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PERSPECTIVE

“Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit, but the highest form of intelligence.” - Oscar Wilde

## NFR begins restoring flood-damaged railway tracks in eastern Assam; services may resume in three weeks

Dibrugarh  
The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has commenced restoration of railway tracks damaged by recent floods in eastern Assam, with officials estimating that train services on the affected route under the Tinsukia Railway Division could resume within the next three weeks.

Railway infrastructure in parts of Sivasagar and Charaideo districts sustained extensive damage after the Dikhow and Darika rivers overflowed earlier this month, washing away sections of the track and disrupting train operations.Railway officials said restoration work is being carried out under the supervision of senior authorities, with engineers and workers deployed to repair the damaged infrastructure at the earliest.

“Railway tracks were washed away due to the floods, severely affecting train services under the Tinsukia Railway Division of the Northeast Frontier Railway. Railway engineers and workers are working to restore the damaged tracks at the earliest,” an official said.The restoration is currently focused on the stretch between Simulguri Junction and Lakwa station in Charaideo district, where heavy flooding caused significant damage to the railway line.

According to officials, personnel and heavy machinery have been deployed at multiple locations to accelerate repair work and restore connectivity.

The damage occurred on the night of July 19, when floodwaters from the Dikhow and Darika rivers inundated the area. Railway authorities said nearly 800 metres of track were washed away in the deluge.

The floods also affected several nearby villages, including Lonpuriya, Bhotorbari, Darikiyal, Gomotha and Abhayapuriya, causing damage to homes, public infrastructure and other property.

### WHO SAID WHAT



**While assessing damages, we will factor in 3 key matters**  
 ■ Loss of lives  
 ■ Damages to public infrastructure  
 ■ Long term damage to capital assets

**I will personally monitor the assessment procedure so that no one is deprived of adequate compensation. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam**



STAY ENRICHED

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# Manipur Fuel Transporters Announce INDEFINITE STRIKE FROM TODAY

**IMPHAL**  
Petroleum product transporters in Manipur have announced an indefinite steering-wheel-down strike from July 31, rejecting the state government's assurances over tackling alleged illegal tax collection along National Highway-37 (Imphal-Jiribam road) after talks with Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh failed to yield an immediate solution.The cease-work agitation is expected to significantly disrupt the transportation of petrol, diesel and LPG across the state, potentially affecting fuel supplies to retail outlets and essential services if the impasse continues.The decision was taken following a meeting held at the Chief Minister's Office in Mantripukhri on July 29, attended by Chief Minister Khemchand Singh, senior government officials and representatives of various petroleum transporters' associations.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, A. Tamphayai, president of the All Manipur Petroleum Products Transporters Association (AMPPPTA), said the government had assured transporters that it would introduce a new legal framework



to curb illegal tax collection along the highways.

However, he said the proposal failed to address the transporters' immediate concerns over alleged extortion and the security of vehicles transporting essential commodities.“The government requested us to withdraw the proposed strike, but after detailed discussions all transporters' associations unanimously decided to proceed with the indefinite cease-work agitation from July 31,” Tamphayai said.The strike is expected to halt the movement of petroleum tankers and LPG carriers across Manipur, disrupting operations at key fuel infrastructure,

including the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) oil depot at Malom, the LPG bottling plant at Sekmai, and fuel distribution to petrol pumps throughout the state.Any prolonged disruption could lead to shortages of petrol, diesel and cooking gas, affecting transportation, businesses and essential public services. Earlier, Chief Minister Khemchand Singh met a delegation of transporters operating on NH-37 at the New Civil Secretariat in Mantripukhri to discuss the security and uninterrupted movement of goods vehicles along the state's principal supply route.The meeting was attended by the Director General of Police (DGP),

Inspector General of Police (IGP), Home Secretary, Chief Secretary, Transport Commissioner, the Director of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (CAF&PD), senior officers of the Manipur Police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and officials of Indian Oil Corporation Limited.

Following the meeting, the Chief Minister said the transporters had raised concerns over both alleged illegal tax collection and the deteriorating condition of the highway.In a social media post, Khemchand Singh said the delegation highlighted persistent challenges caused by poor road conditions, recurring landslides and safety concerns along the Imphal-Jiribam corridor.“I assured them that the Government will take prompt and necessary measures to improve safety, strengthen security, and ensure the smooth movement of commuters and transporters along NH-37,” the Chief Minister said.Representatives from several industry bodies participated in the discussions, including the All Manipur Bharat Petroleum Dealers-cum-Transporters Association, All

Manipur Bulk LPG Transporters Association, HPCL Dealers Association (Manipur), NAYARA Dealers Association (Manipur), and drivers' associations representing petroleum product and LPG transporters.Despite the government's assurances, the transporters maintained that concrete action was required before they could reconsider their decision.National Highway-37, connecting Imphal with Jiribam, is one of Manipur's most critical supply routes, particularly after prolonged disruptions on other national highways during periods of unrest. The corridor serves as a vital lifeline for transporting fuel, food grains, medicines and other essential commodities into the state.The latest strike announcement comes amid recurring concerns over security, extortion, landslides and road conditions along the highway. If the indefinite agitation continues, authorities may face mounting pressure to ensure uninterrupted supplies of essential commodities while addressing the transporters' demands for stronger enforcement against illegal taxation and improved highway security.

## ORUNODOI PAYMENTS TO RESUME FROM AUG 1 flood-hit beneficiaries to get Rs 2,500



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has announced that Aadhaar-seeded payments under the state's flagship Orunodoi scheme will resume from August 1, with 37.1 lakh women set to receive direct benefit transfers in their bank accounts.

Making the announcement after reviewing the implementation of key welfare schemes with Deputy Commissioners through a video conference, Sarma said each beneficiary would receive Rs 1,250 under the scheme.

However, beneficiaries in the flood-affected districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat will receive Rs 2,500 this month as additional financial support to aid recovery and rehabilitation.

“From August 1, we will resume Aadhaar-seeded Orunodoi transfers,” the Chief Minister said, adding that the enhanced assistance for the four flood-hit districts reflects the government's commitment to supporting families affected by the recent floods.

To facilitate smooth implementation, the government will deploy Orunodoi Sahayaks to assist beneficiaries facing difficulties in accessing the scheme or completing related formalities.

Describing August as “a special month for Assam,” Sarma said the state government would roll out several welfare initiatives over the coming weeks.

He announced that application forms for the Nijut Moina and Nijut Babu schemes would be distributed from the first week of August. The government aims to provide financial assistance exceeding Rs 300 crore to more than five lakh students in October under the two programmes.

The Chief Minister also said the state's subsidised ration scheme would be revived from August 10. Under the programme, over 70 lakh beneficiaries will receive free foodgrains along with 1 kg of masur dal and 1 kg of sugar by paying Rs 100 per ration card.

Sarma directed all Deputy Commissioners to ensure that eligible beneficiaries are covered under welfare schemes and that benefits reach recipients without delay.

Launched in 2020, the Orunodoi scheme is Assam's flagship direct benefit transfer programme aimed at supporting economically weaker households, with women designated as the primary beneficiaries of the monthly financial assistance.

## Shillong Bar suspends lawyer accused of molesting intern

**SHILLONG**  
The Shillong Bar Association has suspended the membership of advocate A.H. Hazarika, who is accused of molesting a female intern, while also condemning reports that he was allegedly assaulted and publicly paraded to a police station by members of the public.

In a joint statement, Association president H.R. Nath and secretary T.L. Jyrwa said the executive committee convened an emergency meeting on July 29 following media reports of the incident.

The association strongly condemned the alleged misconduct against the intern, stating that if the allegations are established, they would constitute a serious violation of professional ethics, constitutional values and the dignity of an individual.Considering the gravity of the allegations, the Bar Association has issued a show-cause notice to Hazarika and suspended his membership pending the outcome of the police investigation and disciplinary proceedings before the State Bar Council.At the same time, the association expressed concern over reports that the advocate was allegedly apprehended, assaulted and publicly paraded from his office on Keating Road to Sadar Police Station by certain non-state actors.The Bar Association said that irrespective of the allegations against any individual, taking the law into one's own hands is unacceptable and undermines the rule of law and constitutional governance. It cautioned that such actions could also compromise the administration of justice and affect the fair investigation of genuine cases.Calling for due legal process, the association urged authorities to conduct a fair, impartial and expeditious investigation into both the molestation allegations against the advocate and the reported acts of vigilantism.

It emphasised that both matters should be addressed strictly in accordance with the law and through the established judicial process.

## Manipur Aadhaar enrolment nears 88%; state focuses on boosting registration of young children



IMPHAL

Aadhaar enrolment in Manipur has reached nearly 88 per cent, although registration among children aged 0-5 years continues to lag behind, prompting the state government to intensify efforts to improve coverage, officials said.

The update was shared by Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Home) N. Ashok Kumar during the inauguration of Manipur's first state-of-the-art Aadhaar Seva Kendra (ASK) in Imphal on Thursday.

Describing the new facility as a major step towards strengthening citizen services, Kumar thanked the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) Regional Office in Guwahati for establishing the Aadhaar Seva Kendra in the state capital.

He said the Home Department had been pursuing the proposal for several years and expressed satisfaction that the project had finally been realised.

Highlighting the significance of Aadhaar as a key identity document for accessing government services, Kumar said the state

had achieved overall enrolment of around 87-88 per cent, but acknowledged that enrolment among children below five years of age remained comparatively low.

To address the gap, he said the state government is working in coordination with the Social Welfare Department, Health Department, hospitals and the UIDAI to increase Aadhaar registration among young children through targeted enrolment initiatives.Kumar also urged residents to make use of the newly inaugurated Aadhaar Seva Kendra for enrolment, demographic updates and other Aadhaar-related services. He noted that Aadhaar facilities are also available through Deputy Commissioners' offices and other authorised enrolment centres across the state.

The newly established Aadhaar Seva Kendra is expected to improve access to identity-related services, streamline enrolment and update processes, and strengthen Manipur's digital governance infrastructure by providing a dedicated, modern service centre for Aadhaar-related transactions.

# Flood toll in Assam rises to 80; over 2.12 lakh people still affected



GUWAHATI

Assam's flood death toll has climbed to 80 after two more fatalities were reported from Sivasagar district, even as the overall flood situation continued to improve, with the number of affected people declining to 2.12 lakh, according to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

The latest ASDMA bulletin said

both deaths were reported from Sivasagar during the past 24 hours, including a boy who drowned in floodwaters.

Floods continue to affect 2,12,400 people across eight districts-Golaghat, Sivasagar, Biswanath, Charaideo, Kamrup (Metropolitan), Jorhat, Dhemaji and Nagaon. In all, 21 revenue circles and 437 villages remain inundated.

Charaideo continues to be the worst-affected district with nearly

80,000 people impacted, followed by Sivasagar with around 71,000 and Jorhat with more than 40,000 affected. The latest figures mark a significant improvement from earlier this week, when the number of affected people exceeded three lakh.

The state administration is operating 112 relief camps and relief distribution centres across four districts, sheltering 75,583 displaced people. Rescue

and relief operations are being carried out by the Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Fire and Emergency Services, police and the civil administration.

According to the ASDMA, 17,198.09 hectares of agricultural land remain submerged, while embankments, roads, bridges and other public infrastructure have sustained damage in

several districts. The Dhansiri River continues to flow above the danger level at Numaligarh.

The floods have also affected nearly 2.97 lakh livestock and poultry across the state.

During the past 24 hours, authorities distributed 918.55 quintals of rice, 203.9 quintals of pulses, 146.7 quintals of salt and 17,546.4 litres of mustard oil among flood-affected families.



As per the previous ASDMA assessment, 1,517 houses have been fully damaged, while 7,099 houses have suffered partial damage. A total of 29,987 people have been evacuated, and two persons remain missing.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has announced a six-month moratorium on loan repayments for flood-affected borrowers in Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat districts following a special meeting of the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC), attended by representatives of the Reserve Bank of India, NABARD, the State Bank of India and other commercial banks.

The Chief Minister also said banks would be permitted to extend loan repayment tenures by up to seven years, depending on the nature of the loan, to ease the financial burden on flood-affected borrowers.

Seeking additional assistance, the Assam government has requested a special financial support package from the Centre for relief and rehabilitation. During the visit of the Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT), the state also urged the Centre to classify the Upper Assam floods as an “atypical, high-intensity, rapid-onset event”, which would allow greater flexibility in damage assessment and the provision of central assistance.



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POJK AT A BOILING POINT

The latest unrest in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) has once again drawn attention to a region where political discontent, economic distress and questions of democratic legitimacy continue to converge. Reports of protesters being killed and injured during clashes with security forces, widespread arrests, and heightened restrictions have deepened concerns over the trajectory of governance in the territory. Irrespective of competing political narratives surrounding Kashmir, the immediate issue is straightforward: the use of force against civilians demanding economic relief and political accountability warrants independent scrutiny.

The protests did not begin with demands for secession or armed confrontation. The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), which has led demonstrations for several weeks, centred its campaign on everyday economic grievances-subsidised wheat flour, affordable electricity, and the implementation of a previously agreed 38-point charter. These are demands rooted in livelihoods rather than ideology. That such protests reportedly culminated in a violent crackdown raises troubling questions about the willingness of the authorities to engage with public discontent through dialogue rather than coercion.

The timing of the unrest has further complicated an already fragile political environment. Elections conducted amid prolonged protests, widespread allegations of irregularities and calls for boycott inevitably face questions over their credibility. With the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) staying away from the polls, the JAAC urging the public to boycott the exercise, and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) itself alleging manipulation of electoral outcomes, the democratic legitimacy of the process has come under renewed scrutiny. When major political stakeholders question the integrity of an election before and after voting, public confidence in democratic institutions inevitably weakens.

Democracy cannot be measured solely by the conduct of polling. It also depends on whether political competition is perceived as free, fair and representative. Elections held in an atmosphere of intimidation or mistrust rarely resolve underlying grievances. Instead, they risk reinforcing the perception that political outcomes are predetermined rather than decided by voters.

The economic backdrop to the protests is equally significant. PoJK possesses substantial hydropower resources that contribute to Pakistan's energy generation, yet many residents continue to complain about rising electricity tariffs, inadequate infrastructure and limited economic opportunities. The paradox is difficult to ignore: a resource-rich region struggling with basic affordability and public services. Such disparities have long fuelled resentment among local communities, who argue that they bear the costs of resource extraction without receiving proportional developmental benefits.

This disconnect between resource wealth and public welfare is not unique to PoJK, but in politically sensitive regions it assumes far greater significance. Sustainable governance requires that local populations perceive tangible benefits from the resources generated within their territories. Failure to address such perceptions risks transforming economic grievances into broader political discontent.

Equally concerning are reports of communication restrictions, mass detentions and the use of lethal force against demonstrators. Security responses to public protests may sometimes be justified to maintain order, but they must remain proportionate, transparent and consistent with internationally recognised human rights standards. Allegations of excessive force cannot simply be dismissed as matters of internal administration. They require credible investigation and public accountability.

The broader international response has been notably restrained. Human rights concerns, wherever they arise, deserve consistent attention irrespective of geopolitical considerations. The principles of protecting civilian lives, ensuring due process and safeguarding the right to peaceful protest should not vary according to the territory involved or the political sensitivities surrounding it. Selective concern weakens the credibility of international institutions that claim to uphold universal human rights.

As additional rounds of elections are expected, the priority should be preventing further escalation. Confidence-building measures, meaningful dialogue with protest representatives and transparent investigations into reported casualties are essential steps towards restoring public trust. Independent verification of events on the ground would also help establish an accurate account of what transpired and reduce the space for competing narratives.

The future of any region cannot be secured through prolonged confrontation between citizens and the state. Political stability rests not merely on administrative control but on public consent, responsive governance and economic justice. The events unfolding in PoJK underline the costs of ignoring these fundamentals.

The immediate challenge is therefore not simply conducting elections but rebuilding confidence in institutions that many residents increasingly view with scepticism. Lasting peace will depend less on security measures than on a credible commitment to accountability, transparent governance and respect for the rights and aspirations of the people living there. Until those concerns are addressed, unrest is likely to persist, and every fresh confrontation will further erode the legitimacy that governments seek to establish through the ballot box.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

I prefer tongue-tied knowledge to ignorant loquacity.

- Cicero, 63 BC

INDIA'S SILENT FORCE AGAINST TERRORISM



COL SHIV CHOUDHARY (RETD)

Terrorism has changed dramatically over the past three decades. Today's terrorist seldom wears a uniform, occupies identifiable territory or confronts security forces in conventional battle. Instead, he infiltrates quietly, blends into civilian populations, exploits local support networks, communicates through encrypted technologies and disappears before conventional responses can fully mobilise. Modern terrorism thrives on anonymity, surprise and the ability to exploit gaps in surveillance rather than superior military strength.

India has responded by steadily strengthening its armed forces, intelligence agencies, CAPF and state police organisations. Significant investments in border fencing, drones, satellites, surveillance technologies and joint command systems have considerably enhanced the country's counter-terrorism capability. Yet one strategic resource remains largely untapped, not because it does not exist, but because it has never been systematically organised.

Across India, particularly in border districts, insurgency affected regions and sensitive coastal areas, lives an extraordinary reservoir of disciplined, experienced and patriotic citizens. They include retired personnel from the armed forces, CAPF, intelligence agencies and state police, alongside thousands of ordinary citizens who have spent decades living in border regions. Together, they constitute an immense reservoir of experience, local knowledge and commitment that could significantly strengthen India's counter-terrorism mechanism.

These men and women are already verified through years of public service. They understand discipline, confidentiality, observation, terrain, local customs and the psychology of conflict. Many have spent their careers tracking infiltration routes, protecting strategic assets, analysing intelligence or responding to security threats. Retirement may have taken them out of uniform, but it has not diminished their commitment to the nation. Alongside them stand villagers, farmers, shepherds, fishermen, transport operators, shopkeepers and community leaders who know every path, stream, orchard, mountain trail and settlement in their locality. They instinctively notice unfamiliar faces, unusual movement and deviations from daily routine long before sophisticated technology identify them.

India's professional security forces will always remain the spearhead of counter-terrorism operations. The objective is neither to replace them nor to create parallel organisations. Rather, it is to organise this vast reservoir of experienced veterans and vigilant citizens into a lawful, disciplined and structured force multiplier that strengthens existing institutions while fully respecting the rule of law. This concept is rooted in the realities of life across India's border districts and terrorism-affected regions.

Consider a farmer living near the IB in Jammu who notices fresh footprints across his fields where none existed the previous evening. Instead of investigating or creating panic, he quietly informs the nearest security post. Patrols verify the information, infiltration routes are checked and a possible terrorist movement is intercepted before reaching populated areas. In another village in Poonch, a milk man notices an unfamiliar young man asking for directions to an isolated forest track. His accent appears inconsistent with the region and his behaviour unusually cautious. Rather than confront him, the blacksmith discreetly informs the local police. Surveillance is intensified and a potential infiltration route comes under observation.

Similar examples occur throughout Jammu and Kashmir and other sensitive regions. Shepherds identify disturbed stones concealing improvised explosive devices. Fishermen notice unfamiliar boats operating outside normal fishing patterns. Shopkeepers become suspicious when strangers purchase dry rations. School bus drivers repeatedly notice vehicles conducting apparent reconnaissance. Individually these observations may appear insignificant; collectively they often become valuable operational intelligence.

Technology can detect movement, but local communities often detect abnormality. Satellites identify changes in terrain, whereas experienced citizens recognise behavioural changes that no electronic sensor can interpret. Both capabilities complement each other. Equally valuable is India's vast community of retired security professionals. A retired JCO, police investigator and intelligence officer jointly understand terrain, infiltration routes, operational patterns, criminal networks, local dynamics and invaluable expertise in analysing fragmented information and recognising suspicious behaviour that may otherwise be overlooked.

Their contribution is not operational deployment. They should never neither be operationally deployed, replace serving personnel nor become parallel security organisations. Their value lies in mentoring communities, interpreting local inputs, assisting awareness programmes and helping bridge the gap between sophisticated intelligence systems and ground realities. Properly organised, they become genuine force multipliers, extending the eyes and ears of forces.

Several democratic nations have long recognised that national security cannot rest exclusively upon professional security forces. Israel supplements its standing military through an extensive reserve system.

Finland maintains one of Europe's strongest reserve structures, while Singapore's National Service framework keeps trained personnel connected with national preparedness. Switzerland has successfully followed a citizen-soldier concept for decades, and countries such as the UK and the USA encourage structured neighbourhood vigilance and community reporting to complement

examples demonstrate that experienced citizens contribute within defined legal frameworks.

While India possesses this extraordinary human capital, what remains missing is institutional integration. The country needs a National Security Partnership Framework that formally connects professional security agencies, retired security professionals and vigilant citizens without either creating parallel organisations or replace them active forces.

The framework should begin with the establishment of District Veteran and Community Security Cells (DVCSC) in border, coastal and terrorism-prone districts. Functioning under the supervision of district administrations, this body could include veterans from the said categories with proven records of integrity and competence. Their role should remain advisory, informative, assisting and coordinative, never the operational. The framework should also actively involve selective border villagers, coastal communities, transport operators, shepherds, fishermen, remote dhaba wala, shopkeepers, orchard owners, school staff, volunteer youth and women, whose understanding of local communities is often exceptional.

Equally important is the creation of secure and accessible reporting mechanisms. A district wise toll-free counter terrorism helpline and integrated digital reporting platform would enable citizens to communicate suspicious observations quickly, safely and confidentially. Anonymous reporting, wherever appropriate, would encourage wider participation while protecting those acting in good faith.

Awareness and training should form another important pillar. Citizens are often willing to contribute but remain uncertain about what constitutes useful information or how to report it responsibly. Periodic awareness programmes conducted jointly by security agencies and experienced veterans can educate communities on recognising suspicious behaviour, observing without confrontation, protecting personal safety and avoiding rumours or misinformation. Practical contribution lies in observation, guidance, mentoring and sharing experience, while intelligence operations, investigations and enforcement remain exclusively with authorised agencies.

Unlike raising additional man-

capital. It represents one of the most cost-effective ways of strengthening national security. The nation would simply be organising resource that already exists. Every infiltration prevented, every terrorist hideout detected, every explosive recovered and every innocent life saved would justify the investment many times over. This entire framework should remain volunteer based upon successful partnership and trust. To inspire confidence and motivation, some value based incentive could be introduced.

Beyond its operational value, such a partnership would also strengthen India's social resilience. Terrorism seeks not only to inflict casualties but also to spread fear, mistrust and isolation. When citizens become informed partners rather than passive spectators, communities grow more confident, rumours lose credibility and hostile

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**THE U.S. SENATE JUST VOTED 86-12 TO POTENTIALLY HIT INDIA WITH 100% TARIFFS.** Yesterday, hours after Senator Lindsey Graham's funeral, the U.S. Senate passed the Russia Sanctions Bill that Graham had championed for years. 86 senators voted yes. 12 voted no. Nearly every Republican and most Democrats. The bill gives Trump authority to impose tariffs of up to 100% on the world's top five buyers of Russian oil and gas. India is on that list. China is on that list. The bill would impose sanctions on Russian officials, oligarchs, and financial institutions and give Trump authority to impose tariffs of up to 100% on goods from major purchasers of Russian oil and gas, especially China and India. But here is the critical detail being buried in every headline. The bill provides exceptions for countries that import less than 15% of their natural gas from Russia and are taking steps to reduce those imports. India has been aggressively diversifying its energy sources since the Iran war began, now importing from 41 countries including the U.S., Russia, Brazil, Angola, and Venezuela. India's government has been quietly reducing its Russian gas dependency specifically to protect trade relationships. Whether India qualifies for the exemption will depend entirely on the data and on the diplomatic relationship between New Delhi and Washington. This is not a confirmed 100% tariff on India. It is a loaded gun. Pointed at countries buying Russian energy. With the safety still on, for now. India's response has been characteristically quiet. Calculating. Watching. The same way India always responds.

~ Robert Kiyosaki, Author, Entrepreneur

propaganda finds less takers. History repeatedly demonstrates that terrorism flourishes where fear silences communities and anonymity protects those who seek to do harm. Security becomes a shared responsibility rather than the exclusive burden of those in uniform.

India has invested heavily and should continue in strengthening its borders, modernising its armed forces, expanding intelligence capabilities and adopting advanced technologies. Yet national security is ultimately secured not by fences alone, nor by satellites, drones or surveillance systems in isolation. It is secured when a few citizen notices what others fail to notice, and when professional security forces receive timely information to prevent a tragedy.

India's greatest counter-terrorism force is therefore not hidden inside armouries or advanced surveillance systems. This force lives among disciplined veterans, vigilant citizens and resilient communities spread across the country. The challenge before the nation is not to create this force, but to organise it, empower it responsibly and integrate it into India's broader security architecture. In an era when terrorists seek to disappear into society,



ment professional policing. India's security challenges are unique and demand an indigenous model. These

power, this approach builds upon an already available reservoir of trained and experienced human

India's greatest strength may well lie in a silent society that refuses to look away.

# PM Modi Assures Full Central Support to Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland Amid Flood Crisis

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday assured Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland of the Centre's full support in dealing with the devastation caused by floods, landslides and incessant rainfall, reaffirming the Union government's commitment to relief, restoration and long-term recovery efforts in the two northeastern states.

The assurance came during a meeting with Members of Parliament from Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland at Parliament House, where the Prime Minister reviewed the prevailing flood situation and the extent of damage caused by weeks of heavy rain.

Following the meeting, Modi said the Centre would continue to work closely with the two state governments to address the challenges arising from



the natural calamity.

"Had a meeting with MPs from Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. We talked about the situation in these states in the wake of floods there. The Central Government will keep working with the respective state Governments to address the challenges. Praying for everyone's wellbeing and safety," the Prime Minister said in a social media post.

MPs brief Prime Minister

The delegation was led by Union Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and included Lok Sabha MPs Tapir Gao (Arunachal Pradesh) and S. Supongmeren Jamir (Nagaland), along with Rajya Sabha MPs Tai Tagak (Arunachal Pradesh) and S. Phangnon Konyak (Nagaland).

Except for Congress MP Supongmeren Jamir, all members of the delegation belong to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

After the meeting, Rijiju said the MPs presented a detailed account of the widespread damage caused by floods and landslides in both states.

"Hon'ble Prime Minister assured full assistance and has already given necessary directions for ensuring timely relief, restoration and support

for the affected people," Rijiju said.

Tapir Gao also thanked the Prime Minister for hearing the delegation's concerns and said Modi had assured "all possible assistance from the Government of India" for flood-affected communities.

Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland have witnessed repeated floods and landslides since last month due to prolonged heavy rainfall, resulting in loss of lives and extensive damage to homes, roads, bridges, public infrastructure, agricultural land and crops.

In Nagaland, the Indian Air Force (IAF), working in coordination with the state government, has continued rescue and relief operations in landslide-hit districts.

More than 300 stranded civilians have been evacuated from remote locations, while helicopters have airlifted

food, medicines and other essential relief materials to areas cut off after road connectivity was disrupted.

In Arunachal Pradesh, Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Kiren Rijiju and Chief Minister Pema Khandu recently conducted joint aerial and ground assessments of flood-affected areas to evaluate the extent of damage.

Following the survey, Chouhan assured comprehensive Central assistance, including a detailed assessment of losses and support for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

He announced that families whose homes had been washed away would receive assistance for rebuilding, while compensation would also be provided for losses suffered by farmers due to damage to crops, agricultural land and livestock.

Earlier, Chief Minister Pema Khandu had said both Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah had been kept informed of the evolving flood situation and assured the state of all possible support from the Centre.

Khandu expressed confidence that coordinated efforts between the Union and state governments would not only expedite relief and restoration but also help formulate long-term, science-based strategies to reduce the impact of recurring floods and landslides in the region.

The Centre's renewed assurance comes as disaster response agencies continue rescue, rehabilitation and infrastructure restoration across the two states, where heavy rainfall has disrupted normal life and posed significant challenges to connectivity and essential services.

## Assam ex-servicemen stand with flood victims, present 25 lakh cheque to CM relief fund

GUWAHATI

Assam's ex-servicemen have extended support to flood-affected people across the state by contributing 25 lakh to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for ongoing relief and rehabilitation efforts. The cheque was presented to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma by the veterans' fraternity, reaffirming their continued commitment to public service and humanitarian assistance even after their service in the Armed Forces.

The contribution reflects the enduring commitment of Assam's veterans' fraternity to public welfare even after completing their distinguished service in the Armed Forces. Brigadier Polish Chowdhury, SM (Retd), Director, Directorate of Sainik Welfare, Assam, along with Air Marshal Anjan Kumar Gogoi, PVSM, AGVM, VSM (Retd), and Asom Baibhav Lt Gen Rana Pratap Kalita, PVSM, USVM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd), presented the cheque to Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. Speaking on the occasion, Brig Polish Chowdhury said the donation symbolised the veterans' continued sense of duty and their commitment to standing with the people of Assam during challenging times. He expressed confidence that the Chief Minister's Relief Fund would ensure timely assistance reaches those most affected by the devastating floods.

He also highlighted that a large number of ex-servicemen from Assam have voluntarily joined hands with the civil administration in relief operations across the state. Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma thanked the veterans for their generous contribution and appreciated their unwavering spirit of patriotism, compassion, and service. He said the gesture would encourage more people to come forward and support humanitarian initiatives.

## Sushmita Dev Supports Restoration of Omitted 'Vande Mataram' Verses, Invokes Nehru-Era Decision

NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev on Thursday backed the re-inclusion of two previously omitted verses of "Vande Mataram", arguing that true secularism requires equal respect for all faiths.

Speaking on the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, Dev referred to the historical decision to exclude two verses of the national song, saying the move had been taken following objections from sections of society over references to Goddess Durga.

According to Dev, some groups had expressed reservations about singing those portions of the song, arguing that they did not worship the Hindu deity.

She said the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress leadership had accepted those concerns and agreed to omit the two verses.

"However, if one truly claims to be secular-as the BJP manifesto states-then one must respect every religion," Dev said during the debate.

The Rajya Sabha member further stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had taken the step to restore the two verses that were previously excluded from official use. Her remarks came during discussions on the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which seeks to bring "Vande Mataram" within the legal framework governing offences related to the disrespect of national symbols.

The proposed legislation has triggered political debate, with supporters arguing that it would strengthen the protection accorded to national symbols, while opposition parties have raised concerns over various provisions of the Bill.

## Silchar's Capital Point-Rangirkhari Flyover Project Advances as Pile Testing Preparations Begin

SILCHAR

The long-pending Capital Point-Rangirkhari flyover project in Silchar has taken a significant step towards implementation, with preliminary work for pile testing and soil investigation commencing at the proposed construction site.

Specialised geotechnical equipment has already been brought to the Rangirkhari area as part of the initial technical assessment, raising hopes that the much-awaited infrastructure project will soon move into the construction phase.

The proposed flyover is expected to improve traffic flow between Capital Point and Rangirkhari, one of Silchar's busiest stretches, and provide lasting relief from chronic traffic congestion affecting commuters, businesses and residents.

Officials have begun preparations for pile testing and detailed soil investigations to assess ground conditions before construction begins. These studies



will determine the structural design and foundation requirements of the flyover.

The arrival of specialised soil-testing machinery marks the first major on-site activity for the project and is being seen as a key milestone in the pre-construction process.

Following the completion of the geotechnical assessment and other statutory procedures, the project is expected to move to the next phase of execution.

Welcoming the development, Cachar district BJP president Rupam Saha thanked Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for moving forward with the long-awaited project.

Saha said the commencement of technical preparations demonstrates tangible progress towards fulfilling a long-standing demand of the people of Silchar.

He also described the development as evidence of the state government's commitment to implementing infrastructure projects promised to the public.

Expressing optimism about the project's future, Saha said he

hoped construction work would begin at the earliest after the completion of pile testing, soil examination and other technical formalities.

The proposed flyover is expected to become one of Silchar's key urban infrastructure projects, easing traffic congestion along the heavily used Capital Point-Rangirkhari corridor, which connects important commercial, residential and institutional areas of the town.

Once completed, the flyover is expected to reduce travel time, improve road safety and enhance the overall efficiency of the city's transport network, benefiting thousands of daily commuters while supporting Silchar's growing urban development.

Residents have long demanded the project as a solution to persistent traffic bottlenecks, and the commencement of preliminary engineering work has renewed expectations that the long-delayed flyover will finally become a reality.

## Over 12,700 Assam Households Still Without Electricity; Restoration Depends on Safety, Says CM

GUWAHATI

Nearly 12,800 households in flood-ravaged parts of Assam remain without electricity nearly two weeks after devastating floods and mudslides struck Upper Assam, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stating that power restoration will continue only where safety conditions permit.

Sharing an update on Thursday, the Chief Minister said electricity supply has been restored to a majority of affected consumers, while efforts are underway to reconnect the remaining households as floodwaters recede.

"Consumers without electricity have declined by a further 30 per cent. As water levels recede, we are continuously assessing safety conditions and will restore more transformers to the grid wherever it is safe to do so," Sarma said in a social media post.

12,756 consumers still affected

According to the latest Flood Impact and Power Supply Status Report prepared by the Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL) for the Sivasagar Electrical Circle, a total of 12,756 consumers continue to remain without electricity.

The worst-affected areas include Gaurisagar, Sivasagar, Nazira, Amguri and Demow, where floodwaters and extensive damage to electrical infrastructure have delayed the restoration of power supply.

Authorities said restoration work is being carried out in phases after ensuring that submerged transformers, distribution lines and other installations are safe to re-energise.

The latest figures indicate considerable progress in restoring electricity across flood-hit regions.

On July 24, the Chief Minister

had stated that around 40,000 households were without power even after electricity had been restored to nearly 75 per cent of affected consumers.

With water levels gradually receding, APDCL has accelerated repair and restoration work, reducing the number of affected consumers by nearly two-thirds over the past week.

Flood situation remains serious

Despite an overall improvement in the flood situation, Assam continues to grapple with the aftermath of one of the worst flood events in recent years.

According to official reports, the flood-related death toll has risen to 78, while more than three lakh people remain affected across several districts.

The disaster was triggered by intense rainfall in Upper Assam and neighbouring Nagaland, where heavy downpours from July 19 led

to flash floods, landslides and large volumes of mud and debris flowing into Assam's river systems, causing extensive damage to homes, infrastructure and agricultural land.

Fresh rainfall forecast

The situation remains under close watch as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms, at isolated places across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland over the next three days.

The forecast has raised concerns over the possibility of renewed flooding and landslides, particularly in districts bordering Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, where saturated soil and swollen rivers continue to pose risks.

State agencies remain engaged in relief, rehabilitation and infrastructure restoration while monitoring weather conditions and preparing for any fresh emergencies.

## Assam govt begins free textbook distribution for flood-affected students; Education Minister flags off dispatch

GUWAHATI

Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu flagged off the dispatch of free textbooks for students affected by floods across the state, as the government launched an initiative to ensure uninterrupted education for children who lost their study materials in the calamity.

He said the state government has decided to provide free textbooks to students affected by the recent floods after many lost their homes and study materials.

"Some districts have been severely affected by floods, and many students have lost their homes and had their books destroyed. Consequently, the government has decided to provide free textbooks to these affected students," Pegu told ANI.

The minister said he flagged off the first batch of vehicles carrying textbooks from the department's central warehouse.

"Today, I flagged off the distribution of these books from our central warehouse. Approximately 1,21,000 students have been affected, requiring a total of 9,00,000 books. We flagged off the vehicles today, and additional trucks will be dispatched within a week. The distribution process will be completed within one week," he said.

The initiative aims to ensure that students in flood-affected districts can continue their education without disruption by replacing

books lost during the floods.

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today said relief operations across the flood-affected areas of the state are continuing uninterrupted, with 27 additional relief distribution centres made operational in the last 24 hours. Taking to X, Sarma said the total number of relief distribution centres functioning across Assam has now reached 1,745.

"Over the last 24 hours, 27 additional relief distribution centres have been operationalised, taking the total to 1,745 across the State. Restoration work is progressing steadily while relief operations continue uninterrupted", he said.

Earlier, the Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT), comprising six members from different Ministries of the Government of India (GoI), concluded its on-the-spot flood assessment visit to the worst flood-affected districts of Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat on Wednesday with a meeting with Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kotta.

At a high-level meeting held at Janata Bhawan in Dispur, L. Sweety Changsan, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Assam, Revenue and Disaster Management Department, and Chief Executive Officer, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), briefed the Central Team on the factors behind the recent flood situation in the state and the challenges arising out of the unprecedented calamity.

## Debabrata Saikia Blames Dikhow Flood Devastation on Illegal Riverbed Mining, Alleges Government Inaction

GUWAHATI

Former Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Legislative Assembly and senior Congress leader Debabrata Saikia has alleged that the recent devastation caused by the Dikhow River in Nazira and adjoining areas is the result of years of illegal stone and sand mining, coupled with the Assam government's failure to implement directions issued by the Gauhati High Court to curb such activities.

In a social media post accompanied by satellite images, Saikia claimed that large-scale extraction of stones and sand from the Dikhow riverbed had severely altered the river's natural ecology, increasing its vulnerability to flooding and erosion during the current monsoon.

'Natural barriers removed'

Describing the Dikhow, historically known as the "Vashistha Ganga," Saikia said the river's natural flow was once regulated by stones that acted as "brakes," slowing the current and helping maintain its ecological balance.

According to him, indiscriminate removal of these natural barriers has made the river wider and shallower, significantly increasing the risk of floods and bank erosion.

He alleged that despite widespread knowledge of illegal mining operations, authorities failed to take effective action because of the influence of vested inter-



ests involved in the trade.

Refers to 2019 PIL

Saikia said he had filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL No. 62/2019) before the Gauhati High Court seeking action against illegal riverbed mining and mineral smuggling along the Dikhow.

According to the Congress leader, the petition warned that continued extraction of stones and sand from the river would disturb its ecological balance, alter its natural course and heighten the risk of flooding and erosion in Nazira and Sivasagar.

He claimed that on October 21, 2019, the Gauhati High Court directed the state government to constitute a dedicated Mines and Minerals Task Force Battalion under the Department of Mines and Geology to curb illegal mining.

The court also reportedly instructed

the government to establish a high-powered committee to protect the river's ecosystem and prevent changes to its natural course.

Alleged non-compliance with court directions

Saikia alleged that the state government failed to implement these directions, compelling him to file a contempt petition in 2021.

Instead of creating a dedicated task force, he claimed, the government later informed the court through a review petition that the existing machinery of the Forest Department was adequate to tackle illegal mining activities.

Water Resources Department warning

The former Nazira MLA further alleged that officials of the Water Resources Department had also warned about the

environmental consequences of continued mining.

Citing an inspection conducted on January 12, 2022, by the Assistant Executive Engineer of the Nazira Water Resources Sub-Division near Bamunpukhuri Tea Estate, Saikia claimed the report cautioned that unchecked extraction of stones and sand could alter the Dikhow's course and cause extensive damage to nearby settlements.

He said he repeatedly raised the issue in the Assam Legislative Assembly, including during the March 2022 session, and also wrote to the state's Environment and Forest Minister in June 2024, urging immediate intervention to stop illegal mining along the river.

Satellite images cited

Sharing satellite images comparing the Dikhow River in 2010 and 2024, Saikia alleged that stretches of once-green riverbanks had been transformed into "massive pits and ruins" because of illegal extraction.

"The disaster that the people of Nazira are facing today is not an act of nature; it is a man-made disaster caused by the collusion between the government and the mafia," he alleged.

Government yet to respond

The Assam government had not issued an immediate response to Saikia's allegations at the time of filing this report.

The allegations come in the wake of widespread flood damage in parts of Sivasagar district, where overflowing rivers and erosion have affected thousands of residents during the ongoing monsoon, renewing concerns over river management, environmental protection and the enforcement of mining regulations.

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“Technology Delayed Is Technology Denied”: Air Chief Marshal



NEW DELHI

Underscoring the critical need for self-reliance in India's defence sector, Indian Air Force Chief, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh stated that “technology delayed is technology denied,” warning that production technology loses its relevance if competitors already hold it.

Addressing a gathering on the integration of futuristic capabilities, the Air Chief Marshal emphasised that while different operational zones have been established, effective implementation requires deep structural and procedural integration.

“We now need to think about unmanned systems. We have created different zones, but for the implementation we need to think... Integration is very important. We need to know each other's positions, whether it is procedural or production,” he said.

Calling for absolute self-sufficiency across the entire defence supply chain, Air Chief

Marshal Singh asserted, “Every brick should be developed in India. Then only we can say that we are fully indigenous.”

Highlighting modern digital and technological demands, he noted that cybersecurity remains paramount and stressed the urgent requirement for indigenous Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms.

Urging industry giants to nurture the defence startup ecosystem, the Air Chief Marshal appealed to major corporations to financially back and mentor smaller innovators.

“R&D is very important; it's my appeal to big players to support smaller players, adopt some startups, you become the man who puts money in them, don't think about money back,” he added.

Earlier, Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth on Thursday reaffirmed the government's commitment to building a self-reliant defence ecosystem, saying the resolve is to make India a developed nation by 2047 and transform the Indian Air Force into the

world's most powerful air force through indigenous capabilities and innovation.

Addressing the reporters at a defence sector gathering, Seth said India has always believed in peace and the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, but remains prepared to give a strong response to any challenge to its sovereignty and security.

“India's culture teaches us peace and the welfare of humanity. But when anyone tries to threaten us through terrorism or casts an evil eye on the nation, we also know how to respond with the spirit of Lord Shiva's Tandav,” Seth said.

Highlighting the importance of Atmanirbhar Bharat in the defence sector, the Minister said the country's resolve is to make the Indian Air Force one of the most powerful air forces in the world through indigenous capabilities. “The world is looking towards India today. This is not just a dream, but a resolve and determination that will never remain incomplete,” he said.

“Step forward towards ensuring integrity, transparency”: EAM Jaishankar



NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has welcomed the passage of the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, by both Houses of Parliament, saying the legislation will strengthen the legal framework to prevent the use of unfair means in public examinations.

In a post on X on Friday, Jaishankar said, “The passing of the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 by both Houses is a step forward towards ensuring the integrity, transparency and credibility of India's public examination system.”

Highlighting the key provisions of the legislation, the External Affairs Minister said, “The bill provides for time-bound investigations, Special Public Prosecutors, Special Fast-Track Courts and an expedited appellate mechanism, and will further strengthen the legal framework to prevent use of unfair means in public examinations.”

Jaishankar further said that the government remains committed to protecting the interests of young people.

“The Modi Government is resolute in its commitment to protect the right of India's hardworking youth and talent,” he said.

On Thursday, the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair

Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, was passed in the Rajya Sabha.

The anti-paper leak Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, and will now be sent to the President for assent.

In the Upper House, the Opposition MPs walked out before the Bill was passed.

Replying to the discussion in the House, Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh highlighted various measures taken by the government in the education sector, including the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the increase in the number of universities across the country.

“This is an issue which concerns every parent of this country, every

family of this country. These young children are a huge investment for the country,” Singh said.

He said that around 7.65 crore students would be affected by measures aimed at strengthening the examination system.

“We have made very earnest efforts to liberate it from the management quota malice and tried to make medical education more accessible,” he said.

Singh also described the NEP 2020 as a “game changer” for the education system, saying it had provided students with greater freedom in choosing their educational paths.

“The biggest game changer of the education system is NEP 2020 as it has liberated students from the slavery of choices made by their parents, guardians and elders,” he said.

He said it will reaffirm the government's commitment to protecting the welfare and interests of students and youth. He said that under the new legislation, investigations would have to be completed within two months, while trials would have to be concluded within three months of the filing of the charge sheet.

Singh termed paper leaks a serious issue and said several such incidents had been reported across different states under various state governments as well as previous Central governments.

He further said that the number of universities in the country had increased from 760 to 1,293 and that 400 Eklavya schools were operational across the country.

The Bill proposes stricter penalties, time-bound investigations and Special Fast Track Courts to curb cheating and paper leaks in public examinations.

INTERNATIONAL

Sniffer dogs search mall wrecked after Japan quake as death toll climbs to 35



KUMAMOTO

Sniffer dogs in Japan helped rescuers Friday make a final sweep of a shopping mall wrecked by an explosion after a big earthquake, as the death toll from the tremor three days earlier hit 35.

“At the Aeon mall, 11 people were pulled out as of last night (Thursday),

among them seven dead. To make sure that no one else is inside, we are finalising our confirmation with the assistance of professionally trained dogs,” government spokesman Minoru Kihara said.

Local media quoted the operator of the mall, which was evacuated before being ripped apart by the suspected gas blast over an hour after Tuesday's

quake, as saying that all employees were now accounted for.

At the other major disaster site following the 7.1-magnitude jolt, a paper factory, nine bodies have now been recovered and search and rescue operations were terminated, Kihara said.

Two survivors were also extracted from the site where a smokestack col-

lapsed, he said, putting the overall death toll from the quake in the southwestern region of Kumamoto at 35.

The quake caused widespread damage, flattening homes, damaging bridges, triggering fires and leaving tens of thousands of residents without power and water in temperatures forecast to approach 40C (104F) this weekend.

As of Friday, around 4,500 households across Kumamoto still had no electricity and 79,000 households no water, Kihara said, with some 5,100 military personnel mobilised to help.

Thousands of people, many of them elderly, were escaping the heat in evacuation shelters.

One piece of good news was that 25 felines from a “cat cafe” inside the mall were rescued and transferred to Hiroshima, triggering widespread relief on social media.

Japan is one of the world's most seismically active countries, sitting on top of four major tectonic plates along the western edge of the Pacific “Ring of Fire”.

Kumamoto itself was hit by two devastating earthquakes in 2016, which killed 273 people and injured more than 2,800.

The archipelago, home to around 125 million people, typically experiences hundreds of jolts every year and accounts for about 18 percent of the world's earthquakes.

The vast majority are mild, although the damage they cause varies according to their location and the depth below the Earth's surface at which they strike.

Japan is haunted by the memory of a massive 9.0-magnitude undersea quake in 2011, which triggered a tsunami that killed or left missing around 18,500 people and wrecked the Fukushima nuclear plant.

Trump mulling USD 1,00,000 fee for students keen to work in US after graduation: Report



WASHINGTON

The US is planning to impose a USD 1,00,000 fee on visas issued to international students for working in the US after graduation from an American university, The Wall Street Journal reported.

The Trump administration move comes after a US court struck down a proposal to levy a USD 1,00,000 fee on H-1B visas.

According to The Wall Street Journal, the Department of Homeland Security is mulling the high fee on Optional Practical Training (OPT) visas which are an extension of F-1 visas issued to students.

The OPT programme allows foreign graduates to work for one to three years on their student visas in areas directly related to their studies.

Roughly 4,19,000 foreigners were working on OPT in 2024, the latest year for which data are available.

Tech companies, which conduct most of the recruitments from US universities, opposed the USD 1,00,000 fee on H-1B visas.

A DHS spokeswoman said in a statement: “No policies should be considered final until formally announced.

At DHS we are always having conversations about how to use all tools in our arsenal to

protect the integrity of our legal immigration system.”

In addition to the H-1B and student visas, officials at the State Department are also weighing attaching a USD 1,00,000 bond on applicants for green cards outside the US, redeemable only after they move to the US and become citizens.

The OPT program is one of the primary attractions for international students choosing to study in the US.

Without OPT, most international students would be forced to leave the US immediately after graduation, taking the skills they gained at American universities to foreign markets.

## Breaking Barriers in Tradition: How Barun Sarma Empowered Assam's First All-Women Vyas Ojapali Troupe



Led by Oja Upasana Sarma, the group currently features Jina Priyam Sarma as the Dainapali, with Jyotismita Sarma, Torali Sarma, Kavyashree Sarma, and Dharitri Sarma dedicatedly serving as the Palis. Defying all odds, this all-women Vyas Ojapali troupe began its journey at the Durga Puja mandap in Byaspara and has since earned widespread popularity and immense respect by performing across various parts of the state. Last year, the group won accolades in the Folk Music (Vyas Oja category) at the State Kala Sangam held at Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra. Adding to their achievements, they were also selected to

perform Vyas Ojapali at the prestigious National Kala Utsav held in Pune last December. Their achievement clearly proves that with the right opportunities and proper guidance, women can carry forward our ancient traditions with equal grace and glory. Today, Barun Dev Sarma is no longer just a traditional Oja or performer; he has established himself as a dedicated custodian, teacher, and devoted practitioner of the Vyas Oja tradition. His generational legacy, cultural leadership, and relentless efforts to guide the younger generation are steering this invaluable Assamese folk culture toward a bright and empowered future.



PRANTIK DEKA

Assam's folk culture is not merely a relic of the past; it is a vibrant, living stream of our spiritual and social existence. Notably, an inimitable and vital component of this rich folk culture is the Vyas Ojapali (also known as Vyah-Gowa Ojapali) of the Darrang district. One of Assam's oldest folk cultures, Vyas Ojapali is far more than a traditional dance or musical performance; it is a priceless folk heritage deeply woven into the state's spiritual, literary, and social fabric. For decades, this art form has propagated religious epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata to the masses through a captivating blend of music, drama, and storytelling. It stands as an unbroken, continuous pursuit of wisdom within Assamese society.

To keep any timeless art form alive, it requires the sacrifice and lifelong devotion of dedicated practitioners. Among the artists who have carried the grand heritage of Vyas Ojapali in their very blood and breath, dedicating their entire lives to its preservation, the name of Barun Dev Sarma stands out as truly exemplary. Hailing from No. 2 Ghorasal, a rural residential locality and village within the Sipajhar revenue circle of Darrang district, Sarma views Vyas Ojapali neither as a mere profession nor a livelihood; to him, it is a hereditary, spiritual pursuit of the soul.

You never lose friends.  
You just discover who  
your real friends are.

The family of veteran Vyas Sangeet artiste Barun Dev Sar-

ma has been deeply intertwined with the practice of Vyas Oja for generations. His grandfather, father, and Sarma himself have tirelessly nurtured this heritage, proving that folk art is not merely an expression of individual talent, but a holistic cultural heritage carried by the soul of a community. In this arduous journey, dedicated artistes like Gokul Sarma and teacher Jiten Sarma have equally devoted themselves, preserving the distinct identity of Darrang's Vyas Oja. Their unwavering commitment continues to safeguard this profound tradition from losing its way.

For generations, societal prejudices and superstitions kept women from performing on the Vyas Oja stage. However, true visionaries have the power to break through the darkness of outdated traditions. Barun Dev Sarma took that historic and courageous step. Through his singular efforts, guidance, and inspiration, the very first all-female Ojapali troupe in Assam's cultural history, comprising nine young women, officially debuted as the "Maa Parijati Byasini Ojapali Dal" on July 20, 2023. Mentored by Barun Dev Sarma, a lifelong practitioner of Vyas Oja hailing from Byaspara, Sipajhar, this troupe of young women has successfully navigated the path of transformation while overcoming societal hurdles. Initially, they faced a fierce storm of societal backlash, criticism, and objections, which regrettably led three young women to leave the group. Yet, Barun Dev Sarma remained completely unfazed in his resolve. Embracing the profound belief that folk culture is not the exclusive domain of any particular gender or class, but rather the fundamental right to self-expression and cultural identity for every individual, he empowered women artistes by providing them with continuous training and stage exposure, thereby fostering a progressive new mindset.

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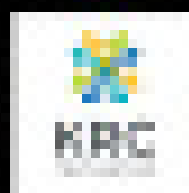


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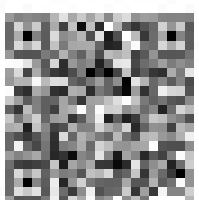


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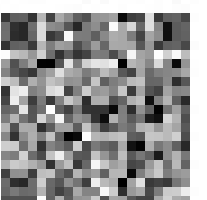


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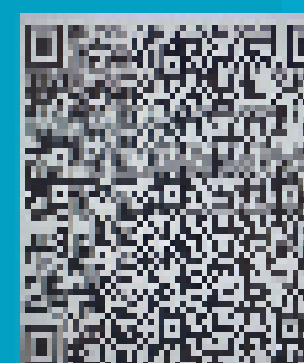
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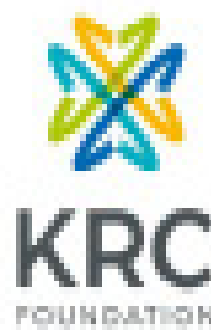
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| 5 BROAD TOPICS |

## Writing Star Contest

**MAY-NOV 2026**

DIGITAL PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATE  
THE SELECTED ARTICLE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON  
[WWW.KRCTIMES.COM](http://WWW.KRCTIMES.COM)

"I can shake off everything as I write;  
my sorrows disappear, my courage is  
reborn."  
- Anne Frank

### TOPICS

- INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NER (ROADS, RAILS, AVIATION, HYDROPOWER & SECURITY)
- PROMOTING TOURISM, MSME, AGRO & HORTICULTURE, ACT EAST DIPLOMACY
- DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ADVENTURE SPORTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
- ART & CULTURE, THEATRE, CINEMA, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
- SE FOR SUCCESS- PROMOTING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Open to Students from Class VI to Senior Citizens, divided into 5 categories+topics

Each entry will receive a digital participation certificate

There is NO fee for participation

The selected entry will be published on [www.krcetimes.com](http://www.krcetimes.com)

email articles: [info@krcfoundation.org](mailto:info@krcfoundation.org)

5 categories: A- Class- VI, VII, VIII | B- Class- IX, X, XI, XII | C-College & PG Students | D- Working Class & Homemaker | E- Retired & Senior Citizen (60+)

FOR RULES AND DETAILS, PLEASE VISIT

[www.krcfoundation.org](http://www.krcfoundation.org)

<https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest>

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