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PERSPECTIVE

Having friends from other cultures makes you more creative, a study found.

Northeast Sees Less Rain, Rising Heat as Monsoon Pattern Shifts



GUWAHATI

The monsoon appears to be changing its pattern across East and Northeast India, with the region receiving significantly less rainfall overall while experiencing increasingly intense spells of rain and rising temperatures.

According to an analysis by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), East and Northeast India recorded its sixth-lowest July rainfall since 1901, even as the average maximum temperature was the fifth-highest and the average minimum temperature the fourth-highest for the month.

The region received 299.8 mm of rainfall in July against the normal 424.1 mm, registering a 29 per cent deficit.

At the same time, the average maximum temperature climbed to 31.98°C, which was 1.03°C above normal and the fifth-highest since records began in 1901. The four warmer Julys were recorded in 2022, 2024, 2023 and 2025.

The average minimum temperature stood at 25.03°C, 0.65°C above normal and the fourth-highest on record. Only 2024, 2023 and 2022 recorded higher average minimum temperatures.

The warming trend is particularly significant as all four years with higher average maximum temperatures have occurred since 2022.

WHO SAID WHAT



“Assam and the Northeast have always been an inseparable part of India’s civilisational and cultural heritage and will continue to remain so.” ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

STAY ENRICHED

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 859 | SILCHAR THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

Amit Shah Likely to Visit Manipur in October Amid NRC-Before-Census Demand

IMPHAL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to visit Manipur in the first week of October to lay the foundation stone for the proposed government medical college in Senapati district, the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) said on Wednesday.

The proposed visit was discussed during a meeting between Shah and Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh at the Union Home Minister’s official residence in New Delhi.

According to the CMO, Shah assured the chief minister that the Centre would work towards fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Manipur.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony for the Senapati Medical College is expected to be the key event during Shah’s visit. The project was recently approved in principle by the state Cabinet.

The proposed medical college, to be established in the predominantly Naga-inhabited Senapati district, is expected to strengthen healthcare in-



frastructure, expand access to medical education and create employment opportunities in the region.

Shah’s proposed visit assumes added political significance as demands for updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the Census have gained momentum in Manipur.

Several legislators from the state are currently in New Delhi seeking the Centre’s intervention on the issue. A delegation representing 14 civil society organisations is also holding meetings with Union ministers and senior officials to press for citizenship verification before the Census and any subsequent delimitation exercise.

Supporters of the NRC-before-Cen-

sus demand have argued that identification of genuine Indian citizens should precede population enumeration and constituency delimitation.

The issue has emerged as a major political talking point in Manipur, with elected representatives and civil society groups separately seeking the Centre’s intervention.

Against this backdrop, Shah’s proposed visit is expected to attract attention beyond its development agenda, particularly over the Centre’s position on issues concerning citizenship verification, the Census and delimitation.

The visit would also mark Shah’s first trip to Manipur since April 2024, when he addressed an election rally in Imphal.His last major visit to the state came in May-June 2023, shortly after the outbreak of ethnic violence. During that visit, he held consultations with political leaders, civil society organisations and representatives of different communities.Further details of Shah’s itinerary are expected to be announced closer to the proposed visit.

Four killed, one injured in suspected ambush on Naga civilians in Kangpokpi



IMPHAL

Tension resurfaced in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district on Thursday after armed assailants allegedly ambushed Naga civilians along the IT Road, killing at least four people and injuring one, while another person was reported missing, sources said.

The incident reportedly took place around 8:30 am between Makui Ashang and Thanamba Naga, an area along the IT Road that is inhabited by Naga commu-

nities.

According to sources, the victims were travelling along the route when they came under attack from armed assailants. Four members of the Naga community were reportedly killed in the ambush, while another sustained injuries. One person remains unaccounted for following the incident.

The attack has triggered fresh tension in Kangpokpi, which has witnessed periodic incidents of violence since ethnic clashes broke out across Manipur in May 2023.

Security forces are expected to step up vigil in the area following the incident. However, police had not officially confirmed the attack or the reported casualties at the time of filing this report.

The identities of those killed and injured, as well as the circumstances leading to the alleged ambush, were not immediately known.Further details are awaited as security agencies assess the situation and efforts are reportedly underway to ascertain the whereabouts of the missing person.

Meghalaya CM Urges Tourists to Return as Normalcy Gradually Returns

SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma on Thursday urged tourists to return to the State, assuring them of safety as the government works to restore normalcy following violence during a Khasi Students’ Union (KSU) bike rally in Shillong on August 19.

Sangma said the situation was moving in the “right track” and that vehicular movement between Meghalaya and Assam had resumed. He, however, said it could take some time for complete normalcy to return.

Speaking after a Cabinet meeting, the Chief Minister said the violence and the subsequent blockade of vehicles at Jorabat had created apprehension among tourists and severely affected the tourism sector.

Hotel booking cancellations in Shillong and Sohra had reached nearly 90 per cent following the August 19 incident, he said.

Sangma said he had spoken to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma after the violence to facilitate the restoration of normal movement between the two states.

“We are seeing the situation moving in the right track. Movement of vehicles between Assam and Meghalaya has resumed,” Sangma said, adding that the government was taking all necessary steps to restore normalcy and was consulting various stakeholders.

Sangma calls KSU meeting positive

The Chief Minister also described his meeting with KSU leaders as “positive”, saying several concerns raised by the organisation had been discussed and that the government would continue the

dialogue.The meeting covered five demands raised by the KSU, including opposition to the proposed Shree Cement project, implementation of laws concerning residents and migrant workers, and recruitment-related concerns at the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEI-GRIHMS).On the KSU’s demand to cancel the public hearing held in July for the Shree Cement project, the State government has decided to constitute a fact-finding committee.

The committee will examine the conduct of the public hearing and environmental concerns surrounding the proposed project and submit its report to the government.

Sangma said Shree Cement was a reputed company and that the government had approved its proposed investment after following due procedures. However, all work related to the project will remain suspended until the committee submits its report.

On the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act, Sangma said registration of people entering the State from outside and rental premises was already under way, although the process would take time.The government is also planning to open a facilitation centre at Umiling before Christmas. Land is being identified for similar centres at Ratcheera and Aithabari.

The centres will help authorities verify the antecedents of people entering Meghalaya, Sangma said.

He added that rules under the Meghalaya Identification, Registration (Safety and Security) of Migrant Workers Act, 2020, were being amended to provide greater clarity on implementation.

Assam Prisoner Escapes, Returns for Aadhaar, Flees Again

PERUMBAVOOR

An Assam native who escaped from a jail in Kerala reportedly returned to a police station seeking his Aadhaar card, only to flee again after spotting police personnel involved in his earlier arrest.

Madhur Jya Sonowal, 28, from Dhemaji district of Assam, escaped from Aluva Sub Jail on August 24, just days after being arrested in connection with a mobile phone theft case.

According to officials, Sonowal had been arrested by Edathala police with the assistance of Perumbavoor police and was subsequently lodged at Aluva Sub Jail.

His movements after the escape took an unusual turn when he walked into the Perumbavoor police station and asked officials to return his Aadhaar card.

Police personnel at the reception reportedly did not initially recognise him. However, Sonowal fled after noticing officials who had assisted in his arrest.

The incident has triggered an intensified search across Perumbavoor, with police issuing a lookout circular and circulating details of the escaped prisoner to police stations across Kerala.

The Railway Protection Force has also been alerted, particularly to monitor railway stations and prevent Sonowal from leaving the state by train.

Assam Police are also expected to be informed so that authorities in Dhemaji can remain vigilant in case Sonowal attempts to return to his home district.

New Myanmar-Arunachal-Tinsukia Drug Route Raises Concern in Upper Assam: Himanta



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma flagged the emergence of a new drug trafficking route from Myanmar through Arunachal Pradesh’s Changlang district to Tinsukia in Assam, warning that the development could pose a serious challenge to Upper Assam.

Speaking to reporters, Sarma said law enforcement agencies had intensified their crackdown on narcotics across the state and made several significant seizures in recent weeks.

He cited a major seizure in Guwahati involving drugs worth nearly Rs 80 crore, which he said were allegedly being prepared for transportation to Punjab.

“We are continuously seizing drugs. But this is a very big milestone,” Sarma said, referring to the recent seizures.

The Chief Minister said the scale of the seizures indicated the volume of narcotics that could potentially enter the wider network if trafficking

routes were not effectively disrupted.

According to Sarma, authorities have traditionally encountered drug trafficking through the Mizoram-Myanmar and Manipur-Myanmar routes. However, a new route appears to have emerged along the Myanmar-Arunachal border.

“Earlier, drugs used to come through the Mizoram-Myanmar and Manipur-Myanmar routes. Drugs were not coming through the Arunachal-Myanmar border. However, in the last few days, we have seized drugs in Tinsukia,” he said.

Sarma said questioning of arrested drug peddlers had provided information suggesting that the narcotics seized in Tinsukia may have entered Assam through Changlang in Arunachal Pradesh.

Describing the development as a “very worrying signal” for Upper Assam, the Chief Minister stressed the need for sustained surveillance and enforcement along the emerging route.

The latest disclosure comes amid Assam’s intensified anti-narcotics campaign, with the state government repeatedly highlighting large-scale drug seizures and efforts to dismantle trafficking networks.

Officials are now expected to strengthen surveillance along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border and in vulnerable areas of Tinsukia and other parts of Upper Assam to prevent the emerging route from developing into an established narcotics corridor.

NEW DELHI/IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday met Union Minister for Minority Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju in New Delhi and discussed a wide range of issues concerning the state, officials said.

A senior official of the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) in Imphal said that Khemchand Singh met Rijiju at the Union Minister’s official residence in New Delhi, and the two leaders discussed various issues related to the development and welfare of Manipur.

Khemchand Singh requested the Union Minister to help the development and welfare of minority communities in the state, the official said. The Chief Minister sought help from the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs on various developmental projects. “The two leaders also discussed issues relating to the Manipur Assembly elections slated for early next year,” the CMO official said.

Rijiju assured Khemchand Singh that his ministry will provide all possible help to the state. The Union Minister is a native of Arunachal Pradesh and has a close connection with Manipur.

Taking to X, Union Minister Rijiju wrote: “Met with the Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh ji, in New Delhi. Had a meaningful interaction on the development and progress of Manipur and the welfare of its people. I appreciate his efforts to implement all the schemes extended by Narendra Modi ji’s Govt for Manipur.”

Earlier in the day, the Manipur Chief Minister also met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and discussed various issues of the Northeastern state. The CMO official in Imphal said that the Home Minister promised the Chief Minister of the Centre’s full support when Khemchand Singh called on HM Shah at his official residence in New Delhi on Wednesday afternoon.

The CMO official said that the Home Minister would also visit Manipur in the first week of October this year and, during his visit, lay the foundation stone of the new Senapati Medical College and review various developmental projects in the state.

The Manipur Chief Minister said that HM Shah had agreed to lay the foundation stone of the new medical college in Senapati district during his proposed visit to the state.

Assam Sets Up Task Force to Regulate Agarwood Trade, Boost Organised Sector

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has constituted a task force to monitor the agarwood trade and explore measures to bring the sector into a more organised framework, Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah said.Mallabaruah said nearly two lakh hectares of land outside forest areas are currently under agarwood cultivation, highlighting the scale of agricultural activity linked to the industry.

Speaking at a workshop on the challenges and prospects of the agarwood sector, the minister said the trade had for years been viewed as illegal, leaving cultivators and traders uncertain about possible action from the Forest Department and police.According to Mallabaruah, the uncertainty had restricted the growth of the industry despite the large number of people involved in agarwood cultivation and trade.

He also alleged that the sector had, at various points, remained under the control of a limited number of groups, preventing genuine cultivators from receiving the full value of their produce while intermediaries benefited.The minister said there were also reports of dry agarwood

being brought from Indonesia and subsequently exported from Assam, raising concerns over the way the trade was being conducted.To address these issues, the government has constituted a task force to monitor the trade and examine measures for the organised development of the sector.Mallabaruah said the government was also working on a mechanism to conduct agarwood auctions in the state, while promoting industries based on agarwood and its products.He said the objective was to ensure that cultivators received better returns and that the sector could operate within a regulated and transparent framework.The minister further announced that the process of shutting down the Monpally market in Hojai began.

Assam has significant potential to expand its agarwood exports, Mallabaruah said. The state has the capacity to send around 1.20 lakh kg of agarwood and 5,000 litres of agarwood oil outside the state annually.

However, only around 120 kg of agarwood was exported last year, he said, pointing to the substantial gap between the sector’s potential and actual exports.





VOLUME:1, ISSUE 859

SECURING
BENGAL'S
FRONTIER

India is confronting two connected challenges along its eastern frontier: preventing further illegal infiltration from Bangladesh and addressing the presence of those who may already have entered and settled in the country. The Centre's move towards a technology-driven "smart border", using drones, radars, surveillance cameras and other monitoring systems across vulnerable stretches, is therefore both necessary and overdue. The scale and geography of the India-Bangladesh border make it impossible to depend on manpower alone. Technology must become an essential force multiplier for the Border Security Force.

Yet a secure border is only half the answer. Stopping fresh infiltration does not resolve the question of those who may already be living illegally inside India. A dedicated mechanism to examine procedures for identification, detention and deportation is consequently important. But such a process must be firmly anchored in law, due process and verifiable evidence. Illegal migration is a serious national-security and governance concern; addressing it cannot, however, become an excuse for arbitrary identification or collective suspicion.

West Bengal occupies a particularly sensitive position in this debate. Its long and densely populated border with Bangladesh, coupled with linguistic and cultural affinities across the frontier, has historically made detection and prevention difficult. In some border districts, allegations of demographic change and illegal settlement have become politically contentious issues. Such claims deserve careful, evidence-based examination rather than sweeping assertions. Where demographic shifts have occurred, the reasons may be complex, and they must be established through credible data rather than political rhetoric.

What is beyond dispute is that the illegal acquisition of official documents represents a serious institutional failure. If people without lawful entitlement have managed to obtain voter identity cards, Aadhaar-linked services, utility connections or other government documents through fraudulent means, the problem is not simply one of migration. It points to weaknesses - and potentially organised corruption - within the administrative system.

The focus, therefore, must extend beyond the migrant to the network that facilitates unlawful settlement. Who arranges forged or improperly obtained documents? Who verifies applications? Who enables access to land, utilities and welfare benefits through fraudulent claims? Are middlemen and officials involved, and if so, how extensive are these networks? These questions require professional investigation, documentary evidence and prosecution wherever wrongdoing is established. Administrative corruption cannot be defeated merely by announcing another verification exercise.

Border management also cannot be held hostage to Centre-State political rivalry. National security requires cooperation between governments irrespective of political affiliation. The experience of the eastern frontier has repeatedly demonstrated the cost of institutional friction. Delays in acquiring land required for fencing, surveillance infrastructure, border roads and strategic connectivity can create vulnerabilities that no security force can entirely compensate for.

The sensitive Siliguri Corridor makes this imperative even greater. The narrow land link connecting the northeastern states with the rest of India is of exceptional strategic importance. Border infrastructure in northern West Bengal must therefore be treated not merely as a state development issue but as part of the country's national-security architecture. Fencing, roads, surveillance systems and secure transport corridors must receive timely administrative and political support.

A stronger Centre-State relationship can now provide an opportunity to correct some of these longstanding deficiencies. Greater cooperation between the BSF, state police, district administrations, intelligence agencies, revenue authorities and other departments can create the integrated security framework that the eastern frontier has long needed. But coordination must produce measurable results, not simply meetings and announcements.

The border problem is also an economic problem. Porous stretches of the frontier can facilitate smuggling of cattle, narcotics, gold, consumer goods and other commodities, depriving the exchequer of revenue while creating an illicit economy that thrives on weak enforcement. The same technology deployed to detect infiltration should therefore be used to monitor smuggling routes and identify organised criminal networks. Border security and economic security are increasingly two sides of the same coin.

At the same time, India must resist the temptation to reduce a complex border problem to a demographic contest. Citizenship, residency and access to public resources are matters governed by law. The state must establish who is legally entitled to remain, who has obtained documents fraudulently and who is entitled to citizenship under the applicable legal framework. These determinations must be made through transparent procedures capable of surviving judicial scrutiny.

The objective should be neither indiscriminate exclusion nor political appeasement. It should be the restoration of the rule of law. The eastern frontier has remained vulnerable for too long because responsibility was often divided between agencies and governments, while political considerations overshadowed long-term security planning. That cannot continue. A modern border-management system requires technology, infrastructure, intelligence sharing, effective policing and sustained political commitment. But technology alone will not secure Bengal. A drone can detect movement; a radar can identify a pattern; a camera can record a crossing. None can prosecute the official who facilitates fraudulent documentation, dismantle a trafficking syndicate or resolve a disputed citizenship claim. Those tasks require institutions that are competent, impartial and accountable.

India must therefore build its eastern security architecture on two fronts: seal the border and strengthen the system behind it. The first will prevent new vulnerabilities. The second will address the networks that allow illegal entry and settlement to become entrenched.

Demographic and administrative problems accumulated over decades cannot be corrected overnight. But a credible beginning is possible through smart surveillance, faster infrastructure development, rigorous verification of official documents, electoral-roll integrity, action against organised facilitators and genuine Centre-State cooperation.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

There's no shortcut to a place worth going.

- Beverly Sills

WHO IS REALLY
PAYING FOR E20?



SANTHOSH KUMAR P K

India crossed 20 percent ethanol blending in 2025, five years ahead of the deadline it had already advanced once. By April 2026, E20 was the default fuel at pumps nationwide. Measured against its own target, the ethanol-blended petrol programme can be seen as one of the most successfully executed industrial policies of the past decade. That is precisely why it now deserves harder scrutiny.

The question is not only whether E20 damages engines or reduces mileage. It is who pays for the blend, who collects the rent, and whether the farmer—the programme's principal moral justification—is anywhere near the front of that queue.

The government's ledger is impressive on its face. Since 2014-15, the ministry of petroleum and natural gas puts foreign exchange savings at over ₹1.97 lakh crore, crude substitution at 316 lakh metric tonnes, avoided CO2 emissions at 952 lakh metric tonnes and payments into the farm economy at ₹1.66 lakh crore. Nor is the energy-security argument merely rhetorical.

When the West Asia conflict pushed crude up by 70-80 percent after February 2026, ethanol continued to arrive at a fixed, administered price of roughly ₹70 a litre while the Indian basket touched nearly \$135 a barrel. Domestic pump prices rose 7-8 percent. Oil marketing companies absorbed an average under-recovery of about ₹11 a litre—some ₹21,300 crore between March and June—and petrol that might have cost ₹125 was sold at around ₹95 in Delhi. A fifth of the petrol pool priced in rupees, immune to the dollar and to the Hormuz Strait, is a genuine hedge. Any honest critique must concede this.

But a hedge is insurance, and insurance has a premium. The programme's central evasion is that this premium has never been priced, disclosed or fairly allocated. Begin with cost. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha in July, the government disclosed that the weighted average ex-mill price of ethanol for the current supply year is ₹66.61 a litre, and that oil marketing companies' delivered cost, inclusive of GST and freight, hovered at ₹71.10-71.21. Maize-based ethanol, now the single largest feedstock, is procured at ₹71.86 ex-mill.

At any normal crude price, this is comfortably above the refinery cost of the petrol it displaces. Blending, in other words, is no longer a cost-reducing activity; it is a cost-plus one that happens to look cheap during a war. The consumer bears this twice over. Ethanol carries roughly a third less energy per litre than petrol. The petroleum ministry itself concedes a 3-5 percent fuel-economy loss. Niti Aayog's 2021 roadmap was more candid, projecting 6-7 percent for

four-wheelers designed for unblended petrol and calibrated for E10, and 3-4 percent for comparable two-wheelers. Yet E20 is sold at exactly the price of the fuel it replaced.

A less energetic fuel sold at parity is a transfer, and it flows from the two-wheeler owner to the ethanol value chain. That transfer could be neutralised at a stroke, and Niti Aayog said as much in 2021 when it recommended that blended fuel be priced lower, or that tax relief compensate for lost efficiency. Neither happened.

The excise exemptions extended in June 2026 to E22, E25, E27 and E30 are, by the government's own explanation, only a device to prevent double taxation—not a rebate to the driver. To this day, the ministry has published no per-litre cost stack for E20: not the depot cost of petrol, not the blending cost, not the tax on each component. Without that disclosure, the claim that E20 is dearer to make cannot be tested, and the question of who pockets the difference cannot be answered.

The distribution claim is weaker still. The ₹1.66 lakh crore is not paid to farmers; it is paid to distilleries and mills, from whom it must travel down to the farmgate. Whether it does is an empirical question with an uncomfortable answer. Agriculture ministry data show that the average mandi price of maize stayed below the minimum support price in every single month from March 2025 to August 2026.

In August, maize averaged just over ₹2,008 a quintal against an MSP of ₹2,410—for a crop the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices sets at ₹1,544. This is the crop farmers were urged to expand for ethanol;

kharif acreage rose to about 9.5 million hectares. Demand did not follow, partly because the state undercut it: surplus Food Corporation of India rice was made available to distilleries at ₹2,320 a quintal, reportedly far below FCI's own acquisition cost, while maize import restrictions were eased.

In ethanol supply year 2025-26, grain feedstock accounts for roughly 72 percent of allocation against 28 percent from sugarcane. Karnataka's distillers told the state government plainly that with output caps and thin margins they could not buy maize at MSP.

Cane tells a parallel story. Fair and remunerative price was raised by ₹10 to ₹365 a quintal for 2026-27; maize MSP by ₹10. Of ₹1,12,740 crore in cane dues for 2025-26, about ₹99,961 crore had been paid by April 2026—leaving nearly ₹13,000 crore outstanding, with farmer bodies putting the arrears at ₹16,087 crore.

The draft Sugarcane (Control) Order, 2026 formally recognises ethanol as a mill output, counting 600 litres as one tonne of sugar, yet still anchors the grower's entitlement to sugar alone. The rent, predictably, settles where the administered price is fixed: at the distillery gate, cushioned by 5 percent GST, interest subvention and soft loans that pulses and oilseeds never received.

Then there is the resource account. Rice-based ethanol carries a water footprint estimated by the Food Secretary at about 10,790 litres per litre, maize 4,670 and sugarcane 3,630. Industry correctly notes that distilleries themselves consume only 3-4 litres; that is the point—the water is spent in the field, in Maharashtra, Punjab and Madhya

Pradesh, where aquifers are already failing.

Meanwhile, installed capacity has run ahead of demand: about 1,900 crore litres against roughly 1,048 crore litres contracted, leaving over 450 crore litres idle. Stranded capital of that scale does not sit quietly; it lobbies for E30, for exports, for more grain. None of this argues for retreat to E0.

It argues for five corrections. Publish the full cost stack of a litre of E20 and audit the programme's net benefit annually. Use the excise lever to make the motorist's energy-adjusted cost

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

A second flight has just taken off, carrying 37.5 tonnes of HADR material, medicines & food packets for Nepal. India remains in close and continuous touch with the Nepalese authorities. We will continue to strongly support the ongoing relief efforts.

~ Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India



neutral, as Niti Aayog advised. Replace feedstock-wise administered pricing with a formula linked to petrol trade parity plus an explicit, budgeted subsidy, so the transfer is visible in the Finance Bill rather than buried in the pump price.

Stop subsidising FCI rice into distilleries while telling farmers to plant maize, and tie ethanol allocations to verified MSP-linked procurement. And legislate revenue-sharing so that ethanol realisations reach the cane grower.

Above all, do not proceed to E30 before E20 has been independently audited. A policy that is right in its energy logic can still be wrong in its distribution. On the only test that matters for a farm-fuel programme—what happens at the farmgate—E20 has not yet passed.

Santhosh Kumar P K | Professor & Director, Centre for Budget Studies, Cochin University of Science and Technology (Views are personal)



Meghalaya Assembly Unanimously Opposes Uranium Mining Across Meghalaya

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya Assembly on Wednesday unanimously passed a resolution opposing uranium exploration, mining and processing anywhere in the state, with all 60 MLAs backing the move amid concerns over environmental risks, land rights and community consent.

The resolution, moved by Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, urged the Centre, the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Uranium Corporation of India Ltd (UCIL) not to permit or undertake uranium-related activities in Meghalaya, including the proposed Kylleng-Pyndengsohiong-Mawthabab (KPM) project in West Khasi Hills.

Moving the resolution, Sangma said Meghalaya had significant uranium



deposits but repeated attempts to explore and mine the mineral had faced sustained opposition from communities and various civil society groups.

He said the resolution was aimed

at clearly communicating the position of the state government, elected representatives and people of Meghalaya on uranium mining.

Sangma cited uranium deposits

at Domiasiat, Wakhyn and Lostoin in West Khasi Hills and South West Khasi Hills. The proposed KPM project includes open-cast mining and an ore processing plant.

The chief minister highlighted the state's fragile terrain and environmental conditions, noting that the proposed mining areas receive heavy rainfall, have steep slopes and remain vulnerable to landslides.

He said the areas also serve as catchments for several streams and rivers that are important sources of drinking water and support agriculture and other local livelihoods.

Sangma raised concerns over the long-term management of mining waste, including overburden, mill tailings and process effluents, particularly given the region's high rainfall and terrain.

The resolution also noted sustained opposition from traditional institutions, autonomous district councils, student organisations, civil society groups and elected representatives.

It said affected communities had not provided their "free, prior and informed" consent for uranium mining in the state.

Sangma also referred to a 2019 Supreme Court judgment concerning land rights in Meghalaya, arguing that landowners have rights over surface as well as sub-soil resources, including minerals.

Another issue flagged by the chief minister was an Office Memorandum issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on September 8, 2025. The memorandum exempted mining projects involving atomic min-

erals from public consultation requirements under the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006.

Sangma said concerns over the impact of uranium mining on communities in other parts of the country also needed to be taken into account.

He said Meghalaya's decision was not only about the present generation but also about protecting the state's environment and resources for future generations.

The resolution received unanimous support across party lines, including from Leader of the Opposition Mukul Sangma of the Trinamool Congress and MLAs of the Voice of the People Party.

The unanimous vote puts the Meghalaya Assembly on record as opposing uranium mining across the state, including the long-pending KPM project.

Rijiju Accuses Rahul Gandhi of Directing 'False' Claims Against Assam CM

GUWAHATI

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju has accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of directing party spokesperson Pawan Khara to make what he termed "false allegations" against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, during the final phase of the 2026 Assam Assembly election campaign. In a post on X, Rijiju claimed that two senior Congress leaders had told him that Gandhi had instructed Khara to raise the allegations against the Assam chief minister and his wife shortly before polling. "2 senior Congressmen told me that Rahul Gandhi had asked Pawan Khara to put false allegations against Himanta Biswa Sarma & Riniki at the last hour of the Assam election," Rijiju said. Rijiju further claimed that the allegations had "backfired" and alleged that Khara was subsequently rewarded with a Rajya Sabha nomination. "When the falsehood backfired, Khara was given a Rajya Sabha seat as a prize, which he doesn't deserve!" he said. The remarks come against the backdrop of a controversy that erupted during the Assam Assembly election campaign after Khara raised allegations concerning multiple passports and alleged overseas assets linked to Riniki Bhuyan Sarma. Riniki Bhuyan Sarma strongly denied the allegations, describing them as "false, fabricated and politically motivated". The controversy subsequently moved into the legal arena, with the Guwahati Crime Branch registering an FIR against Khara under charges including defamation, forgery and criminal conspiracy. The case has since been the subject of legal proceedings in different courts. On April 10, 2026, the Telangana High Court granted interim transit bail to Khara. The matter later reached the Supreme Court, which on April 17 directed him to approach the competent court in Assam for legal remedy.

BTC Deputy Speaker Bijit Gwra Narzary Found Dead at Tamulpur Residence



TAMULPUR

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Deputy Speaker and 26th Darrangajuli constituency representative Bijit Gwra Narzary was allegedly found hanging at his residence in Kumarikata in Assam's Tamulpur district on Wednesday evening. Narzary, a senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader in the region, had served as a Member of the Council Legislative Assembly (MCLA) from Darrangajuli for four consecutive terms.

The circumstances surrounding his death remain unclear, and the reason behind the alleged suicide has not yet been ascertained. Further details are awaited.

The death has sent shockwaves across the Bodoland Territorial Region, with political leaders, colleagues and supporters expressing grief over his sudden demise.

BTC chief and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) president Hagrama Mohilary condoled Narzary's death, describing it as an irreparable loss to the community and public life.

"I am deeply saddened by the untimely demise of Sjt. Bijit Gwra Narzary, from 26 No. Darrangajuli, Hon'ble Deputy Speaker of the Bodoland Territorial Council. His sudden passing is an irreparable loss to our community and public life," Mohilary said.

He extended condolences to Narzary's family, friends, colleagues and well-wishers, and prayed for strength for the bereaved family.

Narzary's death comes as a major loss to the BTC political establishment, where he had been a prominent elected representative for several terms.

Over 1,100 Meghalaya government schools run with a single teacher

SHILLONG

As many as 1,124 government schools in Meghalaya are functioning with only one teacher, while 893 teaching posts remain vacant across the state, the Legislative Assembly was informed on Tuesday.

Education Minister Lakhmen Rymbui provided the figures during the autumn session in response to a question from legislator Mizanur Kazi on the status of infrastructure and staffing in government schools.

Of the 893 vacant teaching posts, 748 are in lower primary schools, 38 in upper primary schools, 91 in secondary schools and 16 in higher secondary schools.

The minister also informed the House of gaps in basic infrastructure across government-run schools. As many as 76 schools do not have science laboratories, while 18 schools lack computer facilities. One school was also re-



ported to be without a library.

Rymbui said the government was taking several measures under its Mission Education initiative to improve infrastructure in government schools, particularly in the plain belt areas.

According to the minister, new school buildings have been constructed at several locations, while construction work is contin-

uing at others. Infrastructure development has also been completed at a number of schools under the first two phases of the Mission Education programme.

Among the schools listed as completed under Phase I are Charbatapara Government LP School, Milonpur Government LP School, Bholarbhitia JB Government LP School, Pushkarni Para Govern-

ment LP School and Magurmari Government LP School.

Under Phase II, Ronkhala Government LP School, Chibinang Government LP School, Batabari Government LP School and Bhajamara Government LP School have been completed.

Hallidayganj JB Government LP School and Peradanga Government LP School have been completed under Phase III, while work at Golagre Government LP School is still underway.

The figures placed before the Assembly underscore the continuing challenges facing Meghalaya's government school system, with more than 1,100 schools dependent on a single teacher and hundreds of teaching posts yet to be filled.

The staffing shortage, coupled with gaps in laboratories, computer facilities and other basic infrastructure, remains a major challenge to ensuring adequate educational facilities for students across the state.

Pradyot Seeks Governor's Intervention Over 18 TTAADC Bills Pending for Years

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha Party founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Wednesday sought the intervention of Tripura Governor Indrasena Reddy Nallu over the prolonged pendency of around 18 bills passed by the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

Debbarma, accompanied by TTAADC Chief Executive Member Runiel Debbarma, met the Governor and urged him to examine the bills that, according to the Tipra Motha leader, have remained pending at different stages for several years.

The TTAADC is an elected body established under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and exercises legislative and administrative powers over specified subjects in the tribal-majority areas of Tripura.

Debbarma said the Council had passed several bills aimed at protecting the rights and welfare of indigenous communities, including legislation concerning land rights, administrative reforms, recruitment policy and customary laws.

However, he said the bills cannot take effect as laws until they receive the required approval of the Governor.

"Many bills, including those related to land rights, administrative reforms, recruitment policy and customary laws, have been passed by the Council. We are an

elected body and people have voted us into power. But these bills are pending for the Governor's signature, and therefore we cannot call them laws," he said.

Debbarma said the issue had been raised with successive Governors and that a written representation had now been submitted seeking intervention to ascertain why the bills had remained pending for such a long period.

He said the delay was creating difficulties for elected representatives, as people continued to question them about the implementation of measures promised during elections.

"If these bills do not get approved, people ask us questions. They have voted for us, so what should we tell them when we cannot make these laws?" Debbarma said.

The Tipra Motha founder also claimed that the matter had been raised before the Supreme Court and said nearly 18 bills had remained pending at different stages since around 2007.

Following the meeting, Debbarma said he had requested the Governor to examine the bills forwarded by the TTAADC over the years.

"Met the Governor of Tripura and requested him to look into the several bills sent by the TTAADC over the years which have remained in the dark," he said in a social media post.

Cachar College Uniform Code in Focus After ABVP-NSUI Clash Over Hijab

SILCHAR

The uniform code at Cachar College has come into sharp focus following a clash between members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) that left several students injured.

College principal Dr Apratim Nag said on Wednesday that the administration would make every effort to implement the institution's prescribed uniform code.

He said the college's official uniform notice clearly specifies the dress code for male and female students.

"Under the prescribed code, male students are required to wear trousers and shirts, while female students must wear salwar-kameez or churidar-kameez with a dupatta worn in the prescribed manner," Nag said.

The principal also said the college administration had not lodged any police complaint in connection with Tuesday's clash.

According to sources, several students injured in the confrontation were taken to Silchar Medical College and Hospital for treatment.

The clash broke out on Tuesday



when ABVP and NSUI members were conducting separate membership drives on the college campus.

Sources said an argument began

after some ABVP members objected to women at the NSUI camp wearing hijab. The verbal confrontation soon escalated into a scuffle, creating ten-

sion on the campus.

Police intervened and separated the two groups before bringing the situation under control.

The two student organisations subsequently gave different accounts of the incident.

NSUI alleged that ABVP members assaulted its workers and used political influence during the confrontation. ABVP, on the other hand, accused NSUI members of provoking the clash and maintained that students should follow the college's prescribed uniform code.

ABVP leaders condemned the violence and called for an impartial inquiry and appropriate action against those found responsible, sources said.

The confrontation came amid a growing debate over dress regulations at the college.

On August 24, a section of students submitted a memorandum to the Cachar District Commissioner seeking restrictions on religious attire, including hijab and skullcaps, on the college campus.

The college administration's renewed emphasis on its existing uniform code has now brought the issue to the centre of the campus debate, with competing positions emerging over the prescribed dress code and religious attire.

The administration is expected to focus on enforcing the existing uniform provisions while efforts continue to prevent further confrontation between student groups.

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Bihar, Uttar Pradesh put border areas on alert after Nepal floods



PATNA/LUCKNOW:

Rain and flash floods in Nepal on Wednesday have prompted Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to step up their vigil in districts bordering the neighbouring country, with authorities monitoring river levels and preparing for possible flooding.

Bihar has sounded an alert in nine north Bihar districts as heavy discharge from Nepal is expected to raise water levels in the Gandak and Kosi rivers. High alerts have been issued for West Champaran, East Champaran, Gopalganj, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Madhubani, Supaul and Khagaria. NDRF teams have been deployed, while the Valmikinagar Barrage on the Gandak in West Champaran

is being closely monitored as water levels rise. Chief Secretary Pratyaya Amrit held an urgent video conference with district magistrates, superintendents of police and Water Resources Department engineers. The department has cancelled leave for field personnel, engineers and embankment surveillance teams. Officials have also been asked to intensify preparations in West Champaran, East Champaran, Gopalganj, Muzaffarpur, Saran and Vaishali.

Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary said he would visit Valmikinagar if required. Deputy Chief Minister and Water Resources Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary said the situation worsened on Wednesday after heavy discharge from Nepal's Rasuwa

district. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also spoke to Bihar CM and assured him of all possible help.

Public announcements have alerted residents in Nautan, Bairia, Yogapatti and Lauria blocks of West Champaran. Residents of Sisai and Chibrahi panchayats in Bagaha have been evacuated, while people from Balua panchayat in Piprasi have been moved to safer places. District Magistrate Taranjeet Singh inspected Bagaha and embankments along the Gandak.

In Uttar Pradesh, CM Yogi Adityanath directed Maharajganj and Kushinagar administrations to take precautions. The districts are likely to see rising water levels in the Gandak and Narayani rivers.

Nepal floods: 133 Indians, including 37 from Tamil Nadu, missing; MEA coordinates rescue efforts

NEW DELHI

At least 133 Indian nationals are among over 700 reported missing after devastating flash floods swept through central Nepal, bordering Tibet, on Wednesday, officials said.

As many as 157 people have died, and their bodies have been recovered from the flood-hit areas, security officials said.

Most of the missing Indian nationals were travelling to Tibet for the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra.

The flood surged through the Bhote Koshi River at about 09:00 local time from the Tibetan side, affecting Rasuwa and Dhading districts near the border, as well as Nuwakot district south-west of Kathmandu.

The flooding caused widespread damage to settlements and critical infrastructure, including at least a dozen hydropower projects.

Some 403 tourists – 341 of them foreigners – were unaccounted for several hours after the disaster struck, according to Nepal's tourism ministry.

The missing foreigners included Indians, and others from Australia, Britain, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa, South Korea and the United States, the tourism board said.

Meanwhile, India on Wednesday night dispatched the first tranche of relief supplies to Nepal aboard a military transport aircraft.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said India dispatched 10 tonnes of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) assistance to Nepal.

"Dispatched 10 tonnes of HADR assistance and essential medicines to support Nepal's response to the devastating floods," he said on X.

The relief supplies were sent on board a C-130J aircraft of the Indian Air Force. The aircraft took off for Kathmandu from Hindon airbase near Delhi around 8:35 pm.

The relief supplies included emergency items such as temporary shelters, blankets, hygiene kits, solar lamps, and medicines.

The whereabouts of 37 of the 57 tourists from Tamil Nadu are yet to be



ascertained, while 20 others have been accounted for, state officials said.

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay said senior government officials had been directed to work towards their swift rescue. "I have directed the senior government officials at Tamil Nadu House in New Delhi to take all necessary measures to swiftly rescue the people from Tamil Nadu who are missing in this disaster and to provide the required assistance to the affected individuals," he said.

Vijay added that the state was taking swift action to gather information through the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Embassy in Nepal and ensure the tourists' safety.

Thanjavur Collector R Revathi said officials had accounted for 20 of the 57 tourists from the district who were believed to be in the affected area.

"We do not know what is happening with the rest for now; we are awaiting more information," Revathi told.

Of those accounted for, 11 are women, according to officials.

Meanwhile, Chennai Central MP Dayanidhi Maran sought the urgent intervention of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to rescue and safely repatriate Indian tourists stranded or missing in the floods. In an official communication, Maran, "writing under the guidance of DMK President M K Stalin", drew attention to the "grave situation" in Nepal.

"Reports indicate that several people have lost their lives and many others, including nearly 50 tourists from Tamil Nadu, remain missing, while rescue operations are being severely hampered by the difficult terrain and continuing flood conditions," Maran said.

He said the disaster had caused extensive destruction, washing away roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure and severely disrupting communication and transport networks. Maran said the rapidly evolving situation had caused "considerable anxiety" among the families of tourists in Tamil Nadu.

He urged the External Affairs Ministry to take all possible measures to locate, rescue and safeguard those affected and asked for directions to be issued to the Indian embassy in Nepal and rescue teams to facilitate the safe return of stranded Indians.

Local media reports said the Nepal Tourism Board, Tourist Police and tourism stakeholders were working to verify the whereabouts and safety of people who were in or travelling through the affected areas.

INTERNATIONAL

Xi orders all-out rescue, relief efforts after flash floods sweep through areas near China-Nepal border



BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday ordered all-out efforts to search for and rescue people missing after devastating flash floods swept through villages and towns near the China-Nepal border area in Tibet,

causing heavy casualties.

A total of 145 officers and soldiers from the Xigaze detachment of the People's Armed Police have been sent to the affected border port to assist with emergency response operations.

A sudden, massive flood swept through two central Nepal districts

bordering Tibet killing at least four people, causing extensive devastation at settlements along the river and damaging at least a dozen hydropower projects early Wednesday.

At least 105 Indians and 37 NRIs are among the nearly 400 persons missing.

Xi called for efforts to evacuate residents at risk and provide timely medical treatment to the injured to minimise casualties.

He made the instructions after a mudslide occurred around 10:30 am on Wednesday, which caused severe casualties and left people unaccounted for at Gyirong border port in Gyirong County, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Xi also stressed the need to strengthen monitoring and early warning, ensure scientific rescue operations and guard against secondary disasters.

China's Tibet Autonomous Region shares a border with Nepal, and a landslide struck near the border crossing between the two countries.

Drone footage showed some buildings at the port buried by debris, Chinese official media reported.

State-run Global Times reported that the local government had dispatched personnel to the disaster-hit area, where communications had been cut off.

The Chinese Embassy in Nepal activated its emergency response mechanism after a flash flood struck the Rasuwa area in northern Nepal, located along the China-Nepal border, on Wednesday morning, the report said.

The embassy assessed the situation of Chinese citizens and enterprises in the affected area and urged the Nepalese government and relevant agencies to carry out rescue efforts.

It also issued a fresh safety advisory to Chinese citizens and institutions in Nepal, the report said.

Iran president says 'US will achieve nothing' with economic pressure



TEHRAN

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday said the "United States will achieve nothing" with its new round of economic sanctions, local media reported.

"With the measures that the government's economic sectors have foreseen, America will not achieve anything with economic pressure at this stage, just as it was unable to achieve anything in the war," Pezeshkian said, according to ISNA news agency.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Monday laid out plans for the "economic asphyxiation" of

Iran, warning of dire consequences for countries that do not join the campaign.

Iran's leaders, however, have dismissed the impact of the new measures, having already endured decades-long crippling sanctions since shortly after the 1979 revolution.

"Our principle is understanding and resolving issues through interaction and negotiation, but at the same time, we will stand firm against economic pressures, as we have done so far and will continue to do," Pezeshkian added.

Negotiations between Iran and the United States have stalled as the two foes wrangle over control over the strategic Strait of

Hormuz.

Traffic through the vital waterway – which normally carries around a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports – remains largely paralysed, disrupting global energy markets.

Iran has exerted control over Hormuz since the outbreak of the war on February 28, and has sought to impose fees on vessels transiting the strait.

The United States wants the strait to return to its pre-war system of free navigation, and US President Donald Trump has claimed that Washington "has total control" over the waterway.

Fast-Growing Tree Species: The Missing Link in Natural Farming



INTRODUCTION

Natural farming is built on the idea that a farm can feed itself biologically through mulch, compost, green manure, and locally prepared inputs such as Jeevamrit and Beejamrit without relying on purchased chemical fertilisers. What is less often discussed is that this entire model depends on a steady, year-round supply of biomass: leaves, green twigs, fodder, and organic matter. In a hill state like Arunachal Pradesh, the fastest and most reliable source of this biomass is not the crop itself, but the trees standing around it. This is why fast-growing tree species deserve a far more central place in natural farming plans than they currently receive.

WHY SPEED MATTERS

Slow-growing timber species certainly have their place in a farm landscape, but they cannot supply the quick, repeated flushes of leaf litter, green manure, and fodder that natural farming inputs require. A tree that takes fifteen or twenty years to yield a usable canopy is of little help to a farmer trying to prepare Jeevamrit or mulch a field this season. Fast-growing species close that gap. They establish canopy cover within two to four years, produce cuttable biomass annually or biennially, stabilise slopes quickly on jhum land prone to erosion, and, in the case of nitrogen-fixing species, begin improving soil fertility almost as soon as they are planted.

SPECIES WORTH PRIORITISING

Several fast-growing species already familiar to farmers across Arunachal Pradesh and the wider North-East are well suited to natural farming integration:

- Alder (*Alnus nepalensis*) - the classic jhum-fallow tree of the Eastern Himalaya. Its root nodules fix nitrogen, and its leaf fall rapidly rebuilds fertility on cleared slopes, shortening the fallow period farmers must otherwise wait out.
- Gamari (*Gmelina arborea*) - among the fastest-growing hardwoods usable for boundary planting and alley cropping; its broad leaves make for abundant mulch and its lopped branches re-grow readily, allowing repeated harvest without replanting.
- Dhaincha and other *Sesbania* species - short-duration, nitrogen-fixing shrubs that can be grown as a green-manure crop within a single season, ideal for quickly building soil organic matter on newly opened natural-farming plots.

cha and other *Sesbania* species - short-duration, nitrogen-fixing shrubs that can be grown as a green-manure crop within a single season, ideal for quickly building soil organic matter on newly opened natural-farming plots.

- Coral tree (*Erythrina*) - a fast-growing, nitrogen-fixing species traditionally used as a living support for betel vine and pepper, doubling as a shade and fodder tree.
- Mulberry (*Morus*) - grows back vigorously after cutting, supplies high-quality leaf fodder for livestock, and its manure in turn feeds back into Jeevamrit preparation, closing the nutrient loop.
- Bamboo- arguably the fastest-growing woody plant available to North-Eastern farmers, reaching harvestable size within three to five years and regenerating from the same clump indefinitely; its leaf litter, culm sheaths, and thinnings all serve as ready mulch and construction material for farm bunds and fencing.
- Tree bean (*Parkia timoriana*) - comparatively quicker to bear pods than most timber legumes, and useful both as an income-generating crop and as a nitrogen-contributing component of a mixed natural-farming plot.
- Subabul (*Leucaena leucocephala*) - a widely planted, fast-growing nitrogen fixer valued for its leaf fodder and repeated coppicing ability; useful on boundary lines and alley rows, though it should be managed carefully where it has shown weedy tendencies.
- Malabar neem (*Melia dubia*), also called forest neem or Malai Vembu - discussed in detail below as one of the clearest agroforestry success stories in the country, and a strong candidate for wider trial in Arunachal Pradesh.

Melia dubia: A Proven Success Story Worth Replicating

If any single species demonstrates what fast-growing trees can do for a farm, it is *Melia dubia*. Known locally in different states as Malabar neem, forest neem, or Malai Vembu, this indigenous tree has, over roughly the past decade and a half, become one of the most widely adopted agroforestry species in India and for reasons that make it just as relevant to natural farming as to commercial timber growers.

Melia dubia reaches harvestable size in as little as six to eight years, far faster than most other timber species, which typical-

ly need fifteen to twenty years or more. Its straight, cylindrical bole and light, spreading crown mean it casts comparatively little shade, so farmers routinely intercrop it with turmeric, ginger, pulses, and other annual or short-duration crops without a major yield penalty underneath. This makes it especially well suited to natural farming's preference for diversified, multi-layered plots rather than single-species blocks.

Its rapid uptake among farmers in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Haryana has been driven by strong, assured demand from the plywood, veneer, matchstick, pulp-and-paper, and pencil industries, which has translated into genuinely attractive returns per acre compared with many alternative land uses. Beyond its timber value, the tree also offers direct natural-farming benefits: its leaves are valued as livestock fodder, and farmers traditionally use the leaf litter as a natural pest deterrent in the field, since the wood and foliage carry compounds that discourage termites and certain insect pests a useful complement to natural farming's reliance on biological rather than chemical pest control.

Melia dubia tolerates a fairly wide climatic range, growing well from near sea level up to about 1,800 metres elevation, in areas receiving anywhere from moderate to fairly high rainfall. This tolerance range overlaps comfortably with much of the mid-elevation, high-rainfall terrain found across Arunachal Pradesh, suggesting the species could be trialled on farm boundaries and in alley-cropping blocks in the state much as it already has been in southern and central India. Given its short rotation, ready market, light canopy, and fodder and pest-management value, *Melia dubia* offers CHF Pasighat a concrete, already-proven model to adapt rather than an unproven experiment when demonstrating to farmers how fast-growing trees and natural farming can reinforce each other.

Local Evidence: The East Siang Plus-Tree Study

This is not a purely hypothetical case for Arunachal Pradesh. An MSc study carried out in the College of Horticulture & Forestry, Pasighat's own Department of Forest Biology & Tree Improvement, surveyed 65 *Melia dubia* trees across eleven villages of East Siang district and selected 34 genetically distinct "plus trees" each tagged with a CHF/CAU/MD identity, GPS-located, and measured for height, girth, and stem form (Daryal, 2020). Selected trees ranged from about 8 to 15 metres in height, and fruit and seed traits from these individuals showed statistically significant, strongly heritable variation, confirming the population is a genuinely suitable base for future seed-orchard and nursery work.

Melia dubia plus trees selected across villages of East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh. (Source: Daryal, U. (2020). MSc thesis, CHF Pasighat.)

The value of this study is that it turns a general recommendation "plant more *Melia dubia*" into something farmers and nurseries can act on directly: a named, mapped,

and measured set of locally proven trees to propagate from, rather than an unfamiliar import.

Recommended Planting Models

None of this requires abandoning existing cropping patterns. Fast-growing species can be integrated through a handful of straightforward configurations:

- Boundary and bund planting - fast-growing species such as gamari, alder, or bamboo planted at roughly 2-3 metre spacing along field edges double as living fences and windbreaks while continuously shedding biomass onto the plot below.
- Alley cropping- rows of a fast-growing, nitrogen-fixing species (subabul, coral tree, or dhaincha) spaced 4-6 metres apart, interplanted with annual crops and periodically pruned, with the cut branches laid directly as mulch between the crop rows.
- Jhum-fallow enrichment- deliberately seeding or retaining alder, or trialling- *Melia dubia* at wider spacing (roughly 3.5 × 3.5 metres, as used in established *Melia* plantations elsewhere in India), on fallow land can shorten the fallow period farmers must observe before the land is productive again, turning a passive waiting period into an active, biomass-generating one.

Why This Belongs in the Natural Farming Conversation

Natural farming's promise of near-zero input cost only holds if farmers have a genuinely local, renewable source of biomass. Without fast-growing trees on or around the farm, that biomass has to be bought, carted in, or foraged from increasingly distant forest patches - undermining the very premise of the approach. By contrast, a farm boundary lined with alder, gamari, *Melia dubia*, or bamboo turns biomass production into something the land does automatically, year after year, with minimal labour. For a forestry and horticulture college such as CHF Pasighat, encouraging farmers to treat fast-growing tree planting with *Melia dubia* as a well-tested, locally validated starting point - as a first step in adopting natural farming, rather than an afterthought, could meaningfully improve how quickly and how affordably the practice takes root across the state.

Conclusion

Fast-growing trees are not a peripheral detail in natural farming - they are the infrastructure that makes the whole model work. Species already familiar across Arunachal Pradesh, from alder to bamboo to *Melia dubia*, can supply the mulch, green manure, and fodder that natural farming depends on, without competing for cropland or requiring farmers to learn an unfamiliar system. With locally validated evidence already sitting in CHF Pasighat's own research - the East Siang plus-tree selections being one clear example - the college is well placed to move this from a general principle into a concrete, farmer-ready extension programme.

Dr Shivani Dobhal (Assistant Professor),

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College of Horticulture and Forestry
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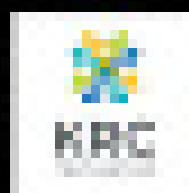


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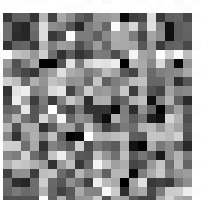


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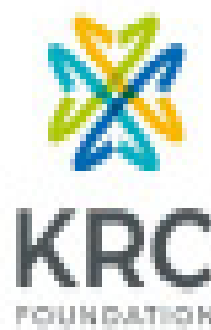
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