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PERSPECTIVE
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Japan PM Sanae Takaichi Likely to Visit Assam in July, Talks with Modi Expected

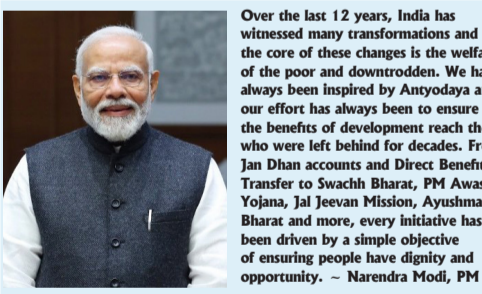
GUWAHATI
Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is likely to visit Assam in the first half of July as part of a proposed trip to India, according to a report by Japan's public broadcaster NHK. The report, carried by NHK WORLD-JAPAN, stated that Takaichi may travel to India as early as July for discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking a significant step in efforts to deepen strategic and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Quoting Japanese government sources, NHK said preparations are underway for Takaichi to visit Assam, where she is expected to hold her second face-to-face meeting with Modi. The proposed visit is expected to focus on advancing bilateral ties under the long-term India-Japan partnership framework outlined during Modi's visit to Japan last year.

Officials familiar with the developments indicated that the leaders are likely to discuss ways to expand cooperation in key sectors, including security, infrastructure, trade and investment. The talks are also expected to address broader global challenges such as energy security and strengthening critical mineral supply chains amid continuing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

According to the NHK report, Takaichi is keen to promote regular high-level exchanges between India and Japan as part of efforts to further institutionalise bilateral engagement and reinforce the strategic partnership. The proposed Assam visit carries added significance as it would come nearly six years after a planned visit by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Guwahati was cancelled in December 2019. Abe had been scheduled to attend the India-Japan Annual Summit in Assam, but the trip was called off amid widespread protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) across the state.

WHO SAID WHAT



Assam Cabinet Portfolios Allocated; CM Himanta Retains Key Departments, Barak Valley Gets Strategic Representation

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

GUWAHATI: With the approval of Assam Governor Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya, the portfolios of the members of the Assam Council of Ministers have been formally allocated. Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the distribution of departments through a social media post on Monday.

The Chief Minister has retained several key portfolios, including Home and Political Affairs, Public Works Department (Buildings and National Highways), Public Works Department (Roads), Power, Information and Public Relations, Printing and Stationery, along with all other unallocated departments.

Among the major assignments, Ashok Singhal has been entrusted with Health and Family Welfare and Medical Education and Research, while Jayanta Malla Baruah will oversee Finance, Environment and Forest, and Mines and Minerals. Dr. Ranaj Pegu has been assigned School Education, Higher Education, Tribal Affairs (Plains), and Information Technology.

Krishnendu Paul has been given charge of Public Health Engineering, Hill Areas, and Barak Valley Development, making him one of the key ministers for the development of southern Assam.



Kaushik Rai has been allotted Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Housing and Urban Affairs, and Cooperation.

Other important allocations include Atul Bora handling Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam Accord Implementation, Border Protection and Development, and Excise; Ajanta Neog taking charge of Women and Child Development and Tourism; and Pijush Hazarika overseeing Agriculture, Irrigation, and Parliamentary Affairs.

Bimal Borah has been assigned Cultural Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Public Enterprises, and Act East Policy

Affairs, while Biswajit Daimary will look after Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture, Sports and Youth Welfare, Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship, and Indigenous and Tribal Faith and Culture.

In his message, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated his cabinet colleagues and expressed confidence in the team's ability to serve the people of Assam effectively.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all my colleagues in Team Assam. With dedication and a sense of responsibility, we will continue to serve the people of Assam through united efforts and further accelerate the state's

journey of growth and development," he said.

The new allocation is being viewed as significant for the Barak Valley region, with Krishnendu Paul receiving the Barak Valley Development portfolio alongside Public Health Engineering and Hill Areas. Observers believe the move could help strengthen focus on infrastructure and developmental issues in the region. Additionally, Jayanta Malla Baruah's stewardship of the Environment and Forest Department is expected to have implications for conservation and environmental management initiatives across Barak Valley.

BJP Nominates Former Manipur Chief Sarda Devi for Rajya Sabha Poll



IMPHAL

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday nominated Adhikarimayum (A.) Sarda Devi as its candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha election from Manipur, with the former state party president filing her nomination papers at the Manipur Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

Sarda Devi submitted her nomi-

nation before the Returning Officer in the presence of Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh, BJP legislators and senior party leaders.

Her candidature marks a significant moment for the party in Manipur. Sarda Devi, who became the first woman to head the BJP's state unit, is now set to contest for a seat in the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament.

The election to the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Manipur is scheduled to be held on June 18. As per the Election Commission's notification, June 8 was the final date for filing nominations, while scrutiny of nomination papers will take place on June 9. Candidates may withdraw their nominations until June 11.

If required, polling will be conducted between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on June 18, with counting of votes scheduled to commence at 5 p.m. on the same day. Alongside Manipur, Rajya Sabha elections are slated to be held in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Rajasthan on June 18. The BJP is widely expected to retain the Manipur seat, given its numerical advantage and continued dominance in the state assembly. Party leaders expressed confidence that Sarda Devi's candidature would further strengthen the BJP's representation in Parliament.

Her nomination comes at a time when the party is seeking to consolidate its political position in the state and maintain its influence in national legislative forums.

Thousands Rally in Imphal, Demand NRC Update Before Census Exercise in Manipur



IMPHAL

Thousands of people participated in a mass rally in Manipur's Imphal on Monday, demanding the updation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before any future census exercise is conducted in the state. The demonstration was jointly organised by 14 civil society organisations under the banner of 14 CSOs Kangleipak. The rally commenced from Tiddim Ground in Imphal West and culminated at THAU Ground, where a public meeting was held.

The gathering drew participation from a wide cross-section of society, including students, youth groups, internally displaced persons, artists and members of indigenous communities. Protesters carried placards bearing slogans such as "Only updation of NRC can save Manipur," "No NRC, No Census," "Do not neglect Manipur State," and "Until NRC 1951 update, don't conduct census." Addressing the public meeting, convenor of 14 CSOs Kangleipak, Shanta

Nahakpam, alleged that the Centre had repeatedly overlooked demands for NRC updation in Manipur despite expressing concerns over illegal immigration in other parts of the country. He referred to a recent notification issued by the Government of India constituting a high-powered committee to examine demographic changes in various states and submit its findings to the Union Home Ministry within a year. Nahakpam argued that Manipur's unique circumstances warranted special consideration, citing its international border, existing peace accords with different groups and concerns regarding demographic shifts. According to Nahakpam, updating the NRC is essential to ensure the credibility of any future delimitation exercise in the state. He contended that delimitation carried out without addressing alleged discrepancies in population records could have implications for the political representation and constitutional safeguards of indigenous communities. The civil society leader also urged the Centre to include a representative agency from the Manipur government in the newly constituted committee examining demographic changes, maintaining that local participation would be necessary for an accurate assessment of the state's concerns.

Meghalaya Border Village Demands Zero-Line Fencing, Fears Isolation from Rest of India

PYNURSLA

Residents of a border village in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district staged a demonstration on Sunday demanding that the proposed India-Bangladesh border fence be constructed along the zero line, arguing that the current alignment would leave their settlement isolated from the rest of the country.

The protest was held in Lyngkhong, a village situated virtually on the international boundary where several homes stand only a few metres away from a Bangladeshi settlement. Villagers submitted a memorandum to the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Pynursla, urging authorities to halt the ongoing fencing work until their concerns are addressed.

Under existing international norms, border fencing is generally constructed at least 150 yards inside the international boundary. However, residents fear that the proposed alignment would place their village outside the fenced area, creating difficulties related to access, security and day-to-day movement.

"We are not against border fencing, but we want the fence to be erected at the zero line so that our village remains inside India and within the fenced area," village headman Ramu said during the demonstration.

According to residents, Lyngkhong has long existed alongside neighbouring settlements across the border, with only a bamboo barrier erected by villagers during the COVID-19 pandemic serving as a visible separation in some stretches.

Local resident Rima Khongsdir said the community was deeply concerned about its future if the fence is constructed along the currently proposed route.

"If the fence comes up in its present alignment, our village will be left outside. We are worried about our future and want the state government to listen to our concerns and take them up with the Government of India," she said.

Officials said the fencing project is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen security along the India-Bangladesh border. Meghalaya shares a 444-kilometre international boundary with Bangladesh, of which less than 80 kilometres remain unfenced due to difficult terrain and unresolved local issues.

A senior official of the Border Security Force (BSF) said a border outpost has already been established in Lyngkhong and security arrangements are in place to ensure the safety of residents.

"The BSF has a presence in the village and all necessary security measures are being taken to ensure the safety of the residents," the official said. Meanwhile, a senior official from the Meghalaya Home Department said India has already raised with Bangladesh the possibility of constructing a single-row fence along the zero line in areas where settlements could otherwise be adversely affected. "Discussions have been initiated regarding the proposal for a single-line fence at the zero line. However, the new government in Bangladesh is yet to take a decision on the matter," the official said.

The demand from Lyngkhong residents highlights the complex challenges of border management in areas where communities have historically lived close to the international boundary and where security requirements must be balanced with the interests of local populations.

Special Assam TET 2026 for LP, UP Levels on June 28; Admit Cards Available from June 12

GUWAHATI

The written examination for the Special Assam Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) 2026 for Lower Primary (LP) and Upper Primary (UP) levels will be conducted on June 28, 2026, authorities announced in an official notification.

The examination is being held for candidates belonging to the Bodo, Garo, Manipuri and Hmar mediums. Admit cards will be available for download from 11 a.m. on June 12 through the official website of the Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA).

Candidates can access their admit cards by logging in with their application number and password generated during the online application process.

According to the notification, examinees must carry a printed copy of their admit card along with a valid government-issued photo identity card to the examination centre. Accepted identity documents include Aadhaar card, PAN card, driving licence and voter identity card.

Candidates under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) category have been instructed to produce a valid certificate issued by the competent authority or the District Commissioner. Officials have advised eligible candidates to arrange the required documents well before the examination date.

The authorities have also issued strict guidelines regarding items permitted inside the examination hall. Mobile phones, even in switched-off mode, and all electronic devices including smart watches, digital watches, Bluetooth devices, earphones, microphones, calculators, pen drives and other storage devices will be strictly prohibited.

Amit Shah to Launch Smart Border System, Inaugurate Facilities at Dawki and Srimantapur Land Ports

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will launch the Land Port Management System (LPMS) in New Delhi on June 9, marking a significant step towards digitising India's border infrastructure and streamlining cross-border trade and passenger movement.

The technology-driven platform has been designed to modernise operations at land ports across the country by integrating cargo, passenger and regulatory processes into a unified digital framework. The initiative forms part of the Centre's broader strategy to strengthen border management, improve security and enhance trade facilitation through technology.

Alongside the launch, Shah will inaugurate newly developed stakeholder accommodation facilities at the Dawki Land Port in Meghalaya and the Srimantapur Land Port in Tripura, aimed at improving support infrastructure for border personnel and other stakeholders operating at these facilities.

According to officials, LPMS will serve as a unified digital platform enabling real-time exchange of logistics and regulatory information among government agencies and private operators. The system is expected to reduce procedural delays, improve transparency and bring land-port operations closer to the digital standards already adopted at airports and seaports.

The platform will provide end-to-end digital processing for cargo and passenger movement, including slot booking, online payments, cargo tracking and single-window clearances. It has also been integrated with key national digital platforms, including ICE-GATE, Unified Logistics Interface Platform and the motor vehicle ecosystem to facilitate seamless inter-agency coordination.

The launch carries particular significance for the Northeast, where several strategically important land ports serve as gateways for trade and connectivity with neighbouring countries. Key facilities include Moreh Land Port, Darranga Land Port, Agartala Land Port and Sabroom Land Port, in addition to Dawki and Srimantapur.

The Land Ports Authority of India, functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs' Department of Border Management, is responsible for the development and management of land ports along India's international borders.

At present, ICPAI manages 15 land ports across the country, including facilities on the borders with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Officials described LPMS as a major milestone in India's efforts to establish a technology-enabled border management network that enhances trade efficiency, strengthens connectivity and supports national security objectives while advancing long-term economic development goals.

Biren Singh Flags 'Village Growth Anomaly' in Manipur Hill Districts, Calls for Scrutiny of Official Data

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: Former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh has raised concerns over what he described as a significant "village growth anomaly" in the state's hill districts, citing official data that shows uneven expansion of villages over the past five decades. In an infographic shared on social media, Singh compared village statistics from 1972 and 2023 for four hill districts, Kangpokpi, Churachandpur, Senapati and Ukhrul. He argued that the pattern of growth reflected in the figures warrants closer examination.

According to the data cited by the former Chief Minister, the total number of villages across the four districts increased from 754 in 1972 to 1,865 in 2023, marking an addition of 1,111 villages over the period.

The infographic showed that Kangpokpi recorded an increase from 193 villages in 1972 to 713 in 2023, while Churachandpur witnessed growth from 339 villages to 874 during the same period.

In comparison, Senapati and Ukhrul registered relatively modest increases in the number of villages. Singh claimed that Kangpokpi and Churachandpur together accounted for nearly 95 per cent of the total increase in villages among the four districts. Describing the trend as a "village growth anomaly", Singh said the figures reveal a pattern that deserves further scrutiny and examination. He suggested that the disproportionate rise in the number of villages in certain districts raises important questions about demographic and administrative developments over the years. The former Chief Minister's remarks have reignited discussions on settlement patterns and administrative records in Manipur's hill regions, with the data likely to attract attention from policymakers and researchers alike. While Singh highlighted the figures as a matter of concern, no official response had been issued by the state government regarding his observations at the time of filing this report.





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THE ECONOMY THAT LIES BEAUTIFULLY

India is officially one of the fastest growing large economies in the world. The headlines are impressive. Roads are being built. Airports are expanding. Digital payments have changed daily life. Infrastructure has visibly improved. Yet, beneath this growth story, there is a quiet unease. The rupee remains under pressure. Foreign investors have pulled out large sums from Indian equities. Too many educated young people are still searching for secure and dignified work. The stock market feels expensive and uncertain. And the common man keeps asking a simple question that no headline can answer: if the economy is doing so well, why does my life still feel so precarious?

This is not a contradiction. It is a signal. And it is the most important signal we have.

The numbers are not lying. But they are not telling the whole truth either. Economics teaches us a simple lesson that politics often resists: everything has a cost, because everything can be used somewhere else. A rupee spent on one scheme cannot be spent on another. Land used for one factory cannot be used for a hospital. And a young person's five years spent chasing one competitive exam cannot be recovered. The moment a country forgets this arithmetic, treating resources as if they were infinite, it begins spending its future while calling it its present.

Take welfare, for example. Protecting the vulnerable is not just good politics. It is sound statecraft. Kautilya understood this clearly: the stability of the state rests on the wellbeing of its people. Food support, direct benefit transfers, and health coverage are not generosity. They are the floor below which no civilised state allows its citizens to fall. But floors are meant to stand on, not to live on permanently. When welfare stops being a bridge and becomes a destination, it quietly transforms from compassion into dependency. And once that happens, the political incentive to move people out evaporates, because the queue itself becomes a voter base.

Infrastructure makes the same promise with different packaging. A new highway from Jammu to Katra is genuinely useful. But the road itself does not create prosperity. It creates the possibility of prosperity. What actually creates prosperity is what happens along the road: the hotels that open, the local produce that finds new markets, the cold storage that stops farmers from watching their crop rot. Infrastructure is the skeleton. Without the muscle of human capability and local enterprise, it remains a very elegant skeleton doing very little.

This distinction between growth and livelihood is one India must hold in plain sight. Gross domestic product can grow on the back of large infrastructure spending, financial services, and high end consumption. But a young graduate in Udhampur does not live inside GDP. He lives inside opportunity. His question is simple. Where is the job? Government vacancies are few. Corporate hiring is selective. So he waits, moving from one coaching centre to another, and the years that should have been his most productive quietly become his most suspended. Every year a capable young person spends in this limbo is a year their energy produces nothing for the economy. Multiply that by millions, and you begin to understand why India's demographic dividend has not yet converted cleanly into economic advantage.

Then there is the rupee. When it weakens, it tells you things that no press release will ever say. Currency pressure is not the problem. It is the symptom. A falling rupee reflects a persistent trade imbalance and a manufacturing base that is not yet deep enough to offset what we buy from the rest of the world. India imports too much of what it should be producing: electronics, energy, components, critical technologies. Each import creates a permanent structural demand for dollars. Atmanirbhar Bharat is the right instinct. But an instinct needs to become an industrial programme with specific targets, honest accountability, and the patience to wait for results that take years, not quarters. Patriotism is an excellent starting point. It is a poor substitute for policy.

The money flowing in and out of Indian markets adds another layer. Foreign Direct Investment is patient money. It builds factories, brings technology, creates jobs, and believes in the long story. Foreign Portfolio Investment is different. It enters when returns look attractive and exits the moment risk rises. When large sums leave Indian equities, it does not mean India has failed. It means sophisticated investors are asking hard questions about whether India's growth story is backed by real productivity or by optimism with a good marketing team. The stock market, meanwhile, is not the economy. A rising index can reflect genuine confidence, or it can reflect excess liquidity looking for a home. True economic strength announces itself differently: in rising wages, expanding small businesses, growing exports, and households secure enough to plan five years ahead.

Beneath all of this runs something that resists quantification but holds everything together: Trust. Businesses invest when they trust that rules will not change arbitrarily. Young people take risks when they trust that opportunity is real. Households spend when they trust that their future income will hold. Trust is built slowly through consistent policy, fair taxation, reliable data, and the quiet daily evidence that the system is not working against ordinary people. When trust weakens, money becomes cautious. And cautious money does not build nations. The Indian economy is not in crisis. But it is sending signals, and signals are worth reading before they become emergencies. Headline growth must translate into household confidence. Infrastructure must become employment. Welfare must build capability rather than sustain dependency. The rupee's stability must come from what India exports, not only from what the Reserve Bank defends. Atmanirbharta must move from a slogan on hoardings to actual supply chains running through actual factories.

Jammu is a good place to think about all of this, because Jammu has never had the luxury of abstractions. This region understands scarcity, resilience, and what it means to build something meaningful under difficult conditions. It also understands that security is not only military. It is economical. Jobs for youth. Industry for towns.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Only by cutting through the darkness of ignorance can we truly imagine the majesty of tolerance.

- Artis Lewis

The Persian Gulf Crisis and Its Implications A Major Test for India's Foreign Policy and Economy



DR. TOMASZ LUKASZUK

The conflict in the Persian Gulf has emerged as one of the most significant tests of India's foreign policy in the 21st century. The war has exposed the limits of India's influence in the Indian Ocean in the face of American actions, while also revealing the constraints of the strategic autonomy that India has been seeking to develop over the past decade.

Economically, the conflict has forced India to reassess its supply chains in relation to energy security and to reevaluate Gulf markets for Indian goods, services, and labor exports. It has also highlighted the need to accelerate the development of domestic energy capabilities and diversify gas sources used for fertilizer production. There are growing expectations that the implementation of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)-a hybrid transport and economic corridor linking Red Sea ports, Saudi rail networks, and Israeli Mediterranean ports-will gain momentum.

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014, India has pursued a multi-aligned foreign policy. India describes this approach as "strategic autonomy," a concept inspired by the tradition of non-alignment, while American and European analysts often characterize it as a balancing or pendulum policy. India has simultaneously cultivated relations with Israel, Iran, and the Gulf states.

Indian diplomacy is largely driven by economic considerations, as all these countries play important roles in India's trade and investment landscape. Israel is a major trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$6 billion and investments surpassing \$300 million. It is also a source of advanced technologies in agriculture, irrigation, desalination, defense industries, and healthcare.

Iran has traditionally been an important source of oil and gas, although U.S. sanctions have limited cooperation. It also serves as a market for Indian rice exports. Additionally, India has invested in the Chabahar Port near the Strait of Hormuz. The facility is intended to provide a counterbalance to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Chinese-developed Gwadar Port in Pakistan. From India's perspective, Iran also plays a crucial role in monitoring and balancing Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan.

The Gulf states meet approximately 50 percent of India's oil requirements and 40 percent of its liquefied natural gas needs. They also account for around 15 percent of India's exports and 20 percent of its imports. Nearly nine million people of Indian origin live in the region-the largest overseas Indian community in the world-and they send home roughly \$50

billion annually in remittances. Indian citizens constitute around 35 percent of the population of the United Arab Emirates.

The war that began in February posed a challenge to India's efforts to maintain balance in its foreign policy. The initial responses of Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar were measured. They expressed concern, called for dialogue, and appealed for the protection of civilians. India sought to remain neutral while indirectly supporting the United States and Israel and criticizing Iran for attacks on Gulf countries. In this context, Modi's visit to Israel two days before the outbreak of hostilities was viewed as an important signal.

The sinking of an Iranian vessel off the coast of Sri Lanka caused concern in New Delhi. The ship had departed from Visakhapatnam, India's largest naval base on the Bay of Bengal, after participating in a joint military exercise. The incident highlighted the limits of India's status as a security provider in the eastern Indian Ocean, a role it has developed with American support. Despite India's confidence in its strategic autonomy, these limitations are still influenced by decisions made in Washington under President Donald Trump's administration.

To offset potential damage to its image, Indian authorities agreed to provide shelter to Iranian vessels at the naval base in Kochi on India's western coast.

From India's perspective, another significant aspect of the U.S.-Iran conflict and the Gulf war was Washington's acceptance of Pakistan's offer to act as a mediator in peace talks with Iran. External Affairs Minister Jaishankar criticized Pakistan, arguing that it was behaving more like a broker than a genuine mediator. He emphasized that India would not accept such a role for Pakistan and

valley with Pakistan and concerns about influence in the Gulf region and the quality of its relationship with the United States.

The lack of strong public comments from the Indian government on the matter was interpreted in India as a sign that New Delhi had accepted Trump's request for greater freedom of action for the United States in India's neighboring regions. The primary concern of Indian policymakers has remained the stabilization of supply chains and ensuring the safety of Indian citizens abroad.

From a supply-chain perspective, the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz became a major issue. Before the conflict, around two million barrels of oil passed through the strait daily. Indian diplomacy successfully secured permission for more than a dozen vessels to transit Iranian maritime zones.

The Indian government also obtained approval to increase oil imports from Russia. This has helped replenish India's strategic petroleum reserves, estimated at around 25 million barrels. Disruptions in imports of gas and other materials used in fertilizer production have forced India to seek alternative suppliers and reroute shipping networks. New routes connect India with Morocco and Jordan via the Cape of Good Hope and with Indonesia and Malaysia through the Bay of Bengal.

Due to shortages in liquefied natural gas supplies, domestic producers in India are operating at only about 60 percent of their capacity.

Approximately one million Indian citizens have already returned home, either individually or in groups. Officials in New Delhi recognize that providing employment for all returnees during a prolonged conflict will be extremely difficult. The situation could evolve into a broader social challenge. Many returnees fear losing their property, jobs, and

Another concern involves 14 Indian commercial vessels located near the Strait of Hormuz and their need for humanitarian assistance. Initially, 37 ships were stranded, but diplomatic efforts enabled 23 of them to continue their journeys.

Despite a temporary ceasefire agreement, clashes between Iranian and American forces continue, and both sides offer dif-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The ocean reminds us we are bound together. It shapes our climate, sustains ecosystems & economies, and feeds billions.

On World Ocean Day, let's act with ambition & resolve to build a new relationship with the ocean – grounded in science & build on shared responsibility. ~ Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, UN



fering assessments of progress in negotiations. Under these circumstances, India must prepare for further economic challenges and



stressed the need for a rapid end to the conflict in the Gulf. India's reaction reflects its continuing ri-

social benefits in Gulf countries, where more than half of them had worked in the construction sector.

may need to consider adjustments to its foreign policy in the coming months.

Tension in Ukhrul as Protesters Oppose Assam Rifles Outpost, Tear Gas Used to Disperse Crowd

IMPHAL

Tension flared in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Sunday after security forces fired tear gas shells to disperse protesters opposing the establishment of a temporary Assam Rifles outpost at New Heaven under the jurisdiction of Shokvao village.

The confrontation occurred around noon when a large group of demonstrators, predominantly Tangkhul Naga women, blocked a road to prevent Assam Rifles vehicles from accessing the proposed outpost site. The standoff had reportedly begun a day earlier and escalated as security personnel attempted to move through the area.

Local organisations, including the Katho Katamno Long, Katho Long and the Katho Women Coordi-



nation Committee, condemned the establishment of the outpost, alleging that it falls within the jurisdiction of Shokvao village and was set up without adequate consultation with local authorities.

According to the organisations, village authorities had repeatedly communicated their objections to the Assam Rifles and sought the withdrawal of personnel from the site. They claimed that concerns raised by the community had not been adequately addressed.

The protesting groups maintained that their opposition was not directed against security measures or the presence of security forces in general, but rather against what they described as the unilateral establishment of the outpost without prior consultation with village authorities and residents.

In statements issued during the protest, community representatives argued that decisions affecting village land and administration should involve discussions with local stakeholders and traditional institutions.

The organisations further stated that women from the village had taken the lead in engaging with personnel of the 40 Shangshak Battalion of the Assam Rifles in an effort to prevent activities within the village's jurisdiction and to press for dialogue on the issue. As tensions mounted, protesters blocked the movement of security vehicles, prompting security forces to use tear gas shells to disperse the crowd and clear the route. No immediate reports of serious injuries were available.

The incident highlights the continuing sensitivity surrounding se-

curity deployments and land-related issues in parts of Manipur, where local communities often seek greater consultation on administrative and security-related decisions affecting their areas.

Authorities had not issued a detailed statement on the confrontation at the time of reporting. However, the situation remained tense, with community organisations reiterating their demand for the withdrawal of the temporary outpost and for discussions with village authorities regarding any future deployment plans.

The development comes amid ongoing security concerns across several districts of Manipur, where authorities continue to balance law-and-order requirements with efforts to maintain community confidence and local cooperation.

Manipur DGP Mukesh Singh Visits Kangpokpi

KANGPOKPI

Newly appointed Director General of Police (DGP) Mukesh Singh on Sunday undertook his first official visit to Manipur's Kangpokpi district, where he held a series of security review meetings with police and paramilitary officials and engaged with representatives of Kuki-Zo civil society organisations amid the state's continuing ethnic and security challenges.

The visit is being viewed as a significant outreach initiative by the state's top police leadership, aimed at directly assessing the ground situation in one of Manipur's most sensitive districts and strengthening coordination among security agencies and local stakeholders.

Mukesh Singh was received at the office of the Superintendent of Police in Kangpokpi by representatives of several Kuki-Zo civil society organisations led by Kuki Inpi Manipur. Community leaders welcomed the DGP with traditional shawls and bouquets as a gesture of cooperation and goodwill.

The DGP was accompanied by Lhari Dorjee and other senior police officers. The visit underscored the police leadership's emphasis on maintaining direct engagement with local communities while addressing security concerns in conflict-affected areas.

During a meeting with civil society representatives, Kuki Inpi Manipur submitted a three-page memorandum outlining key concerns and demands of the Kuki-Zo community in relation to the ongoing crisis in the state.

According to community representatives, the memorandum highlighted issues related to civilian security, protection of lives and property, restoration of public confidence and the need for impartial enforcement of law and order.

Earlier in the day, the DGP chaired a comprehensive review meeting with district police officials at the conference hall of the SP Office. The meeting was attended by senior officers, including Lunsieh Kipgen and Rahul Gupta, along with other district police personnel.

Nagaon Bypoll Becomes Key Test of Congress Revival Strategy in Assam

GUWAHATI

The upcoming Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election is emerging as the first major political test for the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) as it seeks to rebuild its organisation and regain momentum following its defeat in the recent Assembly elections. With a series of electoral contests expected over the coming months, the state Congress leadership convened a crucial strategy meeting at Rajiv Bhawan in Guwahati on Sunday to discuss preparations for the bypoll, organisational reforms and the party's future course. The meeting, chaired by APCC president Gaurav Gogoi, was attended by around 30 senior leaders and office-bearers and focused on strengthening the party's grassroots structure while preparing for upcoming elections, including local body and council polls.

Addressing reporters ahead of the meeting, Gogoi said the Congress was working to translate feedback gathered from across Assam into

concrete organisational reforms.

"Earlier, APCC representatives visited districts across the state to gather feedback from people and understand local concerns. Today's meeting will focus on how those suggestions can be translated into action and used to drive organisational reforms," he said. The Congress leader noted that the Election Commission is expected to announce the Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election shortly following the defection of former Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi to the BJP, which necessitated the vacancy. Describing Nagaon as an important constituency for the party, Gogoi said Congress leaders had already visited the Nagaon and Morigaon Assembly segments to assess public sentiment and identify key local issues ahead of the contest.

"The concerns of the people are already becoming evident. Many are questioning how a government that secured such a strong mandate appears to have forgotten the people from day one.

EU Delegation to Visit Guwahati, Launch Assam's First Blue Valley Cluster

GUWAHATI

A high-level delegation from the European Union (EU) will arrive in Guwahati on June 8 for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening economic engagement with North-east India and exploring new avenues for trade, investment and industrial collaboration.

The visit comes in the wake of the India-EU Comprehensive Strategic Agenda adopted earlier this year and signals growing European interest in the Northeast as a key region for sustainable economic partnerships and value-chain development.

According to the EU, the delegation's visit will focus on identifying opportunities in sectors where Europe and the Northeastern states share complementary strengths. These include renewable and green energy, sustainable urban infrastructure, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and electronics manufacturing, tea and agri-food process-

ing, flavours and fragrances, and the AYUSH sector.

The delegation will include ambassadors and senior representatives from EU member states, led by Hervé Delphin, Ambassador of the European Union to India and Bhutan, along with representatives from leading European companies and industry bodies.

During their stay, the delegation is scheduled to hold discussions with Himanta Biswa Sarma and senior Assam government officials on expanding bilateral cooperation and attracting investment into the state.

A business delegation led by the Federation of European Businesses in India will also engage with government departments and industry stakeholders to identify potential areas for collaboration and commercial partnerships.

A key highlight of the visit will be a workshop titled "Blue Valleys: Building Ecosystems and Value Chains Between India and Europe", to be held on June 9.

Organised by the Assam government, the event will bring together policymakers, industry leaders, entrepreneurs and investors from Europe and India to explore opportunities in innovation-driven and sustainable industries.

The visit will also coincide with the launch of Assam's first Blue Valley Cluster, a specialised industrial hub focused on fragrances, flavours, AYUSH products and food processing. Designed as a public-private-partnership (4P) initiative, the cluster aims to create stronger economic linkages between Europe, Northeast India and Bhutan through research, innovation, sustainable manufacturing and market access.

The pilot project aligns with the Blue Valleys initiative unveiled at the 2026 India-EU Summit and is expected to serve as a model for sector-specific industrial ecosystems that connect local enterprises with global markets.

According to EU officials, the

broader Blue Valleys initiative seeks to promote industrial clusters, strengthen MSME networks and integrate value chains between India and Europe while maintaining high sustainability standards.

Priority sectors under the initiative include clean energy, natural ingredients, bamboo-based industries, eco-friendly textiles, biotechnology, wellness products and advanced manufacturing.

EU representatives said the initiative is designed to combine investment, technology, skills development and sustainability frameworks to create scalable business opportunities, generate local employment and improve access to European markets for enterprises in the Northeast.

The visit is expected to further reinforce Assam's role as a gateway to the Northeast and deepen economic ties between the region and Europe through long-term partnerships in innovation, trade and sustainable development.

BDF Congratulates New Barak Ministers, Seeks Urgent Action on Flooding, Roads and Development Projects

OUR CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR: The Barak Democratic Front (BDF) has congratulated newly inducted Assam ministers Kaushik Rai and Krishendu Paul and urged them to prioritize the resolution of key issues affecting the Barak Valley, including waterlogging, deteriorating roads, traffic congestion and stalled development projects.

In a press statement, BDF Media Cell Convener Jaydeep Bhattacharjee said that while there has been some debate over the absence of a Bengali representative from the Brahmaputra Valley and the exclusion of Silchar's MLA from the state cabinet, the focus should now shift towards securing development for the Barak Valley.

Highlighting the recent spell of

heavy rainfall, Bhattacharjee said artificial flooding caused by severe waterlogging and the poor condition of roads have pushed public suffering to alarming levels. He urged the newly elected ministers to ensure that ongoing drainage improvement works in Silchar and Karimganj are completed efficiently and without delay.

He also expressed concern over the deteriorating condition of the road connecting Capital Point and Silchar Medical College, stating that poor-quality construction carried out in the past without adherence to prescribed standards has left commuters and patients facing serious difficulties. According to him, immediate measures are needed to keep the road usable during the monsoon season, while long-term plans should be made to secure fund-

ing for its complete reconstruction following all technical norms and guidelines. Bhattacharjee further suggested that ministers engage with citizens' groups and stakeholders to make the reconstruction process transparent and people-oriented, thereby strengthening public confidence in government initiatives. BDF Convener Hrishikesh De drew attention to the proposed flyover project in Silchar, whose foundation stone was laid by the Prime Minister before the Assembly elections. He said the project appears to have lost momentum amid the election process despite worsening traffic congestion in the town.

"During peak hours, commuters often spend one-and-a-half to two hours covering a distance of just ten kilometres," he said, urging the newly

elected ministers and MLAs to take immediate steps to begin construction of the flyover. De also called for the speedy implementation of the proposed industrial hub on the abandoned Panchgram Paper Mill land. Referring to the government's earlier announcement and commitments made during the election campaign, he said land-related issues have reportedly stalled the proposed MSME Training Centre at the site. He stressed that a full-fledged industrial and commercial hub equipped with modern facilities is essential for attracting investment and creating industrial growth opportunities in the Barak Valley. The BDF urged the Cachar district's Guardian Minister and local legislators to take immediate action to move the project forward.

Juvenile Crime Cases Rise Nearly 47% in Assam, Reach 206 in 2024



GUWAHATI

Assam witnessed a sharp rise in juvenile crime cases in 2024, with the number of cases registered against minors increasing to 206 from 140 in the previous year, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The figures indicate a nearly 47 per cent increase in offences involving juveniles under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and Special and Local Laws (SLL), highlighting growing concerns over youth involvement in criminal activities across the state.

Of the total 206 cases registered in 2024, 113 were recorded under the IPC/BNS. These included offences ranging from theft and kidnapping to murder and crimes against women.

Official data show that juveniles were implicated in four rape cases and two cases of assault on women with intent to outrage modesty. Fourteen cases involved kidnapping or abduction of women for marriage, while two cases were registered under procurement of children.

Serious offences also featured prominently, with eight murder cases, one case of causing death by negligence, one case of abatement of suicide and two cases of attempted murder registered against juveniles during the year.

Property-related crimes accounted for a significant share of the total. Authorities recorded 35 theft cases, seven burglary cases, one robbery case and one case involving possession or dealing in stolen property. In addition, there were 26 cases of general kidnapping and abduction, six cases of causing hurt, one case of rash driving and one case of arson.

A further 93 cases were registered under various Special and Local Laws. The largest category was offences under the Protection

of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, which accounted for 77 cases.

Other SLL cases included one under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, two under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, three under the Information Technology Act, nine under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and one under the Essential Commodities Act.

The data also reveal that 219 juveniles were apprehended in connection with various offences across Assam during 2024.

An analysis of their educational background indicates that most came from lower educational categories. Twenty-five juveniles were illiterate, while 39 had completed primary education. The largest group, comprising 96 juveniles, had studied beyond primary school but not beyond matriculation.

Only 57 apprehended juveniles had educational qualifications between matriculation and higher secondary level, while just two had studied beyond higher secondary education.

The figures further suggest that juvenile delinquency in the state is not necessarily linked to the absence of family support. Of the 219 juveniles apprehended, 206 were living with their parents, 10 with guardians and only three were homeless.

The trend in Assam mirrors a broader national increase in juvenile crime. Across India, 34,878 crimes involving juveniles were recorded in 2024, up from 31,365 cases in 2023.

The rise in cases has renewed focus on the need for stronger intervention mechanisms, including educational support, community engagement, counselling services and rehabilitation programmes aimed at preventing young people from entering the criminal justice system.

ICAR Manipur Centre Wins First Best Stall Award at State Krishi Mela

BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL: The ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Manipur Centre, Lamphelpat, has been awarded the First Best Stall Award at the State Krishi Mela 2026, organised by the State Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute (SAMETI) under the Department of Agriculture, Government of Manipur.

The award was presented in recognition of the Centre's outstanding exhibition showcasing its research achievements, improved crop varieties, climate-resilient agricultural technologies, farm machinery and implements, integrated farming systems, and farmer-oriented extension activities.

The stall attracted a large number of farmers, students, entrepreneurs, government officials and visitors, who showed keen interest in the informative displays and interactive demonstrations presented by the Centre.

The exhibition highlighted a wide range of technologies and innovations developed in the fields of



crop science, horticulture, natural resource management, agricultural engineering, livestock, fisheries and agricultural extension. Visitors were also provided information on sustainable farming practices, balanced nutrient management, climate-smart agriculture and improved production technologies suitable for the North Eastern Hill Region.

Dr. S. Basanta Singh, Head of the

Regional Centre, congratulated the scientists, technical staff, support personnel and staff of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) for their dedicated efforts in planning, organising and managing the exhibition. He appreciated the collective contribution of all divisions and KVKs in effectively showcasing the Centre's research achievements and technologies.

He stated that the award reflects the Centre's commitment to disse-

minating scientific agricultural innovations and strengthening linkages between researchers, extension personnel and the farming community.

The Centre also expressed gratitude to the Department of Agriculture, Government of Manipur, for organising the State Krishi Mela and providing a platform for showcasing agricultural technologies and innovations for the benefit of farmers and other stakeholders.

Quest!

Dogs will sometimes fake being sick to get attention.

PM Modi completes 12 years in office; says welfare of poor remains govt's core focus



NEW DELHI

A day after his government completed 12 years in office on June 7, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted its achievements, saying India had undergone significant transformation during this period, with the welfare of the poor and marginalised remaining at the heart of the government's efforts.

"Over the last 12 years, India has witnessed remarkable change, and at the core of these developments has been the welfare of the poor and the underprivileged. Inspired by the principle of Antyodaya, our constant endeavour has been to ensure that the bene-

fits of development reach those who had been left behind for decades," he said.

The Prime Minister said major initiatives, including Jan Dhan accounts, Direct Benefit Transfers, Swachh Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission and Ayushman Bharat, were driven by the objective of providing people with dignity, opportunity and an improved quality of life.

Taking to his official account on X on Monday, he said, "It is also gladdening that technology has played a vital role in ensuring a better quality of life for the poor. Through Direct Benefit Transfer and digital platforms, support

is reaching people directly and transparently. This has reduced leakages, improved efficiency and strengthened trust in governance".

He said this was how the "journey of furthering Garib Kalyan has become a collective movement towards human empowerment and realising our dream of a Viksit Bharat".

Marking 12 years of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government at the Centre, the BJP and NDA leaders described the period as dedicated to "Garib Kalyan" and used the hashtag #12YearsOfGaribKalyan.

A government publication said, "Today, whenever the achievements of the government in India are discussed, the welfare of the poor stands paramount. Over the past 12 years, the central government made the welfare of the poor its primary objective an approach grounded not in appeasement, but in genuine fulfillment". The publication described the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana as a "protective shield" for a large section of the population. It said, "Numerous schemes, designed to realize the pledges of 'Garib Kalyan' (Welfare for the Poor) articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, have brought about a transformative change in the lives of villagers and the underprivileged". Citing global reports, it further claimed, "Credible global reports indicate that poverty in India has declined rapidly; this is because, in every decision taken by the top leadership, the welfare and empowerment of the poor-guided by the philosophy of Antyodaya-have become an enduring mindset".

Opposition INDIA bloc meeting begins in Delhi to chalk out joint strategy against BJP

NEW DELHI

The opposition INDIA bloc's meeting, bringing together leaders from 23 political parties, began in New Delhi on Monday as the alliance seeks to project unity, recalibrate its strategy against the BJP and address internal strains following recent political setbacks.

The meeting, underway at the Constitution Club, is being attended by top opposition leaders, including Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge from the Congress, Mamata Banerjee from the Trinamool Congress, Akhilesh Yadav of Samajwadi Party, Tejashwi Yadav of RJD, Omar Abdullah of National Conference and Mehbooba Mufti of PDP, besides Left leaders and representatives from smaller parties.

NCP(SP) leader Supriya Sule, CPI(M)'s John Brittas, CPI's D Raja and leaders of some smaller parties were also part of the deliberations.

Asked about the agenda of the meeting, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said decisions would be taken collectively by alliance partners.

"We will decide the agenda in the meeting," Yadav told reporters, adding that efforts would be made to move towards a "bandhu rashtira". It was important to safeguard democratic values, he said.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav declined to comment on the likely outcomes of the meeting, saying details would emerge after discussions among alliance partners.

CPI general secretary D Raja said the meeting was significant as it was being held after a considerable gap and at a time when constituent parties had several issues requiring discussion.

"There is no particular agenda, but there are issues which political parties have. Left parties do have issues concerning the livelihood of the people and issues confronting the nation as a whole," Raja said.

Recalling that the opposition alliance had come together with the call of "BJP Hatao, Desh Bachhao", Raja said the meeting would deliberate on how constituent parties could work together with mutual



trust and mutual respect while giving priority to issues concerning ordinary people.

He also referred to concerns raised by some alliance partners over the conduct of parties in states and said opposition leaders should avoid actions that deepen mistrust within the coalition.

The gathering marks the first formal meeting of top INDIA bloc leaders in a long time, with the last such engagement taking place during the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign.

Rahul Gandhi had hosted opposition leaders at his residence in August last year, bringing together nearly 50 leaders from over 25 parties.

At that meeting, opposition leaders had raised concerns over alleged electoral manipulation, particularly the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls in Bihar. Since then, INDIA bloc leaders have met mainly during consultations ahead of Parliament sessions to coordinate floor strategy and identify issues to

jointly raise against the Centre.

The meeting comes amid shifts within the opposition alliance. The DMK and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are not participating after distancing themselves from the bloc. While AAP has publicly moved away from the alliance, the DMK had earlier announced its decision to skip the meeting following the Congress ending ties with it in Tamil Nadu and joining the TVK-led government.

Leaders are expected to deliberate on the alliance's future course and attempt to present a united front against the Modi government on key national issues ahead of upcoming state elections and the 2029 Lok Sabha polls.

The recent defeat of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal is also seen as a factor prompting renewed opposition coordination amid the BJP's growing political momentum. The TMC is expected to raise allegations of attacks on its leaders in Bengal and seek support from alliance partners.

Recent Assembly election results have also sharpened differences within the bloc. The CPI(M) is expected to raise concerns with the Congress over allegations that the Left had a political understanding with the BJP during the Kerala polls, where the Left government lost power to the Congress-led UDF.

Ahead of the meeting, the BJP dismissed the opposition grouping, saying the alliance is "a figment of imagination" and lacks conviction on the ground.

Responding to the criticism, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said that, like India, the "INDIA janbandhan" continues to stand united through its diversity.

The last official meeting of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) was held in New Delhi on June 1, 2024, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. The bloc was originally formed with the support of over 25 opposition parties.

INTERNATIONAL

Powerful 7.8 earthquake jolts southern Philippines, leaving 16 dead and triggering tsunami

MANILA

An offshore magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked the southern Philippines Monday, leaving at least 16 people dead, injuring more than 200 others mostly in damaged buildings and sparking a 1-meter (3-foot) tsunami along nearby coasts, officials said.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said the threat of a tsunami had largely passed about five hours after the quake struck the southern region of Mindanao. There have been no reports of damage or casualties from the tsunami, Teresito Bacolcol, the director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said.

"It's a major earthquake and we're expecting damage and we've already some damaged buildings based on videos we've seen," Bacolcol told The Associated Press.

The strongest quake to strike the Philippines this year was centered at sea at a depth of 33 kilometers (20 miles), about 32 kilometers (20 miles) southwest of Maasin town in Sarangani province, according to the Philippine institute.

General Santos, a southern port city of more than 700,000 people that is a hub for the tuna export industry and other commerce, was among the hardest hit.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said "the national government is moving and we will not leave Mindanao behind."

Numerous aftershocks followed the 7:37 a.m. quake, which was also felt in Malaysia. Smaller tsunami waves were detected in Indonesia and Malaysia.

At least three people were killed and 130 others were injured in General Santos, where at least a few small buildings partially collapsed and several structures, including a key access bridge, sustained danger-



ous cracks, Rod Sosmeña, regional director of the Office of Civil Defense, told The Associated Press.

The Department of Health said another person died in Davao Oriental province due to the quake.

There were no immediate reports of people being trapped in partially collapsed structures in General Santos due to the quake, said Sosmeña, who was being driven to work when the ground violently shook.

"Our pickup truck suddenly jerked and I thought we had a flat tire," Sosmeña the AP by telephone from General Santos. "People dashed out of houses into the streets."

The international airport in General Santos was temporarily shut due to the earthquake and 17 domestic flights were canceled, civil aviation officials said.

Ednar Dayanghirang, director of the Office of Civil Defense in a nearby southern region, said more than 100 students attending morning flag-raising ceremonies sustained bruises and some fainted in panic at different grade and high schools.

"I myself could hardly stand and keep my balance when the ground shook as I was leaving my house," Dayanghirang told the AP by telephone from southern Davao, a major port city in the southern Philippines.

DZRH radio station in Manila reported that a small commercial building housing its provincial branch partly collapsed and staffers dashed to the ground floor without injuries. It wasn't clear if other people were trapped in the rubble of the four-story office building. Debris also fell from other buildings, hitting tricycle taxis parked below.

The quake was caused by movement in the Cotabato Trench at a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles), according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

"It's a major earthquake and we're expecting damages and we've already some damaged buildings based on videos we've seen," institute director Teresito Bacolcol told AP.

Waves of 1-meter (3-feet) were monitored in the Philippine provinces of Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani by land-based tsunami watch stations, Bacolcol said. Smaller waves were monitored in at least one other province, he said.

"Please heed the tsunami warning. Move to higher ground now. Do not wait. Your life is more important than anything left behind," Marcos told people in quake-hit provinces.

Malaysia's Meteorological Department issued a tsunami warning for Sabah state on Borneo island. Sabah is just a boat ride away from southern Philippines. An 83-centimeter (2.7-foot) tsunami was measured by a gauge off Indonesia's Sulawesi island. The PTWC said smaller sea changes were possible in Papua New Guinea and in places in the western Pacific. There was no threat for Hawaii. Aftershocks up to 6.5 magnitude were measured by the U.S. Geological Survey. It reported the depth of the original quake at 55 kilometers (34 miles). Variations in measurements by different agencies are common in the immediate aftermath of an earthquake.

The Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, is often hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the ocean. The archipelago is also lashed by about 20 typhoons and tropical storms each year.

'Sacrificing rest, comfort': At Congo's Ebola epicentre, health workers work with little pay or rest



MONGBWALU

Dr. Richard Lokudu, the medical director of Mongbwalu General Referral Hospital, has received barely any compensation for his work on the front line of one of Congo's deadliest Ebola virus outbreaks.

Lokudu and several of his colleagues work all day at the hospital treating an influx of patients. Notifications of suspected cases come even late at night. "I have not received my allowance (and) what happened to others could happen to me as well," Lokudu told The Associated Press.

"Despite all the infection prevention and control measures we are implementing, we do not know what may happen."

Health authorities believe the outbreak, which took the eastern region of Congo by surprise after spreading silently for weeks without detection, started in the bustling mining area of Mongbwalu in Ituri province.

Mining conditions conducive to virus spread

Mongbwalu has emerged as the epicenter of the rare Bundibugyo type. The town attracts large numbers of laborers who work in large gold mines with muddy pools of gold deposits, narrow pits and caves. They live in low-income areas including crowded camps and have little access to proper health pro-

ocols. The conditions increase the possibility of transmitting the disease, which spreads through close contact with bodily fluids of the sick and deceased such as sweat, blood, feces and vomit.

There also has been widespread skepticism regarding the disease, making the job of medical treatment more difficult for Lokudu and his colleagues, while some of the health workers and first responders have died from the disease.

"It is one thing to be far away and hear statistics being reported, but what is happening on the ground is enormous," Lokudu said.

"People are sacrificing their rest and comfort for this cause. There should be recognition that they deserve compensation. These workers should receive their salaries regularly."

The Congolese government did not respond to a request for comment from the AP.

As Ebola spreads in Congo, a radio station tries to stop health misinformation

Minimal resources available

Congolese authorities have confirmed 452 cases including 82 deaths. On Thursday, the Central African nation recorded 71 new cases in a day, which authorities said is a sign of "active community transmission."

The rare Bundibugyo type has no approved vaccines or

treatment, so health workers have been targeting symptoms. The government said at least five people have recovered from Ebola since the outbreak was officially confirmed by Congo's Ministry of Health on May 15.

The disease "had a big head start," according to World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Hospitals in the region could not test for the right type of Ebola that had begun spreading several weeks before confirmation.

Health workers are handling the disease with minimal resources as agencies have been scrambling to bring aid into the region. Masks, gloves, boots and medications were initially all in short supply. "There has been an erosion of the health system," said Heather Kerr, country director for the International Rescue Committee in Congo. "There has not been investment in the health system, and this has been going on for years."

"During the first week, we did not even have time to go home and eat. The second week was the same. We only eat once a day, what amounts to breakfast in the evening," said Alice Bamuhinga, a nurse at the Mongbwalu hospital.

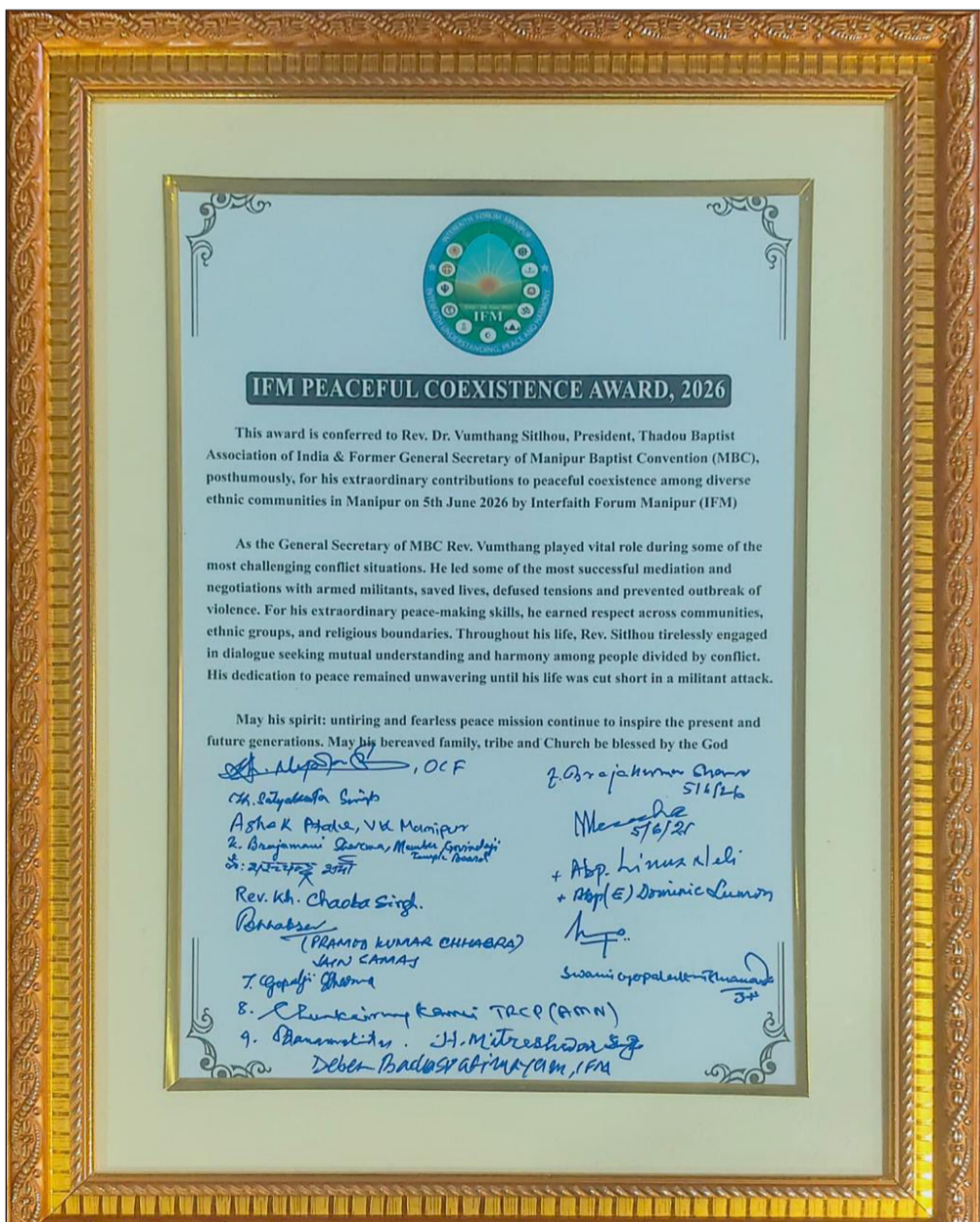
Even with widespread skepticism and disregard for health protocols, many in the town are becoming aware of the outbreak's grave reality.

Asero Jeanne had five children. Two died from the disease within two weeks. When her daughter became ill, the family thought it was malaria and neighbors advised them to avoid the hospital, saying "anyone who went there would die immediately," according to Jeanne, 52.

The daughter died after three weeks of moving between hospitals and home, followed by a son who died days after. Then Jeanne became sick.

"I saw about 20 people die," Jeanne said. "I watched them being taken to the morgue, yet God is allowing me to leave here alive. I thank the doctors."

IFM Confers First Peaceful Coexistence Award on Swami Damodara, Rev. Vumthang Sithhou



of the Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple Board (LSTB), attended as Guest of Honour. The event was presided over by Aribam Brajakumar Sharma.

Several prominent representatives of different faiths and organisations, including members of the Vivekananda Kendra, Divine Life Society, Sikh Samaj, Jain Samaj and India Peace Centre, were also present.

Addressing the gathering, speakers stressed the importance of interfaith dialogue, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence in strengthening Manipur's social fabric. They emphasised that unity amid diversity remains crucial for building a peaceful and prosperous society and assured support for

IFM's initiatives.

The Peaceful Coexistence Award was instituted to recognise individuals who have made significant contributions to promoting interfaith harmony, reconciliation, peacemaking and communal understanding in Manipur. The awards, conferred posthumously on Swami Damodara and on Rev. Sithhou, were received by Prabhu Banamali of ISKCON and Archbishop Linus Neli of the Catholic Diocese of Imphal, respectively. Each award comprised a citation, an IFM Lengyan and a cash honour of Rs 10,000.

Delivering the welcome address, Acharya Kh. Nepolean highlighted the importance of peace as a foundation for spiritual growth. IFM Convener Acharya Deben Bachaspatimayum presented the annual report, describing the forum's work as a continuation of Manipur's composite cultural heritage and its tradition of interfaith understanding. He highlighted several key initiatives undertaken by IFM, including a locally sponsored one-year Youth Peacebuilding Fellowship Programme aimed at developing 100 young peacebuilding professionals from different religious and ethnic communities, the foundation stone laying for a World Peace Centre at the Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple complex, and efforts to promote public discourse on "Politics as Freedom from Violence from Theological and Philosophical Perspectives."

Bachaspatimayum also underlined that peace is an intrinsic value shared by all individuals and religions, adding that responsibility for building local capacities for peace rests not only with governments but also with communities and individuals. Five youth peacebuilding fellows also shared their experiences and insights gained through the fellowship programme.



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL:
The Interfaith Forum Manipur (IFM) conferred its first Annual Peaceful Coexistence Award 2026 on Rev. (Dr.) Vumthang Sithhou, President of the Thadou Baptist Association of India (TBAD) and former General Secretary of the Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC), and His Holiness Bhak-



We fear rejection, want attention, crave affection, and dream of perfection.

tisarupa Swami Damodara, founder of Mani Mandir and the ISKCON

Temple in Manipur, at a function held on Friday to mark the organisation's third Foundation Day.

The award ceremony brought together around 100 participants, including religious leaders, scholars, lawyers and members of various faith communities, reaffirming their commitment to peace, harmony and mutual understanding.

The programme was attended by Thokchom Satyabrata Singh, Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly and Vice President of the Sri Sri Govindaji Temple Board, as Chief Guest. Sandham Gandharaj, Member Secretary

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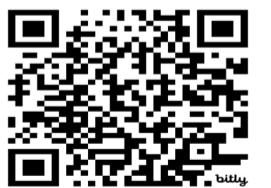
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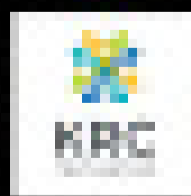


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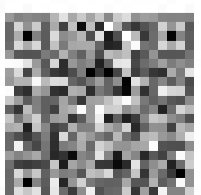


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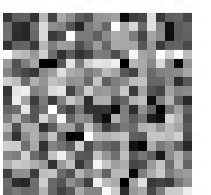


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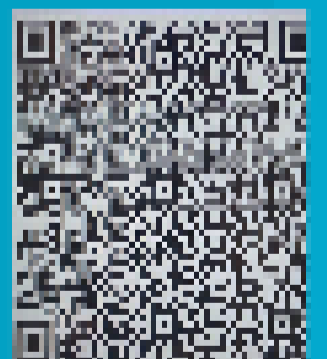
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