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PERSPECTIVE
Silent and "Listen" are spelt with the same letters.

IMD Issues Heat and Humidity Alert for Assam, Relief Likely After 48 Hours

GUWAHATI
The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of hot and humid weather conditions across Assam over the next 48 hours, with daytime temperatures expected to remain significantly above normal in several parts of the state.

In an advisory issued on Monday, the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Guwahati, said prevailing clear to partly cloudy skies coupled with strong solar heating are likely to push maximum temperatures 3°C to 5°C above normal levels. The weather office forecast that temperatures may exceed 35°C at several locations during the next two days. According to IMD observations, Guwahati recorded a maximum temperature of 35.4°C on Sunday, while the minimum temperature on Monday morning stood at 25.8°C. Among the major weather stations in the state, Dhubri and Silchar emerged as the hottest locations, each registering a maximum temperature of 35.6°C. North Lakhimpur recorded the lowest minimum temperature at 23.3°C.

Meteorologists attributed the uncomfortable conditions to a combination of elevated temperatures and high humidity levels, which are expected to persist across parts of Assam during the forecast period.

While the IMD stated that the prevailing heat is likely to remain within tolerable limits for the general population, it cautioned that vulnerable groups including infants, elderly persons, pregnant women and individuals suffering from existing health conditions could face increased health risks.

The department warned that prolonged exposure to high temperatures may lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat stroke and other heat-related illnesses.

In view of the prevailing conditions, the IMD has advised residents to take precautionary measures, including wearing loose-fitting, light-coloured cotton clothing, drinking sufficient water and avoiding direct exposure to sunlight.

WHO SAID WHAT

Had a productive meeting with President U Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar. We in India are honoured that he has chosen India for his first foreign visit as President. Equally glad to see the fact that he began his visit from Bodhi Gaya, with the blessings of Lord Buddha. We reviewed the full range of India-Myanmar relations. Myanmar is vital to India's policies of 'Neighbourhood First', 'Act East' and Indo-Pacific.

- Narendra Modi, PM, India

Assam Pushes for Greater Energy Exploration, Trade Opportunities and Infrastructure Support in Centre Talks

NEW DELHI
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday held a series of high-level meetings with Union ministers to discuss hydrocarbon exploration, trade opportunities, tea industry concerns and major infrastructure projects aimed at accelerating the state's economic growth.

During his meeting with Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Sarma emphasized Assam's potential to play a larger role in India's energy sector through enhanced oil and gas exploration and increased production from existing hydrocarbon fields.

The Chief Minister said discussions focused on expanding the state's hydrocarbon potential and identifying ways to boost exploration activities across Assam. He noted that the Union minister's insights on global energy trends and geopolitical developments were valuable in shaping future strategies for the sector.

"His views on global affairs and the current energy scenario have been extremely insightful," Sarma said, adding that greater hydrocarbon production would enable Assam to contribute more significantly to India's growth story.

Sarma also met Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal



to discuss the implications of India's recently concluded Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and their potential impact on Assam's economy.

The discussions explored how local entrepreneurs, small businesses and farmers could benefit from enhanced market access created through the

PM Modi Raises Northeast Security Concerns; Myanmar Assures Action Against Militants

NEW DELHI

Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing has assured Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Myanmar's territory will not be allowed to be used for activities detrimental to India's security interests, particularly in the sensitive Northeast region.

The assurance was conveyed during wide-ranging bilateral talks held in New Delhi on Monday as the two leaders reviewed cooperation across trade, defence, energy, connectivity, health, education and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.

The meeting marked Min Aung Hlaing's first visit to India since assuming the presidency following Myanmar's recent parliamentary elections and comes amid growing concerns over cross-border insurgent activities along the India-Myanmar frontier.

Briefing the media after the talks, Vikram Misri said Prime Minister Modi highlighted India's



concerns regarding armed groups operating near the international border and the impact of insurgency, military operations and refugee movements on communities in the northeastern states.

According to Misri, the Myanmar President reaffirmed his government's commitment to ensuring that its territory is not used for activities inimical to India's security interests, a key issue for states such as Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, which share a long and porous border with Myanmar. The leaders also reviewed progress on major connectivity initiatives, including the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, stressing the need for their early completion to enhance regional integration and economic cooperation.

Discussions further covered Myanmar's ongoing peace and reconciliation efforts. Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's support for

Myanmar's sovereignty and territorial integrity while underlining the importance of dialogue and inclusive engagement among various stakeholders to achieve lasting peace.

Responding to queries on detained Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Misri said the matter was discussed within the broader framework of Myanmar's peace and reconciliation process.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval had separately met Min Aung Hlaing on Sunday, with discussions focusing on bilateral relations, border management and regional security issues.

India and Myanmar share a 1,640-kilometre border, making security cooperation, counter-insurgency coordination and border management critical pillars of the relationship. Officials said the visit reinforced the commitment of both countries to deepen strategic cooperation and promote stability, connectivity and economic growth across the region.

Amit Shah to Review Bangladesh Border Security During Tripura Visit on June 4-5



AGARTALA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Tripura on June 4 and 5 to review security preparedness along the India-Bangladesh border, with a particular focus on strengthening surveillance and curbing cross-border crimes amid the Centre's push for a technology-driven border management system.

According to senior officials, Shah will arrive in Agartala on the evening of June 4 after attending the 73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council in Shillong.

During his visit, the Home Minister is scheduled to hold a high-level review meeting with officials of the Border Security Force and other security agencies to assess the situation along the India-Bangladesh frontier and evaluate measures to strengthen border management. Before the review meeting, Shah will visit select border locations in West Tripura district to gain a first-hand assessment of security arrangements and challenges along the international boundary.

Officials said the Home Minister will also lay foundation stones for several infrastructure projects near the border, participate in a plantation drive and

address a Sainik Sammelan during the tour.

In addition, Shah is expected to attend the Bhumi Pujan ceremony and lay the foundation stone for a hotel project being jointly developed by the Tripura government and a private partner.

Extensive preparations are underway by the state government, the BSF and the West Tripura district administration ahead of the two-day visit.

Tripura shares an 856-km international border with Bangladesh and is surrounded by the neighbouring country on three sides. The border remains vulnerable to challenges such as illegal migration, narcotics trafficking, smuggling, human trafficking and other trans-border crimes.

Security officials said surveillance and domination along the frontier have been intensified since the political unrest in Bangladesh in 2024 and the subsequent fall of the government led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The visit also comes against the backdrop of the Centre's ambitious "Smart Border Project", under which advanced technologies such as drones, radars, intelligent surveillance systems and high-resolution cameras are being deployed to create a more robust and integrated border security network.

Last month, Shah had announced that the government aims to establish an impregnable border security grid within the next year and directed BSF formations in Tripura, Assam and West Bengal to work closely with local administrations, police and village-level institutions to prevent infiltration and enhance border security.

Manipuri Film 'Boong' Wins Three Major Honours

GUWAHATI

Manipuri cinema received a significant international boost after Boong emerged as one of the standout winners at the 2026 New York Indian Film Festival, securing three major awards during the festival's closing ceremony.

The critically acclaimed film earned the Best Director award for filmmaker Lakshmi Priya Devi, while young actor Gugu Kippen was honoured with the Best Child Actor award for his performance in the film. Boong also received the Best Debut Film award from the festival's critics' panel, marking a remarkable achievement for Manipuri cinema on the global stage.

Organised by the Indo-American Arts Council, the four-day festival concluded on Sunday after showcasing a wide array of Indian independent films. This year's edition featured 19 feature films, four documentaries and 27 short films representing diverse cinematic voices from across India. Festival organisers noted that films in 15 Indian languages were screened during the event, underscoring the growing international appeal of regional cinema and the increasing global audience for locally rooted stories. Among other major winners, Nikhil Vaid won the Best Actor award for his performance in Vinnukut. The Best Actress honour was jointly awarded to Meenakshi Jayan for Mahajan, Victoria Thek, and Prajakta Deshmukh for their respective performances. In the documentary category, Deja Vu won the Best Documentary Feature award, while Jo's Turn was named the Best Narrative Short Film. Speaking at the closing ceremony, Nirmla Mattoo praised the diversity and depth of storytelling showcased during the festival. He noted that many of the selected films successfully balanced contemporary themes with strong cultural and regional identities.

Tripura Minister Urges Centre to Launch Direct Agartala-Mumbai Flights



AGARTALA

Tripura Transport and Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury has urged the Centre to introduce direct flight services between Agartala and Mumbai, citing the growing demand for improved air connectivity between the northeastern state and India's commercial capital.

In a letter addressed to Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, Chowdhury reiterated an earlier request and stressed the importance of establishing a direct air link to facilitate faster and more convenient travel.

The minister noted that Tripura's strategic location in the Northeast and its increasing engagement with major economic centres make enhanced connectivity a necessity. He highlighted Mumbai's significance as a major destination for trade, healthcare, higher education, tourism and employment opportunities, attracting a large number of travellers from the state.

According to Chowdhury, passengers travelling between Agartala and Mumbai currently depend

on connecting flights, often involving lengthy layovers and extended travel times. The existing arrangement, he said, causes considerable inconvenience, particularly for students, patients seeking specialised medical treatment, businesspersons and government officials.

He emphasized that the introduction of a direct flight service would substantially improve regional connectivity, reduce travel time and support Tripura's socio-economic development by strengthening links with one of the country's most important commercial hubs. As an alternative, the minister suggested that the Civil Aviation Ministry consider ensuring smoother connectivity through better-coordinated flight schedules if a direct service cannot be introduced immediately under the existing aviation policy framework.

The demand comes amid continued efforts by northeastern states to secure stronger air links with major Indian cities, with improved connectivity being viewed as a key driver of tourism, trade, investment and overall economic growth in the region.

Rio Expands Nagaland Government, Appoints Five MLAs as Advisors

KOHIMA

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has inducted five legislators as advisors to various government departments and reassigned the portfolios of another MLA, taking the number of advisors in the state government to 29. The appointments, notified by Chief Secretary Sentiyanger Imchen, came into effect immediately and are aimed at strengthening governance by drawing on the experience of elected representatives across key sectors.

Under the new arrangement, Kuzholuzo Nienu has been appointed Advisor for Science and Technology, while Puthai Longon will oversee the Taxes Department. Picto Shohe has been assigned New and Renewable Energy along with the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, and Kikon has been entrusted with the Forest and Food Processing departments. Meanwhile, Nyushetho Nyuthe will continue as Advisor to the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority and has additionally been given charge of Inland Waterways. He has, however, been relieved of the New and Renewable Energy portfolio.

In another significant reshuffle,

Dolie Yimkhuing has been appointed Advisor to the Information and Public Relations, Social Welfare, and Soil and Water Conservation departments. According to the notification, the advisors will assist departments by offering recommendations and suggestions on matters referred to them before final decisions are taken by the concerned ministers. The government clarified that the advisors will not receive any additional salary, allowances, remuneration, or perks beyond those already available to them as members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly.

The latest move marks the first expansion of advisors since the 2023 Assembly elections and is politically significant as it brings two former members of the Naga People's Front-Kuzholuzo Nienu and Kikon into the Rio administration following the party's merger with the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party in October last year.

With the appointments, the Rio-led government has expanded its advisory structure to 29 members, broadening legislative participation in policy implementation and departmental oversight.



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INDO-CHINA DIALOGUE PATH

The constructive and forward-looking talks held between India and China at the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination in Beijing this week represent far more than a routine diplomatic exchange. They are the clearest and most encouraging signal yet that Asia's two most consequential powers have chosen, with deliberation and evident resolve, the path of sustained dialogue over the corrosive temptation of prolonged confrontation. In a world weary of watching conflicts that deliver nothing but misery and destruction, this quiet but determined commitment to engagement deserves both acknowledgement and wholehearted support.

It has become abundantly clear, through hard experience, that consistent and focused bilateral talks are the only durable mechanism through which two nations sharing a 3,400-kilometre border and a combined population of over three billion people can hope to manage their formidable differences. The WMCC meeting reviewed the situation along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, expressed satisfaction with the progress made in maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas, and agreed to make substantive preparations for the next Special Representatives' meeting to be held in China. This is methodical, unglamorous diplomacy of precisely the kind that builds the foundations of lasting stability.

Earlier rounds of engagement had already yielded tangible results, and it is important to acknowledge them. The Special Representatives' dialogue, convened in New Delhi last August between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, produced a series of meaningful outcomes on border management and confidence-building. The disengagement of troops at Demchok and Depsang, after a military face-off that had persisted for over four years, was achieved through painstaking negotiation. Direct air links between the two countries have been restored after a five-year hiatus, and the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra has been permitted to resume. Each of these gestures, modest in isolation, collectively constitutes a considered and comprehensive effort to restore normalcy.

The world has received the most devastating terms, providing any further argument needed for the absolute supremacy of diplomacy over armed confrontation. The ongoing war in Ukraine and the catastrophic conflict in West Asia, involving Iran, America, and Israel, have revealed the true costs of unresolved disputes and militarisation. Cities have been reduced to rubble, economies have haemorrhaged, and millions of civilians have been killed or displaced. Every corner of the world has felt the knock-on effects – soaring energy prices, acute food insecurity, shattered supply chains, and fractured alliances. India and China must regard these theatres not as distant tragedies but as urgent cautionary mirrors.

Credit must be extended to the respective leadership for demonstrating the political flexibility and strategic maturity required to step back from the edge. Prime Minister Modi's meeting with President Xi on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Tianjin provided the crucial political impetus for the current thaw, and both Governments have followed through with methodical, back-channel work ever since. It would be naïve to suggest that all outstanding issues are near resolution – border delimitation remains profoundly complex, trade imbalances persist, and broader geopolitical competition will not be resolved by improved atmospherics. Yet the decision to keep talking, to maintain regular exchanges at both diplomatic and military levels, and to manage shared concerns through agreed mechanisms is precisely what prevents misunderstandings from escalating into catastrophe.

There is a larger, global dimension to this relationship that must not be lost sight of. India and China together account for more than one-third of humanity and are major players in global manufacturing, trade, technology, and renewable energy. In an international environment increasingly defined by economic decoupling and weaponised tariffs, the capacity of these two nations to cooperate – even while competing – could provide a stabilising anchor for a dangerously unsettled world.

The task now is to hold the course with patience, transparency, and consistency. Border management mechanisms must be reinforced, communication lines kept open at every level, and mutual respect for sovereignty maintained as the non-negotiable foundation of every interaction. The reopening of the skies between India and China is a metaphor for something larger: the possibility of two great civilisations choosing, with wisdom and a proper sense of shared responsibility, to face the future side by side.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door - Milton Berle

ABRAHAM ACCORDS IN THE LIMELIGHT AGAIN



HARSHA KAKAR

Negotiations with Iran have been proceeding well and differences are being narrowed down after rounds of exchange of ceasefire terms, being managed by Pakistan and Qatar. Trump announced on his Truth Social media platform, 'Negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are proceeding nicely! It will only be a Great Deal for all or, no Deal at all.' Simultaneously, he asked his negotiators, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, not to rush into the deal, as he had other plans.

The reason for slowing negotiations, especially while the world waits with bated breath for oil and gas prices to reduce to pre-war levels, was to give a fresh impetus to his Abraham Accords, orchestrated by him during his first term in Sept 2020. The accords in 2020 normalized ties between Israel, UAE and Bahrain. Subsequently, it included Sudan and Morocco. Kazakhstan joined in 2025. Trump believes that expansion of Abraham Accords would signal lasting peace in the region, restore growth and benefit all. It would also cement his Nobel Peace Prize. Trump mentioned that he told leaders of the Middle East and Pakistan, 'That after all the work done by the United States to try and pull this very complex puzzle together, it should be mandatory that all of these countries, at a minimum, simultaneously, sign onto the Abraham Accords.' The countries he referred to were Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan. Egypt and Jordan already have a peace treaty with Israel as Turkey and Israel recognize each other, though relations in recent years have been strained. Their joining the accords may not be of major

benefit as those who have refused to recognize Israel.

The hint was towards three countries, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Pakistan. He did leave a door partially open by adding, 'It may be possible that one or two have a reason for not doing so, and that will be accepted, but most should be ready, willing, and able to make this settlement with Iran a far more historic event than it would, otherwise, be.' Trump is aware that in case Riyadh inks the accords, Pakistan and Qatar would follow suit. Hence, he added, 'should start with the immediate signing by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and everybody else should follow suit.' To further enhance pressure on Pakistan and Qatar, the two main negotiators, Trump mentioned that if countries do not sign, they should not be involved in any deal with Iran as 'it shows bad intention.' Was it linked to Pakistan's so-called defence minister Khawaja Asif's cancelled tweet wherein he termed it as 'a curse for humanity' and a 'cancerous state,' is unknown. This demand by Trump threw Middle East nations into a tizzy. Resumption of conflict was the last they desired as their oil infrastructure would face backlash as Iran has, during the ceasefire period, recreated its drone and missile capabilities, while US missiles for their defence are unavailable. Accepting it would result in their own people, as also the balance of the non-Arabic Muslim world, accusing them of surrendering to Israel.

Both, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have linked normalization of ties with Israel on the creation of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, a demand Israel rejects. An option is to procrastinate signing the accords

till elections in Israel conclude in Oct 2026, as it is very likely that Netanyahu may not return to power.

This may not fit into Trump's schedule as US mid-term elections would be too close for comfort, due in Nov. Delaying a peace deal till then would impact his control over the senate. In case the accords are inked between major Islamic nations and the only Islamic superpower, Pakistan, it would give his party a boost.

Further, such a move would isolate Iran as also enhance Israel's security. While Riyadh may still be able to delay inking the agreement on one pretext or the other and Qatar too can delay the same, as it hosts the US's largest bases in the region, diplomatic pressure would mount on Pakistan. Thus far, Pakistan has avoided making any diplomatic statement on the subject. In Trump's phone call to all Middle East nations and Pakistan, it was failed marshal Asim Munir who represented Pakistan. He maintained silence. Vague comments on Pakistan's refusal by Khawaja Asif, mean nothing.

Trump has been calling Asim Munir his favourite field marshal and praised the nation's peace-making efforts. Pakistan has been desperate to get into Washington's good books after years of neglect. It cannot push back against the gains it has made by refusing Trump's request, no matter what its policy has been since 1948. Pakistan also signed onto the Gaza peace Plan, promising to deploy troops in Gaza and be involved in its reconstruction. It is a different matter that the plan is currently shelved.

Islamabad and Rawalpindi will have to find a solution, after all they have been terming India and

Israel as their eternal enemies and swearing their eradication. Occasionally growing tired of accusing only India for being behind their troubles, Pakistan's DG ISPR adds spice in the blame game by including Israel's MOSSAD. Now this very organization will have to build narratives to justify why they should follow Trump like an obedient puppy and ink the accords.

The problem for the Pak mili-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

One of our foremost priorities has been to save Assam from the recurring cycle of floods and erosion.

The ₹18,000+ crore #BadhMuktAssam Mission reflects this commitment. Through Mega Geo Tubes, advanced sluice gates and porcupine structures, we are building durable solutions and strengthening our fight against floods and riverbank erosion. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



tary regime, ruling the country, is the internal backlash. Whenever inputs of even clandestine meetings between Pak and Israel emerge there is anger within the country. The PTI could even push for violence within adding to concerns in case Israel is recognized. It is also possible that Saudi Arabia, to ensure the sanctity of the ruling regime could push Pak to join the accords thereby satisfying Trump's ego. Pakistan, dependent on aid from multiple sources would find it difficult to refuse. Any decision of inking the accord could also anger China as the move would indicate Pakistan falling into the US camp. This would insult China as it would flow soon after the visit of PM Sharif and Asim Munir to China, where Xi Jinping promised to continue supporting Pakistan's development. Pakistan is in a catch 22 situation. If it refuses, it angers the US and carefully built relations could crumble. If it accepts, it could face internal wrath and Chinese displeasure. How it handles it is to be seen.

The author is Major General (Retd)

CM Himanta Sarma meets Nadda, seeks guidance to make Assam 'medical tourism hub'

NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday met Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda and sought his guidance for implementing a series of ambitious healthcare initiatives aimed at transforming Assam into a major healthcare and medical tourism hub.

In a post on X following the meeting, CM Sarma expressed gratitude to Union Minister Nadda for his contribution to strengthening the BJP in Assam during his tenure as the party's national president and for his role in the state's electoral successes.

"Hon'ble Union Minister J.P. Nadda has been instrumental in strengthening BJP in Assam during his tenure as the Rashtriya Adhyaksh and has played a key role in the Assam elections," the



Chief Minister said. CM Sarma thanked Nadda for his efforts and discussed the state government's plans to expand healthcare in-

rastructure and services. "Today, as I met him in Delhi, I thanked him for his efforts and sought his guidance to implement the ambitious health sector schemes which we are undertaking in the State, from medical colleges to proton beam therapy to doctor intake, etc. and build Assam as a preferred hub of medical tourism," he said.

Assam is pursuing an extensive healthcare expansion programme that includes the establishment of new medical colleges, enhancement of specialised treatment facilities and increasing the intake capacity of medical professionals. The state government has also been focusing on positioning Assam as a destination for advanced healthcare services in the Northeast and neighbouring regions, with medical tourism emerging as a key component of its long-term strategy.

Meanwhile, CM Sarma said Union Minister of Power and Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar had assured full support from his ministries for the state's efforts to achieve energy self-sufficiency and accelerate urbanisation. Sharing details of a meeting held at the Union Minister's official residence here late on Sunday night, CM Sarma said Khattar devoted valuable time to discussions on Assam's development priorities and ensured the presence of senior officials from his ministries to chart out future plans.

"On a Sunday night past 10 pm, he was kind enough to ensure that senior officials of his department were there to help us plan a successful road map to achieve Assam's energy self-sufficiency," the Chief Minister said in a post on X

According to Chief Minister Sar-

ma, the meeting focused on formulating a roadmap to strengthen Assam's energy sector and advance the state's goal of becoming energy self-sufficient.

The Chief Minister also said Khattar assured the Assam Government that its urbanisation initiatives would receive priority attention, indicating closer cooperation between the Centre and the state on urban infrastructure and development projects.

Expressing gratitude to the Union Minister, Sarma said the support extended by the ministries would help Assam pursue its long-term objectives in the power and urban development sectors.

Further details regarding specific projects or timelines discussed during the meeting were not immediately disclosed.

Mizoram Eligible for Rs. 650 Crore Under Centre's Capital Investment Scheme

AIZAWL

Mizoram is eligible to receive ₹650 crore under the Centre's Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) programme during the current financial year, Chief Minister Lalduhoma announced on Monday. Addressing a workshop on SASCI and the Real-time System of Integrated Quick Transfers (SNA SPARSH) in Aizawl, the Chief Minister, who also holds the finance portfolio, said technological advancements have transformed the way central funds are received and managed, leading to greater efficiency, accountability, and transparency in public financial administration. Lalduhoma said SNA SPARSH has emerged as a key platform for managing and disbursing a substantial portion of government funds in the state.

He stressed that all departments must develop a thorough understanding of the system to ensure the effective implementation of development programmes and welfare schemes. Highlighting Mizoram's performance under the Centre's incentive framework, the Chief Minister revealed that the state had received ₹350 crore under SASCI Part-9 during the previous financial year as a reward for efficient financial management and coordinated implementation efforts. He expressed confidence that Mizoram could secure the full range of reform-linked incentives available under various components of the SASCI programme this year as well, provided departments maintain momentum in implementing financial reforms.

To facilitate faster execution of projects and improve fund utilisation, the state government has delegated greater financial authority to administrative heads through the Charter of Financial Advisers.

Tripura SEC Starts Preparations for Village Committee Elections; Final Electoral Roll Due on June 15

AGARTALA

The Tripura State Election Commission (SEC) has begun preparations for the upcoming Village Committee elections in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) areas, following the successful completion of the recent TTAADC elections.

State Election Commission Secretary Anurag Sen said the Commission has already initiated the next phase of electoral activities to ensure the smooth and timely conduct of the polls. Preparatory work commenced immediately after the conclusion of the TTAADC elections, with officials focusing on finalizing polling infrastructure and updating electoral rolls.

As part of the process, the SEC issued a notification on May 9 regarding the draft and final list of polling stations. After verification by administrative authorities

across various blocks, a total of 1,550 polling stations have been finalized for the elections. Sen said the revision of electoral rolls is currently underway. The draft electoral roll will be published on June 2, after which voters will be able to submit claims and objections between June 2 and June 9. The final electoral roll is scheduled to be released on June 15.

The Village Committee elections will be a major democratic exercise in the tribal areas, covering 587 Village Committees and a total of 5,873 seats. Election officials said the poll schedule, including nomination dates and voting timelines, is expected to be announced after the completion of the electoral roll revision process. The SEC has expressed confidence that all necessary arrangements will be completed in time to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections across the TTAADC areas.

Katigorah MLA Seeks Renaming of Badarpur as 'Siddheshwar Dham', Cites Cultural Heritage

SILCHAR

In a move that could spark a wider debate on cultural identity and place names in Assam, Katigorah MLA Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha has proposed renaming Badarpur town in Barak Valley as "Siddheshwar Dham", describing the initiative as an effort to honour the region's spiritual and civilisational heritage.

The proposal has already been submitted to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and forwarded to the state's Urban Development Department for further processing. According to Purkayastha, the Chief Minister has instructed the department to examine the proposal in accordance with established procedures, although the final decision will rest with the Assam government.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, the legislator said the proposed name draws inspiration from the revered Siddheshwar Temple, which he

described as a major spiritual and emotional landmark not only for residents of Badarpur but for devotees across the Barak Valley.

"Siddheshwar Temple is not merely a place of worship. It represents the faith, emotions and cultural identity of people across the region. I am grateful that the Chief Minister has taken note of the proposal and directed the concerned department to process it. The final decision, however, will be taken by the Government of Assam," Purkayastha said.

Acknowledging that a change in nomenclature alone cannot guarantee development, the MLA argued that names carry historical, cultural and emotional significance that help shape the identity of a place.

"A name by itself may not bring development, but it influences identity, sentiment and the overall perception of a region. Siddheshwar Dham would reflect the spiritual heritage

of the area and strengthen people's connection with their cultural roots," he said. The proposal has also added a political dimension to the ongoing discourse around cultural heritage and governance.

Rejecting suggestions that the move was aimed at consolidating political support following his electoral victory, Purkayastha maintained that promoting both development and cultural dignity was part of his duty as a public representative. He conceded that differing views on the proposal could emerge but expressed confidence that its underlying sentiment would resonate with those who value India's cultural and spiritual traditions. "Those who respect Indian civilisation, culture and spiritual heritage will understand the sentiment behind Siddheshwar Dham," he remarked.

The BJP legislator also used the occasion to criticise previous Congress governments in Assam, alleging that

issues linked to local faith, cultural identity and civilisational heritage did not receive adequate attention during their tenure.

"For many years, cultural and faith-based aspirations of the people were not given the importance they deserved. During earlier Congress governments, concerns associated with Indian civilisation, local traditions, Sanatan heritage and people's emotional identity were often overlooked. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, such long-standing aspirations are receiving serious consideration and respect," Purkayastha said.

If approved, the renaming proposal would add to a series of initiatives across the country aimed at reflecting local history, culture and religious heritage through place names. The proposal is expected to undergo administrative scrutiny before any final decision is taken by the state government.

works and service sectors.

Vaishnav also reviewed progress on the proposed National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology, which is being established to train young professionals in semiconductor manufacturing and advanced electronics technologies. The institute is expected to play a key role in developing the skilled workforce required to support India's expanding semiconductor sector.

Industry experts view the Jagiroad project as a strategic component of India's efforts to reduce dependence on imported semiconductor products and strengthen its position in global supply chains. The facility is expected to serve both domestic demand and international markets, contributing to the country's ambition of becoming a major semiconductor manufacturing destination.

Apart from semiconductor development, the meeting also focused on railway infrastructure

projects aimed at improving connectivity across Assam and the Northeast.

Chief Minister Sarma said discussions covered the expansion of the state's railway network, including ongoing work on more than 1,300 kilometres of rail track expansion and the redevelopment of over 50 railway stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

The two leaders also reviewed initiatives to improve passenger amenities, freight transportation infrastructure and overall rail connectivity, which are expected to support industrial growth and regional economic development.

The commencement of production at the Jagiroad semiconductor facility would represent a landmark achievement not only for Assam but also for India's semiconductor mission, positioning the Northeast as an emerging hub for high-technology manufacturing and advanced electronics.

Arunachal BJP Backs Pema Khandu, Dismisses Leadership Change Rumours Amid CBI Probe



ITANAGAR

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Arunachal Pradesh has firmly backed Chief Minister Pema Khandu amid speculation over his political future following a Supreme Court-directed CBI inquiry, asserting that there is no question of a leadership change while the investigation remains underway.

The party's clarification came after reports circulated on social media and digital platforms claiming that Khandu was likely to resign in view of the ongoing probe, triggering widespread political speculation across the state.

The controversy stems from an order issued by the Supreme Court of India in April directing the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to conduct a preliminary inquiry into allegations that public works contracts worth around Rs 1,270 crore were awarded between 2015 and 2025 to firms allegedly linked to members of the Chief Minister's family. The inquiry is currently in progress.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP's state headquarters in Itanagar, state BJP president Kaling Moyong said the party would fully respect the judicial process and refrain from taking any decision until the investigation reaches its conclusion.

"If the Supreme Court delivers a verdict against the Chief Minister, the party will take an appropriate decision. But not now, as the investigation is still going on," Moyong said. Senior BJP leaders maintained that the party remains united under Khandu's leadership and dismissed reports suggesting internal divisions or discussions regarding a change in leadership.

Reiterating the party's stand, BJP general secretary Tadar Niglar said all BJP legislators

continue to support the Chief Minister.

"All 46 BJP MLAs are under one umbrella and under one leadership. There is no division within the party," Niglar said.

He also warned that strict disciplinary action would be taken against any party member found to be involved in spreading misinformation regarding the Chief Minister's alleged resignation.

"However, if anyone from the BJP is behind this fake news, we will take stringent action against that individual," he added.

Another BJP general secretary, Junty Singhpo, expressed confidence in both the judiciary and the Chief Minister, stating that the truth would emerge through due legal process.

"We believe in the judiciary, and we also believe in our Chief Minister. We are confident that he will come clean from these allegations," she said.

Meanwhile, the Itanagar district unit of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) lodged a complaint at Itanagar Police Station against the publication that carried the report claiming Khandu was preparing to resign.

According to a statement issued by the youth wing, the organisation accused the publication of spreading "false and misleading information" aimed at creating confusion and destabilising the political atmosphere in Arunachal Pradesh. The BJYM has sought legal action against those responsible for publishing and circulating the report. The BJP's strong show of support comes as the CBI inquiry continues, with party leaders insisting that any decision regarding the Chief Minister's future will depend solely on the outcome of the judicial process rather than speculation or unverifiable reports.

Gaurav Gogoi Slams Centre Over Inflation, Calls for Pro-People Economic Reforms



JORHAT

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president and Gaurav Gogoi on Monday launched a sharp attack on the Centre over rising inflation, alleging that current economic policies are disproportionately benefiting the wealthy while placing an increasing burden on the middle class and poorer sections of society.

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not only fuel prices and essential commodities but also critical sectors such as education and healthcare. According to him, rising school fees, hostel charges, hospital expenses and other service costs have significantly increased the financial pressure on families.

Drawing attention to student protests over rising educational expenses, Gogoi said higher education was becoming increasingly inaccessible for many young people. "Today, attention is focused on the increase in fuel prices and essential commodities, but there has also been a steep rise in school fees, hostel fees, healthcare costs and other expenditures. Students are being forced to take to the streets to protest against rising hostel fees, particularly in higher educational institutions," he said.

Calling for a policy reset, Gogoi stressed the need for economic reforms based on expert consultation and public accountability. He said government policies should be designed to benefit the middle class and underprivileged sections rather than what he termed a privileged class of contractors, corporations and capitalists.

"There is a need for reforms and a new economic policy. The government must frame policies that place the middle class and poorer sections at the centre of development and be willing to listen to constructive criticism," he said.

The Jorhat MP also criticised the continuation of subsidised pulses and sugar for ration card holders, alleging

that the ruling party had failed to meet public expectations created during the recent Assembly election campaign.

"It is unfortunate because people were never informed before the elections that such benefits could be withdrawn. The manner in which the campaign was conducted led many to believe that these supplies would continue. In that sense, it appears to have been an unfulfilled political promise," he remarked.

On the recent arrests of government officials in corruption-related cases, Gogoi alleged that bureaucratic corruption often survives under political patronage and that those providing protection rarely face scrutiny.

"No government official can engage in such activities without political backing. The political forces that protected these officials also benefited from the system, but when their utility ends, officials are left to face arrest and investigation," he alleged.

He further claimed that while government officials are subjected to raids and legal action, those who allegedly provided political cover remain beyond the reach of accountability.

"If this political culture continues, Assam's progress and development will ultimately suffer," Gogoi said.

The Congress leader's remarks come amid growing political debate in Assam over inflation, welfare measures and corruption, issues that are expected to remain central to public discourse in the months ahead.

TMC expels two MLAs for alleged 'anti-party' activities



KOLKATA

The TMC expelled its MLAs Sandipan Saha and Ritabrata Banerjee, accusing them of engaging in anti-party activities.

The expulsion order came minutes after Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari told a press conference at the state secretariat that the two legislators had filed complaints in connection with the 'fake signature' case in the state assembly, where the TMC endorsed Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay as the Leader of Opposition.

"It has been brought to the notice of the All India Trinamool Congress through its competent authority that, despite having been elected as a candidate nominated by the AITC, you have repeatedly failed to attend meetings convened by the authorised leadership of the party and have made yourself involved in anti-party activities," a communication addressed to the two MLAs said. "It has also been observed that you have engaged in activities and made statements that are prejudicial to the interests of AITC," the communication, signed by the party vice-president, Chandrima Bhattacharya, added. After due consideration of the matter, the "competent authority of the AITC has decided to

expel you from the (primary) membership of the party with immediate effect", the communication stated.

"Consequently, you shall cease to hold any position, responsibility, or privilege associated with the party from the date of issuance of this notice," the notice added. Minutes before the expulsion notice, Adhikari tore into the TMC camp alleging the "party is yet to get past its fraudulent practices despite being rejected by the people of the state". Adhikari said it was at the behest of complaints lodged by the two TMC legislators -- Ritabrata Banerjee, who won the Uluberia Purba seat from Howrah, and Sandipan Saha, the MLA from Entally in central Kolkata -- that a case of forged signature from the TMC legislative party endorsing Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay as LoP was lodged by the Assembly secretariat at the Hare Street police station. "This inquiry wasn't initiated by the BJP. It was a follow-up to the complaint lodged before the Speaker on May 27 by the two TMC MLAs, who alleged that no resolution regarding the selection of LoP was passed at their party's meeting held on May 6. They complained that their party's endorsement letter signed by 70 MLAs, of which 14 signatures were

made in block letters, was manufactured and fabricated," the CM said.

Adhikari said the probe was handed over to the state CID on directions of the home secretary at his own approval, following which the agency questioned 13 TMC MLAs in the presence of handwriting experts and videographers.

"At least three TMC MLAs -- Baharul Islam, Arup Roy and Subhasis Das -- have told investigators that the signatures do not belong to them. Of them, it has been found, Islam was not even present at the venue of the said TMC meeting," Adhikari said.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, however, alleged that by bypassing the party leadership to approach the Assembly Speaker amounts to a "betrayal" of the mandate received in the name of former chief minister Mamata Banerjee. Defending the party's decision to expel two MLAs for alleged anti-party activities, Ghosh "thanked" Adhikari for publicly naming the MLAs who had complained to the Speaker, saying it had justified the party's expulsion call. Ghosh maintained legislators who had grievances regarding the alleged "fake signature" controversy should have first brought the matter to the notice of the party leadership instead of writing to the Speaker. "If anyone felt there was an error, they should have informed the leader first. The leader (Mamata Banerjee) was not present during the signature collection," he said. "We did not win as independent candidates. We came to the assembly on the TMC symbol, using Mamata Banerjee's image and receiving the votes of those who supported her. If the party is so bad, then why did they contest on a TMC ticket and sought votes in Mamata Banerjee's name?" he said.

India, US finalise most aspects of trade deal; only 'commas, full stops' left: Commerce Minister Goyal

NEW DELHI

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday said India and the US have resolved most aspects of the first phase of their bilateral trade pact, with talks now centred on a handful of minor details, describing them as "commas and full stops".

He said that the US team is in New Delhi to hold talks on finalising the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA). The talks will take place here from June 2-4.

On February 3, both sides announced the framework for the first phase of the BTA.

"...mostly everything is finalised. As you know, US Ambassador Gora said that 99 per cent of the things have been finalised. Discussions are going on about small issues, commas and full stops.

"While finalising, how will the legal changes that have taken place in the US be reflected in the final agreement, and what kind of changes will be made accordingly. After finalising that, I am fully confident that, with the US, we will conclude the first tranche of the BTA as soon as possible, sign it and start further discussions on how to have a more comprehensive BTA," he told reporters in Delhi.

The US team will be led by its chief negotiator Brendan Lynch. India's chief negotiator Darpan Jain is an additional secretary in the Department of Commerce.

The two sides are "proposed to finalise the details of the interim agreement and take forward the negotiations under the broader BTA on multiple areas, such as market access, non-tariff measures, customs and trade facilitation, investment promotion, and economic security alignment", the commerce ministry has said.

On February 7, India and the US issued a joint statement finalising the



contours or framework of the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA) or an interim trade agreement. Now, both sides will have to finalise the legal text for that deal.

The framework reaffirmed the countries' commitment to the broader India-US BTA negotiations.

According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18 per cent from 50 per cent. It had removed the 25 per cent tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and was to cut the remaining 25 per cent to 18 per cent under the pact.

But, on February 20 this year, the US Supreme Court ruled against President Donald Trump's sweeping reciprocal tariffs, which were imposed under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

After that, the US President announced the imposition of 10 per cent tariffs on all countries for 150 days, starting February 24. It would end on July 23.

In light of these changes, a meeting between the chief negotiators of India

and the US scheduled for February was postponed. The two sides then met in Washington in April, when the Indian team, headed by Jain, visited America from April 20-23, 2026.

To carry forward those discussions, the US team is visiting India this week.

As the tariff landscape has changed in the US, both sides may wish to revisit the agreement's framework.

Under the agreed framework, India proposed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal addresses the AMCHAM Annual Leadership Summit themed "Towards the Resilient Supply Chain" at The Oberoi Hotel, in New Delhi on Thursday, May 21, 2026.

India, US push for trade deal, energy cooperation as Jaishankar flags visa concerns

New Delhi has also expressed its

intentions to purchase USD 500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal over the next five years.

This meeting will be important, as India enjoys a comparative advantage over its competitor countries. Now, with all US trading partners facing a uniform 10 per cent tariff, the pact requires recalibration.

Sources said it is important that India should get an advantage over its competitor nations on the tariff front in the trade pact with the US. India's competitors include Southeast Asian nations, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

"The issue would come during this week's meeting," they said, adding that US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer would also visit India later, once "we have more clarity on the issues and the findings of the Section 301 investigations".

The US can impose any tariff rate under these investigations on its trading partners.

Further, in March, the US Trade Representative (STR) also launched two unilateral Section 301 investigations against a number of countries, including India, over excess capacity and failures to eradicate forced labour in global supply chains. India has strongly rejected allegations made by the US Trade Representative in those two investigations and has requested that the probes be initiated, as the initiation notice has failed to provide a cogent rationale to substantiate the claims. The US was the second-largest trading partner of India in 2025-26. India's outbound shipments to the US grew marginally 0.92 per cent to USD 87.3 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 15.95 per cent to USD 52.9 billion. The trade surplus declined to USD 34.4 billion in 2025-26 from USD 40.89 billion in 2024-25.

INTERNATIONAL

Malaysia bans social media accounts for children under 16 but questions remain



KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia began enforcing rules barring millions of children younger than 16 from having social media accounts, joining a growing global effort to tighten safety protections. Not all families approved, and critics raised concerns about data protection and potential surveillance.

Social media platforms with at least 8 million users in Malaysia, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, must implement age-verification systems and block users under 16 from creating accounts.

Malaysia's Communications and Multimedia Commission said age verification for existing users will be rolled out over the next six months. Users identified as under 16 will have a month to download or transfer data, including photos and videos, before restrictions or other actions are applied.

Companies that fail to comply could face penalties of up to 10 million ringgit (\$2.5 million). Parents whose children manage to bypass the law will not be

penalized.

The government said the measures are aimed at protecting children from harmful content, cyberbullying and platform features designed to encourage excessive use.

Countries including Australia, Brazil and Indonesia have introduced or announced age-based restrictions or requirements for children's access to social media. Others including Britain, France, Spain, Denmark, Thailand and South Korea are studying or developing similar approaches.

Malaysia's regulator said the rules are not intended to prevent children from accessing digital technology. Platforms are required to improve user safety, discourage excessive use and take action against underage accounts and harmful content.

Technology companies have yet to describe how they will comply.

Clara Koh, Meta's director of public policy for Southeast Asia, has cautioned that Malaysia's under-16 ban could backfire by driving teenagers away

from protected apps and into unregulated corners of the internet.

Governments around the world face pressure to address concerns about social media's impact on children's mental health and online safety. In March, a U.S. jury ordered Meta and YouTube to pay millions of dollars in damages in a case alleging that platform design features contributed to harm suffered by a young user.

In Kuala Lumpur, Saravanan Ganasan and Jayaradha Veerasamy, whose children are 12 and 15, said they approve of the changes. They already had banned their kids from using social media, believing minors lack the psychological capacity to cope with it.

Devices are kept out of bedrooms, screen time is limited to common areas and their son is not allowed to lock his phone with a password.

"Exposure is what we fear," Saravanan said. "The wrong kind of exposure will do damage to the mind."

Aadhavan Saravanan, 15, said he believes he would be addicted to social media if allowed full freedom. "Social

media is, like, a luxury and it's not a necessity," he said.

The couple said the restrictions have forced their children to develop offline life skills. Aadhavan reads books in a backyard mango tree and repairs broken household appliances, while their daughter cooks and does crafts.

"A lot of parents are very scared that their children get bored," Jayaradha said. "But boredom is actually very good because they start thinking out of the box."

But Shaun Hew, in the Kuala Lumpur suburb of Cheras, said the new restrictions go too far.

He believes social media allows his kids to spend time productively, as long as there is proper adult oversight. His 11-year-old son uses platforms to learn cooking and his daughter, 14, uses YouTube for exam preparation.

He worries a sudden cutoff could cause teenagers to rebel and find unregulated ways to bypass internet blocks.

Some critics said Malaysia's decision could increase the risks of data privacy breaches and expand state surveillance.

"It is very much following the trend, but in a way that is raising alarms due to requiring a government ID for age verification," said Benjamin Loh, social science lecturer at Monash University in Malaysia. He said social media companies could end up storing sensitive personal data without sufficient safeguards.

Loh said the decision also could unintentionally affect stateless individuals, undocumented residents and members of marginalized communities including LGBTQ+ people who rely on anonymity online for safety. Without penalties on parents, families can easily bypass the law by creating accounts for their children, he added.

"This is a major gap that, unless regulators are willing to fix, will result in the law having little effect in stopping children from using social media," he said.

The bad news keeps coming for Keir Starmer with a new trove of Mandelson files due to be published

LONDON

His poll ratings are dismal and rivals are eyeing his job. Now British Prime Minister Keir Starmer faces more embarrassment on Monday with the publication of hundreds of pages of files about former U.K. ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson, a friend of convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The government is expected to comply with a demand by lawmakers to release documents related to Mandelson's appointment to, and conduct in, the U.K.'s most important diplomatic post.

Mandelson was fired after nine months, and fallout from the misjudged appointment has left Starmer fighting for his job.

A first trove of files published in March revealed ministers had been warned that Mandelson's friendship with Epstein exposed the government to "reputational risk."

It later was disclosed that Mandelson had been approved for the ambassador's job despite failing security checks, a revelation that sparked bitter blame-trading between Starmer and senior civil servants who oversaw the security vetting.

The files being released Monday could run to more than 1,000 pages and are expected to include emails and text messages between Mandelson and government ministers and advisers.

Police have asked for some documents to be withheld because they form part of a criminal investigation into Mandelson for alleged misconduct in public office. Mandelson, 72, was briefly arrested in February by detectives investigating allegations



he passed sensitive government information to Epstein when he was a minister in the British government a decade and a half ago.

He has been released without bail conditions as the police investigation continues.

Health Secretary James Murray said Monday that the release marked an "unprecedented" level of transparency from the government.

"It's right we do that. We have been very clear that the appointment of Mandelson was wrong," he told Sky News.

Conservative lawmaker Alex Burghart said any attempt to withhold or redact more documents than those requested by police "will be viewed by the House as a contempt of Parliament, and as a cover-up by the British public."

Starmer fired Mandelson in September 2025 after an earlier release of documents showed he had maintained contact with Epstein after the financier's 2008 conviction

for sexual offenses involving a minor.

Critics say Starmer's decision to appoint Mandelson is evidence of bad judgment by a prime minister who has made repeated missteps since he led the center-left Labour Party to a landslide election victory in July 2024. Details about Mandelson's ties to Epstein, revealed in a huge trove of files published by the U.S. Department of Justice in January, raised new questions about Starmer's judgment, driving opponents and some Labour lawmakers to call for the prime minister's resignation. Those calls intensified after Labour suffered big losses in local elections in May.

A senior Cabinet minister, Wes Streeting, resigned with the intention of challenging Starmer for the Labour leadership. Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham is running for a seat in Parliament in a June 18 special election, and also is expected to challenge Starmer if he wins.

Myanmar Turmoil Casts Shadow Over India's Act East Ambitions and Northeast Growth

Myanmar's renewed diplomatic outreach to India has drawn attention not merely as a development in bilateral relations, but as a strategic issue with far-reaching implications for New Delhi's regional ambitions. As political instability and conflict continue to grip Myanmar, India finds itself confronting a difficult reality: the success of its Act East Policy and the economic transformation of the Northeast are increasingly tied to developments beyond its borders.

For more than a decade, India's Act East Policy has sought to reposition the Northeastern region from a geographically isolated frontier into a gateway connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia. Successive governments have invested heavily in infrastructure, trade corridors, border connectivity and regional integration initiatives designed to unlock the economic potential of states such as Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. The objective has been clear to transform the Northeast into a hub of commerce, connectivity and strategic engagement.

However, that vision now faces one of its most significant challenges. Myanmar, India's only land bridge to Southeast Asia and the only ASEAN member sharing a land border with India, remains mired in political upheaval and armed conflict. As a result, projects that form the backbone of India's eastern outreach are encountering delays, uncertainties and operational difficulties.

The importance of Myanmar in India's strategic calculations cannot be overstated. Nearly every major overland connectivity initiative linking India to Southeast Asia passes through Myanmar's territory. Consequently, developments within the country are no longer confined to the realm of foreign policy. They directly influence economic prospects, trade opportunities, infrastructure utilisation and security dynamics across India's Northeast.

One of the clearest examples is the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. Envisioned as a transformative corridor connecting India with mainland Southeast Asia, the highway was expected to facilitate trade, improve mobility and strengthen regional economic integration. Alongside it, the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project was designed to provide an alternative route linking the Northeast to the Bay of Bengal through Myanmar, reducing dependence on the narrow Siliguri Corridor and improving access to international markets.

Together, these projects embody India's broader effort to integrate the Northeast into regional and global value chains. Yet the prolonged instability in Myanmar has repeatedly disrupted implementation schedules and complicated efforts to operationalise these ambitious initiatives. The situation underscores a fundamental lesson: infrastructure investments cannot remain insulated from the political realities of the regions through which they pass.

The consequences extend beyond strategic concerns and directly affect economic aspirations in the Northeast. In states such as Assam, Manipur and Mizoram, connectivity projects have long been associated with hopes of attracting investment, expanding industries and creating employment opportunities. Policymakers and business leaders have viewed enhanced regional connectivity as a pathway to reducing logistical costs, increasing market access and positioning the Northeast more effectively within emerging Asian supply chains.

When instability hampers cross-border connectivity, these expectations are inevitably delayed. The pace at which the Northeast can integrate with neighbouring markets becomes dependent not only on domestic infrastructure development but also on conditions across the international border.

For years, discussions on the Northeast's development centred on inadequate infrastructure as the region's primary challenge. There was considerable truth to that assessment. Limited road networks, poor rail connectivity and logistical bottlenecks constrained economic growth and reinforced the region's relative isolation.

Over the past decade, however, significant progress has been made. National highways have been expanded, railway links strengthened, airports modernised and logistics infrastructure improved. While gaps



remain, the Northeast today is far better connected to the rest of India than it was a decade ago.

As a result, the principal obstacle is increasingly shifting from geography to geopolitics. The central question is no longer whether India can build roads, bridges and transport corridors. Instead, it is whether the broader regional environment will remain stable enough for those investments to deliver their intended benefits.

Critics argue that India may have placed excessive expectations on Myanmar from the outset. They point to the country's long history of internal conflict, ethnic insurgencies and political volatility as evidence that large-scale connectivity projects were always likely to face significant obstacles. Some analysts further contend that maritime routes through the Bay of Bengal may ultimately prove more practical and reliable than overland corridors traversing conflict-prone areas.

These arguments merit consideration. Strategic planning must account for ground realities rather than rely solely on aspirational goals. Recent developments have demonstrated that economic corridors and infrastructure networks are vulnerable when neighbouring countries experience prolonged instability.

Yet these challenges do not diminish the broader importance of the Act East Policy. The initiative was never intended merely as a transportation strategy. At its core, it represents an effort to reshape India's relationship with the Northeast and strengthen the country's engagement with Southeast Asia.

Connectivity is about more than the movement of goods and people. It creates opportunities for investment, encourages economic interdependence and strengthens long-term political relationships. Regional integration helps reduce isolation, promotes cooperation and expands the influence of participating economies. In that sense, the value of projects such as the Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan corridor extends far beyond immediate commercial returns.

This wider perspective is particularly relevant at a time of intensifying geopolitical competition across Asia. Myanmar occupies a strategically significant position between South Asia and Southeast Asia, making it a focal point for regional powers seeking influence in the Indo-Pacific. For India, disengagement is neither practical nor desirable. Geography dictates continued engagement, regardless of political complexities.

A stable and connected Myanmar remains central to India's objective of deepening ties with Southeast Asia and advancing the long-term development interests of the Northeast. This reality is visible most clearly in border towns such as Moreh in Manipur and Zokhawthar in Mizoram. Though relatively small in size, these locations have become critical junctions where local economies intersect with larger regional dynamics.

Trade routes, border commerce and connectivity initiatives converge in these areas, making them important indicators of the health of India-Myanmar relations. Their future growth prospects depend significantly on the success of wider efforts aimed at enhancing region-

al integration.

At the same time, Myanmar's continuing crisis offers an important lesson for policymakers. Infrastructure alone cannot guarantee economic transformation. The Northeast must continue building its own economic resilience, irrespective of uncertainties beyond its borders.

Investments in education, manufacturing, logistics, digital infrastructure, entrepreneurship and skill development remain essential.

A stronger and more diversified regional economy will be better positioned to take advantage of cross-border opportunities whenever conditions in Myanmar improve.

In many respects, the turmoil in Myanmar has exposed both the strengths and limitations of India's eastern strategy. The strength lies in recognising the Northeast as a region connected to broader Asian opportunities rather than as a distant periphery. The limitation lies in assuming that infrastructure development by itself can overcome geopolitical instability.

The future of the Northeast will be shaped not only by decisions taken in

New Delhi, Guwahati, Imphal and Aizawl but also by developments unfolding across the border in Myanmar. Geography has ensured that the destinies of these neighbouring regions remain closely linked. For India, the challenge therefore extends beyond constructing highways, bridges and trade corridors. The larger task is sustaining a long-term strategic vision in a neighbourhood characterised by uncertainty and change. The ultimate success of the Act East Policy will depend not only on infrastructure investments but also on the stability and security of the regional environment through which those connections must operate. Myanmar's ongoing crisis is thus far more than a foreign policy concern. It has become a critical test of India's broader regional aspirations and a reminder that the future of the Northeast remains deeply intertwined with the future of its eastern neighbour. As New Delhi seeks to strengthen its engagement with Southeast Asia, ensuring that vision translates into reality will require patience, adaptability and continued strategic engagement with a region whose importance is only growing.

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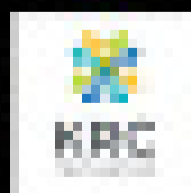


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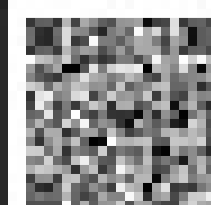


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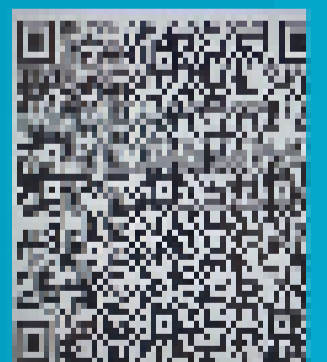
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