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PERSPECTIVE
Eventually, you realise who really matters, who never did, and who always will.

Assam Tightens Anti-Polygamy Stand: Welfare Benefits Barred, Govt Employees Face Dismissal

GUWAHATI
The Assam government has announced stricter measures against polygamy, declaring that individuals found practising the custom will be barred from receiving government welfare benefits, while government employees involved in polygamy could face dismissal from service.

The announcement was made as part of the State Budget 2026-27 presented by Finance Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah in the Assam Legislative Assembly on Friday and was later reiterated by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during a press conference. Addressing reporters, Sarma said the government intends to link welfare eligibility with what he described as responsible family values and adherence to the law. "If a person is involved in polygamy and is a government employee, the government will dismiss that person. Similarly, if a person has criminal antecedents, he or she will not be eligible for government welfare schemes," the Chief Minister said. According to the government, individuals practising polygamy will be excluded from a range of welfare programmes, including the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), free rice distribution schemes and Assam's flagship direct benefit transfer programme, Orunodoi. Sarma said the move forms part of the government's broader efforts to strengthen women's rights and promote gender justice. "Whether it is Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, free rice or the Orunodoi scheme, those involved in polygamy will not be eligible to avail these benefits," he stated. In his Budget speech, Finance Minister Mallabaruah announced that the government proposes to amend the Assam Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1964, making polygamy a punishable offence for government employees and a ground for dismissal from service.

WHO SAID WHAT



We are further strengthening our land laws, based on recommendations from the Central Government, to protect the rights of our indigenous communities near heritage sites and preserve the original identity of these areas.
~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

Assam Budget 2026-27 Unveils Rs 10,000 Crore Development Push, Expands Welfare and Job Creation Plans

GUWAHATI

Assam Finance Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah on Friday presented the State Budget for 2026-27 in the Legislative Assembly, outlining an ambitious roadmap centred on infrastructure development, welfare expansion, agricultural support and employment generation over the next five years.

A major highlight of the budget is the proposed allocation of Rs 10,000 crore for infrastructure projects, underscoring the government's focus on accelerating economic growth through capital investment. Of this, Rs 4,954 crore has been earmarked for the Guwahati Ring Road Project, one of the state's flagship infrastructure initiatives aimed at improving urban connectivity and easing traffic congestion.

The budget also places significant emphasis on social welfare, with an allocation of Rs 6,000 crore for various assistance programmes. The government expects the schemes to benefit thousands of women, students, farmers and differently-abled persons across the state during the



current financial year.

Under welfare measures, the government has proposed financial assistance of Rs 15,000 for pregnant women residing in tea garden areas. The initiative is aimed at improving maternal health and providing additional support to one of Assam's key

workforce communities.

The Finance Minister announced the continuation of monthly financial assistance of Rs 2,500 for graduate students pursuing higher education. A total of 48,366 students are expected to benefit from the programme, which seeks to reduce

financial barriers to higher studies.

In a boost to the agricultural sector, the government will continue the Chief Minister's Agricultural Equipment Scheme, under which small and marginal farmers will receive assistance of Rs 11,000. The budget also proposes additional incentives for farmers selling crops above the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

Paddy and wheat growers will receive an additional Rs 200 per quintal over the MSP, while mustard farmers will be provided an extra Rs 300 per quintal. The measures are intended to enhance farm incomes and encourage higher agricultural productivity.

The government also announced support for the differently-abled community through the Divyang Vahan Scheme. According to the budget, around 3.75 lakh persons with disabilities are expected to be covered under the initiative.

From August 2026, 621 Udasin Bhakats will receive a monthly honorarium of Rs 1,500, recognising their contribution to the state's cultural and religious traditions.

Baruah informed the Assembly that applications under the Mukhyamantri Nijut Moina Scheme will open in August, with financial assistance scheduled to be disbursed from October. More than 5.3 lakh students are expected to benefit from the scheme during the year.

The Finance Minister also highlighted the continuation of flagship welfare programmes such as Orunodoi, which he described as Assam's largest direct benefit transfer initiative, and Jibon Pre-rana, aimed at supporting youth and students.

On employment generation, the government has set a target of creating more than two lakh jobs over the next five years. Baruah said a dedicated task force has already been constituted to formulate and implement strategies for achieving the employment goals.

In a policy announcement concerning government service rules, the minister stated that any government employee found guilty of practising polygamy would face dismissal from service.

BJP Stands Firm on Manipur's Territorial Integrity: Sharda Devi



IMPHAL

Rajya Sabha MP and Manipur BJP president Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi reiterated the party's commitment to preserving Manipur's territorial integrity, asserting that the BJP-led central leadership would not allow any separate administrative arrangement in the state. Speaking at a programme organised to welcome retired Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer Gai-gungdin Panmei into the Bharatiya Janata Party from the 53-Tamenglong Assembly Constituency, Sharda said the BJP remains firmly committed to safeguarding the unity and integrity of Manipur despite ongoing political criticism and public discontent arising from the state's prolonged ethnic conflict.

She acknowledged that sections of the public have expressed frustration over the situation in Manipur and have held the BJP responsible for the continuing crisis. However, she maintained that such perceptions do not reflect the party's commitment to the state's future.

"The BJP is fully committed to protecting Manipur's territorial integrity. The party's central leadership stands

firmly on this position, and there is no question of any separate administration being created in the state," Sharda said.

Her remarks come amid continuing debates and demands from various groups regarding administrative and political arrangements in conflict-affected areas of Manipur.

Emphasising the importance of political stability, the Rajya Sabha member appealed to the people to continue supporting the BJP, arguing that a strong and stable government is essential for restoring peace and ensuring the state's long-term development.

Sharda said the prolonged ethnic conflict has adversely affected governance, economic activity and developmental initiatives across Manipur. She stressed that continued unrest would only hinder progress and delay efforts to rebuild public confidence and normalcy. Calling for reconciliation among communities, she urged all sections of society to work collectively towards restoring peace and harmony.

"Violence and division cannot provide a solution. Communities must come together and engage in dialogue to secure a peaceful and prosperous future for Manipur," she said.

The BJP leader also rejected allegations that her party promotes communal politics. Highlighting what she described as the party's commitment to inclusive governance, she referred to the election of former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and President Droupadi Murmu, as well as the observance of Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, as examples of efforts to recognise and empower diverse communities across the country.

Fake Gold Racket Busted in Silchar, 7.23 kg Counterfeit Gold Seized

SILCHAR

Cachar Police have busted an alleged fake gold racket in Silchar, seizing 7.23 kilograms of counterfeit gold and detaining one suspect during a special operation in the Alambagh area. The operation was carried out on the basis of specific intelligence inputs, Cachar Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Manas Saikia said while addressing a press conference on Friday. According to police, 112 pieces of counterfeit gold weighing approximately 7.23 kg were recovered from the possession of the detained individual. The seizure is being viewed as a significant breakthrough in efforts to crack down on financial fraud and organised cheating networks operating in the region. Preliminary investigations indicate that the accused allegedly intended to sell the counterfeit gold by presenting it as genuine, with the aim of deceiving unsuspecting buyers and illegally securing large sums of money. Police suspect that the detained individual may not have been acting alone and are probing possible links to a wider organised fraud syndicate. Investigators are working to identify other persons connected to the operation and trace the source and distribution network of the fake gold. Officials said further inquiries are underway to determine whether similar fraudulent transactions had taken place earlier and whether additional suspects were involved in the racket. Appealing to the public to exercise caution, ASP Saikia urged prospective buyers to verify the authenticity of gold and other precious metals before making any purchase. He advised people to deal only with authorised and trusted jewellers and traders to avoid falling victim to fraud. The officer also called on citizens to promptly report any suspicious transactions or suspected cheating cases to the nearest police station, stressing that public cooperation plays a vital role in preventing financial crimes and protecting consumers from fraud.

NIA-led team arrests two over killing of six Naga civilians in Manipur



IMPHAL

A National Investigation Agency (NIA)-led joint team on Friday arrested two persons from Manipur's Kangpokpi district in connection with the killing of six Naga civilians, nearly two months after their bodies were recovered, police said. The arrests were made during an early morning operation at Leilon Vaiphei village by a joint team of the NIA, Manipur Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), acting on specific intelligence inputs.

According to police, the two accused, identified as Ayingbi, a woman, and Pradip, were apprehended from the Kuki-Zo village of Leilon Vaiphei. They are alleged to have been involved in the killing of

six Naga civilians on May 13.

The bodies of the six victims were recovered from the outskirts of Leilon Vaiphei on June 10, triggering widespread protests by Naga and Meitei groups, which demanded the immediate arrest of those responsible.

The killings also led Naga organisations to blockade roads leading to Kangpokpi district, causing severe shortages of essential commodities and a sharp rise in prices in the Kuki-Zo-majority district.

Days after the bodies were recovered, Kuki Zo Council (KZC) chairman Henliethang Thanglet apologised for the killings and called for an impartial investigation into all acts of violence linked to the ongoing ethnic conflict in the state.

"I admit the Kuki-Zo people made a grave mistake in killing the six Naga civilians. It was done out of emotion. I strongly condemn it. I am very sorry and apologise on behalf of my people," he had told a press conference.

A day later, however, the KZC issued a clarification, saying portions of Thanglet's remarks had been "misconstrued as an admission of responsibility by the Kuki-Zo community".

The council said the chairperson's expression of regret was made purely in the spirit of humanity, compassion and moral responsibility and "was not intended to assign collective guilt".

The clarification came after an influential Naga students' organisation expressed anger over the KZC chief's remarks on the killing of the six Naga hostages.

Tripura poised to become Northeast's investment hub and gateway to Southeast Asia: Scindia



NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and Communications Jyotiraditya M. Scindia on Thursday described

Tripura as one of the most promising investment destinations in the Northeast, saying the state is rapidly emerging as India's gateway to Southeast Asia under the Centre's Act East Policy.

Addressing the Destination Tripura Business Conclave 2026 virtually, Scindia called on industry leaders and investors to become partners in Tripura's growth story, highlighting the state's strategic location, natural resources and expanding infrastructure network.

The Union Minister said the Northeast is increasingly becoming a major driver of India's economic transformation and will play a crucial role in the country's journey towards becoming a developed nation.

"Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Northeast is emerging as a key engine of growth for a Viksit Bharat. The Act East Policy has transformed the region from India's frontier into its gateway to Southeast Asia, opening up new opportunities for trade, connectivity and investment," Scindia said.

Highlighting Tripura's strategic significance, he noted that the state occupies a crucial position at the crossroads of connectivity, commerce and regional cooperation. According

to him, Agartala is steadily evolving into a gateway linking India with the ASEAN region, a market of more than 670 million people and one of the world's fastest-growing economic blocs.

Scindia said the Destination Tripura Business Conclave reflects the state's readiness to attract long-term investments across multiple sectors and showcases its growing potential as a preferred destination for domestic and international businesses.

The minister pointed to Tripura's abundant natural resources as a major advantage for investors. He highlighted the state's reserves of natural gas, bamboo, agarwood, rubber, tea, spices and horticultural products, along with its educated workforce, improving infrastructure and investor-friendly policies.

He noted that Tripura is India's largest producer of bamboo and the country's second-largest producer of natural rubber, creating significant opportunities in manufacturing, value-added industries, food processing, logistics, exports and technology-driven

enterprises. "Investment follows confidence, confidence follows infrastructure, and infrastructure follows vision," Scindia said, stressing that sustained public investment in infrastructure has laid the foundation for private sector growth in the Northeast.

The Union Minister said the Centre has significantly expanded connectivity and infrastructure across the region over the past decade through targeted investments and policy support. These efforts, he said, have improved the region's integration with national and international markets. Among the key connectivity projects highlighted by Scindia were the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, the Kalandan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, the Special Economic Zone at Sabroom, the Maitri Setu bridge connecting India and Bangladesh, and the Integrated Check Post that facilitates cross-border trade.

According to the minister, these projects are helping position Tripura as a major logistics and export

hub with direct access to markets in Bangladesh, Southeast Asia and the wider Bay of Bengal region. He said the state's transformation from a geographically landlocked region into a strategically connected economic gateway demonstrates the broader changes taking place across the Northeast. Calling on businesses to explore opportunities in the state, Scindia said Tripura offers a favourable ecosystem for investment and is well placed to benefit from the growing economic integration between India and Southeast Asia.

Reaffirming the Centre's commitment to the Northeast, he said the region's eight states—often referred to as the Ashtralakshmi states—are expected to play a leading role in India's next phase of economic growth.

The Destination Tripura Business Conclave 2026 brought together policymakers, industry representatives and investors to explore opportunities across key sectors and promote the state as an emerging destination for business, trade and industrial development.



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HORMUZ AND THE PRICE OF PRECEDENT



The Strait of Hormuz has long been one of the world's most strategically important waterways. Nearly a fifth of global oil trade passes through this narrow corridor linking the Persian Gulf to international markets. Any disruption in its functioning sends tremors across economies, energy markets and diplomatic corridors far beyond West Asia. The recent tensions involving Iran and the United States have once again demonstrated a simple truth: what happens at Hormuz rarely stays in the Gulf.

Over the past few months, global energy markets have weathered a fresh period of uncertainty. Despite fears of a major oil shock, prices remained relatively contained due to strategic petroleum reserve releases, alternative supply sources and the rerouting of shipments through existing pipeline networks. Yet the crisis exposed how vulnerable the global economy remains to geopolitical confrontation in a region that continues to dominate energy flows.

Iran managed to sustain significant oil exports even amid disruptions, while sanctions and maritime restrictions sharply curtailed its revenues. Meanwhile, the United States relied on economic pressure and strategic messaging to contain escalation. The episode highlighted not only the resilience of energy markets but also the dangers of turning critical trade routes into instruments of political leverage.

History offers ample warnings. From interventions in Iran and Iraq to conflicts involving Libya and Venezuela, energy security has frequently overlapped with geopolitical ambitions. Great powers have often justified involvement in oil-producing regions in the name of stability, while resource-rich nations have sought to use their strategic location and reserves as bargaining tools. Neither approach has produced lasting peace.

Today, both Washington and Tehran face a critical choice. The tentative easing of tensions provides an opportunity to rebuild trust and stabilise markets. However, any attempt by either side to exert control over the Strait of Hormuz through restrictions, political coercion or financial levies would be a grave mistake.

The principle governing international straits is well established. Under international maritime law, including provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), transit through natural international waterways cannot be subjected to arbitrary tolls or restrictions. These norms exist for a reason. They protect the free flow of commerce and prevent strategic chokepoints from becoming tools of economic warfare.

The consequences of undermining these principles would extend far beyond the Gulf. If tolls or transit charges were imposed at Hormuz, other nations controlling vital maritime passages could follow suit. Similar measures at the Strait of Malacca, the Gibraltar Strait or other global shipping corridors would increase transportation costs, disrupt supply chains and weaken the foundations of international trade.

For Iran, such a move would be particularly self-defeating. Much of its own energy exports depend on unrestricted maritime routes to reach Asian markets. Any precedent that legitimises transit charges elsewhere could eventually raise costs for Tehran's customers and diminish the competitiveness of Iranian exports.

The United States, too, must recognise the limits of coercive power. While sanctions and military pressure may achieve short-term objectives, they often generate long-term resentment and encourage rivals to seek alternatives to American influence. A foreign policy rooted primarily in confrontation risks eroding the very leadership Washington seeks to preserve.

The economic stakes are equally significant. Iran possesses some of the world's largest oil and natural gas reserves, yet decades of sanctions and political isolation have constrained investment and growth. The country's future prosperity depends not on confrontation but on integration with regional and global markets. Rebuilding infrastructure, attracting investment and restoring confidence require stable relations with neighbours and major powers alike.

For Washington, constructive engagement offers greater dividends than perpetual conflict. Investors, energy companies and regional partners are more likely to support a framework based on predictability than one driven by recurring crises. The experience of Iraq and Libya should serve as reminders that military victories do not necessarily translate into lasting stability or influence.

The larger lesson from the Hormuz crisis is that global trade depends on shared rules. The world has already endured years of tariff disputes, sanctions battles and supply-chain disruptions. Allowing strategic waterways to become arenas for toll collection or political brinkmanship would further fragment an already fragile economic order.

The Strait of Hormuz is not merely a regional passage. It is a global commons whose uninterrupted functioning serves the interests of producers, consumers and shipping nations alike. Preserving its neutrality is therefore not an act of generosity but of collective self-interest.

The recent tensions should become a catalyst for diplomacy rather than a rehearsal for future confrontation. Both Iran and the United States have much to lose from continued escalation and much to gain from stability. The world economy cannot afford a future in which every strategic waterway becomes a toll booth and every geopolitical dispute threatens global commerce.

The message is clear: safeguarding free navigation is not just about oil. It is about preserving the principles that keep international trade flowing. If those principles are weakened at Hormuz, the repercussions will be felt far beyond the Gulf.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

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

GROWING READER APATHY TOWARD NEWSPAPERS IS AN ALARMING SIGN FOR DEMOCRACY



PRADIP DUTTA ROY

In recent times, readers have been showing increasing disinterest in newspapers. This is a matter of serious concern and an unhealthy sign for democracy. The media is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy. It plays a vital role in monitoring the functioning of the other three pillars—the executive, the judiciary, and the government. Whenever there are lapses, shortcomings, or irregularities within these institutions, newspapers bring them before the public. Therefore, if the role of the press weakens, it can never be considered beneficial for democracy. In short, newspapers play a positive and indispensable role in maintaining the health of a democratic society.

However, for various reasons, readers today are gradually losing interest in newspapers. Some households subscribe to newspapers merely as a symbol of social status, while others read only the headlines and move on. Fortunately, there is still a section of readers who carefully read newspapers from beginning to end and point out errors and inaccuracies to the publishers. Elderly readers, in particular, still cherish the tradition of beginning their mornings with a newspaper and a cup of tea. Their day feels incomplete without it. The younger generation, however, has a very different mindset. They believe they have little time to read newspapers and instead begin their day by browsing social media.

Although newspaper circulation has been steadily declining, newspapers remain indispensable for democracy. Even today, newspaper clippings are presented as documentary evidence while raising issues in Parliament or State Legislative Assemblies. Social media posts cannot be used in the same manner. Thus, despite declining reader interest, newspapers have not lost their credibility. Through newspapers, people learn about public grievances, social injustice, crime, and other important developments. For ordinary citizens, newspapers continue to be a trusted source of information.



In recent years, one newspaper after another has shut down in the Barak Valley. Not only weekly and bi-weekly publications, but even daily newspapers have struggled to survive. After the closure of Dainik Sonar Cachar, the Northeast's first Bengali daily newspaper, Dainik Prantajyoti, also ceased publication. Subsequently, Gati Dainik stopped publishing from July 1, 2026. It is deeply saddening to witness the gradual disappearance of print media in the region.



The greatest sufferers are journalists whose livelihood depends on the profession, as well as the many individuals associated with newspaper publishing. Writers, poets, and literary figures will have fewer opportunities to publish their work, while readers will also be deprived. Many remaining newspapers are facing financial hardship, and some have reportedly reduced their workforce simply to stay afloat.

The Barak Valley once had a vibrant newspaper culture that played a significant role in society. Although many of those newspapers were modest in size, their contribution was immense. During those days, journalists were driven more by a spirit of public service than by professional ambition. Many had to pursue other occupations to support their families while continuing to publish newspapers for the benefit of society. Despite the considerable gap between publication costs and income, they persevered and built a loyal readership. Today, however, professional journalism has become far more expensive, making it increasingly difficult for many newspaper organizations to survive.

One of the principal reasons behind the present crisis is the government's decision, beginning during the COVID-19 pandemic, to significantly reduce advertisements in daily newspapers. This has created a substantial gap between publication expenses and revenue from newspaper sales. Government advertisements in literary magazines published monthly, biannually, or annually have also been almost completely withdrawn. As a result, many literary journals have become financially unsustainable, making it especially difficult for emerging poets and writers to publish their work. Numerous literary magazines have been forced to close, limiting opportunities for literature, culture, and socially conscious writing. No individual or institution can continue publishing indefinitely while bearing continuous financial losses.

Private-sector advertising has also changed dramatically. Commercial organizations now prefer electronic media over print, leaving newspapers

of newspapers has evolved since independence, they remain one of the most influential platforms for shaping public opinion. If the space for diverse viewpoints continues to shrink, democracy itself will be weakened.

There are several reasons behind the declining circulation of newspapers. One of them is the tendency of some newspapers to publish only favorable reports about government activities. Readers also want to know about unfinished development projects, large-scale corruption, and the misuse of public funds. They expect investigative reports that expose those responsible. Unfortunately, newspapers that publish such investigations often face the threat of losing government advertisements. Many readers are unaware of this reality. Consequently, despite their willingness, media organizations are frequently unable to meet readers' expectations.

Another major concern is the growing lack of tolerance in public life. Governments increasingly appear unwilling to accept criticism and often expect newspapers to remain supportive of those in power. Such attitudes place immense pressure on media organizations. Earlier governments generally allowed greater freedom to the press, enabling newspapers to highlight administrative failures and contribute positively to society. Governments could learn from criticism and correct their mistakes. A notable example is the renowned cartoonist Kuttu, who frequently caricatured the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Despite being the subject of his cartoons, Indira Gandhi herself inaugurated one of his cartoon collections, illustrating the level of tolerance that existed. Although she has been criticized for imposing the Emergency, this incident reflects a degree of democratic tolerance that appears to be increasingly absent today.

Readers spend their own money to purchase newspapers, and therefore it is natural for them to have expectations. Newspapers must find ways to satisfy these expectations. Readers are interested in the opinions and activities of various political parties, crime, political conspiracies, social decline, and many other issues. Newspapers continuously strive to address these interests. However, many readers feel dissatisfied with the cautious approach newspapers often adopt while covering political affairs due to pressure from the ruling establishment. As a result, they gradually lose interest in newspapers.

Many people now rely solely on social media headlines to stay informed. However, information circulated on social media is often difficult to verify. Exaggerated stories, manipulated videos, and fake news frequently mislead the public. For ordinary citizens, distinguishing truth from falsehood is extremely difficult. The most reliable way to verify such information is by comparing it with professionally reported newspaper coverage. This is precisely why newspapers should never be dismissed. Thoughtful readers continue to trust newspapers, even though younger generations increasingly prefer digital platforms and remain satisfied with brief news updates delivered through their smartphones.

As India is a welfare state, the government has a responsibility to protect and support the news media. Every government exists to serve the people, and strengthening democracy requires safeguarding independent journalism. Therefore, government advertising policies should be made more supportive and transparent.

Newspapers may legitimately express

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

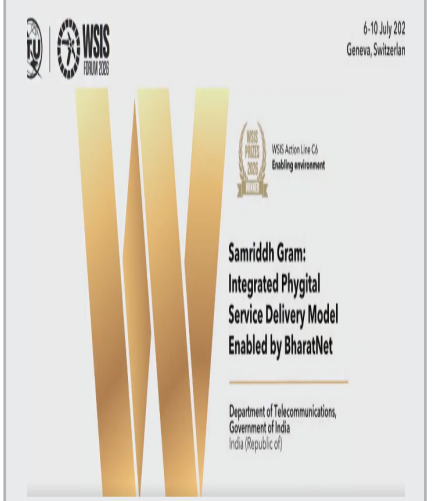
Another feather in the cap for Bharat on the global stage...

An absolute delight to share that @DoT India's Samridhh Gram Integrated Phygital Services Project has been declared Global Winner of the #WSISPrizes2026 under the Enabling Environment category by @ITU

This is also a global recognition of Hon'ble PM

@narendramodi ji's vision of an inclusive #DigitalIndia, where the benefits of technology reach every citizen, including those in our remotest villages. Powered by #BharatNet, Samridhh Gram transforms connectivity into opportunity, delivering healthcare, education and digital banking and livelihood services through village-level Samridhh Kendras.

This feat also reaffirms India's leadership in Digital Public Infrastructure, underscoring that solutions built for India's needs can serve as scalable models for the world. My heartfelt congratulations to all the stakeholders behind the achievement. ~ Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister for



opinions that differ from those of the government, but they should not be punished or marginalized for doing so. Ensuring the freedom of the press is one of the government's fundamental responsibilities. Constructive criticism of governmental actions should be viewed as an opportunity for improvement rather than as hostility. Newspapers also help governments understand the perspectives and concerns of opposition parties.

At the same time, newspapers themselves must adapt to changing circumstances. They should modernize their methods of circulation and outreach so that their publications reach readers even in remote areas. They must also make greater efforts to attract private advertisements. Manufacturers and businesses depend on advertising to promote their products, and newspapers should actively develop attractive advertising policies that encourage them to continue using print media alongside electronic platforms. Newspapers should place greater emphasis on publishing stories that genuinely capture readers' curiosity and interest. By presenting verified facts instead of the misleading or inaccurate reports often found on electronic and social media, newspapers can once again earn the confidence and loyalty of readers.

The opinions expressed above are those of the author.
The author is a former student leader and an advocate of the Gauhati High Court.

Rs 1.7 Crore Spent on Diplomacy, No Standalone Projects: Assam Govt

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has informed the Legislative Assembly that the Act East Policy Affairs Department does not undertake any independent projects and therefore has no project-wise fund allocation or implementation status to report.

Responding to a question raised by Congress MLA Wajed Ali Choudhury on Thursday, Act East Policy Affairs Minister Bimal Bora said the department primarily functions as a facilitator of international engagement, policy dialogue and regional cooperation under India's Act East Policy rather than as an implementing agency.

According to the minister, the department's activities focus on organising diplomatic exchanges, international conferences, academic engagements and policy discussions aimed at enhancing Assam's connectivity and cooperation with neighbouring countries and Southeast Asian nations. Since 2022, these initiatives have

involved expenditure of more than Rs 1.70 crore.

One of the department's major initiatives was the "Act East Through Northeast" Conclave held in Guwahati on May 27, 2022, in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to mark 30 years of India-ASEAN relations.

The conclave brought together Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union ministers, senior government officials, diplomats from ASEAN countries and policymakers. Discussions focused on strengthening road, rail, inland waterway, air and digital connectivity between Northeast India and Southeast Asia, while also exploring opportunities in trade, tourism and exports of regional products such as tea, bamboo and agricultural produce.

The department also co-hosted the NADI 3.0 Conference on May 28-29, 2022, along with the MEA and Asian Confluence. The conference centred on water governance, river conservation

and regional cooperation among countries in the Bay of Bengal and South-east Asia.

The inaugural session was attended by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, former Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Thailand's then Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the then Act East Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary.

According to the Assembly reply, the combined expenditure on the two events amounted to Rs 1,23,50,548.

The government further informed the House that the department facilitated a five-day visit by a 25-member delegation from Bangladesh between June 16 and 20, 2022, as part of celebrations marking Bangladesh's 50 years of independence and India's Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The delegation included freedom fighters, journalists and youth representatives, who visited cultural, religious and historical sites across

Assam and interacted with senior government officials, including the Chief Minister. The programme incurred an expenditure of Rs 10,99,710.

On February 16, 2024, the department organised the "Act East Through Assam: Connectivity Conclave" in Guwahati, focusing on economic and connectivity corridors linking Northeast India with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Discussions explored avenues for strengthening regional trade, transport networks and economic cooperation. The event cost Rs 26,07,977.

The Assembly was also informed that a 32-member delegation from Thailand visited Assam on September 23, 2024, to discuss cooperation under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The talks covered tourism, trade, investment, vocational education, language exchange, scholarships, research collaboration and student and faculty exchange programmes. The expenditure on the programme was Rs 20,660. The department also extended

support to the fifth India-Japan Intellectual Conclave, or Kizuna-5, held in February 2025. The conclave focused on expanding cooperation in technology, logistics and education. In June 2025, it facilitated interactions with a delegation from Bhutan's Gelephu Mindfulness City project to explore collaboration in sustainable development, innovation, spirituality and regional connectivity. Together, these engagements involved expenditure of Rs 10 lakh. As part of its academic outreach initiatives, the department partnered with Royal Global University in March 2026 to organise a quiz and debate competition titled "Youth Interaction with the Act East Policy and Assam's Emerging Role." The programme, aimed at creating awareness among students about India's Act East strategy and Assam's regional role, cost Rs 5 lakh.

Two days later, the department collaborated with Cotton University's Department of Political Science to host an international conclave titled

"Assam in Act East Policy: Gateway, Catalyst and Bridge to the East." The event brought together academics, policymakers and experts to discuss Assam's strategic significance in India's engagement with neighbouring countries and Southeast Asia. The programme involved expenditure of Rs 4,98,212.

The Assembly reply highlighted that while the department does not directly implement infrastructure, trade or development projects, it serves as a coordinating platform for diplomatic outreach, academic engagement and regional cooperation initiatives designed to position Assam as a key stakeholder in India's Act East Policy framework. The government's clarification comes amid growing interest in assessing the institutional role and outcomes of departments created to advance regional connectivity and international engagement, particularly as the Northeast assumes increasing importance in India's economic and strategic outreach to Southeast Asia.

Eight-year-old girl raped and killed in Assam's Sribhumi district

SRIBHUMI

The child went missing around 10 am before relatives began searching. Her body was found in bushes on a nearby hillock. Locals caught Zakir Alam Talukdar and handed him to police.

An eight-year-old girl was raped and murdered in the Madan Mohan area of Sribhumi district, police said.

The girl had been missing since around 10 am. Family members searched the area and found her body in bushes on a hillock near their house. Police said she had been raped before being killed.

Local residents apprehended a man, identified as Zakir Alam Talukdar, in connection with the incident and handed him over to the police.

Residents said the Madan Mohan petrol post, located about 300 metres from the crime scene, was informed soon after the body was discovered, but police did not visit the spot immediately. In response, residents blocked the Chorgola-Hailakandi road in the afternoon.

A police contingent from the district headquarters was sent to the area following the blockade. A senior police officer suspended Mohan Lal Das, the officer in charge of the Madan Mohan petrol post, over the delay in response.

Police later spoke with the protesters, and the road blockade was lifted. The accused, Zakir Alam Talukdar, was taken to the Sadar police station.

An investigation into the case is underway.

Assam Approves Rs 3,789 Crore Incentive Package for Tata Semiconductor Plant

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has approved an incentive package worth Rs 3,789 crore for Tata Electronics' upcoming semiconductor manufacturing facility at Jagirad, while the Centre will provide an additional Rs 10,255 crore, taking the total government support for the project to Rs 14,044 crore.

The details were disclosed in the Assam Legislative Assembly on Thursday by Industries, Commerce and Public Enterprises Minister Bimal Bora in a written reply to a query raised by Rajar Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi regarding subsidies being extended to the semiconductor project. According to the minister, the state government's contribution of Rs 3,789 crore is aimed at ensuring the long-term viability and success of the Tata Electronics facility, while the Union government's share forms part of the Centre's semiconductor promotion initiative. The semiconductor plant, being established by Tata Electronics with a proposed investment of Rs 27,000 crore, is among the largest industrial projects in Assam's history. The facility is expected to generate more than 27,000 employ-

ment opportunities, including around 15,000 direct jobs, Bora informed the House.

The upcoming Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility will have the capacity to produce up to 48 million semiconductor chips per day. It will employ advanced packaging technologies such as Flip Chip and Integrated System in Package (ISIP), positioning the plant as a key component of India's growing semiconductor ecosystem.

The project is being developed at Jagirad in Morigaon district on the premises of the erstwhile Nagon Paper Mill of the defunct Hindustan Paper Corporation. The transformation of the abandoned industrial site into a high-tech semiconductor manufacturing hub is being seen as a major milestone in Assam's industrialisation drive.

The Tata semiconductor facility is expected to strengthen Assam's position in the country's emerging electronics and semiconductor sector while boosting investment, employment and technology-driven manufacturing in the Northeast.

Assam, Meghalaya share cordial ties as border talks progress, says Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday asserted that there is no friction between Assam and Meghalaya over their long-pending interstate boundary dispute, saying both governments continue to work closely through regular dialogue and cooperation.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Behdienkham festival in Jowai, Meghalaya, Sarma said the two neighbouring states have maintained open channels of communication and have been resolving issues along the border through mutual understanding and friendship.

"I keep on meeting the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister. The channel of discussion is always open. We continue to meet regularly, and there is no friction. Whenever any issue arises, we resolve it immediately in the spirit of friendship," Sarma said.

The Assam Chief Minister

also dismissed suggestions of recurring tensions in some border areas, maintaining that the overall situation along the interstate boundary remains peaceful.

"I don't think so. Everything is smooth," he said when asked about reports of tensions in certain disputed locations.

Sarma was in Meghalaya to participate in the annual Behdienkham festival, one of the most significant religious and cultural celebrations of the Pnar community. Observed in Jowai, the festival is associated with prayers for a good harvest, prosperity, good health and the warding off of diseases and misfortune.

His remarks come at a significant juncture in the Assam-Meghalaya border settlement process, with the Meghalaya government recently reconstituting its regional committees to accelerate the second phase of boundary negotiations.

The committees have been tasked with consulting local com-

munities, gathering stakeholder inputs and examining ground realities in the six remaining areas of dispute between the two states before submitting recommendations to the government.

The boundary issue between Assam and Meghalaya dates back to Meghalaya's creation as a separate state in 1972. Differences emerged over the interpretation of historical administrative boundaries, leading to disputes in 12 locations spread across the interstate border.

A major breakthrough was achieved in March 2022 when Assam and Meghalaya signed a landmark border settlement agreement in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The agreement resolved disputes in six of the 12 identified sectors after years of negotiations and consultations.

The first phase settlement covered Tarabari, Gizang, Hahim, Boklapara, Khanapara-Pilangka-

ta and Ratacherra, significantly reducing the area under dispute and laying the foundation for further negotiations.

Attention has since shifted to the remaining six disputed sectors—Langpih, Borduar, Nongwah-Mawtamur, Deshmemor-eah, Block I and Block II, and Psiar-Khanduli—which are considered more complex because of historical claims, administrative concerns and local sensitivities.

Both Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma have repeatedly expressed confidence that the remaining issues can be resolved through dialogue, consultation and consensus-building rather than confrontation.

The reconstituted committees in Meghalaya are expected to play a crucial role in gathering local perspectives and assessing the implications of any proposed settlement before formal negotiations resume.

BJP-ZPM Alliance Secures Majority in CADC, Nirupam Chakma Wins Floor Test

AIZAWL

The BJP-Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) alliance on Thursday reaffirmed its hold over the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Mizoram after newly appointed Chief Executive Member (CEM) Nirupam Chakma won a confidence motion with an overwhelming majority.

Chakma secured the support of 18 members in the 20-member council during a floor test conducted under the chairmanship of Deputy Chairman Sundor Muni Chakma. The motion was passed with 18 votes in favour, while the council's lone Mizo National Front (MNF) member, Rasik Mohan Chakma, was absent from the proceedings.

The floor test came a day after Nirupam Chakma was sworn in as the Chief Executive Member following his appointment by the Governor



of Mizoram. He was chosen as the leader of the Chakma Democratic Alliance Legislature Party, a coalition comprising the BJP and the ZPM. The Governor had directed him to prove his majority on the council floor within seven days.

With 10 BJP members and nine ZPM members in the 20-member council, the ruling alliance enjoys a comfortable numerical advantage. The MNF holds the remaining seat.

Speaking after the successful trust vote, Chakma thanked council members for reposing confidence in his leadership and expressed gratitude to the Governor for enabling the restoration of an elected government after nearly a year of Governor's Rule.

He said the remaining members of the executive committee would be inducted shortly to ensure the effective functioning of the council in accordance with the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Outlining the priorities of the new administration, Chakma said the alliance government would focus on improving road connectivity, strengthening educational infrastructure, expanding access to safe drinking water and enhancing healthcare services across the council area.

He also highlighted youth

employment and skill development as key focus areas, while stressing the importance of coordination with both the Mizoram government and the Centre to accelerate development initiatives in the region.

Expressing optimism about the council's future, Chakma said the CADC would contribute to the broader national goal of building a "Viksit Bharat".

Governor's Rule in the CADC officially ended with Chakma's swearing-in on July 8. The autonomous council had been under Governor's Rule from July 7, 2025, to July 7, 2026, following a prolonged period of political instability marked by repeated changes in leadership.

The Chakma Autonomous District Council administers the Chakma-majority areas of Lawngtlai district in southern Mizoram and functions under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Transparent, technology-based tax system to be built in Tripura: CM Manik Saha



AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday said that timely taxpayers are not only fulfilling their legal obligations, but are also playing an important role as responsible citizens in the economic progress and infrastructure development of the state.

"The state government is determined to build a more technology-based, transparent and accountable tax system in the coming days," said the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister Manik Saha said this while inaugurating the golden jubilee celebrations of the Tripura State Tax Department at Pragya Bhavan in Agartala on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

At the event, Saha formally launched the Tripura Integrated Network for Enforcement Tracking and Risk Analytics (TRINETRA), TRUESIP APP, and Excise Connect digital systems by pressing a button.

On the occasion, Saha said that today is a historic moment in the glorious journey of the State

Tax Department over the last 50 years.

"In these 50 years, the Tax Department has not only collected revenue but has also played an important role in implementing various public welfare programmes, including development, infrastructure construction, education and health initiatives," he said.

He said that the launch of five apps to make the tax system more transparent, simple and people-friendly through digital technology is highly commendable.

The Chief Minister expressed the hope that, as a result, taxpayers will be able to pay taxes more quickly and easily.

Congratulating regular taxpayers, the Chief Minister said that their cooperation is the main strength behind the state's economic development.

"These digital methods will make the tax system more efficient and people-friendly," he said.

The Chief Minister expressed the hope that in the coming days, the department will work with greater efficiency, honesty and dedication and provide proper services to the people of the state.

Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy, Secretary of the Finance Department Dr. Prashant Kumar Goel, and Commissioner of Agartala Central Goods and Services Tax Commissionerate Kundan Yadav were present on the occasion.

Assam Govt Says No Timeline for ST Status to Six Communities, Proposal Awaiting Centre's Decision



GUWAHATI

The Assam government informed the Legislative Assembly that there is no definite timeline for granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six indigenous communities, as the long-pending proposal

remains under consideration of the Central Government.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Chakradhar Gogoi, Tribal Affairs Minister Ranaj Pegu said the authority to grant Scheduled Tribe status lies solely with the Centre and Parliament, making it impossible for the state government to specify when the process will be completed.

"The matter is under the consideration of the Central Government, and the state government cannot indicate a definite timeframe for its completion," Pegu told the House.

The proposal concerns the

long-standing demand for ST status by six communities in Assam - the Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes/Adivasi communities. The issue has remained a major socio-political demand for decades, with successive governments assuring efforts to secure constitutional recognition for the groups.

Pegu informed the Assembly that the Central Government had sought a detailed report and recommendations from Assam to ensure that the inclusion of the six communities in the Scheduled Tribe list does not adversely affect the constitutional safeguards, reservation benefits and other protections currently available to existing Scheduled Tribes in the state.

To address these concerns, the Assam government constituted a Group of Ministers (GoM) to examine the issue and recommend a suitable framework for extending ST status while safeguarding the interests of existing tribal communities.

According to the minister, the GoM submitted its report, which was approved during the Winter Session of the Assam Legislative Assembly in November 2025. The government is now in the process of forwarding the report and its recommendations to the Centre for further consideration.

"The state government has completed the necessary exercise entrusted to it. The report approved by the Assembly is being forwarded to the Central Government, which will take the final decision after following the prescribed constitutional and parliamentary procedures," Pegu said.

The demand for ST status has been one of the most significant identity and

reservation-related issues in Assam, with the six communities arguing that constitutional recognition is necessary to protect their socio-economic and cultural interests.

At the same time, several existing tribal organisations have expressed concerns that any expansion of the Scheduled Tribe list should not dilute reservation quotas or reduce the benefits currently enjoyed by recognised ST communities.

The Centre had earlier sought clarity from the Assam government on these issues before proceeding with the proposal. In response, the GoM examined various options, including measures to protect the rights and entitlements of existing tribal groups while accommodating the aspirations of the six communities seeking inclusion.

While no deadline has been fixed for the completion of the process, the minister expressed confidence that the long-pending demand would eventually be addressed through consultations between the state and central governments.

The issue is expected to remain politically significant ahead of future elections, particularly in Upper Assam and other regions where the six communities have a substantial presence and have consistently campaigned for Scheduled Tribe status.

With the state government now forwarding its recommendations, the next stage of the process will depend on scrutiny by the Central Government, followed by the constitutional procedures required for amendment of the Scheduled Tribes list through Parliament.

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Stolen Ram temple donation funds invested in shares, police freeze 30 bank accounts



LUCKNOW

The ambit of the probe into the embezzlement of Ram temple donation funds has widened with the investigators focusing on investment of a part of the stolen cash in stock market and other financial instruments by the accused in a bid not only to conceal the money trail, but also generate profits. Ayodhya police have searched houses of the accused again and have allegedly frozen their bank accounts. Sources aware of the probe said police took accused Anukalp Mishra to his home on Thursday, searched the premises and questioned his family members. During questioning, Anukalp allegedly told police that he and co-accused Avinash Shukla invested the stolen donation money in the stock market. They also lent money at interest and transferred funds into the bank accounts of their relatives and

close acquaintances before routing the money back into their own accounts.

On Wednesday, police had taken Lavkush Mishra and Karunesh Pandey to their homes for searches. All three accused were placed on a 40-hour police remand. "The exercise was carried out in the presence of forensic experts and independent witnesses. Officers questioned family members, examined documents and searched for electronic devices, investment records and other financial evidence that could help establish the money trail," a police source said. "The investigators have frozen 30 bank accounts of the accused and their relatives after finding transactions disproportionate to their declared income," a source said, adding that police also recovered forged donation receipts from the possession of the accused.

The source said the

accounts are being scrutinised by financial investigators, who are matching banking transactions with stock market investments, property purchases and cash recoveries. Officials suspect these accounts may have been used to receive, transfer or temporarily park the stolen money before it was invested in shares or withdrawn for personal use.

According to investigators, the accused exploited loopholes in the temple's donation counting system. Cash was removed in small quantities during the counting to avoid detection. Rather than immediately spending the money, investigators believe the accused adopted a guarded approach by investing it in financial markets in order to earn returns.

Sources claimed that the probe is now proceeding beyond recovering stolen cash with focus being on the money trail to identify where the funds went, how they were invested and who ultimately benefited from them. Financial experts have also been roped in to determine the total amount allegedly invested. Brokerage accounts, trading statements, mobile applications used for investing and digital payment records are being examined.

"Investigators are also trying to establish whether profits earned through these investments were withdrawn, reinvested or used to acquire other assets," a source said. The financial probe has also revealed that several accused accumulated assets disproportionate to their known sources of income.

WILL CURB DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES: UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH



NEW DELHI

Amid efforts by the Centre to curb infiltration, narcotics smuggling and what it described as unprecedented demographic changes, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday chaired a conference of superintendents of police (SPs) from 119 districts sharing international borders.

Reviewing measures being implemented to strengthen the border security framework, Shah said the government was building a robust system to make the country infiltra-

tion-free.

"The demographic mission has been launched to identify the growth due to abnormal reasons and suggest measures to prevent it in future. It is the resolve of Modi government to stop the increase due to abnormal reasons in the demographics," he said at the conference.

Shah said the conference would deliberate on issues relating to border security, explore solutions to existing challenges and formulate appropriate policy measures. "In the coming times, we will move forward

holistically towards ensuring coastal border security," he said.

"The Modi government is building a strong quadrangular security grid by bringing together concerned border guarding forces, state and district administration, relevant stakeholders of government of India, and local citizens," he said, adding that India's border security system, based on the vision of a Smart Border, would become the most-modern in the world.

He said a secure border, prosperous border regions and a vigilant society together could

ensure the country's security and progress. "Under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, the country has been freed from Naxalism and terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir and the North-East, which is a sign of our collective success." He further asserted that the government would inflict serious damage on the narcotics menace and achieve victory over it within the next three years.

Drawing a contrast with previous administrations, Shah said that earlier problems had remained permanent while solutions were temporary. "But now in the Modi government, we are striking at the roots of the problems and making the solutions permanent. The Modi government has increased border infrastructure by 400 per cent," he said.

Shah said, "Under the Vibrant Villages programme, PM Modi has termed country's last village as its first village. Under this initiative, efforts being made to prevent migration, create jobs, and ensure 100% implementation of government welfare schemes." He added that PM Modi launched the Demography Mission to identify abnormal factors contributing to demographic growth and recommend measures to prevent such changes.

Shah informed the gathering that the Modi Government was fencing the 1,610-km India-Myanmar border at a cost of "31,000 crore." "Our objectives are to prevent proxy war, illegal infiltration, radicalisation, narcotics trafficking, smuggling, drone-related threats, cybercrime, organised crime, and demographic changes; to make border areas more livable; prevent migration from these regions and ensure their security," he said while addressing the SPs.

INTERNATIONAL

North Korea to expand nuclear arsenal, boost military intelligence operations targeting South Korea



SEOUL

North Korea will strengthen its nuclear force "both in quality and quantity" and expand the role of its military intelligence agency focused on South Korea, state media said Friday.

Pyongyang is under widespread sanctions over its nuclear programme, and the two Koreas remain technically at war as their 1950-53 conflict ended without a peace treaty.

The announcement comes after North Korea has repeatedly spurned South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's dovish overtures, labelling Seoul its "most hostile" enemy and declaring itself an "irreversible" nuclear state.

The issues were discussed during an enlarged meeting of the ruling party's central military commission on Thursday, Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said.

The meeting decided on meas-

ures such as "bolstering up the nuclear force both in quality and quantity", the report said.

It also called for broadly expanding the functions and missions of the General Reconnaissance and Intelligence Bureau, Pyongyang's military intelligence agency tasked with operations involving South Korea.

The unit "plays a pivotal role in controlling the potential enemies' threats and gathering key information", KCNA said.

The meeting discussed ways to enhance the unit's "capability of military reconnaissance and intelligence activities in a radical way", it added.

Hong Min, a senior researcher at the Korea Institute for National Unification, said North Korea's latest move reflects Pyongyang's shift to treating the two Koreas as "two hostile states", potentially replacing the previous armistice-based framework.

"Military reconnaissance takes on a different meaning under a state-to-state approach, as intelligence activities targeting another sovereign state can carry diplomatic implications," he told AFP.

Experts have said that North Korea is likely aiming to acquire military technology, including surveillance satellites, in return for the troops it sent to aid Russia's war against Ukraine.

In 2023, the country successfully put a military spy satellite into orbit and claimed it was capturing images of major US and South Korean military sites.

South Korea's Unification Ministry told AFP it was "closely monitoring" any developments related to the North Korean unit's reported expansion.

Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, North Korea has carried out espionage operations ranging from intelligence-gathering to assassinations, including the 1997 killing of defector Lee Han-young.

One of North Korea's best-known spies was Jeong Su-il, who entered South Korea in 1984 posing as Muhammed Kansu, a Filipino-Lebanese academic.

After his cover was blown, he served prison terms in South Korea before later becoming a historian specialising in the Silk Road and the history of West Asia.

Israel shared intel about 'new' Iran plot to kill Trump: reports



WASHINGTON

Israel shared intelligence with the United States this week about a new and "specific" plan by Iran to assassinate President Donald Trump, US media reported Thursday.

The reports come as renewed US and Iranian attacks raised fears of a return to all-out war, and after Trump's puzzling use of an old plane to depart from Turkey after the NATO summit.

Washington has monitored "a steady drumbeat" of intelligence about possible plans to assassinate Trump, "but the warning from Israel was new and concerned a specific plot," CNN reported, citing unnamed sources familiar with the matter.

The Wall Street Journal, also citing unidentified sources, said the intelligence described a "fresh" plot.

Tehran has for years vowed to hit back at Trump for ordering the assassination of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, during his first term. When AFP contacted the White House about the reports, an unidentified official pointed to Trump's remarks from Wednesday.

"They want to take out the US leader — me. I'm on whatever list. I saw this morning I'm on every single one of their lists," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One as he flew home from a NATO summit.

Trump used his old

Air Force One plane to leave Turkey, where the summit took place, sending his new Qatari-gifted jet on ahead to Britain, where he switched planes for the journey to Washington. The switch from the new jet on its maiden foreign trip sparked speculation it was because its security features were lacking — particularly as the US launched fresh strikes against Iran, which borders Turkey.

The New York Times reported late Wednesday that the switch was made at the request of the US Secret Service "as a security precaution."

In a press conference, Trump sidestepped safety questions but alluded to previous alleged assassination attempts by Iran.

State Suffers Estimated Rs.13.28 Crore Loss as Government Employees' Cease-Work Strike Enters Ninth Day

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In an effort to resolve the deadlock, representatives of the MGSF recently met Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh. According to leaders of the federation, the Chief Minister assured them that the Government would consider revoking the order that cancelled Saturday holidays for State Government employees. However, he reportedly sought additional time to examine the remaining demands.

The employees' federation stated that it is considering intensifying its agitation if satisfactory progress is not made on its principal demands.

Prior to meeting the Chief Minister, representatives of the federation also held discussions with the Chief Secretary, Puneet Kumar Goel on 3 July, although no concrete breakthrough emerged from the talks.

Among the seven demands, the federation has identified three as its immediate priorities: restoration of Saturday as a weekly holiday, enhancement of Dearness Allowance to bring it on par with Central Government employees, and raising the retirement age from 60 to 62 years.

While Central Government employees and employees in most Northeastern States currently receive 60 percent Dearness Allowance, Manipur Government employees continue to receive 42 percent. The federation has also argued that increasing the retirement age is justified because the upper age limits for recruitment—35 years for the general category, 38 years for OBC candidates and 43 years for SC/ST candidates—leave many employees with a comparatively shorter span of government service.

With negotiations yet to produce a breakthrough and the cease-work strike likely to be intensified, both the Government and the employees now face mounting pressure to arrive at an early settlement to restore normal functioning of the State administration and reduce the growing impact on governance and public services.

WAARI SINGBUL NETWORK

IMPHAL: The Manipur Government Services Federation (MGSF) has threatened to intensify its cease-work strike, which entered its ninth day on Thursday, as the State Government has yet to meet its seven-point charter of demands. The prolonged agitation has severely disrupted the functioning of government offices across Manipur, bringing administrative processes to a near standstill and causing widespread inconvenience to the public.

The federation launched the indefinite cease-work strike on 1 July, demanding enhancement of the retirement age of State Government employees from 60 to 62 years, increase of Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR) from the existing 42 percent to 60 percent in line with Central Government employees,

Medical Officers.

Although government offices across the State continue to witness near-normal attendance, official work has come to a virtual standstill as employees on cease-work refrain from processing files and carrying out routine administrative functions. The movement of files in many departments has been severely disrupted, resulting in delays in administrative approvals, financial sanctions, payment processing, encashment permissions, and the delivery of several essential government services.

The prolonged disruption has affected citizens awaiting official clearances and has slowed the implementation of numerous developmental programmes. Time-sensitive projects are particularly vulnerable, with delays threatening not only scheduled timelines but, in some cases, the successful completion of projects

Officials pointed out that the estimated financial loss represents only the direct daily cost of the cease-work strike. The broader economic impact arising from stalled governance, delayed public services, disrupted administrative processes, and deferred developmental projects is likely to be considerably greater, although its full extent cannot yet be quantified.

The prolonged disruption comes at a crucial period for the State Government, which has a limited administrative window before the next Manipur Legislative Assembly elections, expected in February–March 2027.

Administrative observers believe that an early resolution of the impasse would be in the interest of both the Government and the public to minimise further disruption to governance and economic activity.



implementation of the 8th Pay Commission, scrapping of the National Pension System (NPS) and Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) in favour of restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), an end to the re-engagement of retired employees on a preferential basis, discontinuation of contractual appointments against sanctioned vacant posts, regularisation of contractual, casual, master roll and daily wage employees, restoration of Saturday as a weekly holiday, and service protection for Grade-III and Grade-IV AYUSH

that have been planned over several years.

According to a senior official in the State Finance Department, who requested anonymity, the cease-work strike has resulted in an estimated productive loss equivalent to 1.66 crore per day. The estimate is based on the State Government's annual salary expenditure of approximately 606 crore on the employees participating in the agitation. Averaged over a calendar year, this amounts to about 1.66 crore per day. Accordingly, the cumulative productive loss during the first eight days of the cease-work strike is estimated at 13.28 crore, excluding the wider economic costs arising from stalled governance, delayed public services, and deferred developmental activities.



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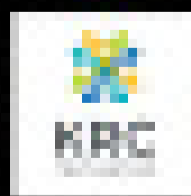


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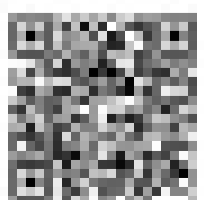


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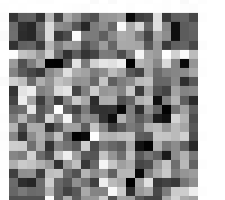


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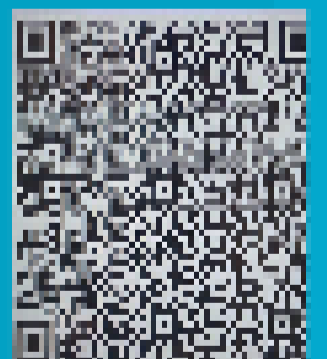
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