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**PERSPECTIVE**

When you're right, no one remembers. When you're wrong, no one forgets.

**SC Seeks Assam Government's Response on Shyamkanu Mahanta's Bail Plea in Zubeen Garg Case**

**NEW DELHI**



The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Assam government on a bail petition filed by Shyamkanu Mahanta, event manager and chief organiser of the North East India Festival in Singapore, who is among the accused in the case related to the death of noted Assamese singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg.

A Bench comprising Justices B. V. Nagarathna and Joyymalya Bagchi directed the Assam government to submit its response within three weeks.

The matter has been listed for further hearing at the end of July.

Mahanta moved the apex court after the Gauhati High Court rejected his bail application on May 29.

With the issuance of the notice, the Supreme Court has initiated the next stage of proceedings and will consider the arguments of both sides during the scheduled hearing.

The outcome of the hearing is expected to determine whether Mahanta will be granted bail while the case remains under judicial consideration.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**Warm greetings on International Olympic Day 2026.**  
This year's theme, "You Can Do This," inspires us to embrace fitness, overcome self-doubt, and build self-belief through sports and physical activity.  
Let us continue to nurture sporting talent and uphold the values of excellence, friendship, and respect.

~ Kiemchand Yumnam, CM, Manipur

## Tripura Targets 11 MW Solar Capacity Addition in 2026-27 to Boost Renewable Energy

**AGARTALA**

Tripura has set a target of adding 11 MW of solar power generation during the 2026-27 financial year as part of its efforts to expand renewable energy infrastructure and reduce dependence on conventional power sources.

The initiative is being led by the Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA), which is stepping up efforts to promote clean energy adoption across government institutions and remote areas of the state.

Currently, Tripura generates around 35 MW of solar power. According to TREDA Director General (in-charge) Debabrata Sukladas, the agency has intensified preparations to achieve the new target, with a particular focus on strengthening solar infrastructure in public offices.

As part of the expansion programme, solar power systems will be installed in all 58 Block Development Offices and 275 village committee offices across the state.



The initiative is expected to increase the use of renewable energy in government operations while helping reduce electricity expenditure.

Sukladas said the solarisation drive would also be extended to other government establishments. The tendering process for the project is in its final stages and is expected to be floated soon.

He noted that all district magistrate offices in Tripura have already been equipped with solar power systems, reflecting the state government's commitment to promoting sustainable and environmentally friendly energy practices.

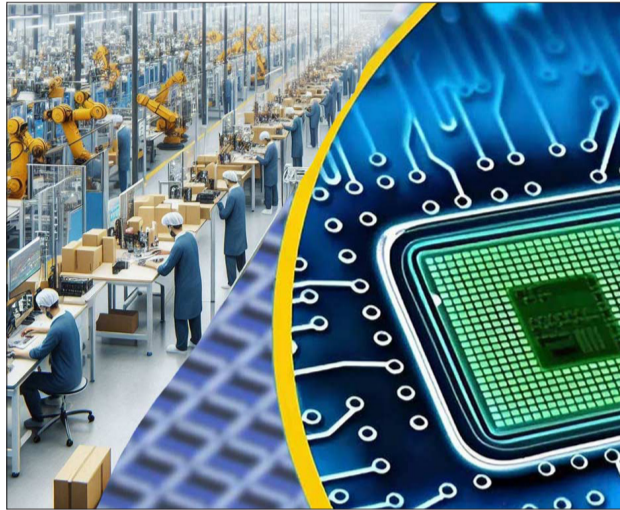
## Assam has transformed from insurgency to an emerging semiconductor hub: Himanta

**NEW DELHI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday highlighted the state's remarkable transformation over the past decade, saying Assam has evolved from being associated with insurgency to emerging as one of India's fastest-growing states and a future semiconductor manufacturing hub.

According to a press release, the Chief Minister, while delivering the keynote address on 'Man on a Mission' at the Republic Summit 2026 in the national capital, said the next two decades would belong to Eastern and North-Eastern India as the region unlocks unprecedented opportunities in industry, trade and innovation in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

"From insurgency to an



upcoming semiconductor hub, this is the transformation of Assam over the last decade. Today, we are the fastest-growing state in India and attracting global attention," he said.

As per the release, projecting Assam as India's gateway to Southeast Asia and neighbouring countries, the Chief Minister said the state is leveraging its strategic location, natural resources and

improving infrastructure to attract global investments.

"We are the entry point of the country. We have to develop a culture of welcoming industry," he said.

Highlighting Assam's growing industrial ecosystem, Sarma announced that Tata Semiconductor would begin exporting semiconductor chips from Guwahati by November. "By November, Tata Semiconductor will start exporting chips from Guwahati. We are going to export 48 million chips from Guwahati," he said.

According to the release, the Chief Minister also noted that Assam's economy is expanding at a pace higher than the national average, reflecting the state's growing contribution to India's development.

Expressing confidence in the region's future, Sarma said Eastern and North-Eastern India possess immense potential to become key drivers of the country's economic growth. "We have the natural resources, we have the international borders, we have the market. We just have to create an environment for industry and the next two decades will belong to the East and Northeast," he said. He urged people to embrace optimism and work collectively towards building a prosperous future.

"We have to bring positivity because we have been deprived so much. Once positivity comes, we will be the bright spot of the economy and contribute to the growth of the nation," he said.

As per the release, the Chief Minister also underlined the importance of safeguarding India's border regions and ensuring balanced development in frontier states.

Referring to Assam's unique geographical and demographic realities, he stressed the need for continued vigilance against illegal infiltration while preserving peace and stability in the region. Sarma said Assam is aligning its development priorities with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 by promoting industrialisation, improving connectivity and creating an investor-friendly ecosystem.

He observed that the state's transformation demonstrates how focused governance, infrastructure development and long-term planning can accelerate economic growth and improve opportunities for the people.

Concluding his address, the Chief Minister expressed confidence that Assam and the Northeast would play a pivotal role in India's growth story over the coming decades through innovation, strategic connectivity and sustainable development.

## Manipur Reduces Summer Vacation to Recover Academic Time Lost to Unrest



**IMPHAL**

The Manipur government has curtailed the summer vacation in schools from three weeks to one week to compensate for academic time lost due to disruptions caused by the recent law-and-order situation in the state.

Announcing the decision at the inaugural session of a three-day workshop on "Reforms in School Education of Manipur: An Approach to Implementation, Challenges and Opportunities of NEP-2020", Chief Minister Yumnam Kiemchand Singh said the move was aimed at ensuring that students do not suffer long-term academic setbacks.

The Chief Minister noted that educational institutions and government offices remained disrupted for nearly a month following the Tronglaobi incident in Bishnupur district in May, in which two children lost their lives in a bomb attack.

"Due to the current law-and-order situation in the state, the summer vacation has been reduced from three weeks to one week," Singh said.

To address administrative delays resulting from the disruptions, the state government has also declared Saturdays as working days for all government departments. Singh clarified that the arrangement is temporary and that regular holiday schedules would be restored once the backlog of work is cleared.

Emphasising the need for educational reforms, the Chief Minister highlighted the importance of mother-tongue-based learning in the foundational years of education. He said that teaching children in their mother tongue up to Class V would improve comprehension and help students grasp concepts more effectively.

The workshop focused on the implementation of the National Education Policy, with discussions centred on key challenges, opportunities and strategies for strengthening Manipur's school education system.

The government's decision comes as authorities work to restore normalcy in educational institutions and minimise the impact of recent disruptions on students' academic progress.

## India-Japan Summit Shifted to New Delhi

**GUWAHATI**

The proposed visit of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to Guwahati for the India-Japan Annual Summit has been cancelled, with the high-level bilateral meeting now expected to take place in New Delhi from July 1 to 3, according to sources familiar with the development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was initially slated to host his Japanese counterpart in Guwahati as part of efforts to highlight the Northeast's growing strategic and economic significance. However, officials indicated that logistical considerations and scheduling constraints led to the decision to shift the venue to the national capital. Sources said Takaichi's itinerary remains constrained by domestic commitments, including the ongoing session of Japan's parliament, the Diet. Given the limited time available between her arrival in India and subsequent departure, holding the summit in New Delhi was considered a more practical option. Officials noted that the change in venue would also allow both countries to accommodate a wider range of meetings and engagements aimed at deepening bilateral cooperation. The visit will be Takaichi's first official trip to India since assuming office. Guwahati had been among the locations proposed for the summit and was offered to the Japanese side as part of the programme. A high-level Japanese delegation, including representatives from more than 50 companies and organisations, is expected to accompany the Prime Minister. Among those expected to participate are senior executives from Suzuki Motor Corporation and other major Japanese firms.

The summit is expected to focus on expanding economic cooperation, strengthening supply-chain resilience and enhancing strategic ties between the two countries. Discussions are likely to cover sectors such as semiconductors, renewable energy, critical minerals, defence manufacturing and automobiles.

## Manipur Governor Meets Displaced Students Awarded Full Scholarships for Education in Dehradun



**IMPHAL**

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Monday interacted with five internally displaced students and their guardians at Raj Bhavan in Imphal after they were awarded full scholarships for schooling in Uttarakhand. The students, hailing from Moreh and Churachandpur and currently residing in relief camps in Imphal, have been selected for free education up to Class 10 under a sponsorship programme of the Information Technology Institute for the Tribes of India-Doon Sanskriti School in Dehradun. The scholarship covers tuition fees, accommodation, food, uniforms and other essential educational expenses. Travel costs from Imphal to Dehradun will be fully borne by the Assam Rifles. The students were selected from among children living in relief camps under an initiative undertaken under the aegis of the Inspector General Assam Rifles (South). During the interaction,

Governor Bhalla described the scholarship as a significant opportunity for the students and encouraged them to pursue their studies with dedication and make full use of the facilities provided.

He urged the children to nurture their talents and strive for excellence in their academic journey, while wishing them success in their future endeavours. The Governor also commended the Assam Rifles for its continued efforts in supporting internally displaced students and helping them access educational opportunities despite the challenges arising from the ongoing crisis in the state. The programme was attended by Major General Gaurav Sharma, Inspector General Assam Rifles (South), and Brigadier Pratyush Kumar, Commander of the 9 Sector Assam Rifles. The initiative comes against the backdrop of the ethnic conflict in Manipur, which has displaced thousands of families and disrupted the education of many children. According to figures previously cited by the Ministry of Education, as many as 14,763 school students were displaced across the state during the crisis. While many of these children have since been enrolled in schools closer to their current locations, a large number of families continue to live in relief camps. Official data obtained through the Right to Information Act indicates that 58,881 internally displaced persons are currently residing in 174 operational relief camps and prefabricated shelters across Manipur.

## Meghalaya Plans Film City, New Institutes to Strengthen Creative Economy

**SHILLONG**

Meghalaya is set to expand its creative economy with plans to establish a Film City and a Film Institute in Shillong, along with a Music Institute in Tura, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma announced on Sunday.

The announcement was made during the inaugural Hello Meghalaya Music Awards held in Shillong to mark World Music Day. Addressing musicians, artists and content creators, Sangma outlined the government's vision of positioning Meghalaya as a major hub for music, filmmaking and digital content creation.

According to the Chief Minister, the proposed institutions are aimed at creating a comprehensive ecosystem for creative professionals by providing world-class infrastructure, training opportunities and sustained support for emerging talent. He said investments in the creative sector are as important as conventional development initiatives because they generate employment opportunities and enable young people

to pursue careers in their chosen fields.

Sangma highlighted the success of the Chief Minister's Grassroots Music Programme, which currently supports more than 7,000 artists across the state. The initiative has emerged as one of the government's flagship programmes for nurturing local talent and promoting Meghalaya's rich musical and cultural traditions.

The state government also showcased the progress of Hello Meghalaya, the OTT platform launched in 2024 to promote regional storytelling and locally produced content. Officials said the platform has surpassed five lakh downloads and hosts more than 1,000 titles, including films, music productions and other digital content.

As part of its efforts to encourage content creation, the government released the second edition of its grant disbursement booklet, detailing financial assistance provided to filmmakers producing feature films, web series and short films.



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## GEOGRAPHY FAVOURS IRAN

The recent conflict involving Iran, the United States and Israel has once again demonstrated a timeless truth of warfare: geography remains one of the most decisive factors in determining a nation's resilience. While American and Israeli air strikes inflicted significant damage on Iranian military installations and research facilities, they fell short of achieving their principal objective-breaking Tehran's resolve or compelling it to capitulate. Instead, Iran has emerged from the confrontation bruised but unbowed, negotiating from a position of relative confidence rather than weakness.

The ceasefire has provided Iran with a valuable breathing space. It has enabled the reopening of underground shelters and military facilities where missiles and drones had been stored. These facilities, many of which survived the bombardment, underscore the strategic advantage Iran derives from both its geography and its long-term military planning.

Iran is not a small, vulnerable state that can be easily coerced through air power alone. Covering an area roughly half the size of India, it possesses vast stretches of rugged mountains and inhospitable terrain. While these geographical characteristics limit agricultural productivity and force the country to rely heavily on imported food grains, they also provide formidable defensive advantages. Mountain ranges offer natural fortifications, complicating military operations and shielding critical infrastructure from enemy attack.

Tehran appears to have drawn lessons from previous American military campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Anticipating the overwhelming air superiority of the United States and Israel, Iran invested heavily over the years in constructing fortified military complexes deep within mountain ranges. Hidden tunnels, underground missile depots and subterranean command centres were designed precisely to withstand the type of bombardment witnessed during the recent conflict. Reports suggest that although many tunnel entrances were struck in the opening stages of the campaign, a significant portion has since been reopened, allowing Iran to restore operational capability.

The survival of substantial sections of Iran's missile and drone infrastructure explains why the country's retaliatory capacity remained intact. This resilience transformed the conflict from a one-sided aerial campaign into a broader strategic contest, forcing adversaries to reconsider their assumptions about Iran's vulnerability.

Geography also shapes Iran's strategic environment beyond its borders. The country occupies a pivotal position at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. It shares borders with Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Across the Persian Gulf lie the Gulf monarchies, many of which host American military installations and critical energy infrastructure.

This location provides Tehran with considerable leverage. During the conflict, Iran demonstrated its ability to threaten military facilities and strategic assets across the region. Such actions were intended not merely as retaliation but as political messaging signalling that any war against Iran would impose costs far beyond its own territory. By widening the risk landscape, Tehran sought to pressure regional governments into urging restraint upon Washington and Tel Aviv.

Equally important is the fact that Iran's geography severely constrains the options available to its adversaries. A large-scale land invasion remains highly improbable. The country's mountainous terrain, vast distances and defensive preparations would make any expeditionary operation extraordinarily costly. Even if external powers sought to exploit ethnic or regional fault lines, Tehran has shown a willingness to act decisively to neutralise perceived threats along its borders.

Consequently, air power remains the principal instrument available to the United States and Israel. Yet recent events illustrate the limitations of air campaigns when confronting a determined state that has spent decades preparing for precisely such a challenge.

Nowhere is Iran's geographical advantage more evident than in its relationship with the Strait of Hormuz. This narrow waterway, connecting the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman, is among the world's most strategically significant maritime chokepoints. A substantial portion of global oil exports passes through it every day, making its security a matter of international concern.

Iran's long coastline and control of several islands near the strait grant it the ability to threaten maritime traffic through missiles, drones, naval mines and fast attack craft. The asymmetry is striking. Tehran need not seek out targets across vast oceans; commercial and military vessels moving through the strait effectively come within range of Iranian capabilities.

This reality gives Iran a powerful deterrent. Even the prospect of disruption in the Strait of Hormuz can trigger anxiety in global energy markets and exert pressure on governments dependent on uninterrupted oil supplies. The strategic value of this leverage cannot be overstated.

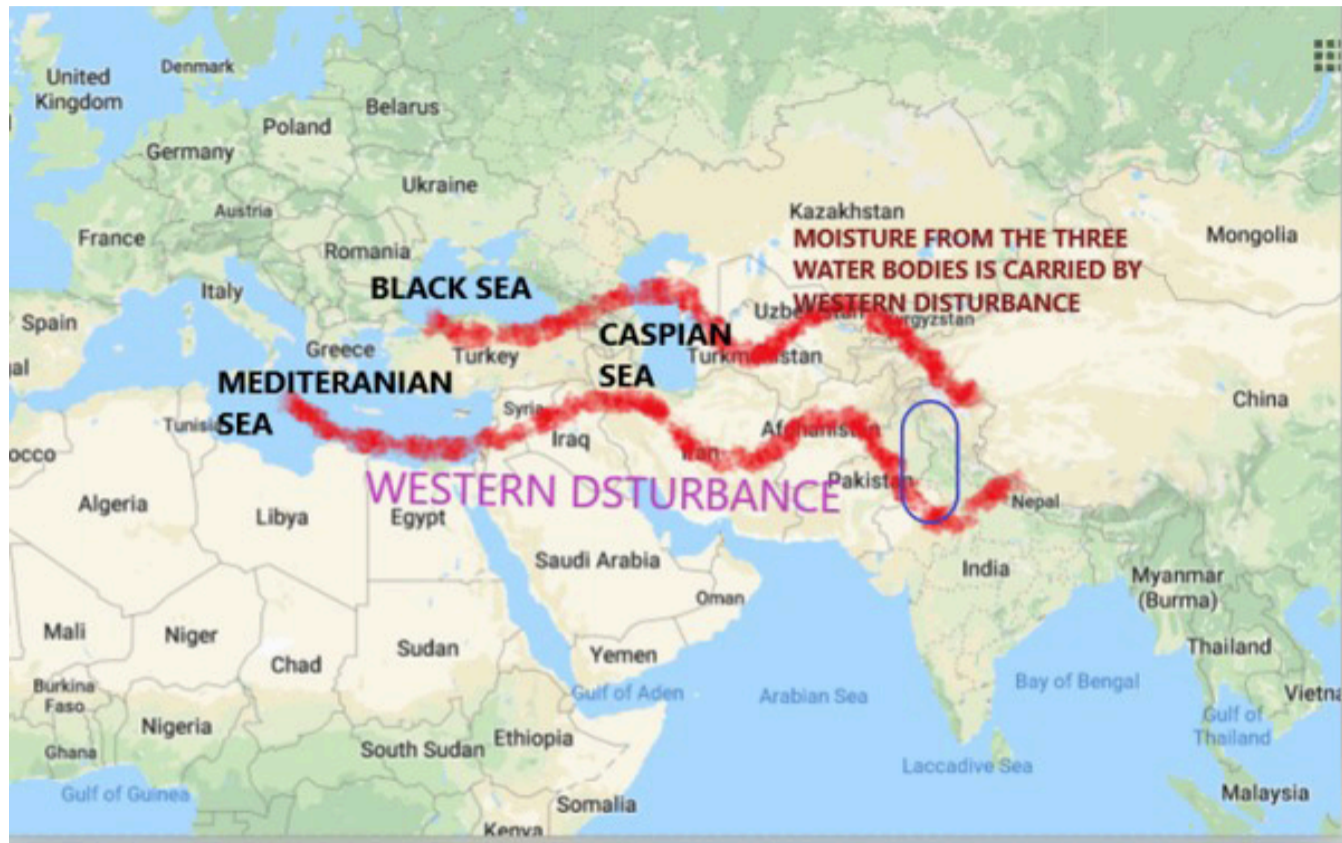
Yet geography cuts both ways. The Strait of Hormuz is simultaneously Iran's greatest strength and one of its most significant vulnerabilities. Much of the country's oil exports and international trade flow through the same waters it threatens to close. Any prolonged disruption would inflict severe economic pain on Iran itself.

Similarly, a substantial portion of Iran's hydrocarbon wealth is concentrated in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, a relatively flat and exposed region. Unlike the country's mountainous heartland, this area lacks natural defensive advantages and remains susceptible to aerial attack or military occupation in a larger conflict scenario.

Perhaps Iran's most underappreciated strategic asset lies to its north. The Caspian Sea provides Tehran with an alternative economic and logistical lifeline that is largely beyond Western military reach. Under the 2018 convention governing the Caspian, only the five littoral states-Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan-possess jurisdiction over the waterway. Foreign military presence is prohibited.

This arrangement has proven advantageous. Trade, food supplies and industrial goods can continue moving through Caspian ports even when pressure mounts elsewhere. Iran's northern ports, particularly Bandar-e Anzali and Amirabad, serve as critical gateways linking the country to Russia and Central Asia. They are also integral to the International North-South Transport Corridor, a project of considerable in-

# From disturbances from the West to a Disturbed West



GLOBAL RAIN

For centuries, India has endured disturbances from the West. Waves of invasions, imperial ambitions, ideological extremism, and geopolitical intrigues entered the subcontinent through its western frontiers. The scars of those disturbances are visible even today in unresolved borders, terrorism, religious radicalism, and regional instability. Yet history has a peculiar way of turning upon itself.

Today, the West-both in the broader global sense and in India's immediate western neighbourhood-appears increasingly trapped in crises of its own making. The very forces that were once exported across continents are now rebounding upon their creators. Climate change, geopolitical instability, resource conflicts, mass migration, and fractured political systems are no longer problems confined to distant lands. They have returned to haunt the societies that helped create them.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more visible than in Pakistan.

Pakistan today stands at a constitutional and political crossroads. Once again, questions about the country's unity, federal structure, and long-term viability have resurfaced. Ethnic tensions simmer across provinces. Balochistan remains in open rebellion. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa struggles with militancy and political alienation. The areas of Jammu and Kashmir under Pakistan's illegal occupation are witnessing unprecedented unrest. The very state that spent decades exporting instability beyond its borders now finds itself consumed by instability within. The most striking development is the growing revolt in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK).

For decades, the people of POJK were encouraged to subordinate their economic and political interests to narratives of religion, nationalism, and hostility towards India. Today, many of them have begun to see through that illusion. Their grievances are no longer hidden beneath slogans. They are demanding accountability, representation, and dignity.

These aspirations have found expression through the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC),

commodities, an end to elite privileges, and genuine political representation.

Yet Islamabad's response has been anything but democratic.

Reports indicate that protests have been met with force, arrests, and violent suppression. Particularly disturbing were incidents in Rawalakot, where unarmed protesters allegedly faced lethal action by security forces. JAAC has been prescribed as a terrorist organisation. Such responses reveal a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Pakistan's governance model: while democracy is celebrated rhetorically, meaningful challenges to centralized authority are often met with coercion.

At the centre of the unrest lies a deeply flawed political arrangement. The so-called Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly consists of 53 seats, of which eight are nominated and twelve are reserved for a peculiar category known as "Kashmiri migrants" residing in different parts of Pakistan. These seats have long served as instruments through which Islamabad exerts control over political outcomes in Muzaffarabad.

The mathematics of power is revealing. A governing majority requires the support of twenty-seven members. Islamabad effectively begins with control over twenty seats through nominated members and migrant constituencies. It therefore needs to influence only a handful of directly elected representatives to determine who governs. Under such circumstances, real power inevitably resides not in Muzaffarabad but in Islamabad.

The JAAC's demand to abolish these reserved seats is therefore far more than an electoral reform proposal. It is a challenge to the entire mechanism through which Pakistan manages and controls POJK. Against this backdrop comes the debate surrounding Pakistan's proposed 28th Constitutional Amendment.

If enacted in its reported form, the amendment would represent one of the most consequential constitutional transformations in Pakistan's history. The proposals reportedly include rolling back provincial autonomy established under the landmark 18th Amendment, revising revenue-sharing arrangements in favour of the federal government,

gions.

Viewed in isolation, each proposal is controversial. Viewed together, they reveal something much larger: a systematic attempt to recentralize political authority.

The significance of this shift becomes clearer when one recalls the importance of the 18th Amendment of 2010. That reform was widely regarded as a milestone in Pakistan's democratic evolution. It transferred substantial authority over education, health, culture, and local governance to the provinces. More importantly, it reflected an acknowledgment that Pakistan's ethnic and regional diversity could be better managed through federalism rather than centralization. The proposed 28th Amendment appears to reverse that philosophy.

Returning key subjects to federal control would weaken provincial governments and diminish local accountability. Altering the National Finance Commission Award would further erode provincial autonomy by tightening Islamabad's grip over financial resources. Political autonomy without fiscal autonomy is little more than symbolism.

Perhaps the most startling proposal is the reported plan to raise the voting age from eighteen to twenty-five years. Such a move would disenfranchise millions of young Pakistanis in a single stroke.

At a time when democracies around the world are exploring ways to expand youth participation, Pakistan appears poised to move in the opposite direction. The message would be unmistakable: political participation is welcome only when it produces acceptable outcomes.

The debate over redrawing provincial boundaries raises equally troubling questions. Administrative efficiency may be the stated objective, but boundary changes in ethnically sensitive regions invariably affect representation, resource distribution, and political power. For provinces already suspicious of federal intentions, such measures are unlikely to inspire confidence.

Equally significant are discussions regarding deeper integration of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan's federal structure. Beyond their regional implications, such proposals reinforce the

The foundations were laid through earlier constitutional changes that altered the balance between the judiciary, elected institutions, and the military establishment. Critics argue that recent amendments weakened judicial independence, expanded political influence over judicial appointments, and reduced institutional checks on executive authority. The cumulative pattern is difficult to ignore.

First came the dilution of judicial autonomy. Then came the consolidation of executive and military influence. Now come proposals to curtail provincial autonomy, tighten control over resources, and potentially restrict democratic participation.

Many analysts describe this process as a constitutional counter-revolution. The phrase may sound dramatic, but it captures a deeper reality. Constitutional democracies depend upon a balance among competing centres of power. Federalism restrains excessive centralization. Independent courts check executive overreach. Broad electoral

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

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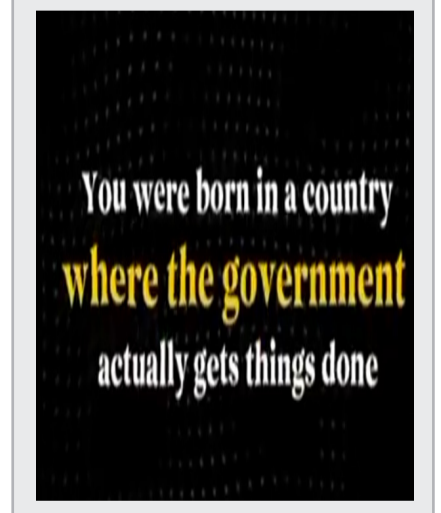
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participation ensures democratic legitimacy. When all three are simultaneously weakened, the character of the state itself begins to change.

The irony is striking. For decades, Pakistan sought strategic depth beyond its borders while neglecting democratic depth within them. It exported instability while suppressing diversity at home. It manipulated identities abroad while denying representation to many of its own citizens. Today, the consequences are becoming visible.

The disturbances that once flowed eastward are now turning inward. The West that disturbed others increasingly finds itself disturbed. Pakistan's constitutional turmoil, provincial unrest, and growing resistance in POJK are not isolated developments. They are symptoms of a deeper crisis-one rooted in the refusal to accommodate diversity, decentralize power, and trust the democratic aspirations of its own people.

History offers a simple lesson: nations can suppress grievances for a time, but they cannot govern indefinitely against the aspirations of their citizens. The choice before Pakistan is whether it learns that lesson through reform or through further turmoil.

The answer may determine not merely the fate of a constitutional amendment, but the future of the Pakistani state itself.



which has emerged as the principal platform of popular resistance. The movement's demands are remarkably basic: affordable electricity, access to essential

raising the voting age from eighteen to twenty-five years, and redrawing provincial boundaries while strengthening Islamabad's control over peripheral re-

perception that constitutional evolution in Pakistan is moving steadily toward greater centralization rather than greater autonomy.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

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

Artis Lewis

# Assam Reports Highest HIV Burden in Northeast with Over 33,000 Cases: Health Ministry

NEW DELHI

Assam has recorded the highest number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) among the Northeastern states, highlighting the continuing public health challenge in the region despite ongoing awareness campaigns and intervention programmes.

According to the Union Health Ministry's 2025-26 report, Assam has 33,145 people living with HIV, accounting for an estimated prevalence rate of 0.13 per cent. The state tops the Northeast in terms of absolute case numbers.

Among the other Northeastern states, Mizoram has reported 26,321 PLHIV, followed by Nagaland with 23,731 and Manipur with 23,463. Tripura has recorded 10,769 cases, Meghalaya 9,244, Arunachal Pradesh 2,630

and Sikkim 533. The report notes that Assam's position as the region's most populous state and a major transportation and commercial gateway connecting the Northeast to the rest of the country presents unique challenges in controlling the spread of HIV. Factors such as migration, high population mobility, urbanisation and uneven access to healthcare services continue to influence transmission patterns and treatment outcomes.

Women account for a significant proportion of HIV cases in the region. Of the 13,809 HIV-positive women reported across the Northeast, Assam alone accounts for 6,809 cases, nearly half of the regional total.

The report also highlights concerns over mother-to-child transmission. Assam recorded 146 HIV-positive



pregnant women, the highest among Northeastern states. Nagaland followed with 127 cases and Meghalaya with 124, underscoring the need for

stronger antenatal screening and prevention programmes. The government, through the National AIDS Control Organisation, has been implementing a comprehensive strategy focused on prevention, treatment, care and support services. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) initiatives remain a key component of the national HIV response, aimed at increasing awareness, encouraging testing and reducing stigma.

Recognising the unique social and cultural context of the Northeast, NACO has rolled out state-specific multimedia campaigns and outreach programmes tailored to local communities. One of its flagship youth engagement initiatives, Red Fest, uses music, cultural performances and interactive activities to spread awareness about

HIV/AIDS while addressing myths and misconceptions among young people. The organisation has also intensified campaigns on HIV transmission, prevention and risk factors, while working with community leaders, policymakers and civil society groups to combat discrimination and promote acceptance of people living with HIV.

Several Northeastern states have convened State Council on AIDS meetings in recent years to strengthen coordination among departments and improve the implementation of HIV control measures at the grassroots level.

Public health experts have stressed that long-term success will depend on expanding early diagnosis, ensuring uninterrupted access to antiretroviral therapy, reducing stigma and reaching

high-risk and vulnerable populations through targeted interventions.

Health expert Suneela Garg said Assam's latest figures indicate that the state continues to shoulder the region's largest HIV burden despite sustained efforts.

"Assam's latest figures suggest that despite ongoing efforts, the state continues to shoulder the region's largest HIV burden, making continued investment in prevention, surveillance and treatment services critical to reversing the trend," she said.

The findings underline the need for sustained public health interventions and stronger community-based awareness programmes as the Northeast continues its efforts to curb HIV transmission and improve treatment outcomes.

## Assam's Healthcare Expansion on Track as CM Reviews 15 Medical College Projects

GANGTOK

Sikkim Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang, on Monday successfully submitted his Special Intensive Revision (SIR) form in the presence of election officials in Soreng District.

In a Facebook post, Tamang stated that the submission was carried out in the presence of Jas Bahadur Tamang, Block Level Supervisor, and Deepson Tamang, Block Level Officers of Soreng District. On the occasion, the Chief Minister Tamang urged all eligible citizens to complete and submit their SIR forms within the stipulated timeline. He emphasised that active participation in the process ensures accurate electoral records and strengthens the democratic system. His post reads "Today, I successfully submitted my SIR form in the presence of Mr Jas Bahadur Tamang, Supervisor, and Mr Semi Hang Limboo and Mr Deepson Tamang, BLOs of Soreng District." Chief Minister added, "I urge all eligible citizens to complete and submit their SIR forms within the stipulated timeline. Participating in this process helps ensure that our records remain accurate and strengthens our democratic system."

State election authorities have confirmed the door-to-door enumeration phase will strictly conclude on June 23, 2026, with no deadline extensions. The District Election Officer (DEO) has been continuously monitoring and encouraging the BLOs by personally visiting them in their respective work stations.

Officials stated that the SIR exercise is being conducted systematically across the district to update and verify voter records efficiently. According to the officials, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) have achieved near-universal distribution of Enumeration Forms across districts, with areas like Namchi recording nearly 100% distribution and Gangtok at 99.63%. The state has made major strides in digital entry. The Gyalshing district notably achieved 100% digitization in its 04-Maneybong-Dentam Assembly Constituency, while Mangan district has hit 87.67%, and Pakyong over 80%.

## Sikkim CM Tamang submits SIR form, urges citizens for timely participation

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The inspection focused on facilities and arrangements put in place to ensure the safety, security and convenience of pilgrims attending the Ambubachi Mela, which is being held from June 22 to 25.

During the visit, Shrivastava reviewed crowd management measures, passenger amenities, cleanliness standards, drinking water facilities, medical assistance centres, help desks and security deployment across the station

stipulated timeline. Participating in this process helps ensure that our records remain accurate and strengthens our democratic system." State election authorities have confirmed the door-to-door enumeration phase will strictly conclude on June 23, 2026, with no deadline extensions. The District Election Officer (DEO) has been continuously monitoring and encouraging the BLOs by personally visiting them in their respective work stations. Officials stated that the SIR exercise is being conducted systematically across the district to update and verify voter records efficiently. According to the officials, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) have achieved near-universal distribution of Enumeration Forms across districts, with areas like Namchi recording nearly 100% distribution and Gangtok at 99.63%. The state has made major strides in digital entry. The Gyalshing district notably achieved 100% digitization in its 04-Maneybong-Dentam Assembly Constituency, while Mangan district has hit 87.67%, and Pakyong over 80%.

## NFR General Manager Reviews Kamakhya Station Arrangements Ahead of Ambubachi Mela Rush

GUWAHATI

With thousands of devotees arriving in Assam for the annual Ambubachi Mela, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava conducted a detailed inspection of Kamakhya Railway Station on Sunday to assess passenger management and operational preparedness during the four-day religious event.

The inspection focused on facilities and arrangements put in place to ensure the safety, security and convenience of pilgrims attending the Ambubachi Mela, which is being held from June 22 to 25. During the visit, Shrivastava reviewed crowd management measures, passenger amenities, cleanliness standards, drinking water facilities, medical assistance centres, help desks and security deployment across the station



premises. He also interacted with railway officials and frontline staff to evaluate the station's readiness to handle the anticipated surge in passenger traffic during one of the region's

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

**AIZAWL:** The inaugural function of the 15th Research Council Meeting, 11th Extension Education Council Meeting, and 33rd Academic Council Meeting of the Central Agricultural University was held on Monday at the auditorium of the College of Veterinary Sciences & Animal Husbandry in Seleshi, Aizawl.

The programme was graced by General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh, Governor of Mizoram, as the Chief Guest. Prior to the inaugural session, the Governor visited an exhibition showcasing technologies, innovations and products developed by the University and its constituent colleges.

The formal proceedings commenced with the National Song and National Anthem, followed by the presentation of the University Song by students. The Chief Guest was felicitated during the event, after which Dr. Anupam Mishra, Vice-Chancellor of CAU,



Miphah, delivered the welcome address.

A key highlight of the programme was the formal hand-

over of a Technology License Agreement document between Prime Meghalaya and the Meghalaya Basin Management Agency.

The Governor also released university publications and Comilla Cotton Meditech products and distributed lavender seeds to farmers. Addressing the gathering, the Governor lauded the efforts of CAU in strengthening agricultural education, research and extension services across the North Eastern Region. He underscored the importance of greater collaboration among institutions and stakeholders to promote sustainable agricultural development. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Prof. K. Mamocha Singh, followed by the National Anthem.

The inaugural function was attended by several eminent academicians, scientists and administrators, including Prof. Pravat Kumar Roul, Prof. M.M. Adhikary, Dr. K.M. Bujarbaruah, Dr. P. Das, Dr. S.V. Ngachan, Dr. Gaya Prasad, Dr. Mamoni Das and Prof. L.M. Garnayak, along with deans and officials from all thirteen constituent colleges of the university.

## G. Ramesh Kumar Assumes Charge as NABARD Chief General Manager for Assam



GUWAHATI

G. Ramesh Kumar has taken charge as the Chief General Manager of the Assam Regional Office of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, bringing with him more than three decades of experience in banking, rural development and financial management.

Kumar assumed office on June 22 and will lead NABARD's operations in Assam, focusing on rural credit, agricultural development, infrastructure financing and financial inclusion initiatives across the state.

An agriculture graduate with a postgraduate degree in Agronomy, Kumar is also a Certified Associate of the Indian Institute of Bankers. Over the course of his career, he has undergone advanced training in financial management and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, data science, blockchain and fintech.

Prior to his posting in Assam, Kumar headed NABARD's Business Operations vertical for over four years, overseeing key strategic and operational functions of the institution.

He has also held senior leadership positions within the NABARD ecosystem, serving as Chief Financial Officer of NABSAM-

RUDDHI Finance and as Vice President of NABCONS, the development bank's consultancy arm.

During his career spanning more than 30 years, Kumar has worked extensively in rural and development banking, project financing, corporate debt financing, credit planning and rural infrastructure development.

His professional experience also includes promoting climate-resilient natural resource management, financing renewable energy and infrastructure projects, and strengthening credit linkages for grassroots institutions such as Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and micro-credit federations.

NABARD plays a pivotal role in supporting agriculture, rural livelihoods and infrastructure development across India, and Kumar's appointment comes at a time when Assam is focusing on expanding rural credit access, agricultural value chains and sustainable development initiatives.

With his extensive experience in development finance and rural banking, Kumar is expected to contribute to strengthening NABARD's efforts in promoting inclusive growth and rural transformation across Assam.

## Imphal Peace Museum Marks 7th Anniversary with Blood Donation, Tree Plantation and Tourism Initiatives



BISWADEEP GUPTA

**IMPHAL:** The Imphal Peace Museum (IPM) and the Manipur Tourism Forum (MTF) jointly celebrated the museum's seventh anniversary on Monday with a series of activities highlighting peace, environmental conservation, community service and tourism promotion.

The celebrations began with a blood donation camp at Babina Hospital, where members and staff of both organisations voluntarily donated blood to support local healthcare needs. A tree plantation drive was also held at the Imphal Peace Museum premises at Red Hills (Maibam Lotpa Ching), reaffirming the commitment of the organisations towards envi-

ronmental sustainability. As part of efforts to boost tourism and improve visitor experiences, a boating facility was inaugurated at the historic Red Hills site. Organisers said the new attraction is expected to draw more visitors and offer a unique way to explore the scenic and historically significant area.

The programme was led by Manipur Tourism Forum Founding President Dr. Thangjam Dhabali, MTF President P. Kunjabihari and Imphal Peace Museum Director Haobam Joyremba, along with members of the tourism sector, civil society representatives and well-wishers.

Located at Red Hills, one of the key battlefields of the historic Battle of Imphal during the Second World War, the Imphal Peace Museum serves as a symbol of peace, remembrance and friendship between India and Japan. Established with support from the Embassy of Japan, The Nippon Foundation and the Sasakiwa Peace Foundation, the museum preserves the memories of one of the fiercest battles fought in Manipur during the war. The site is popularly known among visitors as "Japan Lan"



because of its deep historical connection to Japanese soldiers who lost their lives in the conflict.

Over the years, the museum's anniversary events have attracted several distinguished guests, including governors, Union ministers, diplomats, ambassadors and international delegates, reflecting its growing importance as a centre for peace and reconciliation.

The museum has also drawn international attention. In 2020, a proposed visit by then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the museum was cancelled shortly before the scheduled date. Museum officials said they continue to hope that the leaders of both countries will visit the site in the future as a symbol of peace and friendship.

Speaking on the occasion, Museum Director Haobam Joyremba said that while the foundations of relations between Japan and Manipur have been established, greater efforts are needed to strengthen cooperation through people-to-people exchanges and investments in health, education, science and technology. He noted that Japanese engagement and investment in neighbouring Assam have advanced considerably, while Manipur still has significant ground to cover.

The anniversary celebrations concluded with a renewed pledge by the Imphal Peace Museum and the Manipur Tourism Forum to promote peace, preserve historical memory, strengthen India-Japan relations and position Manipur as a destination of historical and cultural significance.

Quest!

70% of the oxygen we breathe comes from the ocean.

## Four India-bound fertiliser ships sail safely out of Hormuz



NEW DELHI

Four cargo ships carrying vital shipments of urea, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), and sulphur from the Persian Gulf are headed for Indian ports after successfully crossing the Strait of Hormuz last week, according to an official statement issued on Monday.

Navigating through ongoing global trade challenges, these vessels are currently heading toward their designated destination ports—Krishnapatnam, Kakinada, Paradeep, and Mundra. Upon arrival, these fresh imports will immediately offload to supplement the nation's existing fertiliser buffers and secure ongoing agricultural requirements, the statement said.

India's cumulative fertiliser stock position, as of June 22, stands at a robust 196.08 lakh tons, marking a healthy increase from the 168.67 lakh tons recorded during the corresponding period last year. This strong

inventory backup comprises 81.44 lakh tons of urea, 20.92 lakh tons of DAP, 55.91 lakh tons of NPK, 12.68 lakh tons of MOP and 25.13 lakh tons of SSP, the statement said.

Reflecting high agricultural momentum, total fertiliser sales after the Middle East crisis (from March 1, 2026, to June 21, 2026) reached 153.4 lakh tons, visualising a growth of 13.2 lakh tons compared to last year's sales of 140.2 lakh tons over the same duration.

To protect Indian farmers against unpredictable global market shocks, the government maximised indigenous manufacturing capabilities alongside targeted import arrivals. Post-crisis domestic production scaled up significantly to achieve an impressive 133.12 LMT. This strong domestic foundation has been closely matched by total import arrivals hitting 43.69 LMT at Indian ports during this period, striking an ideal balance between localised output and international sourcing, the

statement said.

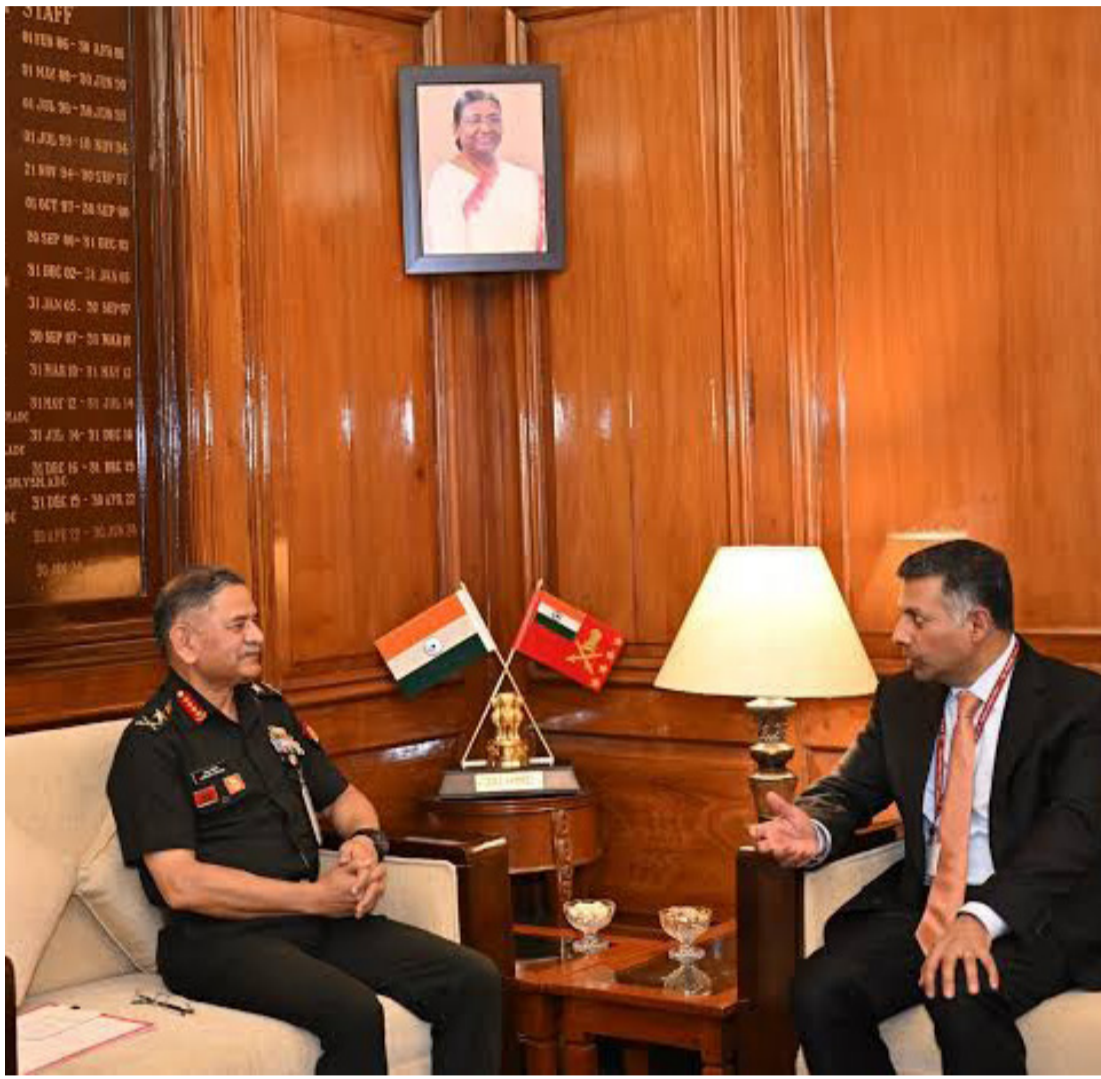
India has successfully contracted 17.70 LMT of urea in its latest global tender evaluation. With this latest addition, India has safely tied up more than 90 LMT of Urea and P&K fertilisers from the global market, specifically tailored for the ongoing kharif season.

This macro-scale procurement strategy was facilitated through active diplomatic coordination with 28 Indian Missions abroad, opening up diverse import pipelines across multiple international corridors, the statement said.

The urea has been sourced from Oman, Malaysia, Vietnam, Georgia, Nigeria, Russia, Finland, Egypt, Algeria, Turkey, and the Netherlands.

The DAP and NPK streams have been secured via the Red Sea shipping route from Russia, Morocco, Egypt, the USA, Jordan, South Korea, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia, the statement added.

## Army Chief Gen Dwivedi, Indian envoy to China Doraiswami discuss strengthening ties with Beijing



NEW DELHI

India's Ambassador to China, Vikram Doraiswami, on Tuesday called on Indian Army General Upendra Dwivedi and exchanged views on the changing regional and global strategic environment.

They also assessed measures aimed at deepening existing frameworks for bilateral cooperation and dialogue between India and

China.

In a statement shared on X, the Indian Army posted, "Shri Vikram K. Doraiswami, Ambassador of India to the People's Republic of China, called on General Upendra Dwivedi, COAS. The discussions centred on the evolving regional and global strategic landscape."

"They also reviewed the current state of bilateral engagement and deliberated on measures to further

strengthen existing mechanisms of cooperation and dialogue," the Army added.

On Monday, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval held a meeting with visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the two-day BRICS NSAs' Meeting in New Delhi.

During their discussions, both sides reviewed recent developments in bilateral relations and

noted the progress towards gradual normalisation.

"NSA Ajit Doval, KC met Member of the CPC Political Bureau and FM of China, Wang Yi, on 22 June 2026 on the sidelines of the BRICS NSAs' Meeting in New Delhi," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) wrote on X.

"The two sides reviewed recent developments in bilateral relations and noted progress towards gradual normalisation. NSA underlined that stable, predictable and constructive bilateral relations contribute to building of trust and better understanding between the two sides," it added.

Earlier on Sunday, Ambassador Doraiswami released a video message for the pilgrims of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra (KMY), highlighting the preparations that are being made for them, sharing parikrama experience and key travel tips.

The Ambassador and his colleagues from the Embassy visited the Parikrama around Mount Kailash and all of the entry points for the official Yatra.

He also noted that it is a holy place for local people, and the pilgrims should expect to see a lot of people there, as this is a once-in-12-year special year in the Chinese and traditional Tibetan calendars.

Doraiswami said that the team from the Embassy visited not only the entry points, but also the hotels where the pilgrims will stay each night, inspected the kitchens, the rooms that will be made available to pilgrims and the primary medical facilities that are on site.

He said that preparations are as complete as they can be in coordination with the Chinese government and cautioned regarding the challenges.

"It is a high-altitude region. On balance, you will be at any point in time above 3,500 meters above sea level. The Kora itself touches 5,605, nearly 6,000 meters above sea level," he noted.

## INTERNATIONAL

# Myanmar army killed over 700 civilians in six months: UN



GENEVA

Myanmar's military was responsible for more than 700 civilian deaths over the six-month election period last year, the United Nations said Monday.

A fresh UN report covering the period from last August, when Myanmar's military announced elections would be held, through the conclusion of the voting period at the end of January, said credible

sources had verified "a minimum of 702 civilian deaths" over that time.

"Of these, 224 were women and 153 children," the report from the UN rights office said, adding that "air strikes remained the single largest cause of destruction and suffering".

"At least 505 civilians, including 175 women and 112 children, or 57 percent of the total, were killed in attacks carried out with jet fighters, drones, para-motors and gyrocopters," it said. Asked who was responsible for

the killings, spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told AFP that "those 702 are attributable to the Myanmar military".

"That doesn't mean that there are no civilian casualties attributable to other armed groups," she stressed, adding that the report relied on "credible data that we have access to. It is not a comprehensive figure".

Civil war engulfed Myanmar in 2021 when the military staged a coup, ending a decade-long democratic

interlude and deposing the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Myanmar was ruled directly by the military for five years after the coup, before the junta held deeply restricted polls which this year delivered a walkover win for its allies in civilian politics.

New MPs elected coup leader Min Aung Hlaing as president in a transition which democracy watchdogs derided as a ploy to rebrand his continuing rule.

The UN rights office, which was harshly critical of the elections from the start, said in its report that "serious human rights violations and abuses, amid generalised insecurity and instability, characterised the period preceding the military-controlled elections".

It said it had "verified incidents that evinced trends and patterns of violations and abuses that significantly undermined the essential fundamental rights and freedoms necessary for credible elections".

The rights office determined that civilian deaths had spiked particularly in two periods -- in August-September and December -- coinciding with "the announcement of the elections and advancements by the military on the battlefield as it attempted to secure its territorial reach".

It called on countries to refer the Myanmar situation to the International Criminal Court and to "cease and prevent the transfer to Myanmar of arms... as well jet fuel and dual-use items, where there is a risk that they could facilitate violations" of international law.

## 'Weapons move more freely than food': Pope warns that bureaucracy is hindering global aid efforts



ROME

Pope Leo XIV slammed Monday the "progressive bureaucratisation of solidarity" which hampers the delivery of aid to the world's hungry, while weapons move freely, fuelling conflicts.

On a visit to the headquarters of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Rome, the pope appealed for the international community "to increase the resources dedicated to combating hunger and its root causes, and to remove the obstacles that prevent aid from reaching those in need".

He said humanitarian concerns were often not a priority despite global rhetoric on the need to alleviate human suffering.

"It is precisely within the gap between acknowledgement in principle and prioritisation in practice that we witness the progressive bureaucratisation of solidarity alongside the quiet

commodification of human life," Leo said.

On one hand, humanitarian action is increasingly burdened by bureaucratic procedures that can delay assistance.

"On the other hand, access to essential goods, including food, is too often influenced by economic or strategic considerations," he said.

"As a result, those who do not generate quantifiable value risk becoming invisible," he added.

The 70-year-old pontiff said that while aid and development projects are obstructed, weaponry is not.

"In effect, conflicts are 'fed' more readily than people are nourished," revealing "a fundamental imbalance in political and moral priorities," Leo said.

The US-born leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics urged governments and people to increase resources for those

combating hunger, like the UN's WFP, which assisted 121 million people in 2025.

"The world today could live without hunger," Leo said in an informal video call with WFP workers in South Sudan, Venezuela and Lebanon. "The resources should be available. The capacity of food production exists, and yet oftentimes the resources are spent on... promoting war and conflict and other kinds of, if you will, less important end results. "And so that the hunger continues even to increase in some parts of the world," he said.

WFP says it has been hit hard by steep European and US funding cuts in recent years.

The deep cuts have come while the challenges have been multiplying, including from the war in the Middle East, which has piled on logistical difficulties and hiked prices for aid deliveries in a range of countries.

## Kamakhya: The Sacred Seat of Shakti Where Feminine Power and Fertility Are Worshipped

**P**erched atop the Nilachal Hills overlooking the Brahmaputra River in Assam, the Kamakhya Temple stands as one of India's most revered and enigmatic centres of worship. Every year, millions of devotees, ascetics, tantrics and spiritual seekers converge on this ancient shrine, drawn by a tradition unlike any other in the Hindu world—a celebration of the divine feminine that places fertility, creation and even menstruation at the heart of spiritual reverence.

Regarded as one of the most important centres of Shakti worship, Kamakhya is not merely a temple. It is a living symbol of feminine energy, creation and regeneration, where mythology, history, tantra and faith intersect in powerful ways.

**The Temple of the Goddess**  
Kamakhya occupies a unique place in Hindu religious tradition. Unlike most temples where a deity is represented through an idol, the presiding deity here is worshipped in the form of a natural rock fissure within the sanctum sanctorum. Fed by an underground spring, the sacred cleft is draped in red cloth and revered as the embodiment of the Goddess.

According to Hindu mythology, Kamakhya is the site where the yoni, or womb and generative organ, of Goddess Sati fell after her body was dismembered by Lord Vishnu's Sudarshan Chakra. The episode followed Sati's self-immolation and Lord Shiva's grief-stricken wanderings across the universe carrying her corpse.

As parts of Sati's body fell across the Indian subcontinent, they gave rise to the Shakti Peethas, sacred sites dedicated to the Goddess. Kamakhya is believed to be the place where the yoni fell, making it one of the most significant among the 51 Shakti Peethas and often regarded as the Adi Peetha, or primordial seat of divine feminine power.

This association with fertility and creation has shaped the temple's identity for centuries, making it one of the foremost centres of Shakta and Tantric traditions.

**Home of the Dasa Mahavidyas**  
What further distinguishes Kamakhya from other temples is its association with the Dasa Mahavidyas—the ten wisdom goddesses who represent different manifestations of Shakti.

Spread across the Nilachal Hills are shrines dedicated to these ten forms, creating a sacred landscape that reflects the many dimensions of feminine divinity.

The first among them is Kali, the goddess of time, transformation and liberation. Her shrine stands near the pathway leading to the main temple. Kali embodies the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death, reminding devotees of the impermanence of worldly existence.

Nearby is the shrine of Tara, the saviour goddess associated with wisdom, speech and spiritual guidance. Revered as the embodiment of mantra shakti, Tara is believed to grant eloquence, knowledge and insight.

Tripura Sundari, also known as Shodasi, represents eternal beauty and supreme consciousness. Her presence within the sanctum of Kamakhya signifies beauty that transcends the physical world and exists in pure spiritual awareness.

At the highest point of Nilachal Hill stands the temple of Bhuvaneshwari, the goddess who creates and sustains cosmic space. She symbolises the vastness of consciousness within which all creation unfolds.

Bhairavi, whose shrine lies south of the main temple, represents the fiery power of speech and truth. She embodies spiritual intensity and the transformative force of knowledge.

Chinnamasta, perhaps one of the most striking forms of the Goddess, is depicted holding her severed head. Her symbolism points to the sacrifice of ego and mind, leading practitioners toward liberation and higher consciousness.

Dhumavati, portrayed as an aged widow, represents experiences often feared or rejected—loss, loneliness, disappointment and suffering. Yet her worship emphasises that wisdom and strength often emerge from life's most difficult moments.

Bagalamukhi is the goddess of restraint and control. Believers seek her blessings to overcome obstacles, silence negativity and gain mastery over hostile forces.

Matangi governs thought, intellect and expression. Associated with learning and creativity, she is revered as the force behind inspired ideas and deeper understanding.

The tenth Mahavidya, Kamala, is the tantric form of Lakshmi. Symbolised by the lotus, she represents prosperity, abundance and spiritual fulfilment.



Together, these ten manifestations transform Kamakhya into a vast spiritual complex where the divine feminine is celebrated in all her forms—from creation and beauty to destruction, wisdom and transcendence.

**Ancient Origins and Historical Evolution**

The origins of Kamakhya remain shrouded in antiquity. Scholars and local traditions suggest that the site predates mainstream Hindu worship and may have emerged from indigenous fertility cults practised by tribal communities inhabiting the region.

Some traditions associate the temple with local groups such as the Khasis and Garos, who worshipped a fertility goddess known as Ka-Mei-Kha, often interpreted as "she who created you." Over time, these indigenous beliefs merged with evolving Hindu traditions, giving rise to the Kamakhya cult.

Religious literature also connects the temple to Kamadeva, the god of love, who is believed to have regained his lost beauty at this sacred site. According to legend, he constructed a grand temple here with the assistance of Vishwakarma, the divine architect.

Historical records indicate that Kamakhya gained prominence during the rule of Naraka, the legendary ruler of Pragjyotisha, the ancient kingdom associated with Assam. However, its fortunes fluctuated over the centuries as political and religious landscapes changed.

The temple suffered destruction during periods of invasion before being revived under the Koch dynasty in the sixteenth century. Maharaja Viswa Singha initiated restoration efforts, while his successor, King Nara Narayan, rebuilt the temple in 1565. Much of the present structure dates from this period.

The distinctive architecture seen today—a blend of indigenous Assamese styles and North Indian influences—reflects the temple's long and complex history.

**The Ambubachi Mela: When the Goddess Rests**

If Kamakhya's mythology sets it apart, the annual Ambubachi Mela elevates it to global significance.

Observed during the Assamese month of Ahaa, corresponding roughly to June,

the festival is based on the belief that Goddess Kamakhya undergoes her annual menstrual cycle during this period.

For three days, the temple remains closed to devotees. Worship ceases, rituals are suspended and the sanctum remains inaccessible. According to tradition, the Goddess withdraws into seclusion as she menstruates.

The festival derives its name from the Sanskrit term associated with the emergence or flow of water. Devotees believe that during this period, the spring-fed waters within the sanctum acquire a reddish hue, symbolising the menstrual cycle of the Goddess.

This sacred observance transforms a biological process often surrounded by social stigma into an object of reverence and celebration.

Across Assam and parts of eastern India, many households suspend agricultural activities such as ploughing, digging and tilling during these days. The practice symbolically allows Mother Earth to rest and regenerate, mirroring the Goddess's period of seclusion.

Temples and household shrines in some communities also remain closed during this time.

On the fourth day, elaborate purification rituals are performed before the temple doors reopen. The reopening marks a moment of celebration as thousands of waiting devotees rush to receive the blessings of the Goddess.

**A Gathering of Faith**  
The Ambubachi Mela attracts one of the largest annual religious gatherings in eastern India.

For days before the temple's closure, roads leading to Nilachal Hill become crowded with pilgrims from across the country. Sadhus, aghoris, tantrics and spiritual practitioners establish temporary camps around the temple complex, creating a unique atmosphere that blends devotion, mysticism and cultural diversity.

The festival is often described as the "Spiritual Kumbh of the Northeast" because of the sheer scale of participation and the concentration of ascetics and spiritual traditions that gather at Kamakhya.

Among the most sought-after blessings during Ambubachi are the Angodak and Angabastra.

Angodak refers to the sacred water associated with the sanctum, while Angabastra is a piece of red cloth believed to carry the blessings of the Goddess during her menstrual period. Devotees preserve these items with deep reverence, considering them symbols of divine grace and protection.

**Challenging Taboos Through Faith**  
Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Kamakhya's tradition is its treatment of menstruation.

In many societies, menstruation continues to be surrounded by silence, stigma and notions of impurity. Kamakhya offers a strikingly different perspective. Here, menstruation is viewed not as a limitation but as a manifestation of fertility, creativity and divine power.

The annual observance affirms the sacredness of women's bodies and the life-giving forces associated with them. It celebrates a process intrinsically linked to creation and regeneration, elevating it into a spiritual principle.

For many devotees and scholars, this makes Kamakhya not only a religious centre but also a cultural symbol that challenges long-standing prejudices. The festival serves as a reminder that feminine power occupies a central place within the spiritual imagination of the region.

**A Living Legacy**  
Centuries after its reconstruction, Kamakhya continues to inspire awe and devotion. The temple's significance extends beyond religion, influencing the cultural identity of Assam and the wider Northeast.

Its blend of mythology, tantra, tribal traditions and mainstream Hindu worship has created a sacred landscape unlike any other in India. The presence of the Dasa Mahavidyas across Nilachal Hill reinforces in countless forms—nurturing and fierce, compassionate and transformative, creative and destructive.

As thousands climb the hill each year seeking blessings, spiritual fulfilment or simply a glimpse into one of India's most enduring traditions, Kamakhya remains a powerful reminder of a worldview in which fertility, nature and feminine energy are not hidden or diminished, but honoured as sacred forces at the heart of existence.

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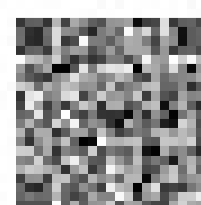


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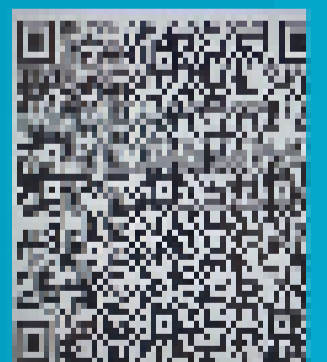
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