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PERSPECTIVE

Pay attention to who is happy for you when you win.

Nagaland Student Bodies Ask Schools to Skip I-Day Events Over Mandatory Vande Mataram

KOHIAMA
The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) and the Ao Students' Conference (AKM) have asked schools and educational institutions under their respective jurisdictions not to send students to Independence Day programmes on August 15, objecting to the mandatory playing or singing of the revised version of Vande Mataram at official functions.

In a notification issued on August 12, the NSF directed its federating units and subordinate bodies to ensure that schools and educational institutions refrain from sending students to Independence Day programmes until the directive making Vande Mataram compulsory at official functions is withdrawn.

The federation clarified that it was not opposed to Independence Day celebrations or to showing respect to the National Flag, National Anthem and other national symbols. Its objection, it said, was specifically to compulsory participation in Vande Mataram, particularly where the song's devotional and religious imagery could conflict with the conscience and beliefs of students from non-Hindu communities. The NSF invoked the constitutional protection of freedom of conscience and religion, along with Article 371A of the Constitution, in opposing compulsory participation. The student body maintained that students should not be forced to participate in an expression that they may perceive as having religious implications. It also said students who decline to participate in Vande Mataram on grounds of conscience or religious belief should not face disciplinary action, discrimination, intimidation or any academic consequences.

WHO SAID WHAT



MPs of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh appeal for maintaining of peace along the border. We must live together harmoniously as brothers and sisters and settle any land dispute through peaceful negotiation only.

~ Kiren Rijiju, MP, Arunachal Pradesh, Union Minister of Parliamentary & Minority Affairs

FCRA Amendment Bill Sent to Joint Panel Amid Opposition Protests, Northeast Concerns

NEW DELHI
The Lok Sabha approved a motion to refer the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, to a 31-member Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for detailed scrutiny, amid strong Opposition protests and concerns raised by Christian-majority states in the Northeast.

The motion was moved by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai amid sloganeering by Opposition MPs demanding the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the House.

The proposed joint committee will have 21 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will nominate the members from the lower House, while Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan will nominate the members from the upper House.

The committee has been asked to submit its report to the Lok Sabha by the last day of the first week of the Winter Session of Parliament in 2026.

The decision came after



months of concern over the proposed amendments, particularly in the Northeast, where Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya have raised reservations about provisions relating to foreign-funded NGOs and civil society organisations.

Before the motion was passed, Congress MP KC Venugopal alleged that the legislation was aimed at minorities and NGOs and demanded its withdrawal.

"This is clearly for targeting minorities and NGOs. We demand that the Bill be withdrawn," Venugopal said.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju rejected the allegation, saying the government had agreed to refer the Bill to a parliamentary committee in response to the Opposition's demand for greater scrutiny.

"If they have any reservations about the Bill, they can speak in the JPC. This is not targeted at any minority community," Rijiju said.

Samajwadi Party MP Akhilesh Yadav questioned the government's claim that the legislation was not directed against minorities.

KRC TIMES

STAY ENRICHED

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Manipur to Invoke NSA Against Highway Extortionists, Disruptors

MANIPUR TO INVOKE NSA AGAINST HIGHWAY EXTORTIONISTS, DISRUPTORS



Crackdown on extortion and unlawful collection of money on highways

Strict action against those disrupting public order and essential movement

NSA to be invoked against repeat offenders and habitual disruptors

IMPHAL
The Manipur government has decided to invoke the National Security Act (NSA) against militants and miscreants involved in extortion and disruptions along key National Highways, Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam said on Wednesday.

Speaking at an event in Imphal in the presence of Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, Konhoujam said illegal activities along the state's highways had severely affected residents and disrupted the movement of essential commodities.

He said the government would soon is-

ssue a notification under the Control of National Highway (Land & Traffic) Act, 2002, to facilitate action against those involved in extortion and other activities disrupting traffic along the highways.

The announcement comes amid reports of systematic extortion targeting transporters and truck drivers on major routes, particularly National Highway 37, which connects Imphal with Jiribam, and National Highway 202.

Transporters have reportedly been forced to pay up to Rs 25,000 per vehicle along the approximately 200-km Jirib-

am-Imphal stretch. In some cases, armed groups are alleged to have issued payment slips or receipts for the money collected.

The extortion has disrupted the movement of essential commodities and triggered protests by transport unions, with operators demanding stronger security measures along the highways.

Konhoujam also warned that the Prevention of Damages to Public Property Act, 1948, would be strictly enforced against individuals or groups involved in damaging public infrastructure. He said the government would take legal action without discrimination, nepotism or favouritism against anyone obstructing the movement of essential goods and services.

Emphasising the need for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis, the Home Minister said lasting peace could not be achieved through violence and that conflicts must be addressed through dialogue and negotiations rather than the use of guns. Konhoujam appealed to all communities and civil society organisations to support peace initiatives and work towards protecting Manipur's integrity.

He also stressed that security forces alone could not restore normalcy in the state without the cooperation and support of the people.

1,500 Trucks Stranded on Assam-Manipur Border as Transporters Demand Security

IMPHAL
Around 1,500 loaded trucks and fuel tankers have remained stranded for more than 15 days along a 20-kilometre stretch of National Highway 37 near the Assam-Manipur border, prompting transporters to demand adequate security escorts for their movement towards Imphal. Tensions rose on Tuesday when a large number of stranded truck drivers and handymen gathered at the Jiribam police station, seeking immediate intervention from the authorities. The crisis emerged after security forces initially deployed only one convoy despite a request for two, leaving hundreds of vehicles and their crews stranded along the highway connecting Imphal with Silchar through Jiribam. The Transporters' and Drivers' Council (TDC) has maintained its five-day ultimatum to the state government. TDC president Hijam Ranjit said transporters would proceed towards Imphal with or without official security if adequate escorts were not arranged within the deadline.

The stranded vehicles include fuel tankers and trucks carrying essential goods. Drivers and handymen have reportedly been facing shortages of food and money while remaining stranded for

more than two weeks, away from their homes. The situation escalated around 9 am when the transport workers assembled at the Jiribam police station. They demanded that the authorities either fulfil the police's request for a second security convoy or allow the vehicles to proceed without escorts. Earlier in the day, security forces had deployed a convoy of 150 vehicles, including 85 fuel tankers and 65 goods-laden trucks. Following the protest, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) deployed a second convoy by around 2 pm in an effort to ease the situation and facilitate the movement of stranded vehicles.

The additional convoy temporarily reduced tensions, but the TDC maintained that transporters could still be compelled to travel independently if adequate security arrangements were not put in place.

Ranjit warned that the government would be held responsible for any untoward incident or security failure if drivers were forced to travel along the highway without armed escorts.

The prolonged disruption on NH-37 has raised concerns over the supply of fuel and other essential commodities to Manipur, where the highway serves as a critical route for supplies from Assam.

UPPL Delegation Urges PM Modi to Fast-Track BTR Accord, Flood-Control Measures



GUWAHATI
A delegation of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), led by Rajya Sabha MP Pramod Boro, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Parliament House on Wednesday and sought speedy implementation of the 2020 Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Accord, along with urgent measures to address recurring floods and erosion in the region.

The delegation included Rajya Sabha MP Rungwra Narzary and Lok Sabha MP Jayanta Basumatary. During the meeting, the UPPL leaders urged the Centre to ensure timely implementation of all provisions of the BTR Accord, which was signed in 2020 under the guidance of Prime Minister Modi.

A key issue raised during the meeting was the proposed 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill. The UPPL delegation urged the Prime Minister to expedite the legislative process concerning the proposed amendments to provisions related to the Sixth Schedule and Article 280 of the Constitution.

The proposed changes are aimed at strengthening the administrative and financial powers of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), which governs the BTR. The UPPL leaders also drew the Prime Minister's attention to the persistent problem of floods and riverbank erosion in several parts of the BTR. They highlighted the impact of water flows from streams originating in Bhutan and sought appropriate long-term measures to address the recurring problem.

The delegation further requested a special initiative for flood-affected districts of Upper Assam, seeking targeted assistance and intervention for communities affected by inundation, erosion and displacement.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of continuing flood concerns across Assam, where several districts have been affected by heavy rainfall, rising river levels and erosion. The UPPL delegation stressed the need for sustained central intervention to strengthen flood-control infrastructure and provide relief to affected populations.

Bank Accounts Mandatory for Assam HSLC 2027 Candidates Before Form Fill-Up

GUWAHATI
The Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB), Division-I, has made it mandatory for students appearing in the HSLC Examination 2027 to have individual bank accounts before the examination form-filling process begins.

According to an official notification issued by ASSEB on August 11, the HSLC 2027 form fill-up is tentatively scheduled to commence in the first week of October 2026. Students will be required to provide their bank account numbers while submitting their examination applications.

The board has directed all Inspectors of Schools to instruct heads of educational institutions in their respective districts to ensure that every Class X student has an individual bank account before the form-filling process starts.

Schools have been specifically asked to facilitate the opening of bank accounts for students who do not already have one, so that they do not face difficulties during the HSLC 2027 application process.

The directive was issued by N.N. Nath, ACS, Secretary of ASSEB, Division-I, from the board's headquarters at Bamunimaidam in Guwahati.

The board has urged schools to complete the exercise well in advance of the proposed October form-fill-up schedule. The requirement is expected to make bank account details a mandatory component of the HSLC 2027 examination application process.

Meghalaya Reports 574 New HIV Infections in Three Months; Officials Warn Against Stigma and Misinformation

SHILLONG
Meghalaya reported 574 new HIV infections during the first quarter of 2026, including 16 pregnant women, prompting the Meghalaya AIDS Control Society (MACS) to intensify awareness, testing and prevention initiatives across the state.

The figures were released as MACS launched the Statewide Intensified Information, Education and Communication (IEEC) Campaign 3.0 at Lady Keane College in Shillong on Wednesday to mark International Youth Day.

According to MACS data, about 52 per cent of the newly reported infections were attributed to casual sexual contact, while 32 per cent were linked to regular partners or spouses. Injecting drug use accounted for nine per cent of infections, commercial sex exposure for four per cent and mother-to-child transmission for around 2.5 per cent. Health Minister Wailadmiki Shylla, who launched the campaign, called for a collective effort to combat HIV and urged people to reject stigma and discrimination against those living with the virus.

Shylla said the government had approved a five-year plan to strengthen Meghalaya's response

to HIV/AIDS and stressed that the campaign should develop into a broader statewide movement focused on awareness, prevention, testing, treatment and dignity. "Ending HIV cannot be the responsibility of MACS alone," Shylla said, emphasising the role of government departments, educational institutions, healthcare workers, civil society groups, parents, teachers and young people. The campaign will focus on the four principal routes of HIV transmission - unprotected sexual contact, sharing contaminated needles and syringes, mother-to-child transmission and transfusion of infected blood. MACS Project Director Dr K L Jawbor said misinformation and stigma continued to pose significant challenges to the state's HIV response. He stressed the importance of early diagnosis and timely treatment.

As part of the two-month campaign, MACS plans to reach 126 villages, 3,000 schools and 85 colleges and conduct around 15,000 door-to-door interactions across Meghalaya. Awareness activities will include public performances, flash mobs, health camps and QR codes providing information on HIV prevention, testing and treatment services.



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THE MECCA PACT

The defence agreement signed in Mecca on August 7 by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye is significant not because it creates an entirely new strategic alignment, but because it reveals how the security architecture of West Asia is changing. The three Sunni-majority states have agreed that an armed attack on any one of them will be regarded as an attack on all. They have also committed to expanding defence cooperation, including joint exercises, personnel training, defensive capability development and defence-industry cooperation. No detailed text of the agreement has been made public. Its timing, therefore, may be more revealing than its undisclosed provisions.

The pact comes as the Iran war enters its sixth month, amid missile and drone attacks and strikes by Iran-aligned groups that have exposed vulnerabilities across the Gulf and disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. For Riyadh, the question is no longer simply whether the United States remains the principal external security provider. It is whether Saudi Arabia can afford to depend on a single security guarantor when the costs of uncertainty are so high. The Mecca pact suggests that Riyadh is seeking layers of deterrence rather than relying on one umbrella.

This process predates the latest agreement. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a mutual defence agreement in September 2025. The Mecca pact now brings Türkiye into a framework that draws upon the three countries' distinct capabilities. It is therefore best understood as an attempt by Riyadh to diversify its strategic options while making use of the military strengths of Pakistan and Türkiye.

The complementarity is striking. Türkiye brings extensive NATO experience, one of the alliance's largest militaries and a growing indigenous defence industry, including Bayraktar drones and naval platforms. Pakistan brings a battle-hardened military, considerable intelligence capabilities and, uniquely among Muslim-majority states, an established nuclear arsenal. Its nuclear capability gives Pakistan a strategic weight that neither of the other partners possesses. Pakistani military personnel are also already deployed in Saudi Arabia, alongside fighter aircraft, drones and air-defence assets. Saudi Arabia contributes what the other two lack: financial resources, strategic geography and considerable political influence derived from its position in the Muslim world and its longstanding relationships with both Pakistan and Türkiye.

The presence of Pakistan's Army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, at the signing was itself a significant signal. Yet the governments involved have been careful to deny that the agreement constitutes a military axis, a sectarian bloc or a nuclear arrangement directed against any particular country. Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognises the right of individual and collective self-defence. These qualifications matter. There is insufficient evidence to describe the arrangement as an "Islamic NATO", and the agreement does not identify Iran or Israel as an adversary.

But collective defence arrangements cannot be understood only through their disclaimers. Their central purpose is deterrence: to convince a potential aggressor that an attack on one member will incur a response from the others. In the present regional environment, that logic inevitably has implications for Iran, Israel and other regional actors, even when none is named. The pact's strategic meaning therefore lies less in the identity of a declared enemy than in the message that the three countries intend to develop additional sources of security.

For Riyadh, this amounts to strategic insurance. The Iran war and the vulnerability of Gulf infrastructure and energy routes have reinforced the case for a more diversified security architecture. Tehran has argued that an agreement with Türkiye and Pakistan cannot provide the security that decades of dependence on Washington failed to deliver. The argument is clearly self-serving, but it points to a broader reality: Gulf states are increasingly interested in multiple sources of deterrence and strategic reassurance. For Washington, there is an additional benefit. Greater regional burden-sharing could allow local powers to assume responsibilities that the United States may increasingly prefer not to carry alone.

The more difficult question is whether the three countries can translate their complementary capabilities into durable collective security. Their threat perceptions are not identical, nor are their strategic priorities. The Baghdad Pact provides an imperfect historical parallel. Established in 1955 with British and American backing, it brought together Türkiye, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan around a security framework aimed principally at containing Soviet influence. Divergent interests and regional opposition weakened the arrangement, and the 1958 Iraqi revolution led to Iraq's withdrawal. The relevant lesson is not that the Mecca pact will meet the same fate, but that defence partnerships become fragile when members disagree over the threats they face and the circumstances in which they are prepared to act.

For India, this distinction is important. Pakistan is likely to emerge as one of the principal beneficiaries of the new arrangement, gaining greater strategic relevance and potentially deeper access to Turkish defence capabilities. Ankara's growing convergence with Islamabad therefore deserves close monitoring. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that Saudi Arabia's new security partnership automatically translates into an anti-India alignment. Riyadh has invested substantially in its relationship with New Delhi across energy, investment, technology and security. Its engagement with India has also demonstrated that closer ties with Pakistan need not determine the entire trajectory of Saudi-India relations.

India should consequently avoid viewing the Mecca pact through a binary lens. Its interest lies in deepening its strategic relationship with Riyadh while ensuring that Pakistan-related disputes do not acquire greater space in the Gulf. New Delhi should continue engaging Ankara even as it accounts for Türkiye's growing strategic convergence with Islamabad. The changing military environment also underlines the importance of accelerating indigenous capabilities in counter-UAS systems, electronic warfare, drone defence and integrated air defence.

The larger significance of the Mecca pact is therefore not that a new bloc has suddenly emerged. It is that West Asia is moving towards a more distributed security order in which regional powers are seeking greater responsibility for their own deterrence while retaining multiple external partnerships. For India, the response should not be to join another camp, but to preserve the strategic flexibility that has enabled it to maintain productive relationships with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Israel, Iran and Oman. In a region where old security certainties are giving way to layered and transactional arrangements, India's influence will depend increasingly on the strength of both its partnerships and its own strategic capabilities.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

One can resist the invasion of an army, but one cannot resist the invasion of ideas. - Victor Hugo

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND YOUTH
A CHANGE IN
PERSPECTIVE IS
ESSENTIAL



DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

The youth protests recently launched in Delhi and other cities by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) have brought to the fore the concerns and demands of the generation widely referred to as 'Gen Z'. What began as anger over irregularities in examinations has now evolved into broader discontent over education, unemployment and the lack of accountability. The movement's ability to mobilise young people has made it difficult to ignore its political significance.

Similar reports of discontent have now emerged from Jharkhand, raising the larger question of where the situation is headed. Whether these protests remain isolated expressions of anger in different places or develop into a broader and sustained youth movement will depend largely on how seriously their underlying problems are addressed.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, while acknowledging the problems faced by young people, described protests as a legitimate means of dialogue. He said that the Gen Z protesters were not "anti-national", as they had been accused of being, but were our own people. In doing so, he became the latest prominent saffron leader to reach out to the concerns of young people. Addressing a gathering of around 2,000 students in Mumbai recently, he said that protests are also a form of dialogue and that, in a democracy, they are a means of attempting to build consensus. However, Bhagwat also stressed that protests must remain within democratic norms. He made no reference to the objectionable slogans raised by young protesters against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Indeed, there has been speculation that Bhagwat played an important role in persuading the government to accept the CJP's demands and bring the rapidly spreading protests to an end. On the question of comprehensive reforms in education and the need to spend six per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) on education, Bhagwat reportedly expressed agreement. At present, however, the government spends only slightly more than four per cent of GDP on education.

Prime Minister Modi, too, is trying to manage the situation. Addressing students at IIT Delhi a few days ago, he said that the younger generation should use its knowledge and skills to build a developed and capable India. He said that the next 30 years of the lives of today's youth would play a crucial role in shaping India's journey towards becoming a developed nation. But the question is whether adequate opportunities exist for young people today. The widening gap between aspirations and opportunities is one of the major reasons for

the discontent visible among the youth.

Young people between the ages of 14 and 29 are estimated to constitute more than 35 per cent of India's total population. Despite this, their representation in Parliament and state legislatures remains extremely low. At present, there are only six MPs and 30 MLAs in this age group. One major reason may be that young people are reluctant to enter politics and have become disillusioned with political leaders. Many of these leaders have repeatedly faced allegations of corruption and indifference towards the welfare of young people. Another reason is that the minimum age for contesting elections is 25. If youth participation in state legislatures is to be increased, lowering this age limit could be considered. Even if the age threshold is extended to 40, however, the picture would not be significantly different.

Of the approximately 4,000 legislators in the country, only 397 are below the age of 40. The government's indifference towards youth protests reflects a lack of institutional foresight. In India, the experience of political leaders is given greater importance, leaving insufficient space within political parties for the energy and dynamism of young people. The most serious

The popularity of the CJP among young people can be viewed in the context of their anger against a traditional, rigid and unresponsive political system that appears disconnected from popular sentiment. Young people today constitute a major force in society, and their demands and needs cannot be ignored at any cost.

While formulating its future strategy, the government will have to take into account the concerns of young people who are struggling to find their place in society. Available data make it clear that they do not have a high degree of trust in the policies of the present government. They are willing to take to the streets to press for their demands, but remain reluctant to participate actively in politics.

Meanwhile, the steady erosion of autonomy in higher educational institutions is also a matter of concern. Freedom of expression and the overall academic environment are being affected. At the same time, the declining quality of teaching at almost every level, except in a select group of institutions such as the IITs, IIMs and some central universities, is another cause for concern. In the latest international assessment by the Varieties of Democracy Academic Freedom Index project, India has been placed



consequence is that young people are not receiving equal opportunities. The indifference of senior leaders, and at times their dismissive attitude towards the youth, is making young people disillusioned and cynical about politics and its institutions.

among the bottom 10-20 per cent of countries and territories out of 179 assessed worldwide. Academic freedom today is lower than it was during the years of the Emergency and has reached its lowest level since 1900. Freedom of expression is also gradually being restricted.

Many universities and teachers are resorting to self-censorship in order to avoid displeasing the government.

Analysts have repeatedly emphasised that universities are centres of independent intellectual thought, built around questioning, debate and dialogue. There should

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

From every corner of the country, when young people leave behind their homes, their families, arriving at our Project Sites with dreams in their eyes, I see my own journey reflected in them. 16 years of age. The first step toward Mumbai. No mother's home-cooked meals. No sense of a father's protection. No predetermined path. Just the courage of hard work and the desire to learn something new every day. Today, in those millions of young people, I see my own story - those who are far from home, far from loved ones, but are shaping their future and India's future with the sweat of their brow. In the second conversation of 'My Words, With My Loved Ones', some such memories, some experiences, and a few lessons learned from life. ~ Gautam Adani, Chairman, Adani Group



be no place for suppressing the voices of students in such institutions.

In such a situation, it is not only the Central government but also state governments that must give serious consideration to the issue. It would be better for them to formulate concrete policies aimed at understanding the problems and aspirations of students and young people. The primary focus should be on the reforms required in the education sector, increasing allocations and expenditure on education from schools to universities, and ensuring equal opportunities for all sections of society.

Education is a subject on the Concurrent List, but Central government spending on improving the condition of schools in remote and backward areas has not been commensurate with expectations. Public universities in major cities are also struggling with inadequate funding. Research scholarships are declining, while the situation in semi-urban areas is even more worrying. All these circumstances have generated discontent among young people for several years. They increasingly feel helpless in the face of the situation. Their teachers, too, are demanding better opportunities and facilities for young people because they are concerned not only about their students but also about the future of the country.

If young people are not prepared to move forward in the right direction and are not provided with the facilities and opportunities necessary to build their careers, what will become of the country's future? Opportunities should not be confined to the rich and upper-middle classes; they must be available to every section of society. Young people, particularly those in rural areas struggling to build their careers, must be given equal opportunities. The son of a farmer or a small trader has as much right to quality education in a school or college in his village as a child from an affluent family. Unfortunately, the government has not shown the seriousness that this need demands.

It is also in the government's own interest to bring about a fundamental change in its approach. If it fails to address the concerns of the younger generation in a positive and judicious manner, the popularity of the present government could suffer adversely.

Manipur CM Sets 15-Day Deadline to Surrender Looted Arms, Warns of Legal Action

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday gave people holding looted, illegal or unauthorised weapons 15 days to surrender them, warning that those found in possession of such arms after the deadline would face legal action.

Khemchand issued the warning at a Home Department programme held at the 1st Manipur Rifles Ground in Imphal to highlight government measures aimed at restoring peace and normalcy in the violence-hit state.

Addressing the gathering as chief guest, the chief minister said the government was making sustained efforts to restore peace and



commended the state and central security forces for their role in recovering weapons.

He said the growing number of voluntary surrenders indicated that people in Manipur wanted an

end to the prolonged violence.

According to Khemchand, security forces and other agencies recovered 1,422 firearms, 7,010 rounds of ammunition and 1,137 explosives between February 2026, when the

present government assumed office, and August 11.

However, he said some looted and unauthorised weapons were still believed to be in the possession of individuals.

The chief minister said the government had initially adopted a cautious approach towards registering cases against people found with weapons, considering the circumstances under which many of them had acquired the arms during the crisis.

With the situation in the state improving, however, he said there was no longer any justification for possessing, concealing or retaining illegal weapons.

Khemchand appealed to those still holding such arms to surren-

der them within 15 days through their respective MLAs or the police in their districts.

He warned that anyone found with illegal, unauthorised or looted weapons after the deadline would be booked under the relevant laws.

The chief minister also referred to the violence that erupted in Manipur on May 3, 2023, saying the prolonged conflict had caused widespread suffering and deepened mistrust between communities.

He said the gradual recovery and surrender of weapons demonstrated the state's movement towards peace and normalcy. The government, he added, was continuing its outreach to different communities and facilitating dialogue, which he described as essential

for rebuilding trust and achieving lasting peace. Khemchand further said security forces were continuing efforts to ensure the supply and movement of essential commodities despite blockades affecting national highways.

The programme included a display of weapons recovered during security operations and the screening of a short film titled Manipur Marches to Peace, highlighting the government's efforts towards restoring normalcy.

Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, Tourism Minister Kh Loken Singh, the Director General of Police, the security adviser and senior officials from various departments attended the programme.

ANSAM Calls for August 15 Boycott, Asks Nagas to Observe 80th Naga Independence Day

IMPHAL

The All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM) has called on its constituent and subordinate units to observe August 14 as the 80th Naga Independence Day and urged members of the Naga community to stay away from India's Independence Day celebrations on August 15.

In a directive, ANSAM asked its units to hoist the Naga national flag at their respective "Okings" on August 14. It also appealed particularly to Naga youths and students to refrain from participating in Independence Day programmes on August 15.

The directive followed resolutions adopted at ANSAM's third Legislative Assembly for the 2024-26 term, held on August 10 at Chandel Christian village in Manipur's Chandel district.

The student body also called on educational institutions and government and private offices in Naga-inhabited areas to observe August 14 as a holiday.

ANSAM linked its decision to what it described as the failure to implement the August 3, 2015 Framework Agreement between the Government of India and the NSCN in its "true letter and spirit". The association alleged that issues relating to the Naga flag and constitution, which it said were recognised under the agreement, remained unresolved. ANSAM also raised concerns over the continued enforcement of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), policies it claimed were creating divisions among the Naga people, and what it described as the suppression of tribal rights.

During the legislative assembly, the organisation also opposed the Manipur government's 6th Amendment Act and 7th Amendment Bill relating to Autonomous District Councils.

ANSAM said it would oppose legislative measures that, in its view, undermine the provisions and spirit of Article 371C of the Constitution.

NIT Silchar Workers Begin Hunger Strike Seeking Regularisation

SILCHAR

Fifty-four muster roll workers of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Silchar in Assam's Cachar district have launched a hunger strike demanding regularisation of their services.

The protest outside the institute's main administrative office entered its third day on Wednesday, according to members of the NIT Workers' Union.

The workers are seeking permanent status, citing a Gauhati High Court order directing NIT Silchar to regularise the services of its muster roll employees and extend benefits available to permanent staff.

A union leader said 122 muster roll workers were employed at the institute, of whom only 20 had been

regularised so far. The remaining workers, the union claimed, have continued to serve the institute for several decades, with some having joined as early as 1993.

The protesters said their demand was based on their long years of service as well as the court's direction on regularisation.

The workers have vowed to continue the hunger strike until the authorities take steps to address their demands.

The protest has brought renewed attention to the employment status and long-term service conditions of muster roll workers at the premier technical institute in Barak Valley.

NIT Silchar authorities could not be reached immediately for their response to the workers' demands.

AIUDF MLA Seeks Identity Cards for NRC-Listed Residents, Rejection Slips for Excluded

GUWAHATI

AIUDF MLA and party general secretary Rafiqul Islam has urged the Centre and Assam government to issue national identity cards to people included in the final National Register of Citizens (NRC), while providing rejection slips to those excluded from the list so they can pursue legal remedies.

Raising the long-pending NRC issue, Islam said the final NRC was published on August 31, 2019, following a five-year exercise. The list included around 3.11 crore people, while nearly 19 lakh applicants were left out.

"Those whose names appear in the final NRC should receive national identity cards, while the 19 lakh people excluded from the list should be issued rejection slips so they can appeal their cases," Islam said.

He said the continued delay in issuing identity cards to people included in the final NRC was a



matter of concern and claimed that the Supreme Court had issued directions on the matter.

Islam said the AIUDF had approached the Supreme Court on several occasions over issues related to the NRC. According to him, the party has filed writ petitions and Interlocutory Applications in different proceedings concerning the exercise.

"There are numerous cases

in the Supreme Court; we have filed Interlocutory Applications and Writ Petitions in each of them," he said.

The AIUDF leader said the next hearing in the matter is scheduled for next month and that the Supreme Court has directed the Centre and the Assam government to submit their responses.

He also said the Registrar

General of India (RGI) has filed an affidavit before the court, while senior lawyers representing the petitioners are preparing a counter-affidavit.

"Our senior advocates are currently preparing a counter-affidavit, which we intend to submit very soon," Islam said.

The NRC was updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court as part of a prolonged exercise to determine the names of eligible residents of Assam. The final list was published in 2019, but its implementation has remained stalled amid legal and administrative issues, including the status of excluded applicants and the issuance of documents to those included.

The issue has continued to remain before the Supreme Court, with questions surrounding the implementation of the final NRC and the next steps for both included and excluded applicants still awaiting resolution.

'We Do Not Want Conflict': Himanta Backs Dialogue to Resolve Assam-Arunachal Border Dispute

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the state government remains committed to resolving its long-standing boundary dispute with Arunachal Pradesh through dialogue and institutional mechanisms, stressing that Assam does not want confrontation with its neighbouring state.

Sarma said the Assam Cabinet had approved the reconstitution of the committee tasked with pursuing a settlement of the interstate boundary dispute. "We do not want conflict; we want a solution," the chief minister said, reiterating the government's preference for a peaceful and practical resolution. According to Sarma, the boundary issue has already been resolved in respect of most villages covered by discussions between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. He expressed confidence that the



remaining areas of disagreement would also be settled soon.

"I do not know what information has been given in the Legislative Assembly," Sarma said, while maintaining that he expected the outstanding issues to be resolved at the earliest.

Referring to a recent confrontation in Dhemaji, the chief minister said the authorities concerned had assured the Assam government that those responsible would face legal action. He pointed out that the

location of the incident falls within a stretch of the interstate boundary that remains disputed. Sarma also appealed to communities living along the Assam-Arunachal border to maintain social harmony. Referring to the Mising and Adi communities, he said their longstanding fraternal relationship should not be affected by boundary-related disputes. On reports of mining activities, Sarma said there was no system of coal or stone mining at Bihubar and Santak. He said the situation was different in Nagaland, where mining activities were reportedly taking place, and argued that Assam could not take unilateral action in matters involving interstate jurisdiction.

"We have no option except to approach the Supreme Court," Sarma said, referring to situations where judicial intervention may be necessary to resolve disputes over mining and jurisdiction.

The chief minister also cautioned against reaching conclusions on complex scientific and technical issues without expert assessment. He said some people were drawing conclusions without waiting for institutions such as the IITs to examine the matters. Amid concerns over the causes and circumstances surrounding the recent floods in Assam, Sarma said the state government was prepared to order an inquiry if there was a demand for one.

"If anyone wants an investigation into the floods, we will provide one," he said. Sarma's remarks came amid continuing efforts to resolve Assam's boundary disputes with neighbouring states. The Assam government has maintained that dialogue, legal mechanisms and institutional processes should be used to address outstanding interstate issues and prevent them from escalating into confrontation.

Assam Flood Rehabilitation Bill May Cross Rs 1,000 Crore, Says Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam may require more than Rs 1,000 crore for repairing flood-damaged infrastructure and rehabilitating affected families, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday as the state expanded its assessment of losses in the worst-hit areas of Upper Assam.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Sarma said a rapid damage assessment launched on August 9 had so far covered more than 8,000 families, with preliminary losses estimated at around Rs 150 crore.

The assessment will continue until August 30 and is expected to cover between 50,000 and 60,000 families across severely affected districts in Upper Assam, he said.

"To give a permanent relief, a rapid relief assessment drive was launched on August 9. As per an initial report, over 8,000 families have been assessed and Rs 150 crore damage has been estimated," Sarma said.

Based on the preliminary findings, the state government expects the overall expenditure on damage repair and rehabilitation to exceed Rs 1,000 crore.

"I believe there will be a spending of over Rs 1,000 crore in damage re-



pair and rehabilitation," Sarma said, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had assured Assam of full support in the rehabilitation process.

The chief minister said the Prime Minister had asked the state government to carry out the assessment com-

prehensively and assured that there would be no shortage of funds for compensating affected families.

The ongoing assessment is aimed at determining the extent of damage to houses, property and livelihoods and calculating the assistance required for

affected households.

Sarma also acknowledged the role of individuals and organisations that have contributed to relief operations in flood-hit areas.

He said 72 YouTubers from different parts of the country had raised funds for flood relief, with several of them already working on the ground.

"We are keeping a close watch on them whether they are spending the money for flood affected areas," he said.

Meanwhile, the state government has initiated the reconstruction of flood-damaged Anganwadi centres in Upper Assam.

Sarma announced the release of Rs 11.3 crore for rebuilding 494 Anganwadi centres damaged in the floods.

"We want to restart these centres as soon as possible so that all services can be provided. Altogether 494 Anganwadi centres, which were damaged, will be rebuilt in this drive," he said.

Each damaged Anganwadi centre will receive up to Rs 2.5 lakh for restoration, he added.

The rehabilitation exercise comes as Assam continues to grapple with the impact of severe flooding that has affected multiple districts, damaged houses and public infrastructure and disrupted the livelihoods of thousands of people.

The government is now relying on the ongoing door-to-door assessment to arrive at a more comprehensive estimate of the losses and determine the scale of rehabilitation assistance required.

Nagaland Reports 39% Decline in New HIV Infections, 80% Drop in AIDS Deaths Since 2010

DIMAPUR

Nagaland has recorded a 39 per cent decline in new HIV infections and an 80 per cent reduction in AIDS-related deaths since 2010, Health and Family Welfare Minister P Paiwang Konyak said on Wednesday. Konyak attributed the improvement to sustained prevention measures, early diagnosis and uninterrupted access to treatment, while cautioning that HIV remains a significant public health challenge in the state. The minister was speaking at the launch of the third round of an intensified Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign on HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) at Agri Expo, 4th Mile, Chumoukedima, on International Youth Day. Citing the National AIDS Control Organisation's (NACO) HIV Estimation 2025, Konyak said HIV prevalence continues to vary across districts, making it necessary to adopt responses based on local conditions and needs. He acknowledged the support of the Government of India and NACO and highlighted the Mobilisation for AIDS Suraksha (MAS) approach as a framework for district-level, evidence-based interventions.

The campaign has been organised by the Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS) under NACO. It aims to increase awareness about HIV and STIs, promote prevention

and early testing, combat stigma and discrimination, and improve access to healthcare services. Konyak stressed the importance of involving young people in the state's HIV response, saying they should be treated as active partners in shaping the present and future. He called for greater investment in youth health, knowledge and empowerment, particularly through sustained awareness and access to testing and treatment.

The minister said the first two rounds of the campaign covered more than 1,300 village meetings, over 1,000 schools and 200 colleges. The initiatives also included more than 7,600 door-to-door awareness drives and direct engagement with over two lakh people. Konyak said the third round of the campaign should not be measured merely by the number of activities conducted, but by their impact on communities. He said the focus should be on reaching more people, increasing HIV testing and treatment uptake and reducing stigma and discrimination associated with the disease.

While the decline in new infections and AIDS-related deaths marks significant progress, the minister stressed the need for sustained prevention, testing and treatment efforts to consolidate the gains made by Nagaland in its fight against HIV.

Quest!

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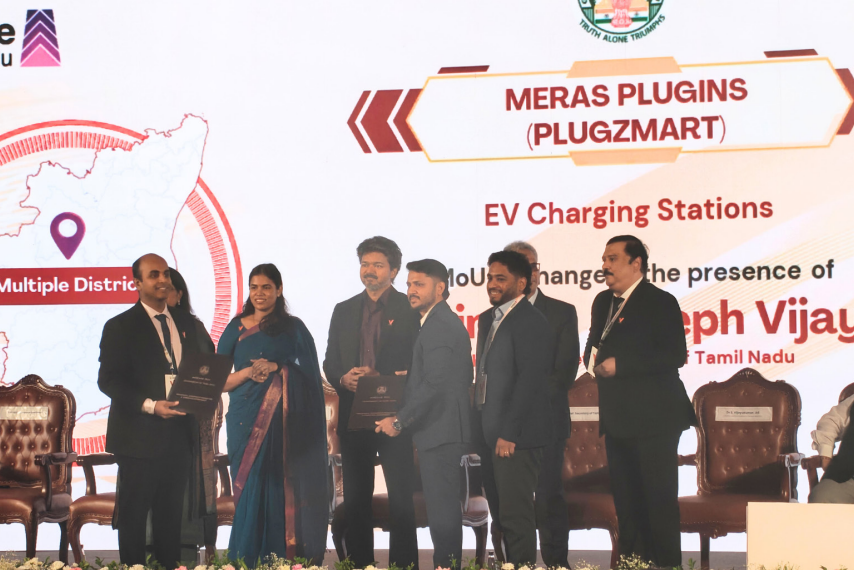
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Live Project Incentives Certificate Free Training

Plugzmart signs Rs.100-Crore MoU with Tamil Nadu Govt to scale EV Charger manufacturing, to create 500+ Deep-Tech jobs



CHENNAI

Plugzmart, a Tamil Nadu-based EV charging technology company incubated at IIT Madras Research Park, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Tamil Nadu during the ‘Vetri Tamil Nadu Investment Conclave 2026’, held in Chennai today (13th Aug 2026) in the presence of the Hon’ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru C. Joseph Vijay, to invest 100 Crore to expand its manufacturing footprint, R&D capabilities, and charging infrastructure ecosystem. The strategic investment is projected to generate over 500 direct, high-skilled jobs in hardware engineering, power electronics, embedded software, and advanced manufacturing across Tamil Nadu over the next three years. As a full-stack EV infrastructure builder, Plugzmart

designs and manufactures indigenously engineered AC and DC fast chargers (ranging from 3.3 kW to 360 kW), ARAI-compliant charger controllers, Power Line Communication (PLC) modules and cloud-native Charger Management Systems (CMS). The fresh capital deployment will significantly scale production capacities at a manufacturing plant located in the industrial hub of Oragadam, Vallam. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Vivek Samynathan, Co-Founder & CEO, Plugzmart, said, “Tamil Nadu has created a strong ecosystem for advanced manufacturing and electric mobility. This investment reflects our commitment to building world-class EV charging technology from Tamil Nadu and supporting India’s transition towards sustainable transportation.” Mr. Raghavendra Ravichandran, Co-Founder

& COO, Plugzmart, added, “Our focus is to build scalable and reliable EV charging solutions that support OEMs, fleet operators, Charge Point Operators, and public infrastructure projects. This investment will enable us to expand our manufacturing capabilities, create skilled employment, and contribute to the rapid growth of EV charging infrastructure in the State.” Plugzmart continues to work closely with leading automotive OEMs, fleet operators, CPOs, and public sector organizations to accelerate EV adoption through reliable and indigenous charging technology. The company believes this investment will further strengthen Tamil Nadu’s position as a hub for EV manufacturing and charging infrastructure while supporting India’s clean mobility objectives.

NEW DELHI

A parliamentary panel has flagged a sharp decline in the number of schools and students as education levels rise, with nearly 73% of students dropping out before completing higher secondary education, while shortages of new textbooks and changing examination patterns are adding to academic stress among those who remain. The observations are part of the Tenth Report (Eighteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Estimates (2026-27) on “Budget and Policy aspects for providing Affordable and Quality Education in the Country including Review of Central Board of Secondary Education”, presented in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The committee noted that the number of schools at secondary and higher secondary levels was significantly lower than at primary and upper primary levels. According to the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2024-25, of the 10,92,671 government and government-aided schools, 9,11,032 are at the primary level, 1,61,808 at the upper primary level, 4,12,805 at the secondary level and only 90,866 at the higher secondary level. Student enrolment also declines sharply with rising education levels, from 6,18,45,033 students in primary classes and 4,08,93,978 in classes 6 to 8 to 2,36,68,220 at the secondary level and 1,64,17,949 at the higher secondary level. “The committee are concerned to note this drastic decline in number of schools and students as education levels rises,” it said. “From the above information, the Committee note that out of over 1 million government schools, the vast majority are only primary schools, and nearly 73% of students drop out before finishing higher secondary,” it added. The committee urged the Education Ministry to prioritise upgrading existing primary and secondary schools into full higher secondary schools to ensure that students have physical access to high schools and to reduce the drop-out rate. “The Committee are of the view that there is an urgent need to increase the number of schools at secondary and higher secondary levels,” it said.

As education is on the Concurrent List of the Constitution, with most schools under the jurisdiction of state governments and Union Territory administrations, the committee urged the ministry to impress upon states and UTs to set up more secondary and higher secondary schools. The panel also flagged a gap between curriculum design and implementation for classes 9 to 12, saying shortages of textbooks and new application-based Board examination patterns were creating academic stress and confusion, particularly among students appearing for classes 10 and 12 examinations. The committee noted that the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had aligned its curriculum framework for Grades 9 to 12 with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023. It, however, said there was a significant gap between curriculum design and implementation as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was still rolling out new textbooks for classes 9 to 12. Schools were therefore often required to teach an updated, high-order curriculum while older study materials remained in use. “The non-availability of textbooks and newer, application-based Board examination patterns are creating significant academic stress and confusion for students especially for the students appearing for the Class 10 and 12 examinations,” the committee said. It urged the ministry to take immediate steps to bridge the transition gap by speeding up the development, printing and nationwide distribution of the remaining new textbooks. The committee also urged NCERT to work with CBSE to ensure the successful implementation of the new initiatives and recommended a nationwide teacher-capacity building programme to train educators in application-based pedagogy. The panel noted that CBSE conducts capacity-building programmes nationwide, with teachers and principals required to complete at least 50 hours of training every year covering core values and ethics, subject knowledge and teaching practices.

It appreciated CBSE for training more than 11 million participants through online and offline programmes over the past five years and providing the training free of cost to government school teachers. However, it flagged a sharp fall in online teacher training, from more than 5.3 million participants in 2022 to about 162,814 in 2025. While government teachers receive free training, private affiliated schools in rural and difficult areas have to pay a general training fee plus an additional Rs 700 per teacher for single-day workshops. “The Committee are of the view that some of the non-government schools in rural or semi-urban areas do not have enough budgetary resources to send their teachers on paid trainings,” the report said. The committee recommended that the ministry maintain continuity in teacher-capacity building programmes, set annual targets for training and review training fees so teachers from budget-constrained private schools, particularly in rural areas, can participate in online programmes. The panel noted that CBSE exempts visually impaired candidates from examination fees but has a uniform fee of Rs 1,600 for five subjects for students appearing in India. It said CBSE did not provide financial concessions or fee waivers for socio-economically disadvantaged sections and recommended targeted exemptions for economically weaker and socially disadvantaged groups “in order to lessen the financial burden and give them opportunity to continue their education”. The committee also recommended greater transparency in CBSE answer-sheet evaluation through standardised and objective assessment. It said the Board’s digital infrastructure under Pariksha Sangam should be continually upgraded to ensure “fool-proof security and efficiency” for Board examinations as well as national selection tests such as the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Selection Test (JNVST).

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Everyone wants to ‘tax the rich’. In New York City, it’s getting complicated

NEW YORK

Across the US, calls to “tax the rich” have become potent political slogans. But even in Mayor Zohran Mamdani’s New York, getting the wealthy to pay more isn’t playing out as smoothly as supporters hoped. What seemed at first like an easy idea — slapping a new tax on people who own luxury second homes in the Big Apple but live elsewhere most of the year — has instead created a lot of confusion in the city’s notoriously convoluted world of real estate arrangements. “It seems very simple but the more you dig into it, the more nuances you look at, the more complicated it gets,” said Gary Bingel, a state and local tax expert and partner at EisnerAmper, an accounting firm. It has also prompted pushback from both the city’s very wealthy and the merely moderately wealthy. US President Donald Trump, whose gilded Manhattan penthouse could be subject to the tax since his primary residence is now in Florida, said he was looking into whether federal intervention could “avert this disaster, before it is too late.” A group of homeowners sued over the city’s rollout of the tax, arguing that officials had not done enough to figure out who would have to pay the tax and instead made it property owners’ responsibility. A judge temporarily paused the process this week, but the city moved to appeal, allowing the tax effort to continue until it’s sorted out in court. Securing a new tax on multimillion-dollar second homes, known as pied-à-terres, was an early win for Mamdani in his quest to raise taxes on the city’s highest earners to pay for his ambitious liberal agenda. The so-called pied-à-terre tax would levy a new surcharge on one-, two- and



three-family homes valued at more than \$5 million, as well as condos and co-ops valued at \$1 million or more, if those dwellings are not a person’s primary residence. The idea, according to officials, would bring \$500 million to the city’s coffers annually, paid primarily by bigwigs who get to enjoy city life but don’t pay city income taxes. That’s where things start to get hairy. It’s common for high rollers to place their properties in trusts, obscuring ownership while allowing the property to pass more easily to family members. Limited liability companies can similarly shield an owner’s identity, also making it hard for government officials to tell who actually lives in any given apartment. From there, there are numerous arrangements that can complicate who

would be subject to the tax. For example, letting a distant family member stay at a second home without formal documentation, or if someone owns one or more properties and rents them out, but the tenants don’t have documentation that the unit is their primary residence. “Those situations make it difficult to prove people are in there,” said Mark Limardo, a partner at the law firm Herrick in Manhattan who focuses on taxes. “The concept is simple, but the ownership rules and the documentation rules have made it very complicated.” City Hall, for its part, argues that it shouldn’t be difficult to provide proof that someone actually lives in the city and says that its finance department is experienced in parsing tangled webs of paperwork. Mamdani, no stranger to razzing

wealthy people, debuted the tax with a video singling out hedge fund CEO Ken Griffin by standing outside a Manhattan penthouse the billionaire purchased for around \$239 million. The clip sent Mamdani’s supporters swooning, but Griffin later said it was “frightening” that a public official would call attention to one of his homes, especially after the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in the same neighborhood. The city then published an expansive online list of property owners who it said could be subject to the tax, listing their names, addresses and property values. The list, which the city is legally required to publish, inflamed tensions between the mayor and the city’s wealthy, many of whom argued the roll amounted to doxing or public shaming. The administration has mailed notices to a much smaller group — about 17,000 properties — that it suspected would be subject to the tax, telling them they could apply for exemptions. Mamdani announced the mailers in a celebratory social media post that read: “If you have a second home in New York City worth more than \$5M, check your mailbox when you’re back in the five boroughs — because you’ve got mail.” He later pushed back the deadline for exemption requests following public outcry from people who claimed to have received the letters in error or had trouble navigating the process. Stewart Sterk, a real estate law professor at Cardozo School of Law in New York, predicted last week’s lawsuit wouldn’t be the last, saying he expected many of the targets of the tax to file individual cases over denied exemptions, given the vast number of apartments at play and various arrangements people have connecting them to their properties.

Rubio and Bessent stayed on decoy flight from Turkey as Trump switched planes



WASHINGTON

The two most senior members of President Donald Trump’s Cabinet, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, flew out of last month’s NATO summit in Turkey on what was effectively a decoy plane following an Iranian threat, while Trump was secretly moved to a smaller military jet, a senior US official said Wednesday. The official, who was briefed on the situation and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive details of presidential travel, said Rubio was aware of the switch and details of the threat behind it but could or would not say why he had stayed on the plane. The official said Bessent was likely aware but did not know for sure. The official, however, noted that security precautions for the president — especially one who has been the target of several assassination attempts — are more robust than those

for even top members of the Cabinet. Under the US Constitution, the secretaries of State and Treasury follow the vice president and the highest ranking member of each chamber of Congress in the presidential line of succession. Trump had flown to the annual gathering of NATO country leaders in Ankara, Turkey, in a new Qatari-gifted and retrofitted red, white and navy blue jet. But ahead of departing Turkey, he said he would fly partway home on an older-model baby blue Air Force One plane instead. The president at the time said the new luxury jet was being flown out ahead of his departure from Ankara to give some US troops based in eastern England a chance to check out the new Air Force One. The Washington Post reported this week that Trump wasn’t on the old Air Force One on the return flight from Turkey and that he instead was smuggled onto another jet via a catering cart to avoid

a possible Iranian assassination plot. The ruse was carried out as journalists and some White House staff members were led to believe they were on the same plane as the president as he began his journey back to Washington. The New York Times and CBS News had reported last month that intelligence officials had raised concerns about a potential attack on the president or his jet, triggering additional precautions and the decision not to use the newly inaugurated aircraft gifted to Trump by Qatar for the first leg of Trump’s trip home from Ankara. Trump acknowledged the transfer late Tuesday. “It’s only up to the Secret Service. I just follow what they’d like to do, so I go by Secret Service and the military,” the president told reporters at Joint Base Andrews. “They wanted me to go on a different flight, a different plane, equal safety, but they wanted me to do it, so I do it. I do what they say.”

Census 2027: Why Counting the Northeast Matters for India's Future

India's Northeast is undergoing a profound demographic and economic transition. New highways and bridges are reshaping mobility, towns are expanding, industries are emerging and younger generations are developing new aspirations. Yet much of the policy understanding of the region still rests on demographic data that is more than a decade old.

That makes Census 2027 far more significant for the Northeast than a routine statistical exercise. The census will offer India its first comprehensive demographic picture of the region since 2011 and, if conducted with accuracy and sensitivity, can become a crucial foundation for planning development, managing migration, strengthening border communities and responding to rapid social change.

The Northeast cannot be understood through population numbers alone. Its demography is closely linked with geography, identity, migration, urbanisation, climate vulnerability, infrastructure and national security. The quality of the census will therefore determine not simply how accurately the region is counted, but how effectively it can be governed in the years ahead.

A Region of Contrasts

The eight northeastern states had a combined population of about 45.77 million in the 2011 Census, roughly 3.8 per cent of India's population despite occupying nearly 8 per cent of the country's geographical area. But regional averages conceal enormous differences.

Arunachal Pradesh had a population density of only about 17 people per square kilometre, compared with roughly 398 in Assam and 350 in Tripura. Assam alone had more than 31 million people in 2011 and remains overwhelmingly the most populous state in the region.

Such contrasts make it difficult to apply a uniform development model to the Northeast. A sparsely populated hill district with difficult terrain has fundamentally different infrastructure and service requirements from a densely populated riverine district. Likewise, the challenges confronting a rapidly expanding city such as Guwahati cannot be compared with those facing a remote border settlement.

Census 2027 must capture these differences in sufficient detail to make demographic information useful for policy.

The first phase of the exercise, covering house-listing and housing conditions, is scheduled between April and September 2026, followed by population enumeration. For the first time, the census will be conducted digitally and will also include caste enumeration. The Union government has approved an outlay of ₹11,718.24 crore, while more than 35 lakh enumerators and supervisors are expected to participate.

But the success of such a vast exercise should not be judged merely by how quickly the enumeration is completed. Its real value will lie in the accuracy, reliability and usefulness of the information collected.

Assam at a Demographic Crossroads

For Assam, Census 2027 comes at a particularly consequential moment.

Since 2011, the state has experienced major changes in connectivity, urbanisation and economic activity. Guwahati has expanded rapidly, placing growing pressure on housing, transport, water supply, sanitation and other public services. At the same time, new highways, bridges, rail links, airports and digital networks are changing the relationship between towns, villages and markets.

The state's economic geography is also beginning to move beyond its traditional Guwahati-centred pattern. Emerging towns and transport corridors could develop into new centres of commerce, industry and employment.

At the other end of the spectrum are areas repeatedly affected by floods and riverbank erosion. For many communities, displacement is not an exceptional event but a recurring feature of life. Settlements can change, livelihoods can disappear and families can move in search of security and employment.

The new census should help establish the scale and direction of these demographic changes.

The important question is not simply how much Assam's population has increased since 2011. It is where that population is concentrated, where people are moving, which districts are losing residents and young workers, where urbanisation is accelerating and how environmental pressures are altering settlement patterns.

Such information can determine where Assam needs new schools, hospitals, roads, housing, transport systems and employment opportunities.

Migration Needs Data, Not Assumptions

Migration will inevitably attract considerable attention, particularly in Assam and other northeastern states sharing international borders.

But migration is too complex to be reduced to political rhetoric. People move for employment, education, marriage, economic opportunity, displacement, insecurity and changing livelihoods. Reliable census information on place of birth, previous residence, duration of residence and reasons for migration can help policymakers distinguish between different forms of population movement.

This is particularly important in the Northeast because the region shares borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar while becoming increasingly connected to the rest of India.

Improved roads, railways, air links and economic opportunities are changing patterns of mobility. At the same



time, cross-border movement and internal migration remain important administrative and policy questions.

Accurate demographic information can help governments plan infrastructure, public services and border-area development. It can also prevent demographic debates from being driven primarily by speculation.

The principle should be simple: sound policy must begin with verified information rather than assumptions.

Diversity Must Be Properly Recorded

Census 2027 will also include caste enumeration, following the Union government's decision in 2025. This provides an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive evidence base for future policy.

The Northeast, however, requires particular sensitivity in collecting and interpreting such information.

The region's social landscape is shaped by tribal identities, customary institutions, indigenous traditions, linguistic communities and constitutional classifications. These identities often overlap in ways that cannot easily be reduced to categories commonly used in other parts of the country.

The purpose of demographic data should therefore not be to flatten the Northeast's diversity into simplistic classifications. Instead, it should help governments understand disparities in education, employment, healthcare, housing and social mobility.

For this to happen, definitions must be clear, enumeration must be consistent and the entire process must maintain public confidence.

Census data is powerful precisely because it can influence public policy for decades. That makes institutional transparency and statistical integrity essential.

Technology Cannot Replace Human Understanding

The digital nature of Census 2027 offers significant advantages. Mobile-based enumeration and online self-enumeration can speed up data collection, improve monitoring and reduce some of the limitations of paper-based systems.

But technology alone cannot solve the Northeast's unique challenges.

The region has remote settlements, difficult terrain, linguistic diversity and highly mobile populations. In some areas, reaching households can itself be a logistical challenge. In others, language and cultural differences may affect communication between enumerators and residents.

The digital census must therefore be supported by trained personnel who understand local conditions.

Multilingual assistance, proper verification mechanisms and special attention to remote and mobile communities will be essential. The most advanced digital platform cannot compensate for incomplete or inaccurate information entered into the system.

The human element will remain at the heart of the exercise.

Demographic Data and the Act East Opportunity

There is also a larger economic argument for obtaining better demographic information from the Northeast.

India increasingly views the region not merely as a peripheral frontier but as a gateway to Southeast Asia under the Act East policy. Major investments in roads, railways, airports, inland waterways and border connectivity are intended to deepen this role.

But connectivity by itself cannot transform the regional economy.

Policymakers need to know where workers are concentrated, where young people are moving, which towns are expanding, what skills are available and where education and healthcare infrastructure remain inadequate.

They need demographic information to determine where industrial clusters, logistics centres, universities, hospitals, skill-development institutions and urban infrastructure should be established.

In this sense, the census is not simply a record of India's present population. It can become one of the tools through which the country plans for future economic growth.

A young population can become a demographic advantage only when employment, education and skills keep pace with its aspirations. Without accurate information about where people live and what they need, that opportunity can be missed.

Development and Security Are Interlinked
The strategic importance of the Northeast is undeniable. Its international borders and geographical position make several districts vital to India's national security.

But security in the region cannot be viewed solely through the prism of border infrastruc-

ture or security deployments.

Strong communities are also essential to national resilience. Reliable roads, schools, healthcare facilities, communications networks, employment opportunities and responsive administration can strengthen the confidence of people living in remote and border areas.

Accurate population data can help governments identify demographic pressures, determine resource requirements and ensure that development reaches communities that are geographically isolated.

A secure border is therefore not simply a line protected by physical infrastructure. It is also a region where people have access to opportunities and where the state's institutions are visible in everyday life.

Climate Change and Changing Settlements

The Northeast's demographic future is also closely connected with climate and environmental pressures.

Assam's recurrent floods and erosion are the most visible examples, but other states too face landslides, changing rainfall patterns and environmental pressures that can influence livelihoods and settlement.

These changes can encourage temporary or permanent migration and alter the economic viability of villages and small towns.

Census 2027 offers an opportunity to establish a stronger demographic baseline against which future changes can be measured. When combined with environmental and economic data, population information can help governments understand where communities are becoming more vulnerable and where investment in infrastructure and adaptation is most urgently required.

Demography cannot prevent environmental disruption, but good demographic information can make government responses more targeted.

From Counting People to Understanding Change

The most useful questions for Census 2027 are therefore not merely numerical.

Which districts are growing fastest? Which are losing young people? Where is urbanisation accelerating? Where are environmental pres-

sures changing settlement patterns? Which communities remain underserved by healthcare and education? Where will future employment demand be greatest? Which towns are emerging as economic centres? Where should infrastructure investment be concentrated?

The answers could determine whether public policy merely reacts to demographic change or anticipates it.

This is especially important because the Northeast is no longer a static region. Connectivity is changing mobility. Urbanisation is changing settlement patterns. Economic investments are creating new opportunities. Young people are increasingly connected to national and global labour markets. At the same time, longstanding questions relating to identity, land, migration and political representation remain important.

The census must capture this complexity without reducing it to stereotypes.

For too long, the Northeast has often been described either as a distant frontier or as a region defined primarily by conflict and unresolved problems. Both descriptions are inadequate. The region is diverse, dynamic and increasingly connected to India's wider economic transformation.

A Census With Long-Term Consequences

Demographic data has consequences that extend far beyond the publication of census tables.

It can influence the allocation of resources, welfare programmes, infrastructure planning, education policy, healthcare investment and the understanding of social change. For the Northeast, it can also contribute to better border management, more informed migration policy and stronger regional planning.

That is why Census 2027 must be conducted with statistical rigour and institutional responsibility.

The Northeast does not need romanticisation. Nor does it need alarmism. It needs accurate knowledge.

India's ambition of becoming a developed economy will depend partly on its ability to understand regions that have historically been treated as peripheral. The Northeast's strategic location, young population, natural resources, cultural diversity and growing connectivity give it enormous potential.

But potential cannot be converted into sustained development without reliable information.

Census 2027 should therefore represent more than an update to the population figures of 2011. It should provide a new demographic foundation for understanding how the Northeast is changing and what governments must do in response.

The region does not need to be counted separately from India. It needs to be understood more accurately within India.

Its diversity should inform development policy. Its geography should shape infrastructure planning. Its demographic realities should guide investment. Its strategic location should strengthen India's economic and national interests.

Ultimately, the census will count people. Its greater purpose, however, should be to show where those people live, how their lives are changing and what India must do next.

To count the Northeast accurately is, in many ways, to understand India's future more clearly.

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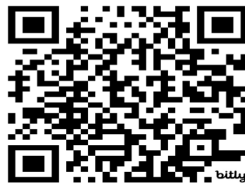
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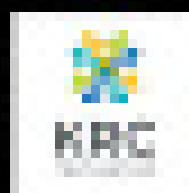


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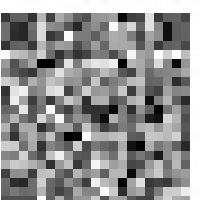


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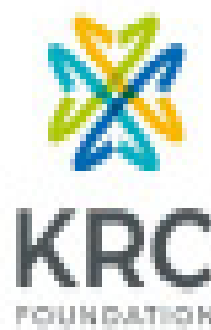
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