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PERSPECTIVE

Positive thinking can actually help increase your lifespan, strengthen your immune system and lower rates of depression.

Manipur insurgent outfit SOREPA calls 12-hour shutdown, urges Independence Day boycott

IMPHAL
The outlawed Socialist Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (SOREPA) has called for a 12-hour general shutdown across Manipur on August 15 and urged people to boycott Independence Day celebrations.

In a statement issued by its Secretary of Publicity and Organisation, M.C. Yaiphabi, the outfit said the shutdown would be observed from 5 am to 5 pm on August 15.SOREPA described August 15 as a “day of sorrow” for the people of Kangleipak and appealed to residents to stay away from Independence Day programmes.The outfit claimed that Manipur had no historical, cultural, linguistic or ethnic connection with India and alleged that the region had faced political subjugation and military repression since its merger with the Indian Union in 1949.

Reiterating its version of Manipur’s political history, SOREPA claimed that the erstwhile kingdom remained under British rule from 1891 to 1947 before entering what it described as a period of “occupation”.The outfit alleged that then-Manipur King Bodhchandra Singh was coerced into signing the Manipur Merger Agreement in Shillong in September 1949, resulting in the formal merger of Manipur with the Indian Union on October 15 that year.SOREPA also referred to a public meeting held at Mapal Kangleibung on April 19, 1953, claiming that resolutions opposing Manipur’s integration with India were adopted during the gathering.

According to the outfit, such political resistance later contributed to the emergence of armed movements in Manipur during the 1960s.

The outfit also referred to the ethnic violence that broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023.

WHO SAID WHAT



This Independence Day, let’s pledge to improve the Govt Schools in our villages.
~ **Abhijit Dipke, Founding President - Cockroach Janta Party**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed its court-appointed committee headed by former High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal to verify claims that around 24,000 families affected by the 2023 Manipur ethnic violence are yet to receive rehabilitation and welfare benefits.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was hearing petitions concerning the rehabilitation of people who lost their homes, properties and sources of livelihood during the violence.

The court took note of steps taken by the government for rehabilitation, including the disbursement of funds to more than 4,000 beneficiaries from around 7,000 identified families for reconstruction of houses.

Under the rehabilitation scheme, the government provides Rs 5 lakh for a kutchha house and Rs 7 lakh for a semi-pucca or pucca house, the bench noted.

The court was also informed that more than 12,000 houses had been approved under the Pradhan Mantri



Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) for families affected by the violence.

Senior advocate Vibha Dutt Makhija, appearing for the Justice Gita Mittal Committee, apprised the bench of the measures undertaken for rehabilitation. The court also noted that temporary shelters had been constructed

and Rs 51.95 crore released to 885 identified beneficiaries for construction of permanent houses.

In addition, families whose houses were completely destroyed have received an additional Rs 1 lakh per household, the court noted.

However, lawyers representing

some of the affected families claimed that nearly 24,000 families were still awaiting rehabilitation and welfare benefits.

The lawyers said details of the families had already been submitted to the three-member committee and that the claims could be verified through ground-level assessment.

“If that is so, we request the committee to verify and confirm the particulars of the alleged affected families,” Chief Justice Surya Kant said.

The bench directed the committee to submit a note on the implementation of government welfare schemes identified by the Supreme Court in its May 27, 2026 order.

Property claims sent to committee

The Supreme Court also referred an application concerning properties belonging to families affected by the violence to the Justice Mittal-led committee for verification.

The committee has been asked to examine the particulars and present status of the properties and submit its findings to the court.

The bench also took note of claims relating to damage to places of wor-

ship. A list of 276 properties requiring verification was placed before the court.

Senior advocate Colin Gonsalves separately informed the bench about a list of 20 churches where encroachment was allegedly carried out.

The court directed the Justice Gita Mittal-led committee to examine the representations and verify the claims on the basis of relevant documents and land records.

Authorities have also been directed to ensure that no further encroachment takes place on properties found to be covered by the claims.

The committee will submit its findings to the Supreme Court after completing the verification process.

The ethnic violence in Manipur erupted on May 3, 2023, following a Tribal Solidarity March in the hill districts against the demand for Scheduled Tribe status by the majority Meitei community.

The violence has left more than 200 people dead, hundreds injured and thousands displaced, with large numbers of families losing homes, property and livelihoods.

Nagaland CM Rio asks Shah to send FCRA Amendment Bill to parliamentary panel

KOHIMA
Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to reconsider the proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) and refer the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026, to a parliamentary committee for wider consultation.

In a letter to Shah on Monday, Rio said the proposed changes could place additional compliance and administrative burdens on churches and Christian charitable organisations in Nagaland, potentially affecting their education, healthcare, humanitarian and social-welfare activities.

Rio called for a comprehensive examination of the Bill by a parliamentary panel and sought consultations with relevant stakeholders before the proposed amendments are taken forward.

He said such a process would help address concerns raised by various sections of society, remove apprehensions and strengthen public confidence while maintaining transparency, accountability and national interest.

The chief minister said the approach would also reflect an inclusive position and reinforce constitutional values, secular principles and respect for the contributions of different communities.The FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25 and is expected to come up for discussion during the ongoing Monsoon session of Parliament.

Rio said concerns over the proposed amendments had been raised particularly by sections of the Christian community in Nagaland. He pointed out that the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) and the Bishop of Kohima had submitted representations to the Union Home Ministry regarding

difficulties faced by churches and charitable organisations.

The chief minister said he had met Christian leaders, including representatives of the NBCC and the Bishop of Kohima, on August 9 to discuss the issue.

According to Rio, the consultations highlighted concerns about the ability of churches and Christian organisations to continue their humanitarian and community-oriented activities under increasingly stringent FCRA requirements.

More than 90 per cent of Nagaland’s population is Christian, and churches have historically played a major role in the state’s social and community life, Rio said.He noted that churches and Christian organisations have contributed to education, healthcare, poverty alleviation, livelihood support and other welfare activities, particularly in remote and economically disadvantaged areas.Rio said several such initiatives have been supported through legitimate foreign contributions, partnerships and assistance.He argued that stringent FCRA regulations and compliance requirements were already imposing significant financial and administrative pressures on smaller churches and charitable institutions.“If implemented in their present form,” the proposed amendments could further increase these difficulties and affect ongoing education, healthcare, welfare and humanitarian programmes, he said.

The chief minister expressed particular concern about smaller grassroots organisations operating in remote and underserved areas, saying they may have limited financial and administrative capacity to meet additional compliance requirements.

Dima Hasao bans roadside cooking, littering to protect environment and road safety

HAFLONG
The Dima Hasao district administration has banned cooking and food preparation along roadsides, viewpoints, lay-bys, open spaces and other public places across the district, citing concerns over environmental degradation, fire hazards and road safety.The order was issued by Dima Hasao District Magistrate and Chairperson of the District Road Safety Committee, Gayatri Devdas Hailing, under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

The prohibition covers the use of LPG cylinders, kerosene and coal stoves, firewood, barbecue grills and other cooking equipment for preparing or heating food at the specified locations.

The restrictions will particularly apply to the Mandardisa-Harangajao stretch of National Highway 27, part of the East-West Corridor, and the Mahur-Hangkram stretch of National Highway 137. Other public roads and locations across the district will also come under the order.According to the administration, the growing practice of tourists and visitors cooking along roadsides has contributed to increased littering in public spaces.Food waste, plastic containers, bottles, disposable plates, packaging material and wrappers are frequently being discarded along roads, officials said.The administration said roadside cooking and dumping were not only harming the environment but also causing inconvenience to commuters and, in some locations, obstructing vehicular movement.

Officials also pointed to the road-safety risks associated with food waste. Discarded food attracts animals to roads, increasing the possibility of accidents involving motorists and pedestrians.

The administration said indiscriminate dumping was also damaging the natural beauty and fragile environment of Dima Hasao, one of Assam’s ecologically sensitive hill districts.

Centre Assures Support to Save Endangered Manipuri Pony



IMPHAL
The Centre has assured comprehensive financial and administrative support for the conservation and protection of the endangered Manipuri Pony, an indigenous breed closely associated with Manipur’s cultural traditions and polo heritage.

The assurance was given by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Animal Husbandry and Dairying in response to a special mention raised in Parliament by former Rajya Sabha MP Leishemba Sanajaoba, who drew attention to the declining population and vulnerable status of the breed.

Sanajaoba had raised the issue during the parliamentary session on March 17, seeking immediate measures to protect the Manipuri Pony and preserve its cultural and sporting significance.

Polo and equestrian organisations in Imphal have also expressed concern over alleged incidents of theft, slaughter and illegal trade in pony meat.

In a recent written response, Union Minister for Panchayati Raj, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh said the Centre was committed to extending necessary financial and administrative assistance

to support conservation efforts.

According to the minister’s response, Rs 29.99 lakh was provided during the 2025-26 financial year to 86 Manipuri Pony owners. The financial assistance was intended to help owners meet rising feed costs and address the healthcare needs of the animals.

The government has also initiated measures to identify and secure suitable grazing areas for the breed. Surveys have been conducted across Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Thoubal and Kakching districts to identify and designate appropriate grazing grounds for the ponies.

The Manipur government is working with pony owners, traditional polo clubs and other stakeholders to strengthen conservation measures and safeguard the breed’s habitat.

Awareness programmes and workshops are also being conducted to educate pony owners and caretakers about common diseases, preventive healthcare and proper animal management. The Manipuri Pony has played a significant role in the history and development of polo in Manipur and remains an important part of the state’s cultural heritage.

The latest measures by the Centre and the state government are aimed at addressing the breed’s declining population, improving animal healthcare, securing grazing habitats and supporting local communities involved in its preservation.

‘Every Tear Was a Gold Medal’: PM Modi Hails Mirabai Chanu After Glasgow Triumph

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has praised weightlifter Mirabai Chanu for her emotional gold medal victory at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, telling her that “every drop of tears” she shed on the podium was like a gold medal.

Chanu, who won gold in the women’s 48kg weightlifting category, said Modi’s words of encouragement during their interaction would motivate her to work harder in future competitions.

“Thank you Hon’ble Prime Minister @narendramodi ji for your constant support and motivation in our journey. Your words of encouragement to each and every medalist during our precious interaction yesterday will definitely motivate us to work hard in our next competitions,” Chanu said in a social media post after meeting the Prime Minister.

The interaction took place at Modi’s residence on Lok



Kalyan Marg , where he met members of India’s Glasgow 2026 medal-winning contingent.

During the meeting, Modi

asked Chanu about the tears she shed after winning the gold medal.

“You have made everyone proud. So many tears were

falling. I feel like a gold medal is falling from every drop of tears,” Modi told the weightlifter.

For Chanu, the tears represented more than the emotion of winning another major international title. They reflected a difficult four-year period marked by injuries, personal challenges and the disappointment of narrowly missing out on a medal at the Paris Olympics. “I was very happy and emotional on that day. I was crying because I missed a medal in the Paris Olympics by one kilogram. A player has to face so many things in life, and I faced so many things in these four years,” the 32-year-old said. Chanu said repeated injuries had disrupted her career while family difficulties added to the pressure.

“I was prone to injuries all the time. And I was facing family problems as well. The last four years were very difficult,” she said.

The emotional significance

of the Glasgow victory became even stronger when she stood on the podium after completing her gold-medal-winning performance.

“When I was standing on the podium, and when our flag was raised, and when our national anthem was played, I couldn’t stop myself from crying,” Chanu recalled.

The meeting also featured a lighter moment, with Modi feeding Chanu a laddu while discussing her journey and the challenges she had overcome.

India finished fourth in the overall medal standings at Glasgow with 39 medals — 13 gold, 17 silver and nine bronze. The Indian contingent competed in a reduced programme that excluded several sports in which the country has traditionally performed strongly.

For Chanu, however, the Glasgow gold marked a significant comeback after years of setbacks and reaffirmed her place among India’s leading weightlifters.

Tripura bags GeM Sustained Adoption award for transparent digital procurement

AGARTALA

The Government of Tripura has been honoured by the Centre with the ‘GeM Sustained Adoption’ award for its continued efforts to promote transparent and efficient public procurement through the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).

The award was presented at an event held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on August 10 to mark the 10th anniversary of GeM.

Dr Akinchan Sarkar, Additional Secretary of the Finance Department, Government of Tripura, received the award on behalf of the state from Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

Tripura was recognised for the growing volume of government procurement undertaken through the GeM platform and the sustained efforts of various departments to adopt digital procurement practices.

The recognition highlights the state’s push towards a more transparent, efficient

and technology-driven public procurement system. It also reflects the efforts of government departments and procuring agencies to increasingly use the GeM platform for purchasing goods and services.

The Tripura government welcomed the award and said it would continue to expand the use of GeM across departments.Officials said wider adoption of the digital procurement platform would help improve efficiency, transparency and value for money in government purchases while strengthening accountability in the procurement process.

The award ceremony was attended by senior officials and representatives of the Central and state governments, along with stakeholders from the public procurement ecosystem.

The recognition comes as GeM marks a decade of operations, with the platform emerging as a key digital mechanism for government procurement across the country.



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WHEN EXAMINATIONS
LEAK, TRUST LEAKS
WITH THEM

India needs more than tighter security to stop paper leaks. It needs accountable institutions, cleaner processes and a culture that refuses to reward cheating. There is something deeply absurd about the way India conducts examinations. Students are searched before entering examination halls. Question papers are transported under elaborate security arrangements. Examination centres are monitored as though they were high-security installations. Yet, despite this formidable apparatus, a question paper can sometimes reach a mobile phone before it reaches the students for whom the examination was designed.

The irony is not merely embarrassing. It is corrosive. The Government's decision to constitute a task force to strengthen mechanisms against examination paper leaks is therefore necessary. But it would be a mistake to believe that another committee, another protocol or another layer of surveillance will by itself solve the problem. Examination malpractice is not simply a security failure. It is a governance failure, and increasingly, a social one.

A question paper does not leak because a piece of paper is inherently insecure. It leaks because somewhere between its creation and its delivery, a person, process or institution fails.

That distinction matters. The temptation after every leak is to identify the immediate culprit and move on. A clerk is suspended, an official is transferred, an examination centre is blacklisted and an investigation is announced. Such action may be necessary, but it rarely addresses the architecture that made the breach possible.

The more important questions are structural. Who had access to the paper? Why was that access necessary? Was it properly recorded? Were responsibilities divided so that no single individual could compromise the entire process? Were warning signals ignored? Was there an independent audit? And, when something went wrong, who was ultimately accountable?

These are questions of institutional design, not merely individual misconduct.

Weak feedback mechanisms, fragmented chains of responsibility, opaque decision-making and excessive human discretion create fertile ground for malpractice. The more complicated and poorly monitored a process becomes, the greater the opportunity for manipulation.

Technology can help, but technology is not a moral substitute.

Encryption can secure a digital file. Artificial intelligence can identify unusual patterns. Digital workflows can record access and create audit trails. Secure distribution systems can reduce physical handling. All of these tools should be used extensively.

But no technological system can completely eliminate the human factor.

Somebody still designs the system. Somebody grants access. Somebody may attempt to circumvent safeguards. Somebody may be willing to sell information. Somebody may be prepared to buy it.

That is why every leak must be examined as an ecosystem of complicity rather than as an isolated act.

There may be a seller and a buyer, but there can also be those who facilitate, ignore or rationalise the wrongdoing. Parents desperate to secure admission for their children may convince themselves that everyone else is doing the same. Coaching operators may regard privileged information as another commercial advantage. Officials may dismiss a procedural violation as a minor favour.

This is where the damage extends far beyond the examination itself.

The student who studies honestly is made to feel like a fool. That is perhaps the most dangerous consequence of an examination leak. A student who spends months preparing for a competitive examination believes that performance will be judged on knowledge and effort. If another candidate gains an unfair advantage through money, connections or leaked material, the implicit social contract is broken.

The message becomes devastatingly simple: merit matters, but access matters more. A society cannot repeatedly send that message to its young people and expect them to retain faith in its institutions. The problem is aggravated by the commercialisation of education. India has gradually built an enormous economy around examinations. Coaching centres, test-preparation platforms, private tutors and admission consultants have become powerful participants in the education ecosystem. Competitive examinations determine access to coveted colleges, professional courses and, eventually, jobs and social mobility. As the stakes rise, so does the incentive to cheat. Education, consequently, risks being reduced to a transaction in which marks become the currency and examination results become the product.

That is precisely when the larger purpose of education gets lost. An examination is supposed to measure learning. It cannot become the reason for learning.

The answer is not to romanticise the past or assume that educationists are inherently more virtuous than administrators or technology professionals. They are not. The answer is to restore educational values to the centre of the system.

Teachers and educationists should have a stronger voice in examination design and policy. Administrators must ensure transparent procedures. Technology experts should build secure and auditable systems. Independent agencies should investigate serious breaches. And those responsible for compromising examinations must face consequences proportionate to the damage they cause.

Accountability must also move upwards. It is not enough to punish the person caught carrying the leaked paper. Investigations must establish how the paper was accessed, who enabled that access, whether warning signs were overlooked and whether institutional negligence contributed to the breach. A system in which responsibility disappears into bureaucratic layers is a system that invites repetition. India also needs to rethink what security means. The objective should not merely be to keep a question paper secret. It should be to make the entire examination chain transparent, traceable and resistant to manipulation. Every access to sensitive examination material should be logged. Every transfer should be auditable. Responsibilities should be clearly defined. Multiple safeguards should ensure that no individual can compromise the system alone.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Your heart is the size of a fist
because you need it to fight.

- Lora Mathis

POJK UPRISING
EXPOSES SELECTIVE
SILENCE OF KASHMIR
VALLEY PARTIES



DR ABHIJEET JASROTIA

The people of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir are rising against decades of oppression. For months, peaceful protesters led by the Joint Awami Action Committee have faced bullets, internet blackouts, mass arrests and a complete denial of basic rights. What began as demands for cheaper electricity and flour has grown into a clear rejection of Pakistan's illegal control. Dozens have been killed. Hospitals are under force control. Food and medicine supplies have been blocked. This is not a local dispute. It is the natural result of Pakistan's long exploitation of a territory that has always been an integral part of India.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has spoken against these atrocities from the first day. Our leaders in Jammu and at the national level have repeatedly condemned the use of lethal force against unarmed civilians. We have reminded the world that PoJK is not "Azad" Kashmir. It is Indian territory under illegal occupation. The unanimous Parliamentary Resolution of 1994 remains our guiding document. It declares the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, including the areas under Pakistan's control, as an inseparable part of India. We stand by that resolution without compromise. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has never accepted Pakistan's claim. We will reclaim every inch of our land at the appropriate time.

The current uprising has deep roots. Since 2023 the people of PoJK have protested rising prices of wheat and electricity. Pakistan extracts resources from the region while giving little in return. The Mangla Dam generates power, yet local residents pay high tariffs. In 2025 the movement expanded into a 38-point charter that included demands for transparent governance, better services and the abolition of 12 assembly seats reserved for refugees settled elsewhere in Pakistan. These seats allow mainland Pakistani parties to control the so-called assembly and keep real local voices weak. When the authorities banned the Joint Awami Action Committee under anti-terror laws in June 2026, the people refused to stay silent. Protests spread from Rawalakot to Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli and other districts. Security forces opened fire. Death tolls reported by local groups and independent observers range from dozens to over a hundred. Internet and mobile services remain restricted. Essential supplies have been cut off. This is the face of Pakistan's rule.

India's Ministry of External Affairs has called out these wanton killings and urged the international community to hold Pakistan ac-

countable. The United Nations has expressed concern and demanded impartial investigations. Amnesty International has described the crackdown as violent and sweeping. Yet the Pakistani establishment continues to label peaceful citizens as enemies and terrorists. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif even equated the protesters with India. Such statements only confirm the desperation of a failing state.

While the BJP has raised its voice consistently, especially from Jammu, the mainstream political parties of the Kashmir Valley have shown little sustained concern for the suffering in PoJK. These parties have often positioned themselves as champions of human rights and self-determination.

They speak passionately about Palestine. They organise statements, social media campaigns and public expressions of solidarity whenever events unfold in Gaza. Yet when their own Kashmiri brethren across the Line of Control face bullets for demanding basic dignity, their response remains muted or limited to brief comments.

This selective approach is not new. For years the same parties remained largely silent while Pakistan systematically denied political rights, economic justice and freedom of expression in PoJK. Their focus stayed fixed on issues that served domestic political narratives rather than the real pain of people living under occupation.

The contrast is clear. The BJP has never treated PoJK as a distant

or secondary matter. Our workers and leaders in Jammu have held press conferences, issued statements and demanded international attention. We have highlighted the forced demographic changes, the denial of democratic rights and the economic plunder that Pakistan has practised for decades. We have pointed out that the so-called elections currently underway are a farce designed to hide repression. When Pakistan tried to mark 5 August as "Youm-e-Istehsal," the people of PoJK themselves rejected the propaganda and turned the day into mass anti-Pakistan protests. Women, youth and ordinary citizens joined in large numbers. This is the truth Pakistan cannot hide behind internet shutdowns.

The uprising also exposes the hollow nature of Pakistan's Kashmir narrative. For decades Islamabad has claimed to support the rights of Kashmiris while treating the people under its own control as subjects.

It has used the territory for strategic depth, as a base for terrorism, and as a source of resources. The same state that lectures the world on human rights responds to peaceful demands with anti-terror laws and live ammunition. The pattern is familiar. Similar repression has been seen in Balochistan and other regions of Pakistan. The people of PoJK are simply the latest to say enough.

India's position is firm and consistent. PoJK is an integral part of our country. The people living there are our own people. Their struggle for basic rights strength-

ens the case for the complete reunification of Jammu and Kashmir. We call upon the international community to look beyond Pakistan's propaganda and examine the ground reality. Independent inves-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Our demands have been clear and consistent from Day One:
1. Home Minister Amit Shah must state on the floor of the House whether the police repression unleashed against students was carried out at his direction. If it was not, he must tell Parliament whose orders were followed. In either case, he must resign.
2. Prime Minister Modi must apologise for the brutality unleashed against our students.
3. There must be a discussion on the floor of the House on Chanda Chori in the Ram Mandir Trust

None of these demands is negotiable.
~ Pawan Khera, MP & Chairman, Media & Publicity Deptt, AICC



tigations into the killings, enforced disappearances and communication blackouts are necessary. The ban on civil society groups and the use of lethal force against unarmed protesters must be condemned without double standards.

The BJP will continue to speak for the people of PoJK. We will continue to remind the nation and the world that occupation cannot be permanent and that justice delayed is justice denied.

The selective silence of certain Valley parties only underlines the difference between genuine concern for Kashmiris and political convenience. While they raise their voice for distant causes, we stand with our people on both sides of the Line of Control. The uprising in PoJK is a wake-up call. Pakistan's iron fist has failed. The demand for dignity cannot be silenced forever. India remains committed to the full recovery of its territory and the protection of its people. The day of reckoning for illegal occupation is approaching.

(The writer is spokesperson for BJP)



Manipur-UNC Talks End Without Breakthrough; Highway Blockade Continues, 400+ Trucks Stranded



IMPHAL
The first round of talks between the Manipur government and the United Naga Council (UNC) ended on a cordial note, but failed to resolve the four-point charter of demands that has led to an

ongoing blockade of national highways in the state. The talks were held at the Senapati district headquarters, where a government delegation led by Deputy Chief Minister L Dikho and Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam met representatives of the UNC.
State government spokesperson Thokchom Radheshyam described the meeting as an “ice breaker” and said both sides had agreed to continue discussions to find solutions to the issues raised by the Naga apex body.
“Today, United Naga Council and Manipur government representatives led by the deputy chief minister and state home minister came here (Senapati) to discuss and find solutions to several issues. We had fruitful and cordial discussions. This is the first round of discussions and a series of talks will follow to find a solution,” Radheshyam

told reporters.
UNC refuses to lift blockade
Despite the talks, UNC president Ng Lorho said the organisation would continue the blockade along the national highways until all four demands in its charter were addressed.
The UNC is demanding:
Abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki militant groups.
Declaration of the Kuki National Front-President (KNF-P) as a terrorist organisation.
Removal of Deputy Chief Minister L Dikho from office.
Arrest of KNF-P cadres allegedly involved in the killing of six Naga civilians.
Lorho said the demands were discussed during the meeting but maintained that the blockade would continue

until they were fulfilled.
“We discussed with ministers and MLAs the way forward on how to bring peace. We discussed our four-point charter of demands, and we stick to it. Unless it is fulfilled, we will not end the blockade,” he said.
On the demand for abrogation of the SoO agreement, Radheshyam said the matter fell under the Centre’s policy.
“That is the policy of the Government of India. Manipur is part of India and we have to go by the policy and decision of the Centre,” he said.
The continuing blockade has severely disrupted the movement of essential commodities and contributed to rising prices of several food items in Manipur.
More than 400 trucks have remained stranded near Litan along the Imphal-Ukhrul route for nearly three weeks. The prolonged halt has left hun-

dreds of drivers and handymen struggling to access food, drinking water and sanitation facilities.
Drivers said many had been away from their homes for 20 to 22 days and had exhausted the money they had with them.
One driver said they were surviving on limited supplies, including around half a kilogramme each of potatoes and onions and a small packet of cooking oil.
The Ukhrul District Drivers’ Union has provided some essential items, but truckers said shortages continued.
Drivers claimed they had approached local police and the Deputy Commissioner seeking passage but had been unable to move through the blocked stretch.
The stranded drivers have appealed to both the state and Central governments to arrange safe passage for the

400-500 vehicles caught in the blockade.
“We understand that there is a road blockade and a conflict situation. But the Government has a responsibility. At least these 400 to 500 vehicles should be given a safe passage to Imphal,” a driver said.
The prolonged stoppage has also created financial difficulties for the truckers, who are unable to earn while vehicle loan instalments continue to fall due.
Some drivers have warned that they could hand over their vehicle keys to their union and return home if the deadlock continues.
With the UNC maintaining its blockade despite Monday’s talks, pressure is mounting on the authorities to find a separate humanitarian arrangement to ensure the safe passage of stranded vehicles and prevent further disruption to Manipur’s supply chains.

Handloom Award, shines spotlight on Assam’s textile heritage

MAJULI
Weaver Riti Doley of Majuli has brought national recognition to Assam’s handloom tradition after receiving the National Handloom Award 2025 from President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi.

Doley was presented the prestigious honour on National Handloom Day on August 7 in recognition of her craftsmanship and contribution to India’s traditional textile heritage.
She received the award for a silk Gero handwoven entirely by her, showcasing the intricate skills and traditional knowledge associated with Assam’s weaving communities. A person with disabilities, Doley has built her craft journey through years of dedication and perseverance. Her achievement has highlighted not only her individual talent but also the resilience of artisans who continue to preserve traditional weaving practices in the state. Through handloom, Doley has created a source of self-reliance and dignity while helping carry forward the distinctive textile traditions of Majuli. Her recognition at the national level has also drawn attention to the cultural heritage of Majuli, where traditional crafts remain closely linked to the island’s social and cultural identity. Majuli Deputy Commissioner Ratul Chandra Pathak later visited Doley at her residence and conveyed the district administration’s congratulations and best wishes.
The administration acknowledged her achievement as a matter of pride for Majuli and Assam, saying her work had helped bring the region’s rich handloom tradition to the national stage. Doley’s award is also being seen as a recognition of the wider community of weavers and artisans who continue to preserve Assam’s traditional textile practices despite changing economic and social circumstances. Her journey demonstrates how traditional craftsmanship can become a means of empowerment while preserving cultural knowledge passed down through generations.
The National Handloom Award has therefore placed both Doley and Majuli’s weaving heritage in the national spotlight, underlining the enduring relevance of Assam’s handloom traditions.

Three Houses Burnt in Manipur’s Kangpokpi After Suspected NSCN-IM Attack

GUWAHATI

Three residential houses were set ablaze in Kailenjang Kuki village in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district on Monday after suspected NSCN-IM cadres allegedly entered the area and opened fire, residents said.
The incident took place around noon in Kailenjang, a vulnerable fringe area between Kangpokpi and Senapati districts. No casualties or injuries were reported.
According to residents, the suspected NSCN-IM members were carrying sophisticated weapons when they entered the village and allegedly opened fire before setting the three houses ablaze.
The houses belonged to village chief Nengneichong Chongloi and residents Kamkhohao Chongloi and Helthang Haokip.
The buildings were completely destroyed in the fire, along with household belongings, valuables and important documents kept inside, residents said.
Security personnel reached the

area following the incident and monitored the situation. The attack has raised fresh concerns over security arrangements in the vulnerable areas along the Kangpokpi-Senapati border.
The reported deployment of a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) contingent in the village has also prompted questions over the security measures in place when the incident occurred.
The incident came amid heightened political and security tensions in Manipur.
Meanwhile, state Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam held talks on Monday with Naga civil society organisations led by the United Naga Council (UNC) over the ongoing economic blockade of the National Highways. The meeting was held against the backdrop of continuing security concerns and disruptions along key highway routes in the state.
However, the talks ended without an agreement, with the UNC maintaining its four-point charter of demands.

Manipur Reviews Highway Security as SC Seeks Verification of Rehabilitation Claims

IMPHAL/NEW DELHI

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh day reviewed security arrangements along the state’s national highways, days after announcing plans to reopen the routes for unrestricted movement of people from all communities.
Singh chaired a Combined Headquarters (Unified Command) meeting at the Chief Minister’s Secretariat, attended by the Chief Secretary, Security Adviser, Director General of Police, Commissioner (Home) and senior officials of the state police, Assam Rifles, Army and Central Armed Police Forces.
The meeting focused on ensuring safe movement of passengers and essential commodities along the highways and preventing attempts to disrupt peace and normal traffic.
“We discussed key concerns regarding the safe operation of transport along the Highways. All issues will be examined seriously and necessary gaps addressed to ensure

safe journeys, secure highways and uninterrupted connectivity for our people,” Singh said in a social media post after the meeting.
He said the government remained committed to ensuring “safe, secure and uninterrupted movement” of passengers and essential goods while strengthening peace, stability and normalcy across the state. The meeting came three days after Singh’s visit to Kangpokpi district, where he announced that the national highways would be reopened for all communities and that the Imphal-Guwahati bus service would resume.
Movement along National Highway 2 (Imphal-Dimapur) and National Highway 37 (Imphal-Silchar) has been severely affected since ethnic violence erupted in Manipur in May 2023.
NH-2, a major supply route for the state, has also been affected by a blockade imposed by Naga groups demanding justice over the killing of six members of the Naga commu-

nity by armed persons in May this year. The continuing disruptions have affected the movement of essential commodities and raised concerns over the availability and cost of supplies in several parts of the state. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on Monday directed a court-appointed committee to verify claims that around 24,000 families affected by the 2023 ethnic violence have yet to receive benefits under government rehabilitation and welfare schemes.
The bench was hearing matters relating to the rehabilitation of people who lost their homes, dwelling units and sources of livelihood during the violence.
The court took note of several rehabilitation measures undertaken by the government, including the disbursement of funds to more than 4,000 beneficiaries out of around 7,000 identified beneficiaries under the house reconstruction scheme.
Under the scheme, Rs 5 lakh is provided for reconstruction of

a kutcha house and Rs 7 lakh for a semi-pucca or pucca house.
The bench also noted that more than 12,000 houses had been approved under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) for families affected by the violence.
Temporary shelters have also been constructed, while Rs 51.95 crore has been released to 885 identified beneficiaries for permanent houses, according to the information placed before the court.
In addition, families whose houses were completely destroyed have received Rs 1 lakh per household. However, representatives of some affected families told the court that around 24,000 families were still awaiting benefits. The figures were based on ground-level verification, the court was informed.
Details of the allegedly affected families have already been submitted to the three-member committee headed by former Delhi High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal.

Nagaland to Review Oil Exploration Along Assam Border, Consult Stakeholders

KOHIMA

The Nagaland government has said it will review concerns raised by landowners and civil society groups over proposed oil exploration along the Assam-Nagaland border and consult all affected stakeholders before proceeding further.
Nagaland Tourism and Higher Education Minister Temjen Imna Along said on Monday that the state Cabinet had discussed the issue and was of the view that concerns raised by landowners and other stakeholders must be addressed.
“The Cabinet is of the view that all concerns have to be addressed in every way,” Along said while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a BJP programme in Kohima. He was referring to the Cabinet meeting held in Wokha on August 6.
The minister’s remarks came amid demands from civil society

organisations for wider consultations with villages and communities likely to be affected by exploration activities. Referring to concerns raised by the Central Nagaland Tribes Council (CNTC), Along said the interests of stakeholders in border areas would have to be taken into account before decisions were taken on oil exploration. The issue follows the signing of a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among the Centre, Assam and Nagaland in New Delhi on June 11 to facilitate mineral oil operations, including the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas, in areas along the Assam-Nagaland border.
The agreement has been projected by the governments as an opportunity to tap the region’s energy resources and promote economic development. However, community

organisations have sought greater clarity on several issues, including land ownership, environmental protection, compensation and the rights of indigenous communities.
Naga groups have also raised concerns over resource extraction in areas affected by the longstanding Assam-Nagaland boundary dispute, arguing that the interests of local communities must be protected before any exploration activity begins.
The Nagaland government’s latest assurance indicates that consultations with affected stakeholders are likely to form part of the process before the state moves ahead with the proposed exploration activities.
The state Cabinet also reviewed the progress of the proposed Foothill Road project, Along said.
He said discussions with the Centre, including the Ministry of

Road Transport and Highways, had focused on the proposed road widths of 30 metres, 18 metres and 12 metres.
The project is expected to improve connectivity across several areas of the state, although details regarding the final alignment and specifications are still under consideration.
The Cabinet also reviewed the flood and landslide situation across Nagaland, where several areas have suffered significant damage in recent weeks.
Along said the immediate priority of the government was to provide assistance to affected residents and support their return to normal life.
“Politics is one thing,” the minister said, stressing that the government had a responsibility to ensure relief and rehabilitation for communities affected by the adverse weather.

‘Jail Bharo’ Protest Sweeps Guwahati as Workers, Farmers Demand Jobs, Higher Wages

GUWAHATI

Hundreds of workers, farmers, students and women took part in the nationwide “Jail Bharo” movement in Guwahati on Monday, accusing the BJP-led Centre of pursuing policies that undermine workers’ and farmers’ interests. Around seven workers’, farmers’, youth and women’s organisations staged the demonstration near the BSNL building in Panbazar, where protesters courted arrest as part of the nationwide agitation. A key demand was the withdrawal of the newly introduced VB-G RAM G model and continuation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), with protesters seeking a guarantee of 200 days of employment annually and a daily wage of Rs 600 for rural workers.
The organisations argued that rural employment opportunities should be expanded rather than curtailed. The protesters also demanded repeal of the labour codes and a minimum monthly wage of Rs 26,000 for workers across sectors. Other demands included regularisation of Anganwadi, ASHA and midday meal workers and restoration of the Old Pension Scheme.
CITU Assam state committee general secretary Tapan Sarma said the agitation was aimed at opposing policies that, according to the participating organisations, had failed to adequately address

unemployment, inflation and labour-related concerns.
“We are observing a nationwide movement today. The government has failed to control price rise and unemployment and has brought labour codes that violate workers’ rights,” Sarma said.
He also demanded financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh for every family that lost its home in the recent floods in Upper Assam.
The protest was organised by the Assam units of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), Assam State Kisan Sabha, Assam Agricultural Labourers’ Union, Students’ Federation of India (SFI), Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), Nikhil Bharat Gana-tantrik Mahila Samiti and allied organisations.
In a joint statement, the groups alleged that labour rights were being diluted through the new labour codes and claimed that workers were increasingly being pushed into contractual and outsourced employment without adequate job security.
They also alleged that farmers were not receiving remunerative prices for their produce while corporate interests were being given greater priority in land and economic policy.
The organisations also criticised the Assam government’s handling of issues related to displacement, land rights, urban flooding, public education and healthcare infrastructure.

Northeast Needs Unified Strategy to Combat Forest Fires, Says Parliamentary Panel

GUWAHATI

Forest fires are emerging as a growing challenge across the Northeast, but individual State-level measures will not be enough to address the problem, a Parliamentary committee has said, calling for a coordinated regional strategy for the Eastern Himalayan States.
The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change, in its report on forest fires in the Himalayan region, has recommended a single, time-bound action plan covering the Eastern Himalayan States.
The panel identified common challenges including Jhum cultivation, difficult terrain, inadequate frontline manpower and irregular funding. It also proposed a permanent regional mechanism to coordinate responses to forest fires that cross State boundaries.
Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland have recorded some of the highest numbers of forest-fire detections among Himalayan States over the past four fire seasons, according to the report. However, the Committee cautioned that the figures do not indicate a uniform increase in fires, with the number of incidents fluctuating significantly between seasons.
Arunachal Pradesh, meanwhile, recorded its highest number of fire detections

in four years by June 8, 2026, even before the current fire season had ended.
The panel said the fire situation in the Eastern Himalaya differs significantly from that in the western Himalayan region.
Forests in the Northeast are characterised by bamboo, moist deciduous vegetation and leaf litter rather than a single dominant, highly combustible forest type. Steep terrain, limited road connectivity and difficult access further complicate fire-fighting operations.
The Committee identified human activity as a major factor behind the fires, with Jhum cultivation emerging as a key driver. However, it noted that Jhum remains closely linked to the livelihoods and food security of several tribal communities. As a result, fire prevention measures cannot rely solely on restrictions on shifting cultivation and must also provide viable livelihood alternatives. Manipur provides a significant example of the link between Jhum cultivation and forest fires. The State told the Committee that an estimated 90-95 per cent of forest fires are human-induced, with short-cycle Jhum cultivation identified as the principal cause. Of 511 active-fire locations detected and subsequently verified between September 2024 and November 2025, 335 — nearly two-thirds — were attributed directly to Jhum cultivation.
Data from the Forest Fire Alert System showed 3,588 fire events in Manipur between January 2021 and May 2026, affecting an estimated 12,650 hectares.
Instead of imposing an outright ban on Jhum, Manipur has been promoting alternatives such as agroforestry, horticulture, beekeeping and livelihoods based on non-timber forest produce.
The Committee, however, found the funding for Jhum rehabilitation inad-

quate. Only Rs 19.04 lakh was utilised for dedicated rehabilitation measures during 2025-26, despite Jhum accounting for a substantial share of verified fire incidents. The panel called for stronger and more transparent incentives for villages that successfully reduce Jhum-related fires. Technology is increasingly being used to improve fire detection and response.
In Manipur, 6,967 frontline personnel and members of village and joint forest committees are registered to receive forest-fire alerts from the Forest Survey of India. The State is also working with the North Eastern Space Applications Centre on forest monitoring, sensors and drone-based surveillance. However, the Committee said technology alone cannot address the problem and stressed the need to strengthen the frontline workforce. Manipur’s Forest Protection Force is operating at around 45 per cent of its sanctioned strength. The panel has recommended a time-bound recruitment programme and a region-wide training initiative for forest personnel.
It also called for stronger fire-response infrastructure and greater support for frontline staff working in difficult terrain. The Committee has recommended that the Centre bring the Eastern Himalayan States together to formulate a common action plan with clearly defined targets, responsibilities and timelines.
It has also proposed a standing regional mechanism to coordinate firefighting and forest protection efforts in cases where fires spread across State boundaries. Funding disparities have also come under scrutiny. The report records significant variations in CAMPA allocations for forest-fire prevention between 2020-21 and 2025-26. During the period, Meghalaya received Rs 3.55

crore, Mizoram Rs 8.15 crore, Manipur Rs 3.22 crore and Arunachal Pradesh Rs 5.28 crore under the relevant head. Nagaland received no CAMPA allocation under this particular category, while Assam received Rs 12 lakh.
The panel called for more consistent and targeted funding to strengthen fire prevention, early warning systems and frontline response capabilities.
The report also highlighted Meghalaya’s traditional system of community-based forest conservation through sacred groves.
The Committee noted that Khasi and Jaintia communities have traditionally protected these forest patches through customary practices that prohibit activities such as tree felling, hunting and removal of fallen wood.
According to the panel, several sacred groves have preserved old-growth forests and biodiversity over long periods through community-based enforcement. It recommended that sacred groves and other community-protected forest patches across the Northeast and Himalayan region be systematically documented and mapped. The Committee stressed that government intervention should strengthen existing customary institutions rather than replace them. The panel also warned that repeated forest fires can create conditions favourable for the spread of invasive species. In Manipur, species such as Ageratina adenophora and Lantana camara have been spreading in fire-affected areas.
The Committee recommended a dedicated regional programme to tackle invasive species, arguing that the problem should not be addressed solely through isolated State-level interventions.

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History will remember Manmohan Singh kindly as most consequential PM: Sonia

NEW DELHI
Days after the Supreme Court gave former prime minister Manmohan Singh a clean chit in the coal block allocation case, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday said his record of integrity and accountability stood in stark contrast to the way the Narendra Modi government has operated.

She said history would indeed remember Singh kindly as a quiet, gentle, but a most consequential prime minister.

In a swipe at Prime Minister Modi, Gandhi said since he is these days “forgiving” India’s students for attacking him, perhaps he can take this opportunity to forgive himself for his undignified slander against Singh. The Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson said the judgment brings to a conclusion one of the most tragic arcs of our public discourse, “the witch-hunt against Dr Singh, a man of the most remarkable probity and integrity.”

“The lobby against him was coordinated and well-organised, with actors stretching from the bureaucracy to the media, the judiciary, civil society, and most certainly to the RSS and BJP.

“The date July 29, 2026, was an important but unacknowledged day in our recent political history as in a remarkable judgment, the Supreme Court upheld the CBI’s clean chit to Dr Manmohan Singh in the alleged coal block allocation scam, Gandhi said.

More importantly, it pulled up the trial court for rejecting the CBI’s closure reports and making adverse observations against the former prime minister for no “compelling reason”, she pointed out. Singh’s record of integrity and accountability stands in stark contrast to how the Modi government has operated, so clearly and grossly misusing agencies designed to investigate crime and corruption like the ED and the CBI,

she said.

“Its purpose has been to exert pressure on politicians. Leaders are either silenced through coercion or cynically folded into the BJP or, in some remarkable instances, rewarded with ministerial positions as well. “When credible accusations of corruption emerge, the Modi government simply brushes them aside. Corrupt when you’re in the Opposition, suddenly clean when you jump ship!” Gandhi said. It is not a coincidence that Modi was also among the most vocal proponents of the attack on Singh, she said.

“His snide and atrocious remarks in the Rajya Sabha on February 8, 2017, that only Dr Singh knew ‘the art of bathing with a raincoat on’, will go down as the lowest point of our parliamentary history,” she said.

Since Modi is these days “forgiving” India’s students for attacking him, perhaps he can take this opportunity to forgive himself for his “undignified slander” against Singh, she said. “Introspection, like charity, must begin from home. Ultimately, the attack on Dr Singh was motivated by a desperate desire to shift the public conversation and narrative away from his outstanding governance record,” she said.

Manmohan Singh’s government heralded profound economic change with unprecedented rates of growth and a consumption and private investment boom that propelled India into the ranks of middle-income countries, Gandhi stressed. In 2008, when the global economy faced turbulence and collapse, India demonstrated its resilience, she said. “Let us not forget that in spite of the reworking of how the growth of India’s GDP is calculated, the 10 years of the UPA government saw higher economic growth than the past 12 years, resulting in millions being pulled out of poverty,” Gandhi said.

The Manmohan Singh government delivered on the constitutional promise of a Right to Education and expanded social justice through the introduction of OBC reservation in centrally-funded higher education institutes like the IITs and IIMs, she said.

“The Forest Rights Act recognised the ancestral rights of our Adivasi and forest-dwelling communities, after a decades-long struggle.

The MGNREGA, recently demolished by the Modi government, was the most powerful social security intervention set up anywhere,” she said.

Another signature achievement of Singh’s government was the National Food Security Act, 2013, which identified and guaranteed access to basic food rations for crores of families, she said.

Soon after he demitted office, he had warned that the rights-based legislation would come under assault and his fears have, most sadly, come true,” she said.

Singh heralded a new era of transparency in government through the landmark Right to Information Act, which enabled citizens to access the government’s inner workings, she said.

“The RTI now stands totally emasculated. There was an explosion of independent media, which was characterised by a fearlessness that appears more remarkable when juxtaposed with its current enfeeblement,” she said. Civil society emerged as a force to be reckoned with, and our students had the freedom to protest against the government and even the prime minister, without being fired upon by metallic pellet guns or AK-47s, Gandhi said, taking a swipe at the Modi government.

The prime minister regularly made himself accountable to Parliament and to the media through 100-plus unscripted press conferences, she said.

Jharkhand job exam stir enters 18th day; BJP observes bandh, ABVP workers detained

RANCHI
The agitation by students and job aspirants over alleged irregularities in Jharkhand recruitment examinations entered its 18th day on Tuesday, with the BJP observing a statewide bandh and the ABVP planning a march to the state Assembly.

The BJP called the bandh from 8 am to midnight in protest against police action against demonstrators during their march to the Vidhan Sabha on Monday. The ABVP said it would take out a ‘Vidhan Sabha March’ from the old Assembly premises to the new complex.

Several ABVP workers were detained on Tuesday during their march to the Jharkhand Assembly to protest against police action against students agitating over alleged irregularities in recruitment examinations in the state, a senior police officer said.

The detention was made as the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) members started their procession from the old Vidhan Sabha area in Ranchi, he said.

The students, protesting since July 25, are demanding transparency in recruitment examinations, reforms in the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) and Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC), cancellation of certain examinations and an independent probe by the CBI or a panel of retired high court judges from outside the state.

Six protesters are also on an indefinite hunger strike, with two of them hospitalised.

The sixth round of talks between the Jharkhand government and the protesting students under the JPSC-JSSC Manch failed to yield a breakthrough on Sunday, with both sides accusing each other of lacking seriousness in resolving the issue.

The government panel said it was unfortunate that the students continued their agitation despite the authorities conceding to “98 per cent of their demands”. The protesters rejected the claim and maintained



their demands.

The agitation intensified on Monday as police used water canons, tear gas and lathi-charge to stop protesters from marching towards the Assembly. Several demonstrators claimed they were injured, while Ranchi police said 14 personnel sustained injuries.

The Enforcement Directorate has also launched a money laundering probe into alleged “anomalies” in the recruitment process. Meanwhile, the Jharkhand CID arrested former JPSC chairperson L Kiangte in connection with the alleged irregularities, taking the number of arrests in the case to 20.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren appealed to the protesting students to resolve their grievances through “dialogue and trust”, while accusing the BJP of trying to mislead the agitators for political gains.

The BJP had gheraoed Soren’s residence before the Assembly march and called Tuesday’s bandh to protest against the “use of force” against the students.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi condemned the police action, saying peaceful protests should not be met with violence. His remarks drew a sharp response from the BJP, which accused him of double standards as the Congress is part of the JMM-led ruling alliance in Jharkhand. Union minister J P Nadda alleged that Gandhi was an integral part of the state government and questioned whether he could hear the students’ voices.

The state government said it had agreed to cancel the 14th JPSC examination and the backlog examinations of 2023 and 2025. Higher and Technical Education Minister Sudivya Kumar said the government had also voluntarily agreed to an ED probe after evidence of financial irregularities emerged.

On the JSSC-CGL examination, Kumar said the government could not order its cancellation as it was conducted under court monitoring. The government has proposed a committee headed by a retired high court judge to oversee the CID probe, but the protesters rejected the proposal.

Kumar said reforms to the JPSC and JSSC standard operating procedures had also been proposed, with inputs from IIT-ISM Dhanbad, IIM-Ranchi and XLRI Jamshedpur

INTERNATIONAL

Bangladesh renews Hasina’s extradition demand as Indian envoy meets PM Rahman



DHAKA
Bangladesh has renewed its demand for the extradition of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from India, during High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi’s first meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in Dhaka.

The meeting also “covered a range of important bilateral issues”, the Bangladesh prime minister’s office said in a statement.

According to a post on X by the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, Trivedi conveyed greetings from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and India’s intent to work with the Bangladesh government and people in a “positive, constructive and forward-looking manner”.

Rahman also met Bangladesh Home Affairs Minister Salahuddin Ahmed on Monday, and Foreign Affairs Minister

Khalilur Rahman on Sunday.

The meetings took place amid speculations that Rahman, who has been invited by India to attend the BRICS summit in New Delhi, may skip the event scheduled for September 12-13.

Relations between India and Bangladesh have witnessed strain after Hasina virtually addressed the press on August 5 in New Delhi, where she said she is determined to return home in December to put the country on the “right track” by restoring democracy, notwithstanding the risk of facing the threat of imprisonment or a death sentence.

Bangladesh expressed outrage over the media interaction, saying the event had hurt the sentiments of its people and could adversely affect efforts to improve bilateral ties with India. They described Hasina as an “absconding, convicted

genocider”.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman with Indian High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi.

However, India’s Ministry of External Affairs on August 7 said that it had no role in the media event concerning Hasina and it does not endorse anything said at the forum about the Bangladesh government.

“Bangladesh hopes that India will expedite the process of extraditing Sheikh Hasina,” said the Bangladesh PMO statement on Monday.

“The meeting covered a range of important bilateral issues between Bangladesh and India. The prime minister stressed the need to create a suitable environment to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries,” it said after the meeting, which lasted for around half an hour.

Trivedi’s meeting with Rahman was his first courtesy call with the prime minister, more than six weeks after he joined as India’s High Commissioner in Dhaka with the status of a Union Minister. Trivedi, a senior leader of India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, is the first politician to occupy this diplomatic position.

During Monday’s meeting, Rahman also took up the matter pertaining to the extradition of the accused in the case of student-leader Osman Hadi’s murder last year.

“Bangladesh reiterated its request to India to return the killers involved in the murder of Shahid Osman Hadi,” the statement said.

Hadi, a prominent activist during the student-led movement that ousted Hasina in 2024, was killed in an attack in December 2025 that triggered renewed political tensions in Bangladesh.

The issue assumed significance as three suspects in the case were arrested in India in March and are currently in judicial custody in West Bengal. India has agreed to extradite the suspects

back to Bangladesh following the due process.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman with Indian High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi.

Hasina was ousted in August 2024 following violent student-led protests and fled to India. In November 2025, she was sentenced to death in absentia by a special tribunal in Bangladesh over alleged “crimes against humanity” during the crackdown on protesters. Dhaka has since been seeking her extradition from India.

The Bangladesh government maintains that Hasina shall have to surrender and face the law if she returns.

After meeting the prime minister, Trivedi on Monday paid a courtesy call on home minister Salahuddin Ahmed, with the discussions focusing on furthering bilateral relations and areas of common interest, including security cooperation between the two countries, the Indian mission said.

Ahmed had earlier warned that India could not simultaneously pursue friendly relations with Dhaka while giving refuge to Hasina.

The details of the meeting between Trivedi and Bangladeshi foreign minister Khalilur Rahman were not shared by any of the sides.

The latest diplomatic engagement comes against the backdrop of an uneasy reset in India-Bangladesh ties after Rahman’s Bangladesh Nationalist Party came to power in February, following a period of strained relations under the interim government over issues that include Hasina’s extradition, border-related matters and Dhaka’s foreign policy tilt towards China.

Trivedi on Sunday said a meeting between Rahman and Modi could help resolve problems in bilateral ties. “When two leaders meet, a lot of problems are solved. I have full confidence [about the problem resolution through the meeting],” he said.

Third phase of PoK polls held amid rigging allegations, clashes



ISLAMABAD
The third phase of elections in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) was held on Monday in four constituencies, amid violence and allegations of rigging, while elections in seven constituencies have been indefinitely postponed.

Clashes between Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) workers were reported in some areas. The region’s Election Commission had classified most of the 803 polling stations in the four constituencies as “sensitive or highly sensitive”.

The Election Commission postponed polling in seven seats in the Poonch Division in the third and final phase “due to concerns over the law and order situation”.

India maintains that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable parts of the country and that Pakistan is in “illegal and forcible occupation” of parts of these territories.

The first two phases of polling were held on July 27 and August 2 and were also marked by violent protests and allegations of rigging. The establishment-backed PML-N won 24 of the 34 seats contested in the two phases, while its coalition partner at the Centre, the PPP, won 10 seats.

Polling is being held for a total of 45 seats. The PML-N is set to form the government in the region, with the party saying its supreme Nawaz Sharif will nominate the candidate for the prime minister’s post.

The PPP has alleged widespread rigging by the PML-N during the third phase. In a series of posts on X, the party claimed that roads leading to the Banni Marasira area were blocked and alleged that PML-N supporters were stamping ballot papers at several polling stations.

“The officials, voters, polling agents and party workers are unable to reach the polling stations to see what is being done inside,” the PPP said, adding that polling did not begin on time at some stations because polling staff had not arrived.

The PPP also alleged that its polling agents were forcibly removed from some stations where PML-N supporters were allegedly stamping ballot papers. It also posted a video purportedly showing PML-N workers attacking a polling station at a school in LA-15 Central Bagh.

Earlier phases of the election were also marred by violence, rigging allegations and clashes.

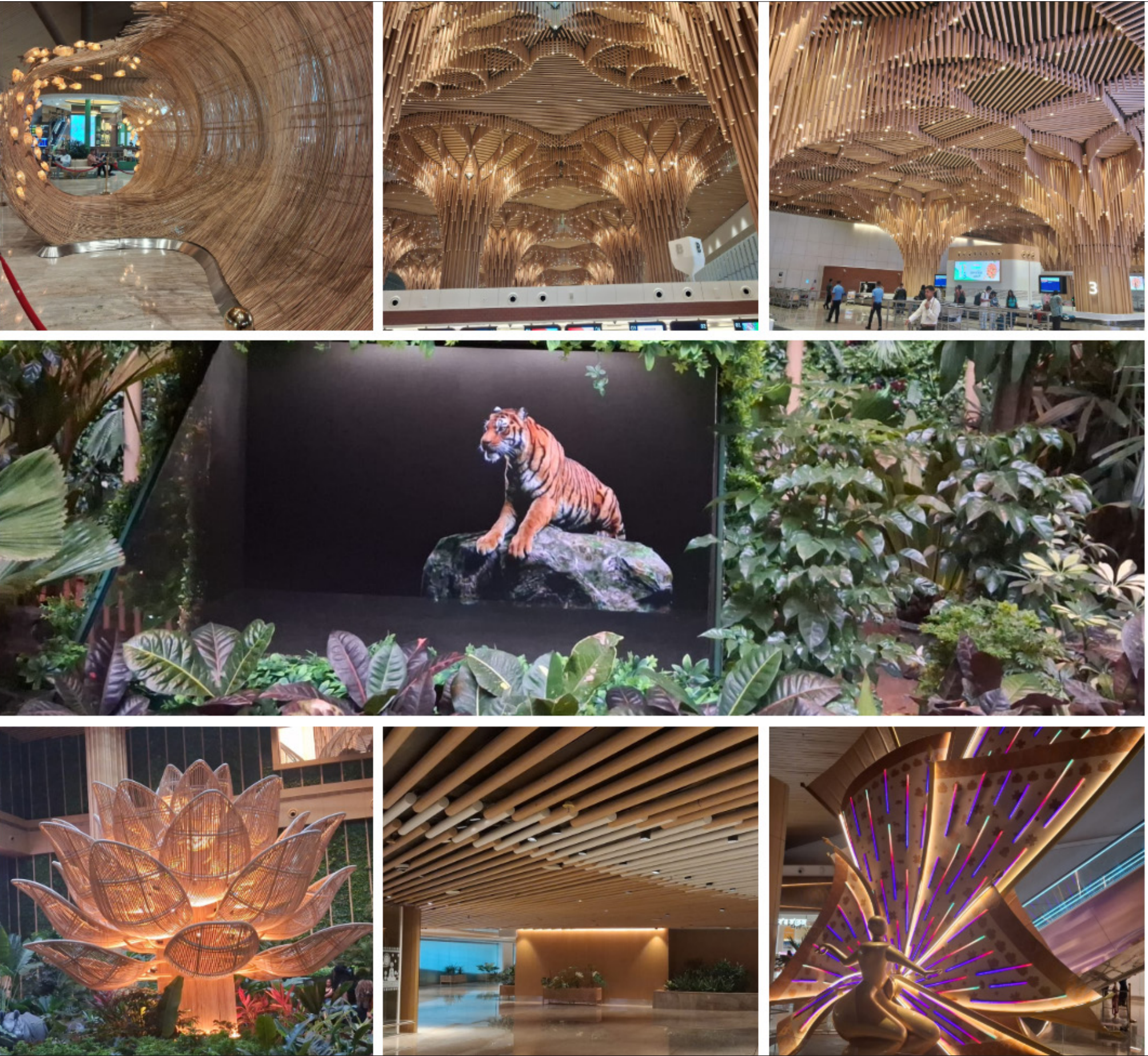
Meanwhile, a large number of people under the banner of the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) have been protesting in PoK since early June. The regional government banned the group in June.

The JAAC has demanded the abolition of 12 refugee seats in PoK, alleging that the establishment uses these seats to install a prime minister of its choice.

The protests led to a crackdown by security forces in which dozens of people were killed. The JAAC has claimed that around 400 protesters have been killed since the first week of June and that more than 40 people were killed during the first phase of polling on July 27.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s adviser Rana Sanaullah, however, has put the number of protesters killed in the violence in “double figures”.

Guwahati Airport's New Terminal Opens New Chapter for Northeast Air Connectivity



BISWADEEP GUPTA

GUWAHATI

The Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBIA) in Guwahati has entered a new phase of modernisation with the opening of its new integrated terminal, aimed at strengthening air connectivity and meeting the growing passenger demand in the Northeast.

Managed by Adani Airport Holdings Limited (AAHL), the new terminal was formally inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 20, 2025. Passenger services at the terminal began on February 22, 2026, with an Akasa Air flight arriving from Mumbai marking the start of commercial operations.

The modern terminal, built at a cost of around 4,000 crore to 5,000 crore, has increased the airport's annual passenger handling capacity to 13.1 million.

The expansion is expected to make Guwahati a stronger aviation hub for the Northeast.

The terminal has been designed around the theme of nature and draws inspiration from Assam's iconic kopou phool, or foxtail orchid. The structure uses more than 140

metric tonnes of locally sourced bamboo from different parts of the Northeast.

One of the major attractions is the indoor "Sky Forest", spread across nearly 1.4 lakh square metres. It features close to one lakh indigenous plants and green landscapes inspired by Kaziranga, giving the terminal a distinct regional identity.

The new facility also comes with several modern passenger services, including DigiYatra, self-baggage drop facilities, automated baggage handling and AI-based security scanners. Transit hotel, duty-free shopping and lounge facilities are also available.

The airport's expansion also includes plans for improved air cargo facilities and Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) infrastructure. Around 1,000 crore has been earmarked for MRO facilities, which are expected to support aircraft maintenance and servicing in the region.

Domestic flight operations were shifted to the new terminal first, while international flights initially continued from the old terminal as part of a phased transition.

Located at Borjhar, around 28 km from central Guwahati, LGBIA is the main international aviation gateway to Northeast India. The modernisation of the airport is expected to boost tourism, business, trade and overall connectivity across the region.

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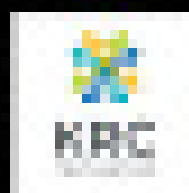


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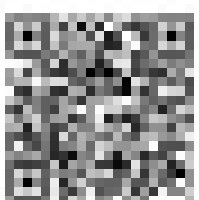


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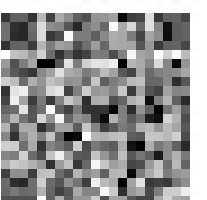


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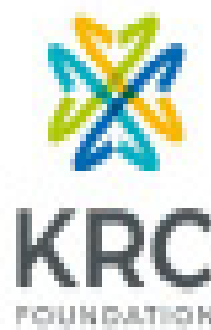
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