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PERSPECTIVE

People will remember not what you said but how you made them feel.

Nalbari Youth Killed, Teen Girl Critical; Police Probe Motive Amid Rising Tensions

GUWAHATI

A fatal roadside attack in Assam's Nalbari district has triggered widespread outrage and heightened tensions after a 19-year-old youth was killed and an 18-year-old girl was critically injured late on the night of May 30.

The deceased has been identified as Madhurjya Barman (19), a resident of Balipathar in Chamata and the Assistant General Secretary of the West Nalbari Regional Students' Union. The injured girl, Mridumudra Deka (18) of Gangapur, is undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), where doctors have described her condition as critical.

According to preliminary reports, the two were travelling on a scooter and returning home from Nalbari town when they were allegedly attacked near Gangapur under Mukalmua. Local sources claimed that two individuals, identified as Roz Ali and Ashik Ali, were allegedly involved in the assault.

Residents discovered the victims lying on the roadside with severe injuries. Barman succumbed to his injuries at the scene, while Deka was rushed to a nearby medical facility before being referred to GMCH for advanced treatment.

The incident has sent shockwaves across Nalbari district, prompting demands for swift action against those responsible. Several local organisations and residents have called for a thorough and impartial investigation into the circumstances leading to the attack.

Amid public anger, some groups have attempted to link the incident to allegations of "love jihad". However, authorities have not officially established any such connection or confirmed a motive behind the crime. Police officials have urged the public to refrain from speculation while the investigation is underway.

WHO SAID WHAT

Swimming is an excellent way to beat the summer heat. Highlighting the efforts of Saji Valasseril from Kerala, who trains future swimming stars ~ Narendra Modi, PM

Centre Deploys Elite COBRA Battalions in Manipur to Intensify Anti-Insurgency Operations

IMPHAL
The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved the deployment of two battalions of the elite Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Manipur, marking a significant step in the Centre's efforts to strengthen security and restore normalcy in the conflict-affected state.



According to official sources, the 207 COBRA battalion based in West Bengal and the 210 COBRA battalion stationed in Assam will be deployed in Manipur in the coming weeks. The highly trained commandos are expected to undertake targeted operations against armed groups involved in violence and activities that threaten peace and public order.

The deployment comes amid continuing efforts by the Centre and security agencies to stabilise the situation in Manipur, which has witnessed prolonged ethnic unrest since May 2023. Clashes between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities have claimed more than 260 lives and dis-

placed thousands of residents, creating one of the most serious internal security challenges in the Northeast in recent years.

Senior security officials said the specialised units would focus on intelligence-driven operations aimed at neutralising armed elements responsible for disturbing peace in the state. The move forms part of a broader strategy to reinforce counter-insurgency capabilities and strengthen law enforcement operations on the ground.

COBRA, the CRPF's specialised jungle warfare force, was raised in 2008-09 primarily to combat Left-

Wing Extremism and insurgent activities across various regions of the country, including parts of the Northeast. The force comprises ten battalions, each consisting of around 1,000 commandos trained in guerrilla warfare, jungle combat, intelligence-based operations and anti-insurgency tactics.

Over the years, COBRA units have played a key role in anti-Naxal campaigns across central India, conducting several successful operations that significantly weakened Maoist networks and reduced insurgent violence in affected states.

Officials noted that the sharp decline in Maoist-related violence has enabled the redeployment of some COBRA formations to address emerging security challenges in other parts of the country. Apart from Manipur, security agencies are also examining the possibility of deploying one or more COBRA battalions in Jammu and Kashmir for specialised operations in the future.

Security experts believe the induction of the elite commandos will

enhance operational effectiveness, improve intelligence-led interventions and provide additional support to ongoing efforts aimed at restoring lasting peace and stability in Manipur.

The latest deployment underscores the Centre's commitment to strengthening the security apparatus in the state and ensuring a conducive environment for reconciliation, rehabilitation and long-term peace-building initiatives.

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Tripura Set for 200 MW Solar Power Plant as Centre Reviews Urban, Energy Projects

AGARTALA

Tripura is set to receive a major boost in its renewable energy capacity with the Centre planning a 200 MW solar power project in the state, Union Minister for Power and Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar announced on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference after a review meeting at the Tripura State Guest House in Agartala, Khattar said the tendering process for the proposed solar power plant is already underway. He noted that while the state has limited scope for hydropower generation, solar energy presents significant opportunities for expansion and long-term energy security.

The Union minister said the meeting reviewed the progress of projects under the Power and Urban Development sectors and assessed the implementation of various centrally sponsored schemes in the state. Highlighting welfare measures for street vendors, Khattar said more than 9,300 loans have been sanctioned under a central government scheme, with financial assistance being released in three phases to support livelihoods and small businesses. On urban infrastructure and sanitation, the minister said the government reviewed waste management initiatives, including the development of the DC Nagar dumping ground project, for which Rs 100 crore has been earmarked. He added that household waste collection is being carried out through self-help group (SHG) members and urged citizens to actively participate in scientific waste disposal and segregation efforts.

Khattar further informed that a comprehensive survey of community, aspirational and public toilets in urban areas

has been commissioned and is expected to be completed by June 20. Based on the findings, financial assistance will be provided jointly by the Centre and the state government to improve sanitation infrastructure.

In a significant development for urban wastewater management, the minister announced that 11 new sewage treatment plants (STPs) in and around Agartala are expected to become operational by December 2026, strengthening the city's sanitation and environmental management systems.

Special sanitation drives are also being undertaken in four key urban centres-Agartala, Udaipur, Dharmanagar and Melaghar-with Rs 27 crore sanctioned for cleanliness and related infrastructure projects.

Khattar also unveiled plans for projects worth Rs 1,200 crore under the Urban Challenge Fund. Under the proposed financing model, the state government will contribute Rs 300 crore, the Centre will provide an equal amount, while the remaining Rs 600 crore will be mobilised through financial institutions.

He explained that the projects would be designed to generate revenue, enabling the repayment of loans in accordance with financing arrangements and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Reviewing the power sector, the minister said the rooftop solar programme under the PM Surya Ghar scheme is progressing steadily across the state. However, he expressed concern over transmission and distribution losses, which currently stand at around 26 per cent

Northeast Becoming India's Gateway to Growth and Opportunity: Scindia

NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya M. Scindia has said the Northeast is undergoing a historic transformation, emerging as a key hub of economic growth, connectivity, cultural pride and strategic opportunity within India's development framework.

In his message for the May 2026 edition of the Ministry of DoNER's newsletter, Scindia said the eight Northeastern states are no longer viewed as remote frontier regions but as dynamic contributors to the nation's growth story. He attributed the shift to the Centre's sustained focus on the region under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and the implementation of the Act East Policy.

"The transformation unfolding across the North Eastern Region today is not merely one of infrastructure and investment, but of confidence, identity and aspiration," the minister said, describing the region as an increasingly important pillar of India's future development.

Reflecting on his recent visit to Sikkim during the state's 51st Statehood Day celebrations, Scindia praised the Himalayan state for successfully balancing economic growth with environmental conservation. During the visit, he accompanied Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Governor Om Prakash Mathur and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang at official programmes in Gangtok.

The minister highlighted Sikkim's achievements in organic farming, ecological stewardship and responsible tourism, saying the state had transformed its mountainous terrain into a valuable economic and environmental asset while preserving its unique cultural identity.

Assam Suspends Subsidised Dal, Sugar and Salt Distribution Until August

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has announced a temporary suspension of the distribution of subsidised pulses, sugar and salt under the public distribution system (PDS), citing the continuation of the vote-account budget following the recently concluded Assembly elections.

In a public notice issued on Monday, the Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Department stated that the supply of the three essential commodities to eligible beneficiaries has been halted for two months with effect from June 2026.

According to the department, the state is currently functioning under a vote-account budget, while the full budget for the financial year 2026-27 is scheduled to be presented by the newly elected government in July.

"The new government will present the full budget in July. Following its approval, the subsidised distribution scheme will resume from August," the department said.

The suspension affects the supply of masoor dal, sugar and salt that were being distributed at subsidised rates to economically weaker sections through the state's public distribution network. However, officials clarified that the monthly allocation of free rice under existing food security schemes will continue without interruption.

The government also stated

that any remaining stock of subsidised dal, sugar and salt left over from the May distribution cycle at fair-price shops may be distributed to eligible families during June, subject to availability.

The temporary halt is linked to fiscal arrangements made under the interim budget presented ahead of the Assembly elections. In February, then Finance Minister Ajanta Neog had sought a vote-on-account of Rs 62,294.78 crore to ensure continuity of essential government expenditure until the presentation of the full budget.

During her budget speech, Neog had highlighted the government's food security initiatives, stating that more than 70.71 lakh families were covered under various welfare programmes. She noted that over 2.49 crore beneficiaries were receiving free rice through the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY).

Officials maintained that while the temporary suspension may affect the supply of subsidised pulses, sugar and salt, the uninterrupted distribution of free rice will ensure that core food security benefits continue to reach vulnerable households across the state.

The government is expected to make fresh allocations for the scheme once the full state budget is passed in July, paving the way for the resumption of subsidised commodity distribution from August.

Assam Seeks Defence Manufacturing Boost as Himanta Biswa Sarma Holds Talks With Rajnath Singh

NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma held discussions with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on developing a robust defence manufacturing ecosystem in the state, signalling a fresh push to position Assam as an emerging destination for strategic and high-technology industries.

The meeting, held in New Delhi as part of Sarma's four-day visit to the national capital, focused on exploring opportunities for expanding defence-related investments, industrial infrastructure and manufacturing capabilities in Assam.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, the Chief Minister said he thanked the Defence Minister for his support and campaign efforts during the recently concluded Assam Assembly elections and sought his guidance on strengthening the state's presence in the defence manufacturing sector.

"I met Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and thanked him for his time and campaign efforts during the Assam Assembly elections on behalf of the party as well as the people of Assam. We also briefly discussed further expansion and



establishment of the defence industry in Assam," Sarma said.

According to the Chief Minister, the discussions centred on ways to attract defence-related investments and create a favourable ecosystem for both public and private sector participation in the state.

Sarma said the Defence Minister suggested organising a large-scale defence industry exhibition and conference in Assam involving participation from defence public sector undertakings, private manufacturers and other stakeholders from across the country.

"He suggested an extensive exhibition as well as a conference with integrated participation of defence industries across

public sector undertakings and private sector in Assam," the Chief Minister stated.

Such an event, if organised, could help showcase Assam's industrial potential, attract investors and facilitate interactions between policymakers, defence manufacturers and technology firms interested in expanding operations in the Northeast.

The Chief Minister said Rajnath Singh assured full cooperation from the Ministry of Defence in advancing the initiative and supporting Assam's efforts to build a defence manufacturing base.

"The Defence Minister also promised to extend support and cooperation in the same and we will work in that direction," Sarma added.

The discussions come at a time when Assam is actively pursuing industrial diversification and seeking to attract investments in sectors such as electronics, semiconductors, defence manufacturing, renewable energy and advanced technology industries.

State government officials believe Assam's strategic location, improving connectivity and expanding industrial infrastructure could make it an attractive

destination for defence-related investments in the coming years.

The meeting with the Defence Minister was one of several high-level engagements undertaken by the Chief Minister during his visit to New Delhi.

Later in the day, Sarma also met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and discussed issues related to Assam's development and future growth prospects.

Following the meeting, Jaishankar congratulated the Chief Minister on the National Democratic Alliance's electoral success in Assam and reaffirmed the Centre's support for the state's development agenda.

In a social media post, the External Affairs Minister said he was pleased to meet the Assam Chief Minister and assured continued assistance for Assam's progress. The meetings followed Sarma's interaction with Narendra Modi a day earlier, during which he briefed the Prime Minister on governance and development priorities in the state.

The Chief Minister also announced that the expansion of the Assam Council of Ministers will take place on June 5 after receiving approval from the Bharatiya

Janata Party's central leadership. He said the exercise would be undertaken following the return of Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya from an overseas visit.

Sarma's ongoing visit to the national capital is expected to include a series of consultations with senior Union ministers and central government officials on matters relating to infrastructure, investment, governance and economic development. The focus on defence manufacturing aligns with the Centre's broader vision of promoting self-reliance in defence production under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. For Assam, the proposed push could open new avenues for industrial growth, employment generation and technological advancement while integrating the state more closely into India's strategic manufacturing network.

If successfully implemented, the initiative could mark a significant expansion of Assam's industrial landscape, complementing ongoing investments in sectors such as semiconductors, logistics, electronics and advanced manufacturing, and further strengthening the state's role as an emerging economic hub in North-east India.



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INDIA'S WATER AWAKENING

For decades, India's relationship with the Indus Waters Treaty resembled that of a generous host who continues to lay out a feast even as the guest overturns the table. That era is decisively over. Since placing the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance following the unconscionable Pahalgam terror attack, India has embarked upon one of the most consequential infrastructure campaigns in its post-independence history. The message is unambiguous: not a single drop of water to which India is entitled shall henceforth flow unused across its borders.

The abeyance of the IWT, far from merely a diplomatic signal, has become an extraordinary blessing for millions of Indians across Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir. Where treaty constraints once shackled India to chronic under-utilisation of its own river waters, political will has now unlocked the gates – quite literally. The unprecedented temporary stoppage of the Chenab's flow to Pakistan last year was not a theatrical gesture; it was a sovereign demonstration of capability, a moment that announced India's arrival as a state that regards water as a strategic national asset.

The Chenab basin has emerged as the centrepiece of this ambitious national agenda. Two freshly approved infrastructure projects – the Rs 2,352 crore Chenab-Beas Link Tunnel in Himachal Pradesh and the Rs 268 crore sediment-bypass tunnel at the Salal Dam in Reasi – together represent an investment not merely in bricks and concrete but in India's long-term water and energy security. The Chenab-Beas Link Tunnel, an 8.7-kilometre engineering marvel, will carry surplus water from the Chandra river – a tributary of the Chenab, historically known as the Chandrabhaga – into the Beas basin, directly irrigating fields in states that have long thirsted for this bounty. The Salal silt-bypass tunnel addresses a longstanding operational inefficiency: by automatically diverting silt-laden water away from the reservoir, it will sharply enhance power generation at one of India's oldest hydroelectric stations. These are not routine projects; every rupee invested here will yield returns measured in irrigated fields, lit households, and thriving livelihoods.

The hydroelectric ambition on the Chenab runs deeper still. Mega projects, including Pakal Dul (1,000 MW), Kiru (624 MW), Kwar (540 MW), Ratle (850 MW), and Sawalkote (1,856 MW), are advancing with a velocity that would have seemed unimaginable under the shadow of the old treaty constraints. Together, these ventures will make Jammu & Kashmir a powerhouse of clean, renewable energy – transforming a region long defined by its challenges into an engine of India's net-zero ambitions. The fast-tracking of these projects signals that delays, whether from bureaucratic inertia or external pressure, will no longer be tolerated.

The Jhelum River, too, is receiving its due attention. The revival of the Tulbul Navigation Project – the long-shelved Wular Barrage – is a milestone of immense significance. Pakistan stalled this project for four decades through specious claims of treaty violation, depriving Kashmir of a historic trade waterway that once carried 70 per cent of the Valley's cargo. Reviving it will restore year-round navigability between Wular Lake and Baramulla, opening new arteries for Kashmir's booming horticulture sector and providing essential flood-regulation benefits. Water storage on the Jhelum is no longer a pipedream; it is a scheduled reality.

On the Ravi, the Shahpur Kandi dam project is another pillar of this national water renaissance. Long delayed, it will now ensure that Ravi waters – India's exclusive entitlement under the original treaty – are fully harnessed for irrigation and power in Punjab and J&K rather than draining unused into Pakistan as they have for years. What binds all these endeavours together is a quality that India's water policy has historically lacked: political will. Engineers have responded with ingenuity and speed. Project timelines are being compressed. Aerial inspections and ministerial oversight signal accountability at the highest level. The transformation will not happen overnight, but it is happening – and it is irreversible. India is writing a new chapter, one measured not in diplomatic courtesies extended to a hostile neighbour but in megawatts generated, hectares irrigated, and citizens whose lives are transformed by the waters that were always rightfully theirs.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence.

- George Washington

BALUCHISTAN: WHEN A STATE LOSES ITS PEOPLE



PUSHP SARAF

Pakistan's south-western province of Balochistan remains on fire. That grim reality was brought home once again when a suicide bomber struck a shuttle train in Quetta on May 24, killing at least 24 Pakistani security personnel and their family members. The attack is the latest in a sustained and deliberate pattern of strikes targeting trains, security forces, and critical infrastructure. There is no sign of abating.

The violence, however, is only one dimension of a crisis that has now acquired an unmistakably political character. In a measured but consequential speech at a function in Lahore on February 8, veteran Baloch leader Sardar Akhtar Mengal triggered what can only be described as a political earthquake. Pakistan, he declared, had gone beyond the "point of no return" on Balochistan, and the two should now "live like good neighbours". Coming from a man who spent years working within Pakistan's constitutional framework, the words carried extraordinary weight. It is a barely veiled argument for peaceful separation.

Islamabad had, in fact, long been warned. Mengal had consistently pleaded for a political solution to the Balochistan crisis, only to be ignored. On September 3, 2024, he resigned from the National Assembly in protest against what he called the "systemic marginalisation" of the province.



Pakistan's response was characteristically brusque. It formalised his exit by accepting his long-pending resignation on February 11 – three days after his Lahore speech. There was no attempt at outreach or reconciliation. By shutting the door on one of the most moderate and persistent Baloch voices, Islamabad has deepened a political challenge it seems increasingly ill-equipped to manage.

A parallel story of courage and consequence is that of Mahrang Baloch, the popular woman human rights activist who has remained behind bars since her arrest on March 22, 2025. Her imprisonment, which in

effect is punishment for campaigning against enforced disappearances and other abuses, has drawn global attention and condemnation. She is widely regarded as one of the bravest women in the world today and has been nominated for the Nobel Prize.

Shutting doors on everyone together, the fates of Mengal and Mahrang Baloch illuminate a broader and more troubling pattern. Pakistan has estranged not only its older, constitutionalist Baloch leadership but also the province's younger generation. This generation is more assertive in its demands for genuine political participation, democratic space, and a fairer share of the prosperity generated by Balochistan's vast mineral wealth. It is not afraid to confront the symbols of the Pakistani state or its Chinese allies working on joint projects.

That estrangement found its most violent expression in the opening weeks of 2026, when the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) launched a series of coordinated attacks across multiple districts. Schools, hospitals, banks, markets, security installations, police stations, a high-security prison, and civilian areas were all targeted. On January 23, the BLA killed 48 Pakistani nationals, including 31 civilians, drawing rare condemnation from the United Nations Security Council. Pakistan responded with a full-fledged military operation from January 30 to February 5, claiming to have eliminated 216 militants at the cost of 22 security personnel.

As is invariably the case in such conflicts, Islamabad and the BLA have offered sharply divergent accounts of casualties on both sides. What neither side disputes is that the week was among the deadliest in recent memory in terms of the intensity of the fighting, the scale of the violence, and the human cost on all sides. The BLA is the region's most powerful militant outfit, which is fighting for an independent Baloch state. Of all the militant organisations operating in the province, it remains the largest and most capable, and it moves in step with a local sentiment

that is deeply and openly hostile to the Pakistani state.

The United States Congressional Research Service describes it as an ethnic-based separatist group numbering several thousand armed militants, one that employs guerrilla warfare tactics including strikes targeting Chinese nationals and China-funded projects in the province. In April this year, the BLA announced a significant expansion of its operational reach – a new naval wing called the Hammal Maritime Defence Force, named after Mir Hammal Jiand, a 16th-century Baloch hero said to have resisted Portuguese naval incursions. The wing wasted little time in making its presence felt. On April 12, 2026, it claimed its first strike with a swift attack on a Pakistani security patrol craft near the strategic coastal town of Jiwani.

One conclusion is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore: Pakistan has failed to establish its writ in one of its most resource-rich provinces. Worse, it appears to have methodically burnt the bridges between the state and the Baloch people bridge by bridge, leader by leader, gesture by gesture. What that portends for the region, and for Pakistan itself, demands careful examination. Peace has become the most serious casualty of all. The situation is now widely described as the worst human rights and security crisis in South Asia.

Politically adrift, clueless. On the political front, Pakistan is equally adrift, with no discernible strategy for dealing with figures like Sardar Akhtar Mengal and Mahrang Baloch. Mengal inflicted serious and lasting blows on Pakistan's body politic at a conference held in Lahore to commemorate the memory of human rights activist Asma Jahangir. He spoke of repression and enforced disappearances, of torture and the absence of democracy, and of Pakistan's compulsion to resolve every dispute through brute military force in a system that resembles military rule in all but name. His words have continued to echo across Pakistan, and most sharply in Balochistan itself.

Three of his utterances, in particular, have acquired a life of their own. The first: "It is better that some distance remains between us. Instead of living under one roof, tearing at each other's flesh, chewing each other's bones, and throwing each other's children into the fire of a furnace, it is far better that we separate and live as peaceful neighbours." The second: "You accuse them of being terrorists, but when a system relies solely on military brute force, torture, and enforced disappearances, what other path is left for the youth?" And the third which is perhaps the most resonant of all was not even his own words but a slogan borrowed from history: "Yaha Hum Sahi, Waha Tum Sahi" ("We are right here, you are right there"). This was a phrase that rang across undivided Pakistan at the time of the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

This was a new Sardar Akhtar Mengal. He had clearly travelled a long and disillusioning distance from the man who once lamented, not so long ago: "The Baloch militants consider me a traitor while the security establishment also treats me as an

enemy." That earlier Mengal was a man trapped between two worlds, still hoping the state would hear him. The Mengal who spoke in Lahore had stopped hoping. Pakistan had not driven him underground or into exile; it had done something more consequential: it had driven him out of belief in the possibility of a shared future.

Then there is Mahrang Baloch, leader of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, who remains at the receiving end

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

200+ families had illegally occupied railway land in the entry point of Guwahati.

In a joint exercise with @RailMinIndia, these illegal structures have been razed to the ground driving away the encroachers & eliminating this hub of anti-social activities. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



of what can only be called ruthless institutional oppression. She continues to be held in detention on shifting pretexts, tried inside prison without access for the media or independent observers, and repeatedly denied bail even as her family has raised serious alarm about a significant deterioration in her health. The opacity surrounding her treatment has been near total. The one slender silver lining is that democratic forces and human rights advocates across the world have refused to look away. Their sustained vigilance appears to have ensured that she has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mahrang herself has responded with characteristic selflessness. In a post on X, she wrote: "I am deeply honoured by this nomination, but it is not about me. It is about the thousands of Baloch who have been forcibly disappeared and the families demanding justice." She added that she and her partners in struggle would "continue our peaceful resistance."

It is a sentence worth pausing on. Pakistan would do well to recognise what a fragile and precious thing that is. Provinces do not burn all at once. They burn slowly, quietly, and then all at once. And the fire in Balochistan has been burning for a very long time.

Manipur Launches Intensive Electoral Roll Revision; CEO Assures No Voter Will Be Removed Without Due Process

IMPHAL

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has commenced the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the Electoral Roll, 2026 in Manipur, launching a statewide exercise aimed at updating voter records, enrolling eligible citizens and eliminating ineligible entries ahead of future elections.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Arun Kumar Sinha on Saturday assured residents that no voter would be struck off the electoral roll without being given a fair opportunity to present their case.

"The Election Commission is committed to maintaining a fair, transparent and inclusive electoral roll. No elector will be deleted without following due process and providing an opportunity to be heard," Sinha said while outlining the revision process.

The exercise, which takes July 1,



2026, as the qualifying date, will cover nearly 21 lakh registered electors across the state. Election authorities have already completed preparatory work, including the training of field personnel, printing of enumeration forms and awareness programmes involving political parties and election officials.

As part of the revision drive, 2,936 Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will conduct door-to-door visits across Manipur

to distribute partially pre-filled enumeration forms. The forms have been printed for all 20,93,076 voters currently listed in the state's electoral roll.

Electors have been asked to verify personal details, provide information related to earlier SIR records wherever available and return the completed forms to their respective BLOs. Officials clarified that no supporting documents will be collected during the enumeration stage.

In a bid to enhance transparency and public participation, the Election Commission has held consultations with recognised political parties and urged them to appoint Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to assist with the verification process. Similar coordination meetings have also been conducted at district and Assembly constituency levels.

Help desks have been established in all 16 districts to assist voters in locating

previous records and completing the required forms. Voters can also access services digitally through the Commission's voter portal and the ECINet mobile application, enabling them to download, fill and upload enumeration forms online.

For electors unable to trace earlier records, online search facilities have been made available through the voter portal and the official website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur. Printed electoral rolls from the last intensive revision conducted in 2005 are also available with Booth Level Officers for reference.

Officials said that in cases where enumeration forms are not returned, BLOs will conduct local inquiries to determine whether the voter has shifted residence, is deceased, absent from the area or has a duplicate entry. Such cases will be displayed publicly on the notice boards of Electoral Registration Offices

(EROs) and uploaded to the CEO's website to ensure transparency.

According to the schedule announced by the Election Commission, the Draft Electoral Roll will be published on July 5, 2026, incorporating all electors whose enumeration forms have been received. Voters who fail to submit their forms before the deadline will still have an opportunity to seek inclusion by filing Form 6 during the claims and objections period, which will remain open until September 2. During this phase, Electoral Registration Officers will scrutinise entries, verify eligibility and issue notices in cases where discrepancies are found or voter records cannot be linked to earlier SIR exercises.

The Final Electoral Roll is scheduled to be published on September 6, 2026, after all claims, objections and verification procedures have been completed.

The Election Commission has also

provided a mechanism for appeals. Electors dissatisfied with decisions made by Electoral Registration Officers may approach the District Magistrate under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. Further appeals can be made before the Chief Electoral Officer if required.

Describing the revision as a collaborative exercise involving voters, political parties and election officials, Sinha urged all stakeholders to participate actively to help ensure an accurate, transparent and inclusive electoral roll for the state.

The Special Intensive Revision in Manipur is part of a broader effort by the Election Commission to strengthen the integrity of electoral databases and ensure that every eligible citizen is able to exercise their democratic right while preventing duplication and ineligible entries in voter rolls.

Manipur CM Condemns NH-202 Ambush in Ukhrul That Killed Truck Driver

IMPHAL

Y Khemchand Singh on Friday strongly condemned the ambush on a convoy transporting essential commodities along National Highway-202 in Ukhrul district that left a truck driver dead and a police constable injured. The attack took place between Leingangching and TM Kasom under Litan Police Station when suspected militants allegedly opened fire on vehicles carrying rice supplied by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) along the Imphal-Ukhrul route.

Expressing condolences over the death of the truck driver, reportedly a resident of West Bengal, the Chief Minister described the ambush as a "cowardly act" intended to disrupt the supply of essential goods and worsen the already fragile security situation in the area.

Singh said drivers transporting essential commodities play a critical role in maintaining uninterrupted supplies across the state and that targeting them was an attempt to spread fear and instability.

The Chief Minister further alleged that vested interest groups could be behind the attack with the intention of undermining the government's efforts to restore peace and normalcy in Manipur. He also wished a speedy recovery to the police constable who sustained bullet injuries during the incident.

Following the ambush, security forces launched search and cordon operations in nearby areas to identify and apprehend those responsible. Authorities have assured that the perpetrators will be brought to justice in accordance with the law.

The incident has once again raised concerns over the safety of transport operators and security of key supply routes in the hill districts, prompting heightened vigilance along the highway corridor.

Electricity Consumers' Body Questions APDCL's 10 Crore Donation, Demands Free Power for Households

IMPHAL

Fresh tensions erupted in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Sunday after residents of Kongsakhul Naga Village alleged that armed cadres of the Kuki National Front (P) [KN-F(P)] and individuals from nearby Leilon Vaiphei village carried out an ambush that left one person seriously injured and another missing.

The allegations were made by the Kongsakhul Village Authority in a statement issued on Sunday, in which it condemned the incident and called for immediate intervention by the government and security agencies.

According to the Village Authority, the alleged attack took place at around 10:30 am after the water supply line serving Kongsakhul Naga Village was reportedly cut, disrupting a critical source of water for local residents.

The authority claimed that villagers had gone to restore the damaged water pipeline when they were allegedly ambushed without provocation.

"When residents proceeded to restore the disrupted water supply, our villagers were mercilessly ambushed," the statement alleged.

The authority said one villager sustained serious injuries in the incident, while another individual remains unaccounted for. It added that the episode has further heightened fear and uncertainty among residents already living amid ongoing security concerns in the region.

Strongly condemning the alleged attack, the Kongsakhul Village Authority described the incident as "barbaric and inhumane" and said it had created an atmosphere of insecurity and distress within the community.

The statement further noted that the incident occurred on a Sunday, a day observed by many residents as a time for worship and prayer.

"The assault on innocent civilians on a Sunday, a sacred day of worship and prayer for Christians, is not only deplorable but also constitutes a grave violation of human rights and Christian principles," the authority stated.

ENPO Accuses Nagaland Government of Backtracking on FNTA Pact, Demands Bill Be Passed Unchanged

KOHIMA

The Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) has accused the Nagaland government of attempting to dilute key provisions of the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA) Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and has urged the state administration to table and pass the proposed FNTA Bill in its original form without any amendments.

In a strongly worded statement issued on Saturday, the apex body representing the people of Eastern Nagaland expressed concern over reports that the state government has raised objections to provisions relating to legislative, executive and financial autonomy granted under the FNTA framework.

According to the ENPO, these autonomy-related provisions

constitute the very foundation of the agreement signed on February 5, 2026, and any effort to alter, delete or weaken them would undermine the spirit and intent of the accord reached after years of negotiations.

The organisation alleged that the state government's current position amounts to a reversal of commitments it had previously supported during consultations on the proposed Frontier Nagaland arrangement.

ENPO claimed that when the Ministry of Home Affairs circulated the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) in 2023 for comments and feedback, the Nagaland government had broadly agreed to the autonomy provisions that later became part of the final agreement.

The organisation said the apparent change in stance has

raised serious questions regarding the government's commitment to the tripartite process involving the Centre, the Nagaland government and the ENPO.

Questioning the timing of the objections, ENPO argued that legal and constitutional concerns being cited after the signing of the agreement were difficult to comprehend, particularly because the MoA was the culmination of nearly three years of consultations, deliberations and negotiations among all stakeholders.

"The agreement was reached after an extensive process involving discussions at multiple levels. Any attempt to revisit fundamental provisions at this stage risks eroding trust in the process," the organisation maintained.

ENPO further criticised what

it described as efforts to shift responsibility for implementation challenges onto the Central government. The organisation warned that any departure from the signed agreement could complicate the implementation process and potentially require alternative mechanisms to fulfil the commitments made to the people of Eastern Nagaland.

It asserted that if such a situation arises, responsibility would rest with the state government for deviating from the agreed framework.

Reiterating its demand, ENPO called upon the government led by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio to honour the agreement "in letter and spirit" and ensure that the proposed legislation reflects all provisions contained in the signed Memorandum of Agreement.

Tripura CM, Union Minister Khattar Review Infrastructure Push, Highlight PM SVANidhi Success

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha and Union Minister for Power and Housing & Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday reviewed the progress of key development projects in the state, with a focus on urban infrastructure, public services and strengthening the power sector. The high-level review meeting, held at the State Guest House in Agartala, brought together senior officials from the Centre and the state government to assess ongoing projects and discuss strategies for accelerating development initiatives across Tripura. During the deliberations, the leaders examined the status of major urban development and infrastructure projects and explored measures to improve implementation, enhance service delivery and address emerging infrastructure requirements in the state.

Officials from various departments

briefed the Chief Minister and the Union Minister on the progress of schemes currently under execution, highlighting achievements, challenges and future priorities. Discussions also focused on ensuring timely completion of projects and improving coordination between different agencies involved in implementation. The meeting underscored the commitment of both the Central and State governments to strengthening infrastructure, promoting sustainable urban development and improving the quality of public services for residents across Tripura. Particular emphasis was placed on expanding urban infrastructure and reinforcing the power sector to support the state's developmental aspirations and growing demand for reliable public utilities.

Earlier in the day, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar participated in the 6th PM SVANidhi Programme in Agartala, where he interacted with

beneficiaries and felicitated street vendors who have benefited from the flagship scheme. Addressing the gathering, Khattar highlighted the impact of the Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme in transforming the lives of street vendors by providing access to institutional credit, encouraging digital transactions and extending social security benefits.

The Union Minister said the initiative has emerged as a significant tool for financial inclusion, helping millions of street vendors across the country gain access to formal banking systems and improve their economic prospects. Describing PM SVANidhi as more than a conventional loan scheme, Khattar said it has become a platform for empowering small entrepreneurs through self-employment, self-reliance and dignity. He noted that the programme has enabled vendors to expand their businesses,

improve incomes and become active participants in the formal economy. The event featured the felicitation of beneficiaries who successfully utilized the financial assistance provided under the scheme to strengthen and expand their enterprises. Chief Minister Manik Saha also reiterated the state's commitment to supporting Central government initiatives aimed at economic empowerment and inclusive growth, particularly those benefiting small traders, entrepreneurs and economically vulnerable sections of society. The day's engagements reflected a broader emphasis on infrastructure development, urban transformation and livelihood enhancement in Tripura. Officials said continued collaboration between the Centre and the state government is expected to accelerate the implementation of development projects and contribute to long-term economic growth in the region.

Manipur CM Calls for Skill Development and Discipline at Student Award Ceremony



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh urged students to combine academic excellence with skill development, discipline and responsible citizenship, saying these qualities are essential for success in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing world. The Chief Minister was addressing the 26th Meritorious Award Distribution Ceremony for Class X and XII students held at Ngakraba Mandap in Singamei Chinga Mathak, Imphal, where outstanding students from various educational boards were honoured for their academic achievements.

Congratulating the award recipients, Khemchand Singh said academic success should be accompanied by qualities such as perseverance, dedication and effective time management. He emphasized that the productive use of time remains one of the most valuable habits that can help young people achieve their goals and build successful careers.

"Success is not determined by academic performance alone. Discipline, hard work and the ability to utilize time effectively are equally important in shaping one's future," the Chief Minister said while interacting with students and parents at the ceremony.

Highlighting the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization and technological advancement, he encouraged students to supplement their formal education with skill-based training and professional development programmes. According to him, practical skills and continuous learning have become increasingly important in preparing young people for future employment and leadership roles.

The Chief Minister also stressed the importance of staying informed about current affairs and developments taking place

around the world. He advised students to cultivate a habit of learning beyond textbooks and classrooms, noting that awareness of social, economic and political issues helps individuals become informed and responsible citizens.

During his address, Khemchand Singh also made an appeal for peaceful resolution of public issues and disputes through dialogue and discussion. Referring to the impact of frequent bandhs and road blockades, he said such disruptions create hardships for ordinary citizens, particularly daily wage earners, students and educational institutions.

He observed that prolonged disruptions affect academic schedules, hamper economic activities and inconvenience people across the state. The Chief Minister urged citizens and organisations to seek constructive solutions through communication and mutual understanding rather than resorting to methods that adversely affect public life.

The awards were presented to students who secured First Division marks during the 2025-2026 academic session under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur (BOSEM), and the Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur (COSEM).

The annual programme was organised by the Ngakraba Leirak Development Association (NGL-DA), which has been recognising academic excellence among students for more than two decades.

The ceremony was attended by office-bearers and senior members of the association, students, parents, teachers and other invited guests. The event served as a platform to celebrate academic achievements while encouraging young learners to pursue holistic development through education, skill enhancement and community engagement.

Speakers at the programme highlighted the importance of nurturing future generations through quality education and positive values, while also recognising the dedication and efforts of students who performed exceptionally well in their examinations.

The event concluded with the presentation of awards and certificates to meritorious students, reaffirming the significance of academic excellence and personal development in shaping the future of Manipur.

Assam Cabinet Expansion Set for June 5 as Sarma Prepares NDA Government's Next Phase

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that the state Council of Ministers will be expanded on June 5, setting the stage for the first major reshuffle and enlargement of the newly formed National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.

The announcement comes less than a month after the NDA secured a decisive mandate in the Assam Assembly elections and returned to power for a historic third consecutive term.

Taking to social media platform X, the Chief Minister confirmed the date for the long-awaited Cabinet expansion.

"I am pleased to inform that the Council of Ministers of the Government of Assam will be expanded on 5 June 2026," Sarma stated.

The expansion is expected to fill several vacant ministerial positions and strengthen the administrative structure of the government as it begins its new term with an ambitious development agenda.

The BJP-led NDA registered a resounding victory in the Assembly elections held earlier this year, winning 102 seats in the 126-member House. The electoral outcome marked the alliance's third



successive term in office and reinforced its political dominance in the state.

Following the victory, Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn in for a second consecutive term as Chief Minister on May 12 at a grand ceremony held at the Veterinary College Ground in Khanapara, Guwahati.

Alongside the Chief Minister, only four ministers were inducted into the Cabinet during the initial swearing-in ceremony-Rameswar Teli, Ajanta Neog, Atul Bora and Charan Boro.

The relatively small size of the ministry had immediately fuelled speculation about a subsequent expansion once consultations with the BJP's central leadership and alliance partners were completed.

With the June 5 date now officially announced, political attention has shifted towards identifying potential new en-

trants and possible changes in the allocation of portfolios.

Although the Chief Minister has not disclosed the names of prospective ministers or the extent of the reshuffle, political observers expect the expansion to accommodate senior BJP legislators, alliance representatives and regional balance considerations.

The exercise is also likely to address administrative requirements by distributing responsibilities across a broader group of ministers as the government implements its policy priorities for the new term.

At present, key departments have been allocated among the four Cabinet ministers. Senior BJP leader Rameswar Teli has been entrusted with the departments of Transformation and Development, Labour Welfare, and Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare. The inclusion of Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare is viewed as particularly significant, reflecting the government's continued emphasis on the welfare and socio-economic development of tea garden communities across Assam.

Atul Bora, president of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), has been assigned the portfolios of Panchayat and Rural Development, Implementation of Assam Accord, Border Protection and Development, and Excise. These departments are expected to play a crucial role in rural governance, border management and implementation of commitments linked to the Assam Accord.

Meanwhile, Charan Boro has been given charge of the Transport Department along with Welfare of Bodoland.

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Shah calls for close watch on centres of radicalization in border areas



BHUJ

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah, chaired a security review meeting in Bhuj, Gujarat, focusing on security-related issues concerning the border and coastal districts of Gujarat situated along the India-Pakistan Border (IPB). Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat, Chief Secretary, DGP, Gujarat, along with other senior state government officials, as well as the District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police of Kutch, Vav-Tharad, and Patan were present in the meeting. With a view to achieving more robust and comprehensive border management, the meeting focused on the challenges, threats, and emerging concerns in these border areas along the India-Pakistan Border, and emphasized the active and effective role of the state government-particularly the DMs and SPs in this regard.

During the meeting, Shah said that border fencing, maritime border security, and the strong political will of the state government have brought about a significant transformation in Gujarat's security landscape. This has resulted in the complete ces-

sation of infiltration into the state and smuggling on the border. He emphasized that a zero-tolerance approach should be adopted towards all unauthorized encroachments within the 0-15 km belt along the international border, and efforts should be made to eliminate them. He also stressed the need to maintain a close watch on centres of radicalization in border areas. Amit Shah said that District Magistrates must strictly monitor and regularly report on demographic changes occurring in border districts. He stated that reverse migration happening in border areas due to the establishment of industrial units is a welcome development. He added that everyone from police station to patwari-should work in unison to ensure deportation of already settled illegal infiltrators. He said that the local administrations should formulate SOPs for specific challenges and requirements of each border district, to ensure identification of existing infiltrators and threats related to drones and narcotics.

The Home Minister said that Security Coordination Groups should be formed in every district, comprising the BSF, Coast Guard, Income

Tax Department, Enforcement Directorate (ED), and the Lead Bank Manager. He said that the responsibility for the effective enforcement of Income Tax, anti-money laundering, and Customs laws should rest with the District Magistrate (DM), Superintendent of Police (SP), and Inspector General (IG), Border Range.

Shah emphasized the need to maintain strict vigil over hawala transactions, financial dealings, mule accounts, shell companies, suspicious vehicles, and GST collections in border districts. He stated that agencies combating financial crimes should strictly be kept apprised regarding border areas, and that the Income Tax Department, in collaboration with the RBI, should conduct extensive survey campaigns.

The Home Minister said that, given the proximity to the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), there is a need to prioritize coastal security and ensure effective coordination with the Indian Coast Guard. He further directed that, alongside the 'Vibrant Villages' initiative, 100% saturation of every scheme-both of the Central and State governments-must be ensured in the border villages.

Armed Forces ready for Op Sindoor 2 if need arises: Army Chief

PUNE

The armed forces are fully prepared for 'Operation Sindoor 2.0' if the need arises, Chief of Army Staff General Udaya Dwivedi said on Saturday, asserting that all three services are enhancing synergy for modern multi-domain warfare that extends beyond land, air and sea.

Speaking at a press conference on the sidelines of the passing-out parade of the 150th course of the National Defence Academy (NDA) here, General Dwivedi noted that while a temporary cessation of hostilities currently exists, all three services are preparing intensely for the next phase should it take place.

India launched Operation Sindoor, a military exercise to destroy terror infrastructure in Pakistan in May 2025, in response to the Pahalgaon terror attack, which claimed 26 lives in April.

"As far as Operation Sindoor is concerned, firstly, it is still continuing. There is a temporary cessation of hostilities. So the Indian Army and all the three services are preparing well for Operation Sindoor 2.0 if it takes place," he said.

He noted that future warfare will not be limited to land, maritime and air alone, but would be increasingly influenced by emerging domains such as space, cyber and cognitive warfare.

Modern battlefields have become highly transparent, General Dwivedi said, adding that military planners must remain cautious about deployments and force protection measures.

"What we have seen over a period of time is 24/7. The battlefield is so transparent that every movement is known to the other side. Therefore, we have to be very cautious in terms of our deployment, in terms of our employment, and the protection which is required to protect our troops as well as the civilians in the border areas," he said.

Referring to information warfare lessons from Operation Sindoor,



General Dwivedi said public trust and national cohesion would remain decisive factors in future conflicts.

"Victory is always in the mind. It's not on the ground. Therefore, information warfare is only successful if the whole of the nation gets together and trusts the people who are giving the information," he said.

"If that happens, I can assure you that the nation which trusts each other and all these stakeholders will always win the war," the Army Chief added.

He said that Operation Sindoor demonstrated India's resolve and the armed forces' ability to deliver a calibrated, precise, and purposeful response.

"This operation underlined the importance of integrated planning, real-time intelligence, precision targeting, strong air defence, secure communications, and synergy across domains," the Army chief said.

He said the Indian Army is fully conscious of modernisation transformation.

"We are transforming ourselves into a future-ready force under the 'Decade of Transformation', where-

in the role of the younger generation would be pivotal," he added.

He noted the raising of industry drone battalions, Divyastra batteries, Shaktiman regiments, Bhairav battalions, and other technology-enabled structures from within our resources is part of this transformation.

The general said the next major step is networking and data-centricity, where data becomes a strategic resource, and decision-making becomes faster, smarter, and more resilient.

Talking about the use of drones and other indigenous weapons, General Dwivedi said since he has taken over, he has been talking about "Eagle on the Arm".

"This means every soldier should have an 'eagle' in their hand... Every soldier should have the capability to fly a drone. You have seen that in our academies and other places, training for this is ongoing, simulators are there," he said.

He further said that the long-awaited military theaterisation process is on the "right track", with deliberations within the Chiefs

of Staff Committee completed and a report submitted to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for review.

All major concerns and interests of the three services have been accommodated in the proposed structure, he said.

General Dwivedi said service chiefs would continue to be responsible for "raise, train and sustain", while theatre commanders would be tasked with operational orchestration of forces.

"We are hopeful that the next setup which is coming under the new CDS should be able to take the journey forward and in the next two to three years, we should be able to see it happening on the ground," he said.

Earlier in the day, General Dwivedi reviewed the passing-out parade of the 150th course at NDA, Khadakwasla, where he said that Operation Sindoor had set a benchmark for when national will was expressed with precision and resolve, defining India's response to provocation.

"From contested grey zones to high-velocity hybrid warfare, today's security environment demands that those who serve must think sharply as they act," he said.

"Operation Sindoor demonstrated that and set the benchmark when national will was expressed with precision and resolve, defining how Bharat responds to provocation. That standard now belongs to you to uphold," the Army Chief said.

Calling the occasion "a poignant and a particularly personal moment", General Dwivedi recalled passing out from the same quarterdeck over 42 years ago.

"Today, as I stand before you at the far end of a life in uniform, preparing to doff mine as you prepare to don yours, I can tell you with certainty: what you begin here endures forever," he said.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump says US close to 'very good deal' with Iran, warns of alternative action if talks fail



WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said the US and Iran are nearing a "very good deal", but warned that if Washington's demands are not met, it would "end it in a different way."

Trump's remarks came during an interview to his daughter-in-law Lara Trump, which was telecast on Fox News on Saturday night.

"We're close to a very good deal. If you're going to be in a hurry, you're not going to make a good deal, and slowly but surely, we're getting what we want - and if we don't get what we

want, we're going to end it a different way," Trump said.

Trump said the Iranians are "good negotiators," but argued that the United States now holds "all the cards" because Iran has been "militarily defeated."

"But we're close to a very good deal. If we can make it, good. Otherwise, we just start up with the Department of War, as we call it," the US President said.

Trump said the Iranians had stated they were not developing a nuclear weapon, but he countered by asking what if they bought one.

"I said, well what happens if you buy a nuclear weapon? So now it says we will not develop or in any way purchase a military weapon. That's a big difference," he said.

President Donald Trump speaks during a Cabinet meeting at the White House, Wednesday, May 27, 2026, in Washington.

What we know and don't know about the emerging deal to end the Iran war

Trump's request has launched another round of back-and-forth between the parties that could last several days.

"It's more specifics about how the US gets the material and the timing," a senior administration official said, referring to the enriched uranium.

The second source told Axios that Trump also wants to amend some of the wording around the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, which hosts roughly one-fifth of the world's energy supplies in normal times.

The US official said Trump was told it would take around three days before the Iranians get back with a response.

not fully dismantled Iran's military because some of the leadership was more moderate.

Trump said the US had targeted Iran's more extreme elements and key leadership.

The US President held a meeting with his top cabinet colleagues and officers of the armed forces in the situation room on Friday but it concluded without any clarity on future actions.

US media outlet Axios reported that Trump asked for several amendments to the deal his envoys reached with their Iranian counterparts.

Trump wants the deal and expects to finalize it soon, but is keen to strengthen several points that are important to him particularly around Iran's nuclear material. Axios reported quoting two US officials.

President Donald Trump speaks during a Cabinet meeting at the White House, Wednesday, May 27, 2026, in Washington.

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'Dont trust enemy's promises': Iran's chief negotiator



TEHRAN

Iran's chief negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Sunday that Tehran will not agree to any deal with the United States that fails to secure the rights of Iranians.

"We will not approve any agreement until we are certain that the rights of the Iranian people have been upheld," Ghalibaf said, in a video broadcast on state television.

He added that Iranian negotiators "neither trust the enemy's words nor its promises."

His remarks came as Iran and Washington continue to exchange proposals over a framework for a deal to end the war that broke out on February 28, engulfing the Middle East.

On Saturday, The New York Times and Axios media outlets reported that US President Donald Trump had sent back to Tehran a new framework to be considered by Iran with "tougher" terms.

Iran views sanction relief and the release of its assets fro-

zen in banks abroad as among its key rights to be ensured under any deal with the United States.

Since the outbreak of the war, Iran has kept tight control over the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy conduit, and sees oversight of shipping through the waterway as within its rights.

Any tweaks to the proposal could further delay an agreement to formally end the Middle East war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz after weeks of fraught negotiations marked by sharp rhetoric and occasional flare-ups of violence.

Trump has said his priorities include stopping Iran from any nuclear weapon development and re-opening the blockaded Hormuz shipping lane.

"The one guarantee that I have to have is that there will be no nuclear weapons. They've agreed to that, and it was very interesting," he told his daughter-in-law Lara Trump in an interview broadcast on her Fox News program

on Saturday night.

But Tehran has previously cast doubt on Trump's assertions and the sides remain far apart on key issues.

Iran has said it needs the release of \$12 billion in frozen assets before engaging in substantive talks on its nuclear program, dismissing earlier Trump comments that its enriched uranium stockpile would be destroyed as "baseless", according to Iranian media.

Tehran has also insisted that Lebanon be included in any deal, despite ongoing fighting, with Beirut accusing Israel of a "scorched-earth policy" as it expands operations against Iran-backed Hezbollah.

After previously signalling a deal was close, Trump struck a less urgent tone, hinting at renewed military action in the Fox interview.

"I'm in no hurry," he said. "If we don't get what we want, we're going to end in a different way."

Home Ground: How Meghalaya Is Turning Local Families Into the Future of Tourism



ecosystem where homestay owners, local transport providers, food vendors, and tourist guides all grow together. The State treats smaller homestays as just as vital as large infrastructure, spreading the economic benefits of tourism to the grassroots rather than concentrating them at the top.

Nowhere is this philosophy more visible than in the State's plans for the upcoming 39th National Games, 2027. Meghalaya intends to house visitors in homestays rather than traditional Games Villages, placing local families at the centre of a national stage.

As that moment approaches, the homestay revolution tells a bigger story about how Meghalaya is choosing to grow. By giving ordinary people, the tools to succeed, the Government of Meghalaya is doing more than expanding accommodation. It is building something more enduring — a tourism economy where benefits flow directly to the families who have always been its greatest hosts.

When travellers visit a new

place, they don't always look for scenic spots. They look for genuine human connections. For years, Meghalaya has offered that warmth, rooted in its rich culture and deep hospitality. Today, that warmth is driving economic growth.

The numbers tell this story clearly. Shillong recently topped Skyscanner's 2025 Report as the most-searched travel destination in India. It is drawing more visitors than ever under its new tourism identity, Symphony in the Mist. Tourist arrivals have surged from roughly 12 lakhs in 2018 to over 16 lakhs today, and the State has set an ambitious target of 21 lakhs by 2028. In April 2026, NITI Aayog's Divya Bharat: A Window to the Soul of India report added further weight to this momentum. It identified Meghalaya as one of India's few year-round travel destinations with no clear off-season. It highlighted the State's living root bridges, extensive cave systems, and indigenous cultural traditions. The message was clear: Meghalaya is no longer a seasonal stop. It is a destination for all seasons.

But recognition alone does not fill a room. As visitor numbers climbed, a serious challenge emerged. Demand was outpacing supply. Many high-potential destinations lacked adequate lodging, and tourist spending went unrealised. The government saw that building massive hotels was not the only answer. Instead, it chose to empower the families who call these hills home. This thinking made the homestay model the cornerstone of Meghalaya's tourism strategy.

The government took the first step in September 2023 by launching the Meghalaya Tourism Homestay Scheme in convergence with the Prime



Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP). The scheme gives financial assistance of up to 70% for projects costing up to 10 lakhs. This includes a 35% subsidy under PMEGP and an equal 35% from the State's Tourism Department, making it accessible to first-time entrepreneurs and rural households. The response was swift. The scheme sanctioned 900 applications. On the ground, more than 490 homestays became operational, creating 1,000 rooms and around 1,500 livelihood opportunities.

With this proof of success, the government moved to scale. It launched the Chief Minister's Meghalaya Homestay Mission in September 2025, building on the earlier scheme with greater ambition. The Mission targets 3,000 new homestays and 15,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2028. The support structure improved as well. New homestays can receive a subsidy of up to 70%, capped at 7 lakhs. Existing homestays can claim an upgradation incentive of up to 2 lakhs to improve quality and visitor experience. Early momentum has been strong, with 80 applications already approved across 10 districts, showing participation from every part of the State.

These are not just statistics. For people like Daminiot Kharshandi from Ri Bhoi district, a first-generation entrepreneur and scheme beneficiary, this

support changed everything. "The Homestay Scheme gave me the financial confidence to launch my business, which I have successfully expanded," he added. "The State's Meghalaya Tourism branding policy has also brought more footfalls and revenue." His story is becoming a familiar one across the region. It shows that the right support, reaching the right people, multiplies.

One such story belongs to Donny Esmond Rapsang. His Friendship Homestay at Umden Umsaitprah, Umroi is a story of resilience and community empowerment. Rapsang once moved between multiple small jobs and businesses to support his family. The Government of Meghalaya's Homestay Scheme opened a new door. With financial assistance of over 9 lakh, he began construction in 2023, completed the homestay in 2024, and opened it to the public in 2025. Today, the homestay supports his household and has created opportunities for local youth involved in its construction and operations. His journey, like Daminiot's, shows how tourism-based initiatives can strengthen livelihoods, promote self-employment, and empower rural communities.

This wide participation reflects what Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Conrad K. Sangma has consistently emphasised. These initiatives are not isolated interventions. They build an

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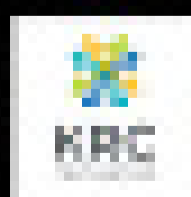


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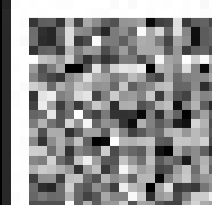


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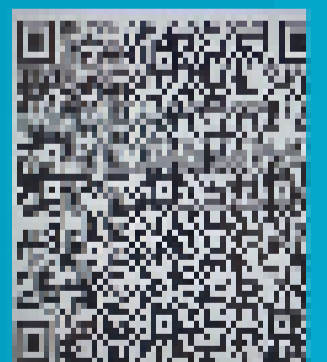
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