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**PERSPECTIVE**

When someone gives you advice, respond with “you’re right” rather than “I know.”

### Himanta meets PM Modi, discusses flood recovery, rebuilding plans



**NEW DELHI**  
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi and discussed the state's flood recovery, livelihood restoration and reconstruction plans, besides apprising him of key initiatives undertaken by his government during its first 100 days in office.

Sarma briefed Modi on a roadmap for rebuilding flood-affected areas, restoring livelihoods and ensuring comprehensive recovery in the state, according to officials. The Assam chief minister thanked the Prime Minister for the Centre's support during the flood response and said Modi had remained in regular touch with the state government while reviewing the situation. Sarma said the Prime Minister reaffirmed the Centre's continued support for Assam's recovery efforts and expressed gratitude for Modi's guidance. The meeting comes as Assam continues rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts following the 2026 floods, which caused extensive damage across several parts of the state. Earlier in the day, Sarma inaugurated the newly constructed Integrated District Commissioner's Office of Kamrup Metropolitan district at Rupnagar in Guwahati. The three-storeyed facility, built at a cost of Rs 81.20 crore, has a total area of around 12,700 square metres and is aimed at bringing various administrative functions under one roof, officials said. The building has been designed to accommodate two additional floors in the future, if required. The foundation stone for the project was laid on January 5, 2023. The facility has a 350-kilowatt solar power system and provisions for adding another 100-kilowatt capacity in the future. The new office is expected to streamline administrative services in Kamrup Metropolitan district and improve access to government services for residents.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**India-China Border issue is a serious subject. Do not make false claim on such sensitive matter. We don't want to repeat the past mistakes. Govt will address the concern of the local people and protect Indian Territory.**

**Kiren Rijiju, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs & MP from Arunachal Pradesh**

#### IMPHAL

The Manipur government has ordered the closure of all schools, colleges and higher educational institutions across the state from August 20 to 22 amid escalating protests over the demand to conduct the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise before the Census.

The Education Department issued the order on August 19, citing the prevailing law and order situation. The directive covers institutions affiliated with the Board of Secondary Education Manipur, Council of Higher Secondary Education Manipur, CBSE and other boards, besides colleges and universities.

The closure applies to government, aided and unaided institutions across the state. The decision came as a 48-hour general strike called



by the Just Fair Delimitation (JFD) was nearing its conclusion on Wednesday night. Authorities reportedly apprehended that students could be mobilised for further protests as the agitation enters a new phase. Students from several educational institutions in Imphal had participated in rallies and demonstrations ahead of the strike. Those reported to have joined the

protests included students of TG Higher Secondary School, Johnstone Higher Secondary School, CC Higher Secondary School and Ananda Singh Higher Secondary School. Educational institutions had remained closed during the two-day strike. With the shutdown ending at midnight on Wednesday, the government extended the closure as a precautionary measure from Thursday to Saturday. The order was issued in the name of the Governor by Ningthoujam Geoffrey, Commissioner-cum-Secretary in charge of School Education, Higher and Technical Education, Adult Education and SCERT.

Night clashes in New Checkon

Tensions escalated in New Checkon in Imphal East on Wednesday night, where protesters clashed with police during the final hours of the

general strike. The confrontation continued until around midnight, with police using tear gas and stun guns after protesters allegedly damaged public property. Officials said the protesters involved in the night-time confrontation were not students. The clashes reportedly involved protesters and other miscreant elements amid heightened tensions following the strike. The JFD's 48-hour strike was organised to press the demand for conducting the NRC before the Census. The organisation has now announced a fresh phase of agitation, including a boycott of state and Central government offices, while exempting essential services such as healthcare, education, electricity and water supply. The group has also announced mass sit-in demon-

strations and night-time torch rallies across Manipur. The latest developments have prompted authorities to strengthen security arrangements in Imphal and other valley areas, with security agencies monitoring the situation amid concerns over further mobilisation. The Education Department has directed Deputy Commissioners, Zonal Education Officers and other concerned authorities to circulate the closure order to all educational institutions. The directive has also been forwarded to the registrars of Manipur University, Dhanamanjuri University, Manipur Technical University and Manipur University of Culture. The government is expected to assess the law and order situation before deciding on the reopening of educational institutions after August 22.

## India-Myanmar border faces growing security threats from insurgency, drugs and refugee influx

**GUWAHATI**  
Security agencies have flagged a growing mix of insurgency, cross-border militancy, narcotics trafficking, drone warfare and refugee movements as major security challenges along the porous 1,643-km India-Myanmar border. The international border runs through Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, making the frontier one of the most complex security zones in the Northeast. Security sources said cross-border insurgency remains one of the primary concerns. Several Indian insurgent groups are reported to maintain camps, training facilities and support networks in Myanmar, particularly in areas controlled by ethnic armed organisations in Chin, Sagaing, Kachin and Shan states. Groups including NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, PLA, ULFA (I), UNLF and KCP have been linked to such networks, which are allegedly used for cadre training, arms movement and planning operations. The proximity of these camps to the Indian border allows militants to move across the frontier and retreat into Myanmar after carrying out operations, while extortion and other activities on the Indian side are believed to help finance insurgent networks. Security agencies are also increasingly concerned about the use of drones by militant groups. According to the sources, an investigation by the National Investigation Agency found that a US national, Matthew Aaron Van Dyke, and six Ukrainian nationals had provided tactical training in drone warfare to Chin ethnic armed organisations in Myanmar. The investigation also reportedly pointed to the movement of drones from Europe through India to militant groups in Myanmar. The development has raised con-

cerns among security agencies because of the potential transfer of drone warfare capabilities to insurgent groups operating along the India-Myanmar frontier. In September 2024, weaponised drones were reportedly used in attacks in Manipur, marking a significant escalation in the nature of militant violence. More than 40 bombs and grenades were allegedly dropped on villages in the Koutruk and Kadangband areas. Drug trafficking is another major concern along the frontier, with security agencies warning of an expanding nexus between narcotics networks and insurgent groups. The Golden Triangle, which includes parts of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand, remains a major source of heroin, methamphetamine and other narcotics reaching the Northeast. The porous border provides multiple routes for trafficking, with Moreh and areas around Sugu-Churachandpur among the routes and hubs that have come under security scrutiny. Sources said insurgent groups allegedly impose taxes on drug consignments, creating a financial link between narcotics trafficking and militancy. Poppy cultivation in parts of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh has further complicated efforts to curb the drug supply chain. Mizoram alone seized more than 1,000 kg of drugs from areas along the Myanmar border in 2025, including 79.2 kg of heroin, 964.4 kg of methamphetamine and 38.8 kg of crystal methamphetamine, according to the figures cited by security sources. Under Operation Jericho, launched in September 2025, security forces reportedly recovered narcotics worth Rs 317.3 crore. The continuing refugee influx from Myanmar has emerged as another major challenge for the border states.

### Assam to conduct seventh Gunotsav in three phases from January to February 2027

**GUWAHATI**  
The Assam government has announced the schedule for the seventh edition of Gunotsav, with the statewide school evaluation exercise set to be conducted in three phases across 35 districts between January and February 2027. The first phase will be held from January 6 to 9 and will cover 13 districts - Barpeta, Bajali, Karimganj, Kamrup (Metropolitan), Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Udalguri, Jorhat, Karbi Anglong and South Salmara-Mankachar. The second phase is scheduled for January 19 to 22 and will cover 12 districts - Baksa, Biswanath, Chirang, Charaideo, Dhubri, Hailakandi, Hojai, Kamrup, Sonitpur, Tamulpur, Tinsukia and West Karbi Anglong. The final phase will take place from February 2 to 5 across 10 districts - Bongaigaon, Dhemaji, Darrang, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Cachar, Nalbari, Morigaon, Dima Hasao and Majuli. Gunotsav is the Assam government's school evaluation initiative aimed at assessing the performance of government schools and identifying areas requiring improvement in the state's education system. The exercise evaluates various aspects of school functioning and educational outcomes, providing authorities with inputs to improve the quality of education and strengthen school infrastructure and learning environments. With the seventh edition spread across three phases, authorities will conduct the assessment in a staggered manner across the 35 districts. The final phase is scheduled to conclude on February 5, 2027.

## Manipur students seek NRC before Census, ask govt to reopen educational institutions



**IMPHAL**  
A delegation of students from 10 schools and colleges on Thursday urged Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh to press the Centre for conducting the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in the state before the Census. The students met Khemchand at the Chief Minister's Secretariat here and sought identification of illegal immigrants through the NRC process before population enumeration under the Census. The delegation also urged the government to reopen educational institutions and requested that the NRC issue be discussed during the forthcoming session of the Manipur Legislative Assembly. Khemchand assured the students that the state government would seek a discussion on implementation of the NRC during the

Assembly session beginning September 2. The chief minister reiterated the state government's support for implementation of the NRC in Manipur, while noting that both conducting the exercise and ensuring that it is error-free were important issues that needed to be addressed. The meeting was attended by Commissioner of Education Ningthoujam Geoffrey and Director of Education (Schools) Ng Bhogendra Meitei. The student delegation comprised representatives from DM College of Science, Manipur College, CC Higher Secondary School, Johnstone Higher Secondary School, Nambol Higher Secondary School, T.G. Higher Secondary School, Ibotsansana Girls' Higher Secondary School, Ram Lal Paul School, Model Higher Secondary School and Ananda Singh Higher Secondary School.

# KSU rally fallout: Assam drivers demand Meghalaya CM's apology, safety assurance

#### GUWAHATI

The fallout from the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) "Black Flag" motorcycle rally in Shillong escalated on Thursday, with Assam-based taxi and commercial vehicle drivers blocking traffic towards Meghalaya at Khanapara and Jorabat. The protest followed allegations of stone-pelting, vandalism and assaults on motorists and passengers during the rally in Shillong on Wednesday evening. The Assam State Drivers' Association alleged that vehicles bearing Assam registration numbers were specifically targeted. In a statement issued on Thursday, the association demanded an apology from Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma and Tourism Minister Timothy D. Shira, along with compensation for those affected. The drivers also sought a written assurance from the Meghalaya government regarding the safety of Assamese drivers and vehicles travelling in the state. "We demand action against those

responsible and a written assurance on the safety of Assamese drivers and vehicles travelling in Meghalaya," the association said. Association president Dhrubaraj Axom said the incident was not an isolated case involving Assam-registered vehicles and drivers. "Is going to Meghalaya a crime for tourists? We want the Meghalaya government to understand that we are not weak. We want a written safety assurance from the Meghalaya government," he said. Tourist driver Amar Das, who claimed to have witnessed the violence, alleged that attackers identified Assam vehicles by checking their registration numbers before targeting them. "Some of our people are in hospital and passengers were injured by broken glass. The attackers checked the number plates before targeting our vehicles and pelted them with stones. They even climbed onto the vehicles and assaulted people," Das alleged. The drivers' association, however, stressed that its protest was directed



against the alleged violence and not against the people of Meghalaya. "We do not want the longstanding ties between the people of Assam and Meghalaya to be damaged, but would not remain silent over attacks on our members," it said. Meanwhile, Meghalaya Police de-

tained three senior KSU leaders - president Raymond Kharjana, vice-president Pynkmenlang Sanmiet and general secretary Reuben Najiar - in connection with the alleged vandalism during the rally. Before his detention, KSU general secretary Reuben Najiar denied involvement by members of the organisation and blamed what he described as "negative elements" for the violence. He alleged that people with vested interests had entered the rally with the intention of disrupting the KSU's agitation. East Khasi Hills Superintendent of Police Vivek Syiem confirmed that several people were assaulted and injured during the violence. "Stone-pelting and vandalism were reported from different parts of Shillong, with both government and privately owned vehicles targeted," Syiem said. He added that busts of Swami Vivekananda and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at the Relief and Rehabilita-

tion Colony were also vandalised. According to the SP, the three KSU leaders were booked under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in connection with alleged damage to public property, assaults and other offences during the rally. The KSU's "Black Flag" rally was organised as part of its ongoing agitation over a five-point charter of demands. The demands include implementation of the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act, recruitment reforms involving the Meghalaya Public Service Commission and District Selection Committees, and stricter regulation of migrant workers. The developments have raised concerns along the Assam-Meghalaya border, with the drivers' blockade threatening to disrupt movement between the neighbouring states. Authorities now face the challenge of containing the fallout while ensuring the safety of travellers and preventing the incident from affecting the longstanding social and economic ties between Assam and Meghalaya.





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NATURAL FARMING

India's agricultural story has long been one of overcoming scarcity. From the food shortages of the pre-Green Revolution era to today's position as one of the world's major producers of foodgrains, fruits, vegetables and oilseeds, the country's farmers have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to adapt and innovate. Public investment in irrigation, improved seeds, fertilisers, mechanisation, technology and agricultural research has transformed the sector.

Yet the next challenge is fundamentally different. India is no longer fighting only for higher production; it must ensure that today's agricultural gains do not come at the expense of tomorrow's soil.

The latest Economic Survey underlines the continuing strength of agriculture, with the sector recording growth of more than 4 per cent over the past five years. Foodgrain and horticultural production has remained robust. But alongside this achievement is a warning that deserves far greater policy attention: the health of India's agricultural soils is deteriorating in many regions, while the efficiency of chemical fertiliser use is declining.

This is where natural farming enters the national debate-not as a fashionable alternative to modern agriculture, but as a potentially important part of India's search for a more sustainable and self-reliant farming system.

For decades, the dominant agricultural policy objective was straightforward: produce more.

That objective remains important in a country of more than a billion people. But simply applying more inputs to obtain higher yields has its limits. Agricultural scientists have increasingly pointed to declining Nitrogen Use Efficiency, whereby additional fertiliser application produces progressively smaller gains in productivity.

The result is a troubling cycle. Farmers apply more fertiliser because they want to maintain yields. Soil health deteriorates further. Nutrient absorption becomes less efficient. More fertiliser is then required to achieve the same output.

This is not merely an environmental problem. It is an economic one.

India imports significant quantities of fertilisers and fertiliser-related raw materials. Every unnecessary increase in chemical fertiliser consumption therefore carries a cost to farmers, the exchequer and the country's foreign exchange position.

The real question is no longer whether fertilisers are useful. They unquestionably have been and remain important to Indian agriculture. The question is whether their excessive and unbalanced use is gradually undermining the very resource base that agriculture depends upon.

The nationwide Soil Health Card programme has provided valuable information about the condition of Indian farmland. One of the most worrying indicators is the low level of Soil Organic Carbon in many areas.

Organic carbon is not just another soil parameter. It is central to soil structure and biological activity. Healthy soils with adequate organic matter are better able to retain moisture, support microbial life and make nutrients available to plants. When organic carbon declines, soil becomes less capable of absorbing and retaining water. Rainfall can run off instead of infiltrating the soil, taking valuable topsoil with it. Irrigation water too may fail to remain available in the root zone. The consequences become especially serious as India confronts increasingly erratic rainfall, prolonged dry spells and extreme weather events.

A farmer cultivating soil that has lost its biological vitality is effectively being asked to compensate for a natural deficit through increasingly expensive external inputs.

The discussion around natural farming is often reduced to a simplistic argument over whether chemical fertilisers are good or bad. Such a binary debate does little to address the complexity of Indian agriculture.

Chemical fertilisers played a decisive role in ensuring India's food security. Millions of farmers continue to depend on them. The immediate objective cannot therefore be to demonise chemical inputs or demand their overnight elimination.

Natural farming seeks to achieve this by strengthening the biological processes within the farm ecosystem and reducing dependence on synthetic external inputs. It uses locally available materials and biological formulations to improve soil microbial activity, treat seeds and manage pests and diseases. Practices associated with natural farming include the use of Beejamrit, Jeevamrit and other preparations, alongside natural pest-management formulations. The larger principle is simple: feed the soil, strengthen its biological system and allow healthy soil to support healthy crops. That principle deserves serious scientific examination. The government's decision to launch the National Mission for Natural Farming in 2024 reflects growing recognition of the need to diversify India's agricultural practices. The mission seeks to promote livestock-based, chemical-free farming with the broader objectives of improving soil health, increasing nutrient-use efficiency and reducing dependence on chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The scale of the programme is significant, with a targeted coverage of more than 7.5 lakh hectares and more than 18 lakh farmers through clusters. Natural farming will succeed only if farmers are convinced that it can protect or improve their incomes. For a small farmer, the question is not ideological. It is practical: Will the crop yield be adequate? Will production costs fall? Will the produce find a market? What happens if pests attack? Can the family afford the risk of transition? These questions must be answered through field-level evidence. This is why the involvement of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, agricultural universities and trained extension workers is so important. Region-specific and crop-specific research can establish where natural farming performs well, where it requires modification and where conventional or integrated approaches may remain more appropriate.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Be there for others, but never leave yourself behind.

- Dodinsky

THE MONSOON SESSION OF PARLIAMENT HAS BEEN WASHED OUT. WHO WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?



POONAM I. KAUSHISH

Ninety-nine per cent perspiration and one per cent inspiration-the Monsoon Session of Parliament has once again provided a striking illustration of this old maxim, albeit in reverse. Almost everything happened except the work our MPs were elected to do. The session was largely washed out, with barely 19 per cent of the scheduled parliamentary business being completed.

Consider this: if an employee completed only 19 per cent of his assigned work but still expected a full salary, allowances and privileges, it would invite disciplinary action in almost any organisation. Yet, in Parliament, such dysfunction is increasingly treated as routine.

There was disruption, sloganeering, adjournments and political blame games, followed by lofty speeches on democracy. Of course, the Opposition has every right to question the government and put it under pressure. The government must face uncomfortable questions. Parliament was never intended to become a rubber stamp.

But there is a fundamental difference between holding a government accountable and preventing Parliament from functioning altogether.

Unfortunately, the session was not merely disrupted; it became another deeply troubling example of the abdication of responsibility. MPs appeared to treat the temple of democracy as though it were a private club exempt from accountability.

Consider the record. The Lok Sabha passed 12 Bills, 11 of them without debate. During the passage of nine Bills, no member other than the concerned minister was present. The only Bill to receive extensive discussion was the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, which saw 11 hours of debate and participation from 48 MPs.

Parliament also failed to confront one of the most important challenges before it: opening its doors to issues raised by Gen Z and bridging the widening distance between the street and the legislature.

The Opposition, meanwhile, appeared convinced that it had once again seized the political initiative from the BJP. It rejected Shah's offer of a debate on alleged police violence against protesters, saying, "We do not want to hear speeches." The episode was viewed by some as an attempt by the government to regain control over the political narrative.

The tragedy is that disruption has now become a political strategy.

Political parties appear to have calculated that disrupting Parliament can generate more television and social-media footage than scrutiny of legislation, detailed questioning and sustained debate. One minute of sloganeering in the House can attract more headlines than an hour of serious legislative examination.

Deliberation has been replaced by theatre.

And the public pays the price. That brings us to the most important question: Who is accountable when Parliament repeatedly fails to function?

When Parliament is paralysed, taxpayers receive neither a refund nor an explanation. There is no meaningful performance review, no accountability linked to attendance, no independent audit of parliamentary productivity and no effective mechanism to hold an MP or political party financially or politically responsible for deliberately wasting parliamentary time.

Every hour lost in Parliament is more than an institutional statistic.

It represents taxpayers' money. It represents legislation left pending. It represents unanswered questions. It represents policies that fail to receive adequate scrutiny. It represents an opportunity lost by parliamentary committees to examine issues in depth. Most importantly, it represents citizens once again being pushed to the back of the queue.

Yet there appears to be little sense of embarrassment.

The most astonishing aspect is the complete absence of institutional accountability.

Who audits Parliament's perfor-

mance? Who asks why hundreds of scheduled hours have been lost? Who determines whether a disruption was justified or politically orchestrated? Who measures the contribution of an individual MP to legislative work? And who explains to citizens why they should continue financing a system in which elected representatives can collectively fail while individually escaping accountability?

Disturbingly, the answer is: no one. This is not a problem confined to one session or one political party. It is a systemic problem.

The government and Opposition may fight bitterly inside Parliament, but when it comes to protecting their privileges and institutional conveniences, they often display remarkable bipartisan unity. One side disrupts Parliament today; the other may do so tomorrow. The rules seem to acquire different meanings depending on who occupies the treasury benches.

That is precisely why parliamentary accountability cannot be left to political morality alone. It requires institutional safeguards.

There should be a transparent public dashboard recording the attendance and participation of every MP, including questions raised, debates attended, private members' Bills introduced and committee-related work. Citizens should be able to see, in one place, what their elected representatives actually did during a parliamentary session.

There must also be meaningful consequences for deliberate and repeated disruption.

Why should an MP who repeatedly obstructs proceedings face no substantial financial consequence when a government employee can lose pay for absence or misconduct? Why should MPs and political parties be allowed to waste crores

of rupees of public money collectively without even being required to explain themselves?

Ultimately, who will account for these parliamentary "washouts"?

Until that question is answered, Parliament may remain one of the few workplaces where failure can be spectacular, expensive and repeatedly reproduced-without anyone being required to account for it.

There is another uncomfortable question: do political parties genuinely want parliamentary reform?

Perhaps not. The existing system often serves their interests. In Opposition, disrupting the House can be used as a political weapon. In government, a parliamentary majority can be used to push legislation through despite limited debate. In both circumstances, meaningful institutional reform conveniently disappears somewhere between political rhetoric and collective amnesia.

The result is that Parliament is increasingly trapped between noise and numbers-the noise of the Opposition and the government's numbers to pass legislation.

Lost somewhere between the two is the most essential ingredient of democracy: reasoned debate.

What next? Parliament needs fewer excuses, fewer adjournments and far greater accountability.

Winning a seat does not make the responsibility to work optional. Democracy should not be judged by how loudly politicians disagree. It should be judged by whether their disagreements ultimately contribute to better governance.

The rules must provide effective penalties for deliberate disruption. Obstructing proceedings should carry proportionate consequences. Both the government and the Opposition must accept responsibility for institutional failure and wasted opportunities.

The government, however, carries a greater responsibility. Ensuring that the House functions smoothly and that legislation receives meaningful discussion and debate is fundamentally a responsibility of the government of the day.

Passing Bills by voice vote simply because the government possesses the num-

Businesses are urged to become more productive. Institutions are repeatedly told to be accountable.

Democracy gives politicians the right to squander public resources with impunity.

It does not give them the right to squander public resources with impunity.

There is an even deeper danger.

Every time Parliament is washed out, public faith in Parliament is weakened a little more. When citizens repeatedly see MPs fighting instead of working, they inevitably begin to wonder whether democratic institutions are genuinely serving them or merely serving the political

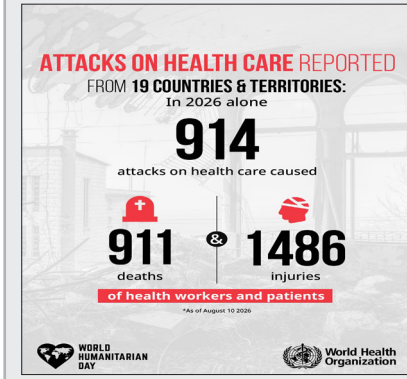
DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

In 2026 alone, 911 health workers and patients have lost their lives to attacks on health care across 19 countries and territories. And nearly 1486 others have suffered injuries.

Often health workers put their duty of care above their own safety. Their loss leaves behind a grieving family, community, and a fragile health system. We repeat. HEALTH IS NEVER A TARGET.

Stop attacks on health care. #ActForHumanity

~ World Health Organisation (WHO)



class. Unfortunately, this is not the first time an entire parliamentary session has been substantially lost, and it will probably not be the last. The question, therefore, is not simply why Parliament was washed out.

The real question is: Who will hold those responsible for these washouts accountable?

Until that question has a credible answer, Parliament may remain one of the only workplaces where failure can be spectacular, expensive and repeatedly reproduced-yet no one is required to pay the price.

Ultimately, Parliament belongs neither to the government nor to the Opposition.

It belongs to the citizens. Its chambers are not political theatres. They are workplaces funded by public money. Collectively, our MPs have a responsibility to demonstrate that they are worthy of the trust placed in them by the people.

Parliament is not defined merely by



bers is not enough. The government must demonstrate greater willingness to build consensus, accommodate dissent and allow adequate scrutiny.

There is an obvious irony here. Politicians frequently lecture citizens about their responsibilities. Young people are told to work harder. Taxpayers are asked to pay their taxes on time. Bureaucrats are expected to perform better.

the government and Opposition members occupying its benches. Its true character is determined by its willingness to listen, deliberate, scrutinise and legislate.

In this session, Parliament appears to have moved far away from that fundamental purpose.

Today, Parliament demands accountability from citizens while placing itself beyond accountability.

Why?



# Manipur NRC Demand Gains Momentum as JFD Strike Disrupts Life

**IMPHAL**  
Normal life remained disrupted across large parts of Manipur on Wednesday as the 48-hour general strike called by the Campaign for Just and Fair Delimitation (JFD) entered its second day, with protesters demanding that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) be updated before the Census.

Amid the growing agitation, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh reiterated that his government supports the implementation of the NRC before the Census.

Speaking at an interaction with artists at the Chief Minister's Bungalow, Singh said the state Assembly had already passed a resolution on the issue in 2022.

The Chief Minister, however, also called for efforts to rebuild trust among the Meitei, Kukli and Naga communities, stressing that an entire community should not be blamed for the actions of a few individuals.

"The conflict, which initially involved two communities, has now expanded to include three communi-



ties," Singh said, urging the Meitei community to take the lead in initiatives aimed at bringing the crisis to an end.

He said restoring trust would require breaking down the barriers that have emerged between communities during the prolonged crisis. Citing Jiribam as an example, Singh said different communities there continue to live together peacefully.

Calls for NRC before Census  
The Joint Tribes Council Manipur (JTCM) on Wednesday separately urged the Centre and the state government to implement the NRC in Manipur using 1951 as the base year to identify bona fide citizens and detect illegal immigrants.

The council also demanded that both the Census and delimitation exercises be deferred until the NRC process is completed.

The JTCM expressed concern over what it described as continued influx across the international border and its possible impact on the state's demographic composition. It said the issue has implications for the identity, land, resources and political rights of indigenous communities.

The council further demanded the de-recognition of villages allegedly recognised without fulfilling prescribed legal requirements.

It warned of further agitation, including bandhs, rallies and sit-ins, if the government proceeds with the Census despite opposition to the current process.

The United Naga Council (UNC) has also maintained that the Census and delimitation exercises should not be undertaken in Manipur before implementation of the NRC.

The UNC and the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) had submitted a joint memorandum to the Prime Minister through the Governor in May 2024, seeking implementation of the NRC before any Census exercise.

Strike affects valley districts  
The JFD strike severely affected normal activities in several valley districts on Wednesday.

Markets remained closed and schools and colleges stayed shut in many areas, while protests, road blockades and confrontations between security personnel and strike supporters were reported from several locations.

At Khurai Lamlong Bazar in Imphal East, security forces and protesters reportedly engaged in repeated scuffles amid road blockades and slogans. A security convoy was forced to

turn back after protesters blocked its movement, while a youth was reportedly injured during the confrontation.

Protesters also burnt effigies of Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh and Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam.

In Thoubal district, protests reportedly disrupted the functioning of the district administration, with staff returning from near the Deputy Commissioner's office. At Porompat, protesters attempted to enter the Census office, prompting security personnel to prevent them from entering the premises.

Road blockades were also reported from Nomeibung Ayangpali, Uripok and Airport Lines, keeping vehicles off several roads.

Government offices in Thoubal, Kakching and Bishnupur recorded thin attendance, although the strike had comparatively limited impact in the hill districts, including Churachandpur.

The 48-hour strike is scheduled to conclude at midnight on August 19.

Census process underway  
The latest agitation comes as the self-enumeration phase of Census 2027 is underway in Manipur. The process began on August 17 and is scheduled to continue until August 31.

The house-listing and housing census is scheduled to be conducted from September 1 to 30.

The JFD's latest agitation follows a series of protests and a torch rally in Imphal demanding that NRC updation precede the Census.

On Tuesday, state government spokesperson Sapam Ranjan Singh said a delegation of legislators would travel to New Delhi to convey the demand to central leaders. Reports have also indicated that NDA legislators from Manipur are planning discussions in Delhi on the issue.

With the state government publicly reiterating its support for the NRC demand while different civil society groups press for its implementation before the Census, the issue is emerging as a major point of contention as the Census process moves ahead.

## Meghalaya Tightens Oversight of Private Universities, Approves Key Amendments

**SHILLONG**  
The Meghalaya Cabinet on Wednesday approved a series of amendments to the Acts governing three private universities, bringing their operations closer to University Grants Commission (UGC) norms and increasing government representation in key management bodies. The Cabinet approved the Maharashtra Institute of Technology of Meghalaya (Amendment) Bill, 2026 and the Mahatma Gandhi University (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Under the proposed amendments, the Governor will become the Visitor of both universities, replacing the existing provision under which the sponsoring bodies could nominate the Visitor. Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said the changes were intended to ensure uniformity in the functioning of private universities in the state and bring their statutory provisions in line with applicable regulatory requirements. The amendments will also increase government representation on the management bodies of the two universities.

The number of government representatives on the Board of Management will rise from one to two, while representation on the Board of Governors will increase from two to three.

The Cabinet also approved the Martin Luther Christian University (Amendment) Bill, 2026, aimed at aligning the university's functioning with UGC regulations. Under the proposed changes, the university will be restricted to operating within Meghalaya. Provisions relating to distance education and the authority to affiliate colleges will also be removed. Sangma said the changes were intended to ensure that the university's statutory framework remains compliant with applicable regulatory norms.

## Assam Relaxes Joining Deadline for Teachers Deployed on Census Duty



**GUWAHATI**  
The Assam government has withdrawn the 14-day joining deadline for teachers engaged in Census duties after intra-district and inter-district mutual transfers.

The Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam, issued a notification on Wednesday announcing the relaxation for teachers who have been engaged or deployed for Census-related work.

According to the notification, teachers who are not involved in Census duties will continue to be required to join their new places of posting within the stipulated period specified in their respective transfer orders.

However, the 14-day joining period mentioned under Point No. 1 of the transfer terms has been withdrawn for teachers currently engaged or deployed in Census duties.

The decision comes in continuation of intra-district and inter-district mutual transfer orders issued through the Teacher Transfer Management System (TTMS) on August 10, 2026.

The Directorate clarified that the relaxation applies only to the specified 14-day joining requirement for teachers on Census duty. All other terms and conditions of the respective transfer orders will remain unchanged.

The notification was issued by Suranjana Senapati, ACS, Director of Elementary Education, Assam.

## Assam Plans Fresh Talks With Arunachal, Meghalaya to Resolve Border Disputes

**GUWAHATI**

The Assam government is preparing to resume negotiations with Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya to seek permanent solutions to long-standing inter-state boundary disputes, Border Areas Development Minister Atul Bora said on Wednesday.

Bora said regional committees headed by ministers have been constituted to hold discussions with their counterparts in Arunachal Pradesh and work towards resolving outstanding boundary issues.

Reacting to the recent firing incident involving alleged miscreants from Arunachal Pradesh and Assamese villagers, the minister described the incident as unfortunate and called on the Arunachal Pradesh government to take strong action against those responsible.

Bora said boundary-related tensions and alleged attempts at land encroachment have persisted since several neighbouring states were carved out of Assam.

He said substantial progress



had been made in resolving the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh boundary dispute following the Namsai Declaration, but disagreements remain in more than 52 villages.

According to the minister, regional committees from the two states are expected to begin discussions soon to address the remaining areas of contention.

Assam-Nagaland dispute remains before the Supreme Court  
On the Assam-Nagaland bound-

ary dispute, Bora said Assam had approached the Supreme Court in 1998 and the case remains pending.

He said the pending litigation has made it difficult for the two governments to reach a comprehensive settlement through negotiations. However, discussions between Assam and Nagaland are continuing to maintain peace and stability along the border.

The Chief Ministers of the two states have also held several rounds of meetings to address border-related concerns, he said.

On the Assam-Meghalaya boundary dispute, Bora said disagreements had been identified in 12 areas. Of these, six have already been settled, while negotiations are continuing over the remaining six.

The minister expressed confidence that the outstanding issues with Meghalaya could also be resolved through continued dialogue.

Bora further said Union Home Minister Amit Shah was keen on resolving inter-state boundary disputes in the Northeast and that representatives of the Union Home Ministry had participated in several rounds of discussions between the states.

The Assam government's renewed push for negotiations comes amid continuing local tensions along some inter-state borders, with the state seeking negotiated settlements while pursuing measures to prevent fresh incidents and maintain peace in disputed areas.

## Tripura Human Rights Commission Seeks DGP Report Over Alleged Illegal Detention, Police Coercion

**AGARTALA**

The Tripura Human Rights Commission (THRC) has sought a detailed report from the Director General of Police (DGP) over allegations of illegal detention, harassment and coercion by personnel of Bishalgarh Police Station in Sepahijala district.

The matter came before the Commission following a complaint filed by Sadhan Paul, a resident of Gomati district, against the Officer-in-Charge and other personnel of Bishalgarh Police Station.

According to the complaint, Paul's son, Susanta Paul, was allegedly taken into custody by Bishalgarh police around noon on August 4. The complainant claimed that neither Susanta nor his family was informed about the grounds for his arrest. He was allegedly kept in custody for more than 24 hours



before being produced before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Bishalgarh, on August 6.

The Commission observed that if the allegations are established, the detention could amount to a violation of fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 21 and 22(2) of the Constitution.

The complaint also alleged that Sadhan Paul faced insult and men-

tal harassment when he visited the police station seeking information about his son.

Paul further alleged that police brought the manager of Satin Creditcare Network Limited and some of his associates to the police station and pressured him to execute a declaration agreeing to repay Rs 4 lakh to individuals who had allegedly taken loans from the financial institution.

The complainant maintained that he was neither a borrower nor personally responsible for the alleged loans. He alleged that the police had intervened improperly in what was essentially a financial dispute.

The Commission noted that recovery of monetary claims is ordinarily a matter for civil remedies and that police authority cannot be used to compel an individual to assume another person's alleged

financial liability.

Paul has also sought preservation and examination of CCTV footage from Bishalgarh Police Station, besides relevant general diary entries, arrest documents, forwarding reports and the case diary connected with the incident.

After examining the complaint, the THRC decided that a report from the DGP was necessary before proceeding further with the matter. The DGP has been directed to conduct an inquiry and submit a report to the Commission.

The Commission has also requested the police chief to inspect the CCTV footage of Bishalgarh Police Station and, if available, submit relevant footage relating to the alleged incident.

The matter has been listed for September 29, 2026, when the Commission is expected to consider the DGP's report.

## Six Decades On, Former Mizoram CM Zoramthanga to Receive Degree Certificate

**GUWAHATI**

Nearly 60 years after completing his undergraduate examination, former Mizoram Chief Minister and Mizo National Front (MNF) president Zoramthanga is set to receive his degree certificate from Gauhati University on August 20.

Zoramthanga appeared for his final undergraduate examination in 1966 from Dhanamanjuri College in Manipur, which was then affiliated with Gauhati University. He studied English as his major subject and passed the examination with a second-class result.

However, he could not collect his degree certificate at the time as he went underground after joining the MNF's armed movement led by party founder Laldenga.

The university's Vice-Chancellor is scheduled to formally hand over the certificate to the 82-year-old former Chief Minister at a ceremony at the Phanidhar Dutta Seminar Hall on August 20. The programme is scheduled to begin at 2.30 pm.

Zoramthanga joined the MNF in 1965 and went underground the following year. He remained closely associated with Laldenga until the signing of the Mizoram Peace Accord in 1986 and played a key role in the organisation's political, military and diplomatic activities.

During the insurgency years, he was involved in managing MNF camps in areas that are now part of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan. He also helped establish contacts with China and was involved

in efforts to negotiate peace with the Government of India.

Following the Mizoram Peace Accord and the state's attainment of full statehood in 1987, Zoramthanga served as Education and Finance Minister in a coalition government formed by the MNF and Congress.

After Laldenga's death in 1990, Zoramthanga took over as MNF president, a position he continues to hold. He served as Mizoram Chief Minister for three terms, from 1998 to 2008 and again from 2018 to 2023. The university has also planned a special lecture to mark the occasion.

The Amia Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Gauhati University Institute of North East India Studies and Centre for South East Asian Studies will jointly organise a lecture by Zoramthanga titled "From Guerrilla Fighter to a Peacemaker." Gauhati University Vice-Chancellor Professor Nani Gopal Mahanta will inaugurate the lecture, while Subhash Chandra Das, chairman of the governing body of the Amia Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, will attend as the guest of honour.

Zoramthanga is also the author of 'From Guerrilla Fighter to Chief Minister, an autobiography published by Penguin Books in 2026. During the lecture, he is expected to reflect on his political journey, including his years as an underground MNF leader and his subsequent career in electoral politics and government.

## Minister Kaushik Rai reviews key road projects in Cachar, directs departments to expedite pending works

**SILCHAR**

Assam Government's Minister for Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs, Housing & Urban Affairs and Cooperation, Kaushik Rai, chaired a detailed review meeting at the office of the District Commissioner, Cachar, on Tuesday to assess the progress of key road infrastructure projects in the district.

The review meeting focused on three important connectivity projects the Silchar elevated corridor from Rangirkhari to Trunk Road, the road connecting Birbal Bazar with Silchar Medical College and Hospital, and the Madhuraghat (Gandhi Ghat) bridge connecting Malugram with Dudhpatil. The meeting was attended by Rajya Sabha Members Kanad Purkayastha and Sushmita Dev, Silchar MLA Dr. Rajdeep Roy and Udharpur MLA Rajdeep Goala, Cachar District Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta, IAS, Senior Superintendent of Police, Cachar, Partha Pratim Das, IPS, and Commissioner, Silchar Municipal Corporation, Ankur Das, IAS. Senior officials of NHIDCL, Public Works Department, Revenue Department and other concerned departments also participated in the review.

During the meeting, the Minister took a detailed account of the present status of the three projects and discussed issues requiring intervention by different departments. Particular attention was



given to pending land acquisition matters associated with the Birbal Bazar to Silchar Medical College road.

Minister Kaushik Rai directed the departments concerned to maintain close coordination and complete the pending formalities at the earliest so that the projects can progress without avoidable administrative delays. He also stressed the need for regular follow-up between the executing agencies, district administration and Revenue Department on matters relating to land and other pending requirements.

Speaking after the meeting, Minister Kaushik Rai said that the review was held to take stock of the progress of important road projects and to discuss the issues that need to be resolved for their smooth implementation. "Today, I held a review meeting at the Cachar District Commissioner's office with NHIDCL, the Public Works Department and the Revenue Department regarding the progress of important roads in the district," Minister Rai said.

He said the meeting covered the Sil-

char elevated corridor from Rangirkhari to Trunk Road, the road from Birbal Bazar to Silchar Medical College and the Madhuraghat bridge connecting Malugram and Dudhpatil.

"Detailed discussions were held on the necessary issues for the speedy and smooth implementation of these development projects in the district," the Minister added. Minister Kaushik Rai also instructed the concerned officials to ensure that matters requiring inter departmental coordination are taken up promptly and that pending formalities are completed without unnecessary delay.

Notably the Silchar elevated corridor is expected to provide an important alternative route through the city's congested areas, while the Birbal Bazar to Silchar Medical College road will improve connectivity to the medical institution and surrounding areas. The Madhuraghat bridge will provide a direct connectivity link between Malugram and Dudhpatil and is expected to benefit commuters and residents on both sides. It's worth mentioning that the review comes as several

road and connectivity projects in Silchar are moving through different stages of execution and administrative processing. The district administration and executing agencies have been working on land, road, drainage, utility and other related requirements to facilitate implementation. The Minister called upon the departments concerned to work together closely and ensure that the issues discussed during the meeting are followed up on the ground. The meeting concluded with directions for expediting pending formalities and maintaining regular coordination among all stakeholders for the timely and smooth implementation of the projects. Meanwhile, following the Minister's review meeting on Tuesday, on Wednesday joint site visits were conducted at the Madhuraghat Bridge site and approaches and at the Silchar Medical College Road site to facilitate further progress of the projects. The Madhuraghat Bridge site visit was led by CDC Raktim Baruah along with representatives from APDCL and PHED, to assess the present site conditions and facilitate commencement of the bridge foundation work. At the Silchar Medical College Road site, a joint team led by CDC Dhruvajyoti Pathak, along with representatives from APDCL, PHED, AMRUT and PBGL, assessed the present site conditions, proposed drain outlets and the readiness of the site for facilitating commencement of the four-laning road work. The field level inspections are aimed at ensuring necessary inter-departmental coordination and addressing site requirements for smooth and timely execution of the projects.

This is stated in a press release issued by the Regional Office of Information & Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, Assam.

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## Congress calls for 25-year freeze on Lok Sabha strength, 33 per cent women’s quota from 2029



NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday called for a constitutional freeze on the current strength of the Lok Sabha for another 25 years while implementing the 33 per cent reservation for women from the 2029 elections, and decided to launch a nationwide campaign on issues facing students and the alleged corruption at the Ram Temple and the E20 issue.

The party’s stand came at a four-hour-long Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting chaired by party president Mallikarjun Kharge. The meeting at Indira Bhawan was attended by Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, KC Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh, among others.

The party also decided to adhere to its historic 1937 position of singing only the first two

stanzas of Vande Mataram at party events. Briefing reporters after the meeting, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Ramesh said that regarding delimitation, the Congress is in favour of keeping the current number of Lok Sabha seats—543—the same for the next 25 years. “At the same time, we demand the implementation of women’s reservation on this very number,” Ramesh said.

The party will also hold nationwide protests on the alleged corruption involving the donation to Ram Temple. “Ram Mandir chanda chori is not only the issue of Ram Mandir now, but it has also become an issue of the sentiments of the people,” party leader KC Venugopal said.

As for the education reforms, Kharge called for a comprehensive and

time-bound “Education-to-Employment Roadmap”. The CWC asked Congress chief ministers to prepare state-specific reports within one month on the reforms required in the education sector.

In its resolution, the CWC alleged that paper leaks had reached “epidemic proportions”, claiming at least 152 instances since 2014, and accused the Centre of failing educated youth on employment. It also condemned the police action against students protesting NEET-UG leak and calling for the Union education ministers’ resignation.

Concerns were also raised about the rollout of E20 petrol, including questions over fuel contamination and the environmental impact of diverting sugarcane and maize for ethanol production.

NEW DELHI

Marking the 82nd birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh on Thursday highlighted the late leader’s transformative contributions to empowering India’s youth.

Emphasising the current youth sentiment across the country, Ramesh noted that Rajiv Gandhi’s vision established foundational reforms that continue to drive young Indians today.

Outlining key milestones from Rajiv Gandhi’s tenure as Prime Minister, Ramesh, in a post on X, recalled that he lowered the voting age, institutionalised National Youth Day, reformed education, strengthened youth networks and pioneered the IT revolution.

He added that Gandhi lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 years through a Constitutional amendment, and declared January 12, the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, as National Youth Day.

Ramesh further listed five key initiatives: “It is important to recall that it was Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who: 1. Gave 18-year-olds the right to vote by reducing the minimum voting age from 21 years by amending the Constitution 2. Declared Jan 12th, which is Swami Vivekananda’s birthday, as National Youth Day 3. Produced the New Education Policy of 1988 that, among many other innovations, established the nationwide network of Navodaya Vidyalayas. 4. Set up the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan covering all districts (since renamed as MY Bharat). 5. Led India decisively into the IT era, creating millions of new employment opportunities.”

Congress leaders led by CPP Chairperson Sonia Gandhi paid floral tributes to former Prime Minister Late Rajiv Gandhi on his 82nd birth anniversary at Veer Bhumi in New Delhi.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also offered floral tributes at the memorial of the former Prime Minister, described as the “architect of modern



India”.

In a post on X, Congress wrote, “Rajiv Gandhi ji, the architect of modern India, is being remembered by the entire country today.”

Senior Congress leader and former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and other party leaders and workers were also present at Veer Bhumi to pay homage.

Remembering Rajiv Gandhi on “Sadbhavana Diwas”, Kharge in a post on X said, “Today, on Sadbhavana Diwas, we remember Rajiv Gandhi, a visionary leader who awakened hope in millions and helped prepare India for the promise of the 21st century.”

“His legacy lives on in the transformative changes he championed and in his enduring faith in India’s youth, technological progress and the power of new

ideas,” he added.

Kharge said the most meaningful tribute to Rajiv Gandhi would be to “strengthen India’s timeless spirit of empathy, harmony and reconciliation, while nurturing intellectual freedom, innovation and the aspirations of our young people. We pay our deepest respects on his birth anniversary and remember his tremendous contribution to the nation.”

On the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel said his political tenure was short, but his contributions were significant.

“Rajiv Gandhi’s political tenure was short, but his contributions were very large. He took many revolutionary steps, including those for Panchayati Raj, the IT revolution, and reducing the voting age to 18. If Rajiv were present today, we would have been number one in Artificial

Intelligence,” Baghel told reporters.

Rajiv Gandhi became the youngest Prime Minister of India when he assumed office in October 1984 at the age of 40, following the assassination of his mother and then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He remained in office till December 2, 1989.

Born on August 20, 1944, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber during an election rally in Tamil Nadu’s Sriperumbudur on May 21, 1991.

His government’s Computer and IT Policy reduced import duties on computers and software, laying the foundation for India’s information technology growth. In 1988, his government’s policies helped establish the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), boosting the country’s software industry.

## INTERNATIONAL

# Trump says US and Canada have a trade deal, but key terms remain unclear

**WASHINGTON**

Canada and the United States moved closer Wednesday to finalizing a trade agreement that would avert threatened 50% U.S. tariffs, with a senior Canadian official calling the emerging terms “a very good deal for Canada” while cautioning that negotiations were not complete.

President Donald Trump said the agreement was “very fair” to both sides and predicted U.S. farmers and manufacturers would benefit. The tariffs on about \$20 billion worth of Canadian imports have been postponed until 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

The senior Canadian official said the emerging agreement would provide greater certainty, protect Canada’s dairy sector and jobs threatened by the new tariffs, and preserve what Ottawa considers favorable trade terms with the United States. Prime Minister Mark Carney has asked provincial premiers to return U.S. alcohol to store shelves, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston said, a step aimed at addressing one of the Trump administration’s key trade complaints. Houston and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe, both conservatives, voiced support for the direction of the talks, though Houston said whether Canadians would actually buy U.S. alcohol again “is a whole other discussion.”

The senior official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the negotiations publicly before an agreement is finalized.

Dominic LeBlanc, the minister responsible for Canada-U.S. trade, returned to Ottawa on Wednesday to meet Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who chaired a Cabinet meeting and a virtual meeting with provincial and territorial leaders.

Last month, Trump invoked a never-before-used legal authority, dating back to the Great Depression, to announce that the United States would slap 50% tariffs on \$20 billion, or about 5%, of Canadian exports to the United States, ranging from hockey sticks to tongue depressors.

Trump claimed that Canada discriminates against American exports of autos, alcohol and cheese. The U.S. president is also furious that Canada and China were the only countries that punched back with retaliatory tariffs of their own when he slapped levies on their products.

The United States and Canada have sparred for decades over trade, poking each other over sore spots like Canadian softwood lumber imports and U.S. access to Canada’s protected dairy market. While details of the agreement emerging Wednesday remain vague, Trump claimed Canada had agreed to end tariffs on U.S. agricultural products. “The tariffs will be non-existent for our farmers. Our farmers were paying tremendous tariffs into Canada, and those tariffs are going to be totally eviscerated. Down to zero,” he said. Canada currently allows a set amount of dairy imports at low tariffs. Once imports exceed that limit, much higher tariffs apply. The U.S. says Canada’s “supply management” system makes it harder for American dairy producers to get full access to the Canadian market.

LeBlanc, talking to reporters in Washington, said Canada’s “agriculture sector will be well protected and we have maintained our tough line.”

The senior Canadian official was even more explicit, saying supply management was “not on the table” and Canada’s dairy system would remain protected.

That leaves another key question unresolved: how Canada can

preserve supply management while giving U.S. farmers the additional access Trump says they will get.

Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, left, and United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, speak to reporters in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2026, the day after the Trump administration temporarily delayed tariffs on Canada.

But the senior Canadian official said the emerging agreement would protect a significant number of jobs and preserve Canada’s favorable access to the U.S. market.

The official also said the agreement would allow Canada to focus more on its domestic economic agenda, including infrastructure projects, attracting foreign investment and diversifying exports beyond the United States. In the Truth Social post announcing the three-day tariff pause, Trump declared that the long-canceled Keystone XL pipeline “may be awoken from the grave.” He did not say whether reviving Keystone XL was part of the agreement.

Keystone XL was designed to carry up to 830,000 barrels of crude a day from Canada’s oil sands to Nebraska and onward to U.S. Gulf Coast refineries. The project became a major political and environmental fight: President Barack Obama rejected it in 2015, Trump revived it in his first term and President Joe Biden canceled its permit in 2021. The Canadian company behind it later abandoned the project.

Carney had already raised reviving Keystone XL with Trump at the White House in October 2025, and Trump was receptive, according to a Canadian government official familiar with the discussion. A revival would align with a longstanding Canadian goal rather than amount to a new U.S. concession.

Carney did not mention the pipeline in his latest statement or detail what Canada had agreed to in the broader trade talks.

Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, left, and United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, speak to reporters in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2026, the day after the Trump administration temporarily delayed tariffs on Canada.

Eight of Canada’s 10 provinces restrict or ban U.S. alcohol — measures imposed in retaliation for Trump’s previous tariffs on a number of Canadian goods last year and amid anger over his repeated talk of making Canada the 51st U.S. state. The Distilled Spirits Council says U.S. spirits exports to Canada have fallen more than 70%.

Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, is especially important. Its government-run LCBO, one of the world’s largest alcohol purchasers, sold nearly \$1 billion in U.S. products annually before pulling them from shelves.

The White House says the emerging deal includes a Canadian commitment to address the restrictions. But Carney cannot order provinces to restore sales. And other provincial leaders could resist if the broader deal falls short of their priorities. The backlash extends beyond liquor stores, with Canadian travel to the United States falling sharply. Even if U.S. alcohol returns, sales could take time to recover. The U.S. is negotiating a North American trade pact — the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement — that Trump strong-armed America’s neighbors into accepting in his first term. The U.S. has begun formal USMCA negotiations with Mexico but not with Canada.

## Pakistan summons top US diplomat over envoy’s remarks saying J&K part of India

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Wednesday summoned US Chargé d’Affaires Natalie Baker and lodged a “strong demarche” over remarks by US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, who described Jammu and Kashmir as an “important part of India” during his visit to Srinagar.

Gor, who is also US President Donald Trump’s Special Envoy to South and Central Asia, arrived in Srinagar on Wednesday on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. He is scheduled to travel to Ladakh on Thursday.

Speaking at a joint media briefing with Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Gor said the United States would review its travel advisory for Jammu and Kashmir, citing steps taken by the Centre and the Union Territory administration to improve security.

“The United States puts out travel warnings and every so often, we re-evaluate those travel warnings. I cannot make any big announcements here today, but it is something we are going to look at,” Gor said.

He said New Delhi and the Jammu and Kashmir government had taken “incredible steps” to make the region safer.

“We will be looking at if the travel warning that is imposed and recommended by the United States is something that should be downgraded because, as I said earlier, this is a beautiful area. I think a lot of Americans would enjoy coming here and seeing the beauty and the opportunities that exist here,” he said.

Gor also described Jammu and Kashmir as “an important part of India” and “an incredibly beautiful place”.

The US envoy met Abdullah at the Chief Minister’s residence soon after arriving in Srinagar.

“I am thrilled to be here. We just had a very good meeting and we have some follow-ups that we



hope to take back to Washington (and) back to Delhi. But a very warm, a very cordial meeting and we look forward to building this relationship forward,” Gor said.

Abdullah said the discussions covered India-US relations, with a particular focus on Jammu and Kashmir.

“It was a very good meeting. We had an opportunity to discuss the relations between our two countries, but with a specific focus on what the US can do with Jammu and Kashmir,” he said.

“There are obviously certain legacy issues that over time we will be working to resolve. But we look forward to taking this conversation further. This is a conversation that will take place both between Ambassador Gor and Washington, and between me and the Government of India in New Delhi,” Abdullah said.

He added that he was “very hopeful and optimistic” that engagement between the United States and Jammu and Kashmir would “both widen and deepen in the years ahead”.

Hours after Gor’s remarks, Pakistan’s Foreign Office summoned Baker in Islamabad and lodged a formal protest.

“Pakistan strongly con-

demned and categorically rejected the characterisation of Jammu and Kashmir as a ‘part of India,’” the Foreign Office said in a statement.

It reiterated Islamabad’s position that Jammu and Kashmir is an “internationally recognised disputed territory” whose final status should be determined in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Pakistan also described Gor’s remarks as “irresponsible”, saying they contradicted what it called the longstanding and well-documented US position on the Kashmir dispute and Washington’s commitment to international law and the UN Charter.

The Foreign Office said Pakistan had appreciated Trump’s offer to mediate between India and Pakistan following the four-day conflict between the two countries in May last year.

Islamabad urged Washington to ensure that its public statements remained consistent with its position on the disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir.



# A Library Built on the Memory of a Father and the Power of Reading

Lt. Biswajit Gupta Memorial Library in Silchar seeks to build a culture of reading, sharing and community service

ProfileGallerySettingContact

THANK YOU

Lt. Biswajit Gupta lived a life defined by leadership, social purpose, and an infectious warmth. A banker by profession, his commitment to people was evident early on—from his days as a spirited student leader to his years serving as a dedicated union leader. Throughout his youth, he was a pioneer in cultural engagements, bringing creativity and a strong social outlook to every endeavor he undertook. As an individual, he was flamboyant, happy-go-lucky, and brave, possessing a rare, innate gift for man-management and bringing people together. His vibrant spirit and belief in human potential remain the guiding light behind this initiative.



@krcfoundation

Dedicated with gratitude to a father, a leader and a gentleman



KRC Foundation

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## OUR CORRESPONDENT

**SILCHAR:** In an age when screens often compete with books for attention, a small community-focused library in Silchar is trying to bring people back to the simple joy of reading.

The Lt. Biswajit Gupta Memorial Library, located at Old Kalibari Road in Malugram, is being developed in memory of Lt. Biswajit Gupta, a banker, student leader, union leader and cultural enthusiast whose love for people and belief in human potential continue to inspire the initiative.

The library is open to students, parents, young people, homemakers, retired citizens and working professionals. It aims to provide a peaceful space where people can read, reflect, learn and spend quality time.

But the story of the library begins much before its doors opened.

### A Father's Simple Lesson

For Biswajit Gupta, reading was not simply a hobby. It was something he wanted his children to grow up with.

Every month, after receiving his salary, he would visit the Wheeler's bookstall at Dimapur Railway Station. He would return home with a fresh collection of books and magazines and leave them on the table for his two sons.

One Sunday, he noticed that the books were still untouched.

With his characteristic humour, he handed his sons a ruler and told them that even if they were not reading the books, they should at least use the scale to open the uncut pages; otherwise, people might think the books were kept only for show.

The sarcasm had the desired effect.

The incident became a turning point. His sons began reading the books and magazines, and the habit stayed with them.

The memorial library carries that same idea forward, turning a personal family memory into a public space for readers.

### More Than Just a Library

The collection includes books purchased and collected by the family over several decades, along with books donated by well-wishers and members of the public from different parts of the world.

The library will offer a reading area and membership facilities. Members can also reserve books through WhatsApp and take part in online book review meetings.

Annual membership is priced at 300 and includes a one-year subscription to the KRC TIMES e-copy. The library also allows non-members to access its facilities during specified hours.

Books are normally issued for a maximum of seven days. Members returning a book can borrow another title immediately. Those wishing to borrow more than one book at a time need to provide a refundable security deposit equal to 50 per cent of the book's value for each additional book.

The library also encourages members to donate books and share short video reviews on social media to encourage others to read.

### Read, Recycle and Pass It On

One of the distinctive ideas behind the project is its focus on sharing and recycling books.

Under its book club initiative, titled "Read, Recycle, Reach, Reuse, Rejoice," people are encouraged to donate gently used books and give them a new life.

Visitors can also take up to two complimentary books from the donated collection.

The KRC Foundation plans to recycle donated books by distributing them to schools and colleges every month. The idea is simple: read a book and then pass it on to a friend, family member or back to the library so that another reader can enjoy it.

The library also provides internship opportunities for students who want to contribute to building a stronger reading culture.

### A Space for Every Generation

The vision of the library goes beyond encouraging children to read.

It seeks to create a space where different generations can meet through books and shared experiences.

For children, the focus is on developing reading habits from an early age and encouraging curiosity and imagination. For senior citizens, the library

aims to offer a welcoming place where they can spend time, discover books and return regularly. They are also encouraged to share their experiences and wisdom with younger readers, both in person and through recorded video messages.

The initiative also seeks to provide homemakers with an opportunity to connect with others, spend quality time and take part in community-building activities.

### Building a Community Around Books

The library is an initiative of the Knowledge Resource Centre Foundation (KRC Foundation), which describes itself as a broad-spectrum consulting organisation working in areas including media and communication, IT services, training and research, entrepreneurship coaching and project execution. For the foundation, the library is also a platform for promoting volunteerism, book recycling, student internships and parenting support.

Its mission includes building early reading habits through intergenerational mentorship and maintaining continuous engagement through online webinars and social media activities.

The wider idea is to make the library a place where people do more than borrow books. It is intended to become a community space where knowledge is shared, books are reused, and people of different ages can connect.

### Remembering a Life of Leadership

At the heart of the project remains the memory of Lt. Biswajit Gupta.

The library describes him as a man whose life was shaped by leadership, social purpose and warmth.

A banker by profession, he was involved in student leadership and later served as a union leader. He was also actively involved in cultural activities and was remembered for his creativity and strong social outlook.

He is described as flamboyant, happy-go-lucky and brave, with a natural ability to manage people and bring them together. His belief in people and their potential remains the guiding force behind the library.

In that sense, the Lt. Biswajit Gupta Memorial Library is more than a collection of books.

It is a family memory transformed into a public resource, and a personal lesson about reading turned into an invitation for an entire community.

"Dedicated with gratitude to a father, a leader and a gentleman" on his birth anniversary, which falls on 20th August.

Prof. Manoj Kumar Sinha Lauds New Memorial Library Initiative

Prof. Manoj Kumar Sinha, Dean of the Swami Vivekanand School of Library Sciences at Assam University, has commended the establishment of a new community library. He, in a message, stated:

I am very happy to learn that you have taken a very nice initiative to establish a Library in the loving memories of your beloved father to guide our future generations.

I hope this Personal Collection Library would definitely be useful for the community people and the older generation to spend their valuable time, and also for younger generations to find a place in your locality to have a reading and study space.

This initiative would definitely give peace to your father's soul.

I extend my best wishes to this initiative to successfully flourish and keep your father's memories alive.

Congratulations and best wishes from my behalf for your noble initiative.

### LIBRARY DETAILS

Lt. Biswajit Gupta Memorial Library  
H. No. 15, Old Kalibari Road, Malugram, Silchar, 788002, Assam

Email: [info@krcfoundation.org](mailto:info@krcfoundation.org)

Phone: +91-9330830083

Website: [www.krcfoundation.org](http://www.krcfoundation.org)

Account: @krcfoundation

Membership: Rs. 300 per year, including a one-year subscription to KRC TIMES e-copy.

### Opening Hours:

Saturday & Sunday: 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Weekdays: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Membership can be obtained online by filling out the Google Form: <https://bit.ly/LBG-MLmembership>

The library is expected to become fully operational on September 15th, 2026.



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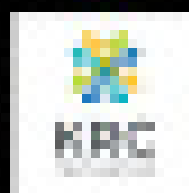


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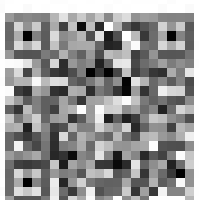


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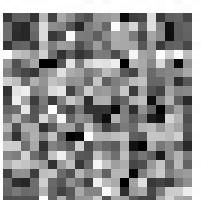


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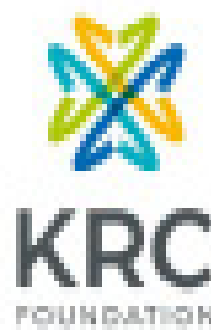


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