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PERSPECTIVE

Lonely is not a feeling when you are alone.
Lonely is a feeling when no one cares.

Manipur sets up panel to probe alleged irregularities in Handlooms and Textiles Directorate

IMPHAL
The Manipur government has constituted a three-member inquiry committee to investigate alleged financial and technical irregularities in the Directorate of Handlooms and Textiles, following complaints from weavers, artisans and cooperative societies over the implementation of welfare schemes.

According to a government order issued on July 15, the committee will be headed by Special Secretary (Home) A. Subhash Singh. Joint Secretary (Finance) Asem Rangina Chanu and Joint Secretary (TCL) Orjubala Haorongbam have been appointed as members.

The panel has been directed to submit a comprehensive report within two weeks.

The inquiry will examine the implementation of Central and state government schemes administered by the Directorate of Handlooms and Textiles under the charge of Elangbam Jeeten. The committee was constituted after weavers, artisans and several handloom and handicraft cooperative societies submitted a joint representation to the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary on July 13, alleging financial and procedural irregularities in the execution of welfare programmes. The complainants sought technical, financial and social audits of major procurements undertaken by the department, alleging irregularities in the distribution of equipment under government-sponsored schemes. Among the allegations is that more than 6,000 incomplete and substandard frame looms were supplied to beneficiaries under a Government of India-funded programme. According to the representation, while an approved frame loom costs ₹30,000, including the Centre's contribution of ₹27,000, many beneficiaries allegedly received units valued at only ₹16,000, with several supplied as incomplete structures lacking essential weaving accessories.

WHO SAID WHAT



The scale of #AssamFloods this time is unprecedented - it was not the conventional flooding, but a sudden 400%+ excess rainfall which led to the large scale devastation in our villages and towns. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

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NPP aims to meet people’s expectations in Manipur ahead of 2027 Assembly polls: Conrad Sangma

Party chief says NPP committed to peace, organisational expansion and emerging as a strong political alternative in the state

IMPHAL

National People’s Party (NPP) president and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Saturday said the party would strive to live up to the growing expectations of the people of Manipur as it prepares for the 2027 Assembly elections.

Addressing a press conference after the party’s Annual Convention at the MFSDS Hall in Imphal, Sangma said the NPP is focused on strengthening its organisational network while work-



ing towards restoring lasting peace and stability in the violence-affected state.

Sangma, who was on a two-day visit to Manipur, inaugurated the party’s state office and reviewed its organisational preparedness for the 2027 Assembly elections.

During the visit, he held meetings with party office-bearers and interacted with representatives from

different sections of society to discuss the prevailing situation in the state, the condition of internally displaced persons (IDPs), economic challenges and the party’s role in promoting peace and development.

“The government has to take responsibility for addressing every problem. At the same time, our party is also making every possible

effort to contribute towards lasting peace in the state,” Sangma said.

He stressed that rebuilding trust among communities through sustained dialogue and engagement was essential for resolving the prolonged crisis.

“The Manipur issue is highly complex, and there is no single or easy solution. But for a better future, people

must give peace a chance,” he said.

Reiterating the NPP’s commitment to the peace process, Sangma said any long-term solution should strike a balance between safeguarding national security and addressing the concerns and aspirations of the people of Manipur.

“There has to be a balanced mechanism to address the crisis without compromising the nation’s security or the welfare of the people,” he added.

Speaking on the party’s electoral prospects, Sangma said the NPP has steadily expanded its presence in Manipur since making its electoral debut in the state in 2017.

“2017 was just the beginning for us in Manipur. At that time, our organisational strength was not where we wanted it to be. But we are moving in the right direction,” he said.

Describing the NPP as a “home-grown party” with a deep understanding of the Northeast, Sangma said there was a growing desire among the people for a credible political alternative, leading to higher expectations from the party.

“There is a lot of hope and expectation from the NPP. We will put in our best efforts to fulfil those expectations,” he said.

Sangma said the party plans to strengthen its organisational network across all Assembly constituencies in Manipur ahead of the 2027 polls. However, he said a decision on the number of seats the NPP will contest would be taken at a later stage.

The NPP has intensified its political activities in Manipur in recent months, positioning itself to expand its footprint as political parties begin preparations for the 2027 Assembly elections.

PM Modi Assures Full Central Support as Assam Battles Flood Crisis



GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday spoke with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to review the flood situation in the state and assured all possible assistance from the Centre for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. During the conversation, the Prime Minister sought a detailed assessment of the damage caused by the floods, the ongoing rescue and relief operations, and the challenges faced by the state administration in reaching affected areas.

Sharing details of the discussion on social media, Chief Minister Sarma said he briefed the Prime Minister on the measures being taken by the Assam government to tackle the crisis and ensure relief reaches every flood-affected family. He also outlined the state’s efforts to support displaced residents and restore essential services in inundated areas.

According to the Chief Minister, Prime Minister Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives and widespread property damage caused by the floods. He assured that the Union Government was treating the situation with the highest priority and would extend every possible support to Assam in its relief, rehabilitation and rebuilding efforts. The Prime Minister’s assurance comes as Assam continues to grapple with severe flooding across several districts, with state agencies, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and other emergency teams engaged in rescue, evacuation and relief operations.

The Centre’s support is expected to strengthen ongoing efforts to provide immediate assistance to affected communities while facilitating long-term rehabilitation and restoration of damaged infrastructure.

Massive Fire Destroys 25 Shops at Hailakandi Market, Probe Underway

HAILAKANDI

Around 20 to 25 shops were reduced to ashes after a massive fire swept through Joykrishnapur Market under Lala Police Station in Assam’s Hailakandi district in the early hours of Friday, causing property losses estimated at several lakh rupees.

According to officials, the blaze broke out in one of the shops at around 1 am before spreading rapidly through the closely packed market, engulfing adjoining establishments within minutes.

Local residents rushed to the scene after announcements were made over the public address system of a nearby mosque. Despite their efforts to contain the flames, the fire spread too quickly for them to bring it under control.

Fire and Emergency Services personnel later arrived at the market and eventually doused the blaze. However, several residents alleged that the fire brigade reached the spot nearly two hours after being alerted, raising concerns over the delay in emergency response.

Police personnel from Lala Police Station and Abdullapur Police Outpost also reached the scene to assist in rescue and security operations.

Zila Parishad member Dilwar Hussain Barbhuiya visited the affected market, expressed concern over the reported delay in the arrival of fire services, and urged the state government to provide immediate financial assistance to the affected traders.

Additional Superintendent of Police Shekhar Jyoti Ray later inspected the site as officials began assessing the extent of the damage.

The exact cause of the fire has not yet been established. Preliminary indications suggest it may have been triggered by either an electrical short circuit or a gas cylinder explosion. Police have launched an investigation to determine the cause of the incident.

Tripura forms three-member SIT to probe DGP Anurag Dhankar’s death



AGARTALA

The Tripura government has constituted a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate the death of Director General of Police (DGP) Anurag Dhankar, who was found dead at the state police headquarters in Agartala earlier this week.

According to a government order issued, the SIT will be headed by West Tripura Superintendent of Police (SP) Namit Pathak. The other members are Additional SP Dhruba Nath and Sub-Inspector Subhojit Deb, who has been serving as the investigating officer in the case.

Dhankar, a 1994-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, was found hanging in the washroom of his office chamber at the Tripura Police Headquarters on July

20. His death sent shockwaves through the state’s police establishment and prompted calls for a thorough investigation.

The government order authorises the SIT chief to co-opt officers from the Tripura Police Crime Branch or any other police unit if required during the course of the investigation. The team has also been permitted to seek technical assistance from the cyber crime unit whenever necessary.

To ensure close monitoring of the investigation, the government has directed the SIT to submit weekly progress reports to Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Manchak Ipper, who will forward them to the Director General of Police.

Officials said the investigation will examine all aspects surrounding the circumstances of Dhankar’s death.

Anurag Dhankar had a distinguished policing career spanning more than three decades. Before serving as Tripura’s police chief, he headed several high-profile investigations, including the Central Bureau of Investigation’s probe into the alleged ₹13,000-crore Punjab National Bank fraud involving fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi. He also supervised the reinvestigation of cases related to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

Dhankar’s last rites were performed on July 22 at his native village in Baraut, Uttar Pradesh’s Baghpat district. The SIT’s findings are expected to provide greater clarity on the circumstances surrounding the senior IPS officer’s death.

Ajmal Demands National Calamity Status for Assam Floods, Seeks Rs. 10,000 Crore Relief Package

GUWAHATI

All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) president Badruddin Ajmal on Saturday urged the Centre to declare the ongoing floods in Assam a national calamity and sanction a ₹10,000 crore relief and rehabilitation package, saying the scale of devastation required urgent and coordinated intervention.

After visiting several flood-hit areas, Ajmal described the situation as one of the gravest humanitarian crises the state has witnessed in recent years. He said thousands of families were facing hunger, displacement, and acute shortages of food, safe drinking water, and sanitation facilities.

The AIUDF chief said he witnessed widespread distress during his tour, with many flood-affected residents still awaiting adequate government assistance.

Ajmal also praised local communities for extending support to those displaced by the floods. He thanked members of both the Hindu and Muslim communities for opening their homes and providing food



and shelter to stranded families, describing their response as a re-

flection of communal harmony and humanity in times of crisis.

Claiming that he had spent nearly ₹2.5 crore on relief work, Ajmal

alleged that government assistance had failed to reach many victims. He called for an independent inquiry into the distribution of relief materials and financial aid to ensure assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries.

Highlighting conditions in relief camps, Ajmal said women were facing severe hardships due to inadequate sanitation facilities. He announced plans to distribute one lakh one-litre bottles of drinking water and arrange 10,000 temporary toilets for women in flood-affected areas to address immediate needs.

The AIUDF leader also expressed concern over the impact of the floods on school-going children, saying many had remained without food for days while their education had been severely disrupted. He appealed to the Centre, the Assam government, and the Education Department to provide textbooks, notebooks, pencils, and other learning materials to help students resume their studies once the floodwaters recede.

Ajmal further announced financial assistance for damaged

Namghars, flood-affected journalists, and families whose homes had been fully or partially damaged. He said the aid would be disbursed after verification of claims.

Recalling an incident from his visit, Ajmal said he met a former athlete who had once received a prestigious national honour but was now struggling to meet basic needs after being affected by the floods. He said he had provided immediate financial assistance of ₹1 lakh and pledged a monthly support of ₹10,000. He added that he would raise the matter with the Prime Minister and the President, seeking official recognition and long-term government support for the sportsperson.

Reiterating that the scale of destruction had overwhelmed affected communities, Ajmal called on both the Centre and the Assam government to intensify relief and rehabilitation efforts, stressing that sustained financial assistance and swift implementation of rehabilitation measures were essential to help flood-hit families rebuild their lives.



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SPACE DREAMS

India's rise as a global space power is one of the country's greatest scientific achievements. From the success of the Chandrayaan missions to the growing confidence in private space enterprises, the nation has demonstrated that it can compete with the world's leading spacefaring nations. Yet, behind the excitement surrounding launch vehicles, satellites, commercial partnerships and ambitious plans for a \$100-billion space economy lies a question that deserves urgent attention: Is India building its commercial space ecosystem on a foundation of transparency, accountability and institutional strength?

A recent Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology has raised concerns that should not be dismissed as routine bureaucratic observations. Instead, they point to structural weaknesses in the manner in which publicly funded space technologies are being commercialised.

The committee observed that technologies developed through taxpayer-funded research are often being transferred to private companies at prices far below their commercial value. Satellite technologies, rocket components, advanced materials, specialised chemicals and sophisticated subsystems-products of decades of public investment and scientific expertise-have reportedly been licensed for amounts ranging from a few thousand rupees to less than ₹10 lakh in many cases. The committee warned that such undervaluation allows private firms to earn substantial profits while the public institutions that created these technologies receive only a fraction of the value they generate.

The concern extends beyond pricing. Parliament has also questioned whether there is any effective mechanism to ensure that the benefits of these low-cost technology transfers ultimately reach the intended beneficiaries. Without clear oversight, there is no guarantee that technologies subsidised by public funds are serving wider national interests rather than simply enhancing private commercial gains.

The committee's recommendations are both sensible and overdue. It has called for market-linked pricing of technologies, transparent valuation guidelines, independent assessment of licensing fees by the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe), and periodic third-party audits of technology transfer agreements. These proposals should not be viewed as obstacles to private participation. Rather, they are safeguards necessary for preserving public trust in one of India's most strategically important sectors.

India's space economy is expanding at an extraordinary pace. Estimated today at around \$8.4 billion, it is projected to grow fivefold by the end of this decade and potentially reach \$100 billion by 2040. Private participation has accelerated dramatically since the opening of the sector. The number of space startups has risen from virtually none a decade ago to well over 400 today. NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the government's commercial arm for space activities, has recorded remarkable revenue growth in just five years.

Such rapid expansion is unquestionably positive. Innovation thrives when private enterprise collaborates with public research institutions. No modern space programme can depend solely on government agencies. The commercialisation of space technology has become essential for sustaining innovation, attracting investment and creating high-value employment.

However, rapid growth cannot substitute for sound governance.

India's space sector has entered a phase where institutional checks must evolve as quickly as commercial opportunities. Public assets developed through decades of taxpayer investment cannot be treated as commodities whose value is determined through opaque negotiations. Every technology transferred from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) or other government laboratories represents years of scientific effort, infrastructure expenditure and public funding. Their commercial value deserves professional and transparent assessment.

Equally troubling is the lack of clarity surrounding many technology transfer agreements. Parliament sought detailed information on technologies transferred since NSIL began operations, including licensing fees and valuation methodologies. Yet several of these questions reportedly remain unanswered. In an industry where intellectual property increasingly defines national competitiveness, opacity is a risk India can ill afford.

Transparency becomes even more critical because of the central role played by IN-SPACe. Established as the single-window regulator for India's growing private space sector, the organisation authorises launches, infrastructure access, satellite operations, data dissemination, safety protocols, technology transfers and industry partnerships. It has emerged as one of the country's most influential regulatory institutions.

Its achievements are impressive. It has facilitated hundreds of authorisations, numerous partnerships and significant private investment into space startups. But concentration of authority also demands stronger systems of accountability. When a single institution becomes both promoter and regulator of a rapidly expanding ecosystem, transparency is no longer optional-it becomes indispensable.

The irony is that while India's commercial space sector is flourishing, the government department responsible for the country's strategic space programme appears to be struggling with serious internal constraints.

The Department of Space continues to face substantial manpower shortages, particularly among scientists, engineers and technical personnel. Thousands of sanctioned positions remain vacant despite expanding responsibilities. Such shortages inevitably affect research capacity, project execution and long-term technological innovation.

At the same time, budget utilisation raises uncomfortable questions. Flagship missions have seen allocations reduced because previously sanctioned funds remained unspent. Delays in expenditure on major projects such as Chandrayaan-4 and the Venus Orbiter Mission suggest that financial resources alone are not the limiting factor. Administrative efficiency, project management and human resource capacity deserve equal scrutiny.

This contradiction is difficult to ignore. On one hand, publicly developed technologies are reportedly being transferred to private firms at relatively low prices. On the other, the public institutions responsible for creating those technologies continue to struggle with staffing gaps and underutilised budgets. The issue is not whether private companies should profit. A thriving commercial ecosystem depends precisely on that. The question is whether the public institutions generating these innovations are receiving adequate returns to sustain future research and development.

India's space programme has earned global respect because it consistently achieved extraordinary outcomes with modest budgets. That model worked when ISRO functioned primarily as a research and mission-oriented organisation. The landscape today is fundamentally different. Space has become a strategic commercial industry where intellectual property, technology licensing and private investment carry enormous economic value.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

- Simon Sinek

Domestic Protests, Global Perceptions



DR. D.K. GIRI

In India today, almost any political action-whether in a small town or on the streets of Delhi-if it concerns fundamental rights, politics, civil liberties, human rights, or causes major public disruption, can become global news within hours. This is both the privilege and the price of being the world's largest democracy in an era of live television and viral social media.

The recent protest against the Union Education Minister, described by some television channels as a movement by the "Cockroach Janata Party," is the latest example of this new reality. What initially appears to be a domestic issue involving governance or public policy quickly transforms into a broader question of how India handles dissent and public protests.

Within days of the protests, a heated debate emerged over alleged foreign interference. Several prime-time television debates and digital news platforms claimed that the protesters had received "covert Chinese support." The presence of some Left-wing leaders and student organizations at protest sites was presented as circumstantial evidence.

There should be no hesitation in acknowledging that foreign powers closely monitor internal unrest in other countries, seek to exploit it, and often attempt to benefit from it whenever possible. This is not unique to India but is a common feature of global geopolitics. Nearly every major democracy faces similar challenges.

However, in India's case, the crucial question is evidence. Are there any concrete and verifiable proofs of direct involvement by a foreign power in this instance? So far, no publicly available evidence-whether financial records, digital forensic findings, or documented coordination has emerged. At present, what is being presented in television debates appears to be correlation rather than proven causation.

Whenever the issue of a "foreign hand" is raised without solid evidence, it has two consequences. Domestically, it may be perceived as an attempt to delegitimize dissent. Internationally, however, it invites greater scrutiny. Foreign governments and think tanks begin asking whether New Delhi's tendency to see foreign conspiracies behind every protest reflects deeper concerns about the state of democratic discourse in India.

In today's media environment, images travel much faster than arguments.

Mainstream television channels repeatedly broadcast scenes of stone-pelting, clashes with police, and damaged police vehicles, creating the impression that law and order had completely broken down.

At the same time, numerous social media accounts supportive of the protesters, along with international citizen journalists, continuously shared videos of baton charges, tear gas, and alleged police excesses. Their narrative sought to portray the government as suppressing democratic voices through force.

When Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi was removed from the road and taken into police custody, competing narratives emerged immediately. The police argued that the protesters had failed to obtain prior permission to demonstrate at the designated location, while the Opposition described the action as a suppression of the constitutional right to protest.

When Indian citizens themselves witness two completely different versions of India, the world inevitably sees the same. Foreign editors, diplomats, and investors often form opinions based not on lengthy reports but on 15-second video clips.

Today, credibility is among a nation's greatest strategic assets. Prime Minister Narendra Modi may not be overly concerned that the Opposition or smaller political parties could pose an immediate electoral challenge, given his continuing popular support. However, he should certainly pay attention to how democratic nations perceive such events, because credibility has become a critical component of national power.

India is currently deepening political, economic, and technological partnerships with democratic countries such as the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, and Canada. These are not merely export markets; they are also India's strategic partners in semiconductors, defence technology, clean energy, and artificial intelligence. In these countries, parliaments, media organizations, and civil society groups continuously examine democratic values and governance. Against this backdrop, when a neutral country such as Switzerland publicly expresses concerns about human rights in India, New Delhi should take notice. The External Affairs Minister has effectively defended India's democratic institutions in response to Swiss comments. Yet the very fact that Switzerland felt compelled to speak indicates that the global democratic community is monitoring not

only India's economic rise but also its democratic conduct.

Demonstrations in support of Sonam Wangchuk have already taken place in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland, the United States, and Germany. These protests were organized by members of the Indian diaspora and received significant local media coverage.

This raises an important question: Had the government handled the movement within India through greater dialogue and a more balanced approach, could these international reactions have been avoided? It is an uncomfortable but legitimate question.

Undoubtedly, managing large and sometimes aggressive protests is never easy for any government. Violence committed by a few individuals cannot be allowed to undermine the peaceful protests of the majority. Yet a country's international image is shaped not by a single incident but by a pattern of events.

Two recent developments have also influenced India's global image.

The first concerns Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike. The climate activist and advocate for tribal rights adopted a Gandhian method of prolonged fasting. However, the administration's silence allowed international non-governmental organizations to argue that India was "ignoring the voices of indigenous communities."

The second concerns alleged irregularities in the NEET examination. For millions of Indian students and parents, the issue represented fairness and the future of their children. Internationally, however, it was interpreted as evidence of declining confidence among young people in public institutions.

Viewed individually, these are domestic issues. Collectively, however, they contribute to an international perception that prompts foreign media and legislatures to ask whether India's democratic institutions are evolving at the same pace as its economic growth.

The fundamental principle of democracy is that protest and law and order are not opposing concepts but complementary ones.

In every democracy, peaceful protest is a fundamental right. A democratic government cannot simply prevent citizens from expressing dissent, nor should it attempt to crush such dissent through excessive force. History demonstrates that repression rarely eliminates discontent; instead, it often intensifies it over time.

At the same time, protests must

remain peaceful. They should not descend into violence, vandalism, or destruction of public property. The state's responsibility is to maintain law and order, ensure public safety, and protect public assets.

The true test of democratic governance lies in maintaining this balance. Peaceful protest must be given adequate space. When violence occurs, authorities should respond in accordance with the law and in a proportionate manner. Governments should clearly explain the rationale behind their actions, while Parliament should serve as the primary forum for debate rather than the last resort.

When this balance is lost, the costs extend beyond national borders. Friendly nations become

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Candidates for the next UN Secretary-General took part in a public Town Hall at UN HQ, answering questions from Member States, civil society & UN staff. Organized by @UN PGA, the event was part of the selection process for the UN's next chief. ~ United Nations Geneva



more cautious in their official statements, investors begin factoring governance risks into economic assessments, and rival countries gain opportunities to launch propaganda campaigns against India.

Has India's handling of protests and dissent at home damaged its democratic image abroad?

The answer is yes-but only to a limited extent.

India's democratic traditions remain exceptionally strong. The world recognizes that India conducts massive, free, and fair elections. It would therefore be inaccurate to claim that India's democratic credibility has suffered permanent or severe damage. Nevertheless, there has been some impact. Countries competing with India have begun citing these incidents in their human rights reports. Friendly nations increasingly raise careful questions about democratic processes during bilateral meetings. International media, too, have begun giving greater prominence to images of confrontation and protests than to stories of development and reform.

This matters because, in the twenty-first century, a nation's strength is measured not only by its military capabilities or economic performance but also by the trust it commands internationally.

Rapid economic growth and development are indispensable for India's future. But they should not come at the expense of democratic values. Meaningful parliamentary debate, efforts to build political consensus, and sufficient democratic space for peaceful dissent are all essential pillars of India's democratic identity.

If concerns about foreign interference in protests arise, the most effective response cannot be limited to government press releases. The strongest answer lies in demonstrating openness, fairness, and sensitivity toward India's own citizens.

When the world sees Indian citizens expressing their views within constitutional limits, police enforcing the law with professionalism and humanity, and democratic institutions functioning transparently and effectively, India's democratic image will grow even stronger.

In the years ahead, India should be recognized not only as one of the world's fastest-growing economies but also as a mature democracy capable of accommodating differences, remaining resilient in the face of dissent, and resolving disputes through its democratic institutions.

That is the India the world needs most-one that advances the ideals of both development and democracy with equal commitment.



Assam minister's daughter sparks row over abusive slogan against PM Modi at Guwahati protest



GUWAHATI
Dibisa Mahanta, daughter of Assam Revenue Minister and senior Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) leader Keshab Mahanta, has sparked a political controversy after videos circulating on social media showed her raising an abusive slogan against Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a protest in Guwahati over the alleged NEET-UG 2026 paper leak.

The demonstration, organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) at Chachal on July 23, demanded education reforms and the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the alleged examination irregularities.

Videos from the protest showed Dibisa Mahanta participating alongside student activists, holding placards and chanting slogans, including one directed at the Prime Minister that contained abusive language.

The footage quickly went viral, triggering widespread debate on social media and drawing criticism over the use of offensive remarks against the Prime Minister.

Dibisa Mahanta is the daughter of Keshab Mahanta, a senior AGP leader who serves as Assam's Revenue Minister in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. Her participation in the protest, and particularly the slogan captured in the viral videos, prompted political reactions online, with many users questioning the involvement of a cabinet minister's family member in a demonstration critical of the Union government. Others criticised the use of abusive language in political protests.

India Today NE reported that repeated attempts to contact Dibisa Mahanta for her response were unsuccessful. Assam Revenue Minister Keshab Mahanta was also

unavailable for comment when contacted regarding the controversy.

Following the circulation of the videos, Dibisa Mahanta's social media account appeared to have been deactivated or removed, making it inaccessible.

The protest was attended by students, youth groups and civil society members from Assam and other northeastern states. Organisers said the demonstration was held in solidarity with activist Sonam Wangchuk and students protesting in New Delhi, while demanding greater transparency, accountability and comprehensive reforms in the country's examination system following the alleged NEET-UG 2026 paper leak. Protesters also sought the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, alleging repeated irregularities in national-level examinations. The gathering expressed solidarity

with students reportedly injured during the "Chalo Sansad" protest in New Delhi earlier this week.

The Guwahati protest coincided with nationwide demonstrations over the alleged examination irregularities. On July 23, Sonam Wangchuk ended his 26-day hunger strike after discussions with the Centre.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Centre would introduce legislation to establish fast-track courts and provide for stricter punishment in examination paper leak cases, reiterating the government's commitment to protecting students' interests.

The protest concluded peacefully, but the viral videos featuring Dibisa Mahanta became the focal point of political discussion in Assam, drawing attention across social media and political circles.

Government schemes must reach remote areas swiftly and transparently: Ratan Lal

AGARTALA
Tripura Power, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Thursday directed officials to ensure that the benefits of government welfare and development schemes reach people in remote areas quickly, efficiently and with complete transparency.

Nath made the remarks while chairing a district-level review meeting in Ambassa, his first since being appointed Guardian Minister of Dhalai district. The meeting was attended by District Magistrate Vivek H.B., legislators, members of district and village councils, public representatives and senior government officials. Reviewing the progress of ongoing development initiatives, the minister said the state government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha, is committed to accelerating infrastructure and welfare projects across Tripura, including in Dhalai district. He said timely completion of ongoing projects would pave the way for launching new development initiatives and improving public service delivery. The meeting reviewed the implementation of several key programmes, including the Jal Jeevan Mission, road connectivity projects, the VB-GRAM-G Scheme, and other centrally sponsored and state-funded development initiatives. Nath instructed officials to carry out ground-level verification of project implementation and ensure that information submitted by executing agencies accurately reflects the situation on the ground. He also directed departments to expedite the execution of centrally sponsored schemes to avoid delays in delivering benefits to the public.

Special emphasis was placed on the development of Chawmanu, Gandatwisa and other rural areas, along with urban local bodies in the district. The minister said development priorities would be finalised after regular consultations with MLAs and elected representatives and by incorporating feedback from local residents.

Manipur CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh offers prayers for peace at Purna Yatra celebrations



IMPHAL
Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh participated in the Purna Yatra (Kanglen) celebrations at the historic Shri Govindaji Temple in Imphal, offering prayers for peace, prosperity and communal harmony as the state's annual 10-day Kang Chingba (Rath Yatra) festival drew to a close. The Chief Minister attended the concluding religious ceremonies in the presence of Maharaja and former Rajya Sabha member Leishemba Sanajoba, along with hundreds of devotees who gathered at the temple for the occasion.

Purna Yatra, locally known as Kanglen, marks the return journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balab

hadra and Goddess Subhadra and signifies the formal conclusion of the annual Rath Yatra festivities in Manipur. The event mirrors the grand chariot procession held on the opening day of the festival.

Offering prayers before the deities, Khemchand Singh sought divine blessings for lasting peace, prosperity and unity in the state.

"I offer my prayers to Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra for a peaceful and prosperous Manipur, where unity and order prevail among all communities. May everyone be blessed with peace and a spirit of non-violence," the Chief Minister said.

The festival witnessed a large turnout of devotees, who participated in the concluding rituals and offered prayers on the auspicious occasion. The Kang Chingba festival, one of Manipur's most significant Vaishnavite religious celebrations, is observed annually with traditional rituals, devotional processions and community participation, reflecting the state's rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

Assam floods: Govt yet to reach 80,000 stranded people in Upper Assam: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said nearly 80,000 people stranded by the devastating floods in Upper Assam are yet to be reached by government relief teams, highlighting the continuing challenges posed by widespread inundation and damaged infrastructure.

Addressing the media, Sarma said around 50,000 people in Nazira subdivision and another 30,000 in Sivasagar district remain cut off from relief operations despite sustained efforts by rescue agencies.

"There are around 50,000 people in Nazira and nearly 30,000 people in Sivasagar whom the government has not yet been able to reach with relief. The flood situation has improved slightly, but these areas remain inaccessible," the Chief Minister said.

He said rescue teams are working continuously to access the marooned villages and expressed



confidence that the remaining stranded population would be reached as water levels recede and connectivity improves.

Sarma also confirmed that the flood-related death toll in the state has risen to 50, while warning that the number could increase as several people remain missing and many affected areas are still inac-

cessible.

The Chief Minister said more than 60,000 households continue to remain without electricity after floodwaters damaged power infrastructure across the worst-hit districts. Restoration work is underway, but electricity cannot be resumed in several locations until submerged transformers and

other equipment are declared safe.

To assess the scale of the disaster, an inter-ministerial team from the Centre is scheduled to visit Assam on Saturday. The team will evaluate the extent of damage and determine the financial assistance required for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Upper Assam, particularly the districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo and Jorhat, has experienced unprecedented flooding following exceptionally heavy rainfall and large inflows from upstream areas. The sudden deluge inundated villages, damaged roads and bridges, disrupted communication networks and left thousands stranded.

Rescue and relief operations are continuing with the support of the Army, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and other state agencies as authorities race to reach the remaining marooned population and restore essential services.

NSCN-IM Eastern Flank announces split, forms provisional government under Ikato Chishi Swu

GUWAHATI

The Myanmar-based Eastern Flank of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) has formally announced its split from the Hebron-based leadership headed by Thuingaleng Muivah, unveiling a provisional government led by Ikato I. Chishi Swu, son of the organisation's co-founder and former chairman Isak Chishi Swu.

The decision was adopted through a resolution passed at an "Extraordinary Joint Emergency Meeting" held at Mt. Horeb Camp in Myanmar on July 21. The meeting was chaired by the faction's vice-chairman, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) H.S. Ramsan.

According to the resolution, the provisional government has been constituted to "rescue the Naga political movement from its present predicament" and to restore what the faction described as the vision and principles of the organisation's founding leaders.



It appealed to Naga national workers and the public to support the newly formed leadership.

Besides Ikato I. Chishi Swu as chairman, the provisional government includes Lt. Gen. (Retd.) H.S. Ramsan, Lt. Col. (Retd.) Victor Angami, Lt. Gen. A. Raman, Brig. Detail Dani and Angyo Jacob Jingseya. Ngaranni Jagoi, Merry Ramson and Rev. Vitovi Yephutho have been appointed as advisers. The announcement follows the expulsion

of Ramsan, Raman and several other senior leaders by the NSCN-IM leadership earlier this month, bringing long-simmering internal differences into the open.

In its resolution, the Eastern Flank declared the expulsion orders against Ramsan, Raman, Angami, Swu and Yephutho "null and void", alleging that the action was aimed at silencing senior leaders and paving the way for what it termed a "piece-meal solution" to the Naga political issue. The faction also rejected the set of "Competencies" reportedly submitted by the NSCN-IM leadership to the Government of India as part of the ongoing Naga peace negotiations. It alleged that the proposals compromised the "sovereign existence" of the Naga people and violated the preamble of the Yehzabo, the organisation's constitution.

On the ceasefire issue, the Eastern Flank accused the Hebron leadership of failing to act on Muivah's

November 7, 2024 statement warning of a return to armed resistance if the political dialogue failed to achieve a satisfactory outcome. Claiming that the "spirit of the ceasefire agreement has ceased to exist" due to what it described as the Centre's failure to honour the 2015 Framework Agreement, the faction declared that it would continue both political engagement and armed resistance. Security officials said the emergence of a parallel leadership within the NSCN-IM could further complicate the already protracted Naga peace process by creating a competing centre of authority within one of the Northeast's most influential insurgent organisations.

The latest development comes at a time when negotiations between the NSCN-IM and the Government of India over a final Naga political settlement remain inconclusive, raising fresh uncertainty over the future of the decades-long peace process.

Unchecked development in Meghalaya's Jorabat-USTM belt poses threat to Guwahati: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed concern over rapid construction activities in Meghalaya's Jorabat-USTM belt, warning that unregulated development along the Assam-Meghalaya border could increase the risk of flooding and landslides in Guwahati.

Addressing reporters in Dispur, Sarma said a Supreme Court-appointed committee had examined the issue and submitted what he described as a "very devastating report" highlighting the environmental risks posed by large-scale development in the area. "This matter has been examined by the Supreme Court-constituted committee, and they have given a very devastating report, stating that the development in Jorabat, particularly in USTM and the surrounding area, will pose a huge threat to Guwahati," the Chief Minister said.

Appealing to the Meghalaya government to take the findings seriously, Sarma said the environmental consequences of rapid urbanisation near the interstate boundary should be addressed with due consideration for its impact on Assam.

"I think the Meghalaya Government has to take sympathetic consideration regarding the impact on Assam. I'll only appeal to the Meghalaya Government to see how

development in and around Jorabat can be controlled," he said. The Chief Minister cautioned that unchecked construction in the catchment areas could make Guwahati increasingly vulnerable to flash floods and waterlogging, placing enormous pressure on the city's drainage infrastructure. "Otherwise, Guwahati will become an unmanageable city. It will be very difficult. We will not be able to keep Guwahati intact because the kind of water that comes down cannot be managed by any kind of drainage system," Sarma said.

He added that the issue remains under judicial consideration and that the Assam government would present its arguments before the Supreme Court when the matter is taken up for hearing.

"I am talking to the Chief Minister of Meghalaya. The Supreme Court is seized of the matter. Any day, the matter will come up for hearing, and we will argue before the Supreme Court," he said.

The remarks come amid growing concerns over the environmental impact of rapid urban expansion along the Assam-Meghalaya border, particularly in the Jorabat-USTM corridor, where experts have repeatedly warned that extensive hill cutting, construction activities and changes in natural drainage patterns could aggravate flooding and landslide risks in downstream areas of Guwahati.

Naying hydro project-affected families seek fair compensation, threaten peaceful protests

ITANAGAR

Project-affected families (PAFs), local landowners and residents of Yapik village in Arunachal Pradesh have demanded immediate settlement of pending compensation and environmental concerns linked to the proposed Naying Hydro Electric Project, warning that they will launch peaceful protests if their grievances remain unaddressed.

The demands were adopted through five resolutions passed at a community meeting held on Thursday under the chairmanship of Taya Yabu.

Participants expressed concern over delays in compensation, pending land and property assessments, and what they described as unresolved environmental issues associated with the hydroelectric project.

One of the key resolutions called for an immediate response from the Arunachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board (APSPCB) to a memorandum submitted during the project's public hearing on December 17, 2025. According to the participants, the memorandum, which outlined the community's concerns, has not received any official response.

The meeting also demanded that compensation for residential structures, forests, horticultural assets and standing crops be assessed and disbursed in accordance with the provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act), along with relevant notifications issued by the Arunachal Pradesh government.

The project-affected families further sought a comprehensive survey of forest resources, including medicinal plants, cane and bamboo, and urged the authorities to include these resources in the compensation package based on government-approved market rates.

Referring to a state government order issued on May 2, 2026, the gathering called for the immediate completion of all pending compensation assessments, bill processing and disbursement related to the project. The affected families said they would resort to peaceful and lawful protests if the project authorities and the state government failed to address their demands within a reasonable timeframe.

"We are not against development, but the rights of our local landowners and the preservation of our ecology cannot be bypassed. We expect the authorities to honour the law, protect our forest resources, and complete the pending assessments and compensation without further delay, as mandated by the government," Taya Yabu said.

The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation that while the community supports infrastructure and development projects, such initiatives must be implemented in accordance with legal provisions governing land acquisition, rehabilitation and environmental protection, ensuring that the rights and livelihoods of affected families are safeguarded.



and complete the pending assessments and compensation without further delay, as mandated by the government," Taya Yabu said.

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Delhi Police says 400 Pakistan-linked social media handles blocked over fake posts on CJP protest

NEW DELHI
Delhi Police alleged that a coordinated misinformation campaign involving AI-generated content, deep-fakes and fake social media posts was being used to spread false information about the ongoing CJP protest. It said more than 400 Pakistan-linked social media handles had been identified and blocked. Addressing a press briefing, police said several attempts had been made to spread misleading and false information related to the protest on social media. The force appealed to the public to verify the authenticity of posts, videos and photographs before believing or sharing them.

Police said the protest has

been continuing for the past several weeks, during which a large number of posts and videos were shared on social media platforms, particularly Instagram. Several of these were found to be false, edited or intended to mislead people, posing a potential threat to law and order. The police also referred to a social media post by a political leader claiming that the Centre was preparing to launch a major crackdown on protesters at Jantar Mantar. Delhi Police termed the claim misleading and said no such action had been proposed.

According to the police, the investigation found that several Pakistan-based social media accounts were involved in spreading fake

and misleading content related to the protest. More than 400 such handles have been identified and blocked. These accounts allegedly circulated AI-generated videos, deep-fakes, edited photographs and other misleading content.

Police said some of these accounts had also been active in spreading fake news during Operation Sindoor.

The police also announced the formation of a Special Task Force (STF) within the Crime Branch to investigate paper leak cases and irregularities in competitive examinations. The STF will function under the supervision of a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) rank officer, and orders for its formation have already been issued.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns after weeks of student-led protests



NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned on Saturday after weeks of sustained nationwide protests over the NEET paper leak row, saying it was not a matter of “individual prestige” for him.

Pradhan’s resignation comes just hours before the third round of talks between the government and representatives of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), who have been protesting at Jantar Mantar for nearly a month, was scheduled to begin.

According to sources, Pradhan submitted his resignation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday morning, taking responsibility for the controversy.

Pradhan later confirmed his decision in a post on X, saying he had resigned in the larger interest of the party and the nation and that the country’s interests would always remain above personal considerations.

In his resignation letter, Pradhan said he had taken responsibility for the NEET paper leak “from day one”.

The Sambalpur Lok Sabha MP also said that he was disturbed by

the events of the past 10 days and that the decision (to resign) was aimed at ensuring that “anti-national elements” did not benefit from the situation unfolding at Jantar Mantar and elsewhere in the country.

“...To ensure that anti-national elements are not benefitted by the situation at Jantar Mantar and across the country, that the nation remains united, students in India do not get tangled in legal complexities and focus on their studies and their career, I have tendered my resignation to the Prime Minister...” the letter reads.

Until late Friday evening, gov-

ernment sources continued to fuel speculation over whether Pradhan would step down, keeping both the media and protesters guessing.

However, with the agitation gathering momentum and spreading across several parts of the country, the government reportedly concluded that there was little alternative but to seek his resignation.

Earlier in the day, the CJP had categorically stated that there was no point in participating in further talks unless Pradhan’s resignation was accepted by the government.

Pradhan’s resignation comes amid CJP-led protests at Jantar Mantar demanding his accountability over the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak and alleged irregularities in the CBSE’s on-screen marking process, besides seeking wider reforms in the conduct of public examinations.

The Centre had reportedly grown increasingly concerned over the scale and intensity of the protests, as well as the growing resentment among young people over Pradhan’s continuation as Education Minister.

Political observers said the prolonged agitation had begun to erode the government’s public credibility, particularly among first-time and young voters, a demographic regarded as an important support base for the BJP.

The demand for Pradhan’s resignation remained the central issue throughout the movement, with protesters insisting that meaningful dialogue could only take place after he stepped down. As demonstrations continued to gain public support, concerns reportedly mounted within the ruling party that the issue could have electoral consequences. The prolonged unrest was also being viewed as a potential political liability for the BJP in poll-bound states such as Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, where the youth vote is expected to play a decisive role.

Many in political circles believed on Saturday that resolving the controversy swiftly had become essential to limiting further political damage and restoring public confidence.

INTERNATIONAL

UN chief arrives in Syria, first since before civil war: state media



DAMASCUS

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived in Syria on Saturday on the first visit by a chief of the global body since before the country’s civil war erupted, state media reported.

During the three-day visit, Guterres is set to reaffirm support for Syria’s transition, more than a year and a half after the new authorities led by President Ahmed al-Sharaa overthrew longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad after more than 13

years of war.

Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shabani received Guterres “and his accompanying delegation at Damascus International airport”, state news agency SANA reported.

He is the first UN chief to visit Syria since Ban Ki-moon in 2009, two years before the start of Syria’s civil war which went on to kill more than half a million people before Assad’s overthrow in December 2024.

Since Sharaa took power, the international community has urged the new Islamist authorities to build

strong and effective institutions and establish a governance system that includes all components of Syria’s multi-ethnic, multi-confessional country society.

Guterres “will emphasise that the opportunity now is not only to recover from conflict, but also to lay the foundations for a future for Syria that will be more stable, more inclusive and more prosperous for all Syrians”, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said ahead of the visit.

He will also “reaffirm the role of

the United Nations is to accompany and support the Syrian people on this journey”, Dujarric added.

UN special envoy to the country, Claudio Cordone, said earlier this week that Guterres would “reaffirm the United Nations commitment to supporting the Syrian government and the Syrian people at this defining period in Syria’s history”.

Guterres is to meet Sharaa, who last year made a landmark visit to the UN where he became the first Syrian president in decades to address the body’s General Assembly.

The UN chief is also set to meet representatives of Syrian civil society and non-governmental organisations supporting women’s issues, and to address the new transitional parliament, which held its first session earlier this month.

He is also set to visit a UN peacekeeping force that has been stationed in south Syria’s Israeli-occupied Golan Heights since 1974.

After Assad’s December 2024 overthrow, Israel sent troops into the UN-patrolled buffer zone that separated Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan, and has carried out strikes and repeated incursions deeper into Syrian territory.

Israeli officials have said they intend to keep forces in a “security zone” in southern Syria, where they seek a broader demilitarised zone.

Despite tensions between the neighbours, Israel and Syria’s new authorities have held several rounds of direct talks and have agreed to establish an intelligence-sharing mechanism, though the move has failed to halt Israeli military actions which have been condemned by the UN and members of the international community.

Several senior UN officials have visited Syria since Assad’s fall, including rights chief Volker Turk and UN nuclear watchdog head Rafael Grossi, while a UN Security Council delegation of ambassadors made its first-ever visit to Syria late last year.

European Union breathes sigh of relief over new US tariffs



BRUSSELS

The European Union expressed relief Friday over a new wave of US tariffs imposed by Washington on trading partners, following concerns of possible retaliation to a massive fine Brussels had slapped on US giant Google.

“The EU notes positively the fact that this outcome is in line with the US tariff commitments agreed under the EU-US Joint Statement,” said European Commission spokesman, Olof Gill.

The statement comes as a new wave of US tariffs targeting 60 trading partners took effect Friday, replacing an expiring global duty rolled out by President Donald Trump earlier this year.

The new levies range from 10 percent to 12.5 percent and impact major economies like China, India and the European Union.

The EU spokesman said that the new regime would establish an all-inclusive tax rate of 10 percent for the EU and reintroduce additional customs duty exemptions on certain European products, such as cork and diamonds. In addition, other goods such as aircraft and their spare parts, and generic medicines were also exempt, Gill noted.

This would create a “positive dynamic” for transatlantic discussions on various topics ranging from strategic raw materials to artificial intelligence, he said. Washington’s announcement came just

a few hours after the EU’s decision to impose a fine of 890 million euros (nearly \$1 billion) on Google for anti-competitive practices in the digital sector. This had fuelled European fears of possible retaliatory measures from Washington, for example in the form of higher customs duties, with the Trump administration regularly accusing the EU of unfairly targeting US companies via its digital regulations.

The fine imposed on Google “creates uncertainty” in trade relations with the US, White House Trade Representative Jamieson Greer had warned Thursday, seeing in it “a real risk” to the maintenance of transatlantic stability.

WHEN THE HILLS OVERFLOW: Why Extreme Rain in Nagaland Triggered Devastating Floods Across Upper Assam

The devastating floods that swept across parts of Upper Assam in July 2026 were not merely the result of heavy local rainfall. They were the outcome of an interconnected hydrological chain that began in the steep hill catchments of Nagaland, where days of torrential rain saturated the landscape before unleashing massive volumes of runoff into the plains below. The disaster serves as a reminder that floods in the Northeast are increasingly regional events, transcending administrative boundaries and exposing the growing vulnerability of both hill and valley ecosystems.

The widespread inundation in districts such as Sivasagar, Jorhat and Charaideo—even in localities that have historically remained outside conventional flood zones—has highlighted how changing weather patterns, environmental degradation and rapid development can combine to transform an intense monsoon spell into a major humanitarian crisis.

A Deluge Begins in the Hills

The chain of events was set in motion between July 18 and July 20, when Nagaland's districts of Mon, Wokha, Longleng and Mokokchung experienced exceptionally heavy rainfall. The steep terrain of these districts acted like giant funnels, rapidly channeling rainwater into streams and rivers that eventually descend into Assam's low-lying plains.

Unlike riverine floods caused solely by the Brahmaputra overflowing its banks, this episode was driven largely by intense runoff from hill catchments. As water rushed down the slopes, it carried enormous volumes into downstream tributaries, overwhelming their capacity and inundating villages, agricultural fields and urban settlements across Upper Assam.

Hydrologists describe this as a classic case of catchment-driven flooding, where the rainfall occurring upstream—not necessarily over the flooded areas themselves—becomes the primary trigger for downstream inundation.

A Weather System That Intensified the Rainfall

Meteorologists attributed the episode to a lower-tropospheric cyclonic circulation that developed over central Assam and adjoining Nagaland. The weather system produced strong moisture convergence over the already saturated hill ranges bordering Assam.

With abundant moisture continuously feeding into the atmosphere, repeated bursts of heavy rain fell across Nagaland's hill districts. Since the soil had already absorbed substantial rainfall during the earlier phases of the monsoon, very little additional water could infiltrate into the ground.

Instead, the rainfall rapidly became surface runoff.

The combination of saturated soils, steep gradients and continuous precipitation created ideal conditions for flash floods and landslides throughout the hill region.

Rainfall Figures Tell the Story

Rainfall data illustrates the extraordinary nature of the event.

Over the three-day period from July 18 to 20:

- Wokha recorded approximately 239 mm of rainfall.
- Mokokchung received around 167 mm.
- Mangkolemba measured nearly 211 mm.
- Longleng recorded about 152.2 mm.

The adjoining districts in Upper Assam also witnessed unusually wet conditions during the week ending July 22.

Rainfall departures from normal included:

- Golaghat: 147% above normal
- Jorhat: 46% above normal
- Sivasagar: 47% above normal
- Dibrugarh: 41% above normal
- Tinsukia: 84% above normal

One of the most striking observations came from Sonari in Charaideo district, where nearly 190 mm of rainfall fell during the night of July 18 alone.

While each of these figures is significant individually, together they point to a broader regional weather event affecting both the hills and the adjoining plains simultaneously.

Why Even "Safe" Areas Went Underwater

One of the most unusual aspects of the July floods was the inundation of areas that are not traditionally regarded as flood-prone.

Normally, these regions remain protected because local drainage systems can accommodate routine monsoon rainfall. This time, however, runoff from Nagaland's hills arrived in extraordinary quantities while local rainfall continued simultaneously.

The result was a cascading failure of drainage systems.

Small streams overflowed.

Natural channels filled beyond capacity.

Low-lying roads became temporary rivers.

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Water accumulated faster than it could drain away, causing flooding even in settlements located away from the main channels of the Brahmaputra.

This demonstrates an important but often overlooked reality of flood management in Northeast India: local rainfall alone does not determine flood risk. Rain falling hundreds of kilometres upstream can be equally important.

The Role of Saturated Soil

Rain does not automatically translate into flooding.

Healthy soil acts like a sponge, absorbing substantial amounts of water before allowing runoff to occur.

However, by mid-July the region had already experienced vigorous pre-monsoon and early monsoon rainfall. During April and May, repeated wet spells had left much of the landscape saturated.

Once soils reach saturation, their ability to absorb additional rainfall declines dramatically.

Every subsequent shower contributes increasingly to surface runoff rather than groundwater recharge.

Consequently, even moderate additional rainfall can generate disproportionately large floods if the ground is already saturated.

In July 2026, this saturation effect significantly amplified the flooding.

Northeast India's Natural Vulnerability

Extreme rainfall is not unusual in Northeast India.

The region's unique geography makes it one of the wettest parts of the world.

Moisture-laden monsoon winds from the Bay of Bengal encounter successive mountain ranges stretching across Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and neighbouring states.

As these air masses are forced upward over the hills, they cool rapidly, producing intense rainfall through a process known as orographic lifting.

Combined with steep slopes and numerous fast-flowing rivers, this geography naturally favours flash floods and landslides.

Climate scientists have increasingly warned that warming temperatures may further increase the frequency of short-duration, high-intensity rainfall events, making flood management even more challenging.

Human Activities Have Increased the Risk

While the weather created the immediate trigger, human interventions have significantly increased the vulnerability of the landscape.

Over the years, extensive deforestation has reduced the natural ability of hill ecosystems to retain rainfall.

Forests intercept rainwater through their canopy, slow the movement of runoff and promote infiltration into the soil through extensive root systems.

When forests are cleared, rainfall reaches the ground more directly, runoff accelerates and soil erosion increases.

Large volumes of sediment are then carried into rivers, gradually reducing their carrying capacity.

This makes downstream flooding more frequent and more severe.

Wetlands Are Disappearing

Natural wetlands once acted as buffers during the monsoon.

They temporarily stored excess floodwater before releasing it slowly into rivers.

However, many wetlands have been degraded, encroached upon or converted for agriculture, settlements and infrastructure projects.

As these natural storage systems disappear, more runoff flows directly into rivers and streams during heavy rainfall.

Without adequate floodplains and wetlands to absorb excess water, downstream settlements face greater risks.

Infrastructure Has Altered Natural Drainage

Rapid infrastructure expansion has also changed the hydrology of many hill regions.

Road construction, hillside cutting and poorly designed drainage systems can interrupt natural watercourses.

In some locations, embankments and roads inadvertently block traditional drain-

age channels, forcing water to accumulate or seek new pathways.

Improper slope modification also destabilizes hillsides, increasing the likelihood of landslides that can temporarily block streams before suddenly releasing impounded water downstream.

While infrastructure development remains essential for connectivity and economic growth, experts increasingly stress that engineering designs must account for the region's complex hydrology.

Floods Without Borders

The July floods underscore the interconnected nature of river systems across Northeast India.

Rain falling in Nagaland does not remain within Nagaland.

Water flows across state boundaries, affecting downstream communities in Assam.

This interdependence calls for stronger cooperation between neighbouring states in hydrological monitoring, rainfall forecasting and disaster preparedness.

Real-time sharing of rainfall data, river levels and catchment conditions could significantly improve early warning systems and enable downstream districts to prepare before floodwaters arrive.

Preparing for a Wetter Future

The July 2026 floods highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to flood management that extends beyond emergency relief.

Experts argue that long-term resilience will require a combination of scientific planning, ecological restoration and climate adaptation.

Protecting forests, conserving wetlands and restoring degraded catchments can improve the landscape's capacity to absorb rainfall.

River channels and drainage systems need regular maintenance to preserve their carrying capacity.

Infrastructure projects in fragile hill regions should incorporate detailed hydrological assessments to minimise unintended impacts on natural drainage.

Equally important is strengthening weather forecasting and expanding community-based early warning systems so that vulnerable populations receive timely alerts before extreme events unfold.

A Warning From Nature

The floods that engulfed Upper Assam were not the product of a single cloudburst or isolated weather event. They emerged from the interaction of exceptional rainfall, saturated hill catchments, altered landscapes and interconnected river systems spanning two states.

As climate variability increases and extreme rainfall events become more frequent, disasters of this nature may no longer remain exceptional.

The lessons from July 2026 are clear. Flood management in Northeast India cannot focus solely on rivers within individual districts or states. It must consider entire catchments, protect natural ecosystems that regulate water flow and promote coordinated planning across state boundaries.

The hills and plains of the Northeast are inseparably linked. When the hills receive more water than they can hold, the plains inevitably bear the consequences. Building resilience against future floods will therefore depend not only on responding to disasters after they occur, but on managing the shared landscape before the next extreme rainfall event arrives.

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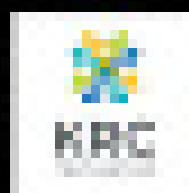


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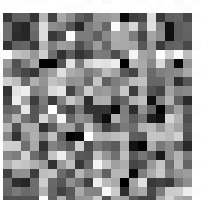


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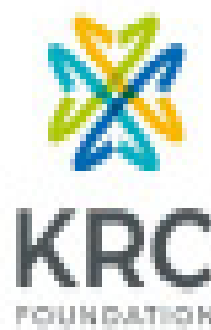
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