ally DMK. Earlier DMK, at the instance of the Left parties said that the Party would be fighting BJP on national plane, but in recent days,

the DMK attitude towards the Congress and INDIA bloc has stiffened. This gives a big opportunity to the BJP to fish in the volatile politics of Tamil Nadu.

TN chief minister Vijay's views about BJP and the INDIA bloc have not been fully transparent. Vijay is vulnerable to the BJP pressure if he thinks that that helps his party. Rahul Gandhi is quite close to Vijay. He must ensure that TVK joins INDIA bloc and agrees to its official position to fight the BJP in Lok Sabha elections. DMK was the leader of INDIA bloc in Tamil Nadu and Stalin led the bloc quite well by accommodating his allies including the Left parties. In 2029 Lok Sabha elections, Congress and the CPI, CPI(M) will have to fully depend on Vijay for seat sharing. It is not sure whether Vijay will be as cooperative as Stalin was in 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Amidst this bad patches in the fortunes of the INDIA Bloc partners, Rahul Gandhi is continuing his consistent fight against the BJP-RSS and focusing in a big way for ideological battle against the BJP and the RSS. His speech at the June 8 meeting of the INDIA bloc in Delhi made sense since lot of analysis was there about the failings of the bloc partners including the Congress. Resolve was made for taking corrective action.

The ground reality is that the Congress has to shoulder the main responsibility of electoral offensive in the coming three years preceding the holding of Lok Sabha polls in 2029. 2029 is special since the BJP is aiming at establishing a one nation one party goal through this elections. The next constitutional amendment to convert India into a Hindu Rashtra is also on agenda after 2029 Lok Sabha elections. So the next three years are crucial for IN-

DIA bloc in rebuilding the bloc and uniting all the forces including the civil society groups against the BJP.

In 2027, seven states are going for assembly elections. Out of this seven, excepting in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, in all other five states, the Congress is the principal INDIA bloc party taking on the BJP and NDA. These states are Goa, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Himachal and Gujarat. In UP, the Congress has to arrive at an electoral understanding with the SP recognizing that SP is the major partner and the seat sharing will be made on the basis of ground reality. As regards Punjab, AAP is the dominant player followed by the Congress. Here there is no threat from the BJP. So it can be a contest between AAP and the Congress.

In 2028, state polls will be held in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, and Karnataka among others. These are the states the Congress has to improve its performance. The win of INDIA bloc partners in the state assembly elections can only generate the necessary momentum for the Lok Sabha polls in April/May 2029. That way, the Congress and to some extent SP will have to lead the INDIA Bloc during this crucial period. The five point programme adopted at the June 8 meeting, has to be followed up in true spirit.

After the INDIA bloc founding in June 2023, the results of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls were quite favourable for the partners. BJP was reduced to 240 from the earlier majority figure. But the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah took corrective steps and in the next two years, the BJP has turned the electoral arithmetic in its favour. INDIA Bloc has also to do correctives and ensure that the united struggles continue along with the measures

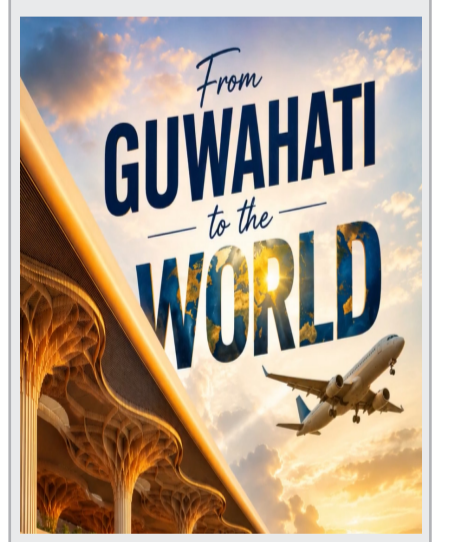
for electoral preparedness. Congress, SP, RJD and the Left have to shoulder the ideological task for taking on the BJP-RSS combo.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Guwahati is opening its doors and with it a lot of new opportunities!

With new flights scheduled to commence to Dubai and Abu Dhabi from August and planned services to Vietnam, people now have a host of global destinations to choose from for trade and tourism.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam.



ADB Commits \$42.2 Million to Unlock Northeast's Bamboo Economy Across Six States

GUWAHATI

In a major boost to the Northeast's green economy, the Asian Development Bank has approved a \$42.2 million financing package aimed at developing an integrated bamboo value chain across six northeastern states, seeking to transform the region's vast bamboo resources into a driver of jobs, investment and sustainable growth.

The initiative will cover Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, and represents one of the largest multilateral investments in the region's bamboo sector to date.

Despite possessing some of the world's richest bamboo reserves, the Northeast has long struggled to fully capitalise on the resource. The region accounts for 35.8 per cent of India's bamboo resources, spread across 5.34 million hectares, while

housing only 3.8 per cent of the country's population. Yet India continues to rely on imports for several bamboo-based products, highlighting the gap between resource availability and industrial utilisation.

The ADB-backed project aims to bridge that gap by creating a modern bamboo ecosystem that extends beyond traditional handicrafts and cottage industries. The programme will support bamboo cultivation, nurseries, processing facilities, manufacturing units and digital marketing platforms, enabling the sector to evolve into a structured value chain.

"By harnessing the country's abundant bamboo resources and building private sector-led industrial value chains, ADB's financing will stimulate trade, investment and infrastructure," said Mio



Oka.

The project is expected to provide new income opportunities for rural communities, particularly at a time when climate-related challenges are affecting ag-

ricultural livelihoods across the region.

Building a Modern Bamboo Industry

Under the initiative, financing will be directed towards establishing bamboo plantations and nurseries, integrated bamboo parks, common facility centres and digital trading platforms. Entrepreneurs and investors will also receive technical support, market intelligence and improved access to financing.

ADB's vision extends beyond conventional bamboo crafts and furniture. The project seeks to promote bamboo as a raw material for high-value sectors, including engineered products, construction materials, furniture manufacturing and bioenergy.

The programme will also encourage the productive use of bamboo waste by converting it into biochar, charcoal and briquettes, promoting a circular econo-

my model that minimises waste while generating additional revenue streams.

Focus on Women-Led Enterprises

A key feature of the initiative is its emphasis on women's participation and entrepreneurship.

ADB plans to support the establishment of at least one women-led manufacturing facility in each participating state. The project will also create employment opportunities for women in bamboo nurseries, plantations and processing units.

Women entrepreneurs and self-help groups will be connected to digital marketplaces and skill development programmes, helping them access wider markets and new business opportunities.

A New Growth Model for the Northeast

The project is being viewed as a signif-

icant step towards converting the Northeast's natural resource wealth into long-term economic gains. Policymakers have long advocated leveraging the region's abundant bamboo reserves to generate employment, attract private investment and strengthen local industries.

If implemented successfully, the initiative could reduce India's dependence on imported bamboo products, foster green manufacturing, generate sustainable livelihoods and position the Northeast as the country's leading hub for bamboo-based industries.

For a region that holds more than one-third of India's bamboo resources, the ADB investment signals growing confidence in bamboo's potential to become a cornerstone of the Northeast's emerging green economy and industrial future.

Sribhumi Police Bust Major Drug Network, Seize Contraband Worth Rs 2.34 Crore; Three Arrested

SRIBHUMI

In a major breakthrough in Assam's ongoing fight against drug trafficking, Sribhumi Police seized 11,695 bottles of a suspected intoxicating substance valued at approximately Rs 2.34 crore and arrested three individuals allegedly linked to the consignment. The operation marks another significant success under the state government's intensified anti-narcotics campaign, "Assam Against Drugs", aimed at curbing the illegal trade and distribution of narcotics across the state.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma praised the police for the successful operation and highlighted the seizure on social media, describing it as a substantial setback for drug trafficking networks operating in the region. "Some lessons are expensive. For this drug network, the bill came to Rs 2.34 crore," Sarma remarked, congratulating the police personnel involved in the operation. Reaffirming the government's commitment to combating the drug menace, the Chief Minister said Assam Police would continue to strengthen enforcement efforts against narcotics smuggling and substance abuse. "You can keep trying, but Assam Police will always try harder," he added, underscoring the administration's zero-tolerance approach towards drug-related crimes. Police officials have launched a detailed investigation to trace the origin of the seized consignment, identify its intended destination, and determine whether it is linked to a larger interstate or cross-border trafficking network. Authorities said further legal proceedings against the arrested individuals are underway.

The latest seizure adds to a series of anti-drug operations carried out across Assam in recent years as law enforcement agencies continue to target organised trafficking networks and disrupt the supply chain of illegal narcotics entering the state.

Gaurav Gogoi Slams Centre Over NEET Paper Leak, Questions Government Accountability

GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on June 25 criticised the Central government over the NEET paper leak controversy, alleging a lack of accountability in addressing issues affecting students and other sections of society. Speaking to reporters in Delhi, Gogoi said the Congress continues to raise concerns regarding the alleged irregularities linked to the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) and questioned the government's handling of the matter.

The Congress leader argued that the Centre must demonstrate its commitment to democratic accountability by responding to concerns raised on issues of public importance.

"Government has no accountability on this issue," Gogoi said while referring to the NEET paper leak controversy and the concerns expressed by students and parents across the country.

He further alleged that several groups continue to face unresolved challenges, including farmers, Agri-preneurs, women students and candi-

dates affected by examination-related issues. Linking the NEET controversy to broader concerns surrounding recruitment and examination systems, Gogoi referred to issues related to UPSC and CBSE examinations, claiming that questions regarding transparency and institutional accountability remain unanswered.

According to the Congress MP, democratic governance requires governments to remain responsive to public concerns and provide clear answers when questions are raised about the functioning of key institutions. Gogoi said the government should explain its approach to ensuring accountability and restoring public confidence in examination and recruitment processes, particularly when allegations of irregularities emerge.

The remarks come amid continuing political debate over examination-related controversies, with opposition parties seeking greater transparency and accountability in the conduct of competitive examinations and recruitment processes.

17% of Assam's PM Surya Ghar Beneficiaries Report Zero Power Bills: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on June 25 said that nearly 17 per cent of households in the state that have installed rooftop solar systems under the PM Surya Ghar scheme are now paying zero electricity bills, highlighting the growing impact of the Centre's flagship renewable energy programme.

Sharing the update on social media, Sarma said the initiative has significantly reduced electricity expenses for thousands of families while advancing Assam's transition towards clean and sustainable energy.

The Chief Minister noted that Assam is currently among the top five states in the country in the implementation of the PM Surya Ghar scheme, which encourages households to adopt rooftop solar power through financial assistance and incentives.

"Seventeen per cent of Assam's solar households have paid zero electricity bills. This



is the transformation which PM Surya Ghar has brought about in Assam," Sarma said.

According to the Chief Minister, the scheme is not only easing the financial burden on consumers but also strengthen-

ing the state's energy security by promoting decentralised power generation and reducing dependence on conventional sources of electricity. The PM Surya Ghar programme aims to accelerate the adoption of rooftop solar systems across residential households, enabling consumers to generate their own power and lower monthly electricity costs. Beneficiaries receive subsidies and support for installing solar panels, making renewable energy more accessible and affordable. Assam has been actively pushing the scheme as part of its broader renewable energy strategy. State authorities believe increased rooftop solar adoption will contribute to long-term economic savings for households while supporting environmental sustainability and clean energy goals.

The latest figures underscore the growing acceptance of solar energy in the state, with a significant number of households already reaping financial benefits from the initiative. The government expects participation in the scheme to rise further as awareness and infrastructure support continue to expand across Assam.

Imphal West Selected as Pilot District for Manipur's Digital Health Transformation Initiative

IMPHAL

Manipur has taken a significant step towards modernising its healthcare system, with Imphal West district being selected as the pilot district for the development of an integrated digital health ecosystem under a joint initiative of the National Health Authority (NHA) and the state government.

The decision was formalised during a high-level meeting between Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla and NHA Chief Executive Officer Dr Sunil Kumar Barnwal at Raj Bhavan in Imphal.

The initiative aims to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, expand access to medical services and accelerate the adoption of digital health technologies across the state. Governor Bhalla emphasised the need for coordinated efforts between the state government and the NHA



to ensure that healthcare reforms reach all sections of society effectively.

During the meeting, Dr Barnwal outlined several key digital health programmes being implemented by the NHA, including the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), Unified Health Interface (UHI), Health Information Exchange and Consent Manager (HIE-CM), National Health Claims Exchange (NHCE), and the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA).

The discussions also focused on flagship healthcare schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), which provides eligible families with annual cashless health insurance coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh, and the Ayushman Vay Vandana Card for senior citizens.

Later, addressing a workshop jointly organised by ABDM Manipur and PMJAY, Dr Barnwal stressed the importance of integrating Manipur into India's expanding digital healthcare network.

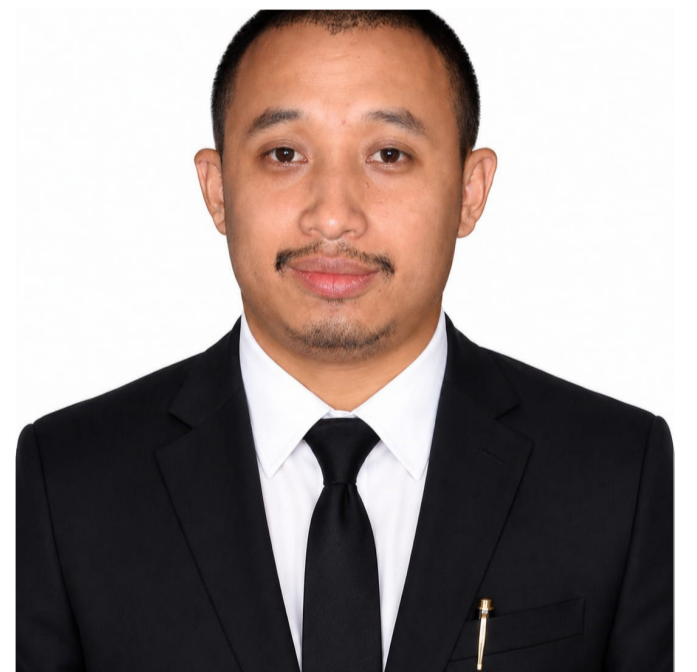
He noted that more than 80,000 beneficiaries receive treatment under PMJAY every day across the country. According to NHA data, the scheme has facilitated treatment for over 12 crore patients during the past seven-and-a-half years, with government expenditure on healthcare services reaching nearly Rs 1.9 lakh crore.

In Manipur, around 3.73 lakh families were initially brought under PMJAY coverage when the programme was launched in 2018. To date, nearly seven lakh beneficiaries have been issued PMJAY cards.

Dr Barnwal urged the state government to accelerate enrolment efforts and ensure that all 16 lakh eligible residents are covered under the scheme. He said broader coverage would enable more people to access quality healthcare services while benefiting from the integrated digital health ecosystem being developed in the state.

The designation of Imphal West as a pilot district is expected to serve as a model for the wider rollout of digital health services across Manipur, supporting improved healthcare delivery, streamlined patient services and enhanced access to government-backed health schemes.

NCST Seeks Report from Manipur Government, DGP on Alleged Abduction of Naga Tribal Civilians



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has sought a factual report from the Manipur Government and the state police on a petition alleging the abduction and hostage-taking of innocent Naga tribal civilians in the state.

In a notice dated June 10, 2026, the Commission issued directions to the Chief Secretary of Manipur and the Director General of Police (DGP), Manipur, after taking cognizance of a representation submitted by Asem Roshan Singh on May 22, 2026. The petition raised concerns over the reported abduction and hostage-taking of Naga tribal civilians.

Acting under the powers vested in it through Article 338A of the Constitution of India, the NCST directed the state authorities to furnish the facts of the case along with details of the action taken within 30 days of receiving the notice.

The Commission stated that the matter had been accepted for investigation and inquiry. It further warned that if no response is received within the stipulated period, it may invoke the powers of a Civil Court available under Article 338A and issue summons requiring the appearance of the concerned officials or their representatives.

The notice was issued by Kushal Dev Verma, Deputy Secretary of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. A copy of the communication has also been forwarded to the petitioner.

The Commission's action marks the initiation of a formal process to obtain information from the concerned authorities regarding the allegations. However, the NCST has not made any findings on the claims at this stage, and the matter remains under examination pending receipt of reports from the Government of Manipur and the Manipur Police.

Assam Attracts Investment Proposals Worth Over Rs 5 Lakh Crore: Finance Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah

GUWAHATI

Assam has received investment proposals exceeding Rs 5 lakh crore, marking a significant shift in the state's economic landscape, Finance Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah said during a pre-budget consultation meeting organised by the Assam BJP in Guwahati on June 24.

The consultation brought together economists, academicians, entrepreneurs, industry leaders and representatives from various sectors to provide inputs for the preparation of the upcoming Assam Budget.

Addressing the gathering, Mallabaruah said the state government is committed to preparing a pragmatic, growth-oriented and people-centric budget by incorporating suggestions from stakeholders across different sectors. He noted that the implementation rate of budgetary allocations under the current government has reached nearly 90 per cent and expressed confidence that efforts would continue to ensure effective execution of development programmes.

Highlighting Assam's changing investment climate, the Finance Minister



said that attracting investments worth even Rs 1-2 crore had once been a challenge, but the state has now emerged as a preferred destination for large-scale industrial investments.

"Assam has received investment proposals worth more than Rs 5 lakh crore," Mallabaruah said, underscoring the state's growing appeal to investors.

He also pointed to Assam's rising prominence on the national stage, noting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited the state more than 35 times in recent years. According to the minister, the frequent visits reflect the Centre's increasing focus on Assam's development and strategic importance.

Mallabaruah further highlighted developments in the semiconductor sector,

stating that following the establishment of a semiconductor manufacturing unit in the state, plans are underway for two additional semiconductor facilities. He said these projects are expected to strengthen Assam's position as an emerging hub for advanced manufacturing and technology-driven industries.

Speaking at the event, Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia said the state's economy has witnessed substantial growth between the financial years 2014-15 and 2024-25. He credited Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's leadership for accelerating economic transformation, addressing public concerns and creating a foundation for sustained long-term growth.

Saikia said Assam is steadily pro-

gressing towards becoming one of India's leading states and added that its development trajectory aligns with Prime Minister Modi's vision of a "Viksit Bharat".

The consultation also featured recommendations from industry and academic leaders. Abhijit Baruah, Managing Director of Assam Air Products, called for greater support to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector and proposed launching a "Make in Assam" initiative on the lines of the Centre's "Make in India" programme. He also suggested increasing the use of bamboo and cane-based products in government infrastructure projects.

Meanwhile, Cotton University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ramesh Chandra Deka urged the government to prioritise investment in higher education infrastructure, while entrepreneur Akashjyoti Gogoi, Managing Director of Bahubali, recommended insurance subsidies for small poultry and egg-producing farms to encourage growth in the sector.

The meeting was attended by representatives of financial institutions, universities, business organisations and professional bodies, along with Cabinet ministers, Members of Parliament and senior BJP leaders.

The suggestions received during the consultation are expected to be considered while formulating the state budget, which the government says will focus on balancing economic growth, industrial expansion and public welfare.

Quest!

Lightning is hotter than the surface of the sun

Beyond Conflict: Why Manipur's Future Depends on Classrooms and Commerce



For much of the past three years, conversations about Manipur have revolved around violence, displacement, ethnic tensions, and security operations. These are unavoidable realities. Yet an uncomfortable truth remains: even if peace returns tomorrow, Manipur's challenges will not disappear overnight. Conflict leaves scars that extend far beyond damaged homes and disrupted lives. It weakens institutions, interrupts education, shrinks economic opportunities, and erodes public confidence in governance. Restoring normalcy, therefore, requires more than ending violence. It requires rebuilding the foundations of society itself.

This is why recent discussions on the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) deserve greater attention than they might ordinarily receive. In many parts of India, these may be viewed as routine policy matters. In Manipur, however, they are closely linked to a much larger question: how does a conflict-affected society prepare for recovery?

The answer lies in creating opportunities for people, especially the youth. And that means investing simultaneously in education and economic growth.

The Cost of Lost Years
Perhaps the greatest casualty of prolonged conflict is not infrastructure but human potential. Thousands of students have experienced disruptions to their education. Academic calendars have been affected, institutions have struggled to function normally, and many families have been forced to focus on survival rather than long-term aspirations. For young people, uncertainty has become an unwelcome companion.

History shows that societies emerging from conflict face a critical choice. They can allow a generation to drift into frustration and unemployment, or they can create pathways that transform young people into drivers of recovery.

Manipur cannot afford the former. The state's demographic profile is one of its greatest strengths. It possesses a highly talented and ambitious youth population that has repeatedly demonstrated excellence in sports, education, arts, civil services, and entrepreneurship. But talent alone is not enough. Young people need systems that enable them to succeed.

This is where educational reform becomes crucial. Why NEP 2020 Matters More in Manipur

The National Education Policy 2020 is often discussed in terms of curriculum changes, academic structures, and institutional reforms. Yet its real significance lies in its attempt to redefine what education should achieve.

For decades, the Indian education system has been criticised for emphasising memorisation over understanding, examinations over skills, and degrees over employability. The result has often been a mismatch between education and the needs of the modern economy.

NEP 2020 seeks to address this gap. Its emphasis on multidisciplinary learning, vocational training, internships, research, creativity, and critical thinking reflects an understanding that the future workforce must be adaptable rather than merely qualified. Students are encouraged to learn across disciplines, develop practical skills, and explore multiple career pathways.

For Manipur, this shift could be transformative. A conflict-affected society requires more than educated individuals. It requires problem-solvers, innovators, entrepreneurs, teachers, and community leaders capable of rebuilding institutions and generating opportunities.

The policy's focus on flexibility is equally important. The introduction of multiple entry and exit options, credit transfers, and the Academic Bank of Credits acknowledges that educational journeys are not always linear. Students facing personal, financial, or social challenges can continue their studies without losing years of effort.

In a state where disruptions have repeatedly affected educational continuity, such flexibility is not merely a reform. It is a necessity.

Education as a Tool of Social Healing

Education also plays a role that extends beyond employment. In divided societies, classrooms can become spaces where understanding, cooperation, and shared aspirations are cultivated. They can help bridge social differences and encourage dialogue across communities.

Manipur's diversity has always been one of its defining characteristics. Its many communities possess rich cultural traditions, languages, and histories. Yet diversity requires institutions capable of fostering inclusion and mutual respect.

The emphasis within NEP 2020 on multilingual education, local knowledge systems, cultural awareness, and holistic development offers an opportunity to strengthen these values.

Educational institutions cannot solve political conflicts. But they can help shape citizens who are better equipped

to navigate differences constructively. That contribution should not be underestimated.

Economic Recovery Cannot Wait

If education prepares people for the future, economic opportunity determines whether that future can be realised.

This is where discussions around GST become relevant.

The economy of Manipur has faced considerable strain in recent years. Businesses have struggled with disruptions, transport networks have been affected, and investor confidence has suffered. Small enterprises, which form the backbone of the local economy, have often found themselves navigating uncertainty.

Under such circumstances, economic revival becomes an urgent priority.

The GST framework was designed to simplify India's indirect taxation system and create a unified national market. While debates continue regarding specific aspects of implementation, the broader objective remains clear: reducing complexity and encouraging formal economic participation.

For states located on the periphery of major economic centres, integration into larger markets can create significant opportunities.

Manipur's entrepreneurs, artisans, weavers, traders, and small manufacturers increasingly have access to customers beyond state boundaries. Digital commerce platforms have opened doors that were unimaginable a decade ago. Local products can now reach consumers across India.

Yet opportunity alone does not guarantee success.

Business owners must understand taxation systems, digital compliance requirements, and interstate trade regulations. Without adequate awareness, many may struggle to take full advantage of available opportunities.

This makes public understanding of GST an economic necessity rather than a bureaucratic requirement.

Formalisation and Growth

One of the challenges facing many developing economies is the persistence of informal business activity.

Informality often limits access to institutional credit, government support, insurance, and investment. It can also reduce transparency and create uneven competition.

Encouraging greater participation in the formal economy benefits not only governments but also businesses themselves.

Formal enterprises are generally better positioned to expand operations, attract investment, access larger markets, and build consumer trust.

For Manipur, where entrepreneurship is increasingly viewed as a pathway to economic resilience, greater aware-

ness of taxation and compliance systems can support sustainable growth.

This is particularly important for younger entrepreneurs who are exploring opportunities in e-commerce, technology, services, and creative industries.

A modern economy requires modern capabilities.

Linking Education and Economic Reform

The most important lesson emerging from discussions on NEP 2020 and GST is that neither policy should be viewed in isolation.

Education and economic development are deeply interconnected.

An education system that produces skilled graduates but fails to provide economic opportunities will generate disappointment. Conversely, economic reforms cannot achieve their full potential if citizens lack the skills needed to participate effectively.

Manipur's future depends on strengthening both.

A student trained in a flexible, skill-oriented educational environment may become an entrepreneur, researcher, healthcare professional, artist, or business owner. But success in any of these fields requires access to functioning markets, supportive institutions, and economic opportunities.

Likewise, businesses need a workforce capable of adapting to changing technologies and market conditions.

The relationship is symbiotic.

Education creates human capital. Economic reform creates avenues through which that capital can be utilised.

The Media's Responsibility

There is another dimension to this conversation that deserves attention. Policies often fail not because they are poorly designed but because they are poorly communicated.

Citizens cannot benefit from programmes they do not understand. Students cannot take advantage of educational reforms they know little about. Businesses cannot comply with regulations they find confusing.

This places a significant responsibility on the media.

Journalism's role is not to act as a publicity platform for governments. Nor is it to dismiss every policy initiative with cynicism. Its responsibility is to inform, explain, scrutinise, and evaluate.

In a state like Manipur, where misinformation and mistrust can easily flourish, accurate communication becomes a public service.

The media must help citizens understand what reforms mean, how they affect daily lives, and whether promises are being translated into outcomes.

Good governance depends on informed citizens. Informed citizens depend on credible information.

Looking Beyond Security

The tendency to view Manipur solely through the lens of conflict risks obscuring equally important conversations about development.

Security remains essential. Without peace, progress becomes difficult. But peace alone is not development.

A society does not thrive merely because violence declines. It thrives when students see opportunities ahead, when businesses can grow with confidence, when institutions function effectively, and when citizens believe their future can be better than their past.

That is why discussions on education and economic reform deserve a central place in the state's public discourse.

The real challenge before Manipur is not simply ending conflict. It is ensuring that when peace arrives, there is a strong foundation upon which to build.

A Future Built on Opportunity

The road to recovery will be long and complex. There are no quick solutions to the challenges confronting Manipur. Yet one principle remains clear: sustainable peace requires opportunity.

Young people need quality education. Entrepreneurs need supportive markets. Communities need functioning institutions. Citizens need confidence that progress is possible.

NEP 2020 and GST, despite belonging to different policy domains, both contribute to this larger objective. One seeks to prepare people for the future. The other seeks to create an economic environment in which that future can flourish.

Ultimately, Manipur's success will not be measured only by the absence of violence. It will be measured by the presence of opportunity, innovation, and hope.

The state's recovery begins not merely with restoring order, but with empowering its people. And that empowerment starts in classrooms, extends into marketplaces, and ultimately shapes the future of society itself.

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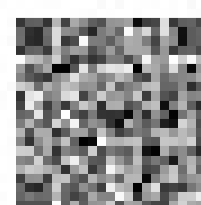


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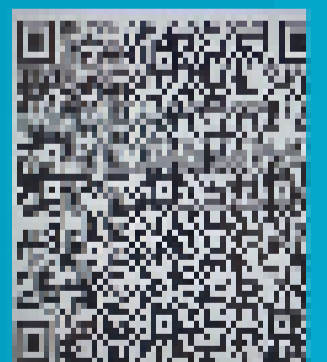
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