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PERSPECTIVE

Power comes from sincere service

Dima Hasao Council Name Row: Indigenous People's Forum Gives 14-Day Ultimatum

HAFLONG

The Indigenous People's Forum (IPF) and several apex organisations in Assam's Dima Hasao district have opposed the use of "Dima Hasao Autonomous Council" in place of the nomenclature "North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council", describing the latter as the constitutionally prescribed name.

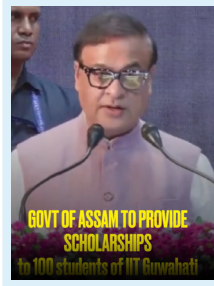
In a statement issued on Thursday, the IPF said the name of the autonomous council could not be changed through a council notification, resolution or administrative order.

The forum said it had earlier raised the issue with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who, according to the organisation, had stated that the council's name had not been changed and that the nomenclature "N.C. Hills Autonomous Council" continued to be valid.

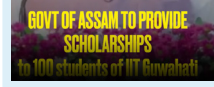
The IPF, however, expressed concern over an order issued by the council's Principal Secretary on August 31 directing heads of departments to use "Dima Hasao Autonomous Council" as the name of the council.

The forum questioned the legality and timing of the directive and alleged that vested political interests could be attempting to exploit the nomenclature issue to create divisions among indigenous communities.

The allegation has not been independently established.



Govt of Assam intends to provide scholarships to 100 students of @IITGuwahati
I request the authorities to draw a roadmap on how we can actualise this plan.
~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam





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Manipur Violence: 306 Dead, 49 Still Missing Since May 2023

IMPHAL
At least 306 people have been killed and 49 remain missing in the ethnic violence that has continued to affect Manipur since May 2023, Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam told the state Assembly on Thursday.

Konhoujam disclosed the updated figures in response to a question from BJP MLA Sapam Ranjan Singh on the second day of the ongoing Assembly session. The figures cover incidents recorded up to August 31, 2026.

The violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities erupted on May 3, 2023, following a Tribal Solidarity March in the hill districts. The march was organised in opposition to the demand for Scheduled Tribe status for the Meitei community.

The prolonged conflict has resulted in deaths, disappearances and large-scale displacement, while



repeatedly disrupting normal life across the state.

Meiteis account for around 53 per cent of Manipur's population and are largely concentrated in the Imphal Valley. Tribal communi-

ties, including the Nagas and Kukis, constitute about 40 per cent of the population and predominantly inhabit the hill districts.

The violence also triggered a major political crisis in the state. The

BJP-led government headed by N Biren Singh resigned on February 9, 2025, amid the continuing unrest, following which President's Rule was imposed on February 13.

The 60-member Manipur As-

ssembly, whose term runs until 2027, was placed under suspended animation during President's Rule.

President's Rule was revoked on February 4, 2026, paving the way for the formation of a new government under BJP leader Yumnam Khemchand Singh, who took over as chief minister.

The latest figures presented in the Assembly underline the continuing human cost of the conflict more than three years after violence first erupted.

With 49 people still officially reported missing as of August 31, the issue of unresolved disappearances remains a major concern for families affected by the violence.

The government's disclosure comes as efforts continue to restore normalcy and address the political, humanitarian and security challenges arising from the prolonged conflict.

Assam-Mizoram Border Tension Flares Up Again in Sribhumi Over Land Dispute

STRIBHUMI

Tension has resurfaced along the Assam-Mizoram border in Sribhumi district after a group of Mizo residents allegedly entered nearly two kilometres into Assam and claimed the area as part of Mizoram, officials said.

The incident was reported from West Kalagang under the Ramkrishnanagar subdivision, where the group allegedly objected to the construction of a house by a local resident and prevented the work from proceeding.

Following the development, Assam officials and police reached the area to assess the situation and prevent any escalation. Ramkrishnanagar Sub-Divisional Circle Officer Antara Pal and Jatrabari Police Station Officer-in-Charge Chittaranjan Bora visited the disputed site along with police personnel.

Officials from the two states subsequently held discussions with the Officer-in-Charge of Kanmun Police Station in Mizoram's Mamit district.

The meeting focused on maintaining peace and preventing the dispute from escalating. As an interim measure, both sides agreed to maintain the existing status quo in the area.

Under the arrangement, no new houses or other structures will be permitted in the disputed stretch until the land issue is resolved.

The latest development has renewed concerns among residents of West Kalagang and adjoining areas, where disputes over boundary demarcation, land surveys and possession have surfaced repeatedly.

The disputed area is located close to the Singla Forest Reserve under

the Cheragi Range and is considered a sensitive stretch along the Assam-Mizoram boundary.

The two states have previously held discussions over alleged encroachment in the Soru Bhirband area. Several rounds of talks were conducted in 2020, but residents claim that they failed to produce a permanent resolution.

A separate dispute later emerged near West Kalagang LP School over the measurement and identification of land, further highlighting the difficulties surrounding boundary demarcation in the region.

With fresh claims now emerging, residents have renewed their demand for a clear and mutually accepted demarcation of the inter-state boundary to prevent recurring disputes and confrontations. The Assam-Mizoram border has a history of serious tensions. The most violent confrontation occurred on July 26, 2021, when six Assam Police personnel were killed during a clash involving police forces of the two states at the Lailapur border area in Cachar district. Against this backdrop, the latest dispute has drawn close attention from both administrations.

Although the situation in West Kalagang remained peaceful after the intervention of officials, residents fear that unresolved questions over land ownership and the precise location of the inter-state boundary could lead to renewed tensions if a lasting settlement is not reached.

For now, officials from both sides have agreed to maintain the status quo, while the underlying dispute over the land remains unresolved.

25 More Houses Torched in Kangpokpi Village, Fresh Tensions Grip Area

KANGPOKPI

At least 25 houses were allegedly set ablaze by unidentified miscreants in Tiporam village under Chalwa police station in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Wednesday, officials said, a day after 10 houses were reportedly torched in three nearby villages.

The latest incidents have added to tensions in the area, where a series of attacks involving Naga and Kuki-Zo communities has been reported in recent weeks.

According to officials, armed miscreants allegedly attacked three Liangmai Naga villages - Tapon Khullen, Tapon Khunou and Makui Tiporam - on Tuesday. The attacks were followed by gunfire, during which at least 10 houses were reportedly set on fire. A village church pastor also sustained bullet injuries.

A resident of Tiporam, speaking on condition of anonymity, said five houses were allegedly torched on Tuesday and armed men had threatened to burn more homes.

"Today, 25 houses were set ablaze and the miscreants subsequently left the area," the resident alleged.

The resident further claimed that five of the houses burnt on Wednesday belonged to members of the Nepali community.

Residents said villagers from Tiporam had earlier been evacuated to Makui following the violence. They returned to the village on Tuesday but allegedly came under fire, forcing them to flee again to a relief centre in Makui. The two villages are around 15 km apart.

Residents also alleged that security forces were informed about the burning of houses but that no immediate action was taken.

Manipur Cracks Down on Illegal Road Blockades, Warns of Prosecution



IMPHAL

The Manipur government has warned of strict legal action against individuals, organisations and groups involved in unlawful road blockades, highway obstructions and other activities disrupting public movement across the state.

The warning was issued in an order dated August 28 by Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Home) N Ashok Kumar and made public on September 3.

The government said those who organise, instigate, support or participate in unlawful blockades would face prosecution under relevant laws without further notice.

The directive comes amid recurring disruptions along national highways and other major roads in Manipur, affecting the movement of essential commodities and contributing to shortages and rising prices in several parts of the state.

According to the order, the government has received reports and credible inputs about bandhs, road blockades, obstructions and other unlawful activities being carried out by various organisations, associations, groups and individuals on national highways and public roads.

The government said such activities not only disrupt normal life but also affect public order and the safety of citizens. Prolonged road blockades also hamper the transportation of essential goods and adversely affect economic activity, it said.

The order specifically warns against activities involving damage to public property, forcible restriction of movement and acts that could potentially result in a breach of peace.

The government also pointed to the constitutional right to freedom of movement, stating that unlawful obstruction of public roads interferes with citizens' ability to move freely across the country.

Deputy commissioners, police authorities and other law enforcement agencies have been directed to take immediate measures to ensure the uninterrupted movement of vehicles on national highways and other public roads.

They have also been instructed to initiate prompt legal proceedings against individuals or groups found violating the directive.

The government's latest warning signals a tougher approach towards recurring road blockades, which have remained a major source of disruption to transportation and the supply of essential commodities in the state.

Authorities are now expected to closely monitor vulnerable stretches of national highways and take preventive measures to keep key routes open.

Hailakandi Orunodoi Row: Protesters Clash with Police Outside DC Office

HAILAKANDI

A protest over the alleged deletion of eligible beneficiaries from Assam's Orunodoi scheme turned tense outside the Hailakandi Deputy Commissioner's office on Thursday after police resorted to a mild lathicharge when demonstrators attempted to enter the premises.

The protest was led by Congress MLA from Algapur-Katlicherra, Jubair Anam, who along with a large number of residents marched to the Deputy Commissioner's office on Kachari Road.

Police stopped the protesters at the entrance and put up barricades to prevent them from entering the office compound. The situation escalated briefly when some demonstrators tried to push through the barricades, following which police used a mild lathicharge to control the crowd.

Several people who claimed to have been removed from the Orunodoi beneficiary list participated in the protest.



Addressing reporters, Anam alleged that repeated reviews of the beneficiary list had resulted in the exclusion of several eligible people from the welfare scheme.

He also alleged that genuine flood-affected families were being denied assistance and raised concerns over alleged irregularities in the implementation of government schemes in the district.

"The people who should get Orunodoi are not getting the bene-

fits. Actual flood-affected people are also not receiving assistance," Anam alleged.

The MLA claimed that the authorities had been informed about the alleged discrepancies but no effective action had been taken.

Anam said the protesters included local residents affected by the alleged irregularities and not merely Congress workers.

"The people you see on the streets today are not merely our party work-

ers. They are residents of Hailakandi who have been affected by these issues," he said.

He further alleged that people who had complained about irregularities in government schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, were being harassed.

The Congress MLA also raised concerns over road construction and repair works in Hailakandi, alleging that some government-approved contractors had failed to execute projects despite the release of funds. He said the party was considering a separate agitation over the alleged irregularities in road projects and would seek an inquiry into the matter.

Meanwhile, the protesters remained outside the Deputy Commissioner's office, demanding a meeting with the district administration and assurances on their grievances.

"We will wait until the DC comes and meets us," a protester said.

Further details on the administration's response were awaited at the time of filing this report.

Assam Among Top-Performing States in New Criminal Laws Implementation: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam has emerged among the top-performing states in the implementation of India's new criminal laws, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday.

In a post on X, Sarma said Assam has scored 92.16 per cent in the assessment of implementation of the new criminal laws since they came into force on July 1, 2024, well above the reported national average of 74.86 per cent. The three new laws - the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam - replaced the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Indian Evidence Act, respectively. According to Sarma, Assam has achieved 100 per cent compliance on several key parameters linked to the implementation of the new legal framework.

These include the rollout of the Nyaya Sanhitas and Model Rules, the Interopera-

ble Criminal Justice System (ICJS) Data Sharing Matrix, the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) and the Medico-Legal Examination and Post-Mortem Reporting System. The Chief Minister said the performance reflected the state government's efforts to strengthen the criminal justice system and ensure greater efficiency in investigation and prosecution. He said the government remained committed to ensuring that victims are heard, cases are pursued to their logical conclusion and citizens receive justice in a timely manner.

The assessment covers the implementation of the new criminal laws since their nationwide rollout in July 2024.

Sarma said Assam's performance demonstrated the state's focus on adopting technology-driven systems and strengthening institutional mechanisms aimed at improving the delivery of justice.



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WHEN THE WATERS RECEDE

Natural disasters are often described as acts of nature. That description is comforting, but increasingly inadequate. The devastation caused by the recent flash floods in Nepal is a stark reminder that while nature may trigger a disaster, human decisions often determine its scale, its reach and its human cost.

The floods have already claimed hundreds of lives, with thousands still missing, while homes, farms, roads, bridges and critical infrastructure have been destroyed or severely damaged. The economic cost is expected to run into billions, placing an enormous burden on a country whose resources are already limited. For families searching for loved ones, however, no financial estimate can capture the real magnitude of the tragedy.

The first priority, understandably, is rescue and relief. The Nepal government deserves credit for moving quickly once the scale of the disaster became apparent. The mobilisation of the army, security forces, helicopters and other emergency resources, along with assistance from India, China and other countries, has helped rescue thousands of people stranded by the floods. Workers trapped in hydropower tunnels have been brought out, displaced families have been moved into temporary shelters and alternative routes have been opened to maintain essential supplies.

But rescue is only the beginning. When the waters recede and the immediate emergency passes, Nepal will have to ask uncomfortable questions about why the disaster became so catastrophic-and whether some of its consequences could have been prevented.

Climate change will inevitably be part of that conversation. The Himalayas are warming rapidly. Glacial melt, unstable slopes, changing rainfall patterns and extreme weather events are increasing the vulnerability of communities across the mountain region. Nepal, despite contributing very little to global carbon emissions, is paying an increasingly heavy price for a climate crisis it did little to create.

That injustice must be recognised. Industrialised nations cannot continue to view climate change solely through the lens of emissions targets and economic transition while countries such as Nepal bear the immediate human consequences. The mountains may be in Nepal, but the forces destabilising them are global. Climate finance, adaptation assistance, technology and disaster preparedness must therefore be treated not as charity but as part of a wider global responsibility.

Yet climate change cannot become an excuse for avoiding domestic accountability.

Nepal is one of the world's most geographically fragile countries. Its steep mountains, narrow valleys, unstable geological formations and rapidly changing weather patterns make development particularly challenging. That reality should have made environmental risk assessment and disaster preparedness central to every major infrastructure decision.

Instead, the tragedy raises serious questions about the way roads, settlements and hydropower projects are planned and constructed in vulnerable terrain.

The impact on the hydropower sector is particularly significant. More than a dozen projects have reportedly been affected, with hundreds of workers trapped in tunnels and massive losses estimated for the electricity sector. Hydropower is central to Nepal's economic ambitions and energy strategy. But the destruction also raises a fundamental question: can infrastructure designed to drive development continue to be planned without fully accounting for a rapidly changing climate and increasingly unpredictable geological conditions?

Development cannot simply mean building more roads, dams and power projects. It must mean building infrastructure that can survive the environmental conditions in which it is located.

Every damaged road, washed-away bridge and destroyed power project should therefore become part of a larger national audit. Were environmental assessments properly conducted? Were hazard maps taken seriously? Were early-warning systems functional? Were evacuation plans in place? Were communities informed about what to do when warnings were issued? Were construction standards adequate for the risks involved? These are not questions for a blame game. They are questions of governance. Early-warning systems deserve particular attention. In a region where extreme rainfall and sudden floods can turn valleys into death traps within hours, warning people a few minutes or even an hour earlier can save lives. Technology exists. The challenge is ensuring that warnings reach the people who need them, in languages and formats they understand, and that communities have safe evacuation routes and designated shelters.

A warning without the ability to act on it is not preparedness. The disaster has also exposed another modern vulnerability: the speed at which misinformation travels during a crisis. False reports, manipulated images and graphic footage of dead bodies can deepen public panic, obstruct rescue efforts and cause further trauma to families already searching for missing relatives. There is a difference between informing the public and turning suffering into digital spectacle. The concerns raised by Nepal's Press Council are therefore important. Human tragedy should never be reduced to clicks, views, likes and shares. Journalists and citizens alike have a responsibility to protect the dignity of victims and their families. During an emergency, irresponsible reporting can be more than unethical-it can interfere with rescue operations and spread dangerous misinformation.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Good friends are good for your health. - Irwin Sarason

THE MISSING VOTES AND THE POLITICS OF ELECTORAL DELETION

KAPIL SIBAL

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has betrayed the trust of the Supreme Court by persuading it to believe that the special intensive revision (SIR) was not intended to be exclusionary, but to clean up the voters' list by removing duplicate entries, the names of those who have changed their place of residence, dead voters and infiltrators who claim to be Indian citizens. The Supreme Court held that while the annual updation of voters' lists by the ECI itself cannot be trusted, this exercise was required to address the very concerns the ECI enumerated.

On the ground, these deletions were and are being done by booth-level officers (BLOs). This procedure was followed in almost all states which went to the polls after the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The evidence available in the public domain, some of which was also brought to the court's notice, should have alerted the Supreme Court. Several instances—especially in Delhi—of hundreds of persons living at the same address; statements of BLOs on record; trains assigned to carry people from Haryana to Bihar and from Surat to West Bengal; messages conveyed on WhatsApp to BLOs; the illogical concept of 'logical discrepancies'; the burden cast on voters,

aside all objections and instances of wrongdoing that were sought to be brought to its notice.

The inference that the ECI deliberately deleted names, either directly or indirectly, to help the BJP electorally, gains credence from what has been found by the tribunals set up by the Supreme Court to adjudicate the claims of voters whose names were deleted and whose appeals could not be decided before the publication of the final voters' list. In this context, the reply to the Right to Information application filed by Congress MP Isha Khan Choudhury revealed that the total number of appeals submitted for adjudication was 38,10,620, of which only 82,782 (a bare 2.17 percent) have been disposed of thus far. Of the deleted names, 75,443 (about 91 percent) were restored, while 7,339 (a bare 8.86 percent) were excluded.

What does this tell us? That 91 percent of genuine voters were wrongly deleted. It can be assumed that BLOs, spread throughout West Bengal, could not have acted in such a uniform manner to cause such massive deletions. The question is: who directed those names to be deleted, and which party benefited from these deletions? Presumably, the massive restoration of 91 percent of the deleted names may have

ing elections.

It is also significant that the appeals in constituencies with the highest Muslim population, where the Trinamool Congress had a strong presence, have not yet been disposed of. For example, of the 7,47,305 appeals filed in Murshidabad, only 487 have been decided (of which 434 restored); of 5,31,149 appeals in Malda, only 1,471 (all restored) have been decided; of 3,58,872 appeals in North 24 Parganas, only 277 (all restored) have been decided; of 3,21,332 appeals in South 24 Parganas, 20,107 names were restored and only 24 were alleged to be rightly excluded; and of 2,77,242 appeals in Purba Bardhaman, only 83 have been decided.

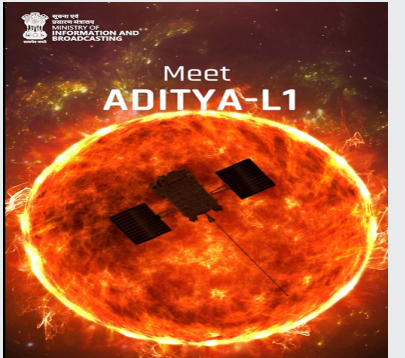
It seems that the Supreme Court was more concerned about the voters being wrongly included in the voters' list. It was contended that not one such voter should be included in the voters' list. It now appears that lakhs of voters who were entitled to vote have been excluded and a minuscule number were prima facie not entitled to vote. Had the Supreme Court known about these massive deletions, it probably would not have approved the SIR exercise. To date, the Supreme Court has not been told how many Bangladeshis have been found in the voters' list, the political narrative

names will never be known.

If this happened in West Bengal, as we have proof that it did, the same would likely have happened in earlier elections in Maharashtra, Bihar and Haryana. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the situation was somewhat different because the Bharatiya

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

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Janata Party doesn't have a presence in either state, and any such massive-scale manipulation would have exposed the ECI's agenda. Now that all these facts are available to the court, it should take note of the fact that in the second phase of the SIR, voter deletions in Uttar Pradesh stood at 2.05 crore (around 13 percent of the state's electorate), 13-14.5 percent in Gujarat, 16.38 percent in Haryana, 19.09 percent in Arunachal Pradesh, 16.48 percent in Jharkhand, 10.78 percent in Andhra Pradesh, 10.39 percent in Uttarakhand, 19.5 percent in Karnataka, 11.8 percent in Chhattisgarh and 16.6 percent in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In the third phase, where SIR has been launched in 16 states and three Union territories and is already at the draft stage, deletions exceed 1.5 crore. In the completed phases so far, there have been 5-6 crore net deletions. That is an astronomical figure.

If allowing ineligible voters to vote is bad, exclusion of lakhs of eligible voters from the voters' list, thereby disenfranchising them, is not only worse but unconstitutional. Therefore, the time has come for the Supreme Court to relook at the entire SIR exercise. Else, the will of the people will be buried by the ECI with the tacit approval of the court.

Kapil Sibal | Senior lawyer, member of Rajya Sabha and former Union education minister



both literate and illiterate, to fill forms seeking information that was and is often hard to access; along with a host of other issues, should have been enough to scrap this exercise. However, the court found this exercise necessary and brushed

impacted the overall result of the Assembly elections.

The tribunals, working at this pace, would take about 25 years to dispose of these appeals. It is a travesty of justice that the procedure adopted will disenfranchise lakhs of voters in the com-

on the basis of which this exercise commenced.

The question now is what the court should do, given these revelations. If lakhs of voters were wrongly excluded, and I dare say lakhs may not have filed appeals, the truth regarding those

Direct Manipur-Guwahati Rail Link on Agenda as NFR Reviews Jiribam-Imphal Project

IMPHAL

The feasibility of establishing a direct railway link between Manipur and Guwahati was discussed on Wednesday as Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava held meetings with senior state government officials to review rail connectivity and infrastructure in the state.

Shrivastava called on Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Lok Bhavan before meeting Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh at the Chief Minister's Secretariat. Senior officials from the state government and NFR attended the discussions.

The meetings focused on strengthening railway infrastructure,



improving passenger services, facilitating freight movement and enhancing security to support more reliable rail operations in Manipur.

Officials discussed measures to ensure the smooth and regular operation of passenger services between Jiribam and Khongsang, with emphasis on providing dependable and convenient connectivity for people in the region.

The possibility of a direct rail service connecting Manipur with Guwahati was also taken up. Such connectivity could provide passengers from the state with easier access to Guwahati, one of the Northeast's major commercial and transport hubs. The discussions also covered road connectivity between Vangaichungpao and the National Highway, along with the need to strengthen security infrastructure around railway operations. Freight transportation featured prominently in the meetings, with officials reviewing arrangements for efficient handling and management of goods at Khongsang Terminal. The proposed introduction and operationalisation of Roll-on/Roll-off (RO-RO) services at the terminal was also discussed as a means

of facilitating the movement of goods and vehicles by rail. The status of the Jiribam-Imphal New Railway Line Project was also reviewed. Officials stressed the need to expedite ongoing works and maintain steady progress towards completion of the strategically important project.

The meetings underscored NFR's focus on improving passenger and freight connectivity in Manipur while strengthening railway security and infrastructure.

Better rail connectivity is expected to play a significant role in improving access, supporting trade and transportation, and contributing to the state's wider socio-economic development.

80 Crore Heroin Seized in Jiribam, Truck Driver Held



JIRIBAM

Security forces seized 10.8 kg of brown powder suspected to be heroin, with an estimated international market value of around 780 crore, from a goods truck in Manipur's Jiribam district and arrested the vehicle's driver, officials said.

Acting on specific intelligence about the movement of suspected anti-social elements in and around Makha Basti, a joint team of Borobekera Police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Assam Rifles launched checking operations in the area on Wednesday. At around 4.30 pm, the team intercepted a goods truck bearing registration number AS 01 LC 7631. A search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 10.8 kg of brown powder, packed in separate packets and allegedly concealed beneath the roof section of the truck cabin.

The seizure was conducted in the presence of Borobekera Sub-Deputy Collector Md Hefajuddin. Police said the preliminary estimated international market value of the suspected contraband was approximately 780 crore.

During questioning, the driver allegedly told investigators that the substance had been concealed by a person identified as Md Anash, who was known to him.

The driver, Azahar Husain alias Monu, a resident of New Khairabad F.V., Lalpani, in Assam's Cachar district, was taken to Jiribam Police Station and arrested around 5.30 pm after completion of legal formalities.

Arunachal Administrative Reforms Panel Submits First Report to Government

ITANAGAR

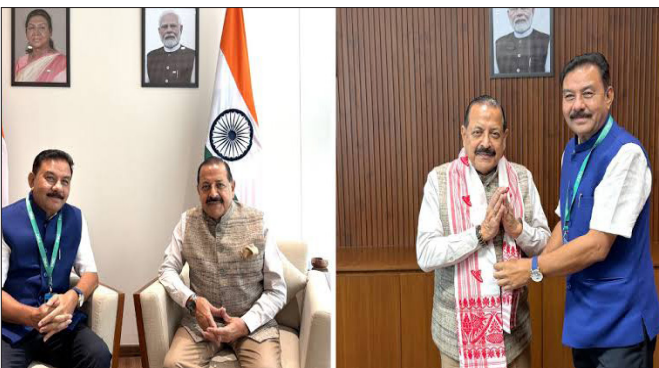
The Arunachal Pradesh Administrative Reforms Commission on Wednesday submitted its first report to the state government, marking a major step towards restructuring and strengthening the state's administrative system. Chief Minister Pema Khandu said the report could help make governance more efficient, responsive and citizen-centric.

In a post on X, Khandu said administrative reform was fundamentally about ensuring that government functions more effectively for ordinary citizens. "The presentation of the First Report of the Administrative Reforms Commission, led by chairman Pramod Jain, marks an important step in that direction," he said. The commission, headed by former IAS officer Pramod Kumar Jain, was constituted by the state government in November 2024 to review the functioning and scope of the state

administration and recommend reforms in line with changing socio-economic conditions and India Vision 2047. Its mandate covers a wide range of areas, including restructuring the organisational framework of the state government, streamlining departments, manpower planning and process re-engineering. The commission is also examining ways to strengthen district administration, improve public service delivery, promote participatory governance and expand the use of e-governance. A key focus of the panel is to assess whether the existing administrative structure is adequately aligned with Arunachal Pradesh's developmental priorities and its distinct socio-economic conditions.

Jain was appointed chairman of the commission in July 2025. Retired civil servant Hento Karga is its member, while the secretary of the Administrative Reforms and Training Department serves as member secretary.

Assam Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass meets Jitendra Singh, discusses state's development roadmap



GUWAHATI

Assam Legislative Assembly Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass met Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh, in New Delhi on Wednesday and discussed Assam's changing development profile and its growing role in the country's economic and technological progress.

The meeting focused on the

scope for expanding science and technology infrastructure in Assam, promoting innovation and research, and creating greater opportunities for young people through start-ups, incubation centres and technology-driven initiatives.

Dr Jitendra Singh, who also holds charge as Minister of State for the Prime Minister's Office, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions,

highlighted the pace of development witnessed in Assam over the past decade.

He said several major projects in the state had been put on track with the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and underlined the Centre's emphasis on using science and technology to accelerate development in the Northeast.

The Union minister said programmes under the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Biotechnology (DBT) could play an important role in strengthening research, encouraging entrepreneurship and promoting scientific temper among the youth.

The discussions also covered the potential use of space and atomic energy-related technologies for development applications in Assam. Dr Singh highlighted the role of geospatial technology in areas such as infrastructure planning, disaster management and improving agricultural productivity, particularly in remote

and difficult-to-reach areas.

Reflecting on Assam's transformation, Singh said the state had witnessed a marked change over the past decade. He noted that Assam, which had earlier frequently figured in the national discourse over protests and insurgency-related challenges, had moved towards a phase of greater peace and development.

He said the people of Assam had increasingly integrated with the broader national mainstream and that the state was now emerging as an important contributor to India's growth story.

The Union minister also recalled his association with the Northeast during his seven-year tenure with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).

The meeting highlighted the changing trajectory of Assam, with greater emphasis on peace, development, technology and integration as the state seeks to strengthen its role in India's growth journey.

Tripura Under 'Mafia, Commission Raj' Since BJP Came to Power, Alleges LoP Jitendra Chaudhury

AGARTALA

Tripura Leader of the Opposition and CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury on Tuesday accused the BJP-led government of weakening democratic institutions and aggravating the problems faced by farmers, agricultural workers, youth and other sections of society.

Addressing a mass gathering at Swami Vivekananda Maidan in Agartala during the three-day state conference of the All India Kisan Sabha, Chaudhury launched a strong attack on the state government, alleging that democratic rights had been steadily curtailed since the BJP came to power.

The CPI(M) leader claimed that attempts were made to prevent people from attending the gathering, alleging that vehicles carrying participants were stopped at several locations and some people were



threatened with being denied government benefits.

"Despite these obstacles, farmers, Jhum cultivators, agricultural workers, women and common people have turned up in large numbers. After nearly five and a half years, this conference is being

held under unusual circumstances," Chaudhury said.

He alleged that the functioning of democratic institutions in Tripura had deteriorated significantly during the BJP's tenure.

"Democracy is being looted in Tripura and the Constitution is being rendered ineffective," he alleged, further accusing the BJP government of using the state as a "laboratory" for its political agenda.

Chaudhury also questioned the government's employment figures. Referring to figures cited by Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy, he claimed that around 22,000 regular appointments had been made while nearly 26,000 posts were filled through outsourcing.

"If 48,000 new employees have been added to the administration, why do schools, hospitals, health centres and government offices continue to face staff shortages?"

he asked.

The Opposition leader also alleged irregularities in the implementation of government projects, claiming that people close to the ruling establishment were benefiting from commissions.

He accused the government of allowing a "mafia raj" and "commission raj" to flourish across several departments.

The CPI(M) leader's remarks came as the party stepped up its criticism of the BJP-led government over employment, governance and what it describes as shrinking democratic space in the state.

Chaudhury said farmers, agricultural workers, women, youth and ordinary citizens were bearing the brunt of what he described as the government's failures, and called for greater public participation in defending democratic rights and livelihoods.

N Irabanta Singh Conferred with Business Success Award 2026



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

BENGALURU: N Irabanta Singh, Chairman of UNACCO School and UNACCO College, has been conferred with the Business Success Award 2026 at Proficor 2026, organised by Quantum Leap in Bengaluru.

The two-day event was held on September 1 and 2 at Aldovia Resort and Convention and brought together around 2,000 entrepreneurs, business owners

and professionals from across the country.

According to a release issued by UNACCO School, the award recognises Singh's contribution of more than 16 years to the fields of quality education, skill development and youth empowerment in Manipur.

The recognition highlights his efforts towards creating better educational opportunities and supporting the development of young people in the state.

NESt Fest 2026: Northeast's youth, culture and music to take centre stage in Delhi



NEW DELHI

The vibrant culture, music, cuisine and creative talent of the Northeast will take

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centre stage in the national capital as the ninth edition of the North East Students' Festival (NESt Fest) is set to be held on September 4 and 5.

Organised by NGO My Home India, the two-day festival will be hosted at the Talkatora Indoor Stadium under the theme "The Sound of India's Yuva Shakti". The event is open to all and will bring together students, young artists, performers and cultural groups from across the Northeast.

The festival will open on September 4 with an inaugural ceremony featuring a

cultural parade showcasing the traditions of the eight northeastern states. The opening day will also include the inauguration of a government pavilion, folk music and dance performances, besides an exhibition showcasing Janajatiya handicrafts and regional cuisine.

"My Home India was built on one idea - that the distance between Delhi and the Northeast should never be a distance of understanding. Twenty-one years on, this festival is where that idea comes alive every year. When leadership from different

regions shares the same stage for our students, that is the India we set out to build," said Sunil Deodhar, founder of My Home India and senior BJP leader.

The second day will feature a "Vande Mataram"-themed inter-college cultural competition, a regional attire fashion show, a youth pledge ceremony and the valedictory session.

A host of artists from the Northeast are scheduled to perform during the festival. They include Sourabhee Debbarma, Dikshu Sarma, Danube Kangjam, Lunia Tadu, Aj Maisnam, Moko Kozu, Chorun Mugli, Siampuii Ralte and Lily Sawian.

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Mizoram Governor V K Singh are scheduled to participate in the second-day programme. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Sambhaji Shinde are also among the invited guests.

The festival will additionally set up an Assam flood relief help desk to assist people affected by the recent floods in the state and facilitate coordination of relief and support initiatives.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya Scindia, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Maharashtra Governor Jishnu Dev Varma and Odisha Governor K Hari Babu are among those expected to attend the inaugural ceremony.

With its focus on youth, culture and regional identity, NESt Fest has emerged as a platform to showcase the Northeast's artistic and cultural diversity while strengthening its engagement with audiences in the national capital.

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‘Will the Home Minister act?’: Abhishek’s Kolkata office vandalised



KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress, TMC national general secretary and MP Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday alleged that armed “BJP hooligans” vandalised the party’s office on Camac Street in Kolkata in the early hours of the day, and accused the police of failing to respond promptly despite repeated complaints. The BJP, however, rejected the allegations, with its Baranagar MLA Sajal Ghosh asserting that no party worker was involved. In a series of posts on X, Banerjee claimed that a group of armed men stormed the office around 4.30 am, assaulted those present, ransacked the premises and damaged electronic equipment. Describing the incident as a “disgraceful assault on the rule of law”, Banerjee alleged that the Kolkata Police did not reach the spot for nearly two hours despite repeated calls and emails from party workers

and lawyers. “No political party and no group of armed hooligans can be above the law,” he said. Questioning the law and order situation in the state, Banerjee said, “If people can storm a political party office with weapons at 4.30 in the morning, assault people and vandalise property while the police remain absent, then what exactly is left of the rule of law in West Bengal?” Calling for immediate action, the TMC leader demanded the arrest of those allegedly involved in the attack and sought accountability from the authorities. “Enough is enough. Arrest the perpetrators. Fix accountability. Act now,” he said. Sharing another video on X, Banerjee questioned whether the Governor, Union Home Minister or the Prime Minister’s Office would intervene. He also urged the judiciary, particularly the Calcutta High Court, to take “note of what is happening” and act to

uphold the rule of law in West Bengal. He also slammed Chief minister Suwendu Adhikari, questioning whether he was “scared” of the TMC, and said Adhikari should resign, alleging that he had no moral authority to remain in office if the opposition continued to face such attacks in the state. “This is not democracy. This is political thugery,” Banerjee said, adding that “every attack, every act of intimidation, every abuse of power” would be remembered. The TMC leader also demanded a probe into who “planned, organised and directed” the alleged violence. Meanwhile, BJP’s Baranagar legislator Sajal Ghosh dismissed the allegations, saying, “I can say with responsibility that no one from the BJP is involved in this incident”. He questioned why TMC workers were present at the office at that hour and alleged that the incident was staged to remain in the political spotlight.

Retired Air Marshal Jeetendra Mishra named first full-time CEO of Ayodhya Ram temple Trust



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Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Nyas (temple trust), on Wednesday, named former Air Marshal Jitendra Mishra as the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the temple trust to oversee the administration and other affairs of the Shree Ram temple in Ayodhya. Air Marshal Mishra led the Western Air Command during Operation Sindoor last year. He is a native of Deoria district in eastern UP. The temple trust made the announcement of the appointment of Air Marshal Mishra at its third meeting after the case of Ram temple donation theft surfaced in June this year. The trust also announced

three new trustees, including a woman for the first time. The three new trustees include Delhi-based Mahesh Bhagchandka, Ayodhya advocate Madan Mohan Pandey and Nirmala Yadav of Shikohabad, who is associated with the RSS. Moreover, the other changes announced at the board meeting of the temple trust included the appointment of Swami Govind Dev Giri ji as the general secretary. Giri, who has been the treasurer of the trust so far, will now fill the post of general secretary vacated by Champat Rai. Similarly, the newly appointed trustee Mahesh Bhagchandka is likely to be entrusted with the responsibility of treasurer of the trust. VHP leader Sharad Sharma

has been named as the spokesman for the trust. Notably, eight persons have been named as accused in the donation theft case and they have been lingering in jail since then. Moreover, three senior trustees, including Champat Rai, trust member Anil Mishra and Gopal Rao, have stepped down from their posts in connection with the embezzlement row. According to search committee member Suresh Haware, Air Marshal Jitendra Mishra, who played a significant role during Operation Sindoor against Pakistan, brought discipline and management to the Ram temple. Haware hoped that Air Marshal Mishra would restore the faith and trust of Ram bhakts, which got a dent after the donation theft controversy. Besides Haware, a retired nuclear scientist and former chief of Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust in Shirdi, the other two members of the three-member selection panel are retired Supreme Court judge Justice Pramod Kohli and retired Lieutenant General Vishnukant Chaturvedi. As per sources, among the other three newly appointed trustees, Mahesh Bhagchandka is the chairman of M2K Foundation and a trustee of the Ashok Singhal Foundation. He has also authored a book on the late VHP international president, to whom he is related. Advocate Madan Mohan Pandey had been associated with the Ram Janmabhoomi case in the local courts and is also associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The new trustees were appointed to fill the vacancies that arose after the resignations of General Secretary Champat Rai and member Anil Mishra following recent allegations of theft of donations at the Ram Temple. However, the third vacan-

cy arose following the death of Bimlendra Mohan Pratap Mishra, scion of Ayodhya’s erstwhile royal family, last year. However, taking to X, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra posted: “The comprehensive, transparent, and technology-enabled process for selecting the Chief Executive Officer of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra has been completed... After reviewing 5,585 applications, the selection committee held detailed discussions with 16 candidates. Today, the committee submitted the final panel of three highly qualified candidates to the Trust, which will make the final decision and official announcement.” The search committee secretary Sameer Panda said: “The Search Committee, on the basis of its comprehensive evaluation, has recommended a panel of three highly qualified professionals to the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust. These candidates represent the highest calibre of institutional leadership, management expertise, integrity and vision required to serve as Chief Executive Officer of an institution of national and international significance.” The committee said the selection process was conducted through a multi-tiered evaluation combining AI-enabled technology with manual assessment. According to a statement from the panel, teams worked simultaneously across Delhi-NCR, Pune and Sambalpur to screen and shortlist candidates in a “rigorous” and “transparent” process. The committee said the final three candidates were recommended after a “comprehensive evaluation”, taking into account institutional leadership, management expertise, integrity and vision required to head an institution of “national and international significance”.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump floats renaming Strait of Hormuz after himself, says ready to strike Iran again ‘any time’



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday suggested renaming the Strait of Hormuz as “Trump Strait,” asserting US control of the vital waterway even as fighting raged there with Iran. It is the latest in a series of geographical name changes floated by Trump, and comes after he claimed US sovereignty over the strait that Tehran has effectively shut for six months. “Now that we have it under USA control, should we change the name

Hormuz Strait to TRUMP STRAIT??? Like America itself, it would be ‘hotter’ than ever before!” Trump said on his Truth Social network. Trump also said Wednesday that the US was ready to attack Iran again after extensive bombardment of sites across the country left at least 19 Iranians dead. “We blew up much more than their radar last night. It was a very heavy attack last night, and we’re prepared to do another one any time we want,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. Meanwhile, the White House later

posted a map of the Gulf on social media with the waterway marked “Trump Strait.” “It’s got a nice ring to it,” the White House post added. The 80-year-old president’s call to unilaterally rename an international body of water after himself comes despite the fact that the six-month-old war with Iran shows no sign of ending. Since returning to office last year, Trump has made a string of similar renaming suggestions which started out as apparent attempts to troll his adver-

saries, but then came to fruition. Last week the 80-year-old Republican signed an order renaming Lake Ontario as “Lake America” amid a trade war with neighboring Canada. Trump also renamed the Gulf of Mexico as the “Gulf of America” on his first day back in the White House in January 2025. Neither Mexico nor Canada have accepted the changes. Trump additionally reverted the name of Denali, North America’s highest peak, to its former moniker Mt. McKinley. The billionaire president has also gone on a spree of renaming things after himself, including the Kennedy arts center in Washington, a peace institute, a “Trump Gold Card” for immigration and a “Trump Rx” drug-sales website. The US Treasury meanwhile on Wednesday issued \$1 coins featuring Trump’s face to mark the 250th anniversary of US independence, running counter to federal law that says no living president may appear on US currency. But the strait suggestion may also be aimed as a fresh distraction from the Iran war, which has caused oil prices to spike for US consumers ahead of crucial midterm elections in November. Fighting has flared again after weeks of calm, with US forces launching fresh strikes near the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday in response to what Trump said were new minelaying efforts by Iran. Iran said one of the US strikes killed four people at a wedding, branding it a “war crime”, and launched a wave of retaliatory strikes at US bases in Jordan, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Iraq. Iran has effectively shut down the chokepoint, through which a fifth of the world’s oil passes, in retaliation for the war Trump started along with Israel in late February. Trump has in recent weeks repeatedly pressed a threat to claim sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, even posting a map showing the waterway as a “new US territory.”

Rubio says he does not think India, Iran are discussing trade deal; warns of US sanctions



WASHINGTON

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said he does not believe India and Iran are currently discussing a trade deal, while warning that countries helping Tehran circumvent US sanctions could themselves face punitive measures. Rubio’s remarks came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The two leaders discussed bilateral ties, trade and the situation in West Asia. Asked about the meeting and whether India and Iran were working towards a trade arrangement, Rubio said, “Well, I don’t think there’s a trade deal between India and Iran.” Speaking on The Brian Kilmeade Show, Rubio said countries were free to pursue their own foreign policies and noted that several nations maintained contact

with Iran. However, he reiterated Washington’s opposition to any efforts to help Tehran evade US sanctions. “I think what ultimately happens, though, is, and the President’s been very clear, is no country should be helping Iran evade sanctions,” Rubio said. He added that countries should not create mechanisms that allow Iran to generate revenue that could be used to “sponsor terrorism and try to build a nuclear weapon”. “And if countries decide to do that, then we’re going to have to sanction them too,” Rubio said. At his meeting with Pezeshkian, Modi had said India wanted to strengthen its long-standing ties with Iran and expand and diversify bilateral trade. “Met President Masoud Pezeshkian in Bishkek. Reiterated our commitment to strengthening India’s long-standing friendship with Iran across diverse sectors. We want to expand and diversify our

trade basket in the times to come,” Modi said in a post on X. The two leaders also discussed the situation in West Asia, with Modi reiterating India’s support for efforts aimed at securing lasting peace in the region. The Ministry of External Affairs described the meeting as “fruitful”. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Modi reiterated India’s position that issues in the region should be resolved through “dialogue and diplomacy”. The discussions also covered the safety of commercial shipping, seafarers and civilians amid the ongoing conflict, as well as the need to safeguard freedom of navigation and commerce. Modi also conveyed India’s readiness to work closely with Iran in multilateral forums, including BRICS and the SCO. He invited Pezeshkian to India for the BRICS Summit, scheduled to be held in New Delhi from September 12 to 13.

Assam-Meghalaya Tensions: What We Stand to Lose Is Greater Than What We Seek to Prove

As tensions between Assam and Meghalaya strain cross-border ties, the real challenge is to ensure that political and boundary disputes do not turn into hostility between ordinary people.

The recent tensions between Assam and Meghalaya have raised an uncomfortable question: what happens when a dispute between two states begins to affect relationships built over generations?

Just days before the latest unrest in Shillong, six friends from Assam had visited my home in the Meghalaya capital in two separate groups. They came as friends have done over the years. We talked, shared meals and recalled old memories. There was nothing unusual about those meetings and, certainly, nothing that suggested we belonged to opposing sides.

Within days, however, the atmosphere had changed.

A protest in Shillong turned violent, leaving people injured and vehicles and public property damaged. The Meghalaya government later said 31 vehicles were targeted, including eight registered in Assam. Restrictions on movement between the two states added to the sense of unease.

What was particularly disturbing was how quickly an incident involving a protest began to acquire a broader social meaning. Assam and Meghalaya, neighbouring states with a complicated history and an unresolved boundary question, were increasingly being spoken about as opposing camps.

That is dangerous territory.

My own life has never fitted neatly on one side of the boundary.

I am a Garo from Meghalaya, but much of my childhood was spent in Assam, where my father worked. I went to school there and grew up surrounded by Assamese language, culture and everyday life. While our family was based in Assam, I came to Shillong for college. After my father retired, we returned to Meghalaya.

Assam shaped my childhood and early years. Meghalaya is my home. I have never regarded those two realities as contradictory.

My professional journey, too, began in Assam. As a young man, I worked as a Special Representative for the Assamese children's magazine Mouchak, edited by Shantanu Tamuli and published from Jorhat. I later began my career as a Special Correspondent with the Assamese newspaper Mahajati, edited by Dr Purna Narayan Sinha and published from Tezpur.

I was also among those involved in establishing the Udalguri Press Club on January 20, 1988.

Those years brought me into contact with several people who had already established themselves in Assam's media, including Dharendra Nath Bezbaruah, Kanaksen Deka, Wasbir Hussain, Prashanta Rajguru and Mihir Deori. As a young writer, I learned from them and from the Assamese journalistic environment in which I was beginning to find my own voice.

My association with Assam extended beyond childhood and journalism. As a young man, I became involved in public life there, served as a regional leader of the All Assam Students' Union, participated in the Assam Agitation and remained active during the transition from the student movement to the formation of the Assam Gana Parishad.

That experience has influenced how I understand questions of identity.

People have legitimate reasons to be deeply concerned about their identity, culture, land and political rights. These concerns are often rooted in history and in fears about the future. There is nothing inherently wrong with holding such concerns strongly.

The problem begins when an argument over issues becomes an argument against people.

Assam and Meghalaya have genuine differences. Some have existed for decades. The boundary dispute remains unresolved in several areas, while questions relating to land, identity, migration, employment, development and natural resources continue to generate political and public debate.

These are serious issues. They deserve serious discussion.

But a dispute between governments is not the same thing as a dispute between people.

An issue can be de-



bated, negotiated and, eventually, resolved. Suspicion between communities is much harder to reverse.

An Assamese person travelling to Meghalaya can quickly cease to be seen simply as a traveller, student, trader, colleague or friend and instead be reduced to the label "Assamese". The same can happen to a Meghalayan travelling to Assam.

When that happens, an incident involving a few individuals begins to acquire a meaning far beyond those directly involved.

That is when political disagreement begins to damage social relationships that had nothing to do with the original dispute.

The violence in Shillong must be addressed according to law. Those responsible for unlawful acts must face due process. The Meghalaya government has constituted a Special Investigation Team and FIRs have been registered in connection with the violence.

At the same time, people who had no involvement in the incident should not be made to answer for it simply because of where they come from.

The developments that followed demonstrated how quickly a local incident can spill across the boundary and affect ordinary lives.

The two governments have since taken steps to restore movement and improve coordination, including arrangements for stranded travellers and vehicles and mechanisms for continued engagement. Another round of discussions is expected around September 10 on longer-term arrangements.

These measures are necessary.

But restoring movement is only one part of the task. People must also regain the confidence that crossing the Assam-Meghalaya boundary will not change the way they are treated.

The relationship between Assam and Meghalaya is far older and wider than the disagreements of the present.

For decades, people have crossed the boundary for education, employment, healthcare, trade and family. Students attend institutions in one another's states. Patients travel to places where they can access treatment. Families visit relatives. Traders and transporters depend on roads that connect the two states.

Friendships have developed in schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods without anyone asking which side of the boundary the other person belongs to.

These everyday connections are easy to overlook because they rarely make headlines.

Yet they are among the strongest foundations of peaceful relations between neighbouring societies.

There is a useful comparison within families.

Brothers and sisters may disagree over property, responsibility or other matters. Sometimes those disputes become serious and can take years to settle. But disagreement does not necessarily mean that the relationship itself has to end.

Assam and Meghalaya have disagreements of their own, some longstanding and difficult. That should not turn the people of the two states into strangers.

I keep returning to those six friends who visited my home in Shillong only days before the incident.

They did not come as representa-

tives of Assam. I did not receive them as a representative of Meghalaya. We were simply people who had known one another for years.

Those friendships existed before the present tension. They should not be defined by it.

This is what concerns me when a political disagreement begins to acquire a social meaning.

A young person may begin wondering whether travelling to a neighbouring state somehow makes them disloyal to their own. A family may become apprehensive about where its children travel. A friendship may suddenly be viewed through the politics of the moment. None of that resolves a boundary dispute.

None of it protects an identity. And none of it advances a legitimate political interest.

A child growing up in Meghalaya should be able to learn Assamese, have Assamese friends and travel to Assam without having to explain why. A young person in Assam should be able to visit Meghalaya with the same sense of ease.

These may appear to be small things.

In reality, they are part of what allows neighbouring societies to coexist comfortably.

My own life is difficult to divide into an "Assam chapter" and a "Meghalaya chapter".

Assam gave me my childhood, schooling, early public life and the beginning of my professional career. Meghalaya is my home, my roots and the place to which my family eventually returned.

One has never had to cancel out the other.

That is why the language of choosing sides makes me uncomfortable.

I can belong to Meghalaya and still feel affection for the place where I grew up. I can care deeply about Meghalaya's interests without regarding Assam or Assamese people as a threat. At the same time, I can understand why people in Assam have concerns of their own and expect those concerns to be taken seriously.

This does not mean legitimate grievances should be ignored.

Nor does it suggest that complex disputes can be settled through sentiment alone.

They require negotiation, evidence, law and political judgement.

But sentiment can remind us of what must not be lost while those difficult questions are being debated.

For generations, people in Assam and Meghalaya have built connections through family, friendship, education, employment and everyday life. Much of this has happened quietly, without governments directing it and without anyone making a political claim over it. We inherited many of these relationships from those who came before us.

We should think carefully before allowing a dispute of our generation to become hostility inherited by the next.

I grew up in Assam, and I belong to Meghalaya. I have friends on both sides. For most of my life, I never had to explain how those things could coexist. I would not want the next generation to grow up having to ask that question. There will be disagreements between Assam and Meghalaya. There will be difficult negotiations, competing interests and political arguments. That is part of public life.

What should not become part of that process is the idea that ordinary Assamese and Meghalayans must look at one another with suspicion because their governments or political groups happen to disagree.

The boundary may remain a political question.

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