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PERSPECTIVE

Don't be afraid of growing old. A lot of people never make it that far.

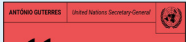
John Abraham backs Meghalaya's anti-drug campaign, announces football academy

SHILLONG
Actor and Northeast United FC co-owner John Abraham joined Meghalaya's anti-drug campaign on Saturday, announcing plans to establish a football academy in the state while urging young people to embrace sports as a pathway to a healthier future.

The announcement came during "Pulse of the Hills: Every Beat Against Drugs," an awareness programme organised by the Meghalaya Social Welfare Department in collaboration with the Drug Reduction, Elimination and Action Mission (DREAM) at the State Guest House, Taraghar, under the patronage of Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma. Addressing students at the event, Abraham stressed the importance of discipline, physical fitness and staying away from substance abuse.Expressing his admiration for the state, the actor thanked Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, describing him as "one of the nicest human beings," and reiterated his affection for Shillong and the Northeast.Calling the region a "hotbed of football," Abraham announced that his football academy would be ready within the next two years."I want to see a Ronaldo or a Messi coming from the Northeast," he said, adding that sports can play a transformative role in empowering young people and steering them away from drugs. Social Welfare Adviser Paul Lyngdoh, who attended the programme as the chief guest, said Meghalaya is making significant strides in sports and youth development.Highlighting the proposed football academy, the construction of what he described as India's largest football stadium in Shillong and increased investments in the social sector, Lyngdoh said the state is "poised for a future brighter than the sun."

During the programme, dignitaries flagged off a vehicle provided by the Social Welfare Department with support from the DREAM Mission for the Asha Bhavan Rehabilitation Centre in Tura. The vehicle will strengthen rehabilitation and outreach initiatives under the state's anti-drug campaign.

WHO SAID WHAT



“Extreme heat is not a future threat. It is here. It is becoming more dangerous. And unless we act to protect people & tackle the root cause of the crisis it will become deadlier still.”
@antonioguterres as @WMO forecasts even hotter months ahead.

Four killed in suspected toxic gas leak while cleaning underground tank in Cachar

SILCHAR

Four persons died after allegedly inhaling toxic gas while cleaning an underground water tank at a newly constructed house in Assam's Cachar district on Friday, with authorities launching an investigation to determine the exact cause of the tragedy.

The incident occurred at Nij Jayanagar in Kumarpara under the Borkhola Assembly constituency. The deceased were identified as Niloy Pal, Debashish Pal, Nandan Pal and Champu Pal.

According to preliminary reports, one of the daily-wage workers entered the underground tank to clean it but lost consciousness. Three others subsequently entered the confined space one after another in an attempt to rescue him. They too collapsed inside the tank and could not be revived.

Cachar Additional Superintendent of Police Rajat Pal said the exact nature and source of the suspected gas are yet to be determined.

"The exact nature and source of the suspected gas are yet to be ascertained and the entire tragic incident is being investigated," he said.

Personnel from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), police and the civil administration rushed to the spot after receiving information

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Assam mulls Rs 10,000 emergency advance for Orunodoi beneficiaries

GUWAHATI

The Assam government is considering introducing an emergency advance facility of up to Rs 10,000 for beneficiaries of its flagship Orunodoi scheme, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Friday.

The proposed initiative is aimed at enabling women beneficiaries to meet urgent financial needs during emergencies. Under the plan, the advance amount would be recovered through small monthly deductions from future Orunodoi payments.

Speaking at a programme, Sarma said the government was examining the proposal as part of its efforts to strengthen the social security net provided under the scheme.

The Chief Minister said financial assistance under Orunodoi is currently being provided to nearly 37 lakh women, with beneficiaries receiving Rs 9,000 from April onwards. He described the welfare programme as one of the government's highest priorities in the current financial year. Sarma also said the state government is working to link Orunodoi benefits with Aadhaar and ensure beneficiaries' bank accounts are Aadhaar-seed-



ed to curb fraudulent claims and ensure assistance reaches genuine recipients.He noted that around 17,000 beneficiaries may experience temporary delays in receiving payments due to the ongoing Aadhaar-linking process. However, the government is taking measures to complete the process and ensure timely disbursement of benefits.

Meanwhile, Assam Cabinet Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah announced that Orunodoi beneficiaries affected

by the recent floods would receive an additional Rs 2,500 as financial assistance.He also said nearly 36 lakh women associated with the scheme would contribute Rs 150 each towards flood relief efforts.To improve the implementation of the programme, the government has assigned specific responsibilities to Orunodoi Sarathis, with one Sarathi designated for every locality to assist beneficiaries and help resolve issues related to the scheme.

Long queues at Imphal petrol pumps as fuel transporters launch indefinite strike



IMPHAL

Long queues were witnessed at petrol pumps across Imphal on Saturday after fuel supplies were disrupted following an indefinite strike called by the Manipur Petroleum Transporters and Drivers Association (MPTDA) over alleged illegal roadside tax collection along National Highway-37.

The state government, however, appealed to the public not to resort to panic buying, assuring that adequate fuel stocks are available and steps are being taken to maintain uninterrupted supplies.

The strike began after the transporters' association alleged that Petro-

leum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) tankers were being subjected to illegal tax collection by criminal elements along the Imphal-Jiribam stretch of NH-37. The association had submitted an ultimatum to the Chief Minister on July 15, seeking government intervention within 15 days.

Director of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (CAF&PD), Y. Nelson, said the state currently has sufficient reserves to meet immediate demand.

According to the department, Manipur has fuel stocks sufficient for nine days of petrol, 25 days of diesel, seven days of kerosene, 17 days of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), and eight days of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).The state's daily consumption stands at 300 kilolitres (KL) of petrol, 400 KL of diesel, 10 KL of kerosene, 34 KL of ATF, and 169 KL of LPG, officials said.

Nelson said the government is in constant coordination with petroleum transporters to ensure the continued movement of fuel supplies. He added that the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) depot at Malom currently has 540 KL of fuel in stock.

Officials also said that 74 loaded fuel tankers are currently moving along the Imphal-Jiribam route to replenish supplies across the state.

Authorities warned that panic buying could rapidly exhaust existing stocks and force fuel retail outlets to temporarily suspend sales, urging the public to purchase fuel only as required.

Ambulance driver stabbed in parking dispute at Silchar Medical College, accused held



SILCHAR

An ambulance driver was seriously injured after he was allegedly stabbed multiple times during a parking dispute at the Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH) on Friday, police said.

According to reports, the incident occurred following an argument between two ambulance drivers, identified as Raju Kar and Bappu Laskar, over parking inside the hospital premises. The verbal altercation soon escalated into a physical confrontation.

Police said Laskar allegedly attacked Kar with a sharp weapon, inflicting injuries on five to six parts of his body. Several security personnel who intervened to stop the assault also reportedly sustained injuries during the scuffle.

Kar was immediately shifted to Silchar Medical College and Hospital for treatment, where his condition was reported to be serious.

Police personnel rushed to the scene, brought the situation under control and arrested the accused. The incident briefly triggered tension inside the hospital campus.

Following the attack, members of the Bajrang Dal reached the hospital and demanded stringent legal action against the accused.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation to ascertain the circumstances leading to the violent clash.

Manipur's Jadumani Singh enters Commonwealth Games boxing final, assured of silver

IMPHAL

Manipur boxer Mandengbam Jadumani Singh secured a place in the men's 55kg final at the Commonwealth Games 2026, defeating Namibia's Philip Pumulo Mutakela Haoseb in a commanding semifinal bout to move within one win of a gold medal.

With the victory, Jadumani has already assured India of at least a silver medal and will now fight for the top podium finish in the final.

Speaking after the bout, the Indian pugilist said he had arrived at the Games with the sole objective of winning gold for the country."The opponent was great today. I also strategised on how to play. I came here to win the gold medal. I will dedicate it to the entire country and my coach," Jadumani said.The Manipur boxer's progression to the final triggered celebrations in his home state, with family members expressing pride and confidence ahead of the title clash.His elder brother, Robinson Mandengbam, said the family had always believed Jadumani would make it to the final."We are feeling ecstatic. He has reached the final, and we are very happy. We were confident that he would win; we always believed he would win," Robinson said.Jadumani will now compete for the Commonwealth Games gold medal in the men's 55kg category, carrying India's hopes and aiming to add another major international title to his growing achievements.



Tripura's Asmita Dey scripts history with India's first-ever Commonwealth Games judo gold

AGARTALA

Tripura's Asmita Dey created history by becoming the first Indian judoka to win a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games, clinching the women's 48kg title at the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games.The 23-year-old from Belonia produced a remarkable performance to secure India's maiden Commonwealth Games gold in judo, marking a watershed moment for both the country and the northeastern state.Asmita advanced through a challenging draw, defeating Scotland's Eva Ewing by ippon in the quarter-finals before overcoming another home favourite, Summer Shaw, in the semi-finals.In the gold-medal bout, she faced Canada's Heidi Quach in a closely contested encounter. Despite trailing during the contest, Asmita kept her composure, forced the match into Golden Score, and executed the decisive throw to seal a historic victory.

Born on March 22, 2003, in Belonia, South Tripura, Asmita hails from a humble family. Her father, Arjun Kumar Dey, runs a bicycle repair shop. Initially an athletics competitor in the 800 metres, she switched to judo after being encouraged by a coach, a decision that transformed her sporting career.She began training under Bina Debnath at the Belonia Vidyapeeth Coaching Centre before joining the Tripura Sports School, where she trained under Manik Lal Deb. Her consistent performances later earned her admission to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Regional Centre, Bhopal, in 2018, where she trained under coach Yashpal Solanki and became

part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) development programme.

Asmita first made her mark internationally in 2022, becoming the first athlete from Tripura to win an international judo medal at the Asian

Cadet and Junior Judo Competition in Thailand. She followed it up with a gold medal in the women's 48kg category at the Junior Asia Cup in Macau in 2023 and a silver medal at the Asian Open in Kuwait.

In 2025, she claimed her maiden senior international title at the Casablanca African Open in Morocco, while a fifth-place finish at the 2025 Asian Senior Championships further established her among India's leading judokas.

On the domestic circuit, Asmita has won multiple titles at the Khelo India University Games and emerged as the junior national champion during the 2023-24 season.Congratulating the judoka, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha described her achievement as a historic moment for both the state and the nation.

"Tripura's daughter Asmita Dey creates history. A daughter of Tripura has once again brought glory to the state on the international stage. The talented judoka from Belonia has achieved a historic feat by winning the gold medal in the 48kg judo category at the Commonwealth Games," the Chief Minister

Manipuri short film 'Toy Gun' selected for Oscar-qualifying BISFF 2026, Jagran Film Festival



IMPHAL

Manipuri short film Toy Gun has added two more milestones to its festival journey after being selected for the Indian Competition section of the 16th Bengaluru International Short Film Festival (BISFF) 2026, India's only Oscar-qualifying short film festival, and the 14th Jagran Film Festival 2026. Written and directed by Thingnam Parshuram, the 14-minute 55-second film follows the story of a widowed

mother and her young son living under the lingering shadow of past violence. Through a restrained and intimate narrative, Toy Gun explores how memories of conflict continue to shape everyday lives long after the violence has ended. The film has steadily gained recognition on the national festival circuit since its world premiere at the Hyderabad International Short Film Festival (HISFF) 2025, where it won the First Runner-Up Award. It later received the Best Non-Feature Film award at the North East India Film Festival 2026 and has since been screened at several national film festivals. Its latest selections at BISFF 2026 and the Jagran Film Festival further strengthen the film's growing national profile and highlight the increasing recognition of Manipuri cinema at leading film platforms.

Produced by Khumallambam Omeshwori, Toy Gun stars Leishangthem Tonthoi and Thingnam Parihanba in the lead roles, with music composed by Akhu Chingangbam.

With its emotionally resonant storytelling and consistent festival success, Toy Gun continues to bring national attention to the richness and diversity of Manipuri cinema.



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ENTRANCE
EXAMINATION
REFORMS



PM Narendra Modi's choice to personally announce the formation of a high-powered task force under Nandan Nilekani - architect of Aadhaar and one of the principal builders of India's digital public infrastructure - signals that the paper leak crisis has finally been elevated to the highest level of political attention. That the announcement came directly from the Prime Minister, in a video message rather than through a ministerial statement, is itself significant. The Government is no longer content to let the Education Ministry manage this crisis alone.

The urgency is not misplaced. The resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as Education Minister, following a 36-day agitation led by the Cockroach Janata Party at Jantar Mantar, was a rare moment of accountability in Indian public life. It reflected the scale of anger among students who have watched years of preparation undone by leaked question papers, cancelled exams and endless litigation. The PM's move to simultaneously push a Bill in Parliament - the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 - with provisions for fast-track courts, ten-year jail terms and fines running into crores shows an intent to attack the problem on two fronts: punishment through law and prevention through systemic reform via the Nilekani-led task force. The composition of the task force, drawing on a former ISRO chairman, a former Intelligence Bureau director, an IIT Chennai director, a former Education Secretary and a logistics expert, suggests the Government understands that this is not merely a technology problem but one involving security, logistics, personnel and institutional design all at once.

Yet a note of caution is essential. This is not the first task force, nor the first committee, that Governments have constituted to fix examination integrity. The Supreme Court itself has, in the past, weighed in on the NTA's functioning, recommending an expansion of its permanent staff and infrastructure precisely because the agency has leaned too heavily on outsourced vendors for question-paper printing, transport and centre management. This has repeatedly been identified as the weak link through which papers leak. Despite these warnings, 2026 saw yet another NEET leak, proving that recommendations on paper are worthless unless implemented with rigour and audited continuously. The Government must resist the temptation to treat a new committee as a substitute for acting on the old ones.

There is also a structural blind spot that neither the task force nor the new Bill fully addresses: the private coaching-institute ecosystem and the individuals engaged as paper setters, many of whom operate at the intersection of both worlds. Any serious reform must scrutinise how papers are set, who has access to them before the exam date, and how coaching networks sometimes appear to have advance knowledge of question patterns. Technology and encryption can secure transmission, but they cannot fix a system where the human links in the chain are compromised.

Equally pressing is the question of scale. The national conversation has focused almost entirely on NEET and JEE, both administered by the NTA. But paper leaks are not a national-exam problem alone - they are a governance problem replicated at the state level, often with less scrutiny and even less accountability. Punjab, Uttarakhand, Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir have all witnessed student agitations over leaked state-level recruitment and entrance examinations recently. Karnataka's move to hold Deputy Commissioners personally responsible for leaks in their districts is a useful, if belated, acknowledgement that state administrations cannot simply outsource blame to Delhi. If a national task force fixes the NTA's processes while state public service commissions and state examination boards continue with the same opaque, poorly audited systems, the menace will simply migrate downward rather than disappear.

What this moment demands, therefore, is not a single law or a single committee but a comprehensive, layered framework - a central law that sets minimum standards for examination security, matched by binding state-level legislation and institutional capacity to enforce it. Paper leaks have quietly become a well-organised business. The process has begun. But students across the country are watching for outcomes, not intentions. The resentment is too obvious now to be ignored. Political parties, Central and State Governments alike owe them a united, sustained fight - not another report that gathers dust until the next leak happens again.

QUOTE OF THE DAY
Moral courage is the most valuable and usually the most absent characteristic in men. - Gen. George Patton

LEARNING CRISIS
SHADOWS NE SCHOOLS



JAYANTA DEBNATH

For decades, Northeast state's has been regarded as one of India's strongest performers in school education, boasting a high literacy rate, an extensive network of government schools, and one of the country's best teacher-student ratios. However, a closer examination of recent education data suggests that beneath these achievements lies a growing structural challenge that could reshape the region's education landscape.

Education experts believe that while the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the revised CBSE curriculum demand significant improvements in digital learning, science laboratories, language education, vocational training, and skill-based infrastructure, most government schools across the Northeast have yet to witness comprehensive infrastructure upgrades to meet these new standards. This gap, they argue, is gradually encouraging more parents to choose private schools over government institutions.

The situation is further compounded by thousands of vacant teaching positions, school mergers, and increasing concerns over learning outcomes in public schools.

According to the latest UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus) 2024-25 data, India has approximately 13.61 lakh schools, including 10.13 lakh government schools and around 3.48 lakh private and government-aided institutions.

Tripura currently has 4,943 schools, of which 4,187 are government schools and 756 are private or aided institutions, meaning nearly 85 percent of all schools in the state are government-run—one of the highest proportions in the country.

Across the Northeast, government schools continue to dominate the education system. Assam has 44,741 government schools and around 6,900 private schools. Meghalaya has 7,789 government and about 2,200 private schools. Manipur has 2,952 government and nearly 1,150 private schools. Mizoram has 2,617 government and about 540 private schools. Arunachal Pradesh has 2,558 government and around 420 private schools. Nagaland has 1,936 government and approximately 740 private schools, while Sikkim has 857 government and nearly 340 private schools.

These figures indicate that although public education remains the backbone of school education in the Northeast, the private sector is steadily expanding.

Tripura's teacher-student ratio remains one of its biggest strengths. On average, there is one teacher for every 18 students, significantly better than the national average of around 24:1. Most schools have access to electricity, separate toilets, and basic infrastructure, while enrolment at the primary level and gender parity continue to outperform national averages.

However, serious concerns persist. UDISE+ data indicates that

around 340 government schools in Tripura continue to function with only a single teacher, serving more than 6,000 students collectively. The problem is particularly severe in remote rural and tribal areas.

The state currently has approximately 6.90 lakh students (690,084) studying across government and private schools.

Data available through NITI Aayog's National Education Repository shows that Tripura has 37,733 teachers in government schools. Yet the state reportedly continues to face a shortage of nearly 4,000 teaching posts, particularly in science, mathematics and English at the upper primary and secondary levels.

Education officials acknowledge that while a large number of teachers retire every year, recruitment has not kept pace, resulting in widening vacancies and uneven teacher deployment across schools.

Another major development has been Tripura's large-scale school merger programme, under which more than 300 government schools with low enrolment have been merged with nearby institutions.

The government maintains that the initiative allows better utilisation of teachers and infrastructure while improving educational quality. However, critics argue that the mergers have increased travel distances for children in rural and tribal areas, making access to education more difficult and contrib-

uting to declining enrolment in some government schools.

Educationists also point to another growing trend—the increasing migration of students from government schools to private institutions.

Many middle-class families are opting for private schools in search of English-medium education, improved digital facilities, extracurricular opportunities, and better academic outcomes. Unless government schools receive substantial investments in modern educational infrastructure, this shift is expected to continue.

Recent assessments by NITI Aayog also underline that while access to education has improved nationwide, major challenges remain in learning outcomes, equitable teacher deployment, digital infrastructure, skill-based education, and rebuilding public confidence in government schools.

A comparison across the Northeast reflects different strengths and challenges. Mizoram continues to rank among India's most literate states, Sikkim has made notable progress in digital education, Assam possesses the region's largest government school network, while Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh continue to struggle with geographical barriers affecting school accessibility.



Taken together, these developments suggest that school education across Tripura and much of Northeast India is entering a critical phase. The region still possesses a strong foundation through its vast public school network, favourable teacher-student ratio, and long-standing literacy achievements. Yet teacher shortages, declining enrolment in government schools, the rapid growth of private education, the long-term impact of school mergers, and the need to align infrastructure with NEP 2020 and the revised CBSE curriculum are emerging as defining challenges. Education analysts believe that if Tripura and other Northeastern states are to realise the

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

My vision is to build an AI-First Assam, where Artificial Intelligence becomes a force multiplier for better governance.

We have now commissioned our first GPU cluster, creating secure, government-owned AI infrastructure that will power the next generation of public services.
~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



vision of the National Education Policy 2020 and become knowledge-driven societies, increasing the number of schools alone will not be sufficient. Modernising classrooms, strengthening science and computer laboratories, expanding vocational education, ensuring equitable teacher deployment, and delivering quality education to every child—from urban centres to remote tribal villages, will be the true test of the region's education system in the years ahead.

(The author is a senior journalist and Editor of Tripurainfo.com).

CM Khemchand Singh reaffirms Manipur govt's commitment to peace and normalcy



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Friday reaffirmed his government's unwavering commitment to restoring lasting peace, strengthening communal harmony, and creating conditions conducive to the return of normalcy across

the state.

Representatives of the Unified Zou Organisation (UZO), Zomi Chief Association (ZCA) and the Zomi Council (ZC) on Friday called on him at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, Babupara, where the Chief Minister, along with MLA Tongbram Robindro, extended a warm welcome to the delegation.

While talking with the 14-member delegation of the three organisations of the Zomi tribal community, the Chief Minister said that the government remained committed to its promise in promoting peace, normalcy and fostering harmony among all communities of the state and creating an environment conducive to normal life.

Khemchand Singh reiterated that the government would continue to engage with all stakeholders to achieve a peaceful, inclusive and lasting resolution to the prevailing situation. A senior official of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that during the meeting, the representatives of the Zomi organisations apprised the Chief Minister of various issues concerning the state and assured him of their support towards the government's ongoing efforts to restore lasting peace and normalcy in Manipur. They also deliberated on initiatives to strengthen mutual trust and understanding among different communities. The delegation further submitted a proposal seeking the construction of a Multi-Utility Hall at Churachandpur, a district inhabited by Kuki-Zo tribal communities.

The visit of the Zomi organisations assumes significance as it marks the first time in three years that representatives of the three organisations travelled together from Churachandpur to Imphal to meet the Chief Minister, reflecting the improving law and order situation and the gradual restoration of free movement between different communities. Social Worker Joseph Valte, son of late MLA Vungzagim Valte, said that they are looking forward to the return of peace and prosperity in the state.

Manipur Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA and veteran Zomi tribal community leader Vungzagim Valte died at a private hospital in Gurugram on February 21 (2026). A three-time legislator from the Thanlon Assembly constituency, Valte had been undergoing prolonged medical treatment in Delhi and Gurugram after he was brutally attacked during the ethnic violence in Manipur capital Imphal on May 4, 2023. Chairman of the Zomi Council, Vumsuan Naulak, said the delegation had travelled from Churachandpur to brief the Chief Minister on the ongoing developments in the district and to help build mutual confidence among communities. He said the meeting was cordial and constructive, adding that they are grateful to the state government for reaching out and creating opportunities for people to work together for development and lasting peace.

Naulak further expressed the hope that peace would soon return to Manipur so that people from all communities could interact freely and collectively work towards the progress of the State. Secretary (Information and Publicity), Zomi Council, Mary Jones, said that after nearly three years, they were able to visit Imphal again, expressing happiness over the positive change and describing it as an encouraging sign for the restoration of normalcy.

Among those present in the delegation were P. Guite, Vice President, Zomi Chief Association; Liankhankhup Zou, Unified Zou Organisation (Zomi Council); along with other members of the Unified Zou Organisation, Zomi Chief Association and Zomi Council. Since the ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023, Kuki-Zo tribals residing in the state's hill districts have largely stopped visiting the Imphal Valley, which is predominantly inhabited by the Meitei community.

Assam BJP MPs urge Amit Shah to allow advance wages for flood-hit farmers under VB-GRAM G Act



NEW DELHI

A delegation of Assam BJP MPs on Friday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Parliament House and apprised him of the flood situation in the state, seeking additional support for communities affected by the recent deluge.

During the meeting, the MPs urged the Centre to allow flood-hit farmers to receive wages for 100 days in advance under the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, saying the measure would provide immediate financial relief to families struggling in the aftermath of the floods.

According to BJP MP Dilip Saikia, the Union Home Minister assured the delegation that the Centre would extend all possible assistance to Assam to help manage the flood crisis and support affected people.

The delegation included Union Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita, BJP MPs Dilip Saikia, Kamakhya Prasad Tasa and other parliamentarians from Assam.

The meeting comes as Assam continues relief and rehabilitation efforts in several flood-affected districts, with the state government seeking enhanced central support for recovery and livelihood restoration.

Dima Hasao gears up for digital Census 2027; self-enumeration from Aug 2

HAFLONG

The first phase of Census 2027, comprising the House Listing and Housing Census, will begin in Assam's Dima Hasao district after August 16, while residents can submit household details online through the newly introduced self-enumeration facility from August 2. Deputy Commissioner Gayatri Devidas Hailing announced on Friday. Addressing a press conference at the Deputy Commissioner's office in Haflong, Hailing said the initial phase will focus on collecting information on every household, including housing conditions, available amenities and other basic details. She said the second phase, Population Enumeration, will be conducted in February 2027. During this stage, officials will collect demographic, social, educational and economic information from every individual to support policy formulation, governance and development planning. The 2027 Census will be the 16th Census of India and the eighth since Independence. It will also mark the country's

first large-scale digital census, with advanced technology being used for data collection and management to improve transparency, efficiency and accuracy. As part of the digital initiative, citizens will be able to complete the self-enumeration process online between August 2 and August 16, 2026, by submitting household details through a dedicated digital platform before field enumeration begins. The district administration has appealed to residents to cooperate fully with the Census exercise and ensure that the information provided is accurate and complete to facilitate reliable and comprehensive data collection.

Officials said Census data serves as a critical foundation for government planning and policymaking, guiding resource allocation and the formulation of welfare and development schemes in sectors such as education, healthcare, housing, transportation and infrastructure, while also providing an updated demographic profile of the country.

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said discussions on flood-related concerns and the Assam-Nagaland border issue would be taken up only after relief and rehabilitation efforts are completed, stressing that the immediate priority is helping people affected by the disaster.

Addressing the ongoing flood situation, Sarma said neighbouring Nagaland, particularly the districts of Mon and Mokokchung, has suffered extensive damage due to heavy rainfall and flooding. "At this stage, we cannot comment because Nagaland is also under flood. There has been tremendous damage in Mon and Mokokchung districts," he said.

The chief minister emphasised that Assam and Nagaland share longstanding geographical ties and that any differences should be resolved through dialogue at an appropriate time.

"We were made neighbours by



nature, and we share geography. We will discuss what the issue is, how it happened and what the solution is. But there is a right time for it," Sarma said.

Assam CM defers border talks with Nagaland, calls for empathy amid flood crisis

parts of the country. He also noted that states such as Odisha and Gujarat are grappling with flood-related challenges.

"While we are fighting the flood, we should have empathy for all the people across the country who are suffering," he said.

Sarma indicated that he could meet the Nagaland chief minister in September or October, once the flood situation improves. By then, he said, satellite imagery and other technical inputs would help provide a clearer picture of the circumstances surrounding the issues.

"Maybe in September or October, we can meet the chief minister of Nagaland and examine what is happening. By then, a lot of satellite pictures will emerge showing what was happening," he said.

Reiterating that relief and rehabilitation remain the government's immediate focus, the chief minister said discussions on the border issue would be taken up after the flood crisis subsides.

Assam to begin compensation, infrastructure restoration under phased flood recovery plan

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday unveiled a phased roadmap for the rehabilitation of flood-affected areas in Upper Assam, outlining measures ranging from insurance claim settlements and financial assistance to school restoration and infrastructure repair. Addressing a press conference after the state Cabinet meeting, Sarma said the government would hold a meeting with insurance companies on August 5 to ensure speedy settlement of claims for vehicles, livestock and other insured assets damaged in the recent floods. "Several vehicles have been damaged in the floods, causing immense hardship to people. We will meet insurance companies to ensure policyholders do not face any negligence in claim settlements," the chief minister said.

He added that the government

would also meet Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) on the same day to explore relief measures for flood-affected borrowers, following the announcement of a six-month moratorium on loan repayments made on July 30.

On the financial assistance of Rs 15,000 announced for affected families, Sarma said the assessment process is nearing completion and disbursement is expected to begin by August 2 or 3. "Teachers are conducting the assessments, and within the next one or two days we will be in a position to start releasing the assistance," he said.

The chief minister also announced that Rs 8 crore from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund would be released to the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan on August 1 for replacing school uniforms damaged in the floods.

He said the funds would be

transferred to School Management Committees, while the assessment of affected students was underway to facilitate financial assistance of Rs 1,000, Rs 3,000 and Rs 5,000, depending on the extent of losses. Distribution of textbooks has already begun, he added.

Sarma said a comprehensive assessment of permanent damage to houses and other properties would begin on August 7. "The exercise will be carried out in mission mode and completed within 10 to 15 days. Compensation for damaged houses, livestock and other eligible losses will be disbursed within August in accordance with government norms," he said. The chief minister noted that nearly 550 schools in Sivasagar, along with several others in Charaideo district, had been affected by the floods.

To restore educational infrastructure, the government will

provide Rs 2 lakh to Rs 3 lakh to schools for repairing damaged buildings and clearing silt and mud from campuses. The funds are expected to be released by August 5 or 6.

"Our target is to reopen schools in Sivasagar and Charaideo from August 9. If that is not possible, we will aim for August 15," Sarma said.

Highlighting the relief effort so far, the chief minister said the government has distributed around 23,730 quintals of rice, 4,541 quintals of pulses and 1,18,110 litres of mustard oil among flood-affected families. He said the next phase of the recovery plan would focus on rebuilding damaged public infrastructure. "From September, we will begin infrastructure restoration. Separate packages will be approved for Sivasagar and Charaideo to repair roads, embankments and other public infrastructure damaged by the floods," Sarma said.

AAKYSU demands ST Enumeration for Karbis of Cachar

SUSHANTA ROY

DIPHU The All Assam Karbi Youth & Students Union (AAKYSU) submitted an official memorandum to the Cachar District Commissioner today, July 31, 2026.

The student's organization has urged the Cachar administration to ensure that Scheduled Tribe (ST) options are accurately listed and enumerated for the Karbi population residing in Assam's plains districts during the upcoming House Listing Census 2026.

In their representation submitted at the District Commissioner's office in Silchar, leaders of the youth and student body expressed deep concerns over historical undercounting and administrative exclusion during demographic exercises.

The union emphasized that a significant population of the indigenous Karbi community has resided across Cachar and other plains districts of Assam for generations.

However, owing to rigid categorizations between hill and plains tribes, Karbis living outside the autonomous hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao often face misclassification or exclusion during national census counts.

"Without explicit provision and field-level training for enumerators to record Karbi tribal identities accurately in the

house-listing phase of Census 2026, thousands of community members in Cachar risk being left uncoun ted under the Scheduled Tribe category," stated the memorandum.

The delegation urged the district administration to issue clear instructions to census supervisors and enumerators across all circles in Cachar to prevent technical oversights that lead to demographic underrepresentation.

The submission comes at a crucial juncture as preparations for the House Listing operations of Census 2026 gain momentum across Assam.

AAKYSU leaders highlighted that accurate census data is vital not only for reflecting the true demographic reality of the region but also for ensuring fair access to constitutional safeguards, developmental welfare schemes, and policy planning for the Karbi populace living in the plains.

Receiving the memorandum on July 31, 2026, official representatives at the Cachar District Commissioner's office assured the union that their grievances would be reviewed.

They also assured that the memorandum will be forwarded to the Registrar General of India and the Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, to ensure comprehensive and fair enumeration during the 2026 census exercise.

Assam University Seminar Highlights Mahakavi Kalidasa's Enduring Relevance

SILCHAR

Assam University's Department of Sanskrit organised a national seminar on the contemporary relevance of Mahakavi Kalidasa's literary works, bringing together scholars, academicians and research scholars from across India and Nepal to examine the timeless appeal of the classical Sanskrit poet.

The one-day seminar, held on July 29 to mark Guru Purnima, was themed "The Contemporary Relevance of the Literary Works of Mahakavi Kalidasa" and served as a platform for discussions on the poet's contributions to literature, philosophy and Indian cultural traditions.

The inaugural session, held at Swapna Devi Smriti Bhavan in the Department of Sanskrit, was attended by Vice-Chancellor (in-charge) Prof. Ashok Kumar Sen, former Head of the Department Prof. Snigdha Das Ray, IQAC Director Prof. Piyush Pandey, Head of the Department Prof. Shanti Pokharel and Prof. Govind Sharma.

Welcoming the participants, Prof. Pokharel underlined the importance of preserving India's literary and cultural heritage through academic research and dialogue. The programme began with a Saraswati Vandana performed by post-graduate student Joyita Bhattacharjee.

Delivering the keynote address, Prof.



Snigdha Das Ray spoke on the literary genius of Mahakavi Kalidasa, highlighting celebrated works such as Ritusamhara and Abhijnanasakuntalam. She noted that Kalidasa's poetic vision, philosophical insights and portrayal of nature and human emotions continue to resonate with readers and scholars across generations.

Prof. Piyush Pandey described Kalidasa's writings as universally relevant, observing that the Sanskrit poet is often compared to William Shakespeare for his command of language and profound understanding of human nature. Research scholar Vijaya Lakshmi Sharma high-

lighted the significance of Guru Purnima and the Guru-Shishya tradition, while students honoured their teachers with tilak and mementoes as part of the celebrations.

In his presidential address, Prof. Ashok Kumar Sen described Sanskrit as the foundation of India's rich intellectual and cultural heritage, saying Kalidasa's works continue to offer valuable lessons in literature, ethics, philosophy and culture. The department also released the 20th volume of its annual research journal, Vagishwari, during the inaugural session.

The seminar featured five technical sessions—two conducted offline and three online—where a total of 63 research papers were presented. Nineteen papers were presented in person, while 44 were delivered virtually, reflecting wide academic participation.

The valedictory session was attended by Assam University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Rajive Mohan Pant as the chief guest. He reaffirmed the enduring relevance of Sanskrit literature and described Kalidasa's works as a timeless source of knowledge and inspiration. Certificates were distributed to all paper presenters before the programme concluded with the recitation of the Shanti Mantra.

The seminar drew 103 registered delegates from 76 universities and colleges across 14 Indian states, along with scholars from Nepal, giving the event an international dimension. Organisers said the programme reinforced the university's commitment to promoting Sanskrit scholarship and preserving India's classical literary heritage through research and academic collaboration.

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Commercial LPG cylinder prices cut by up to Rs 209, no change in domestic cooking gas rates

NEW DELHI

Commercial LPG cylinder prices were sharply reduced on Saturday, with the price of a 19-kg cylinder cut by up to Rs 209 across major cities. The retail price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder has been reduced by Rs 202 in Delhi and Rs 209 in Kolkata, effective August 1. Following the revision, a 19-kg commercial cylinder will cost Rs 2,872.50 in Kolkata, sources told ANI.

There has been no change in the prices of domestic LPG cylinders.

The latest revision follows a series of price changes over recent months. On July 1, oil marketing companies had reduced the price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder

by Rs 183.50, bringing the retail price in Delhi down to Rs 2,930 per cylinder. At the same time, the price of the 5-kg Free Trade LPG (FTL) cylinder was lowered by Rs 13, taking its retail price in Delhi to Rs 808.50.

Commercial LPG prices have witnessed multiple revisions this year. In June, the price of domestic LPG cylinders was increased by Rs 29, raising the cost of a 14.2-kg domestic cylinder in Delhi from Rs 913 to Rs 942.

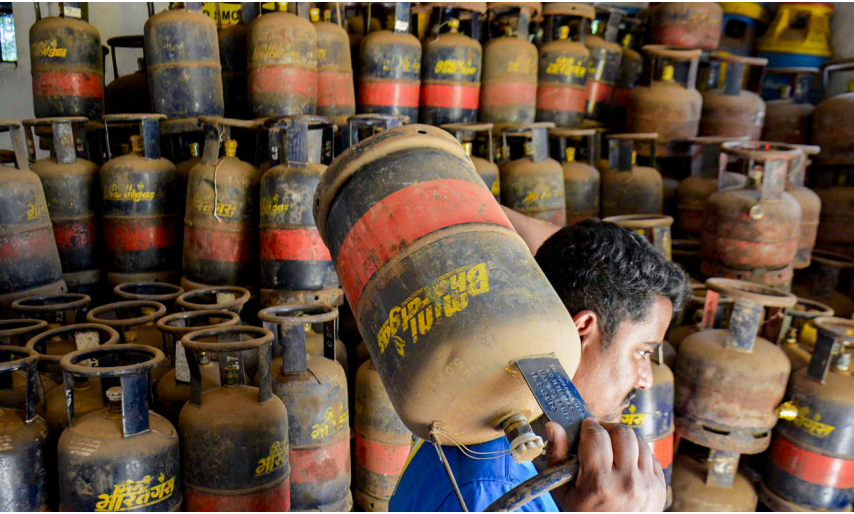
Earlier, on March 7, oil companies had increased LPG prices by Rs 60 per cylinder, citing disruptions in global energy markets linked to the conflict in West Asia.

In April, commercial LPG cylinder prices were raised by Rs 195.50 across metropolitan

cities amid heightened tensions in West Asia. Following that revision, a 19-kg commercial cylinder was priced at Rs 2,208 in Kolkata, Rs 2,031 in Mumbai, and Rs 2,246.50 in Chennai.

At the beginning of the year, oil marketing companies had also increased the price of the 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder by Rs 111, taking the retail price in Delhi to Rs 1,691.50 from January 1. The price of the 5-kg FTL cylinder was simultaneously raised by Rs 27.

Commercial LPG cylinders are widely used by restaurants, hotels, catering services and other businesses, making price revisions significant for operating costs in the hospitality and food service sectors.



INTERNATIONAL

Massive Attack banned from Singapore over Palestinian flag display



SINGAPORE

British trip-hop band Massive Attack has been barred from performing in Singapore after an investigation found two members unfurled a Palestinian flag during a concert, police said.

Two band members who held the flag on stage during a concert on Wednesday were also banned from re-entering Singapore and issued with warnings, police said in a statement late Friday, without naming the pair.

Singapore, known for its tough laws

on public speech and assembly, bans the open display of all foreign flags, national emblems or banners without a permit.

A video circulating online showed two Massive Attack members on stage unfurling a Palestinian flag to loud, prolonged cheers from the audience,

‘I want to forgive them’: PM Modi says students who abused him should be guided, not punished



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he was forgiving students who abused him and his late mother during the Jantar Mantar protest, asserting that legal action was not the answer and that the “misguided children” should instead be shown the right path.

PM Modi posted a video message on social media, with the caption, “Abuses never solve anything. Let’s guide the misguided. Let’s work together. Let’s work for Bharat”.

Opening with a direct and personal appeal, the prime minister said, “Hi friends today I just feel like talking only to you. What happened at Jantar Mantar has been seen by the country and the

world. Some mischievous children used very vulgar, abusive language.

That does not suit any civilised society. Such words were used.

They abused me; they even abused my late mother. I don’t know how ugly it all was”. PM Modi’s video came a day after a zero FIR was registered at Noida’s Expressway police station against a woman for allegedly using abusive language against the prime minister during a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

According to the FIR, the complainant alleged that on July 23, the accused used “abusive and objectionable” language against the prime minister at Jantar Mantar, hurting the dignity of the constitutional office and with the

intention of spreading hatred and disturbing public peace.

Seeking to guide young people away from what he described as being misguided and towards contributing to the nation’s development, the prime minister said, “But today I want to say that mistakes do happen in childhood. And in childhood, there is also an opportunity to learn from mistakes. And that is what childhood is. And that is why, within society, I can very well understand the anger.”

Calling the episode a “cultural shock”, the Prime Minister said he wanted to forgive the protesters.

“I want to forgive them; people make mistakes, but this is a cultural shock that our daughters are using such abusive

language,” he said.

Calling for compassion rather than retribution, he said, “But this is the time to embrace these children and show them the right path. They are misguided children. It is our job to guide them.

“Punishing them, making them go around courts, harassing them in society will not change the situation. I want to forgive them. And I request society to accept this from me”.

The prime minister further said, “Because the only feeling in my heart is that sometimes we accidentally bite our tongue and it bleeds, but we don’t break our teeth, because both the teeth and the tongue are ours. These children are also ours. It is our job to show them the way. Guiding those who have gone astray is difficult, but we have to do the difficult job”.

Making a direct appeal to young people, he added, “And that is why, I am telling these children: children, come, let us move forward together for the country. Let us learn something new. Let us learn even from our mistakes and move forward with our dreams”.

Concluding on a hopeful note, the prime minister said, “The country is moving forward, it will move forward, and your progress is also certain. That is my dream. I live for you, I work hard for your bright future.

“Come, let us take the country forward together. Thank you very much, friends. Just come, learn from your mistakes, and move forward”.

The youth-led Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protests at Jantar Mantar in Delhi concluded on July 25. Thousands of student activists, joined by innovator-activist Sonam Wangchuk during his 26-day hunger strike, mobilised to express public anger over the alleged widespread competitive examination paper leaks.

Following intense demonstrations, police standoffs and a major march to Parliament on July 20, the agitation resulted in the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

The CJP officially ended the protest after the government conceded to their core demands which included educational reforms.

‘That was raging’: Trump renews claim of stopping India-Pakistan war with tariff threats



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Friday reiterated his claim that India and Pakistan agreed to end their conflict after Washington threatened to impose tariffs if the two countries did not stop fighting, referring to Operation Sindoor last year.

Speaking to reporters at Camp David in Washington, Trump said India and Pakistan were “very angry, and screamed and yelled” when the US threatened tariffs if they did not end their war. He also claimed that 11 planes were shot down during the conflict, an assertion disputed by New Delhi.

Trump repeated his claim that he had stopped eight wars during his presidency

and asserted that Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted to make a deal to end the war with Ukraine. “We ended the India-Pakistan (war). 11 planes were shot down. That was raging. That was good. I used tariffs. I said, ‘If you’re going to go to war, 250 per cent tariff.’ Each of them,” Trump said at a media interaction after a televised meeting with his cabinet colleagues.

“And they (India and Pakistan) screamed and yelled and were very angry. They were both angry about it. A day later they called and they said, ‘We will not go to war,’” Trump said.

The US President said Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he saved 50 million lives by stopping the war between the two nuclear

powers.

India has maintained that the ceasefire understanding during Operation Sindoor came after Pakistan’s Director General of Military Operations contacted his Indian counterpart. New Delhi has also consistently denied any third-party intervention.

India had carried out Operation Sindoor targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in response to the Pahalgalam terror attack.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year to destroy the terror bases in PoK used to plan the terrorist attack in Pahalgalam on April 22. The operation was paused on May 10 following a request from Pakistan.

From Menstrual Health to Cancer Awareness: Asha Foundation's Mission to Empower Rural Women

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH KRC TIMES FOUNDER BISWADEEP GUPTA

For over a decade, Asha Foundation has been working quietly in villages and remote areas to improve the lives of women and adolescent girls through menstrual health education, reusable sanitary products, and cancer awareness. What began with the installation of sanitary pad vending machines in schools has gradually evolved into a larger movement that promotes sustainable menstrual hygiene, early detection of cancer, and healthy living.

In an exclusive interview with KRC Times founder Biswadeep Gupta, the founder of Asha Foundation shared her journey, achievements, and concerns about the growing health challenges faced by women, especially in rural communities.

Recalling the beginning of her mission, she said the organisation started its journey in 2014 with a focus on school-going girls.

"Our work initially centred on installing sanitary pad vending machines in schools, particularly in Nainital. We also worked on public toilet facilities, girl child awareness, environmental protection, health, and hygiene. Girls in villages and remote areas often do not have access to proper menstrual hygiene products or correct information. That was the gap we wanted to bridge," she said.

However, after years of working in the field, she realised that simply distributing disposable sanitary pads was not the ideal long-term solution.

"Most girls throw used sanitary pads into the garbage after use. These market-made pads create a huge environmental problem because they take years to decompose. I gradually realised that disposable sanitary pads are causing serious harm to nature," she explained.

She also pointed out that many rural women still depend on cloth during menstruation, but even that comes with challenges.

"Pure cotton cloth is not easily available nowadays. More importantly, many girls feel embarrassed about menstruation. Whenever male members enter the house, they quickly hide the washed cloth instead of drying it properly under sunlight. Damp cloth can become a breeding ground for infection. The social stigma surrounding menstruation is creating additional health risks."

According to her, menstrual cups are among the most environment-friendly options available today.

"A menstrual cup can last for nearly two years if used properly. It creates almost no waste and is a sustainable solution."

However, she admitted that menstrual cups may not be practical for everyone.

"Many school-going girls are unfamiliar with the method of insertion. Younger girls often find it difficult to use because of their age and body structure. Therefore, while menstrual cups are excellent, they may not always be the most suitable first option."

As an alternative, Asha Foundation has been promoting reusable sanitary pads.

"We provide reusable pads that can easily last for two to three years. They can withstand nearly 100 washes if maintained properly. The only requirement is washing them thoroughly and drying them under bright sunlight. They are economical, environmentally friendly, and safer for long-term use."

The foundation has already carried this awareness campaign to nearly 50 villages, where around 700 women and girls have received training on menstrual hygiene and the proper use of reusable sanitary pads. Many of them were also provided with reusable pads free of cost.

Beyond menstrual health, cancer awareness has become another major focus of the organisation.

She expressed concern over the increasing incidence of cervical and breast cancer and stressed that awareness remains the strongest weapon against these diseases.

"Cervical cancer continues to be a major concern. At the same time, breast cancer has become one of the biggest health challenges. The good news is that if cancer is detected early, the chances of successful treatment improve significantly."

She emphasised that breast cancer is not a disease that affects only women.

"Many people do not know that men can also develop breast cancer, although it is less common. Similarly, men face other cancers such as prostate cancer. Boys and men should also be educated about cancer. A awareness should involve the entire family."



The foundation regularly conducts awareness sessions where women are taught how to identify possible warning signs through monthly self-examination.

"Every woman should fix one date every month for a self-examination. After taking a shower, stand in front of a mirror and observe both breasts carefully. Look for any noticeable difference in size or shape. Check whether one nipple appears different from the other. Watch for skin changes, unusual patches, or dimpling."

She also advised women to remain alert if there is any unusual nipple discharge or persistent pain.

"Gently press around the nipple and observe if there is any abnormal discharge or pain. Feel for lumps not only in the breast but also around the underarm area. Some cancerous lumps are painless, which is why they often go unnoticed. Never ignore any unusual change."

She further noted that many visible symptoms of breast cancer can be recognised at an early stage if women perform regular self-checks.

"Nearly 80 per cent of breast cancer symptoms are visible if one knows what to look for. That is why awareness is so important. A few minutes of self-examination every month can save lives."

Despite the availability of information online, she believes personal guidance and community education remain irreplaceable.

"Google can provide information, but it cannot replace the care and guidance of a mother or an experienced health educator. Awareness programmes create confidence, encourage discussion, and remove fear."

She also stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle to reduce health risks.

"Our eating habits have changed dramatically. Fast food has become a regular part of life, especially among young people. Traditional home-cooked food is always the better choice. Lifestyle changes are contributing to many health problems."

She also referred to medical research suggesting that delaying childbirth may increase certain health risks and encouraged people not to ignore scientific advice.

"Medical science should always be respected. We should follow evidence-based guidance regarding health, nutrition, and preventive care." Ending the conversation with a message of hope, she urged people never to lose faith if diagnosed with cancer.

"Cancer is no longer a disease that automatically means the end of life. Even people diagnosed at advanced stages have survived with proper treatment. The key is early detection, timely medical consultation, and a positive mindset. Never ignore symptoms. Never delay seeking medical advice." After more than a decade of grassroots work, Asha Foundation continues to demonstrate that lasting change begins with education. Whether through promoting sustainable menstrual hygiene, breaking social taboos, or teaching women how to recognise the early signs of cancer, the organisation's message remains simple yet powerful: awareness saves lives.

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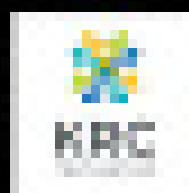


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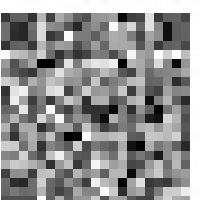


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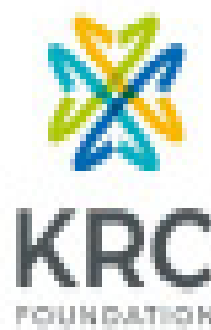
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