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PERSPECTIVE

Smile... it confuses people.

Tripura Raises Journalist Pension to Rs 10,000, Expands Welfare Coverage

AGARTALA
The Tripura government has expanded its welfare measures for journalists by significantly increasing pension benefits, extending family support schemes and providing medical assistance, reinforcing its commitment to the financial and social security of media professionals in the state.

Under the Tripura Journalist Honour Pension Scheme, the monthly pension for eligible journalists has been enhanced from Rs 1,000 to Rs 10,000. The government has also strengthened support for families of deceased journalists through the Tripura Journalist Family Security Pension Scheme, which provides a monthly pension of Rs 5,000 to eligible dependents.

To streamline implementation and improve access to the benefits, the state amended the guidelines governing the schemes in 2025.

Officials said pensions were recently sanctioned for five additional retired journalists, raising the total number of beneficiaries under the honour pension scheme to 13. The family security pension scheme was also extended to two more families, taking the total number of beneficiary households to seven.

In addition, financial assistance for medical treatment was provided to four journalists through the Journalist Welfare Fund to help cover healthcare-related expenses.

The state government said the initiatives reflect its continued focus on strengthening welfare measures for journalists, while ensuring greater financial stability and social protection for media personnel and their families across Tripura.

WHO SAID WHAT

India is moving confidently towards becoming a developed nation by 2047. This vision of Viksit Bharat can be realised only through the energy, talent and commitment of our youth.
~ President of India

Manipur Tightens Anti-Drug Net, CM Khemchand Leads Strategic Review



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Tuesday reiterated the state government's resolve to eradicate the drug menace through sustained and coordinated action, following a high-level review meeting with senior officials of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in Imphal.

The meeting, held at the State Secretariat, focused on strengthening the ongoing anti-narcotics campaign and enhancing cooperation among enforcement agencies to tackle drug trafficking networks operating across the region.

Chief Minister Singh held discussions with R. Sudhakar, IPS, Deputy Director General (Northeast Region), NCB, and P. K. Mishra, Additional Director, NCB. The

deliberations centred on improving intelligence-sharing mechanisms, reinforcing co-ordination between state and central agencies, and expanding collaboration with international partners to curb the illicit drug trade.

According to officials, the review also examined measures for more effective enforcement of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, with a focus on dismantling trafficking networks and strengthening legal action against offenders.

Sharing details of the meeting on social media platform X, the Chief Minister said the discussions highlighted the need for stronger intelligence gathering and seamless inter-agency cooperation to address the growing challenges posed by narcotics traffick-

ing. He emphasized that the fight against drugs requires a comprehensive approach involving law enforcement agencies at the state, national and international levels.

"The government remains firmly committed to eliminating the drug menace through coordinated and sustained efforts," Singh stated.

Manipur has intensified its anti-drug initiatives in recent years under the state's campaign against narcotics, with authorities conducting regular operations against illegal poppy cultivation, drug trafficking networks and the cross-border movement of contraband. The latest review meeting underscores the government's continued focus on strengthening enforcement and ensuring a multi-agency response to the challenge.

Scindia Reviews Northeast Flood Situation, Assures Centre's Full Support to Affected States



NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya M. Scindia reviewed the flood situation across the Northeast and assured all possible assistance from the Centre for relief, rescue and restoration efforts in the affected states.

The review comes amid incessant rainfall that has triggered flooding, landslides and widespread disruptions across several parts of the region.

Scindia held separate discussions with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang and Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh to assess the evolving situation and review measures

being undertaken to tackle the flood crisis.

During the interactions, the Union Minister took stock of conditions in the affected areas and reiterated the Centre's commitment to supporting state governments in their response efforts. He said the

Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region would continue to work closely with the states to protect lives, strengthen relief operations and expedite the restoration of normalcy.

Among the Northeastern states, Assam remains the worst affected, with floods reported in six districts. In Arunachal Pradesh, continuous heavy rainfall has caused flood-related impacts in 12 of the state's 28 districts.

Authorities in Sikkim and Manipur have also remained on high alert as adverse weather conditions persist, while Meghalaya is closely monitoring the situation amid continued rainfall.

The Ministry said that Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura are also under close watch to ensure timely intervention if weather conditions deteriorate further.

Several Northeastern states have been grappling with rising river levels, landslides and disruptions to transport and essential services in recent weeks, prompting coordinated disaster response efforts by state administrations and central agencies.

Assam, Meghalaya Push Ahead with Phase-II Border Talks

GUWAHATI/SHILLONG

Efforts to resolve the decades-old Assam-Meghalaya boundary dispute have gained fresh momentum, with Assam expressing confidence in an early settlement while Meghalaya has reconstituted regional committees to address the six remaining areas of difference under the second phase of the border resolution process.

Assam Border Protection and Development Minister Atul Bora on Tuesday said the state government remains committed to resolving all interstate boundary disputes through dialogue and mutual understanding, in line with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's policy of negotiated settlements with neighbouring states. Speaking during a visit to fringe areas of the Disoi Valley Reserved Forest along the Assam-Nagaland border in Jorhat district, Bora said sustained discussions with both Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh have brought the states closer to resolving long-pending territorial disagreements. "Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has consistently advocated resolving boundary disputes through dialogue and deliberation. Discussions on unresolved issues with Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh have progressed significantly, and we are moving towards an early solution," Bora said.

He noted that a structured framework involving regional committees, joint field inspections, technical assessments and Chief Minister-level consultations has helped create an environment conducive to consensus-based resolutions. Bora highlighted that the mechanism adopted by Assam and its neighbouring states has enabled progress on contentious issues without resorting to confrontation, strengthening confidence in the ongoing negotiations. The minister's remarks coincided with Meghalaya's decision to reconstitute three regional committees tasked with examining the six unresolved sectors along the Assam-Meghalaya boundary.

Around 500 Displaced Myanmar Nationals Undergo Biometric Registration in Manipur



IMPHAL

Around 500 displaced Myanmar nationals residing in temporary camps in Manipur's Kamjong district underwent biometric registration on June 30 as authorities intensified efforts to strengthen border management, enhance security monitoring and streamline humanitarian assistance.

The verification exercise was conducted in Phaikoh, Shangkhakok and Aloyo villages by a joint team comprising nearly 40 personnel from the district administration, medical departments and the Assam Rifles.

According to the Inspector General of Assam Rifles (South), the biometric registration forms part of Phase II of Operation Anchor, an initiative aimed at creating an authenticated database of displaced Myanmar nationals taking shelter in the state. Officials said the exercise is intended to support civil administration, facilitate targeted delivery of medical and humanitarian aid, and strengthen internal security measures in border areas.

The Assam Rifles stated that Phase I of Operation Anchor focused on physical border denial through measures such as electronic surveillance and targeted fencing along vulnerable stretches of the international border. The ongoing second phase is designed to improve demographic tracking and provide reliable data to assist state and central governments in policy formulation and relief planning.

Officials said the creation of a verified database would help eliminate anonymity, improve monitoring mechanisms and ensure that assistance reaches intended beneficiaries more effectively.

The biometric verification drive comes nearly two months after Myanmar-based armed groups allegedly attacked and set fire to three border villages-Z Choro, Namlee and Wanglee-on May 7, according to the Assam Rifles.

Manipur shares a 398-kilometre international border with Myanmar and has witnessed a steady influx of displaced persons fleeing unrest in the neighbouring country. Thousands of Myanmar nationals have crossed into border districts of Manipur since the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 and the subsequent armed conflict between the ruling military junta and various resistance groups. The continuing instability has prompted Indian authorities to strengthen border management while providing humanitarian support to those displaced by the conflict.

Assam Ranks Among Top States in Implementing New Criminal Laws: Centre

NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI

Assam has emerged as one of the leading states in the implementation of India's new criminal laws, according to officials of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, which reviewed the progress made two years after the landmark legal reforms came into effect.

The state was ranked among the country's top performers alongside Haryana, Goa, Chandigarh and Punjab in implementing the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA). The three laws replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Indian Evidence Act on July 1, 2024.

Officials said Haryana secured the top position, followed by Goa, Assam, Chandigarh and Punjab. The rankings were based on four parameters-administrative reforms, operational efficiency, adoption of information and communication technology (ICT), and integration of digital systems. The weightage assigned to these indicators is revised periodically to assess implementation more effectively.



The Centre introduced the three legislations as part of a broader effort to modernise India's criminal justice framework and improve the efficiency of investigations, prosecutions and trials. The reforms aim to ensure that criminal cases move from the regis-

tration of a First Information Report (FIR) to a final verdict by the Supreme Court within a three-year timeframe.

A major component of the reform process has been the rollout of the Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) 2.0, a unified digital platform designed to connect the five key pillars of the criminal justice system-police, courts, prisons, forensic science laboratories and prosecution agencies. According to the Ministry, 23 states and Union Territories have already achieved full integration with the upgraded platform.

Data released by the Ministry indicates notable improvements in investigation timelines since the implementation of the new laws. The proportion of charge sheets filed within the mandatory 90-day period rose from 39.56 per cent in 2024 to 60.96 per cent in 2026. Compliance with the statutory 60-day deadline for filing charge sheets also improved significantly, increasing from 50.92 per cent in 2024 to 67.26 per cent in 2026.

In cases involving sexual offences, the percentage of charge sheets filed within the prescribed two-month period climbed from 44 per cent in 2024 to 75.16 per cent in 2025, reflecting im-

proved adherence to timelines under the revised legal framework.

Officials further stated that police forces across the country have registered 74.66 lakh FIRs under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita since the laws came into force. These include 63,572 Zero FIRs, a provision aimed at facilitating the registration of complaints irrespective of jurisdiction.

The Ministry also highlighted the growing use of technology in criminal investigations. Law enforcement agencies have generated more than 46.50 lakh digital evidence IDs through the e-Sakshya application, which is intended to strengthen evidence collection, preservation and management.

To support the increased emphasis on scientific investigation, the Centre has approved eight additional Central Forensic Science Laboratories, taking the total number of such facilities in the country to 15.

Apart from the top-ranked states, officials noted that West Bengal and Tamil Nadu have also recorded substantial progress in implementing various provisions of the new criminal laws and strengthening digital integration within their criminal justice systems.

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WHEN CITIZENSHIP BECOMES A SUSPICION

The controversy surrounding citizenship verification and the legal status of government-issued identity documents has exposed a troubling shift in the relationship between the citizen and the State. At the heart of the debate lies a fundamental question: when the government itself issues documents after due process, can it later treat those very documents as insufficient evidence of citizenship and place the burden of proof back on the individual?

Recent remarks suggesting that an Indian passport is merely a travel document and not proof of citizenship have reignited concerns over how citizenship is being interpreted and administered. While it is technically correct that no single document can serve as absolute and irrefutable proof of any fact in a court of law, such a narrow reading ignores a central principle of legal administration: statutory documents carry a presumption of validity unless proven otherwise.

This distinction is not merely academic. It strikes at the foundation of governance, public trust, and constitutional rights.

A passport is not issued casually. Before an Indian passport is granted, authorities undertake a detailed verification process involving personal details, place of birth, identity, and background checks. The document is then recognised internationally as evidence that its holder is a citizen of India. Immigration authorities across the world rely upon that presumption. Visa-free travel arrangements, diplomatic protections, and international mobility are all built upon the understanding that a sovereign nation stands behind the citizenship status of its passport holders.

To argue that a passport is only a travel document may satisfy a technical legal formulation, but it overlooks the practical and constitutional significance attached to it. If the State itself ceases to attach credibility to documents it has issued after exhaustive scrutiny, it creates uncertainty not only for citizens but also for institutions that depend upon those records.

The same principle extends to other statutory documents such as voter identity cards, birth certificates, and Aadhaar. None of these may independently constitute conclusive proof of citizenship. Yet each carries a presumption of authenticity because it is issued by a legally empowered authority acting under statutory mandate. In a functioning democracy governed by the rule of law, citizens cannot be expected to repeatedly prove their existence, identity, or nationality every time the State changes its administrative priorities.

The burden of proof is a cornerstone of legal justice. When a document issued by a competent authority is challenged, the responsibility ordinarily rests on the challenger to establish why that document should not be accepted. Reversing that burden has serious consequences. It transforms citizenship from a recognised legal status into a perpetual condition of suspicion.

This concern becomes particularly acute when citizenship questions intersect with electoral processes. The right to vote may be statutory rather than fundamental, but it remains the most vital instrument through which citizens participate in democratic governance. Any mechanism that allows administrative officials to cast doubt upon a person's citizenship without a clear and legally established process risks disenfranchising legitimate voters.

Democracies depend upon certainty in electoral participation. When citizens who possess valid government-issued documents are suddenly required to furnish additional proof to exercise their franchise, the principle of equal treatment comes under strain. Two individuals possessing identical credentials should not be treated differently merely because one has become the subject of administrative doubt while the other has not.

The larger danger lies in the precedent such practices establish. Once the State begins questioning the reliability of its own records, no document remains secure from future scrutiny. Citizens may find themselves trapped in an endless cycle of verification, compelled to repeatedly establish facts that government agencies had already accepted and certified. Such a system weakens public confidence in institutions and erodes the certainty that citizenship is meant to provide. India's constitutional framework does not permit arbitrary deprivation of rights. Citizenship may indeed be challenged under law, and fraudulent claims must be investigated. But those challenges must occur through established legal procedures, supported by evidence and subject to judicial scrutiny. Administrative suspicion cannot become a substitute for due process.

The issue is not whether citizenship can be questioned. Every sovereign nation retains the authority to determine who its citizens are. The issue is whether that authority will be exercised within the safeguards of law or through mechanisms that effectively compel citizens to prove themselves innocent before any allegation has been established.

A democracy as large and diverse as India cannot afford to weaken the credibility of its own institutions. Government-issued documents derive their value from public trust. If that trust is diluted, the consequences extend far beyond electoral rolls or passport offices. They reach into the everyday lives of millions who rely upon these documents to access rights, benefits, services, and opportunities.

Citizenship is not a privilege granted at the discretion of shifting political winds. It is a legal status protected by constitutional principles and reinforced through statutory processes. When those processes are completed and official documents are issued, the presumption must remain in favour of the citizen unless compelling evidence proves otherwise.

The State's obligation is not merely to regulate citizenship but to provide certainty, fairness, and equal protection under the law. Any departure from that principle risks replacing constitutional assurance with administrative doubt—a dangerous path for any democracy to tread.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives a superficial appearance of being right. - Thomas Paine

STEADY AND STABLE AS SHE GOES: INDIA AND THE ECONOMIC FALLOUT OF THE GULF CONFLICT



V. ANANTHA NAGESWARAN

When strikes closed the Strait of Hormuz at the end of February - the channel through which close to a fifth of the world's oil and the bulk of India's crude oil and cooking gas pass - the script for India seemed already written. A country that imports nine-tenths of its crude and more than half its cooking gas through the Gulf was, by the textbook, headed for queues at the pump, empty kitchens, a run on the rupee and a scramble for dollars. Nearly four months on, with the Strait reopening and crude back near its pre-crisis level, none of that came to pass. Not a single retail outlet ran dry. Every household that wanted a cylinder got one. India faced neither a 1991 moment nor a 2013 one. Macroeconomic stability held.

This was not an accident, and it was not luck alone. It was the work of a government that chose to act as it had during the pandemic - deliberately and gradually, building one measure upon another rather than reaching for a single dramatic lever. The first priority was the household.

Throughout, not a single retail outlet ran out of stock, and every kitchen had its cylinder. The import-linked cost of a 14.2 kg cylinder rose above 1,600 rupees, yet the household price was held near 900 rupees, and lower still for the poorest. The memory of the early pandemic months, when panic among migrant workers set off a wave of reverse migration to the villages, was instructive. Commercial and bulk users were asked to give way to protect the home.

On the fuels that power the wider economy, the government chose to absorb the shock rather than pass it on. It cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by ten rupees a litre, forgoing about 1.7 lakh crore in revenue, and eased the burden on aviation fuel. The marketing companies then held pump prices steady for more than two months before a single restrained revision. The logic is worth stating plainly: in such uncertainty, only the government has the balance sheet and the time horizon to bear the risk, and it chose to absorb the impact on the fiscal account rather than on households and firms. Special support for the airlines and a credit-guarantee scheme for micro, small and medium enterprises followed the Covid-era template of targeted and effective interventions.

Behind the price cushion lay a real defence of supply. Domestic refiners lifted cooking-gas output by half within a week, largely replacing the lost imports. India quickly widened its sources, deepening purchases from the United States and Russia and adding new suppliers, so that less energy arrived through the Strait, and it secured the waivers it needed to keep buying Russian crude. The government also pressed measures for the longer run: converting homes from cylinders to piped gas, a coal gasification programme, a further push on ethanol

blending, and strategic crude storage agreed on the Prime Minister's visit to the United Arab Emirates. India was among the few nations that kept its cargoes moving even as Hormuz traffic fell to a trickle.

The external accounts were managed with the same patience. The government removed withholding and capital gains taxes on foreign institutional purchases of government debt and widened the securities open under the Fully Accessible Route, drawing money into the bond market. A new non-resident dollar deposit scheme is expected to bring in a sizeable sum of dollars. The free trade agreements signed over the years did their quiet work: exports of non-oil, non-gems-and-jewellery merchandise and services in April and May 2026 grew by more than 12 per cent over the same period a year earlier.

The headline numbers reassure. Gross foreign direct investment in the last financial year reached ninety-five billion dollars, breaking out of the seventy-to-eighty-billion-dollar band of the post-pandemic years. The current account deficit was barely 0.6 per cent of GDP in FY26 and is now expected to be only marginally higher in FY27.

Honesty also requires acknowledging that fortune lent a hand. The crude basket climbed past a hundred and twenty dollars within weeks of the closure, but from May, a fall in China's oil purchases and steady releases from the United States reserve eased it back below a hundred, and China's resumption of fertiliser exports spared the budget a heavy blow. Had the conflict dragged on, or oil settled near \$120, the picture would feel less comfortable; sound policy and good fortune both played their part. Indeed, fortune eventually favours sound pol-

icymakers.

In a sign of the revisions to come, Goldman Sachs recently upgraded its growth forecast for India to 6.8% for CY26 and 6.5% for FY27, both up by 30 bp from previous forecasts.

The medium term, though, allows no complacency. In a world of fragmented alliances, weaponised supply chains and capital that can be turned on and off, the pressure on the balance of payments may outlast the conflict that threatened it. India must place a very high premium on attracting foreign direct investment. A balanced bilateral investment treaty framework, certainty in tax policy, state governments respecting the integrity of contracts, dependable logistics and single-window clearances that actually clear will draw the global supply chains now seeking to spread their bets.

The deeper issue is import dependence, and not in energy alone. The merchandise trade deficit runs at about eight per cent of national income; strip out oil, and it is five per cent; strip out oil and gold, and it is still three and a half. Comparable large economies do better. India must indigenise what it can produce competitively and what it must. Its firms and trade bodies must work harder on their agreements - particularly the new pacts with the United Kingdom and the European Union, which take effect this year and should boost labour-intensive exports. None of this is possible without skilled hands, which is why the training of young Indians in trade skills must now proceed on a war footing.

These tasks will demand persistence and speed. Even as it turns to them, the government must also attend to a southwest monsoon that has so far disappointed, and to the

arrival of artificial intelligence and what it will mean for Indian work and Indian life. The Gulf conflict tested one kind of resilience; the years ahead will test others. India met the first test in good order. That is a reason for quiet confidence - and for getting on with the next.

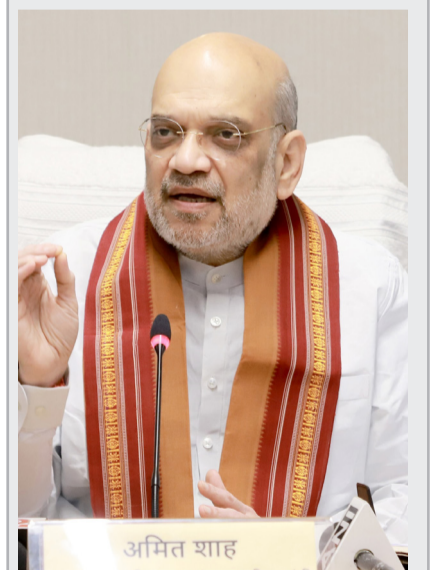
(The author is Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India. His views are personal)

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The Modi govt, has transformed India into a digital nation, changing how people earned, learned, and were governed. In the #11YearsOfDigitalIndia our nation rode the tide of digitalization and scaled new heights, delivering good governance by connecting 103 crore people with internet, 2.2 lakh villages with Bharat Net, delivering ₹51 lakh crore through DBT, and clocking 50% of the world's digital transactions.

Today digitalization is a movement integral to India, empowering startups, innovations and firing up AI, semiconductors and electronics manufacturing sector.

~ Amit Shah, Union Home Minister



Imphal Sit-In Demands Justice for Six Slain Liangmai Naga Civilians

IMPHAL

A sit-in protest was held at Changanggei Community Hall in Imphal West district with participants demanding justice for six Liangmai Naga civilians who were allegedly abducted and killed.

The demonstration was organised under the banner of the Justice for the Six Sons of Koubru Joint Committee (J6SKUC) and drew support from several civil society organisations, including the Joint Tribes Council, All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation, Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity, Changanggei Apunba Club, Langdai Khangsu-



naha and RIFPCO Manipur.

Following the sit-in, protesters formed a human chain and raised slogans demanding accountability

and legal action against those responsible for the killings.

According to organisers, J6SKUC was constituted under

the aegis of the Joint Tribes Council to pursue justice for the victims through peaceful and democratic means. The committee is

coordinated by Chingdinliu Panmei, State President of Rongmei Naga Luphwam, Manipur.

Addressing the gathering, committee representatives said the movement was not aimed against any particular community but sought impartial enforcement of the law, prosecution of the perpetrators and restoration of public confidence in the justice system.

The committee submitted five key demands to the government, including the immediate arrest and prosecution of all individuals allegedly involved in the killings, withdrawal of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement, declaration of the Kuki National Front-Pridential as a Terrorist

organisation, removal of Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen, and eviction of what it described as illegal settlements established on government and protected land.

Protesters carried placards with messages such as "Arrest the Named Killers, Prosecute the Guilty," "End SoO, End the Proxy War," and "Protect Our Land, Uphold the Law."

The committee appealed to both the Government of India and the Government of Manipur to address its demands and said the campaign would continue through peaceful democratic means until justice is delivered for the six victims.

Kiren Rijju meets flood-affected families in Arunachal Pradesh, assures help

ITANAGAR

Union Minister Kiren Rijju visited the flood-affected families during his one-day visit to Arunachal Pradesh. He assured the families that help will be provided to them while visiting the affected areas along with Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Arunachal Chief Minister Pema Khandu. Rijju shared a post on his official 'X' handle and informed about the development during his visit on Tuesday. He also interacted with the families affected due to the flash floods and assured them of every possible help from the government.

"Assured the flood-affected families of all help during day one visit to Arunachal Pradesh, along with Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, CM of Arunachal Pradesh Pema Khandu," he wrote on 'X'. Arunachal Pradesh witnessed heavy rainfall, cloudbursts and flash floods, particularly in Keyi Panyor district, where multiple casualties have been reported. In an X post, Shivraj Chouhan said that a detailed assessment of the damage will be conducted and assured no shortcomings in relief and rehabilitation efforts.

He wrote, "Today, I visited the flood-affected areas in the Keyi Panyor district of Arunachal Pradesh along with Union Minister Kiren Rijju ji and Chief Minister Pema Khandu ji, and met with the affected people to offer them courage and share in their sorrow. Due to heavy rainfall and landslides, roads, bridges, houses, and crops have been severely impacted. Following the directions of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, the central and state governments will jointly provide all possible assistance. A detailed assessment of the damage will be conducted, and no shortcomings will be allowed in relief and rehabilitation efforts."

"In this hour of crisis, the entire country stands with Arunachal Pradesh. Our priority is to ensure that aid reaches every affected individual. The central and state governments will spare no effort in providing relief, rehabilitation, and rebuilding the damaged infrastructure," the post read.

No Evictions in BTC, 93 Families to Be Rehabilitated: Hagrama Mohilary

KAJALGAON

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Hagrama Mohilary on Tuesday said no eviction drive would be carried out in the BTC region, asserting that 93 families allegedly occupying government land would instead be rehabilitated by the administration.

Speaking to reporters after a review meeting in Kajalgaon, Mohilary said the BTC government was committed to addressing land-related issues through rehabilitation rather than eviction. "There will be no eviction in the BTC region. The government will make arrangements to rehabilitate the 93 affected families," he said. The review meeting focused on assessing the performance and progress of key departments, including the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Municipal Administration Department. Senior officials briefed the BTC chief on the implementation of various welfare

schemes and infrastructure projects across the region.

Addressing queries on the proposed inclusion of six communities in Assam's Scheduled Tribe (ST) list, Mohilary said he had no objection to the move as long as the interests and constitutional safeguards of existing ST communities remain protected.

"The proposal is a positive step, but the rights and benefits of the communities already enjoying Scheduled Tribe status must not be affected. The process should ensure that all communities benefit," he said.

Mohilary also shared his views on the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup, predicting that Argentina national football team would reach the semi-finals with a strong campaign, while France national football team would emerge as the eventual champions. The BTC chief was speaking to the media after concluding the departmental review meeting in Kajalgaon in Assam's Chirang district.

JORHAT

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi accused the state government of failing to safeguard Assam's territorial interests and the rights of residents living along the Assam-Nagaland border, alleging that recurring encroachment and administrative interference have created insecurity among border communities.

Accompanied by senior Congress leaders and members of the Jorhat District Congress Committee, Gogoi visited Mariani, including Nagajan village, where residents recently alleged that work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act had been halted following objections from authorities in Nagaland.

During the visit, Gogoi interacted with local residents, who raised concerns over alleged land encroachment, restrictions on developmental activities and recurring disputes along the inter-state boundary.

The Congress leader also reportedly met officials from the Nagaland side and questioned them over alleged encroachments, road construction and infrastructure projects undertaken on land claimed by Assam.

Addressing reporters, Gogoi alleged that the situation along the Assam-Nagaland border had worsened over the past decade, particularly in Mariani, Urianghat and Merapani, where local residents claim that agricultural land traditionally cultivated by Assamese farmers has gradually come under encroachment.

"People living on the Assam side of the border have complained that Naga groups are gradually moving beyond the recognised boundary into areas where Assamese farmers have cultivated land for years. Over the last 10 to 11 years, the situation in Mariani has become increasingly serious. This is Assam's constitutional boundary, and it is the responsibility of the government to protect

it," he said.

Referring to the long-pending Assam-Nagaland boundary dispute before the Supreme Court of India, Gogoi questioned how permanent construction activities were allegedly being allowed in disputed areas.

"When the border issue is already before the Supreme Court, how can permanent construction be allowed within territory claimed by Assam? What was the Assam government doing while these developments were taking place?" he asked. Gogoi further alleged that MGNREGA work in villages on the Assam side of the border had been disrupted due to objections from the Nagaland administration and questioned the state government's response.

"If workers holding valid job cards in Assam are unable to carry out work because of objections from the Nagaland administration, what steps has the Assam government taken? Why has it accepted such interference with-

out standing up for the people?" he said.

The APCC chief claimed that recurring border tensions had left many residents, particularly women, living in an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity.

"It is unfortunate that people living within Assam's own territory do not feel secure. Border residents deserve the same protection and attention as any other citizen of the state," he said.

Targeting Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Gogoi alleged that the government had adopted a weak approach to the border issue despite being part of a "double-engine" administration. "The Chief Minister projects himself as a strong leader capable of delivering results in Delhi. But when it comes to protecting Assam's land and people along the border, he appears to have surrendered. People expected faster solutions under a double-engine government, but the problems have only intensified," he alleged.

First Flood Death Reported in Assam as Nearly 47,000 People Remain Affected

GUWAHATI

The flood situation in Assam remained critical on Tuesday, with the state reporting its first flood-related death of the season and nearly 47,000 people affected across six districts as swollen rivers continued to inundate villages, damage infrastructure and disrupt normal life.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority, a woman died after being swept away by floodwaters in Sissibogaon in Dhemaji district, marking the first flood fatality of the year.

The latest ASDMA flood bulletin stated that 46,938 people across 10 revenue circles and 221 villages in six districts—Dhemaji, Nalbari, Dibrugarh, Chirang, Lakhimpur and Biswanath—have been affected by the floods.

Dhemaji remains the worst-hit



district, accounting for 45,841 of the affected population. The situation has deteriorated since Monday, when around 45,500 people in five districts were reported to be affected.

Authorities said two major rivers, the Brahmaputra River at Neamatihat and the Disang River at Nanglamuraghat, continue to flow above the danger mark, raising concerns of further flooding if rainfall persists.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the government was closely monitoring the evolving sit-

uation and ensuring relief reached affected communities.

"We are leaving no stone unturned in our flood response. While I continue to monitor the situation closely, my Cabinet colleagues are on the ground overseeing relief efforts, protection measures and ensuring timely assistance," Sarma said in a post on social media.

As part of the state's response, Water Resources Minister Susanta Borgohain and Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Keshab Mahanta visited flood-hit areas along the Chakrang River in Gohpur to assess the situation and review relief measures.

Borgohain said instructions had been issued to the concerned departments to undertake immediate flood-protection works in vulnerable locations.

The ASDMA said four relief

camps and six relief distribution centres are currently operational, providing shelter and essential assistance to more than 450 displaced residents.

Floodwaters have also submerged 3,809 hectares of agricultural land, affecting farmers across the impacted districts. In addition, over 88,000 animals, including nearly 50,000 large livestock, have been affected by the deluge.

Officials said roads and other public infrastructure have suffered damage in several areas, with restoration work continuing alongside relief and rescue operations.

With river levels remaining high and forecasts indicating the possibility of further rainfall, authorities said the situation is being closely monitored and additional measures are being kept ready should flood conditions worsen in the coming days.

Aizawl Records 1,005 New HIV Cases in 2025-26; Positivity Rate at 2.74%

AIZAWL

Aizawl district recorded 1,005 new HIV-positive cases during 2025-26, with a positivity rate of 2.74 per cent, according to data presented by the District AIDS Prevention and Control Committee (DAPCC).

The cases were detected from 36,634 general blood tests conducted across the district during the period. Among 8,595 pregnant women screened for HIV, 52 tested positive, representing a positivity rate of 0.60 per cent, officials said. Data presented at a recent DAPCC meeting showed that the highest number of new infections was reported among individuals aged 25 to 35 years, accounting for 381 cases. The district also recorded 14 HIV-positive cases among children below 14 years of age and 79 cases among persons aged above 50 years. Heterosexual transmission remained the dominant mode of infection, accounting for 762 cases, or 76.3 per cent of all new detections. Injecting drug use was identified as the second-largest mode of transmission, contributing 160 cases (14.7 per cent), followed by homosexual and bisexual transmission with 62 cases (6.4 per cent). Parent-to-child transmission accounted for 12 cases (1.5 per cent), while the mode of transmission remained unspecified in nine cases.

Officials said 10,715 people are currently receiving Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) in the district. The data also revealed that 14 pa-

tients were co-infected with both HIV and tuberculosis (TB), underscoring the continuing public health challenge posed by the two diseases. Among high-risk groups, 39 HIV-positive cases were detected from 3,613 blood tests conducted among people who inject drugs. Twelve cases were identified from 366 tests among female sex workers, while 13 cases were detected from 7,333 tests among men who have sex with men (MSM). The figures were presented during a meeting of the District AIDS Prevention and Control Committee held at the DC Conference Hall under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Vanlalrova. The committee reviewed HIV prevention and control activities undertaken during 2025-26 and discussed strategies to curb the rising number of new infections in Aizawl district. Members also deliberated on measures to strengthen the identification and treatment of people living with HIV. The meeting further reviewed a demonstration of a condom funder application designed to improve public access to condoms. Committee members noted that the app has not yet been widely promoted and recommended enhancements to improve its outreach, effectiveness and user experience.

Preparations for the Red Ribbon School Quiz Competition 2026 were also discussed during the meeting as part of ongoing awareness and prevention initiatives.

Meghalaya High Court Upholds Sonam Raghuvanshi's Bail in Raja Raghuvanshi Murder Case

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya High Court has upheld a lower court order granting bail to Sonam Raghuvanshi, the prime accused in the high-profile murder of Indore businessman Raja Raghuvanshi, after finding no grounds to interfere with the earlier ruling that highlighted procedural irregularities in her arrest.

A single bench of Justice W. Diengdoh dismissed the Meghalaya government's appeal against an April 2026 order of the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Judicial), Shillong, which had granted bail to the accused. The High Court had reserved its verdict on June 10 after hearing extensive arguments from both sides. A detailed judgment is awaited.

The controversy centred on errors in arrest-related documents prepared by the investigating agency. The Shillong court had observed that authorities repeatedly cited Section 403(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita instead of Section 103(1), which pertains to the offence of murder.

According to the lower court, the incorrect provision was mentioned across



several documents, including the arrest memo, checklist justifying the arrest, inspection memo, intimation of rights and extracts from the case diary. The court concluded that the accused had not been properly informed that she was being arrested on a murder charge, thereby affecting her legal rights.

Rejecting the prosecution's argument that the error was merely typographical, the court noted that the mistake appeared repeatedly in multiple documents, suggesting a more serious procedural lapse.

Challenging the bail order, the Meghalaya government argued before the High Court that the error had not caused any real prejudice to the accused. Ap-

pearing for the state, Advocate General Amit Kumar contended that Sonam was fully aware of the allegations against her, pointing to her signatures on arrest documents, her appearance before a magistrate during remand proceedings and the fact that she had legal representation from the beginning.

The state also cited the Supreme Court judgment in State of Karnataka v. Sri Darshan, arguing that procedural defects of this nature are curable and should not automatically result in bail unless actual prejudice is demonstrated.

During the hearings, Justice Diengdoh reportedly questioned why the same error appeared repeatedly across offi-

cial records and observed that some of the forms appeared to have been copied from standard templates. The court also noted that one portion of the arrest documentation incorrectly referred to the accused as a "deserter" from the armed forces, raising further concerns about the preparation and verification of the documents.

While the state argued that Sonam posed a flight risk, the High Court observed that the bail conditions imposed by the lower court were clear and that any violation could be dealt with under law.

The case relates to the murder of Raja Raghuvanshi, a businessman from Indore, who travelled to Meghalaya with his wife Sonam for their honeymoon shortly after their marriage in May 2025. The couple went missing during a visit to Sohra, triggering a large-scale search operation.

Raja's body was later recovered from a gorge near Wei Sawdong Falls with multiple injuries, while Sonam remained untraceable for several days before being arrested.

According to Meghalaya Police, Sonam allegedly conspired with her purported lover and hired assassins to murder her husband during the honeymoon. Several co-accused were subsequently arrested from different states.

Police have since completed the investigation and filed a chargesheet. The trial in the case is currently underway.

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Congress moves privilege notice against Rajnath Singh for 'misleading' Parliament on death of Indian soldiers



NEW DELHI

Congress sought privilege proceedings to be initiated against Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for allegedly withholding information and misleading the Parliament by saying no Indian soldiers were martyred during the Operation Sindoor. In a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Congress MP and Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) KC Venugopal urged the Speaker to initiate privilege proceedings under Rule 223 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha, accusing the Defence Minister of misleading the House.

In his letter, Venugopal wrote that on 28 July, 2025, during the discussion on the terrorist attack at Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor, the Defence Minister stated that "none of our soldiers were harmed in the operation."

However, contrary to the statement, an official statement has been released that

the following six armed forces personnel had died during the Operation Sindoor, said Venugopal.

He further listed the deceased personnel as: Subedar Major Pawan Kumar (Indian Army), Rifleman Sunil Kumar, Vir Chakra (Indian Army), Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar (Indian Army), Aviation Technician Mood Murlinaik (Indian Army), Havildar Sunil Kumar Singh (Indian Army), and Sergeant Surendra Kumar, Vayu Sena Medal (Indian Air Force).

Venugopal said that the discrepancy clearly showed that the Defence Minister's statement on the floor of the House was "misleading and incorrect." "It is well established that misleading the House or withholding information from the House by a Minister on the Floor of the House constitutes a breach of privilege and contempt of the House," he further wrote.

"In view of the foregoing, I request that privilege proceedings may be initiated against

the Minister of Defence in the matter," Venugopal added.

Later, in a post on X, Venugopal alleged that the Defence Minister had "lied to the people of India" during the Lok Sabha debate on Operation Sindoor.

"In the debate in Lok Sabha on Operation Sindoor, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh lied to the people of India. It was a straightforward, clear-cut lie to mislead the House. How could he, in July 2025, say that no Indian soldier was martyred, and then a year later the forces announce that we have lost six jawans? It is a grave insult to the families of these six martyrs and the entire armed forces that the people of India were not told of their bravery and ultimate sacrifice. They died in the service of our nation, while defending it against our enemies, and the so-called nationalist Government simply lied about their martyrdom.

"It is a well-established norm that if a Minister misleads the House or withholds information, it constitutes a breach of privilege, amounting to contempt of the House. In this regard, I have written to the Hon'ble Lok Sabha Speaker requesting privilege proceedings be initiated against the Defence Minister," he wrote.

On June 26, the government had released the names of the six personnel who died during the cross-border operation. Following this, the Congress stepped up its criticism, alleging that the Defence Minister had earlier informed Parliament that no Indian personnel had been harmed during Operation Sindoor.

Break silos, adopt 'whole of the govt' idea, PM Modi tells secretaries



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while chairing a review meeting on Tuesday with the secretaries of Central government departments, emphasised adoption of a "whole of the government" approach to ensure time-bound completion of work and delivery of objectives.

The meeting, which lasted for nearly four hours at Seva Teerth, saw the Prime Minister undertake a detailed review of the govern-

ment's reform agenda and assess the preparedness of key departments through presentations by the secretaries.

Eighty secretaries attended the meeting. According to sources, each of them made presentation before the PM while Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan anchored the meeting agenda-wise.

The PM stressed the need to break down departmental silos by strengthening coordination and

integrated planning to achieve optimum outcomes through transparent implementation of reforms. Modi encouraged the use of the PM GatiShakti platform as an effective mechanism for inter-departmental coordination and informed decision-making.

According to sources, deliberations focused on two key themes. The first was "deregulation and other reforms for ease of doing business and ease of living", while the second was "promoting

Aatmanirbharta", in line with the national objective of achieving Viksit Bharat 2047.

Sources said the secretaries outlined the major initiatives being undertaken by their ministries and departments in line with the two themes, while also highlighting ongoing efforts to translate the Prime Minister's vision into tangible outcomes. The meeting also featured discussions on sector-specific challenges, with departments outlining their future strategies to strengthen governance and improve service delivery.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister reportedly asserted that proper and meticulously planned attention must be given to the tangible impact of reform schemes on people's lives. He also reportedly stressed the importance of delivering measurable outcomes within stipulated timelines, while making periodic reviews an integral part of the government's reform strategy. A discussion on the use of AI and other technology-driven governance initiatives was also reportedly held.

A source said, "The deliberations also covered the government's flagship reform agenda, with particular emphasis on measures aimed at improving ease of doing business and ease of living." Sources said the secretaries made presentations on their respective ministries, giving details on the functioning.

Modi has already set the government's goal of turning India into a developed country by 2047, when it celebrates 100 years of its independence. He had earlier outlined the reform priorities for the next 10 years, asserting that his government's "Reform Express" has delivered systemic transformation.

INTERNATIONAL

US envoys arrive in Qatar for meetings on Iran, with tensions high over Hormuz



DUBAI

Two U.S. envoys arrived in Qatar on Tuesday for talks with mediators about the implementation of an initial deal to end the war in Iran, an official said.

The visit by Steve Witkoff, U.S. President Donald Trump's special Mideast envoy, and Jared Kushner, his son-in-law, comes after a week-end of crossfire in the Persian Gulf over efforts to reopen the Strait of

Hormuz to shipping traffic.

The envoys won't be having direct negotiations with Iranian diplomats while in Qatar's capital, Doha, said Majed al-Ansari, a spokesman for Qatar's Foreign Ministry. Instead, mediators are working for the time being as go-betweens for the talks, which won't include any high-level officials, he added.

Such indirect negotiations have happened in the past between Iran

and the U.S. However, the two previous rounds of talks collapsed into the 12-day war Israel launched against Iran in 2025 and the recent Iran war. "We're not expecting any high-level Iranian officials at the moment, but as I said, the technical meetings are ongoing ... and they haven't stopped since then," al-Ansari told journalists at a weekly news conference.

Iran was also sending a delegation to Qatar this week. Iran's

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Tuesday that Iran has had no plans for a meeting with the American side at any level in the coming days.

"What will take place in Doha tomorrow is a discussion with the Qatari side about implementing parts of the memorandum of understanding, including the release of Iran's blocked assets," Baghaei told journalists at his own briefing.

However, that left open the possibility of messages being passed to the Qataris between the two sides.

The U.S. and Iran agreed to an interim deal earlier this month that calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of enriched uranium. It also waives U.S.-backed oil sanctions on the country, calls for free traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and gives each side 60 days to hammer out broader agreements.

A fifth of the world's oil was shipped through the Strait of Hormuz before the war began Feb. 28. Iran's attacks and threats stopped cargo ships and tankers from moving through the strait, creating a global energy crisis.

The strait has long been considered an international waterway despite being in Iran and Oman's territorial waters.

Both sides traded strikes amid efforts last week to open Oman's territorial waters in the strait to both inbound and outbound ship traffic from the Persian Gulf. That raised concerns that negotiations to formally end the war could be disrupted.

Iran twice attacked vessels in the strait — including a tanker filled with Qatari crude — and drew retaliatory American airstrikes. Iran also launched drone and missile attacks targeting Bahrain and Kuwait on Sunday.

US Supreme Court upholds birthright citizenship, rejecting Trump's proposed limits



WASHINGTON

A divided Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld a broad conception of birthright citizenship, rejecting President Donald Trump's executive order declaring that children born to people who are in the United States illegally or temporarily are not American citizens.

The justices relied on a long-settled understanding of the 14th Amendment, adopted after the Civil War, and more recent federal laws in ruling that anyone born in the country, with very limited exceptions, is a citizen.

"Citizenship, then and now, was the right to have rights—to freely participate in our political community. The Framers of the Fourteenth Amendment extended that promise to 'every free-born person in this land.'" Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court, citing congressional debate over the amendment, "We keep that promise today."

Three conservative justices would have allowed the restrictions to take effect.

The Republican president's restrictions had been blocked by several lower courts and had not taken effect anywhere in the U.S.

During arguments in April, both conservative and liberal justices questioned the order's legality in a momentous case that was magnified by Trump's unprecedented attendance

in the courtroom.

The case framed another test of Trump's assertions of executive power that defy long-standing precedent for a court with a conservative majority and a robust view of presidential power that has largely ruled in his favor. In the notable exceptions when the court has not, Trump has responded with starkly personal criticisms of the justices.

The justices ruled on Trump's appeal of a lower-court ruling from New Hampshire that struck down the citizenship restrictions.

The birthright citizenship order, which Trump signed on the first day of his second term, is part of his administration's broad immigration crackdown.

Birthright citizenship was the first Trump immigration-related policy to reach the court for a final ruling. The justices previously struck down global tariffs Trump had imposed under an emergency powers law that had never been used that way.

Trump reacted furiously to the late February tariffs decision, saying he was ashamed of the justices who ruled against him and calling them unpatriotic.

He also seemed to recognize the court was likely to rule against him on birthright citizenship, too, using his Truth Social platform to criticize "dumb judges and justices" and wealthy pregnant women from China and elsewhere who come

to the U.S. to give birth so their newborns will have American citizenship.

Trump's order would have upended widely held views that the 14th Amendment confers citizenship on everyone born in the U.S., excluding only the children of foreign diplomats and those born to a foreign occupying force.

The amendment was intended to ensure that Black people, including former slaves, had citizenship, though the Citizenship Clause is written more broadly. "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside," it reads.

In a series of decisions, lower courts have struck down Trump's executive order as illegal. The decisions have invoked the high court's 1898 ruling in Wong Kim Ark, which held that the U.S.-born child of Chinese nationals was a citizen.

The Trump administration argued that the common view of citizenship is wrong, asserting that children of noncitizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States and therefore are not entitled to citizenship.

More than one-quarter of a million babies born in the U.S. each year would have been affected by the executive order, according to research by the Migration Policy Institute and Pennsylvania State University's Population Research Institute.

While Trump has largely focused on illegal immigration in his rhetoric and actions, the birthright citizenship restrictions also would have applied to people who are legally in the United States, including students and applicants for green cards, or permanent resident status.

EL NIÑO'S WARNING FOR NORTHEAST INDIA

The emergence of El Niño conditions ahead of the 2026 southwest monsoon has placed Northeast India under an increasingly watchful eye. Forecasts from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) indicating the possibility of below-normal rainfall have sparked concern across a region whose economy, ecology and daily life remain deeply intertwined with the rhythm of seasonal rains. While much of India anxiously tracks monsoon forecasts each year, for the Northeast the stakes are often considerably higher. Here, rainfall is not merely a meteorological event; it is the foundation upon which agriculture, water security, hydropower generation, biodiversity and rural livelihoods depend.

The developing El Niño has therefore revived an important question: how vulnerable is Northeast India to shifts in global climate patterns, and what could a weaker monsoon mean for a region already grappling with climate uncertainty?

Although El Niño is a recurring natural phenomenon, scientists increasingly warn that its effects are being amplified by a warming planet. This raises concerns that the Northeast may not only experience reduced rainfall but also face increasingly erratic weather patterns that challenge traditional assumptions about the monsoon. For policymakers, farmers and disaster-management agencies, the issue is no longer whether climate variability will affect the region but how prepared the region is to cope with it.

A Climate Phenomenon with Global Consequences

El Niño originates thousands of kilometres away from India in the tropical Pacific Ocean, yet its influence can extend across continents. The phenomenon occurs when sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific become significantly warmer than normal. These warmer waters disrupt atmospheric circulation patterns and alter the movement of moisture across the globe.

Under normal conditions, strong trade winds push warm ocean waters westward toward Southeast Asia and Australia. During an El Niño event, these winds weaken, allowing warm water to spread eastward. This shift changes weather systems worldwide, influencing rainfall patterns, temperatures and storm activity in many regions.

India's southwest monsoon is among the weather systems most closely linked to El Niño. Historically, many El Niño years have coincided with weaker monsoon seasons and below-average rainfall across the country. While the relationship is not absolute and can be influenced by other climatic factors such as the Indian Ocean Dipole, El Niño remains one of the most reliable indicators of monsoon variability.

Meteorologists are therefore monitoring the current development closely. The concern is not merely about the possibility of lower rainfall totals but about the broader instability that El Niño can introduce into seasonal weather patterns.

Why Northeast India Faces Unique Risks
Northeast India occupies a distinctive geographical position that makes it both richly endowed with rainfall and highly dependent upon it. Moisture-laden winds travelling from the Bay of Bengal collide with the hills, valleys and mountain ranges of the region, producing some of the heaviest rainfall recorded anywhere in the world.

Places such as Cherrapunji and Mawsynram in Meghalaya have become globally renowned for extraordinary annual precipitation. Rivers, forests, wetlands and agricultural systems across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim have evolved around this abundance of water.

Yet this very dependence creates vulnerability.

Unlike parts of northwestern India, where extensive irrigation networks can offset fluctuations in rainfall, large areas of the Northeast continue to rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture. Communities often depend directly on seasonal rains for farming, drinking water and local economic activity. A modest decline in rainfall can therefore produce disproportionate consequences.

The region's mountainous terrain further complicates matters. Water storage infrastructure remains limited in many areas, making it difficult to capture and preserve rainfall during wet periods for use during drier months. As climate variability increases, this structural weakness becomes more apparent.

Agriculture on the Frontline

No sector illustrates the risks posed by a weaker monsoon more clearly than agriculture. Rice cultivation remains the backbone of agricultural activity throughout much of Northeast India. In Assam, paddy fields dominate the rural landscape, supporting millions of farming households. Successful cultivation depends heavily on the timely arrival and adequate distribution of monsoon rainfall.

A delayed onset of rains can disrupt sowing schedules, forcing farmers to postpone planting operations. If dry conditions persist during critical stages of crop development, yields may decline significantly. Even



when total seasonal rainfall appears adequate on paper, uneven distribution can severely affect productivity.

Farmers are particularly vulnerable because many operate on small landholdings with limited access to irrigation. Crop failures or reduced harvests can quickly translate into financial distress, food insecurity and increased rural indebtedness.

The risks extend beyond paddy cultivation. Maize, pulses, vegetables and oilseed crops may also suffer from prolonged dry spells. Horticultural production, which has become increasingly important in several Northeastern states, depends on stable weather conditions and reliable water availability.

The challenge is compounded by rising temperatures. Higher heat levels can increase evaporation rates, reduce soil moisture and place additional stress on crops already coping with rainfall deficits.

Assam's Tea Industry Faces Uncertainty
Among the sectors most sensitive to weather fluctuations is Assam's globally renowned tea industry.

Tea bushes require a delicate balance of rainfall, temperature and humidity to maintain both productivity and quality. Insufficient rainfall can slow plant growth, reduce leaf production and alter flavour characteristics that define Assam tea in international markets.

Periods of excessive heat, particularly when accompanied by rainfall shortages, can further weaken tea plants and increase vulnerability to pests and diseases. Estate managers may be forced to increase irrigation costs or implement additional management measures to protect crops.

The implications reach far beyond tea gardens themselves. Assam's tea industry supports millions of workers, small growers, transport operators, traders and associated businesses. Any significant disruption to production can reverberate throughout the regional economy.

Given the tea sector's contribution to exports and employment, a weaker monsoon could have consequences that extend well beyond agricultural statistics.

The Flood-Drought Paradox
One of the most important realities often overlooked in discussions about El Niño is that reduced rainfall does not necessarily mean the absence of floods.

In fact, climate scientists increasingly warn that many regions, including Northeast India, may experience a dangerous combination of drought-like conditions and extreme rainfall events within the same season.

Climate change has altered rainfall behaviour in ways that make precipitation less predictable. Instead of steady, evenly distributed rain over several months, regions may experience long dry periods punctuated by short bursts of intense rainfall.

For the Northeast, this creates what experts describe as a flood-drought paradox.

A district may suffer water shortages for weeks and then experience sudden cloudbursts capable of triggering flash floods, landslides and riverbank erosion. These extreme events often cause extensive damage while contributing little to long-term water availability because much of the rainfall runs off rapidly rather than replenishing groundwater or reservoirs.

The implications are severe. Farmers struggle to plan cropping cycles, local authorities face greater challenges in disaster management and infrastructure systems become increasingly vulnerable to sudden weather shocks.

Rivers, Hydropower and Water Security
The consequences of a weaker monsoon extend beyond agriculture and directly affect water resources.

The Northeast is home to major river systems, including the Brahmaputra and Barak basins, which support millions of people and countless ecosystems. Sustained rainfall is essential for maintaining river flows throughout the year.

Reduced precipitation can lower water levels, affecting fisheries, irrigation systems and river-dependent livelihoods. Wetlands, many of which serve as biodiversity hotspots, may also face ecological stress during prolonged dry periods.

Hydropower projects represent another area of concern. Several Northeastern states have invested heavily in hydroelectric infrastructure, viewing the region's rivers as a source of renewable energy and economic development.

These projects depend on reliable water flow. Extended rainfall deficits can reduce generation capacity, particularly during periods of high electricity demand. Such disruptions can have cascading effects on energy security, industrial activity and economic growth.

not resemble those of previous decades.

Historical records remain valuable, but they may no longer provide a complete guide to future conditions. The climate system itself is changing, making old assumptions less reliable.

For Northeast India, the implications are profound. Planning based solely on historical rainfall averages may underestimate emerging risks. Governments, businesses and communities must increasingly prepare for scenarios that fall outside past experience.

Building Resilience Before Crisis Strikes
The developing El Niño should not be viewed as a prediction of inevitable disaster. Rather, it serves as a reminder of the importance of preparedness.

Strengthening climate resilience requires action across multiple sectors.

Weather forecasting systems must continue to improve, providing farmers and local authorities with timely and accurate information. Early-warning mechanisms can help communities prepare for both drought conditions and extreme rainfall events.

Agriculture needs greater diversification. Reliance on a narrow range of crops increases vulnerability to climate shocks. Promoting drought-tolerant crop varieties, improving irrigation efficiency and expanding climate-smart farming practices can help reduce risk.

Investment in water-storage infrastructure is equally important. Reservoirs, check dams, rainwater-harvesting systems and groundwater recharge projects can improve resilience during periods of rainfall deficit.

Disaster-management systems must also adapt to a future characterised by greater uncertainty. Flood mitigation measures, landslide monitoring and resilient infrastructure development should become central components of regional planning.

Perhaps most importantly, climate adaptation must move beyond short-term responses. The challenge is not merely to cope with a difficult monsoon season but to prepare for decades of increasing climate variability.

A Defining Test for the Future

The Northeast has long been defined by its relationship with rain. Rivers, forests, agriculture and entire cultures have evolved around the monsoon's annual cycle. Yet that relationship is becoming increasingly complex.

The emergence of El Niño conditions in 2026 highlights the growing intersection between natural climate variability and human-induced climate change. It underscores how a phenomenon originating in the Pacific Ocean can influence livelihoods across thousands of villages in Northeast India.

The coming monsoon will undoubtedly be watched closely. But the larger lesson extends beyond a single season.

The real challenge for Northeast India is not simply whether rainfall this year falls above or below average. It is whether governments, institutions and communities can adapt to a future in which uncertainty itself becomes the new normal.

This means that future El Niño episodes may

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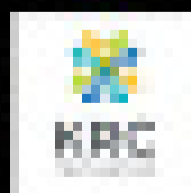


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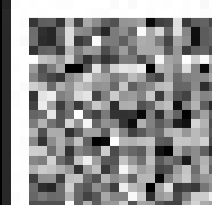


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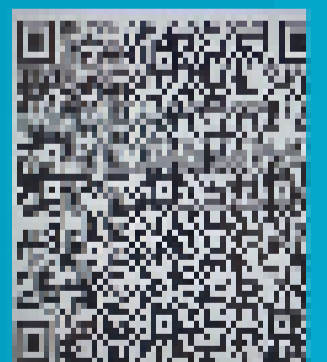
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