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PERSPECTIVE

Accept your past without regret, handle your present with confidence, and face your future without fear.

Assam CM gives departments 15 days to fill vacant promotional posts

GUWAHATI Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has directed senior government secretaries to take immediate steps to fill vacant promotional posts across departments within 15 days.

Sarma issued the directive after observing that a large number of promotional posts have remained vacant for various administrative and procedural reasons. He asked the senior-most secretaries to review the vacancies and take appropriate action to complete eligible promotions within the stipulated timeframe.

In a letter, the Chief Minister said that wherever permitted under existing rules, requirements relating to age, experience or other eligibility criteria could be suitably relaxed, provided such relaxation does not compromise merit, suitability or the quality of appointments.

Several promotions, according to the government, have been held up because of non-availability of Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs), insufficient years of service or work experience, pending departmental proceedings, vigilance cases and other administrative issues. Sarma said keeping promotional posts vacant affects the functioning of government departments and has a direct impact on recruitment. When promotional posts remain unfilled, corresponding entry-level posts do not become available for direct recruitment. This reduces the number of vacancies that can be offered to job seekers, while employees occupying entry-level positions are also unable to progress through their prescribed career structure. The Chief Minister stressed the need to remove all avoidable administrative and procedural hurdles on priority. Where ACRs are unavailable, he directed departments to obtain special reports from the competent authority so that eligible cases can be processed without unnecessary delay.

WHO SAID WHAT



The impact of the deadly flood in #Nepal has been described as “immense” as the authorities there confirm that 538 bodies have been recovered from the disaster-stricken area. ~ United Nations

Assam’s Varnali Deka becomes first woman IAS officer from state empanelled as Joint Secretary

GUWAHATI

Dr Varnali Deka has become the first woman IAS officer from Assam to be empanelled for appointment as Joint Secretary to the Government of India, marking a significant milestone in the state’s civil services history.

Deka, a 2009-batch IAS officer, was serving as Commissioner and Secretary of Assam’s General Administration Department before proceeding on deputation to the Centre in August 2025.

During her tenure in Assam, Deka served as Deputy Commissioner in five districts - Barpeta, Golaghat, Goalpara, Kokrajhar and Nalbari. She also held several key administrative positions, including Vice Chairman and CEO of the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority, Managing Director of the Assam Skill Development Mission and Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, and Executive Director of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

She has also served as Secretary in the Health, Urban Development, Skill, Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Development departments, besides serving as Secretary of the Bodoland Territorial Council. Deka was also Director of the Assam and Bodoland Administrative



Staff College. Before entering the civil services, Deka worked in the corporate sector with Tata Consultancy Services’ Global Consulting Practice and ANZ Bank as a business analyst and engineer. She initially secured Rank 82 in the UPSC examination for the Indian Police Service and later secured Rank 16 for the Indian Administrative Service. An accomplished academic, Deka holds a BTech in Computer Science, an MBA in Systems and Operations with a minor in Finance, an LLB and a PhD in Commerce. She studied at Delhi Public School, R.K. Puram, St Mary’s School,

Guwahati, RV College of Engineering in Bengaluru and IIT Bombay. She was also the state topper in the HSLC examination and an NTSE scholar. Besides academics and administration, Deka is a Visharad in Indian classical music. Her administrative career has been marked by several national-level recognitions. She received the Prime Minister’s Award for Excellence in Public Service for innovation in an aspirational district and has won the National e-Governance Award twice. She has also received the National Water Award twice for innovations in water

management, the Election Commission of India’s Best DEO Award for innovative election management practices and the Chief Minister’s Karmashree Award. Several of her initiatives have received recognition from institutions including the United Nations Development Programme, NITI Aayog and the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, with some being recommended as replicable best practices. Her One District One Product initiative in Kokrajhar was selected by the Capacity Building Commission under its Innovations in Public Administration programme for submission to the Prime Minister’s Public Human Resources Council.

Her work on Jan Bhagidari in Poshan Kokrajhar has also been developed into a case study for the Amrit Gyan Kosh/iGOT Karmayogi platform.

Deka’s achievements also include the L.V. Reddy Memorial Award for Best Officer Trainee (North-East) for the 2009 batch at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie. Her empanelment as Joint Secretary places her among the senior civil servants eligible for important policymaking and administrative responsibilities at the Centre.



STAY ENRICHED

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Guwahati-Delhi rail corridor set for four-track expansion:Himanta



GUWAHATI

The railway corridor connecting Guwahati with Delhi will be expanded to four tracks, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said, describing the proposed upgrade as a major

boost to passenger and freight connectivity in the region.

Sarma said work was progressing rapidly on plans to convert seven railway routes across the country into four-track corridors. The expansion of the Guwahati-Delhi route is ex-

pected to increase the capacity of the network and facilitate the movement of more passenger and freight trains.

The Chief Minister also said construction of a second railway bridge over the Brahmaputra at Saraighat is expected to begin soon.

The additional bridge, along with the expansion of the rail corridor, is expected to strengthen Assam’s connectivity with the national capital and other parts of the country.

According to Sarma, the increase in passenger and freight train services would be possible after the completion of certain formalities.

The proposed infrastructure expansion comes amid efforts to strengthen Assam’s rail network and improve transportation capacity to meet growing passenger demand and facilitate faster movement of goods.

The four-track connectivity between Guwahati and Delhi is expected to provide greater operational flexibility for the Railways while improving the overall efficiency of one of the key rail links connecting the Northeast with the rest of the country.

Rajeev Singh Thakur likely to be next Manipur Chief Secretary

IMPHAL



Senior IAS officer Rajeev Singh Thakur is likely to be appointed as the next Chief Secretary of Manipur after the Centre approved his inter-cadre deputation to the state.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the transfer of Thakur, a 1995-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre, to the Manipur cadre by curtailing his ongoing central deputation.

According to the approval, Thakur will remain on inter-cadre deputation to Manipur until June 30, 2029, when he is scheduled to retire. The extension has been approved as a relaxation of the existing deputation policy.

The proposal for his transfer was moved by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

Thakur’s appointment as Chief Secretary is expected to be formally notified by the Manipur government. If appointed, he will take charge of the state’s top bureaucratic position at a critical juncture, as Manipur continues efforts to restore peace and normalcy following the prolonged ethnic conflict.

His elevation is also expected to bring continuity to the state administration as the government works on rehabilitation, restoration of public services and other measures aimed at rebuilding confidence and stability.

The appointment will be closely watched given the key role of the Chief Secretary in coordinating the civil administration, security agencies and various departments during the ongoing recovery process.

Rival ZUF factions clash in Manipur’s Noney, one reported dead and five injured

IMPHAL

A factional gunfight between two rival factions of the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) has reportedly left one person dead and five others injured in a remote forested area of Manipur’s Noney district, officials and local sources said.

The exchange of fire reportedly took place in the Khumji area between the ZUF-Jenchui faction (ZUF-J) and the ZUF-Kamson faction (ZUF-K). The confrontation occurred in a remote jungle stretch, away from populated areas, and security personnel were yet to reach the site because of the difficult terrain.

Local sources said one person was killed and five others sustained injuries in the clash. However, the identities and affiliations of those involved were not immediately known.

The reported casualty figures could not be independently verified immediately, as security forces had not yet accessed the site. Authorities are expected to conduct an on-ground assessment

once personnel reach the area.

The circumstances that led to the latest confrontation between the two factions also remained unclear.

The incident comes against the backdrop of longstanding tensions and armed rivalry among groups operating in Zeliangrong-inhabited areas of Manipur and neighbouring regions.

Both the ZUF-Jenchui and ZUF-Kamson factions trace their origins to former cadres associated with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM). The Zeliangrong United Front was formed in 2011 following a split involving former NSCN-IM cadres and later developed into a separate organisation focusing on issues concerning the Zeliangrong community.

Differences among ZUF factions have periodically led to armed confrontations, with rival groups staking competing claims over political influence, territorial control and representation of Zeliangrong interests.

3.5 lakh Manipur women to get Rs 10,000 grant under new empowerment scheme



IMPHAL

The Manipur Cabinet has approved a new women’s empowerment scheme under which around 3.5 lakh women belonging to recognised self-help groups (SHGs) will receive financial assistance.

The Women Empowerment (WE)-Manipur scheme will provide each eligible woman with a Rs 10,000 grant in the first year, followed by interest-free loans in the second and third years.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired at the Chief Minister’s Secretariat in Bapupara on August 28.

The scheme is aimed at strengthening the financial capacity of women associated with recognised SHGs across the state. The government plans to use the SHG network as a platform to expand access to financial assistance and support women-led livelihood activities. Under the scheme, the

first-year assistance will be provided as a direct grant. In the subsequent two years, beneficiaries will be eligible for interest-free loans, enabling them to access additional financial support without an interest burden. The government has not yet disclosed the total financial allocation for the scheme or the timeline for disbursement of the first-year grant.

Officials are expected to issue detailed guidelines and notifications separately, outlining the eligibility criteria, application process, disbursement mechanism and other implementation-related provisions.

The Cabinet’s decision comes as Manipur continues to focus on livelihood support and economic empowerment initiatives, with self-help groups playing an increasingly important role in extending financial and livelihood opportunities to women at the grassroots level.

Tripura gears up for Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls from September 5



AGARTALA

The Tripura Election Department has intensified preparations for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which is scheduled to begin across the state from September 5.

Chief Electoral Officer Brijesh Pandey and Additional Chief Electoral Officer Usa Jen Mog reviewed the preparedness for the exercise during a video conference with all District Election Officers (DEOs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) on August 28.

The meeting focused on administrative arrangements and the use of technology to ensure

that the revision of electoral rolls is carried out accurately and transparently across all districts.

Officials reviewed the measures required to conduct the exercise smoothly and discussed steps to ensure uniform implementation throughout the state.

The Election Department said particular emphasis would be placed on accuracy, transparency and inclusion, with efforts to ensure that no eligible voter is left out of the electoral rolls during the revision process.

The district-level election machinery has been asked to make the necessary arrangements ahead of the September 5 commencement of the exercise.

The SIR is expected to involve detailed verification and updating of electoral roll data, with officials working to strengthen the accuracy and reliability of voter records across Tripura.

The state Election Department said close coordination among DEOs, EROs and other officials would be crucial for completing the revision process effectively.



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ALERT, NOT ALARM

Delhi's latest influenza numbers should prompt vigilance, not panic. With H1N1 cases reportedly crossing 2,300 this year and cumulative Influenza A and B infections approaching 3,000, the capital is once again confronting a familiar monsoon challenge. The dominant strain may change from one year to another-H3N2 made headlines last year, while H1N1 has emerged more prominently this year-but the underlying vulnerability remains the same. Monsoon conditions, crowded public spaces, poor ventilation and increased indoor contact create favourable circumstances for respiratory viruses to circulate. For a city as densely populated as Delhi, seasonal influenza is therefore not an unexpected event. What matters is whether the health system and the public are prepared to respond before a seasonal surge becomes a wider public-health burden. The Delhi Government's effort to avoid alarmism is appropriate. Fever clinics, isolation facilities and heightened preparedness at hospitals are necessary components of a sensible response. The presence of medical teams and additional facilities can help identify serious cases early and prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed. But official assurances will have meaning only if preparedness is visible on the ground and sustained for as long as the outbreak requires. There is, however, an equally important responsibility on the public. Influenza is often dismissed as an ordinary seasonal fever until complications emerge. That attitude can be dangerous, particularly for older people, young children and those with underlying vulnerabilities. At the same time, excessive anxiety can produce another problem: unnecessary hospital visits, indiscriminate medication and the spread of misinformation. Self-medication deserves particular caution. Fever, cough and body ache can have several causes, and assuming that every respiratory infection is influenza can lead people to treat themselves without proper diagnosis. Antibiotics do not treat viral influenza, while inappropriate use of medicines can create additional health risks. Even commonly used drugs should be taken according to medical advice, particularly when symptoms are persistent or severe. The basic precautions remain straightforward. People who are unwell should avoid unnecessary contact with others and, where possible, stay home until they recover. Masks can be useful in crowded or poorly ventilated environments, especially for symptomatic individuals. Regular hand hygiene, adequate ventilation and responsible coughing and sneezing practices can reduce transmission. Most importantly, worsening symptoms should not be ignored in the hope that they will disappear on their own. The Government, meanwhile, must look beyond immediate case numbers. Influenza surveillance needs to remain active across hospitals and laboratories, with timely information shared with the public. Health authorities should monitor hospital occupancy, oxygen and critical-care requirements, medicine availability and vulnerable populations. Schools, workplaces and public institutions also need clear guidance on managing symptomatic individuals without creating unnecessary disruption. There is another lesson here. India's public-health preparedness cannot be seasonal. Every monsoon should not have to trigger a scramble to expand fever clinics and remind citizens of basic respiratory hygiene. Surveillance systems, primary healthcare capacity and public communication should be strong enough to absorb predictable seasonal increases without allowing them to become crises. The public, too, must resist both extremes. Influenza is neither something to fear irrationally nor an illness to dismiss casually. The right response lies between those two attitudes: awareness, early consultation, responsible behaviour and adherence to medical advice. Delhi does not need another cycle of panic followed by complacency. It needs a culture of preparedness in which citizens recognise symptoms early, healthcare institutions remain ready and authorities communicate clearly and transparently. The message this monsoon should therefore be simple: stay alert, seek timely medical advice and do not let either fear or carelessness dictate the response. A seasonal influenza wave can be managed effectively when public health preparedness and public responsibility work together.

QUOTE OF THE DAY
Necessity has no law.
- Oliver Cromwell

THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS ‘PURIFICATION’



SUKHADEO THORAT

A couple of days after Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addressed a public gathering at Ramlila Maidan in Haldwani, Uttarakhhand, on August 8, members of a right-wing group, reportedly Shri Ram Sena, conducted a ritualistic purification ceremony at the site where Kharge had delivered his speech. The act was widely criticised, with many seeing it as a reminder of the persistence of caste prejudice and notions of ritual purity and pollution. The incident also prompted questions about whether such an act could fall within the scope of laws dealing with untouchability and atrocities against the Scheduled Castes. Whatever its precise legal character, the episode is troubling because it appears to revive a notion that the presence or touch of a person belonging to a historically marginalised caste can render a place impure and in need of purification. The incident, however, should not be viewed in isolation. There have been several instances in the past in which places or objects associated with Dalit leaders or visitors have reportedly been subjected to purification rituals. These include the purification of a statue inaugurated by Union Minister Jagjivan Ram in 1978, a temple purification following a visit by Bihar Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi in 2014, and reported instances involving Munni Devi in Kanpur in 2016 and Manisha Anuragi, a sitting Dalit BJP MLA in Uttar Pradesh, in 2018. The Haldwani incident involving Mallikarjun Kharge, therefore, brings back a question that India has confronted repeatedly: how deeply have notions of ritual purity and pollution associated

with caste survived despite the constitutional abolition of untouchability? The cases involving prominent public figures naturally receive attention because they are visible. But similar experiences may be faced by ordinary people in less visible ways. In all, there were as many as 55,865 atrocities registered against members of Scheduled Castes in 2024 alone. The idea of ritual purity and pollution has a long history in parts of the Hindu social order. Ancient dharmashastras and smritis contain several prescriptions concerning contact with those regarded as outside the caste order. The Vishnu Smriti was one of the earliest to refer to the need for purification after contact with a chandala or outcaste (asprushya). The Manusmriti prescribed bath after contact with a chandala, with the touching of food or earthen vessels requiring them to be thrown away and metal vessels scrubbed with ashes. The Apastamba Dharma-sutra and Gautama Dharmasutra go beyond touch: if a chandala's sight falls on another person, that person must look at the sun to purify. If spoken to, the person must converse with a Brahmin or recite a specific Vedic mantra to cleanse themselves. Thus the Kharge incident is not an isolated one, but an inherent outcome of Brahmanical religious, ethical and legal codes, in which high castes are considered victims. Kharge's case may have been picked up deliberately because he chose egalitarian Buddhist ideology, not iniquitous Brahmanism. It is important to distinguish between the historical existence of such prescriptions and the beliefs and practices of contemporary Hindu society. Hindu

traditions have themselves undergone considerable change, and millions of Hindus do not subscribe to notions of untouchability or caste-based exclusion. The Constitution, social reform movements and generations of struggles against discrimination have profoundly altered the social landscape. Yet the persistence of occasional purification rituals suggests that some older ideas have not entirely disappeared. The significance of the Haldwani incident lies precisely here. It raises the uncomfortable question of whether notions that were once embedded in a hierarchical social order continue to influence social behaviour even in a democratic and constitutional India. For B R Ambedkar, the struggle against caste was not merely a struggle for political representation. It was a struggle for equality and human dignity. His advocacy of Buddhism was part of his larger search for a social order based on equality, liberty and fraternity. The construction of a major Buddhist Vihara at Kalaburagi by Kharge can similarly be seen as reflecting his association with an egalitarian social philosophy. The history of India has witnessed a long contest between hierarchical and egalitarian ideas. Buddhism, the Bhakti traditions and later the movements led by social reformers such as Jyotirao Phule, E V Ramasamy Periyar and Ambedkar challenged entrenched forms of social inequality in different ways and in different historical circumstances. These movements did not always share the same philosophy, but they contributed to a continuing debate about social hierarchy, dignity and equality. Independent India ultimately gave this egalitarian principle its strongest institutional expres-

sion through the Constitution. Equality, liberty and fraternity became foundational values, while untouchability was expressly abolished under Article 17. The Constitution did not merely prohibit a particular social practice; it sought to fundamentally change the relationship

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

NEPAL, WE FEEL YOUR PAIN
India & particularly Ladakh understands the pain of being at the forefront of #ClimateChange.
We have experienced this in Leh in 2010. Unfortunately many more places will experience this in future if we do not change our ways.
People in the mountains suffer for no fault of theirs as people in big cities continue to live as if there's no tomorrow.
There perhaps is NO TOMORROW...
Please live simply in big cities, so we in mountains may simply live.
#ILiveSimply

~ Sonam Wangchuk, Teacher & Environmentalist

between citizenship and caste. Ambedkar described his struggle as revolution by Buddhism against a counter-revolution by Brahmanism. The final blow to the counter-revolution was the adoption of the Constitution based on equality, liberty and fraternity, and democracy, secularism and socialism. However, the counter-revolutionaries had opposed the Constitution, too. The Shankaracharya of Puri and Hindu Mahasabha had proposed to base the Constitution on Brahmanism and varnashrama. After its adoption in 1950, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS had opposed it arguing it did not embody Hindu culture. The continuing appearance of purification rituals, therefore, deserves attention not simply as an isolated religious practice or a political provocation, but as a reminder of the distance that can sometimes remain between constitutional values and social behaviour. It is equally important not to generalise from individual incidents to an entire religious community or tradition. The challenge is to identify and oppose discriminatory practices wherever they occur while recognising the diversity and capacity for reform within Indian society. The Haldwani incident, like earlier episodes, brings an old question into the present. Can a democratic society that guarantees equality to every citizen continue to accommodate practices based on the assumption that some people are inherently polluting or less worthy of social acceptance? The answer lies in the constitutional promise of equality, liberty and fraternity. Protecting that promise requires not only laws but also a sustained social rejection of untouchability and caste discrimination. The issue is therefore larger than any individual political party, organisation or religious group. It concerns the kind of society India seeks to be—and whether the principles of the Constitution can ultimately prevail over inherited notions of hierarchy and exclusion. Sukhadeo Thorat | Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University and former Chairman, University Grants Commission (Views are personal)

Manipur Census deferment likely before Sept 2 Assembly session: Civil society groups



IMPHAL

The Centre is likely to announce a deferment of the Census exercise in Manipur before the state Assembly session begins on September 2, civil society organisations (CSOs) said on Friday.

A delegation representing indigenous communities, including Meitei, Naga and Meitei Pangal groups, returned to Imphal after a week-long visit to New Delhi, where it held discussions with central officials and political leaders over its demand for an update of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the Census.

The delegation, which travelled to the national capital on August 20, met officials including

the North East security adviser and representatives of the Intelligence Bureau. It briefed the media at Imphal International Airport after returning on Friday.

Shanta Nahakpam, spokesperson for 14 CSOs under Kangleipak, said the delegation highlighted concerns over the alleged presence of illegal immigrants in Manipur and reiterated its demand for an NRC exercise during the meetings.

According to Nahakpam, the discussions indicated that the Centre could defer the Census in the state. He said the next step should be a tripartite dialogue involving the Manipur government, the Centre and civil society groups to determine how illegal

immigrants, if identified, should be dealt with.

He said the mechanism could involve provisions under the Foreigners Act or the NRC, but any decision should be taken after consultations with all stakeholders. Several civil society groups have been staging protests and other forms of agitation demanding that the NRC be updated before the Census is conducted in Manipur.

The groups have argued that conducting the Census amid the continuing fallout of the conflict and concerns over illegal immigration could affect the accuracy of the exercise and impact the interests of the state's indigenous population.

Senior SSB officer reviews security along India-Bhutan border in Assam



GUWAHATI

Security arrangements along the India-Bhutan border in Assam's Tamulpur and Udalguri districts were reviewed by a senior Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) officer during a two-day visit, officials said on Friday.

SSB Inspector General of Frontier Headquarters, Guwahati, Sudhir Verma visited several border outposts in the two districts on Thursday and Friday. He was accompanied by H K Gupta, Commandant of the SSB's 24th Battalion based in Rangia.

During the visit, Verma interacted with officers and personnel and reviewed border security arrangements, operational preparedness and other issues related to guarding the international border, according to an official statement.

The SSB officer also took part in tree plantation drives at the Guabari and Bimalanagar border outposts and highlighted the importance of environmental conservation among local residents and SSB personnel. Verma inaugurated three newly constructed accommodation units for officers and personnel at the Guabari border outpost, the statement said.

He also participated in sports activities with SSB personnel during the visit, it added.

30,000 of 37,000 flood-hit families in Sivasagar get Rs 15,000 aid: Akhil Gogoi



SIVASAGAR

Around 30,000 of the 37,000 flood-affected families in Assam's Sivasagar constituency have received a one-time financial assistance of Rs 15,000 each, MLA Akhil Gogoi said on Friday.

Gogoi said he would meet Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday evening to raise the issue of compensation for families affected by the floods.

The MLA said a significant number of flood-hit families

were yet to receive adequate assistance and urged the state government to ensure proper compensation for those who suffered losses. Gogoi warned that failure to provide sufficient relief and compensation could trigger an agitation in the coming days.

The Sivasagar MLA has repeatedly raised concerns over the difficulties faced by flood-affected residents and demanded stronger relief and rehabilitation measures from the Assam government.

Meghalaya lawyers boycott courts, seek removal of Advocate General Amit Kumar

SHILLONG

Lawyers across Meghalaya boycotted court proceedings on Thursday and staged a protest in Shillong, demanding the resignation or removal of Advocate General Amit Kumar over alleged remarks made during court proceedings and concerns over the functioning of his office.

The Tura Bar Association also suspended court work in solidarity with the protest. While its members did not travel to Shillong, they joined the action by abstaining from court proceedings.

Senior advocate Kishore Chand Gautam said lawyers from across the state had united over the issue and stressed that the protest was not limited to the Shillong and High Court bar associations.

The dispute centres on comments allegedly made by Kumar during proceedings concerning the safety of women in the legal profession. Lawyers have objected to the manner in which the issue



was handled and how the remarks were subsequently reported.

Members of the bar associations met on August 24 and unanimously decided to approach Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, seeking Kumar's removal. Gautam said Kumar later expressed regret over the way his comments were reported, but the lawyers did not consider it an apology.

The dispute also widened af-

ter a local newspaper published a report that the bar associations alleged gave the impression that lawyers were opposing Kumar because he had supported a woman intern.

Gautam said the report did not accurately reflect the reasons behind the lawyers' protest. The associations subsequently decided to boycott the newspaper and not provide legal representation in cases involving it. They also decided to explore legal action over the reports.

The lawyers also raised questions over the Advocate General's office engaging lawyers from outside Meghalaya for court cases. Gautam questioned the need for such appointments, particularly in cases he described as relatively minor.

He also questioned the appointment of Kumar's son to represent Meghalaya in the Supreme Court. The bar associations, he said, would seek details through Right to Information applications

on expenditure incurred by the Advocate General and his legal team.

The lawyers also objected to Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma's recent remark that Meghalaya was "very lucky to have" Kumar as Advocate General. Gautam said the comment had upset members of the legal fraternity and contributed to the large turnout at the protest.

The Tura Bar Association had discussed the issue at an emergency general meeting on August 21 and unanimously resolved to support the bar associations in Shillong and abide by decisions taken by the High Court Meghalaya Bar Association and Shillong Bar Association.

The protesting lawyers marched through Shillong before staging a sit-in and submitting a memorandum to the Governor.

Gautam said the protest would continue until Kumar resigned or was removed from the post of Advocate General.

Northeast can turn challenges into opportunities for space economy: SIA-India

GUWAHATI

The Northeast can transform its unique developmental challenges into opportunities for building a new space economy, leveraging its geography, talent and institutions to develop solutions for the region as well as national and global markets, the Space Industry Association of India (SIA-India) said.

The message emerged on the concluding day of the two-day Northeast India Space Workshop 2026, organised by SIA-India in partnership with the North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC) under the theme, "Leveraging Space Technology: Regional Transformation to Global Reach."

The workshop marked the first occasion on which SIA-India took its national space-industry dialogue beyond New Delhi, bringing together representatives from the govern-



ment, space institutions, academia, industry, startups and international organisations in the Northeast.

Participants identified floods, landslides, agriculture, forests, water resources, border management, connectivity, infrastructure and regional planning as key areas where government requirements could be converted into problem statements for industry, startups and researchers.

Discussions emphasised the need to move beyond disaster monitoring towards real-time intelligence and

actionable early-warning systems by integrating satellite observations with ground sensors, weather data and artificial intelligence.

A major outcome of the workshop was the proposed Centre for Space Entrepreneurship in Assam, being taken forward by SIA-India in partnership with the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) and the Assam government.

The proposed centre is envisaged as a platform connecting startups, innovators, academia and industry with mentorship, technical expertise and market opportunities. It will also establish linkages with the Centre of Excellence in Space Technology in Bengaluru.

"This is not about bringing a few space solutions to the Northeast; it is about building the capabilities for the Northeast to create solutions of its own and take them to India and the world," SIA-India Director

General Anil Prakash said.

Human capital and research also emerged as key priorities during the workshop. Participants called for industry-ready education, longer hands-on internships, interdisciplinary learning, application-oriented research and shared technical infrastructure.

The discussions stressed the importance of enabling students and researchers from the Northeast to work on advanced technologies while addressing problems specific to the region, rather than creating a talent pool that eventually migrates to established technology hubs.

Participants also highlighted the need to strengthen the pathway from research to prototype development, field validation, enterprise creation and market access, while encouraging greater industry participation in research, training and technology development.

Zubeen Garg death case: Doctor, associate depose before Guwahati fast-track court



GUWAHATI

The trial into the death of Assam singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg witnessed fresh witness testimonies, with a doctor and one of his associates appearing before the Fast Track Court in Guwahati.

Dr Hitesh Baruah and Garg's associate Hareswar Mahanta appeared before the court as proceedings continued in the case.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Mahanta said his testimony would assist the court in delivering justice.

"Whatever I said today will help in giving justice to the case," Mahanta said.

He alleged that the lawyer representing accused Amritprabha had sought to establish during question-

ing that Zubeen Garg was an alcoholic and took all decisions related to his activities himself.

Mahanta, however, told the court that although Garg consumed alcohol, he was not an alcoholic.

"He used to have one or two peps, but after the seizure attack in 2020, whenever I was with him or met him, he never drank. That is what I said," Mahanta said.

Mahanta also distinguished between Garg's social and professional decisions. He said Garg personally took decisions concerning social activities and helping people, while his professional engagements were handled by his manager, Siddharth Sharma.

"Regarding professional work, all those decisions were taken by the manager.

Zubeen himself sometimes did not know where or what programme he had to attend," Mahanta said.

The court is recording witness testimonies as the trial progresses.

The case concerns the death of Zubeen Garg, whose mortal remains were brought back to Assam after his death.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on August 17 deferred the bail plea of Shyamkanu Mahanta, one of the key accused in the case, and fixed October 5 for the next hearing.

Nepal floods: Assam helpline gets 6 distress calls, workers at Upper Trishuli feared missing

GUWAHATI

At least six families in Assam have contacted the state government's dedicated help desk after losing contact with relatives working in Nepal, where devastating flash floods have left hundreds dead or missing, officials said on Friday.

The help desk at Assam Bhawan in New Delhi received six distress calls from families seeking information about relatives who were reportedly working in Nepal. Officials said the exact number of people from Assam who may be missing is yet to be confirmed.

Most of the calls were related to people from Assam who were reportedly employed at the Upper Trishuli Hydropower Project in Nuwakot district of Nepal's Bagmati Province.

"Several people from the state who were reportedly engaged in the Upper Trishuli project are feared missing in the aftermath of the flash floods. Many remain out of contact as we are working to verify details and establish communication while also preparing detailed lists," an Assam Bhawan official said.

Among those feared missing is Shatadal Nath, a resident of Hindu Block village in Doboka in Hojai district. Nath had reportedly travelled to Nepal around eight months ago in search of work and was employed with a power supply com-



pany.

His family said they last spoke to him on Tuesday and have not been able to contact him since.

"We spoke to him on Tuesday, but there has been no contact since. We are praying for his safety," a family member said.

Another worker from Doboka, Gautam Das, who was employed by the same

company, reportedly survived the floods and later contacted his family. According to relatives, Das said Nath and at least 14 other workers remained missing after floodwaters swept away their accommodation.

Authorities have not independently verified the claims, including whether Nath and Das were associated with the Trishuli-1 project or another worksite

affected by the floods.

There was also no confirmed figure available on the number of people from Assam or the wider Northeast who remained missing or uncontactable in Nepal.

The Assam government opened the dedicated help desk at Assam Bhawan on Thursday to assist families trying to trace relatives affected by the disaster. Officials said the desk would coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Indian Embassy in Nepal and other agencies to compile and verify information on missing persons.

Concern has also spread to other northeastern states, with Meghalaya activating a helpline through its State Disaster Management Authority to collect information about residents who may be missing or uncontactable in Nepal.

The MEA said on Thursday that 84 Indian nationals had been rescued from flood-hit areas of Nepal, including 63 workers associated with the Trishuli-1 hydropower project and 21 people from Tamil Nadu.

The ministry said efforts were continuing to trace other affected Indians, with contact yet to be established with 290 Indian nationals amid ongoing search and rescue operations.

The flash floods have caused widespread devastation in Nepal. By Friday, the death toll had risen to 469, while hundreds remained missing as rescue operations entered their third day.

The disaster struck on August 26 after a reported ice-rock avalanche triggered by a glacial collapse near the Nepal-Tibet border unleashed a massive torrent of water, mud and debris downstream through central Nepal.

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Rs 40,603 Crore GST Shock: DGGI issues record tax notices to Mahadev App Kingpins

RAIPUR

In what is likely one of the largest-ever tax evasion crackdowns, the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), Raipur Zonal Unit, has issued massive show-cause notices demanding over Rs 40,603 crore in unpaid Goods and Services Tax (GST) from the Mahadev Online Book betting network, sources revealed.

The probe, overseen by Director General Sujit Kumar and Joint Director (Raipur Zonal Unit) Shivi Sangwan, revealed that the betting syndicate generated an extremely large taxable value of approximately Rs 1.45 lakh crore between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2024.

Tax notices have been issued across different operational periods to 97 individuals, including the syndicate's chief promoter Saurabh Chandrakar, co-promoter Ravi Uppal, key associates, and panel operators.

DGGI investigators found that Mahadev Book is not a single app or website, but a massive umbrella network operating dozens of online betting portals, including Gold365, Laser247, Play247, 11xPlay, Betbook247, Silver Exchange, and Cricket Bet9.

The illegal gambling and sports-betting network ran via approximately 2,000 panel operators. Each panel averaged daily cash/digital receipts between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, generating an estimated cumulative daily turnover of Rs 99 crore. Panel operators contacted punters via WhatsApp, directing deposits into fictitious, benami bank accounts in exchange for betting points and credits.

Approximately 80% of total profits were channelled directly back to key promoters Saurabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal.

DGGI's investigation established that core servers and command operations were hosted in Dubai and other foreign locations. To launder the proceeds of the illicit betting empire, the syndicate set up more than 50 shell companies, moving billions into stock markets, cryptocurrency, and high-value real estate. Both Chandrakar and Uppal fled India to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Following Red Corner Notices issued at the request of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the CBI, Indian investigative agencies alongside the Chhattisgarh Police are actively pursuing their legal extradition from the UAE.

Under Supreme Court rul-

ings and current GST provisions, real money online gaming and betting platforms are subject to mandatory 28% GST. Since Mahadev Book completely bypassed GST registration and filings, authorities are aggressively tracking the international money trail to recover the vast revenue losses inflicted on the state exchequer.

Mahadev betting app scam, unearthed in the year 2022 during the previous Congress regime, was being investigated by the anti-money laundering probe agency Enforcement Directorate (ED). After BJP came to power in Chhattisgarh, the EOW-ACB registered an FIR under IPC section 120 B (criminal conspiracy), 420 (cheating) and the Prevention of Corruption Act. Later, the Chhattisgarh government issued a notification to transfer the probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Breakdown of the Rs 40,603 Crore Tax Demand

April 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023: Rs 35,517.22 crore in unpaid GST dues

October 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024: Rs 5,085.80 crore in IGST dues

Total Tax Demand: Over Rs 40,603.02 crore



NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi government is reportedly preparing for a major reshuffle of the Union Council of Ministers.

A key feature could be the redistribution of additional portfolios currently held by several Cabinet ministers. Eleven of them are handling additional ministries. They include Home Minister Amit Shah, who also holds Cooperation; former Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, who has Power in addition

to Housing and Urban Affairs; JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh; Pralhad Joshi; JP Nadda; Ashwini Vaishnaw; Kiren Rijiju and Dr Mansukh Mandaviya.

The emerging view is that the reshuffle, whether held in September-October or November, could follow the principle of "One Minister-One Ministry". Another consideration could be keeping party and government responsibilities separate. The BJP wants to strengthen its organisa-

tion ahead of the 2029 general elections. Under such an arrangement, BJP MPs holding organisational positions may not be inducted.

JP Nadda is the Health and Family Welfare Minister and also holds Chemicals and Fertilisers. Shivraj Singh Chouhan is the Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister and also handles Rural Development. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has the additional charge of Corporate Affairs. Among NDA allies, H. D.

Kumaraswamy handles Heavy Industries and Steel. Rajiv Ranjan Singh is Minister for Panchayati Raj and also handles Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

Jyotiraditya Scindia holds Communications and the additional charge of Development of North Eastern Region, while Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju also handles Minority Affairs. Mansukh Mandaviya is Labour and Employment Minister and also handles Youth Affairs and Sports. G. Kishan Reddy holds Coal and Mines.

Ashwini Vaishnaw has perhaps the largest additional responsibility. Apart from Railways, he handles Information and Broadcasting and Electronics and Information Technology. Several Ministers of State, including Rao Inderjit Singh and Arjun Ram Meghwal, also hold additional portfolios or responsibilities.

Another consideration is the induction of new faces from both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, with adequate representation for women. There is speculation that the government could seek to raise women's representation to around 33 per cent of the ministerial strength across Cabinet and Minister of State ranks.

"This is logical as it might reflect the PM's commitment to ensure 33% representation to women. However, Modi may consider doing this before the legislation is passed in Parliament, thereby taking the issue away from the Opposition and reiterating the NDA's commitment to give reservation for women," a senior BJP functionary, privy to this consideration, told this newspaper on Friday.

The reshuffle could therefore be more than a routine exercise, with representation, organisational discipline and accommodation of different sections within the NDA being key considerations. Some prominent BJP leaders who were recently left out of organisational positions, as well as those expected to be dropped from the party's parliamentary board, could also be considered for ministerial positions.



INTERNATIONAL

Nepal flood toll climbs to 579 amid fear of fresh deluge; India ready to send NDRF teams if required

KATHMANDU

The death toll from flash floods in central Nepal climbed to 579 on Friday as more bodies were recovered after search and rescue operations resumed at full pace, following a brief slowdown amid fears of fresh flooding due to rising water levels in the Bhotekoshi River area.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) said rising water levels at the site of a devastating flash flood earlier this week increased the risk of another flood in the area.

"The water level mixed with mud has increased at the same place where the flash flood occurred on Wednesday, and there is a risk of more flooding in the area," the NDRRMA said.

The warning came after a massive flash flood swept through Rasuwa and other parts of central Nepal on Wednesday, killing hundreds and causing widespread damage to settlements, roads, bridges and hydropower infrastructure.

The NDRRMA urged people involved in search and rescue operations, as well as those staying in the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli areas for various reasons, to remain highly alert and immediately move to safer places if they face any risk.

Nepal Police on Friday said 579 bodies were recovered from eight districts of the Himalayan nation, with thousands still missing.

According to the police, 233 dead bodies have been recovered from Chitwan district, 154 from Nawalparasi East, 46 from Gorkha and 40 from Dhading.

Similarly, 37 dead bodies were recovered from Nuwakot, 30 from Tanahu, 27 from Nawalparasi West, and 12 from Rasuwa.

Five people have been killed

in Gyirong County in the Tibet Autonomous Region, according to Chinese authorities.

At least 1924 people, including 86 security personnel, 517 foreign tourists and 127 Nepali travellers, have been missing since Wednesday morning when the flash floods hit Rasuwa and adjoining districts of Nepal.

So far, 1,545 injured and stranded people have been rescued from various affected regions. Among them, 84 are currently undergoing treatment in various hospitals in Kathmandu, where families are desperately searching for their loved ones. So far, 4451 people have been rescued from different affected areas. These include 129 foreign nationals, including 85 Indians, and 191 people trapped in tunnels of various hydropower projects. Altogether, 101 injured people are undergoing treatment in various hospitals in Kathmandu.

"Two helicopters have been dispatched but it is challenging because it is tough to even locate the entry points of the tunnel," army spokesman Raja Ram Basnet told. Search and rescue operations continued for the third day of the tragic incident with the mobilisation of 7,451 security personnel, including 2,391 Nepal Army personnel, the police statement said.

Helicopters have been used to reach isolated areas and evacuate survivors, while ground teams continue searching riverbanks and downstream settlements, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

Morgues in hospitals in Nepal in several areas are running out of space as more bodies swept away by the floods downstream are being recovered.

Bodies recovered from Rasuwa and Nuwakot have been found

as far downstream as Chitwan, Tanahun, Nawalparasi, Gorkha and other districts, with morgues in several areas running out of space.

Meanwhile, the Nepal government has decided to halt all examinations from August 29, given the situation that developed following the devastating natural disaster.

Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah and members of his cabinet have decided in a cabinet meeting to donate a month's salary to the disaster relief fund.

The cabinet also directed the finance ministry to prepare a relief, concessional financing and rehabilitation package for individuals and businesses affected by flash floods.

In another development, Nepal has denied refusing assistance from friendly countries and the international community, saying it wants to "prioritise" maximum deployment of its own security forces, which are familiar with local environmental conditions and rugged terrain.

Speaking to the National News Agency (RSS), Nepal foreign minister Shisir Khanal said that "International assistance was not rejected but that the rescue strategy was decided based on national capacity, immediate need and Nepal's unique geographical situation." Meanwhile, India on Friday sent a third tranche of 10 tonnes of relief supplies to Nepal, along with an 11-member team of doctors and paramedics and a reconnaissance crew to assess tunnel rescue operations.

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said that a team for tunnel rescue operations has been sent to Nepal as nearly a hundred people are stranded in a hydropower tunnel.

"Right now, our effort is on supporting Nepal in the relief and

rescue of people. Even today I spoke in the morning to the Nepal foreign minister. We have given them a range of support offers and they are evaluating it," he said.

"Right now, the main thing is that in one place where there is a hydroelectric project, there could be possibility of people who may be in a tunnel. So, we are sending a team to help with the experts," he said.

"If they require NDRF people to go, we will send them. We have given them that option," the minister told reporters.

Meanwhile, China sounded a Level-IV alert late on Thursday, saying a large barrier lake had formed near the confluence of the Chhochen Khola and Purepu Tsangpo rivers in Nepal. China's emergency response system for natural disasters has four levels, with Level-I being the highest and Level-IV the lowest.

In Tibet, China was forced to suspend its rescue operation at the hardest-hit area of Gyirong over the risk of renewed flooding on Friday, before saying the threat had eased.

Rescue operations were therefore "proceeding in an orderly manner", it added.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who chaired a meeting on rescue efforts, offered Beijing's help to Nepal's emergency operations.

Chinese authorities had informed Nepal that around 2 million cubic metres of water had accumulated in the lake, with another 3 million cubic metres potentially entering it over three days, raising concerns about a possible breach.

The lake had formed near the confluence of the Chhochen Khola and Purepu Tsangpo rivers, which originate in Tibet and flow into Nepal as part of the Bhotekoshi river system.

Trump announces 'biggest oil deal in world history' with Venezuela; US to control 65 billion barrels



WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said Friday his administration has reached a huge oil deal with Venezuela that gives the United States majority control of 65 billion barrels of proven petroleum reserves.

The deal - which Trump proclaimed as "the biggest oil deal in world history" - will bring nearly \$100 billion in private investment to Venezuela, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves. Its government has operated under intense pressure and close scrutiny from the Trump administration since the US ousted and captured long time ruler Nicolas Maduro in January. It allowed his then vice president, Delcy Rodriguez, to stay on and serve as interim leader so long as she toes the US line.

Trump has made no secret of his desire to secure Venezuelan oil for the US, and in his post announcing the deal on his Truth Social platform, he said it will more than double US oil reserves.

There was no immediate confirmation of the arrange-

ment from the Venezuelan government.

Trump said Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had reached the deal with Rodriguez "through a partnership with private business."

"This Transaction will greatly strengthen the already growing relationship between Venezuela and the United States!" Trump wrote.

Rubio said the deal demonstrated how "President Trump's bold foreign policy is driving America First wins: securing stable reserves and low-cost oil in our Hemisphere and lowering gas prices here at home."

"For the Venezuelan people, this deal will bring nearly \$100 billion in private investment, support thousands of high-paying jobs, and drive the reconstruction of Venezuela's economy," the top US diplomat wrote on X, without providing further details.

The news site Axios reported Thursday the two countries were in talks on a dozen productive oil fields with 90 billion barrels of proven reserves - about a third of Venezuela's total proven reserves of 300 billion

barrels. Axios quoted two US officials.

In return for a US ownership stake, private companies, including American firms, would develop the fields and return more oil revenue to Venezuela, according to Axios.

Axios also said the deal would more than double US oil reserves at a time when the US strategic petroleum reserve is at a 40-year low.

Trump also insisted the deal will lower gasoline prices for Americans - a major issue as his approval ratings fall ahead of November midterm elections after launching a war on Iran that has disrupted global oil supplies.

The Trump administration has been urging US companies to invest in Venezuela, but they remain wary due to dilapidated infrastructure and past appropriation of assets of foreign investors by the government in Caracas.

Chevron, the only US oil company that was still operating in Venezuela when Maduro was ousted, said in July that it had raised its daily crude production to 280,000 barrels and plans to increase output by 50 percent by the end of 2028.

Historic India-Japan Business Mission Rekindles Hope for Greater Japanese Investment in Manipur



BISWADEEP GUPTA

In a historic initiative aimed at elevating the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, led India's largest-ever business delegation to Japan, comprising more than 200 business leaders, entrepreneurs, startup founders and industry representatives from across the country. The landmark mission reflected India's growing economic ambitions and underscored Japan's continuing importance as one of India's most trusted strategic and development partners.

Manipur was represented by Hao-bam Joyremba, Managing Director of CubeTen Technologies Pvt. Ltd., who is also the Chairman of the Manipur CII, along with Yambem Roshni, Managing Director of Globiz and Ramananda Nongmeikapam, Registrar of Manipur Technical University, who participated in a series of high-level business engagements, sectoral discussions and networking sessions with Japanese stakeholders.

The delegation was jointly organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) in collaboration with the Government of India and leading Japanese industry organisations.

Significantly, the delegation included 28 representatives from the Northeastern states. The visit brought together an impressive spectrum of Japanese institutions, policymakers and industry leaders. Key stakeholders included representatives from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, leading Japanese corporations, technology companies, financial institutions, manufacturing associations, innovation agencies and trade promotion organisations. The extensive participation reflected Japan's strong interest in expanding cooperation with India across multiple sectors.

A significant emphasis was placed on skilled workforce mobility, particularly in light of Japan's ageing population and increasing demand for trained professionals. Discussions focused on creating pathways for Indian youth to access employment opportunities in Japan across sectors such as engineering, information technology, healthcare, manufacturing, construction and caregiving. Skill development, language training and certification mechanisms were identified as key enablers for future collaboration.

For Manipur, the visit carried special significance. Sharing a unique historical bond with Japan dating back to the Second World War, the state has emerged over the years as an important symbol of peace, reconciliation and friendship through initiatives such as the Imphal Peace Museum and various Indo-Japan cultural exchange programmes.

Joyremba noted that while several Northeastern states have successfully attracted Japanese development assistance and investment, Manipur remains largely outside the ambit of major Japanese-funded development projects.

"It is encouraging to witness the strong engagement between Japan and the Northeastern region. However, it is equally

important to recognise that Manipur, despite its deep historical, cultural and emotional connection with Japan, has yet to receive significant development assistance through JICA-supported projects," Joyremba remarked.

He pointed out that Assam has benefited from JICA-assisted projects worth well over 1,500 crore across sectors such as infrastructure, water supply and urban development, while Meghalaya upto 877 Crore, Tripura 1400 crore plus, and investment in Mizoram, Tripura and Nagaland.

In contrast, Manipur presently has little or no major JICA-funded development project, despite its strategic location and longstanding relationship with Japan.

"Manipur possesses enormous potential. Our young talent, strategic location, historical association with Japan and growing digital capabilities make us an ideal destination for future collaborations. We hope this mission becomes the beginning of a stronger partnership that translates into meaningful investments and sustainable development for our state," he said.

As India and Japan continue to deepen their strategic partnership, the outcomes of the visit are expected to strengthen bilateral trade, encourage greater investments, promote technology partnerships and create new opportunities in sectors that will define the future of both economies.

For Manipur, the delegation represented far more than participation in an international business mission. It served as an opportunity to present the state's aspirations before some of Japan's most influential institutions and decision-makers, while reiterating the need for stronger developmental partnerships. With its unique historical ties, strategic geographic location and emerging strengths in technology and innovation, Manipur has every opportunity to become an important pillar of the evolving India-Japan relationship. The hope now is that these discussions will translate into concrete collaborations, greater investments and long-term partnerships that contribute meaningfully to the state's economic growth and reinforce the enduring friendship between the people of India and Japan.

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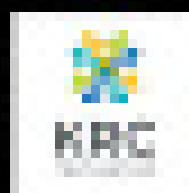


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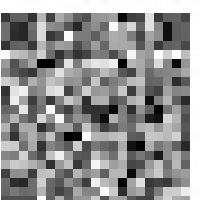


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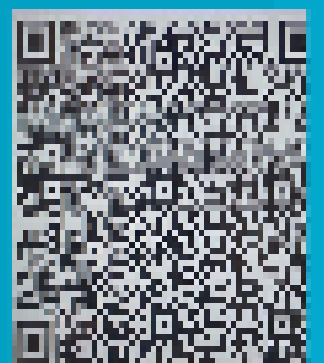
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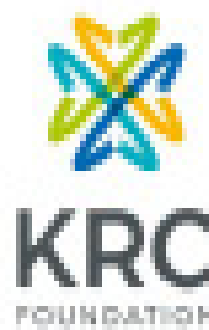
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