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PERSPECTIVE

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## Hijab row sparks clash at Cachar College, several students injured

**SILCHAR**

Tension gripped Cachar College in Silchar on Tuesday after a clash reportedly broke out between two groups of students affiliated with the ABVP and NSUI over the wearing of hijab on the college campus.

According to reports, the incident occurred when NSUI members were conducting a membership drive on the campus. Members of the ABVP allegedly arrived at the spot and objected to the programme. The disagreement reportedly escalated after objections were also raised over some NSUI members wearing hijab.

The argument soon turned into a physical altercation between the two groups, leaving several students injured. There were also allegations that some female students wearing hijab were assaulted during the clash.

Police were rushed to the college following the incident and brought the situation under control. The injured students were taken to a hospital for treatment, according to sources.

Despite the police intervention, tension reportedly continued on the campus.

The incident came a day after a group of Cachar College students submitted a memorandum to the Cachar Deputy Commissioner seeking restrictions on the wearing of religious attire, including hijab and tupi, by Muslim students on the college campus.

The latest clash has intensified the controversy surrounding religious attire at the institution and raised concerns over the possibility of further tension.

### WHO SAID WHAT



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# Three-day Manipur Assembly session from September 2; Congress objects to short duration



**IMPHAL**

The eighth session of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly will begin on September 2 and conclude on September 7, but will have only three sitting days, according to a provisional calendar issued by the Assembly Secretariat on Tuesday.

The limited duration has drawn objections from the Opposition Congress, with Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader K Meghachandra submitting a dissent note and demanding more sitting days to allow a detailed discussion on the prevailing situation in the state.

Assembly Secretary Rohit Sapam issued the provisional calendar outlining the legislative business scheduled for the three sittings.

The first sitting on September 2 will begin with obituary references, followed by the presentation of the Business Advisory Committee report, the First Batch of Demands for Supplementary Grants for 2026-27 and the introduction of government Bills.

The second sitting, on September 3, will include a question-and-answer session and a general discussion on the First Batch of Demands for Supplementary Grants for 2026-27.

The third and final sitting, scheduled for September 7, will have another question-and-answer session, followed by discussion and voting on the supplementary grants. The Appropriation Bill will also be introduced, while government Bills will be taken up for consideration and passage.

The seventh session of the 12th Manipur Assembly was held in March this year.

Reacting to the three-day schedule, Meghachandra said the House needed more time to debate the issues confronting the state.

“We need to have a debate and discussion on the present situation in the state. If we do not have enough sitting days, there will not be any meaningful debate and discussion. If there is no debate, there cannot be healthy democracy and healthy administration,” he said.

The Congress leader also claimed that the Assembly was falling short of the prescribed norms on the number of annual sittings.

“As per the rules, the minimum number of Assembly sittings should be 50 days in a year. This year, we have had far fewer sittings. It is a violation of the Assembly guidelines,” Meghachandra said.

He stressed that the Assembly should be given adequate time to discuss issues affecting the people of Manipur.

“We need more sitting days so that the voice of the people can be discussed in the House,” said Meghachandra, the Congress MLA from Wangkhei Assembly constituency.

The Congress has submitted its dissent note for the record and reiterated its demand for an extension of the upcoming session.

The provisional schedule was finalised after a meeting of the Assembly’s Business Advisory Committee chaired by Speaker Th Satyabrata.

## Barak Valley Mini Secretariat Gets New Name, 32 Departments to Function from Silchar



**SILCHAR**

The Assam government has formally renamed the ‘Mini Secretariat, Barak Valley’ as the ‘Assam Secretariat, Barak Valley, Silchar’, following a decision of the state Cabinet.

A government notification issued on August 21 said the new name would come into effect immediately. The notification also specified the departments that will operate from the Secretariat’s Barak Valley establishment in Silchar.

As many as 32 of Assam’s 59 government departments will function from the Silchar-based Secretariat, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier announced.

The move is aimed at strengthening the administrative machinery in the Barak Valley and improving the

delivery of government services and implementation of development programmes in the region.

The decision to rename the establishment was announced by Sarma on August 18 after a Cabinet meeting. The Chief Minister said the existing mini secretariat would henceforth be officially recognised as the Assam Secretariat, Barak Valley.

The Cabinet has also approved the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines governing the functioning of the departments from the Barak Valley Secretariat.

The government’s decision marks a significant change in the administrative identity of the Silchar-based establishment and is part of its broader efforts to decentralise governance and improve administrative access for people in the Barak Valley.

## Two Manipur Educators Selected for National Teachers’ Awards 2026



**IMPHAL**

Manipur has earned recognition at the national level with the selection of Dr Pukhrambam Lilabati Devi of Manipur University and Wanglembam Gobin Singh of Laikon Upper Primary School, Imphal East, for the National Teachers’ Awards 2026.

Their selection is being hailed as a proud moment for the state and a recognition of their dedication, discipline and sustained commitment to education.

The achievement also highlights the contribution of educators in shaping students and strengthening the education system in Manipur.

Dr Lilabati Devi and Gobin Singh were congratulated for bringing honour to the state, with their recognition described as an inspiration to the teaching community.

Their selection for the prestigious national award is expected to encourage other teachers to continue their efforts towards improving the quality of education and nurturing young learners.

## 14 Manipur Civil Groups Seek Rijiju’s Intervention on Census, NRC and Delimitation



**IMPHAL**

Leaders of 14 civil society organisations and other groups from Manipur met Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju in New Delhi on Monday and sought his intervention on issues related to the Census, citizenship and delimitation.

The delegation, led by convenor Nahakpam Santa, met Rijiju at his official residence and submitted a memorandum outlining their demands. Manipur Government spokesperson and MLA Thokchom Radheshyam was also present during the meeting.

The delegation called for the conduct of the Census and measures to ensure proper identification of Indian citizens. It proposed 1951 as the base year for the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur.

The groups also sought a freeze on the delimitation exercise until the Census is completed and citizenship status is determined.

The delegation argued that clarity

on population figures and citizenship status was necessary before undertaking any delimitation exercise in the state.

Rijiju assured the representatives that their concerns regarding the Census and other demands would be discussed with Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He also assured them that the issues raised in the memorandum would be given due consideration.

The delegation comprised representatives of organisations from several communities, including Meitei, Kabui, Kom, Muslim and Rongmei Naga groups. Representatives of organisations working for internally displaced persons (IDPs) were also part of the delegation.

The meeting comes amid continuing debate in Manipur over the Census, citizenship documentation and the proposed delimitation exercise, with various civil society groups seeking safeguards for the state’s demographic and electoral interests.

# Manipur CM hails Naga, Kuki cooperation in keeping NH-2 open

**IMPHAL**

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Monday thanked members of the Naga and Kuki communities for helping ensure the uninterrupted movement of public transport along National Highway-2 (NH-2), describing the cooperation as an important step towards restoring peace and normalcy in the state.

Speaking at the 45th Hawkers Day celebration organised by the Manipur Hawkers Association at Haying Khongbal in Imphal, Khemchand said the communities’ cooperation was helping facilitate the movement of people and vehicles and could contribute to wider reconciliation efforts.

The Chief Minister referred to the incident at Taphou village in Senapati district on Monday, following which the movement of vehicles was briefly disrupted. He said MLAs and district authorities intervened and appealed to both communities to maintain free movement and refrain from any activity that could obstruct traffic.

Public transport from Imphal resumed after a delay of a few hours, he said.

Services along the Imphal-Dima-



pur-Guwahati route through NH-2 continued for the fourth consecutive day on August 24. Around 300 passengers, including women and children, travelled from Imphal towards Dimapur and Guwahati in five buses and nine Winger vehicles.

Khemchand said nearly 900 passengers had so far travelled from Imphal towards Dimapur and Guwahati, while

more than 400 people had safely travelled in the opposite direction.

He attributed the continued movement of public transport to the government’s peace and reconciliation initiatives and dialogue among different communities. He also referred to the joint announcement made on August 8 to ensure free movement along the state’s national

highways. Referring to his recent visit to Jiribam, the Chief Minister said communities that had lived together before the outbreak of the crisis were gradually moving towards peaceful coexistence through the government’s reconciliation efforts.

“Dialogue among communities is key to restoring peace and promoting development,” Khemchand said, stressing the need for continued engagement among all sections of society.

He also said protecting the territorial integrity of Manipur was not the responsibility of the government alone but a collective responsibility of all communities and people living in the state.

During the programme, the Manipur Hawkers Association submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister. Khemchand assured the association that its proposal for setting up a corpus fund would be placed for discussion at the next Cabinet meeting.

MLAs Sapam Kunjakswor Singh and Lourembam Rameshwor Meitei, office-bearers of the Hawkers Association and newspaper distributors were also present at the event.

**GUWAHATI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has urged Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari to expedite the restoration of national highways damaged by the recent floods and speed up major road infrastructure projects in the state.

Sarma met Gadkari in New Delhi and discussed measures to restore flood-affected highway stretches at the earliest while making Assam’s road infrastructure more resilient to recurring floods.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister stressed the need for stronger and more flood-resilient road designs. He also called for evidence-based planning in the construction and placement of culverts and bridges to minimise damage during future floods.

The two leaders also discussed

the recurring flash-flood problem at Jorabat. Sarma sought a comprehensive redesign of the highway infrastructure in the area to address the issue and improve traffic movement.

The Chief Minister also pressed for faster progress on several major road projects in Assam, including the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor and Guwahati Ring Road. Upgradation of key highway stretches across the state was also taken up during the meeting. Sarma said Gadkari assured him that Assam’s road infrastructure requirements and ongoing projects would receive the Centre’s highest consideration and continued support.

The meeting comes as Assam continues to assess and repair infrastructure damaged by this year’s severe flooding, with several road and highway stretches affected by erosion, waterlogging and other flood-related damage.



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REVOLT BY YOUTH

India's political class has discovered a constituency it can no longer afford to ignore: the young. Across party lines, there is a growing race to court voters who are not merely numerous but increasingly vocal about education, employment, examination irregularities and the shrinking promise of social mobility. The question is no longer whether India's youth matter politically. It is whether their growing anger can develop into a sustained political force.

The first signs of this shift were visible in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, where actor-turned-politician Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) emerged as the single-largest party in the 234-member House with 108 seats. Though short of the 118 required for a majority, the party subsequently secured the support of the Congress, VCK, Left parties and IUML, taking the coalition tally to 121 and clearing the way for Vijay to form the government. The development was significant not simply because a new political formation came to power, but because it demonstrated the electoral possibilities of a political platform built around a relatively young constituency and a new style of political communication.

Then came the controversy surrounding the emergence of the so-called Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), a youth-led movement that began on social media following remarks attributed to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant during a Supreme Court hearing. The Chief Justice later clarified that the reference to "cockroaches" was aimed at people allegedly using fake degrees to enter professions such as law and media, rather than at unemployed youth or young Indians as a whole.

But the clarification could not put the genie back in the bottle. Young people appropriated the term as a badge of protest. What began as an online expression of anger soon acquired a broader political meaning, bringing together grievances over unemployment, paper leaks, examination irregularities, recruitment delays and the perceived failures of the education system. The movement eventually spilled onto the streets. Demonstrations were held at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi and elsewhere, continuing for more than a month. The protests culminated in a significant political development with the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on July 25, 2026, following nationwide student protests. The agitation was subsequently called off after the government accepted its key demands. Whether one agrees with the politics or methods of such a movement is beside the larger point. India's youth are demonstrating that they are no longer content to remain passive consumers of political promises. They can organise rapidly, mobilise support and put institutions under pressure. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2025, unemployment among people aged 15-29 stood at 9.9 per cent. The problem was considerably sharper in urban areas, where youth unemployment reached 13.6 per cent, compared with 8.3 per cent in rural India. For millions of young Indians, however, unemployment is only one part of the problem. The larger crisis is one of uncertainty. A student may spend years preparing for a competitive examination only to see it cancelled because of a paper leak. A recruitment process may remain pending for years. A degree may not guarantee employment. And the cost of private education continues to place considerable pressure on families. This is where political rhetoric increasingly collides with everyday experience. The promise of a demographic dividend depends upon the availability of quality education, productive employment and opportunities for upward mobility. A large young population is not automatically an economic advantage. Without adequate skills and jobs, it can become a source of frustration and political discontent. The condition of government schools adds another layer to the problem. In many parts of the country, questions continue to be raised about teacher shortages, inadequate buildings, toilets, laboratories and other basic facilities, as well as the quality of classroom instruction. These cannot be solved through periodic announcements or publicity campaigns. They require sustained public investment, administrative capacity and accountability.

The National Education Policy 2020 envisaged public investment in education reaching 6 per cent of GDP. The continuing distance between that ambition and actual spending remains a matter of concern. More importantly, expenditure alone cannot be the measure of success. What matters is whether that investment produces better schools, better teachers, better learning outcomes and a fairer pathway from education to employment.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Chhatron Ki Goonj campaign has sought to put paper leaks, examination irregularities, education costs and employment at the centre of political mobilisation. The initiative reflects a broader attempt to provide students with an organised platform to articulate their grievances.

The ruling establishment, too, has understood that conventional political communication is no longer sufficient. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged Union ministers to increase their presence on Instagram, use short-form videos and communicate more directly with younger audiences. The government has also explored greater interaction between ministers, universities and young people. The transformation is not merely technological. It is political. Instagram, YouTube and other digital platforms have altered how young Indians consume information, debate politics and organise collective action. A controversy that might once have taken weeks to become a national issue can now spread across the country within hours. A student grievance in one city can become a national campaign before political institutions have even formulated a response.

Social media can democratise political participation by allowing voices outside established political structures to be heard. But it can also magnify misinformation, outrage and impulsive mobilisation. A movement built primarily around anger may struggle to develop a coherent programme once its immediate demands are addressed.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.

- Norman Vincent Peale

A NEW AMERICAN VIEW OF KASHMIR AS INTEGRAL PART OF INDIA



T N ASHOK

US Envoy Sergio Gor's visit to Srinagar describing J&K as an integral part of India is a moment that redefines US government perception of the decades old Indo Pak dispute on Kashmir as his choice of words about India's sovereignty over the region goes far beyond terming it as one of the most beautiful places he has ever seen. Jammu and Kashmir, Gor said, was an "important part of India."

For a territory that has been at the centre of seven decades of Indian-Pakistani rivalry, the words were unusually direct. They were also followed by something more tangible: Gor said Washington would review its travel advisory for Jammu and Kashmir, raising the prospect that the United States could finally lower the highest warning it has maintained for the region. The distinction matters. The U.S. State Department calls its warning Level 4 - "Do Not Travel," not a "D-level" threat. The warning has covered Jammu and Kashmir because of terrorism and civil unrest and has specifically identified Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam as places where violence could occur.

Gor's visit therefore comes at an intriguing moment. The question is no longer simply whether Kashmir is safe enough for American tourists. It is whether Washington's assessment of Kashmir's political and security environment is beginning to catch up with the transformation India says has taken place on the ground.

Gor said he had been impressed by the security arrangements put in place by the central and Jammu and Kashmir governments and by the systems designed to protect ordinary people. That is important because the American advisory is not merely a travel brochure's warning. It is a formal assessment of risk by the world's most powerful diplomatic and intelligence establishment. If that assessment changes, the consequences will extend beyond tourism.

American tourists have never been a large component of Kashmir's foreign-tourist market. In 2019, according to

data cited from the Jammu and Kashmir Crime Investigation Department, about 26,662 foreign tourists from 106 countries visited the Valley; Americans numbered approximately 731. That makes the American traveller a useful barometer rather than a major source of tourist revenue. The broader tourism numbers tell a more dramatic story. Kashmir has moved from years in which militancy and shutdowns kept visitors away to a period of extraordinary mass tourism. Jammu and Kashmir recorded about 2.36 crore tourist visits in 2024, while the number of foreign visitors rose to more than 65,000.

Yet Washington continued to tell Americans not to go. Indeed, the Level 4 warning predates Donald Trump's return to the White House. In July 2024, the State Department placed Jammu and Kashmir at Level 4, citing terrorism and civil unrest. The Pahalgam massacre of April 2025, in which 26 people were killed, mostly tourists, gave Washington an even stronger reason to retain the warning. That makes Gor's intervention more significant. He is not simply announcing that Kashmir has become picturesque again. He is suggesting that the security equation deserves another look. Why Washington may be changing its calculation; The most obvious reason is the changed security environment. Since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, New Delhi has pursued an aggressive strategy of suppressing militant networks, tightening intelligence coordination and expanding physical security around tourist centres. The restoration of mass tourism became one of the most visible indicators of that effort.

But the Pahalgam attack exposed the limits of declaring victory. The killing of tourists demonstrated that even a heavily secured tourist economy could be penetrated. What appears to have impressed Gor is something slightly different: the capacity of the state to respond.

A security assessment is rarely based on whether a place has experienced violence. It asks whether governments can prevent attacks, respond to them, protect foreigners and restore order when something goes

wrong. Gor's comments suggest that American officials are examining precisely those capabilities.

There is another reason. Washington's strategic relationship with New Delhi has changed dramatically. India is no longer viewed in Washington simply through the prism of its relationship with Pakistan. It is an increasingly important strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific, a defence partner and a counterweight to China.

Kashmir consequently has less room to remain an isolated India-Pakistan problem in American strategic thinking. That does not mean Washington has formally abandoned its longstanding position that Kashmir is disputed. The current State Department advisory still describes the territory as disputed among India, Pakistan and China. But Gor's language about Jammu and Kashmir being an important part of India represents a striking diplomatic emphasis.

The episode has a recent precedent. In February, the U.S. Trade Representative's office published a map of India that showed Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Aksai Chin within Indian territory. It was striking because Washington had traditionally avoided cartographic formulations that appeared to endorse India's territorial claims. The map disappeared from the USTR's social-media account within days. The deletion restored the ambiguity. Gor's statement, however, cannot simply be deleted from the diplomatic record.

Together, the two episodes suggest a Washington wrestling with two impulses: avoiding unnecessary confrontation with Pakistan while simultaneously accommodating India's insistence that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the country. The roots lie in the chaotic autumn of 1947. At Partition, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir had the option of acceding to either India or Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh initially hesitated. In October, armed tribesmen and Pakistani nationalists entered Kashmir. Hari Singh sought Indian military assistance and signed the Instrument of Accession to India. Indian

troops were flown into Srinagar and pushed back the attackers.

This is where the Indian narrative of Nehru's "mistake" begins. Critics argue that Jawaharlal Nehru should have allowed the Indian Army to continue its advance until the entire princely state was recovered instead of accepting a ceasefire and taking the dispute to the United Nations. They regard the decision as having frozen a battlefield problem into an international dispute.

The historical reality is more complicated. Nehru acted amid

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

15 Medical Colleges  
10 more to go

With the approval to admit students in Bongaigaon Medical College, Assam's 15th Medical College is up and running; furthering medical studies and quality healthcare in the BTR region of Assam.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

British military influence, the advice of Governor-General Lord Mountbatten and the danger of a wider India-Pakistan war. India went to the United Nations in January 1948. The Security Council subsequently adopted Resolution 47, which called first for Pakistan to secure the withdrawal of tribesmen and Pakistani nationals who had entered Kashmir to fight, followed by conditions for a plebiscite.

The crucial first step was never completed. The ceasefire line eventually hardened into what became the Line of Control, LoC, leaving Pakistan administering the territory it calls "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" and India calling it Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Seven decades later, the unresolved geography remains. The irony across the Line of Control; The latest irony is that the sharpest political discontent may now be emerging inside Pakistan-administered Kashmir itself. For years, Islamabad presented "Azad Kashmir" as the liberated alternative to Indian-administered Kashmir. But the region has witnessed sustained protests over electricity prices, shortages of subsidised wheat, political representation and what residents describe as excessive influence by Pakistan's political and military establishment.

The grievances have a striking economic logic. Mangla Dam, built in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, transformed the region's rivers into a major source of electricity for Pakistan. Residents have argued that a territory bearing the environmental and social costs of major hydroelectric projects should not have to pay high electricity tariffs for power generated from its own resources. The Joint Awami Action Committee has become the vehicle for much of this discontent.

The unrest has increasingly become a challenge to Pakistan's political management of the territory. Elections in 2026 were accompanied by violence, clashes and allegations of political manipulation. Reuters reported more than 30 deaths in clashes around the regional election period.

# Shillong violence: Arrest tally reaches four as Meghalaya CM vows strict action

SHILLONG

One more person has been arrested in connection with the violence during the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) "Black Flag" rally in Shillong on August 19, taking the total number of arrests to four, including three KSU leaders.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma told the Assembly on Monday that five masked men allegedly involved in attacks on vehicles registered in Assam had been identified, with one of them arrested.

Describing the violence as "unfortunate", Sangma assured the House that the government would take strict action against everyone found responsible.

"The government would take



all steps and action, and all those involved in the August 19 violence would be brought to justice," he said.

Three KSU leaders were earlier arrested and booked under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. They were subse-

quently remanded to 14 days' judicial custody on August 20.

At least 31 vehicles, mostly government SUVs, were damaged during the violence, while a government vehicle was set on fire. Several pedestrians were also reportedly assaulted.

Sangma said a Special Investigation Team headed by an Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) had been constituted to investigate the violence and identify those involved, particularly in attacks on Assam-registered vehicles.

The Chief Minister also said the government was taking steps to restore normal movement and improve relations along the Meghalaya-Assam border. Vehicles are

currently moving between the two states, he said.

As part of the efforts, Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar and Assam Cabinet Minister Atul Bora held a joint meeting on August 22 to build confidence and work towards restoring normalcy along the inter-State border.

A district-level joint committee comprising officials from Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district and Assam's Kamrup district will also be constituted. The committee will be headed by the respective Deputy Commissioners and include senior police officials from both states.

The panel will deal with day-to-day issues along the inter-State border and coordinate efforts to

prevent local disputes from escalating.

A separate transport committee will also be formed with commissioners and secretaries from both states, along with representatives of tourist taxi operators.

Sangma said the transport committee would focus on protecting the shared tourism interests of Meghalaya and Assam. It is expected to hold its first meeting in the second week of September.

Reiterating his government's resolve to act against those responsible for the August 19 violence, Sangma said the administration would "leave no stone unturned" to ensure that all those involved were brought to justice.

## Northeast Frontier Railway achieves major milestone in green energy with 42.1 MWp solar capacity

**GUWAHATI**

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is making significant progress towards its commitment to green energy and sustainable railway operations through the expansion of solar power infrastructure across its divisions and units. As a major green-energy milestone, 23.7 MWp of solar power capacity was commissioned from January to July 2026, the highest among all Zonal Railways of Indian Railways.

With this achievement, the total installed solar capacity across NFR has reached 42.1 MWp as of July 2026, since the inception of its solarisation initiative in 2011. Among the divisions, Lumding Division, including the Guwahati portion, has achieved the highest cumulative solar power installation of 17.7 MWp, followed by Rangiya Division with 9.6 MWp. Alipurduar, Katihar and Tinsukia Divisions have also made significant contributions towards enhancing NFR's overall solar power capacity, further strengthening its commitment to clean and sustainable energy.

The solar installations have delivered significant operational and financial benefits for NFR. During the financial year 2025-26, solar power generation reached approximately 114 lakh units, resulting in savings of around Rs. 8.6 crores. This marks an increase of approximately 90% in solar energy generation and 95.45% in financial savings compared to 2024-25, when around 60 lakh units of solar energy were generated, resulting in savings of approximately Rs. 4.4 crores.

The substantial growth in solar generation and cost savings reflects NFR's sustained efforts towards reducing its carbon footprint, promoting clean energy and optimising energy expenditure.

## Nagaland to host National Sports Day events across 20 colleges in 12 districts

**KOHIMA**

Nagaland will join the nationwide National Sports Day programme on August 27, with events planned across 20 colleges in 12 districts under the Khelo India Samwad 2026 and Yuva Connect initiatives, officials said on Monday. The state-level programme will bring together students, youth volunteers, sports enthusiasts and other stakeholders to promote participation in sports, leadership and community development. Ruokuvikho Chale, State APS MyBharat Nagaland, and Pradeep J, District Youth Officer, MyBharat Kohima, announced the programme at a press conference in Kohima. National Sports Day is observed annually on August 29 to mark the birth anniversary of legendary hockey player Major Dhyan Chand. This year, however, the nationwide special programme will be held on August 27 to connect young participants across the country through a common platform.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address more than

eight lakh young participants virtually from around 1,600 locations as part of the programme, officials said.

In Nagaland, activities will be organised across 20 colleges in 12 districts, giving students and young people an opportunity to discuss the role of sports in personal development, community building and nation-building. Chale said the programme would also encourage young participants to reflect on the broader role of sports in building a healthier and more engaged society and contributing to the vision of a Viksit Bharat. The organisers said the initiative is aimed at fostering a stronger sporting culture among young people while encouraging them to take an active role in community development and nation-building. Nagaland's participation is expected to expand the reach of the national initiative across the state's educational institutions and provide young people with a platform to engage with sports and youth development programmes.

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha visited several flood-affected areas and relief camps in the state and said the government was working on long-term measures to address the recurring flood problem.

Saha visited flood-hit areas and relief camps at Vivekananda School in Bardowali and Ashram Chowmuhani, where he interacted with affected residents and reviewed the relief arrangements.

The Chief Minister said the administration was on high alert and officials at different levels were working round the clock to deal with the situation.

Referring to the situation in Khowai and West Tripura districts, Saha said several areas were inundated following heavy rainfall, including in the Barmura Hills.

He noted that similar flooding had occurred in August 2024 and said the government was examining measures to prevent a recur-



rence of such incidents.

Saha said the Haora river had crossed the danger mark but its water level was gradually receding, providing some relief.

"Everyone is working, starting from the District Magistrate to the Secretary," the Chief Minister said, adding that he had remained in contact with officials while visiting Amarpur for an official programme.

The government has opened relief camps and made arrangements for food and baby food for affected families, Saha said.

According to the administration, 17 relief camps have been opened, sheltering 413 families comprising 1,305 people. Disaster response teams have been deployed in affected areas, while boats have also been pressed into service. Saha said the govern-

ment was exploring permanent measures to tackle the flood problem, including strengthening existing embankments and taking additional steps based on the experience of recent floods.

"We are alert from our end. NDRF teams have been kept in reserve," he said, adding that elected representatives, government officials and other workers were also engaged in relief and monitoring activities.

The Chief Minister acknowledged that the government could not completely prevent the impact of extreme natural events but said authorities would continue to strengthen preparedness and response mechanisms.

West Tripura has been among the worst-affected areas, with officials maintaining close watch on the situation as water levels recede. West Tripura District Magistrate Dr Vishal Kumar, Secretary Milind Ramteke and other senior officials accompanied the Chief Minister during his visit.

## Nagaland University study proposes integrated framework for ethical AI governance

GUWAHATI

A multi-institutional international study led by Nagaland University has proposed an integrated framework for governing artificial intelligence (AI), linking ethical decision-making, transparency, environmental sustainability and organisational resilience.

The study argues that AI governance should go beyond regulating technology and instead serve as a strategic mechanism to build stakeholder trust while supporting sustainable organisational performance.

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in decision-making across sectors, researchers said issues such as transparency, accountability, fairness and public trust have assumed greater importance, particularly in environmental management and sustainability.

The study brings AI governance, ethical decision-making, organisational resilience and environmental sustainability together in a single framework.

Researchers used a mixed-methods approach involving 185 managers, sustainability officers, governance experts and AI specialists from organisations using AI-enabled environmental and digital platform systems.

The findings have been published in NESciences (Natural and Engineering Sciences) under DOI 10.28978/nesciences.261029.

The paper was jointly authored by Mohammed Shamsul Hoque, Professor of English and Dean, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Southeast University, Dhaka; R. Vasanthan, Associate Professor, Department of English, Nagaland University; Khrierei Zhunuo Dzuvichü, Associate Professor,

Department of History, Central University of Tamil Nadu; Olga Glukhova of the Faculty of Linguistics and Journalism, Rostov State University of Economics, Russia; and P. Shanmuga Sundari, Assistant Professor, School of Computing, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Tiruchirappalli.

Nagaland University Vice-Chancellor Prof Jagadish Kumar Patnaik said the growing influence of AI across sectors made it essential to align technological development with ethical principles, institutional accountability and long-term sustainability.

He said the research highlighted the need for governance mechanisms that promote social responsibility and environmental stewardship while improving organisational effectiveness.

"Such interdisciplinary and international collaborations reflect

Nagaland University's commitment to research excellence and its engagement with contemporary global challenges," Patnaik said.

R. Vasanthan said AI had significant potential to transform organisations but stressed that responsible AI use should not be viewed merely as a regulatory exercise.

According to Vasanthan, the proposed approach would help organisations use AI with greater transparency and accountability while safeguarding public interest and strengthening ethical decision-making.

The researchers said the framework could be useful to policymakers, industry leaders and researchers in developing responsible AI strategies aimed at supporting sustainable development, building stakeholder confidence and promoting ethical decision-making in AI-driven organisations.

## SC asks Mizo woman to approach Gauhati HC over amended marriage law



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court asked a Mizo woman challenging the constitutional validity of amendments to Mizoram's marriage and property inheritance law to approach the Gauhati High Court.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joydalya Bagchi and V Mohana told counsel for petitioner Meriam L Hrangchal that there was no need for her to travel to Delhi when the jurisdictional high court was available in the region.

The bench advised the peti-

tioner to file her plea before the Gauhati High Court, observing that high courts were established to deal with such matters.

Hrangchal has challenged the constitutional validity of amendments introduced through The Mizo Marriage and Inheritance of Property (Amendment) Act, 2026.

The petitioner has alleged that the amended provisions discriminate against Mizo women who marry non-Mizo men and adversely affect the rights of their children.

The amended legislation further codifies customary law and strengthens provisions of the principal 2014 Act, including those relating to polygamy, inter-community marriages and women's property rights.

The amendments prohibit polygamy and provide women with rights to 50 per cent of matrimonial property. However, provisions concerning Mizo women marrying non-Mizo men have triggered controversy.

The petitioner has challenged the interpretation of these provisions, alleging that Mizo women could lose their Mizo identity and Scheduled Tribe status after marrying men from outside the Mizo community.

The Supreme Court's direction means the constitutional challenge will now have to be pursued before the Gauhati High Court, which has jurisdiction over Mizoram.

## Kuki groups condemn Leplen, Taphou attacks, warn against setback to Manipur peace efforts

IMPHAL

Two Kuki organisations have condemned separate incidents of violence in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, alleging that the attacks on Leplen and Taphou Kuki villages could undermine recent efforts to restore peace in the violence-hit state.

The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), Sadar Hills, and the Ihang-Bungpi Working Committee issued separate statements condemning an alleged armed attack at Leplen village and an arson incident at Taphou Kuki village.

The organisations alleged that the incidents were linked to armed activities by cadres of the NSCN (IM), with the CoTU also alleging the involvement of members of the Liangmei community. The allegations could not be independently verified.

The CoTU claimed that the incidents were retaliatory in nature and followed recent government action against an alleged illegal checkpoint at Namdilong.

The organisation said measures taken by the state government under Chief Minister Y Khemchand had shown some signs of progress towards restoring law and order, and warned that fresh violence could derail those



efforts.

The CoTU urged the Centre and the state government to take decisive action against what it described as the operational activities of NSCN (IM) cadres in the hill districts.

It also called for action against leaders of the United Naga Council (UNC) and the Sadar Hills District Sports Association (SDSA), alleging that certain individuals and organisations were contributing to tensions through public statements and mobilisation.

"If the Government of India and the

state are sincere towards their peace mission, decisive action must be taken against forces seeking to destabilise the hill regions," the organisation said.

The CoTU also raised allegations regarding a security operation at J Songtun early Monday. It claimed that security personnel assaulted women and elderly residents during the operation and called for security measures to be carried out impartially while ensuring the protection of civilians.

Meanwhile, the Ihang-Bungpi Working Committee alleged that NSCN (IM)

cadres carried out an armed attack on Leplen village at around 12.20 am on Monday, injuring a civilian.

According to the committee, armed personnel stationed at Seneikethil village entered the Leplen area and opened fire at villagers and local travellers. It described the incident as an attack on civilians.

The committee claimed that security forces had been withdrawn from Leplen around six days before the incident, while a substantial deployment remained at nearby Seneikethil. It alleged that the move left Leplen and Songmun Kuki villages with inadequate security cover.

Questioning the deployment pattern, the committee alleged that the arrangement amounted to selective security and left some villages vulnerable to attacks. It demanded the immediate arrest of those responsible for the Leplen incident and sought the urgent re-deployment of adequate Central security forces in Leplen and Songmun.

The committee also called for equal protection of civilians and property, irrespective of their location or community identity.

Warning of the possibility of further violence, it said the government would be responsible for any subsequent loss of life or property if immediate preventive measures were not taken. Both organisations reiterated their support for peace and security but warned that fresh attacks and what they described as uneven security arrangements could deepen fear among civilians and further destabilise Manipur's hill districts.

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# NSS Meet: Amit Shah pushes for AI-powered Intelligence, tougher action against infiltration



NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday called for greater use of artificial intelligence to analyse intelligence inputs and strengthen India's response to emerging national security threats, while directing security agencies to take strict measures against infiltration.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the ninth two-day National Security Strategies (NSS) Conference-2026 here, Shah also directed agencies to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for tackling different national security challenges based on AI-driven analysis of information available on the Multi Agency Centre (MAC) platform.

The Home Minister stressed on the need for an integrated approach to counter-terrorism and radicalisation, including comprehensive investigation of cases under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Shah emphasised strength-

ening the implementation of the Ministry of Home Affairs' (MHA) PRAHAAR scheme, expediting trials by bringing fugitives back to India and making greater use of provisions allowing trials in absentia.

In an official statement, the MHA said more than 850 participants are attending the conference, being held in hybrid mode. Ministers of State for Home Affairs, the Union Home Secretary, Deputy National Security Advisers and heads of Central Armed Police Forces and Central Police Organisations are participating in person.

Directors General of Police from States and Union Territories, young police officers working at the cutting edge and domain experts from specialised fields are also joining the meeting virtually.

The first day's deliberations focused on major security challenges, including counter-terrorism, intelligence fusion and operationalisation through the MAC, narcotics control, detection and deporta-

tion of illegal migrants, cyber-crime and Pakistan-backed proxy warfare.

Before inaugurating the conference, Shah paid tribute at the Martyrs' Column, laying a wreath in memory of Intelligence Bureau personnel who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty while protecting the country's security and integrity.

On the second day of the conference the participants will examine threats posed by sub-aerial systems and possible countermeasures, protection of the blue economy, information warfare and its national security implications, and the need for a comprehensive bio-security framework, the MHA said. The NSS Conference has been held annually in hybrid mode since 2021 following the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It brings together grass-roots-level security and police officers with domain experts to develop practical solutions to emerging national security challenges.

# EAM Jaishankar meets Russian President; Putin assures more fertiliser supply to India

NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered to increase fertiliser supplies to India further, signalling Moscow's intent to deepen one of the most strategically important pillars of the bilateral economic relationship. The offer came when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called on Putin in Moscow.

Putin made clear that Russia was prepared to increase supplies to meet India's agricultural requirements.

"We are doing everything to close this issue for Indian farmers and agriculture, we are increasing these supplies and we are ready to do this further," Putin said. He separately highlighted fertilisers alongside fuel as an important component of Russia's economic support to India.

"One of these issues – not just fuel – is the supply of mineralisers (fertilizers). We are doing everything we can to resolve the issue for Indian farmers, for agriculture; we are increasing these exports and are prepared to continue doing so."

The offer comes as fertilisers have become an increasingly important element of India-Russia economic ties. Russia has emerged as India's largest supplier of fertilisers, particularly urea, with Indian fertiliser imports from Russia rising by almost 40 per cent in 2025.

The two countries had also identified fertilisers as an area for longer-term cooperation during Putin's December 2025 visit to New Delhi, when they welcomed steps to secure long-term supplies and discussed the possibility of establishing joint ventures. Putin also pointed to the broader expansion in bilateral trade.

Jaishankar conveyed Prime Minister Modi's plans for future meetings with Putin, saying Modi looked forward to meeting the



Russian president at the forthcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit and welcoming him to India for the BRICS Summit. The two leaders are also expected to hold their annual bilateral summit at a mutually convenient time.

"We have a very strong picture of cooperation to present," Jaishankar said. Earlier Jaishankar after his meeting with Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov said bilateral trade had increased from around \$13 billion in 2021 to

approximately \$60 billion in 2025. However, the growth has been overwhelmingly tilted towards Russian exports, pushing the bilateral trade deficit for India from \$6.6 billion to more than \$50 billion.

Jaishankar identified market access, the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, stronger payment mechanisms and greater business-to-business engagement as key priorities. These measures will be critical if India and Russia are to achieve their shared target of \$100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030.

Denis Manturov said India-Russia trade had increased by 8 per cent during the first half of 2026, with Moscow seeking to broaden the composition of trade beyond energy and fertilisers. Agricultural products, machine-building goods, metallurgy and forest products are expanding alongside traditional Russian exports of fuel and mineral fertilisers. Indian exports to Russia include pharmaceuticals, agricultural products, industrial raw materials, equipment and components, and light-industry goods.

# INTERNATIONAL

# Iran's rial currency hits new record low as US prepares to announce more sanctions



DUBAI

Iran's currency hit a record low Monday as Washington prepared to announce new sanctions it said would be an "economic D-Day" and would add further pressure on an economy already battered by previous sanctions and a U.S. naval blockade.

The rial dropped to 2.02 million to the U.S. dollar as trading opened on informal currency markets. Iran's

official Central Bank rate stood at around 1.5 million rial to the dollar, but the informal rate is what most Iranians pay.

The currency had already been under pressure before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, with double-digit inflation and negative growth, but has been hitting new record lows as nearly six months of war have taken an even greater toll.

Still, U.S. President Donald

Trump has been unable to win concessions from Iran, which continues to keep a firm grip on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the key waterway through which a fifth of the world's traded oil transited freely before the war began. Iranian attacks and threats have severely hampered that traffic during the war.

Iran and Oman, which is on the opposite side of the strait, are reportedly in the final stages of agreeing

upon a plan for joint management of the waterway, which regional officials have said would include having ships to enter the Persian Gulf through an Iranian-controlled route and exit through a route controlled by Oman.

Trump has been sharply critical of Oman, an American ally, threatening to bomb the country if it "gets in the way."

Oman's foreign minister was to visit Iran on Tuesday for new talks.

In an attempt to break the impasse with Iran, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent promised even stronger sanctions than those already in place would be announced Monday, including secondary sanctions on countries that continue to do business with Iran.

"President Trump decimated Iran's economy to a point where the rial has never been weaker and inflation has rarely been higher," Bessent wrote Sunday in an opinion piece in the Financial Times. "The regime's final refuge now lies in the self-deception of fearful nations that still believe accommodating aggression can secure a durable peace."

Already last week, the United Arab Emirates announced that it was suspending all trade with Iran. Trump had called the leader of the UAE, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the day before the announcement.

The UAE has long been one of Iran's largest trading partners and its biggest source of imports, as well as a major re-export and financial hub for Iranian businesses.

Following Bessent's remarks, Mohsen Rezaei, the hard-line leader of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said in a post on X that any country's support for new American economic measures would be seen as an "act of war."

# US proposes raising H-1 B visa fee to over USD 100,000, raising fresh concerns for Indian professionals



NEW DELHI

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proposed imposing a USD 103,265 fee on H-1B petitions, reviving a major immigration policy issue that could considerably increase the cost of employing foreign professionals in the United States, particularly Indian nationals who account for the bulk of H-1B beneficiaries. The proposed regulation was published in the Federal Register on Monday. The fee would apply to H-1 B cap-subject petitions, including petitions eligible for the advanced-degree exemption.

The move comes after a similar fee announced last year was challenged in court and subsequently stopped. The proposals, however, are not yet final. Their precise scope and implementation will depend on the formal regulations, public comments, and potential legal challenges.

If implemented, the proposal could substantially increase the cost for US employers sponsoring H-1B workers and add to the financial burden on foreign nationals seeking employment in the country. It could also affect international students transitioning from US universities into employment under programmes such as Optional Practical Training (OPT), depending on the outcome of a separate proposal.

The proposed H-1B fee is particularly significant for India. Indian-born professionals accounted for 71 per cent of H-1B beneficiaries among petitions approved by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in 2024. USCIS approved 399,402 H-1B petitions that year.

H-1B visas are meant for specialty occupations that generally require at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent.

The DHS proposal says

the objective of the new fee is "revenue generation" to support the administration of the lawful immigration system across multiple US departments and agencies. The additional funds are intended to provide resources to USCIS for "adjudications, systems modernization, fraud detection and national security vetting", as well as records, fee collection and coordination with other DHS components.

The proposal also envisages supporting immigration-related activities across several agencies, including USCIS, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Executive Office for Immigration Review, the State Department and the Department of Labor. These activities include immigration court proceedings, consular visa processing, labour standards enforcement and inspection and enforcement operations.

The latest proposals form part of a broader tightening of US immigration rules under the Trump administration. Earlier this month, DHS also proposed eliminating the existing 60-day grace period for certain H-1B workers whose employment ends before their authorised stay expires.

If finalised, the proposed change could require affected workers and their dependants to leave the US much sooner after employment termination, potentially creating additional uncertainty for foreign professionals.

For India, the measures carry particular significance. More than 5.2 million people of Indian origin live in the United States, according to recent estimates.

# Assam's Seismic Gap: Guwahati Cannot Afford to Wait for the Big One

No seismologist can predict the hour, date, or exact magnitude of the next major earthquake. Science has never offered such precision, and it is unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future. What science can tell us, however, is where tectonic stress is accumulating and which regions face an elevated risk of destructive earthquakes.

For Assam and the wider Northeast, that warning is unmistakable.

The region lies in one of the world's most active seismic belts. The collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, combined with the complex network of faults running through the Himalayan and Indo-Burmese regions, continues to generate enormous geological stress. Guwahati, in particular, lies within the broader Assam Seismic Gap, a tectonically active zone between the Himalayan Arc and the Indo-Burmese ranges, where scientists have long warned of the potential for a major earthquake.

A magnitude 8 or greater earthquake in the region is therefore not a matter of sensationalism. It is a credible geological possibility.

The important question is not when such an earthquake will strike. It is whether Guwahati will be prepared when it does.

The answer, at present, is deeply troubling. Earthquakes kill primarily because buildings collapse, infrastructure fails, and emergency systems are overwhelmed. The absence of advance warning makes preparedness even more important. Every measure that can save lives must be implemented before the first tremor begins.

For Guwahati, that means enforcing earthquake-resistant construction standards, auditing vulnerable structures, retrofitting critical buildings, protecting lifeline infrastructure, and preparing communities for the first few hours after a major disaster.

The first two minutes

A major earthquake would transform Guwahati within minutes.

Violent ground shaking could continue for a prolonged period, leaving little time for people to react. The destruction would not necessarily occur in neat stages. Buildings could collapse while roads are blocked, electricity fails, water pipelines rupture, and communications go down.

A particularly dangerous category would be reinforced-concrete buildings constructed without adequate seismic detailing. Buildings with open ground floors used for parking, shops, or commercial space can be especially vulnerable because the ground floor may be considerably weaker than the floors above.

In densely populated parts of the city, the consequences could be devastating. Multistory buildings stand along narrow roads and lanes in many neighborhoods. If even a few structures collapse, debris could completely block access for ambulances, fire tenders, and rescue teams.

The problem would be compounded by the nature of Guwahati's terrain.

Large parts of the city are built on alluvial deposits, with areas having shallow groundwater tables. Strong shaking in water-saturated soils can produce liquefaction, causing soil to lose much of its strength and behave almost like a fluid. Structures with inadequate foundations could tilt, settle, or suffer severe structural damage.

The hills present another danger.

Years of slope cutting, deforestation, and unplanned construction have increased vulnerability in several hill settlements. An earthquake could trigger landslides, rockfalls, and debris flows, damaging homes and cutting off access routes simultaneously.

And then there is the infrastructure that holds the city together.

Damage to bridges, flyovers, major highways, and arterial roads could divide Guwahati into isolated pockets. Any serious disruption to the Saraihat bridge approaches, National Highway 27, or other key transport corridors could severely affect the movement of emergency personnel and essential supplies.

Power, water, telecommunications, and fuel networks would also be at risk.

Broken electrical lines and gas pipelines could trigger fires at precisely the moment when water supplies and firefighting systems are themselves compromised. Telecommunications towers could fail, leaving authorities unable to establish reliable communication with affected areas.

The first 72 hours would therefore be decisive. Vulnerability is not evenly distributed.

Earthquake damage would not be uniform across Guwahati. The city's geological conditions, building stock, and topography mean that certain areas could face substantially greater risks.

Parts of the commercial core, including Fancy Bazar, Paltan Bazar, Machkhowa, Rajgarh, Tarun Nagar, and Bharalumukh, have extensive development on alluvial terrain. Dense commercial construction, older buildings, and narrow access routes could combine to create a particularly difficult rescue environment.

The danger is not limited to old structures. Modern-looking reinforced-concrete buildings can also be vulnerable if seismic design principles have not been properly incorporated during construction.

The areas around RG Baruah Road, Ganeshguri, Bhangagarh, and Panbazar contain high-rise residential and commercial buildings, medical facilities, and other critical establishments. Any building with inadequate lateral resistance, weak ground floors, or insufficient shear-wall systems could face serious damage during prolonged shaking.

This is particularly worrying because some of the city's most important medical facilities are concentrated in these urban corridors.

A major earthquake could leave hospitals facing a double crisis: treating thousands of injured people while simultaneously dealing with damage to their own buildings, power supplies, water systems, and medical infrastructure.

The hill areas require a separate strategy.

Kalapahar, Narakasur, Sarania, Kharghuli, and parts of Jalukbari have experienced extensive construction on or around slopes. Earthquake-triggered landslides could destroy buildings, block roads, and make conventional rescue operations extremely difficult.

Transport junctions would become critical points of vulnerability.

Jalukbari, the approaches to the Saraihat bridges, and major corridors along GS Road are essential to Guwahati's mobility. Their failure could prevent emergency

## ASSAM FACES LONG-TERM RISK OF POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE

Geological experts warn that Assam lies in a high seismic zone and could face a devastating earthquake in the future.

### WHY ASSAM IS AT RISK?

- Located in Seismic Zone V (highest risk)
- Tectonic collision between Indian and Eurasian Plates
- History of strong earthquakes
- Rapid urbanization & vulnerable infrastructure

### WHAT IT COULD MEAN

- Severe shaking
- Damage to buildings and bridges
- Landslides and soil liquefaction
- Loss of lives and property

BE PREPARED, NOT SCARED



Build earthquake-resistant structures



Have an emergency plan



Keep emergency supplies



Stay informed, stay safe

teams from crossing between parts of the city and could severely disrupt the movement of supplies into the region.

Preparedness cannot begin after the earthquake

Assam's disaster-management system has made progress, but a major urban earthquake would require a level of preparation far beyond conventional flood or storm response.

The response system must be decentralized.

Several fully equipped emergency operations centers should be established at geographically separated locations on relatively safe and open ground. Facilities such as the Khanapara playground, Sarusajai Stadium, the AEC ground, and other large public spaces could be assessed for their suitability as emergency coordination and relief hubs.

These centers should have independent power, satellite communication, emergency medical supplies, water, fuel, and other essentials.

The Brahmaputra, too, should be incorporated into the emergency-response architecture.

If roads and bridges become unusable, the river could provide an alternative transport corridor. Emergency boats, water-purification systems, medical facilities, and relief supplies could be pre-positioned at Pandu Port and other suitable inland water transport facilities.

Road access must also be protected.

Designated emergency or "blue corridors" along major routes such as VIP Road, GS Road, and NH-27 should be identified and legally protected for the movement of ambulances, fire services, police, rescue teams, and relief supplies.

Without such planning, roads could quickly become unusable because of abandoned vehicles, fallen structures, and public congestion.

Rescue equipment must be available before the collapse

One of the most important lessons from major earthquakes around the world is that the first responders are often ordinary citizens and locally stationed emergency personnel.

Specialized equipment cannot be brought in after every major structure has collapsed.

Fire stations and disaster-management depots in and around Guwahati should therefore maintain adequate stocks of concrete cutters, hydraulic spreaders, thermal-imaging equipment, acoustic life detectors, lifting airbags, and other urban search-and-rescue tools.

Specialized structural-collapse teams and trained canine units should also be stationed within the city or its immediate vicinity.

Every hour lost during the early rescue period can mean lives lost.

The state cannot afford a system in which critical rescue resources have to travel from distant locations after the disaster has already paralyzed roads and bridges.

Hospitals must prepare to function while damaged

Medical preparedness deserves equal attention.

Guwahati's major hospitals could themselves become casualties in a major earthquake. Hospitals must therefore have contingency plans that allow them to continue functioning even when buildings, power systems, or water supplies are compromised.

Deployable field hospitals with independent power generation, emergency operating capacity, trauma facilities, and essential medicines should be pre-positioned outside the most densely built areas.

Open spaces should be identified in advance for mass casualty triage.

Blood banks and essential medical storage facilities should have decentralized, backup power systems so that a single grid failure does not destroy the city's emergency medical capacity.

Relief camps, meanwhile, should not be identified only after disaster strikes. Suitable open spaces should be mapped beforehand and equipped, where feasible, with access to water, sanitation, power, and emergency communications.

Communities will be the first responders

No government agency, however well equipped, can reach every neighborhood immediately after a major earthquake.

That makes community preparedness indispensable.

Residents should be trained in basic first aid, fire suppression, light search-and-rescue techniques, and emergency communication. Ward-level volunteer groups can help evacuate vulnerable residents, identify trapped people, and provide immediate assistance before professional teams arrive.

The Bipod Bandhu Bahini model provides a useful starting point for building such local capacity.

Regular earthquake drills should become part

of life in schools, hospitals, offices, markets, and residential communities.

People need to know where to assemble, which routes to avoid, and how to respond during and immediately after an earthquake. Public awareness can prevent panic, stampedes, and secondary casualties.

The most urgent task is to audit what already exists

New construction standards are important, but Guwahati's immediate problem is the enormous stock of buildings that already exist.

A mandatory seismic safety audit should be carried out for hospitals, schools, government offices, bridges, major commercial buildings, and other critical infrastructure.

Buildings found to be structurally vulnerable should be prioritized for retrofitting.

Techniques such as column jacketing, steel bracing, strengthening of joints, and other appropriate structural interventions can substantially improve resistance when properly designed and executed.

But audits alone will not save lives.

There must be enforcement.

If building codes are treated as paperwork rather than safety requirements, the entire system becomes meaningless. Construction approvals, structural certification, and compliance inspections must carry real accountability.

The same principle should apply to bridges, flyovers, water pipelines, electrical infrastructure, and telecommunications systems.

The price of preparedness is smaller than the price of neglect

Assam cannot prevent an earthquake. It

cannot predict its exact arrival. But it can decide how vulnerable Guwahati will be when the ground begins to shake.

The choice is between investing before disaster and paying an incomparably higher price afterwards.

Every building retrofitted today is a potential life saved tomorrow. Every emergency drill conducted today can prevent panic tomorrow. Every rescue tool stored in advance can mean another person brought out alive. Every strengthened bridge or protected road can keep an entire neighborhood connected to help.

The seismic threat is not new. What remains unfinished is the preparation.

Guwahati has expanded rapidly, but disaster resilience has not always kept pace with urban growth. The city cannot afford to continue adding buildings, cutting hills and intensifying density while treating seismic safety as an administrative formality.

We do not know when the next great earthquake will come.

We do know that the geological forces beneath Assam are real, that the region has experienced devastating earthquakes before, and that a major event would test every weakness in the city at once.

The time to decide what will stand is before the shaking begins.

The cost of preparedness may be debated in government offices and budget meetings. The cost of failing to prepare will be measured in collapsed homes, destroyed livelihoods, and funerals.

For Guwahati, waiting is not a strategy.

Preparation is key.

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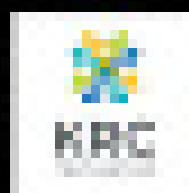


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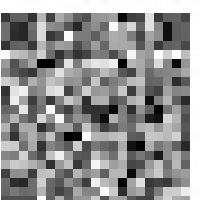


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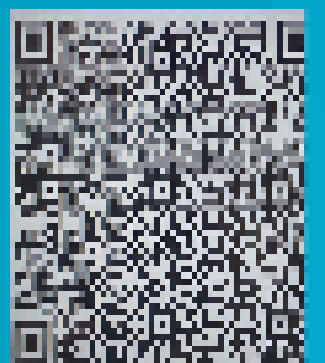
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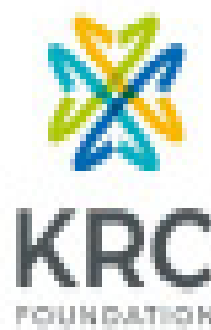
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