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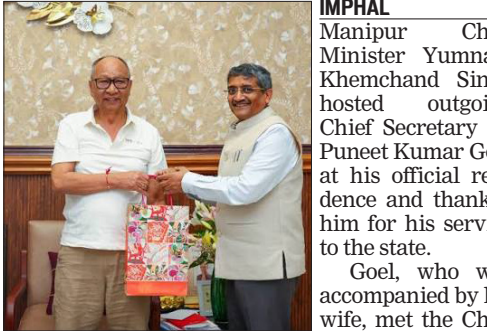


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PERSPECTIVE

Studies show that at any given moment, the average person is keeping 13 secrets

Manipur CM thanks outgoing Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel for service



ning of August 29, ahead of his retirement on August 31.

Singh expressed his gratitude to Goel for his “dedicated and selfless service” to the people of Manipur and acknowledged his role in key administrative efforts during his tenure.

The Chief Minister particularly referred to Goel’s work related to the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and efforts towards restoring peace in the state.

Singh also conveyed his best wishes to the outgoing Chief Secretary for his future endeavours and wished him a long and healthy life.

Goel has served as Manipur’s Chief Secretary since July 21, 2025. His tenure has included administrative efforts focused on public service delivery and the state’s response to the continuing humanitarian and security challenges.

With his retirement, the state administration is set for a change at the top bureaucratic level.

WHO SAID WHAT



“The highest honour in our democracy does not lie in any office, but in being a citizen of India, our motherland.”
We remember Former President of India and Bharat Ratna, Pranab Mukherjee, with profound respect, honouring his remarkable contribution to our democracy and nation.
~ Pranab Mukherjee Legacy Foundation

Tripura Assembly erupts over Congress claim that DGP’s alleged suicide note was ‘removed, hidden’

AGARTALA

The Tripura Legislative Assembly witnessed heated scenes on Monday after Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman alleged that a purported suicide note linked to the death of state DGP Anurag Dhankar had been removed and kept hidden.

The issue was raised on the final day of the ongoing Assembly session, shortly before Question Hour began. Roy Barman claimed that Dhankar’s wife, who arrived in Tripura on Sunday, had sought the note allegedly written by the police chief before his death.

“She arrived in Tripura yesterday and asked for the suicide note that was reportedly written by the DGP before his death,” Roy Barman said in the House, alleging that the note had been “removed and hidden”.

The Congress MLA further claimed that Dhankar’s wife possessed a photograph of the alleged note and had sought access to the original.

The allegation immediately triggered an uproar in the House, with the Speaker intervening to stop Roy Barman from pursuing the matter.



Speaker Rampada Jamatia said the issue could not be raised in the manner being attempted by the Congress legislator, pointing out that Chief

Minister Manik Saha had already made statements on the matter twice. “Being a senior leader, please do not confuse the people,” Jamatia said,

NEW DELHI

The prevailing situation in Bangladesh has direct implications for the security of India’s Northeast, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has told a Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs amid strained ties between the two neighbouring countries. The ministry said the government was adopting a comprehensive approach to address cross-border security challenges in coordination with the governments of Northeastern states, border-guarding agencies, central investigative agencies and law-enforcement bodies.

“The Government of India is undertaking a comprehensive approach in dealing with cross-border security challenges in coordination with State governments of the Northeastern states, border guarding agencies, Central investigation agencies and law enforcement,” the MEA informed the committee.

The issue assumes significance for Assam and other Northeastern states sharing borders with Bangladesh, as



the region remains vulnerable to illegal migration, smuggling, drug trafficking and infiltration by extremist groups. According to the ministry, 14 terrorists affiliated with the Ansarullah Bangla Team have been arrested by the Assam government since December 2024 in joint operations involving the state police and other agencies.

The government also informed the committee that heightened security along the border in recent months

had led to the detention of several Bangladeshi nationals and the seizure of around 12,300 kg of narcotics.

The developments were highlighted in the latest report of the parliamentary panel, chaired by Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor, on ‘Future of India-Bangladesh Relationship’, which was tabled in Parliament.

The committee noted that the security, stability and economic development of the Northeast were closely

linked to effective management of the India-Bangladesh border.

It called for a more holistic and coordinated approach involving the MEA, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and governments of the border states. The panel said closer coordination was necessary to address interconnected challenges, including illegal migration, smuggling, drug trafficking and infiltration by extremist groups. The committee also underlined the need for India to engage proactively with Bangladesh on possible refugee inflows and humanitarian challenges, including those arising from the situation in Myanmar. “India should engage proactively with Bangladesh on managing potential refugee inflows and humanitarian challenges, including those emanating from Myanmar, to ensure that responses remain consistent with India’s security and humanitarian obligations,” the report said.

The panel’s observations come at a time when India-Bangladesh relations

have faced renewed strain, making border management a key security concern for the Northeast.

The MEA, meanwhile, said its States Division works with DoNER on infrastructure projects aimed at strengthening socioeconomic development and connectivity in the Northeastern region. The projects cover sectors such as roads, healthcare, education, water supply, power, tourism and digital connectivity and are being implemented under schemes including the Prime Minister’s Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE), North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS), schemes of the North Eastern Council and Special Development Packages.

The government maintained that stronger connectivity and infrastructure, alongside coordinated border management, were essential components of a broader strategy to strengthen the Northeast’s security and economic development.

NE states seek Centre’s support over revenue gap fund withdrawal: Saha



AGARTALA

The Northeastern states have jointly raised concerns with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman over the proposed withdrawal of the revenue gap fund following the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said.

Saha said the withdrawal could put additional pressure on the finances of the Northeastern states, with Tripura alone expected to face an annual shortfall of around Rs 4,000 crore.

The issue was raised collectively at a meeting of representatives of the Northeastern states with Sitharaman in Shillong, he said.

The Centre has sanctioned a fund titled ‘Pride of Hills’ to meet financial requirements in the region. However, Saha said the allocation may not be adequate to make up for the anticipated revenue gap resulting from the withdrawal of the existing fund.

Tripura Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy had earlier warned that the state could lose around Rs 4,000 crore annually, translating into nearly Rs 20,000 crore over five years.

The state government had also drawn the Finance Commission’s attention to its growing fiscal burden, particularly expenditure commitments towards government employ-

ees and pensioners.

The issue assumes added significance amid discussions over the proposed 8th Pay Commission, which is expected to revise salaries and allowances of government employees, potentially increasing the financial burden on states.

Despite the concerns over revenue availability, Saha said the state government’s recruitment drive would not be affected.

“We have to fill up vacant posts as much as possible if there are no technical problems,” the Chief Minister said.

He said the government would continue efforts to fill vacancies across departments and create employment opportunities. While technical issues could occasionally delay the recruitment process, they would not stop the government from making appointments, he added.

Saha also said the state government was taking measures to prevent any arbitrary increase in the prices of essential commodities.

He said he had discussed the issue with the Food Minister and directed the authorities to engage with traders and other market stakeholders to ensure that prices were not raised unreasonably.

The Chief Minister said the Northeastern states would continue to press the Centre for greater financial support, citing the region’s distinct fiscal and developmental challenges.

The states have maintained that any reduction in revenue support needs to be assessed against their limited revenue-generating capacity and relatively high expenditure commitments, particularly on salaries, pensions and essential public services.

13 Meghalaya MLAs may join BJP, could alter ruling coalition equation

SHILLONG

Meghalaya’s political landscape could see a major shift if 13 legislators from the United Democratic Party (UDP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) join the BJP, a move that could make the saffron party the second-largest partner in the ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA).

According to sources, nine of the UDP’s 12 MLAs and all four TMC legislators, including former chief minister Mukul Sangma, are likely to join the BJP following a meeting in New Delhi on Sunday.

The possible crossover comes days after some UDP legislators met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the national capital. The legislators have publicly said the meeting was related to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), though sources claimed that a possible merger with the BJP was also discussed.

The UDP currently has 12 MLAs in the 60-member Assembly, while the TMC has four.

Under the anti-defection law, however, at least two-thirds of the legislators of a party must agree to a merger to avoid disqualification. This means eight UDP MLAs and three TMC legislators would be required for the proposed merger to meet the threshold.

If the crossover takes place, the BJP’s strength would rise to 15, making it the second-largest constituent of the NPP-led MDA government, ahead of the UDP.

Such a realignment could also trigger changes in the state Cabinet and the distribution of portfolios among ruling coalition partners.

The National People’s Party (NPP), led by Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, currently has 33 MLAs and has the numbers to form the government without the BJP, besides enjoying the support of smaller parties and independents.

Manipur’s JDF calls 24-hour strike over Census ahead of Assembly session

IMPHAL

The Joint Democratic Front (JDF) has called a 24-hour general strike across Manipur from midnight on Monday, demanding suspension of all Census-related activities in the state until the National Register of Citizens (NRC) is updated.

The strike comes ahead of the Manipur Legislative Assembly session scheduled to begin on September 2 and is the second such call by the Front in recent weeks.

JDF convenor Jeetendra Ningombam said the strike was aimed at mounting pressure on the state government to take a clear position on the demand during the upcoming Assembly session.

“The general strike will start from midnight today to press our demand ahead of the Assembly session, which is expected to be convened from day after tomorrow, September 2,” Ningombam told The Assam Tribune over the phone.

He urged Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, who has publicly supported updating the NRC, to take up the matter with the BJP-led government at the Centre.

Ningombam said people expected the government to announce a concrete decision on the Assembly floor to suspend Census-related activities in Manipur and outline a roadmap for updating the NRC.

The strike call followed a series of protests across the valley districts on Sunday, including a torch rally in Kakching that turned confrontational after police stopped protesters from marching towards the district headquarters.

The “No NRC, No Census” torch rally began at Wabagai-Hiyanglam

Lamkhai Keithel, with a large number of people from Wabagai, Hiyanglam and adjoining areas taking part.

Protesters raised slogans against conducting the Census before updating the NRC and also demanded the resettlement of internally displaced persons.

Tension escalated when the protesters attempted to proceed towards the Kakching district headquarters. Police stopped the procession near Keirak Dam, following which a confrontation broke out between the protesters and security personnel.

Police fired several rounds of tear gas to disperse the crowd. At least seven protesters, including four women, were detained in connection with the incident. They were reportedly released later.

Protests were also reported from several other locations, including Pheija Leitong, Lamangdong, Nepra Manjor Pukhrimapal, Moirang Bazar, Thoubal Ningombam Keithel, Singmaie Chingamakha, Kakching and Wangkhei Angom Leikai.

A Meira rally was also held at Wangkhei Angom Leikai as part of the wider campaign.

Ningombam said the Front would continue its agitation, with further protests planned on Monday at Ema Keithel and other locations.

“Today, too, we have lined up major protests at Ema Keithel and other places. Our campaign and pressure continue,” he said.

The protests come as the state government prepares for its first Assembly session since the latest political developments in Manipur, with the NRC and Census emerging as key issues for sections of the valley-based civil society.

Fresh firing in Manipur’s Kangpokpi leaves two dead, two injured; houses torched

IMPHAL

Two villagers were killed and two others injured after suspected cadres of the NSCN-IM and ZUF-K allegedly opened fire at N Teikhang Kuki village in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district on Monday morning, triggering fresh security concerns along the IT Road corridor.

The incident took place at around 9.30 am under the T Waichong sub-division, according to local sources. The attackers allegedly fired at villagers and subsequently set several houses on fire, forcing residents to flee amid the gunfire.

The deceased have been identified as Lamtinthang, who was reportedly killed in the firing, and Neichin, wife of Tongpao, the sources said.

Two others - Seilun and Nemneichong - sustained bullet injuries in the attack. Seilun was reportedly shot in the thigh, while his son Lamtinthang was among those killed.

The attack has heightened apprehension among residents in the Twilang belt along the IT Road, where armed confronta-

tions and incidents of firing have been reported in recent weeks.

Several houses were reportedly torched during Monday’s attack. The violence prompted villagers to leave their homes and seek safety as the situation remained tense.

The latest incident comes amid continuing tensions in the wider Twilang area, where repeated clashes and attacks on settlements have raised concerns over the safety of civilians living along the strategically important IT Road.

The remote villages in the area have also faced difficulties in movement and access to essential supplies and healthcare amid the prolonged security situation.

The attack on N Teikhang has further added to fears among residents, with civilian settlements in the belt increasingly vulnerable to armed clashes and retaliatory attacks.

Security forces are expected to intensify their presence in the area as authorities assess the incident and monitor the broader security situation along the IT Road corridor.



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INDO-CHINA
DIALOGUE

Five years on from the bloodshed at Galwan, the India-China relationship is being rebuilt brick by brick, and largely through the unglamorous instruments of statecraft rather than grand declarations. Direct flights have resumed after half a decade of silence in the skies. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, suspended for years, once again carries Indian pilgrims across the Himalaya. Border trade through passes such as Lipulekh and Shipki La has flickered back to life, and NSA Ajit Doval's extensive talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing this week mark the 25th round of the Special Representatives' dialogue on the boundary question. Each of these developments, taken alone, is modest. Taken together, they describe a relationship in genuine, if cautious, recovery.

Yet it would be a mistake to read this recovery as resolution. With 3,488 kilometres of border remain contested, much of it undemarcated and subject to competing claims that have hardened rather than softened over with time. The Upper Subansiri region of Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing insists on calling South Tibet, remains a live flashpoint, with reports of assertive Chinese troop movements surfacing even as diplomats exchange warm words in Beijing drawing rooms. This is the essential paradox of the current thaw: economic and cultural ties are visibly warming even as the fundamental territorial dispute that triggered Galwan in the first place stays essentially unresolved. Flights and pilgrimages restore the human texture of the relationship; they do not, by themselves, move a single boundary marker.

That is precisely why the structured mechanisms matter so much. The Special Representatives' framework, in place since 2003, has never delivered a final settlement. Still, it has proved its worth as a pressure valve - a channel through which recurring flare-ups can be managed before they metastasise into confrontation. Doval's visit, coming weeks ahead of President Xi Jinping's expected presence at the BRICS summit in India, is best understood in this light: not as a breakthrough, but as the necessary maintenance of a relationship that cannot be allowed to drift back towards the freeze of 2020. Progress on delimitation will, realistically, be measured by incremental understandings over years rather than sudden accords.

What has changed, and changed for the better, is the wider strategic context in which this bilateral relationship now sits. The tariff war launched by Washington, followed by the turbulence of the Iran-Israel-US confrontation, has left both New Delhi and Beijing newly conscious of the risks of an international order organised too tightly around a single dominant power and a single reserve currency. India and China together account for well over a third of humanity, and, on current trade figures exceeding one hundred billion dollars annually, are each other's indispensable economic partners whether they fully embrace that fact or not. BRICS offers both capitals a forum in which to hedge against dollar-centric trade without formally severing ties to the existing order - but that hedge only has credibility if the two largest members of the bloc are not simultaneously eyeing each other across a militarised frontier. This is the sense in which mutual interest, not sentiment, ought to be the organising principle of the relationship going forward. Neither country can choose its neighbour, and geography has bound India and China together for millennia regardless of the political temperature between them. Coexistence is not a concession; it is simply the recognition of an unalterable fact. Back-channel military-to-military contacts and front-facing ministerial dialogue are not mutually exclusive tracks but complementary ones, each reinforcing the other's credibility. Trade imbalances, restrictions on critical exports such as rare earths, and the unresolved question of cross-border terrorism sponsored from Pakistan will all continue to test the relationship's limits. None of this diminishes what has been achieved since 2020. But normalisation must be understood as a process, not an event - one that requires the two sides to keep talking. The choice before both capitals is not between confrontation and friendship, but between vigilant, patient engagement and the far costlier alternative of drift. Doval's visit to Beijing is one more instalment in that patient work. It should be judged not by whether it resolves the border question but by whether it keeps the channels open for the harder conversations still to come.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

After all, tomorrow is another day. - Margaret Mitchell

Ethnic Conflict in
Meghalaya — Which
Way to a Solution?



PRADIP DUTTA ROY

On 19 August, the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) organised a protest march in Shillong. The allegation was that the state government had been ignoring their previously declared demands. Among their demands was the provision for a public hearing before establishing a cement factory. They also demanded amendments to laws concerning the safety and security of the residents of Meghalaya and laws relating to migrant workers.

However, the march organised against the government unnecessarily turned violent. The participants allegedly attacked local pedestrians and 31 tourist vehicles from Assam. We are aware of what happened subsequently. Following blockades and counter-blockades along the Assam-Meghalaya border, government intervention, and the arrest of KSU leaders, the situation is currently under control, although an undercurrent of tension still persists.

However, amid all this turmoil, one issue appears to have received no response from either the Meghalaya or Assam governments. On that day, participants in the procession also vandalised the statues of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Swami Vivekananda at R.R. Colony in Shillong. Although the glass covering in front of Swamiji's statue was shattered by stone-pelting, the statue itself was not directly damaged. But Netaji's bust was actually broken and thrown to the ground. Not only that, it was reportedly kicked around like a football.

Although the Meghalaya government has made no response on the matter, the state's Department of Arts and Culture has reportedly assured that the two statues would be restored, beautified and reinstalled.

One may naturally wonder what was the purpose of carrying out such acts, which apparently had no connection with the demands of the procession, and why the government has remained silent on the matter. In reality, behind the insult to these eminent personalities lies an attitude and politics rooted in hostility towards so-called outsiders and the local Bengali population.

Such incidents have repeatedly been carried out by organisations like the KSU, and Meghalaya's history and popular politics have played a major role behind them.

Let us turn briefly to history to understand the matter:

According to the 2011 Census, Meghalaya's total population was approximately 30 lakh, of whom around 26 lakh were members of Scheduled Tribes and about 4 lakh were non-tribal people. In percentage terms, non-tribals constituted approximately 13.8 percent of the population. The non-tribal population includes Bengalis, Nepalis, Hajongs, Biyates, Koch, Rajbanshis, Boros, Dimasas and others. There are also smaller numbers of Punjabis, Sikhs, Biharis and Marwaris. According to the 2011 Census, the Bengali population in Shillong was around 2.32 lakh, accounting for approximately 6.4 percent of the total population.

The migration of non-tribal people, particularly Bengalis, into Shillong took place mainly in several phases:

1. During British colonial rule
In 1874, Shillong was declared the capital of the Chief Commis-

sioner's Province of Assam and became one of the major centres of British civil and military administration. Because educated, skilled and hardworking human resources were essential for administrative and economic purposes, people were brought to Shillong from different parts of India.

Bengalis were brought in for clerical work, teaching, accounting, business and other professions; Nepalis for the military, animal husbandry, carrying goods and transportation; and Marwaris, Sindhis and Gujaratis for commerce. People from various other communities also migrated to Shillong to meet different requirements.

As a result, even before Independence, Shillong and its surrounding areas had developed into a multi-ethnic and modern urban centre.

2. Partition in 1947 and the subsequent period

The manner in which the Indian subcontinent was divided by the stroke of the Radcliffe Line left countless people displaced from their ancestral homes. A large number of them, particularly Hindu Bengalis, were forced to flee to India. Some of them found refuge not only in West Bengal, Tripura and Assam, but also in Meghalaya.

This movement continued into the 1950s. The Relief and Rehabilitation Colony in R.R. Colony, where the aforementioned statue of Netaji was installed, was established in 1956 through a government initiative to rehabilitate refugees who had arrived from erstwhile East Pakistan.

3. The 1960s

Against the backdrop of continuing violence in East Pakistan, refugees also occasionally sought shelter in Meghalaya during this period. However, a large proportion of those who arrived during this phase belonged to the Garo, Hajong and other indigenous tribal communities.

4. 1971 and thereafter

There is no clear evidence regarding whether, and to what extent, migration into Meghalaya took place in 1971 and thereafter. Yet organisations such as the KSU have used this issue to label the entire Bengali community of Meghalaya as "illegal immigrants" or "Bangladeshis" and have continued to pursue politics on that basis.

Meghalaya emerged as a new state in 1972. Subsequently, it received recognition as a Sixth Schedule state. From then onwards, the grounds for conflict between tribal and non-tribal communities began to develop.

The special rights granted to tribal communities under the Sixth Schedule created a major question—not merely how to prevent further migration of non-tribals, but also how those non-tribal communities who had been living in this region for generations could be incorporated into the process of state-building.

The principal factors behind this concern included demographic apprehensions. There were also concerns regarding land rights, particularly because special powers concerning land were granted under the Sixth Schedule. At the same time, following the creation of the new state, the political power of tribal communities increased, and they became more influential.

In addition, the dominance of non-tribal communities in various local employment and economic sectors—such as government jobs, business and commerce, transportation and different professions—became another source of conflict.

Rapid urbanisation and the economic rise of Shillong, the capital, further intensified direct competition and conflict. However, two other factors must also be mentioned. First, continued migration from Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Nepal and other regions; and second, the impact of the "foreigner expulsion" or "Bengali expulsion" movements that took place in Assam during the 1970s and 1980s.

The tensions between tribal and non-tribal communities first took the form of an ethnic conflict in 1979. One of its principal targets was Meghalaya's Bengali community.

Although the conflict began over the immersion of a Kali idol in the local Laban-Villa area, it gradually

spread throughout the state. The Khasi Students' Union was at the forefront of the movement. More than 30 Bengalis were killed in the riots. Houses and business establishments were vandalised, set on fire and looted. A large number of people were forced to take shelter in relief camps.

In the aftermath of the riots, between 25,000 and 40,000 people were reportedly forced to leave the state permanently and settle elsewhere.

Since then, similar incidents have been repeated, with only the target community changing.

In 1987, members of the local Nepali community became the targets of attacks by tribal miscreants. Around 20 people were killed, several thousand were displaced, and houses, shops and commercial establishments were extensively attacked.

In 1992, local Biharis became the targets of attacks. More than 20 innocent citizens were killed, and around a thousand people were displaced. In addition, incidents occurred in Langpih on the Assam-Meghalaya border in 2010; in Shillong's Punjabi Lane in 2018, where Dalit Sikhs were attacked; and in Ichamati, near the India-Bangladesh border, in 2020, where three people were killed and around a hundred Bengalis were displaced.

One point deserves mention here. Although the overall population increased, the proportion of non-tribals in Meghalaya's total population declined between 1980 and 2011. The Bengali population declined from 8.95 percent to 7.84 percent, while the Nepali population declined from 4.59 percent to 1.84 percent.

Yet Bengalis and other non-tribal communities have made significant contributions to the development of modern Shillong and the state as a whole.

Through Bengali initiative, Laban Boys' School was established in Shillong in 1923 and New Colony School in 1964. Bengalis also played an important role in Shillong Law College, the first medical store and clinic, and various professional services during the 1960s.

The foundations of various businesses, transportation services and administrative activities were also laid by non-tribal communities.

But there has never been any example of non-tribal communities exercising domination over the indigenous tribal population. Rather, they participated alongside the tribal communities in the socio-economic development of the state.

At one point, there was a very close relationship of mutual cooperation between the two communities, and such cooperation still exists at the grassroots level.

A review of the overall course of events makes it clear that the concerns of tribal communities regarding non-tribals were not entirely without basis. However, if the government and the intellectual community had demonstrated goodwill and maintained an impartial approach, the problem could certainly have been resolved through dialogue.

Unfortunately, since the 1979 riots, hardly any of the miscreants responsible for the killing and assault of non-tribals, or for setting fire to their properties, have received any significant punishment.

Instead, non-tribals have gradually been labelled as "Dkhars" (outsiders) and "Bangladeshis", and have increasingly been reduced to second-class citizens.

It is clear that successive governments in Meghalaya have failed—whether for political reasons, out of fear, or deliberately—to bring such perpetrators to justice. They have also failed to restrain the unethical activities of organisations such as the KSU. Only in the aftermath of the present incident have some senior KSU leaders been brought within the ambit of the law, which is a rare exception. Some have argued that if the blockade along the Assam border had continued for a prolonged period, the state would have faced shortages of essential goods and an economic crisis. Therefore, the Chief Minister was compelled to take such measures.

As a result, non-tribal people living in Meghalaya have been liv-

ing under an invisible sense of fear for many decades. For more than four decades, their lives have been marked by uncertainty, insecurity and the constant need for self-protection.

Many may have chosen silence as the safer option, creating an invisible shield of silence around themselves. Circumstances that could genuinely reassure them

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Dear tobacco sellers, consider this your reality check

Stay 100 metres away from educational institutions or face action. A major enforcement drive in Tinsukia has already sent the message. Kindly mend your ways. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



have never been created. At present, tribal communities have 80 percent reservation in government employment. To compete for the remaining 20 percent of posts, proficiency in a local tribal language is required, which naturally places non-tribals at a disadvantage. Consequently, the representation of non-tribals in government employment is now extremely small.

Non-tribals who operate small business establishments are required to approach the District Council authorities for renewal of their trade licences, and these applications are reportedly kept pending on various pretexts and excuses. Thus, there is hardly any genuine level playing field for competition.

A few years ago, prominent citizens of Shillong submitted a memorandum to the present Chief Minister, Conrad Sangma, earnestly requesting the establishment of a separate Minority Development Department for the protection and development of Meghalaya's non-tribal communities. However, there appears to have been no significant progress on this matter to date.

Our Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to life and security and the right to live with dignity.

It must be acknowledged that these rights of Meghalaya's non-tribal communities have been violated for decades. If this situation continues, others too may gradually be forced to leave the state in the future.

Since the failure of the state government in this regard is evident, intervention by the Central Government is urgently necessary. There is no other alternative.

An initiative may perhaps be taken to rebuild the broken statues. But as citizens of this country, will any initiative also be taken to restore among Meghalaya's non-tribal communities their confidence in their own existence and in their right to live with dignity in their own homeland?

(The views expressed are solely those of the author.)

The author is the founding president of the student organisation AKSAR and an advocate of the Gauhati High Court.

Assam Cabinet clears Rs 50,000-crore development package, focuses on flood control, health and education

GUWAHATI

The Assam Cabinet has approved a Rs 50,000-crore package for capital-intensive infrastructure and welfare projects, with the government focusing on flood protection, healthcare, education, housing and connectivity across the state.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the decision on Sunday, saying the funds would be mobilised through the state's own resources, NABARD assistance and various Central government schemes.

The package includes projects aimed at improving living conditions in tea garden areas, expanding educational infrastructure and strengthening public services.



Housing for tea garden workers has been identified as one of the key areas of investment. The plan also covers the construction and strengthening of schools and colleges, student welfare initiatives, women's markets and hostels for women.

Flood management is another major component of the package, with funds earmarked for strengthening embankments and improving Assam's resilience to its recurring flood crisis.

The government also plans to invest in primary healthcare, Anganwadi centres, roads and power infrastructure under the package. The proposed spending

is expected to support the expansion of basic services while improving connectivity and other essential infrastructure.

Among the major healthcare projects approved by the Cabinet is a Rs 600-crore Proton Beam Therapy facility at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH).

The facility is intended to provide advanced cancer treatment and is expected to add a specialised treatment option to Assam's public healthcare system.

The package also includes measures to strengthen the state's industrial infrastructure, with the government seeking to combine large-scale capital investment with wel-

fare-oriented projects.

The Cabinet's decision comes as the Assam government looks to accelerate investment in infrastructure and public services, with a particular emphasis on projects requiring substantial upfront expenditure.

Sarma said the package was aimed at creating long-term assets and strengthening the state's development infrastructure rather than limiting spending to short-term interventions.

The government said the projects, spread across sectors including health, education, flood management, housing, roads and power, are intended to improve public services while supporting Assam's broader economic growth.

Nine Assam residents safe after Nepal floods; nine others remain untraced

GUWAHATI

Nine residents of Assam linked to the devastating floods in Nepal have been confirmed safe, while authorities are continuing efforts to trace nine others who remain unaccounted for, officials said on Sunday.

The latest figure includes seven people whose safety has been confirmed by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), along with two others - Gautam Das and Gopal Debnath - whose safety was confirmed separately by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The latest ASDMA list, dated August 30, contains 16 names of Assam residents who were reported missing or stranded in Nepal following the floods.

Of these, seven - Sonewar Narzary, Pankaj Barman, Samar Bezbaruah, Dr Tirtha Chaliha, Silva Marak, Sarbison Marak and Elipson Sangma - have been confirmed safe, an ASDMA official said.

The remaining nine - Rhituopurno Brahma, Montri Basumatary, Rahul Daimary, Shatadal Nath, Pankaj Naug, Arun Mahanta, Dr Dipali Sarkar, Manash Kr Ghosh and Birson Sangma - have not yet been traced or their safety confirmed.

Two teenagers killed after speeding vehicle runs over pedestrians in Dimapur



DIMAPUR

Two teenagers were killed after a speeding vehicle allegedly ran them over in Dimapur's Veterinary Colony on Saturday night, police said on Sunday.

According to the PRO of Dimapur Police, the vehicle first hit a motorcycle before colliding with a car and a tempo and subsequently running over the two pedestrians.

The teenagers sustained serious injuries and were taken to a hospital, where they later succumbed to their injuries.

The deceased were identified as 15-year-old Macagbou Charenamai, a resident of Manipur's Senapati district, and 17-year-old Gaisinlung Thangmei of Kohima. Both were living in Dimapur's Burma Camp area.

Police arrested the driver, identified as Bumei Phom, in connection with the incident.

A case has been registered at the East Police Station in Dimapur, and an investigation is underway to determine the circumstances leading to the accident.

The state government has pointed to its substantial committed expenditure, including salaries of government employees and pensions, while flagging the potential impact of the change in the fiscal support mechanism.

The issue assumes greater significance for Tripura as the state continues to manage its recurring expenditure commitments while preparing for the implications of the proposed 8th Pay Commission, which is expected to revise salaries of government employees.

Despite the tighter fiscal position, Saha said the state government would not put its recruitment programme on hold.

Rio says ILP must safeguard Naga identity without holding back development

KOHI MA

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Saturday said the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime must strike a balance between protecting the state's indigenous identity and enabling legitimate economic activity, arguing that the system should serve as more than a mechanism to regulate the movement of people.

Speaking at a national seminar on the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) Act, 1873, at Town Hall in Dimapur, Rio said the law and the ILP system should be used to protect Naga land, culture, customary practices and indigenous rights while creating space for investment and economic opportunities.

"We have to bring a system of using this BEFR 1873 which will protect Indian citizens, indigenous Nagas, and mutual interest for economic development," Rio said.

He said Nagaland should not isolate itself from the rest of the

country but should learn from others and adopt best practices while ensuring that the interests of its indigenous population remained protected.

Rio also referred to the extension of the ILP system to Dimapur, Chümoukedima and Niuland. The decision had been challenged in the Gauhati High Court, which upheld the state government's move.

The Chief Minister described the court verdict as a "big victory for Nagas" and said it also highlighted the constitutional significance of Article 371A.

Referring to the BEFR, Rio said its provisions prevent outsiders from purchasing immovable property in Nagaland. He cautioned, however, against using the law in a manner that could undermine its original purpose.

"We must judiciously use this Act, or otherwise, if we misuse and abuse it or try to harm others, it will harm ourselves," he said.

Rio said Nagaland's leaders

had played a role in ensuring the continuation of the BEFR in the state during the negotiations that led to the 16-Point Agreement.

He said customary laws, ownership and use of land and its resources, and religious and social practices were protected under Article 371A and needed to be preserved without turning the safeguards into instruments of exclusion or misuse.

The seminar also saw the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) push for a separate institutional mechanism to oversee implementation of the ILP regime. The NSF's Inner Line Regulation Commission submitted a representation to Rio seeking legislation to establish an autonomous Inner Line Regulation Commission for Nagaland.

The student body proposed that the commission be given powers to frame rules and regulations and ensure stricter and more consistent enforcement of the 1873 regulation. It also sought autonomy for the proposed body

to formulate policies aimed at ensuring a balanced implementation of the ILP system.

Senior advocate Prashant Bhushan, who addressed the seminar, raised constitutional questions over the ILP regime.

Bhushan referred to Article 29 of the Constitution, which protects the right of communities to conserve their language, script and culture, while also pointing to the fundamental right of citizens to move freely throughout India.

He questioned how restrictions on entry through an ILP could be reconciled with the constitutional guarantee of free movement, arguing that Nagaland and other northeastern states where the BEFR or ILP regime operates remain part of India.

The debate over the ILP therefore involves competing concerns - protection of indigenous communities and their land and culture on one hand, and constitutional rights and economic integration on the other.

Revenue gap fund withdrawal worries Northeast states; Tripura stares at Rs 4,000-crore annual shortfall



AGARTALA

The withdrawal of the revenue gap grant has triggered concern among northeastern states, with Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha saying the state could face an annual shortfall of around Rs 4,000 crore following the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission.

Saha said the issue had been raised collectively by the northeastern states with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during a meeting in Shillong.

According to the Chief Minister, the withdrawal of the revenue gap fund would put additional pressure on the finances of states that have traditionally depended on such support to meet their expenditure commitments.

The Centre has sanctioned a separate fund, titled 'Pride of Hills', to address the financial needs of the northeastern states. Saha, however, said the allocation would not be sufficient to make up for the revenue gap expected to arise from the withdrawal of the earlier support.

Tripura Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy had earlier estimated that the state could lose around Rs 4,000 crore a year, translating into a potential shortfall of nearly Rs 20,000 crore over five years.

The state government has pointed to its substantial committed expenditure, including salaries of government employees and pensions, while flagging the potential impact of the change in the fiscal support mechanism.

The issue assumes greater significance for Tripura as the state continues to manage its recurring expenditure commitments while preparing for the implications of the proposed 8th Pay Commission, which is expected to revise salaries of government employees.

Despite the tighter fiscal position, Saha said the state government would not put its recruitment programme on hold.

"We are committed to filling vacant posts as much as possible if there are no technical problems," he said.

The Chief Minister said the reduction in revenue-gap support would not, by itself, derail recruitment initiatives across government departments.

The revenue-gap grant is intended to help states whose assessed revenue receipts are insufficient to meet their projected expenditure requirements. The change in the Centre's fiscal support framework has therefore become a concern for northeastern states with relatively limited own-revenue bases and high expenditure commitments.

Saha said the northeastern states would continue to pursue the matter with the Centre, seeking financial arrangements that take into account the region's fiscal constraints and development requirements.

Sonowal pitches youth sports push in Assam, says India preparing athletes for 2036 Olympics

DIBRUGARH

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday stressed the need to identify and groom young sporting talent in Assam, saying India was already preparing a new generation of athletes with an eye on the 2036 Olympics.

Sonowal was speaking to reporters after inaugurating the first Samiran Bordoloi Memorial Inter Club Swimming Competition at the newly constructed swimming pool stadium in Dibrugarh. The Union minister said India's sporting ecosystem had undergone a significant transformation over the past 12 years, which he attributed to the sustained focus on sports under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said Indian athletes had produced strong performances at international competitions in recent years, helping generate greater interest in sports among young people. "Consequently, athletes have succeeded in delivering outstanding performances on major international stages, which in turn has significantly inspired the new generation," Sonowal said.

He said the focus now should be on identifying

promising athletes early and providing them with the training and support required to compete at the highest level.

"I believe that preparations are already underway to groom our young athletes so that they can participate in the 2036 Olympics, which India is set to host," he said.

Sonowal's remarks come as India looks to expand its sporting infrastructure and talent pipeline ahead of a series of major international sporting events. He also referred to the 2030 Commonwealth Games, which will be hosted by Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

Following the conclusion of the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, the Commonwealth Games Federation flag was handed over to Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, representing the next host state. The flag was subsequently presented to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and is set to remain in Gujarat until the 2030 Games.

The hosting of major sporting events, Sonowal said, would provide another opportunity to encourage young people to take up sports and build a stronger sporting culture.

Manipur CM backs NRC update, urges protesters to call off bandh and blockades

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday backed the demand for an update of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state but urged groups spearheading the agitation to shun bandhs and blockades, saying such disruptions would only add to the hardships of ordinary people.

The appeal came ahead of a proposed 24-hour shutdown by the Campaign for Just and Fair Delimitation (JFD) from midnight on August 31. The group has threatened the bandh over its demand that the Census be deferred until the NRC is updated.

The JFD has also indicated that its next phase of agitation would be linked to the Manipur Assembly session, which begins on September 2.

Speaking to the Directorate of Information and Public Relations before leaving for New Delhi, Khemchand said both the state and Central governments were committed to addressing the concerns raised by civil society groups.

He said a recent campaign by 14 civil society organisations, along with a delegation of MLAs that travelled to New Delhi to press for an NRC update before the Census, had received a positive response from the Centre.



Khemchand said there was little merit in resorting to shutdowns when discussions with the Centre were already underway.

"Bandh will not serve any purpose," the Chief Minister said, appealing to organisations to adopt other democratic means to press their demands.

He said shutdowns disproportionately affect people dependent on daily earnings, particularly women vegetable vendors and daily-wage workers. Students, too, suffer when educational institutions are disrupted and the academic calendar is affected, he said.

The Chief Minister, however, reiterated the state government's support for updating the NRC in Manipur. The issue has emerged as a major political and social flashpoint ahead of Census 2027,

with civil society organisations arguing that the exercise should be preceded by an NRC update.

Several groups have also demanded that 1951 be used as the base year for identifying citizens, while opposing the conduct of the Census before the NRC exercise.

The agitation has so far included rallies, road blockades and protests against Census-related training programmes in parts of the state.

The state government has maintained that it is pursuing the NRC issue with the Centre. Earlier this month, Khemchand had said the government was working towards taking the demand forward, while Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam said Manipur was prepared to undertake the exercise within the constitutional and legal framework.

Khemchand also warned that while peaceful democratic protest was legitimate, those attempting to disrupt public order or violate the law would face action.

The Chief Minister is scheduled to meet senior Central leaders in New Delhi to discuss issues concerning the state.

Meanwhile, the government has also highlighted the restoration of the Imphal-Dimapur-Guwahati bus service after a gap of more than three years.

Khemchand said the resumption of the service would provide an affordable alternative for people travelling between Imphal and Guwahati, many of whom have had to rely on costly air travel during the period when the bus service remained suspended.

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NEET-PG 2026 concludes successfully; over 2.66 lakh candidates take test across 339 cities



NEW DELHI

The National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) successfully conducted the NEET-PG 2026 examination on Sunday, 30 August 2026, across the country with comprehensive logistical, technological, security and manpower arrangements to ensure a fair, secure and seamless examination process, as per the press release.

The examination was scheduled for 2,73,096 candidates at 1,111 examination centres across 339 cities, covering all 36 States and Union Territories. A total of 2,65,980 candidates appeared for the examination, with the examination completed for approximately 2,63,535 candidates.

The nationwide examination was supported by extensive real-time monitoring and stringent security measures. A total of 2,527 faculty members were appointed as Independent Appraisers to oversee the conduct of the examination. In addition, more than 700 senior faculty members, includ-

ing Deans, Directors, Medical Superintendents and senior professors, were deployed as Flying Squad members.

To strengthen coordination and monitoring, 16 NBEMS Regional Command Centres were made operational across the country.

The examination centres were also placed under live CCTV surveillance, which was continuously monitored from the NBEMS Command Centre at its Headquarters in Dwarka. A dedicated team of 190 personnel from NBEMS and TCS was deployed for real-time surveillance and monitoring.

At the dedicated Command Centre at NBEMS Headquarters, officials from NBEMS, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, BEL, ECIL and TCS maintained close and continuous oversight of the examination process throughout the day.

As part of measures to further strengthen examination security and prevent impersonation, Aadhaar-based authentication of candidates

was successfully undertaken at examination centres. Government agencies extended their full support towards the secure and orderly conduct of the examination.

While the examination was completed for the overwhelming majority of candidates nationwide, an unforeseen technical disruption occurred at iON Digital Zone iDZ Sitapura Centres, Jaipur, Rajasthan (TC Nos. 41682 and 41683), where the examination could not be completed for 2,445 candidates due to internal power supply issues at the test centres, attributable to M/s TCS Ltd., the examination conducting agency.

NBEMS deeply regrets the inconvenience caused to the affected candidates and has taken prompt steps to ensure that they are provided a fair and equitable opportunity to appear in NEET-PG 2026.

Accordingly, re-examination of all affected candidates will be conducted on Saturday, 5 September 2026, at 3:00 PM in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Venue details and other examination-related instructions will be communicated separately to the concerned candidates.

The successful conduct of the examination across 1,111 centres in 339 cities reflects the extensive coordination among examination authorities, medical institutions, faculty, security agencies, technology teams and other stakeholders involved in the nationwide exercise.

The NBEMS has appreciated the cooperation, patience and trust of the candidates and acknowledges the dedicated efforts of all personnel and institutions associated with the conduct of NEET-PG 2026.

India, Uzbekistan elevate ties to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, target USD 5 billion trade by 2030



NEW DELHI

The two countries also agreed to establish a long-term arrangement for the supply of uranium from Uzbekistan to India as part of their cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sector.

The Modi-Mirziyoyev talks covered a wide range of areas, including trade and investment, infrastructure, critical minerals, mining, defence and security, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, information technology, digital public infrastructure including UPI, and education.

The current bilateral trade

between India and Uzbekistan is worth more than USD 1 billion. Modi said both sides would work in a structured manner to address issues related to market access, banking, payment systems and connectivity.

“Uzbekistan is at the heart of Central Asia and is at the heart of India’s engagement in the region,” Modi said, adding that a stronger India-Uzbekistan partnership would be a “powerful force for peace, progress and prosperity in Central Asia”.

On defence cooperation, Modi said the two countries would

encourage their defence industries to pursue direct linkages, co-development and co-production of military hardware.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during the joint press meet after the exchange of MoUs, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

He said terrorism, extremism and separatism posed serious challenges to the region, adding that maintaining a policy of zero tolerance towards these threats would remain a shared resolve.

The two sides also agreed to

establish a Coordination Council at the level of foreign ministers to provide direction to all aspects of bilateral cooperation. Their existing joint commission will also be elevated from the secretary level to the ministerial level.

India and Uzbekistan will jointly organise a business summit involving business leaders from both countries, Modi said.

The two leaders witnessed the exchange of several agreements covering areas including mining, culture, education, tourism and ayurveda.

A Letter of Intent was also agreed upon for the restoration and conservation of the Buddhist sites of Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa in Uzbekistan. The ancient monasteries in southern Uzbekistan are associated with the spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road and its flourishing in Central Asia.

“We are celebrating the 15th anniversary of our strategic partnership. I am delighted that, on this special occasion, we are elevating our ties to the level of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,” Modi said during the bilateral talks.

He also referred to the “productive discussion” he had with Mirziyoyev over dinner on Saturday, saying the two leaders had taken several important decisions.

Mirziyoyev said Uzbekistan was determined to expand cooperation with India across sectors including energy, culture, critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, jewellery and agriculture.

“We will prepare roadmaps for each of these sectors; specific teams from India will visit here, and our teams will travel to India, enabling us to clearly define our objectives in these fields,” the Uzbek president said.

Modi arrived in Tashkent on Saturday for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening cooperation with Uzbekistan in areas including trade, investment, defence and clean energy.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran’s supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei calls for Muslim unity against US, Israel



TEHRAN

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyid Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei has called for unity among Muslims and urged Islamic countries to identify and confront what he called their “true enemy”.

In a series of X posts on Sunday, Khamenei said the “enemy of Islam” seeks to exploit racial, cultural, social, economic, political and geographical differences to sow division among Muslims and weaken their strength.

“The enemy of Islam strives to turn racial, cultural, social, economic, political, and geographical difference into a pretext for sowing division among the Muslims to see the erosion of their strength, as he waits for an opportune moment to impose his dominance over them,” Khamenei said.

“Anyone in any position who does

an action that leads to a division among the Muslims and creates strife within the Islamic community - whether this is done knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally - has advanced the agenda of the enemies of Islam,” he said.

“And in this day and age, how could anyone attribute this act to ignorance or negligence, when the world’s tyrants, with the criminal US at their forefront, have stripped the deceptive, flimsy masks from the hideous face of their colonial objectives & arrogant, domineering plots?” Khamenei said.

Referring to Palestine, he questioned whether the situation would have been the same had Muslims been united.

“If the Muslims had been a single, united hand, which is clenching its fist with firm resolve, would the nation of Palestine have been left so

defenceless in this way and subjected to the oppression and crimes of the occupiers?” he said.

Khamenei also called for unity among nations and governments on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

“If the nations and governments on the shores of the Persian Gulf had firmly established their unity under the banner of Islam, would corrupt, unprincipled scoundrels have dared to covet their lands and wealth from thousands of kilometres away?” he said.

He urged the rulers of Islamic countries, particularly those in West Asia and along the Persian Gulf, to identify their “true enemy”.

“My repeated, emphatic recommendation to the rulers of Islamic countries, particularly those in the West Asian region and along the Persian Gulf, is that you must know who your true enemy is, understand

their plots, and confront them,” he said.

“The solution to the Islamic Ummah’s problems lies in maintaining unity, friendship, and cooperation in the pursuit of goodness and virtue,” Khamenei said.

He also identified the United States and Israel as opponents of Muslim unity and friendship.

“The criminal rulers of the US and the illegitimate Zionist regime are the sworn enemies of this unity [among Muslims] and friendship,” he said.

“The criminal rulers of the US and the illegitimate Zionist regime hold an enmity toward the entire Islamic Ummah. In this regard, not even the rulers of these countries - many of whom are considered to be their allies - are exempt,” Khamenei said.

“And the blatant disrespect and derogatory remarks of the leaders of Global Arrogance directed toward certain leaders of Islamic countries are still fresh in your memory and ours,” he said. Earlier on Saturday, in an address outlining state economic strategy, Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei said boosting domestic production and reducing reliance on the US dollar in key transactions are essential to building a self-reliant “Resistance Economy”. Highlighting the duties of a service-oriented administration, the supreme leader, in a post on X, framed economic resilience not merely as a policy choice, but as a mandatory national framework to counter external financial pressure and achieve long-term stability.

His remarks came as, on August 24, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the launch of “Operation Economic Outcast”, saying the campaign aims to sever Iran’s financial connections around the world and cut off revenue sources supporting the Iranian regime.

Nepal floods: Families pick up pieces, try to rebuild lives amid debris



KATMANDU

Families in flood-hit Nepal have begun returning to their homes to salvage belongings and rebuild their lives after the devastating flash floods that swept through the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli river system on August 26.

The death toll crossed 700 on Sunday, while around 2,500 people remain missing as rescue teams continue search operations across northern and central Nepal.

In Galchhi, about 50 km northwest of Kathmandu, residents are clearing mud and debris from their damaged homes.

“Everything was here before, but now there is nothing left. Everything has been destroyed. It feels really bad. But we will rebuild it. We will work hard and make the house like it was before,” said Class 11 student Nayan Tiwari.

Nayan said he was in Kathmandu when the floods struck and immediately asked his family in Galchhi to move to higher ground. Soon after they left, floodwaters swept through the area, damaging their home and washing away more than

15 nearby houses.

His cousin Nivi Tiwari also returned from Kathmandu to find their family home buried under mud and sand.

“I had never seen such a devastating flood before. When I came back and saw my house, I felt completely helpless,” she said.

“We are working hard with our family to make this house like it was before. We will repair it soon because our childhood was spent here. We learned to walk and read in this house. Now it has been badly damaged, but we will rebuild it,” she added.

In Galchhi, about 50 km northwest of Kathmandu, residents are clearing mud and debris from their damaged homes.

In Trishuli in Nuwakot district, residents searched through wreckage for belongings and missing relatives, while displaced families gathered at relief camps in Devighat for food and shelter.

A catering worker at one of the camps said free meals would continue for as long as survivors needed them.

“We will not say that the food supply has ended. Whoever

comes here will be provided free meals,” the worker said.

At a teaching hospital in Kathmandu, families gathered outside the morgue as photographs of flood victims were displayed to help identify those still missing.

Among the missing are eight men from Bihar’s Samastipur district who were working at a tyre and hardware shop in Nuwakot district. Their phones remain unreachable, relatives said.

The floods also stranded pilgrims returning from Nepal. Kerala resident Renjitha Vinay Kumar said she witnessed huge trees being swept away.

“It’s a blessing that we escaped and survived,” she said.

Another pilgrim, Vineeth Kumar, recalled seeing water rushing through the area with tremendous force.

“About 500-600 metres away, we saw water gushing out like a tsunami,” he said.

The disaster was triggered by an ice-rock avalanche following a glacial collapse near the Nepal-Tibet border, sending a massive torrent of water, mud and debris downstream through the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli rivers.

Northeast India Can Become a Strategic Gateway for India's Emerging Space Economy: SIA-India



GUWAHATI

The first day of the Northeast India Space Workshop 2026 – “Leveraging Space Technology: Regional Transformation to Global Reach”, organised by the Space Industry Association of India (SIA-India) in partnership with the North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC) explored an opportunity that extends beyond the deployment of space technologies for regional development. The discussions examined how the Northeast can build a stronger role within India's evolving space ecosystem by leveraging its unique geography, strategic location and institutional capabilities to advance space-enabled connectivity, disaster resilience, innovation, manufacturing and national security, while creating pathways for regional enterprises and talent to participate in emerging national and international opportunities.

“For the first time, SIA-India is taking its national space-industry dialogue beyond New Delhi and bringing it to the Northeast. This is more than a change of location; it is a change in perspective. India's space economy is becoming more distributed, more private and more application-driven, and our conversations must travel to where new opportunities, challenges, talent and enterprises are emerging.” — Dr Subba Rao Pavuluri, President, SIA-India

The discussions on Day One examined how the region can develop a shared Vision 2030 for its participation in India's New Space economy, while recognising Assam's potential to act as an important economic and institutional centre for the wider Northeast. The conversation also placed the region's space opportunity within the larger national objective. “The question before us is not simply what the Northeast will look like in 2030, but what vision we must build today to shape its journey towards 2047” — Shri Satinder Kumar Bhalla, ITS, Secretary, North Eastern Council (NEC)

The discussions also highlighted the need to view space-enabled infrastructure as an increasingly critical component of regional development and resilience. For Assam, this means integrating satellite communications, Earth observation, geospatial intelligence and space-derived data more systematically into planning and delivery across critical sectors, while creating predictable pathways for private industry to contribute to these capabilities.

The emphasis was on moving from technology deployment to reliable, real-time services that can support citizens, institutions and critical infrastructure across

the region. The focus was on improving the quality and availability of data and, crucially, converting it into information that enables timely decisions on the ground. “The vision is not about how many satellites are launched, but about how effectively space technology can translate better data and real-time information into action on the ground. The real challenge is bridging the gap between knowledge and action—ensuring that this information reaches citizens, officials and ground workers in time, so they have the knowledge and the opportunity to prepare and respond.” — Shri Pallav Gopal Jha, Secretary, Science & Technology, Government of Assam

Discussions examined opportunities for local industries, MSMEs and startups to build capabilities, strengthen supply-chain linkages and participate in emerging areas of space and semiconductor manufacturing, supported by appropriate infrastructure, skills, investment and policy frameworks.

“The Northeast may account for only about 8% of India's geographical area, but its strategic and natural significance is far greater. As a biodiversity hotspot and India's gateway to Southeast Asia, the region has immense potential to contribute to the country's space economy. We must reimagine the Northeast not merely as a user of space technology, but as a creator of space-based solutions, by building a strong ecosystem of startups, innovation and indigenous capabilities within the region.” — Dr S. P. Agarwal, Director, North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC)

Its geographical position also opens a wider horizon for the space ecosystem emerging in the region. As India deepens its engagement with Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific, the Northeast can play an increasingly important role in connecting India's technological and economic capabilities with neighbouring markets. The very characteristics that make the region one of India's most challenging operating environments can also make it a natural testbed for space-enabled solutions—from connectivity across difficult terrain and disaster resilience to Earth observation, geospatial intelligence and border awareness. Solutions developed for these requirements could, over time, find relevance across other parts of India and the wider Indo-Pacific.

“The Northeast must build the scale to support innovation, startups and a strong technology ecosystem. Our focus is not only on bringing solutions into the region, but on enabling the talent and enterprises of the Northeast to create, develop and take those solutions to the rest of the world.” — Shri Anil Prakash, Director General, SIA-India

To help build this entrepreneurial pipeline, SIA-India is working with the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) and the Government of Assam to establish a Centre for

Space Entrepreneurship in Assam.

The proposed Centre will create a platform for startups, innovators and emerging enterprises in the region to access mentorship, industry networks, technical knowledge and market linkages, while creating direct linkages with the Centre of Excellence in Space Technology in Bengaluru. This linkage is intended to enable a free flow of ideas, knowledge, experiences and best practices between the Northeast and established space-technology ecosystems, helping regional innovators connect with the wider national space industry.

The workshop brought together a distinguished cross-section of policymakers, government officials, space institutions, defence and security experts, and industry leaders, including Shri Satinder Kumar Bhalla, Secretary, North Eastern Council (NEC); Shri Pallav Gopal Jha, Secretary, Science & Technology, Government of Assam; Dr. S.P. Agarwal, Director, North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NE-

SAC); Dr. Subba Rao Pavuluri, President, SIA-India; Shri Anil Prakash, Director General, SIA-India; Lt Gen Rana Kalita, former Commander, Eastern Command; Dr. Nayanjyoti Goswami, Managing Director, AISF; Dr. Saraj J. Saikia, Managing Director, Spacefaring Technologies; and senior representatives from BSNL, Hughes Communications India, Gilat Satellite Networks, KPMG India, XDLINX Space Labs, GalaxEye and other organisations.

Day Two will take this conversation forward, with the participation of the Hon'ble Governor of Tripura, Shri Indra Sena Reddy Nallu, bringing an additional state-level perspective to the deliberations and further broadening the regional character of the workshop. As India's space economy enters a phase of deeper commercialisation and wider participation, the Northeast has an opportunity to shape that journey in its own right. The next step is to move from identifying potential to building the partnerships, capabilities and enterprises that can realise it.

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KRC TIMES is a journalistic initiative from KRC Foundation where we follow our core philosophy of 'Connecting the unconnected' We cater to the untold and unheard stories with an aim to reach the last mile.

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- 5E FOR SUCCESS- PROMOTING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYABILITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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