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Barak Valley, Assam | JAN-MAR 2025

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PERSPECTIVE

If money didn't exist, would you still get up every morning and do what you do for a living?

Assam records 15.43 lakh active job seekers; 3.55 lakh new registrations added in 2026

GUWAHATI

Assam has more than 15.43 lakh active job seekers registered with the state's employment directorate, with over 3.55 lakh fresh registrations recorded so far in 2026, the state government informed the Legislative Assembly on Monday.

Replying to a starred question by MLA Rekibuddin Ahmed, Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship Minister Prasanta Phukan said that 15,43,350 job seekers were registered with the Directorate of Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship as of June 30, 2026.

The minister told the House that the department had 15,82,987 registered job seekers as of March 31, 2016, and has maintained annual records of registrations since then.

Data tabled in the Assembly showed fluctuations in the number of registered job seekers over the past few years. In 2022, the total number of registered job seekers stood at 11,53,971, with 10,34,613 fresh registrations recorded during the year.

The figure rose sharply in 2023 to 20,10,517, driven by 8,56,546 new registrations. In 2024, registrations increased further to 21,16,561, with 1,06,044 fresh additions. However, the number of active registered job seekers declined to 11,88,160 in 2025 despite 2,49,765 fresh registrations during the year. As of June 30, 2026, the registry showed 15,43,350 active job seekers, with 3,55,741 new registrations recorded during the current year. The government also informed the Assembly that 12,52,731 registrations had lapsed by June 30, 2026, indicating a significant number of inactive entries being removed from the database. The educational profile of registered job seekers revealed that graduates constitute the largest segment, numbering 6,48,899. The registry also includes 1,16,159 postgraduates, highlighting the large pool of educated youth seeking employment opportunities across the state.

WHO SAID WHAT



An outstanding performance by our youngsters! ~ Narendra Modi, PM

Manipur's Bhumeshwory Devi wins bronze in women's 800m at Asian U23 Championships



IMPHAL

Manipur's Bhumeshwory Devi Huidrom added another chapter to the state's rich sporting legacy by clinching a bronze medal in the women's 800m event at the 2026 Asian U23 Athletics Championships in Ordos, China.

The 22-year-old middle-distance runner clocked 2:10.20 to finish third in a closely contested race on July 12, edging China's Gejing Zhu by a narrow margin of 0.03 seconds to secure a place on the podium.

Uzbekistan's Jonbibi Hukmova claimed the gold medal with a time of 2:08.41, while Japan's Kurumi Sugure took silver in 2:09.42.

With the achievement, Bhumeshwory became one of the few athletes from North-east India to win a medal in an international track event, marking a significant milestone for both Manipur and Indian athletics.

A native of Huidrom Awang Leikai in Manipur, Bhumeshwory began her athletics career in 2017 at the Sports Authority of India's National Centre of Excellence in Takyel, Imphal. Following the closure of the programme, she shifted to Bhopal to continue her training and pursue her sporting ambitions.

Her steady rise in the sport earned her

a place in the IOCL Project Shakti programme, a high-performance initiative supported by the Sports Authority of India, the Athletics Federation of India and Indian Oil Corporation Limited, aimed at preparing athletes for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Currently training at the SAI National Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru under Italian coach Claudio Pannozzo, Bhumeshwory has established herself as one of the country's promising middle-distance runners.

Before her success in China, she won gold medals at the Indian Grand Prix and the Open Athletics Meet, besides securing a silver medal at the 64th National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championships.

Former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh congratulated the athlete on her achievement, describing the medal as a proud moment for Manipur and India. In a social media post, he lauded her dedication, perseverance and talent, saying her success would inspire aspiring athletes across the region.

Bhumeshwory's podium finish further underlines Manipur's reputation as one of India's leading sporting hubs, producing athletes who continue to excel on national and international stages.

2027 Assembly polls crucial for Manipur's future, says Ibobi Singh; alleges complete collapse of law and order

IMPHAL, JULY 13

Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee president and former chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh on Sunday said the 2027 Assembly elections would be critical in determining the future course of the violence-hit state, while accusing the government of failing to maintain law and order.

Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhavan in Imphal, Singh strongly criticised the recent arson incident at Kanto Sabal in Imphal West district, where a large mob allegedly set fire to at least three abandoned houses on Saturday.

Describing the incident as alarming, the veteran Congress leader said repeated outbreaks of violence despite a strong security presence raised serious concerns about the state's governance and security apparatus.

"Kanto Sabal is located adjacent to a major Army camp, and a large number of central security personnel are deployed in the area. Despite this, such an incident took place," Singh said, questioning how the mob was

able to carry out the attack.

He further alleged that state security personnel and fire service teams were prevented from entering the area while the houses were being torched. Questioning the effectiveness of the administration under President's Rule, Singh asked whether the constitutional mechanism was being properly implemented in the state. He also expressed concern over the absence of any official statement from the state's Home Department regarding the incident.

Claiming that governance had deteriorated significantly, the former three-time chief minister said law and order had "totally collapsed" and alleged that democratic institutions were being weakened.

"How long can the people of Manipur continue to endure such incidents?" he asked, adding that the state was facing a serious crisis of governance.

Singh also questioned whether the state administration was functioning independently, alleging that key decisions were being influenced from outside the state.

Tripura, Assam explore closer cooperation to strengthen food distribution and food security

AGARTALA

Tripura and Assam have agreed to explore greater cooperation in the food and public distribution sector, with ministers from the two states holding discussions on strengthening food security programmes and improving the efficiency of welfare delivery systems.

The meeting took place at the Tripura State Secretariat on Saturday between Tripura Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Sushanta Chowdhury and Assam Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Minister Kaushik Rai.

The discussions centred on enhancing the Public Distribution System (PDS), improving food security initiatives and identifying measures to make essential food services more transparent, efficient and citizen-friendly.

During the meeting, Chowdhury outlined the functioning of Tripura's public distribution network and highlighted steps taken by the state government to strengthen food se-



curity programmes. He also shared details of initiatives aimed at improving service delivery, ensuring transparency and enhancing accountability within the system.

The two ministers exchanged views on the functioning of their respective departments and discussed the adoption of best practices that could help improve governance and service delivery in the food and consumer affairs sector.

They also explored opportunities for greater inter-state collaboration to enhance the implementation of welfare schemes and ensure that benefits reach intended beneficiaries more effectively.

A key focus of the discussions was on making food distribution services more responsive and accessible, particularly for vulnerable sections of society that depend on government-supported food security programmes.

Speaking after the meeting, Chowdhury reiterated the Tripura government's commitment to modernising the public distribution sys-

tem through reforms and technology-driven interventions.

He said the state would continue efforts to build a transparent, efficient and citizen-centric PDS that guarantees timely access to essential food supplies for all eligible beneficiaries.

Assam minister Kaushik Rai emphasised the importance of cooperation among states in strengthening public welfare programmes and improving service delivery mechanisms.

He said sharing experiences and successful practices could help states enhance the transparency, effectiveness and reach of food security initiatives. Rai also stressed the need for coordinated efforts to achieve the objective of Antyodaya-the upliftment of the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society.

The meeting reflected a growing emphasis on regional cooperation among northeastern states to improve governance, strengthen welfare systems and ensure better delivery of essential services to citizens.

PM Modi gifts Assam's prized Manohari Gold Tea to Indonesian President Prabowo



GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented Assam's renowned Manohari Gold Tea to Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto during his recent official visit, showcasing one of India's most exclusive specialty teas as part of a curated collection of traditional gifts highlighting the country's cultural and artisanal heritage.

Produced at the Manohari Tea Estate in Assam, Manohari Gold Tea is considered among India's finest premium teas. It is crafted exclusively from the tender buds of the P126 tea clone and is known for its distinctive golden appearance, delicate flavour profile and limited production.

The tea undergoes a meticulous manufacturing process during As-

sum's second flush season in June. The buds are hand-plucked, hand-rolled and naturally sun-dried, contributing to the tea's unique character and exceptional quality.

The inclusion of Manohari Gold Tea in the diplomatic gift package reflects India's efforts to promote its traditional products and agricultural excellence on the global stage.

Reacting to the gesture, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Prime Minister's decision to present the tea to President Subianto had brought international recognition to one of Assam's rarest and most celebrated tea varieties.

In a post on social media platform X, Sarma noted that Prime Minister Modi had earlier visited the Manohari Tea Estate and spent a night there, interacting with tea garden workers. He said the visit highlighted the Prime Minister's appreciation for Assam's tea industry and the contribution of its workforce. Alongside the Assam tea, Modi presented several traditional Indian handicrafts to the Indonesian leader. These included an Aipan artwork, a traditional folk art form from Uttarakhand's Kumaon region, known for its intricate geometric and ritualistic motifs.

The Prime Minister also gifted a handcrafted Kashmiri papier-mâché bowl featuring detailed floral and bird designs, as well as a repoussé silver decorative plate adorned with elephant and floral patterns.

The gifts formed part of India's cultural diplomacy efforts, showcasing the country's rich traditions, craftsmanship and regional specialties while strengthening bilateral ties with Indonesia.

Silchar spa raid: Two absconding owners arrested as probe widens

SILCHAR

Cachar Police on Sunday arrested the two principal accused in the high-profile Imperial Shopping Mall spa case, days after a raid on two spa-cum-beauty parlours in Silchar triggered a wider investigation into alleged unlawful activities.

The accused, identified as Rupali Das, owner of Lovely Spa, and Rahul Debnath, proprietor of Lotus Spa, had been evading arrest since police conducted the operation on July 25. Acting on specific intelligence inputs, investigators tracked the duo to locations within Silchar town and took them into custody. Additional Superintendent of Police (Headquarters) Manas Saikia said all legal formalities related to the arrests had been completed and the accused would be produced before the court.

Police said the investigation is continuing and further action may follow depending on the verification of licences, permits and other documents linked to the establishments. "If any mandatory licence or document is found to be missing, expired or invalid, legal action will be taken. Anyone found involved will be brought within the ambit of the law," Saikia said, adding that additional arrests cannot be ruled out as the probe progresses.

The arrests come in the wake of a police raid on the two spa-cum-beauty parlours, during which 26 women were detained for questioning. The operation brought renewed scrutiny to the rapid growth of spa businesses in Silchar amid allegations that some establishments were being used for activities in violation of the law.

Police also clarified that no minor girl was involved in the case, dismissing speculation circulating after the raid.

A case has been registered at Silchar Sadar Police Station under Case No. 584/2026. The charges include provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Sections 3, 4, 7 and 8 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act.

Meghalaya plans mandatory visitor registration system on ILP model

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya government is preparing to introduce a mandatory registration and verification mechanism for tourists and other visitors entering the state, a move aimed at strengthening monitoring of inward movement and addressing concerns over illegal entry. Under the proposed system, all visitors will be required to register and undergo identity verification before entering Meghalaya.

Authorities will record details such as identity documents, antecedents and the purpose of visit, creating a comprehensive database of entrants. The initiative is being designed on the lines of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) framework operational in several northeastern states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur, where visitor entry is regulated through registration and verification procedures.

Tourism Minister Timothy D. Shira said the state government considers the measure necessary in view of the increasing influx of tourists and the need for better tracking of individuals entering Meghalaya.

"We need a proper registration system because many people enter the state in the name of tourism. Their documents must be examined to verify whether they are genuine Indian citizens or foreign nationals carrying valid papers," Shira said.

According to the minister, the proposed food court and tourism

facility at Umiling will also function as a key visitor registration and facilitation centre. The location is expected to serve as one of the primary entry verification points for travellers entering the state.

Shira said visitors would be able to complete registration formalities while accessing amenities at the facility. "Our plan is to develop it as both a facilitation centre and a tourist registration hub. Since the registration process may take some time, visitors can make use of restaurants and other services available there," he said.

The government also plans to establish similar registration centres in other strategic locations, including Berubari in the Garo Hills region, to ensure uniform implementation of the system across Meghalaya. Officials said the proposed mechanism would help improve oversight of visitor movement, strengthen security measures and create a structured and transparent process for recording entries into the state. It would also enable authorities to maintain real-time data on tourist arrivals and other visitors. The move comes amid continuing demands from various organisations in Meghalaya for the implementation of an Inner Line Permit system. While the state does not currently have ILP provisions, the proposed registration framework is seen as an effort to enhance visitor monitoring and border management without introducing a full-fledged permit regime.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 821

MODIPLOMACY

Few contemporary leaders have reshaped the optics of diplomacy as dramatically as Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Over the past decade, India’s foreign policy has not merely been conducted through official communiqués, strategic partnerships and summit meetings; it has increasingly been projected through mass public engagement, diaspora mobilisation and a highly personalised style of statecraft. What has emerged is a distinct diplomatic model often described as “Modiplomacy”—that seeks to transform India’s growing economic and geopolitical weight into a powerful global brand.

The latest illustration came in Melbourne, where nearly 30,000 members of the Indian diaspora gathered at Marvel Stadium to welcome Modi during his three-nation tour of Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. The enthusiastic reception prompted Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to remark that even global music icons had not witnessed such a response at the venue. The event was more than a political rally abroad; it symbolised a new era in which India’s leader is received not only by governments but also by large communities that see themselves as stakeholders in India’s rise.

This phenomenon is neither accidental nor isolated. Since assuming office in 2014, Modi has undertaken one of the most extensive diplomatic outreach programmes in India’s history, visiting around 100 countries. The significance of these travels lies not simply in their frequency but in their geography. Unlike the traditional focus on major power centres such as Washington, Moscow, London, Paris or Beijing, Modi’s diplomatic map has extended to countries that often remain outside the spotlight of global diplomacy.

From Fiji and Papua New Guinea to Rwanda, Mongolia, Mauritius and Trinidad and Tobago, the Prime Minister has consistently sought to engage nations that host sizeable Indian-origin populations or occupy strategic positions in emerging geopolitical calculations. In several cases, these visits marked the first by an Indian Prime Minister, signalling an attempt to broaden India’s international footprint beyond conventional diplomatic circuits.

At the heart of this approach is the Indian diaspora. Numbering more than 35 million people worldwide, it represents one of the largest and most influential expatriate communities in the world. Previous governments acknowledged its importance, but the Modi era has elevated diaspora engagement into a central pillar of foreign policy.

Large-scale community events from New York’s Madison Square Garden and Houston’s “Howdy Modi” rally to stadium gatherings in Sydney, London and Melbourne have become recurring features of official visits. These spectacles serve multiple purposes. They reinforce emotional ties between overseas Indians and their ancestral homeland, project India’s soft power, and create visible demonstrations of influence that resonate with host governments.

Critics often dismiss such events as political theatre. Yet diplomacy has always involved symbolism. State visits, military parades, ceremonial welcomes and summit photographs are all carefully choreographed exercises in perception management. What distinguishes Modi’s approach is the scale of public participation and the deliberate blending of political communication with diplomatic engagement.

Equally distinctive is the personal dimension that characterises Modi’s interactions with world leaders. Informal gestures, personal anecdotes and highly publicised moments of camaraderie have become trademarks of his diplomatic style. Whether through warm embraces, references to shared experiences, or carefully curated cultural symbolism, the Prime Minister has sought to humanise international relations in ways that often attract global media attention.

Supporters argue that this approach helps make India more relatable and visible on the world stage. Detractors contend that it risks reducing diplomacy to personality-driven optics. The truth likely lies somewhere in between. While symbolism alone cannot substitute for substantive policy outcomes, neither can modern diplomacy ignore the importance of narrative and public perception.

The crucial question is whether the spectacle is matched by substance. On this count, the record presents a more nuanced picture.

Modi’s latest tour was not merely about diaspora outreach. It produced agreements spanning defence co-operation, space collaboration, trade and strategic partnerships. India’s engagement with Indonesia continues to deepen in areas ranging from maritime security to technological cooperation. Relations with Australia have expanded significantly, driven by shared concerns over regional stability and the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific. New Zealand, meanwhile, has become an increasingly important partner in trade and education.

Such developments reflect a broader transformation in India’s foreign policy. The country today occupies a stronger position in global affairs than it did a decade ago. It is the world’s fastest-growing major economy, a key player in multilateral forums, and an increasingly important destination for investment and supply-chain diversification. This changing reality provides Indian diplomacy with leverage that earlier governments could only partially access. The reception accorded to Modi abroad must therefore be understood within this larger context. Governments and businesses are not responding solely to the charisma of an individual leader. They are responding to the opportunities associated with a nation of more than 1.4 billion people, a rapidly expanding consumer market and a globally connected diaspora. India’s economic significance has enhanced the value of engagement with its leadership, regardless of political preferences.

This does not mean criticism is unwarranted. Opposition parties have questioned the costs associated with frequent foreign travel and have argued that excessive focus on image-building can overshadow domestic challenges. Such scrutiny is legitimate in any democracy. Public diplomacy, however successful, cannot be the sole measure of foreign policy effectiveness. Trade gains, investment flows, technological partnerships, security cooperation and tangible benefits for citizens remain the ultimate benchmarks.

Yet it would be equally mistaken to dismiss Modiplomacy as mere spectacle. In an era where international influence is shaped as much by narrative as by military or economic power, the ability to project national confidence matters. Nations increasingly compete not only for markets and strategic partnerships but also for attention, goodwill and global relevance.

The larger achievement of Modi’s diplomatic strategy may therefore lie in branding India as a nation that commands notice. Stadium events, diaspora gatherings and highly visible public engagements are tools in that effort. They signal that India is no longer content with being a passive participant in global affairs; it seeks to shape conversations, build networks and cultivate influence on its own terms. Ultimately, the crowds in Melbourne or Houston are not the story in themselves. They are indicators of a broader transformation—one in which India’s growing economic strength, demographic scale and international ambitions are being packaged into a recognisable global identity. Whether future governments retain the style or modify it, the precedent has been set: Indian diplomacy is no longer confined to conference rooms and banquet halls.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You have to know the past to understand the present.

- Carl Sagan

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME: THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP SETS A NEW GLOBAL STANDARD



NILAKUMAR KONSAM

The 2026 FIFA World Cup, co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, is the biggest edition of the tournament in history and arguably its best organized so far. With 48 nations competing across an unprecedented 104 matches, FIFA has successfully managed the immense logistical complexities of an expanded World Cup with remarkable efficiency.

From transportation and security to world-class stadiums, immaculate pitches, and seamless venue operations across three countries, the tournament has showcased meticulous planning, professionalism, and attention to detail. The incorporation of state-of-the-art indoor and retractable-roof stadiums has ensured uninterrupted scheduling while offering spectators a comfortable, climate-controlled match-day experience. Modern venues have seamlessly blended sport, entertainment, hospitality, digital connectivity, and fan engagement into a truly integrated World Cup experience.

The tournament has also set new standards in global broadcasting and accessibility. Through an extensive network of television broadcasters, satellite and cable networks, and OTT streaming platforms, every match has reached audiences across virtually every corner of the world. High-definition production, multilingual commentary, immersive camera angles, real-time analytics, and on-demand streaming have made the FIFA World Cup more accessible than at any other time in its history.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup is well on course to become the most watched edition of the tournament ever. The expansion from 64 to 104 matches has dramatically increased cumulative viewing opportunities, while larger-capacity stadiums have enabled millions more supporters to experience the spectacle in person. Equally transformative has been the evolution of digital broadcasting. Today, fans can watch matches virtually anywhere—on smartphones, tablets, laptops, smart televisions, and other connected devices through OTT services, satellite television, and cable networks. This unprecedented accessibility, combined with football’s ever-growing global appeal, is expected to make the tournament the most viewed and the most digitally consumed FIFA World Cup in history.

Technology has emerged as one of the defining features of this World Cup, significantly elevating both the quality and integrity of

the competition. Sensor-equipped match balls containing inertial measurement chips, semi-automated offside technology, goal-line technology, and the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system have together enhanced the accuracy, consistency, and credibility of refereeing decisions. While no officiating system is entirely free from debate, these innovations have substantially reduced clear errors, increased transparency, and contributed to a higher standard of the game.

One iconic moment from football history perfectly illustrates this transformation. Had today’s technological safeguards—particularly VAR, goal-line technology, and multiple high-definition camera angles—been available in 1986, Diego Maradona’s famous “Hand of God” goal would almost certainly have been disallowed for deliberate handball. One of football’s most celebrated and controversial moments would instead have become a routine VAR review, demonstrating how technology has fundamentally reshaped the game by placing fairness, accountability, and accuracy at the heart of officiating.

Barring the visa-related difficulties experienced by Iran, the tournament has been remarkably free of major organizational setbacks. Importantly, Iran did not boycott the competition. Its participation reaffirmed that

football can transcend geopolitical tensions, making it a victory not only for FIFA but also for the unifying spirit of the World Cup over international politics and conflict.

Perhaps the tournament’s most remarkable achievement has been its ability—at least for a few weeks—to quiet the geopolitical noise that so often dominates global discourse. On the pitch, nationality remains a matter of sporting identity rather than political division. Billions of people, irrespective of language, religion, ideology, or nationality, have united around a shared passion for football. In a world often fractured by conflict and uncertainty, the FIFA World Cup has once again demonstrated sport’s unique capacity to build bridges, inspire hope, and remind humanity of what it has in common.

The FIFA World Cup has continuously evolved over the decades, adapting to changing times while preserving the essence of the beautiful game. From its humble beginnings to a truly global spectacle spanning three nations, 48 teams, 104 matches, cutting-edge technology, and billions of viewers across television and digital platforms, the tournament has embraced innovation without losing its soul. Every era has left its own legacy, and the 2026 edition appears destined to set a new benchmark in scale, accessibility, organization, and fan experience.

If this World Cup has proved anything, it is that excellence in sport is measured not only by the brilliance displayed on the field but also by the ability to inspire, innovate, and unite. For a fleeting but powerful moment, football has spoken louder than politics. The 2026 FIFA World Cup is not merely the biggest ever staged; it is a compelling glimpse into the future of the beautiful game.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Racism, intolerance and discrimination tear at the fabric of our societies, which is harmful us all.

Everyone, everywhere can speak up and take action to #FightRacism.

<https://un.org/en/fight-racism>

~ United Nations



Cold drink consignment worth Rs 15 lakh stolen on Guwahati-Imphal route recovered; one held

SILCHAR

A consignment of cold drinks worth over Rs 15 lakh that went missing while being transported from Guwahati to Imphal has been largely recovered by police in Assam's Cachar district, with one person arrested and several suspects, including the truck driver, still on the run.

Police said 1,100 cartons of Coca-Cola beverages valued at approximately Rs 15.47 lakh were recovered during raids conducted in neighbouring Hailakandi district following a complaint by the owner of the consignment.

The shipment belonged to Imphal West-based businessman Jagnarayan Prasad and was being transported in a truck bearing



registration number AS-01-K-9317 from Guwahati to Imphal. Con-

cern arose after the vehicle failed to reach its destination within the

expected time frame.

On July 11, police traced and re-

covered the abandoned truck from Ujan Tarapur under Lakhipur in Cachar district. Following the recovery of the vehicle, the businessman lodged an FIR, prompting a full-scale investigation.

Acting on intelligence inputs, Banskandi Police carried out a series of raids in Hailakandi district. During a search operation at Algapur Part-II, officers recovered 500 cartons of the stolen beverages from the residence of Dilwar Hussain. Investigators suspect the cartons had been stored there by Taibur Rahman. However, both men allegedly fled before police arrived.

In another raid at Boalipar Part-II, police seized an additional 600 cartons from a warehouse owned by Muktaadur Rahman

Choudhury. Choudhury was arrested at the site and taken into custody.

The accused was produced before the Lakhipur court on July 12, which remanded him to two days of police custody for further interrogation.

Police said the probe is now focused on tracking down the remaining suspects, including the truck driver, and determining whether an organised theft network was involved in diverting and storing the consignment.

The investigation is being led by Sub-Inspector Rehan Uddin of the Banskandi Police Outpost, with search operations continuing across multiple locations to recover any remaining goods and identify all those linked to the case.

Cachar Police seize 3,000 Yaba tablets in Katigorah

SILCHAR

In a major breakthrough in the ongoing anti-narcotics campaign in Assam, Cachar Police seized 3,000 Yaba tablets and arrested an alleged drug peddler during a late-night operation in the Katigorah area of the district.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs, a joint team from Katigorah and Kalain police stations conducted a raid at Latimara along the K.H. Road under the jurisdiction of Katigorah Police Station. During the operation, the team recovered 3,000 banned Yaba tablets and apprehended a suspect believed to be involved in drug trafficking.

The arrested individual has been identified as Hasan Ahmed, son of Abdul Matin and a resident of Lahmali village under Katigorah Police Station in Cachar district.

Police officials said the operation was launched following credible information regarding the movement of narcotics in the area. The recovered Yaba tablets, a synthetic stimulant drug widely trafficked across the North-east, are estimated to be worth several lakh rupees in the illicit market.

A case has been registered against the accused under relevant provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and further investigation is underway to determine the source of the contraband and identify any larger trafficking network linked to the seizure.

Officials described the recovery as another significant success in Cachar Police's continuing drive against drug smuggling and narcotics trafficking. The district police have intensified anti-drug operations in recent months as part of the Assam government's broader campaign to curb the illegal drug trade across the state.

Manipur Congress Inducts 11 New Members, Says They Aim to Contribute to State's Restoration

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: The Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) on July 12 inducted 11 new members from different Assembly constituencies into the Indian National Congress during a reception programme attended by senior party leaders.

The newly inducted members said they joined the Congress with the objective of contributing to the restoration of peace and the overall development of Manipur.

The new entrants include Th Oxford Singh from Thongju, Longjam Suranjoy Singh from Keirao, Yengkhom Sanjeep Singh from Thangmeibam, Laishram Sashibhushan from Uripok, B Sarat Sharma and Th Brinda Devi from Yaikul, Kh Devendro Singh and Kh Gambhir Singh from Sekmai, and Md Nasir Khan, M Anwar Hussain and Col

Mohd Sahir Khan from Lilong. The induction programme was presided over by Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee president and former Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh, who welcomed the new members into the party.

Addressing the gathering, Singh said the new members had joined the Congress out of conviction and with a commitment to work towards rebuilding Manipur. He expressed confidence that their inclusion would strengthen the party's organisational base and its efforts to restore peace, stability and development in the state.

Senior Congress leaders and party workers were also present at the programme, which forms part of the party's ongoing organisational strengthening efforts ahead of the 2027 Manipur Assembly elections.

Ibobi Singh slams government over Kanto Sabal arson, raises questions on security and governance

IMPHAL

Former Manipur Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Okram Ibobi Singh on Sunday condemned the arson attack at Kanto Sabal in Imphal West district, describing it as a major security failure and questioning the effectiveness of the state government's response to the ongoing unrest.

Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhavan in Imphal, Ibobi said the burning of at least five houses in Kanto Sabal was particularly alarming as the locality lies close to the 57 Mountain Division and is considered a heavily secured area.

Calling the incident "deeply unfortunate", the Congress veteran said the fresh violence highlighted persistent shortcomings in maintaining law and order

despite the continued deployment of security forces across the state.

"People have been suffering for more than three years. Violence continues to erupt despite the presence of security forces. How long will the people have to endure this situation, and why does the conflict continue?" he asked.

Ibobi also questioned the role of both the state and Central governments in addressing the prolonged ethnic conflict, alleging that the Manipur government was functioning under the "remote control" of the Centre rather than acting independently.

Referring to the Kanto Sabal incident, he said the government's response appeared limited to issuing a condemnation statement, while residents expected stronger action and accountability.

"The people of Manipur deserve assurance, accountability and decisive action from the government," he said.

The former chief minister further alleged that democratic institutions in the state had weakened under the BJP-led governments at both the Centre and in Manipur. He cited delays in conducting elections to local bodies and Autonomous District Councils as examples of what he described as democratic erosion. According to Ibobi, elections to grassroots local bodies have remained pending since 2022, while polls to the Autonomous District Councils have not been held for two consecutive terms. He said these delays had fuelled public concern over whether future elections would be conducted on time.

With Assembly elections approaching, Ibobi urged the

government to ensure that democratic processes remain intact and called on voters to make informed choices. He also reiterated the Congress party's commitment to safeguarding Manipur's territorial and administrative integrity, recalling that the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra was launched from Imphal to defend constitutional values and democratic institutions. The remarks come a day after at least five houses belonging to members of the Meitei community were allegedly set ablaze in Kanto Sabal during a protest march by members of the Kuki community from neighbouring Kangpokpi district. The incident drew widespread criticism as it occurred in broad daylight near an Army cantonment, raising fresh concerns over security arrangements in the violence-hit state.

Doctor shortage in Ukhrul, seek urgent government intervention

IMPHAL

Two civil society organisations in Manipur have raised concerns over what they describe as a critical shortage of doctors and healthcare personnel in Ukhrul district, urging the state government to take immediate steps to strengthen medical services in the region.

The People's United Youth Alliance (PUYA) and the Foot-hills Naga Coordinating Committee (FNCC) on Sunday released findings from a joint fact-finding exercise, alleging significant disparities in healthcare infrastructure between Imphal and the hill district of Ukhrul. Addressing a press conference in Imphal, PUYA General Secretary Longjam Abothe said the team's assessment revealed that healthcare facilities in Ukhrul are operating with severe manpower shortages, affecting the delivery of essential medical services. According to the organisations, Ukhrul district has one District Hospital, a Community Health Centre (CHC) at Somdal, six Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and eight Primary Health Sub-Centres. However, they alleged that the Somdal CHC is functioning with only one gynaecologist and no other doctors. The report further claimed that four PHCs are being run by a single doctor each, one PHC is managed solely by an AYUSH medical officer, while another is operating without any doctor. PUYA and FNCC alleged that the shortage has left

rural health facilities struggling to provide basic healthcare services to residents of the predominantly Tangkhul Naga-inhabited district.

The organisations also raised questions over the reported disappearance of an X-ray machine that was allegedly allotted to the Somdal CHC around three years ago. According to Abothe, the equipment was delivered to the office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in Ukhrul, but its present location remains unclear. He further claimed that the district's health administration was unaware of the machine's whereabouts, prompting concerns over accountability and utilisation of medical equipment. In addition to infrastructure-related issues, the groups highlighted alleged absenteeism among healthcare personnel. They claimed that several medical officers transferred to Ukhrul in May this year have yet to join their assigned postings, despite official transfer orders.

According to the organisations, the matter has already been brought to the attention of the Director of Health Services by the Ukhrul Chief Medical Officer. Expressing concern over the condition of healthcare facilities in the district, PUYA and FNCC called on the Manipur government and the Health Directorate to urgently deploy adequate medical staff and improve health infrastructure to prevent further deterioration of healthcare services.

Ecological crisis deepens in Karbi Anglong Unregulated Resource Extraction and Deforestation threaten lifelines

SUSHANTA ROY

DIPHU: The twin hill districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong are facing an unprecedented environmental crisis.

Decades of unscientific extraction of major and minor minerals, alongside rampant destruction of key reserve forests, are rapidly turning this ecologically fragile, biodiversity-rich landscape into a severely degraded terrain.

At the heart of the crisis are the collapse of local river systems and the severe fragmentation of the region's ancient forest covers, pushing indigenous communities and wildlife toward a tipping point.

The perennial rivers of the districts, which historically supplied water year-round to local settlements, are suffocating under uncontrolled mechanical sand mining.

The River Lungnit and the Jamuna River (which originates in the Khaunbaman Hills) have borne the brunt of unregulated minor mineral extraction.

Unscientific and deeper-than-permitted scraping of riverbeds has altered the natural flow patterns of the Jamuna and Lungnit rivers.

Despite regulatory frameworks like the Sustainable Sand Management Guidelines, extraction depth often exceeds the standard 3-meter threshold.

The removal of heavy sand layers has heightened bank erosion, destroying the



riverbanks and causing heavy aggradations down the line.

Local residents point out that streams that once ran clear are now turning into muddy, seasonal channels, triggering severe artificial water scarcity during the dry seasons.

Compounding the aquatic crisis is the relentless pressure on the region's dense green canopy. Unregulated and rat-hole coal mining operations across the hills continue to degrade fragile hill slopes, while acid mine drainage pollutes groundwater channels.

The assault on the land is heavily visible across several Reserve Forests, including the Langnit Reserved Forest, Kaki Reserved Forest, and the pristine Panbari Reserved Forest along the northern slopes.

A longitudinal timeline paints a stark picture of the ecological breakdown: 1970s-2000: The initiation of heavy commercial and anthropogenic pressures begins altering the demographic and forest-use patterns in the hills.

2001-2020: According to satellite-based assessments, Karbi Anglong emerged as one of the most severely deforested zones in Assam, losing approximately 97,400 hectares of tree cover—representing a devastating 12% decline in total forest area.

2013-2023: Forest fragmentation accelerated aggressively. A decade-long analysis revealed a further decrease of 108.56 square kilometers of dense forest cover, juxtaposed against a 26.69 square kilometer expansion of agricultural encroachment and over 30 square kilome-

sends a strong message both to society and to those engaged in narcotics trafficking," he said. The chief minister noted that Assam has increasingly become a transit route for drugs originating from Myanmar and passing through north-eastern states before reaching markets in West Bengal and other parts of India.

Hestressed that combating the drug trade requires more than routine checking and enforcement operations. "Drug trafficking cannot be stopped merely through checking. Intelligence gathering, technology and strong inter-state coordination are essential. The masterminds often operate from outside the country through multiple layers of agents and sub-agents," Sarma said.

Responding to questions on the proposed fencing of the India-Myanmar border, the chief minister said physical barriers could help check illegal movement but would not be sufficient to stop narcotics trafficking. "Drugs can be transported using drones and other innovative methods. Fencing is only one component; the

fight against drugs requires technological solutions and stronger enforcement mechanisms," he added.

As part of the statewide disposal programme, district police units also destroyed seized narcotics at various locations.

In Tamulpur district, police disposed of narcotic substances worth Rs 71.92 lakh, including 87,888 kg of ganja, 6,855 intoxicating capsules and 2,832 grams of brown sugar.

Meanwhile, in Biswanath district, authorities destroyed seized drugs worth nearly Rs 86 lakh, including around 163 kg of ganja and 18.5 grams of heroin recovered in different cases over the past year.

The initiative comes amid growing concern over drug trafficking in the Northeast. During the recent Assam Assembly session, legislators across party lines called for stronger measures to tackle the narcotics trade and dismantle trafficking networks operating in the region.

ters of built-up areas.

2024-2026: Population growth (surging to an estimated 1.1 million by 2025) and institutional loopholes have fueled illegal stone quarrying and sand mining.

Recent reports suggest that over 8 million cubic meters of stone were extracted beyond legally sanctioned limits from the hill slopes adjoining critical wildlife reserves.

The destruction of the Panbari RF and adjacent hills has physically choked critical animal migration pathways, notably the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Elephant Reserve corridor.

With heavy stone crushers, dust pollution, and deep open-cast mining sites operating within 1 to 2 kilometers of forest boundaries, wild herds are increasingly forced into human settlements.

The historical data from 2000 to 2023 reveals gruesome fallout from this habitat fragmentation, documenting over 1,400 human fatalities and approximately 1,200 elephant deaths directly tied to the shrinking boundaries of the Karbi Anglong forests.

"In the past, our forests were dense, and rivers like the Jamuna and Lungnit flowed throughout the year," shared a village elder near Manja. "Now, the riverbeds are wide deserts of silt, and the forests are disappearing before our eyes."

If the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and state enforcement agencies fail to immediately enforce stringent environmental safeguards, restrict mining depths, and halt illegal logging, the region faces an irreversible ecological disaster marked by absolute water scarcity and total loss of its rich biodiversity.

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Will hold PM Modi accountable for ‘betrayal’: Congress ups ante on Ram Temple donation row

NEW DELHI

Stepping up its attack on the government over the Ram temple donation embezzlement case, the Congress on Sunday questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “silence” and said the country will never forgive the BJP-RSS for their “betrayal of faith”.

Pointing out that Congress leaders have held 48 press conferences across the country on the issue, party general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh demanded that the prime minister “break his silence” on the “theft scandal”.

Prior to this, answers were sought from the prime minister through eight press conferences held at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi between June 26 and July 9, Ramesh said in an X post in Hindi.

“No matter how hard Prime Minister Modi, the RSS and the BJP try, the Congress will not rest until it compels Prime Minister Modi to be held accountable for this betrayal: the theft of donations at the Lord Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya, which has struck a blow to the faith of crores of people across the country,” Ramesh said, sharing screenshots from 13 press conferences held by the party on Sunday, including in Manipur, Goa, Madurai and Bhubaneswar.

Ramesh accused the BJP-RSS of collecting donations in the name of Lord Ram while running a “racket of theft” behind the scenes.

The heinous act of donation theft at the Ram temple in Ayodhya is a massive deception perpetrated against his devotees, Ramesh asserted.

“All indications so far suggest that the prime minister and the top leadership of the BJP-RSS utilised the SIT to provide a ‘safe exit’ to their close associates responsible for this theft; furthermore, the actions taken by the Uttar Pradesh Police have proven to be nothing more than an attempt to shield the true masterminds behind this murky affair,” he said.

Ramesh reiterated the party’s demands for an independent investigation supervised by the Supreme Court, a forensic audit, a fixation of



accountability and strict action against the guilty.

Ram temple donation row: Kejriwal starts signature campaign; Nripendra Mishra says no govt role in trust

In an earlier X post, Ramesh had said, “Donation Theft: A Betrayal of Faith. A month has passed since the theft of donations at the Lord Shri Ram Temple came to light, yet Prime Minister Modi, who is quick to claim credit for everything, remains silent when it comes to accountability.”

New facts emerging daily are exposing those who have politicised the Ram temple issue, he said.

Even the Special Investigation Team (SIT), constituted ostensibly to resolve the matter, has been forced to acknowledge the daily disappearance of lakhs of rupees in offerings, Ramesh said.

“The theft of donations at the Lord Shri Ram Temple cannot be limited to just a few employees; yet, this govern-

ment – hostile to the cause of Ram – is intent on shielding the real culprits,” he alleged.

The Congress has consistently maintained that the SIT, the FIR, and the resignations are merely attempts to hoodwink the nation, Ramesh said.

Government efforts to suppress the matter make it evident that Champat Rai and other temple trustees harbour deep secrets; this is why the Modi government is taking no action against them, and their influence remains intact, Ramesh said.

“The Congress demands the following: An independent and impartial investigation supervised by the Supreme Court, a forensic audit, fixation of accountability, strict action against the guilty,” he said.

“Prime Minister, the nation wants to know: Why this silence? The country will never forgive the BJP and RSS for this planned betrayal of faith, perpetrated under Modi’s patronage,”

Ramesh alleged.

The Congress on Saturday sought to corner PM Modi over the alleged embezzlement of donations, questioning his “silence” on the issue and saying it will demand answers from him in the upcoming Parliament session.

Under attack from the Congress and others, the BJP has maintained that those found guilty of wrongdoing in the case will not be spared and alleged that the opposition parties, which never supported Ram temple construction, were using the issue to divide Hindus.

The alleged embezzlement of Ram temple donations came to light on June 7. An FIR was registered on June 25, following a preliminary report from the SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government.

Eight people associated with the temple’s donation and counting process have been arrested so far, while the investigation is continuing.

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has directed all new applicants seeking enrolment in the electoral rolls to furnish their parents’ Special Intensive Revision (SIR) details along with Form 6, officials said.

The declaration, introduced during the Bihar SIR exercise launched in June last year, has been made mandatory through ECI instructions without formally amending Form 6, which is required for enrolment as a new voter.

Officials said every applicant filing Form 6 is required to submit the declaration, a practice reflected in the daily SIR bulletins issued during the Bihar revision exercise. Applicants filing Form 6 online cannot complete the registration process without filling in the declaration.

According to EC officials, the requirement helps map new electors to existing records, reducing the number of supporting documents applicants need to submit during enrolment.

Meanwhile, the poll panel strongly defended the SIR process, rejecting concerns raised by United Nations Special Rapporteurs over its transparency and fairness. Officials maintained that the exercise is constitutional, transparent and has received the backing of the Supreme Court.

The Commission said the objective of the SIR is to ensure that all eligible Indian citizens are included in the electoral rolls while removing duplicate, deceased, shifted, absent and foreign electors to improve the accuracy of voter lists.

Responding to allegations of large-scale deletion of minority voters, including claims relating to Nandigram in West Bengal, EC officials denied any bias and said the revision process provides adequate opportunities for affected voters to challenge exclusions and seek corrections.

The ECI’s response comes after UN Special Rapporteurs, in a recent communication to the Union government, expressed concerns that the SIR process lacked sufficient transparency and could potentially affect the voting rights of vulnerable communities.

However, the Commission reiterated that the revision is being conducted in accordance with established legal provisions and due process.

INTERNATIONAL

US launches more strikes on Iran as the standoff over the Strait of Hormuz escalates

DUBAI

The United States and Iran each asserted Monday they controlled the Strait of Hormuz after a weekend of attacks stretching across the wider Middle East, further threatening any diplomacy to end the war.

The attacks, sparked by Iran striking a container ship Sunday in the strait off the coast of Oman, again underlined that the waterway that once saw a fifth of the world’s traded crude oil and natural gas pass through it remained the key issue in negotiations. The narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf has seen shipping disrupted since the start of the war as Iran maintained a chokehold on it by attacking commercial vessels around it, intimidating shippers.

Iran and the U.S. are nearly at the midway point of the 60-day period of an interim deal that was supposed to set up talks for a permanent end to the war. Instead, it has devolved into a series of attacks over the strait and its future, worrying world leaders the Iran war fully could resume.

“A return to full-scale hostilities would have catastrophic consequences,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said in a statement.

The U.S. military’s Central Command described its forces as hitting dozens of sites in the strikes Monday, including air defense systems, radar sites, missile and drone equipment and small boats.

“The Strait of Hormuz is a vital maritime corridor for global trade,” Central Command said. “Iran does not control it.”

Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, a key power center in the country’s theocracy that controls its ballistic missile



arsenal, sharply rejected America’s statement.

“The Strait of Hormuz is our territory, and we will not allow a rogue and child-killing army from the other side of the world to continue its illegal interference in it,” the Guard said.

Missile alert sirens sounded twice Monday in Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet, and Kuwait said it was intercepting hostile fire. There was no immediate word on damage in either country.

In Jordan, the kingdom’s military said it shot down four Iranian missiles in an incident that “resulted in zero casualties or material damage.” Jordan also hosts U.S. military forces and aircraft.

Iranian state media acknowledged the latest attacks on its soil early Monday, describing explosions in several locations with at least one person being killed.

Iranian attacks on Sunday stretched Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan and even Oman — whose territorial waters with Iran make up the strait. Oman, which long

has been an interlocutor between Tehran and the West, summoned an Iranian diplomat to criticize the attack.

Meanwhile Monday, a base belonging to the armed wing of the Kurdistan Freedom Party, an Iranian Kurdish opposition group based in Iraq’s semiautonomous northern Kurdistan region, came under drone attack. Rebaz Sharifi, commander of the Kurdistan Militia Corps, said the strikes targeted the group’s Chamshar base, without giving details on casualties or damage. No group immediately claimed responsibility. The U.S. military early Sunday said it hit some 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps, communication equipment and other sites — a far-heavier set of attacks than in two previous rounds of strikes in the last week.

“We bombed the hell out of them last night,” U.S. President Donald Trump told NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

Iran retaliated by attacking

nations in the region hosting U.S. military forces, while insisting it alone must control the strait and potentially charge vessels for traveling through it.

“The era of one-sided deals is OVER,” Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, the speaker of Iran’s Parliament and a main negotiator, wrote. “We told you: keep your word or pay the price. Reality is knocking.”

Iran described the strait as being closed, while the U.S. military and Trump asserted that the strait remained open.

Iran’s chokehold on the strait, however, has loosened as the U.S. military provided support to vessels moving along a southern route hugging the coastline of Oman. That new route has angered Iran, which launched repeated attacks on ships using it.

Iran’s grip on the strait led to a global energy crisis, though oil prices have sharply dropped since wartime highs of \$120 a barrel.

Trump suggested last week that the interim deal in the war was “over.” But mediators, including Pakistan, Qatar and Egypt, have continued efforts to reach a final agreement to end the war.

A regional official involved in mediation, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss talks, said efforts to shore up the ceasefire continued Sunday. Pakistan said its foreign minister spoke by phone with Iran’s top diplomat and urged “de-escalation” on both sides.

Iran’s new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, unseen since the war began, on Saturday vowed in his first statement since the funeral of his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, that Iranians would avenge his killing.

ASEAN ministers push stalled peace plan in talks with Myanmar



BANGKOK

Southeast Asian foreign ministers pressed their Myanmar counterpart for “concrete” progress on a stagnant ASEAN peace plan for the country during a meeting in Bangkok on Sunday, top Thai and Philippine diplomats said.

The meeting between foreign ministers of several members of the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Myanmar’s Foreign Minister Tin Maung Swe was the first such gathering since a 2021 military coup in the country.

Myanmar has been diplomatically sidelined within the regional bloc since the country’s military ousted the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi more than five years ago, triggering a civil war.

But junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was installed as civilian president in April following highly restricted elections, and neighbouring Thailand has been leading attempts at normalising relations.

Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow told a press briefing on Sunday that his government supported “calibrated engagement” with Myanmar in an effort to implement ASEAN’s

“five-point consensus” plan aimed at ending the war between the military and a coalition of pro-democracy rebels and ethnic minority armed groups.

But he said it required Myanmar to address the concerns of ASEAN and the international community.

“We have some concrete expectations” with regard to humanitarian assistance, reduction of violence, especially against civilians, and promoting inclusive political dialogue, Sihasak told reporters.

He also urged “further release of political prisoners and further positive development” with regard to 81-year-old Suu Kyi, who remains detained after she was moved from prison to house arrest.

“We want to see progress, step by step,” Sihasak said.

“Concrete actions”

But ASEAN has made little headway with its initiative to end Myanmar’s civil war through dialogue with all sides.

Myanmar lawmakers – elected in a vote that did not include rebel-controlled areas or Suu Kyi’s party – blasted the bloc’s plan in parliament last week, calling for it to be “reviewed and reconsidered”,

the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar said.

The plan “undermines Myanmar’s equality within ASEAN and is inconsistent with ASEAN’s fundamental principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a member state”, they said, according to the outlet.

Still, Philippines’ Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro said she and the bloc stood behind the plan.

Lazaro, who is also the Myanmar special envoy of the ASEAN chair, told reporters that ministers at the meeting in Bangkok hoped Myanmar would take the “opportunity to make concrete and demonstrable progress or benchmarks on the core points of the five-point consensus” – although no timeline was set.

“ASEAN called for concrete actions towards the cessation of hostilities,” she said, adding that she intended to visit Myanmar this year in an effort to expand access to humanitarian assistance in the country.

The five-point plan, which Myanmar and the rest of ASEAN agreed to in 2021, calls for an immediate halt to hostilities and for dialogue between all parties, mediated by the ASEAN envoy.

But consensus among ASEAN members is fraying, analysts say, between those open to seizing on small concessions to bring Myanmar back into the fold – a group led by Bangkok – and those maintaining a firmer stance.

The governments of Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam confirmed their foreign ministers’ attendance on Sunday, while Malaysia’s foreign minister told AFP he could not attend but sent other representatives.

From the Hills to the Western Front: A Book Restores the Northeast's Forgotten Wartime Legacy

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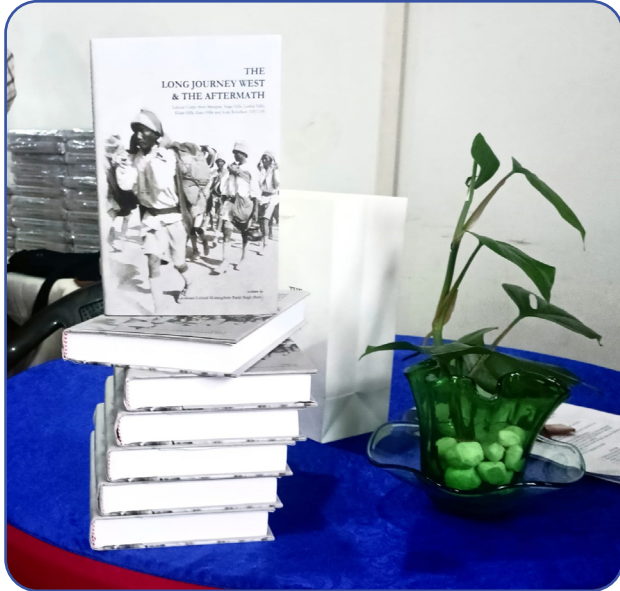
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SANJOO THANGJAM

The resonant strains of Sana Leibak Manipur, rendered by Kongthoujam Bobin, R.K. Nandeshwori, Chitra Pangambam and Kennedy Khuman, set a reflective mood at the DIPR Auditorium in Imphal on Sunday as scholars, veterans and history enthusiasts gathered to witness the launch of a work that illuminates one of the least explored chapters of Northeast India's past.

The occasion marked the release of The Long Journey West & The Aftermath: Labour Corps from Manipur, the Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills, the Khasi Hills, the Garo Hills and the Kuki Rebellion, 1917-1919, the debut book of Lt. Col. Moirangthem Ranjit Singh (Retd.).

More than a volume of history, the book is a tribute to thousands of men from the hills and valleys of the region who journeyed across continents during the First World War to serve the Allied war effort in France.

Gracing the function were Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Konsam Himalay Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd.) as Chief Guest, Dr. R.K. Nimai, IAS (Retd.) as President, and Capt. L.B. Singh, Indian Navy Veteran, as Guest of Honour. Members of the author's family and his in-laws joined an audience comprising former civil servants, scholars and admirers of the region's history. In their addresses, the dignitaries commended the author for his painstaking scholarship.

Lt. Gen. Himalay Singh observed that the work bears the imprint of years of diligent archival research, while Dr. Nimai praised its engaging narrative, remarking that it reads "almost like a novel." He also encouraged the author to continue his inquiries into the military history of the region with a future study of the famed Double Company.

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Commissioned into the 16 Rajput Regiment in 1972, Lt. Col. Ranjit Singh cultivated an abiding interest in the history of Manipur and the wider Northeast from his student days. Even after retiring from the Army in 2007, he continued to write and research, contributing regularly to The Sangai Express. His first book is the culmination of decades of curiosity and dedication. Drawing upon archival records and previously overlooked sources, the study reconstructs the remarkable story of the labour corps recruited from Manipur and the neighbouring hill districts. Numbering thousands, these men left their homes for a distant and unfamiliar Europe, where they spent nearly a year performing arduous yet indispensable duties behind the front lines. The book follows their recruitment, their long sea voyage to France, their wartime experiences and the fate of those who never returned. Interwoven with this narrative is a nuanced account of the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-19, placing local resistance and wartime mobilisation within a broader historical framework. In doing so, the volume enriches our understanding of how global events touched the lives of communities in the Northeast.

The launch of the book was thus more than a ceremonial occasion. It was an affirmation that the sacrifices and journeys of these forgotten men deserve a permanent place in the collective memory of the region and the nation alike.

The launch of the book was thus more than a ceremonial occasion. It was an affirmation that the sacrifices and journeys of these forgotten men deserve a permanent place in the collective memory of the region and the nation alike.



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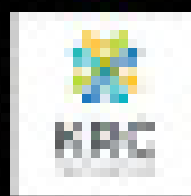


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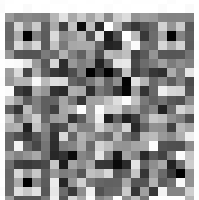


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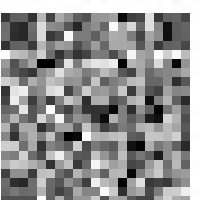


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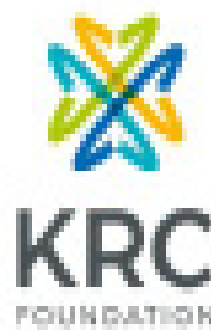
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