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PERSPECTIVE

Live and let live is the rule of common justice

HOLIDAY NOTICE

KRC TIMES will remain closed on 18 th September 2026 on account of BISWAKARMA PUJA. Regular work will resume on 19 TH SEPTEMBER 2026. We wish our readers/advertisers Happy BISWAKARMA PUJA .

— Editor

Manipur imposes power cuts amid 90 MW deficit

IMPHAL
Manipur has imposed temporary rotational power cuts across the state amid an electricity shortage of around 90 MW, the Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL) said on September 16. According to MSPDCL, the state currently has around 180 MW of power available against a peak demand of 270 MW, resulting in a significant supply gap. The distribution company said rotational power cuts had been introduced to maintain grid stability amid the severe supply constraints.

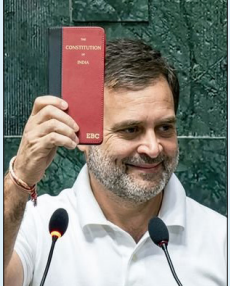
"The power cuts are a necessary measure to maintain grid stability amid severe power supply constraints," MSPDCL said in a statement.

MSPDCL attributed the shortage to several factors, including reduced hydropower generation amid erratic rainfall linked to El Nino conditions.

The company also cited lower thermal power generation due to coal shortages and inadequate availability of electricity in the energy market.

According to MSPDCL, similar supply constraints are affecting several states across the country. In coordination with the Manipur government, the power distribution company said it was exploring all available options to reduce the duration of interruptions and restore normal electricity supply as soon as possible.

WHO SAID WHAT



Happy birthday to PM Narendra Modi ji. Wishing you good health and a long life.
~ **Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition (Lok Sabha)**



STAY ENRICHED

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 876 | SILCHAR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com , www.krctimes.com

Assam CM hands out over Rs 278 crore to 82,219 young entrepreneurs



GUWAHATI
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on September 17 distributed financial assistance worth more than Rs 278 crore to 82,219 young entrepreneurs under the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan (CMAAA) 1.0 and 2.0, as the state government continued its push to promote youth entrepreneurship.

Speaking at a financial assistance distribution programme at Jyoti-Bishnu Antartatik Kala Mandir in Khanapara, Sarma said the initiative was aimed not only at providing financial support but also at helping young people build sustainable

businesses and become self-reliant. Under CMAAA, beneficiaries in the general category receive Rs 2 lakh, comprising a 50 per cent grant and a 50 per cent interest-free loan. Entrepreneurs in the professional category are eligible for Rs 5 lakh under the same funding structure.

CMAAA 1.0 covers 9,552 general-category and 26 professional-category beneficiaries, while CMAAA 2.0 includes 72,447 general-category and 194 professional-category beneficiaries, taking the total number of beneficiaries across the two phases to 82,219.

According to programme details,

more than Rs 196 crore is being distributed under CMAAA 1.0, while the allocation under CMAAA 2.0 is stated to be more than Rs 182 crore.

Sarma said the government had earlier provided Rs 75,000 during the initial phase and another Rs 25,000 in a subsequent phase to beneficiaries to support their entrepreneurial ventures. However, not all beneficiaries qualified for further assistance after failing to meet the prescribed requirements. Of around 13,000 beneficiaries, about 9,552 fulfilled the criteria, while nearly 4,000 did not. The Chief Minister attributed some of the dropouts to beneficiaries taking up jobs instead of continuing with their businesses.

He said the government was now seeking to encourage those who had received the earlier Rs 25,000 assistance, along with those receiving Rs 1 lakh, to pursue entrepreneurship more seriously. The government also plans to motivate beneficiaries receiving smaller amounts to work towards qualifying for higher assistance in the next phase, which Sarma said could be undertaken within the next nine to 10 months.

Over 31,000 displaced people return home amid rehabilitation drive



IMPHAL
More than 31,000 people displaced by the ethnic conflict in Manipur have returned to their original homes as the state government continues its rehabilitation and resettlement efforts, according to the State Home Department.

As of September 3, 28,899 internally displaced people remained away from their homes. Of them, 24,530 were staying in 105 relief camps, while 4,369 were living in temporary accommodation.

To support the return of displaced families, authorities have constructed

7,034 houses and repaired 4,159 damaged homes. The Centre has sanctioned Rs 1,347.78 crore for rehabilitation since the conflict began in May 2023, of which Rs 949.63 crore has been released and utilised.

Bishnupur has the highest relief-camp population with 7,892 IDPs, followed by Churachandpur with 5,195 and Imphal West with 4,395.

Meanwhile, police registered 2,638 conflict-related FIRs between February and August 31, 2026. The cases have resulted in 1,463 arrests, while charge sheets have been filed in 181 cases.

Naga talks remain stalled as Rio, NSCN-IM discuss apex panel



KOHIAMA
Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on September 16 said the state government's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) and the NSCN-IM held discussions on the delay in resuming Naga political negotiations and the proposed formation of an apex committee.

The closed-door consultation was held at Chumoukedima, with the two sides discussing the reasons behind the stalled dialogue and the proposed structure of the apex panel.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Rio said the composition of the committee was still being discussed and that the political talks would resume after the issue was settled.

"We discussed why the talks are delayed and the constitution of the apex committee for discussion, which is in negotiation. So after that, talks will start," Rio said.

Rio had recently said that the Naga peace talks remained stalled and expressed hope that the dialogue would resume following Union Home Minister Amit Shah's assurance that a Union Minister of State for Home Affairs would be appointed as interlocutor.

However, NSCN-IM leader Rh Raising described Wednesday's meeting as a consultation rather than a formal negotiation.

Asked about the next steps in the decades-old political dialogue, Raising said the outcome depended on the other side.

"It depends on... not on us. The ball is in their court," he said.

The NSCN-IM entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Centre in 1997 and has since been engaged in negotiations for a political settlement to the Naga issue. The two sides signed the Framework Agreement in August 2015.

Despite years of negotiations, several contentious issues remain unresolved. These include the NSCN-IM's demand for a separate Naga flag and constitution, as well as the integration of Naga-inhabited areas across state boundaries. The proposed apex committee is being discussed amid efforts to facilitate the resumption of the political dialogue, although its composition and mandate have yet to be finalised.

NSCN-IM distances itself from Jamir-Bhagwat meeting

Meanwhile, the NSCN-IM has distanced itself from former Nagaland chief minister SC Jamir's recent meeting with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, during which the Naga political issue was reportedly discussed.

Raising said Jamir was not authorised to speak on the Naga political issue. "Jamir is not the advocate of the Naga people, and he does not have the right to talk on the issue of the Nagas," he said.

Another NSCN-IM leader, VS Atem, also said those involved in the meeting were not authorised or mandated to represent the Naga people in the political negotiations.

"We have no comment. They are not authorised people, mandated people. They are just talking for the sake of the party," Atem said.

Sribhumi extortion case: Two Assam Police personnel arrested, SI absconding



STRIBHUMI
Two Assam Police personnel have been arrested in Sribhumi district in connection with an alleged extortion case involving Rs 14 lakh, while a sub-inspector named in the case remains absconding.

The arrested personnel have been identified as Lance Naik Anwar Hussain and Constable Sajal Shuklabaidya. Both were posted at Patharkandi Police Station.

According to police sources, the alleged incident took place on September 10 when a business associate was reportedly picked up from Patharkandi Railway Station in a police vehicle and taken to the Chandkhira area. It is alleged that Rs 14 lakh was subsequently taken from him. During the investigation, the involvement of two police personnel, including a sub-inspector posted at Patharkandi Police Station, allegedly came to light. Police subsequently arrested Hussain and Shuklabaidya. Searches were also conducted at the residences of the two accused personnel, during which Rs 2 lakh was reportedly recovered. The sub-inspector, identified as M. Nangthaiba Singh, remains absconding. Police have launched a search to trace and arrest him.

The alleged involvement of serving police personnel in the extortion case has raised concern in Sribhumi district, with the investigation continuing.

Manipur tops hill, Northeast states in NITI Aayog EV index



IMPHAL
Manipur has been recognised as the best-performing state among the hilly and northeastern states in the India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2025 released by NITI Aayog.

Delhi topped the Open Category, followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka and Chandigarh, while Manipur emerged as the leading state in the hilly and northeastern category.

The recognition highlights Manipur's efforts to promote electric mobility and sustainable transportation and comes amid the state's push to expand electric vehicle adoption and strengthen supporting infrastructure.

A team led by Manipur Principal Secretary (Transport) R.K. Dinesh Singh received the recognition on behalf of the state government. The delegation included Special Secretary (TCI) Laltanpuii, Director (Transport) Kh. Diana Devi, Priyoranjan of MSPCL and Imphal West District Transport Officer Kh. Sanjeevkumar.

The state government attributed the recognition to coordinated efforts by the Transport Department, Power Department, MAHUD and other stakeholders to promote electric mobility.

Manipur has taken measures to facilitate the shift towards cleaner transportation, including strengthening electric mobility infrastructure and encouraging the adoption of electric vehicles.

The government also cited increasing public awareness and growing adoption of electric mobility among residents as factors contributing to the state's performance.

The recognition is expected to encourage further efforts to develop electric mobility infrastructure and expand sustainable transport options across Manipur.

The state government said it would continue to promote environmentally sustainable mobility solutions and strengthen the electric vehicle ecosystem with greater public participation.

Petrol pumps may stop UPI payments above Rs 2,000 over MDR



NEW DELHI
Petrol pump dealers in several states have threatened to stop accepting UPI payments of Rs 2,000 and above if they are required to bear a flat Rs 5 merchant discount rate (MDR) on such transactions.

Dealers in Delhi-NCR, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan have raised concerns that the proposed charge could further erode their margins, which they estimate at around Rs 2.40 to Rs 3.40 per litre.

Monty Sehgal, spokesperson for the Federation of All India Petroleum Traders (FAIPT), said

fuel retailers could be forced to restrict UPI payments above Rs 2,000 unless they are granted an exemption. The issue follows a clarification by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) that UPI transactions for fuel purchases above Rs 2,000 will attract a flat Rs 5 MDR, while transactions below the threshold will continue to carry zero MDR.

The Akhila Karnataka Federation of Petroleum Traders (AK-FPT) has sought an exemption for fuel retailers, arguing that dealers cannot raise petrol and diesel prices to recover digital payment charges because retail prices are fixed by oil marketing companies.

Dealer Hemant Sirohi of Uttar Pradesh, citing official UPI transaction data, said petrol pumps collectively process around 23.9 million UPI transactions worth Rs 1,573 crore. About 20 per cent of these transactions are estimated to be above Rs 2,000.

Sirohi estimated that the proposed MDR could add around Rs 230-250 a day to the costs of an indi-

vidual petrol pump.

The All India Petroleum Dealers Association (AIPDA) has also urged the government to completely waive MDR for fuel stations. The association said petrol and diesel are essential commodities and transactions above Rs 2,000 are common at fuel stations.

India had 1,03,023 petrol pumps as of April 2026, with more than 90 per cent operated by Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL).

The proposed charge has also triggered concerns about its impact on consumers and digital payment adoption. BimaPay CEO Hanut Mehta said passing digital payment costs on to consumers could affect confidence in digital payments, particularly among price-sensitive users.

The dispute comes as fuel retailers seek clarity on how the proposed MDR will be implemented and whether petrol pumps will be exempted from the charge.

Ajmal attacks Congress after filing nomination for Nagaon bypoll



NAGAON
AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal on Thursday attacked the Congress after filing his nomination for the Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll, claiming that his entry into the contest had disrupted the Opposition party's electoral strategy.

Ajmal alleged that Congress leader Rakibul Husain's election planning had failed after the AIUDF fielded him as its candidate.

"Rakibul's entire planning has failed because Ajmal was given the ticket. The Congress is now disappointed," Ajmal said after filing his nomination.

The AIUDF leader said his campaign would focus on issues including eviction drives, price rise, education and healthcare.

Ajmal also raised concerns over an alleged security lapse during the nomination process, claiming that his Samsung Ultra mobile phone was stolen from his personal assistant while he was leaving the venue.

"Nagaon Police have not been able to provide security to us. How will they provide security to our mobile phones?" he said, questioning the security arrangements made by the district police.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 876

The Silence Over Gaza

A newspaper is more than a record of events. It is, metaphorically, a second skin. It absorbs the reader's anger, anxiety, indifference and helplessness. More importantly, it creates a space where citizens respond to what is happening around them. That response or the absence of it can sometimes tell us as much as the news itself.

The debate over Gaza has exposed an unsettling absence of response. For many younger readers, wars such as Vietnam belong to another historical age. The language of protest, resistance and political dissent associated with Vietnam appears distant, almost museum-like. Gaza, meanwhile, has become another item in the relentless flow of information.

The Vietnam War generated an extraordinary cultural and intellectual response. Musicians such as Joan Baez and Bob Dylan gave the conflict a human voice. Intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky challenged the structures of power behind it. Paediatrician Benjamin Spock became an unlikely figure of the anti-war movement. The war was not merely reported; it was debated, interpreted and experienced through music, literature, politics and protest.

The response to Gaza has been markedly different. Many people know the technical details of weapons and military aircraft. They follow maps, operations and battlefield developments. Yet the human beings behind the statistics often disappear from the conversation. The deaths of children become numbers; destroyed homes become images; displacement becomes a figure in a report.

That transformation is central to understanding contemporary violence.

The violence of the 21st century is increasingly mediated through numbers. Thousands killed. Millions displaced. Hundreds of buildings destroyed. Such figures are necessary, but numbers alone cannot communicate suffering. They can record the scale of a tragedy while simultaneously making it feel distant and impersonal.

This is where journalism faces one of its greatest challenges. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, associated with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, offered a different model. Its proceedings were communicated across languages and communities, turning spectators into witnesses. People were not simply informed about apartheid; they were compelled to confront testimony, confession, responsibility and violence. Information became an ethical encounter.

That sense of witnessing appears increasingly fragile in the age of digital information.

The problem is not simply that people have forgotten history. Memory itself has changed. Vietnam, the Holocaust, the Bangladesh genocide and Rwanda remain powerful historical references, but for generations born long after these events, they can seem remote. Historical memory can preserve the past, but it can also turn it into something safely contained in textbooks, documentaries and anniversaries. Gaza demonstrates the danger of that distance.

When violence is encountered primarily through screens and statistics, suffering can become abstract. The constant circulation of images can paradoxically produce numbness. A tragedy that is witnessed every day can begin to feel like background noise. Hannah Arendt's phrase, "the banality of evil", acquires a disturbing contemporary resonance here. Violence does not always arrive in a form that shocks us into action. It can become routine, bureaucratic and statistical. Its horror can be hidden behind terminology, military briefings and casualty figures. To say that thousands have died is necessary. But journalism must also ask: Who were they? What were their lives? What families did they leave behind? What dreams, relationships and ordinary routines were destroyed? Without such questions, the body count risks becoming a form of erasure.

Numbers must speak.

They must carry stories, biographies and memories. A statistic should not be allowed to conceal the individual. Every number represents a person who had a history, a family and a place in a community. This is not an argument against facts or data. It is an argument for placing information within the human context that gives it meaning. The great historical tragedies of the past were accompanied by storytelling, testimony and resistance. They forced societies to confront uncomfortable questions about power and responsibility. The challenge today is to recover that moral dimension without romanticising the past or pretending that contemporary violence is identical to earlier wars.

The newspaper still has an important role in that effort. Its task is not merely to count the dead but to make the dead visible.

It must connect information with knowledge, memory with experience, and statistics with human lives. It must create witnesses rather than passive spectators. In an age of endless images and instant information, perhaps the greatest danger is not ignorance but indifference. Gaza should therefore compel us to reconsider not only how we understand violence, but also how we communicate it. If numbers become silent, memory becomes hollow. And when memory loses its human voice, even extraordinary suffering can pass before our eyes without leaving a mark.

The newspaper remains one of the few public spaces where that silence can still be challenged.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“People with courage and character always seem sinister to the rest.”
- Hermann Hesse

INDIA IS A MARITIME NATION IN GEOGRAPHY, NOT IN MINDSET



VICE ADMIRAL BISWAJIT DASGUPTA (RETD)

India has the geography of a maritime power. What it lacks is something more fundamental: a maritime mindset.

A country can be described as a maritime nation only when its people 'think maritime.'

We sometimes claim that India is a maritime nation. This statement is borne out of abject ignorance.

Having oceans on three sides and being situated in the centre of the Indian Ocean bestows a huge maritime character to its landmass. However, that is different from being a maritime nation.

A country can be described as a maritime nation only when its people 'think maritime'. That is nowhere near happening soon.

The man on the street or in the village does not know the difference between the Indian Navy and the merchant marine.

Neither do many understand the difference between the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard.

Recently, a leading newspaper's headline betrayed its lack of ability to differentiate between a warship and a scientific research vessel.

I would not be surprised if some worthies cannot spot the difference between a Commodore and a komodo.

There is hardly any maritime sport or adventure ecosystem in a country with a coastline of over 11,000 kilometres.

We have never been anywhere close to a podium finish in any Olympic maritime sport.

The impunity with which we pollute our coastal areas and oceans is criminal. India builds and operates less than 1% of global shipping. The list is endless.

To be fair to the leadership of the country over the past two decades or thereabouts, there have been several initiatives in maritime outreach, thanks mostly to the initiative of the Indian Navy.

The Indian Navy's leadership has always taken upon itself the responsibility of sensitising the political leadership and civilian bureaucracy about affairs maritime.

They must be singularly credited for the partial recovery from India's sea blindness. This recovery, however, has been slow and inadequate.

Other than the Indian Navy, which has made impressive strides within its domain, be that in operations, ship design, indigenisation, training or logistics, every other aspect of maritime development and security have been well below par.

The Coast Guard too, has done reasonably well. That too was possible because it was carried by the Indian Navy on its shoulders from the time the Coast Guard was established, till about a decade ago, when it had its first home-grown director general, quite unlike the other Central Armed Police Forces that are led and officered at the senior level largely by the IPS.

Every other area of maritime devel-

opment and security languished for years, quite obviously because they were not accorded national priority.

In this backdrop, the recent initiatives in the ports, shipping and ship-building led development of the maritime sector are laudable.

Some forward-looking measures have also been put into motion in the fisheries sector, which bode well for the country.

Beyond that, precious little has happened and whatever is being done is half-hearted, too little and too late.

There are multifarious aspects of maritime development and security ranging from maritime defence in times of conflict at one end to maritime tourism, history and culture at the other end.

This is an area of immense possibilities in every aspect, from economic benefit, diplomatic dividends, scientific research, technology development and adventure, just to mention a few.

Just as an aside, someone told me, tongue-in-cheek, that eating pani puris on Mumbai's Chowpatty beach is the only maritime adventure that Indians indulge in.

We may

laugh at this seemingly flippant quip but it is quite telling, if one cares to understand its import. There is nobody to blame for this state of affairs but ourselves as a nation.

How can we expect people to be maritime conscious if we do not create opportunities for successive generations to learn about the seas, generate an interest, take a liking and finally choose a maritime vocation or interest that lasts a lifetime and gets passed on to the next generation?

How will it happen if we do not create jobs in the sector or not actively encourage maritime tourism, sport and adventure?

Can we seriously expect maritime awareness or knowledge to develop in our youth when nothing of it

is taught in school syllabi? Universities that run undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, that too, in very narrow disciplines of maritime studies, can be counted on two hands.

India needs its people to understand the seas and prepare to join the maritime ecosystem in its varied dimensions.

This cannot happen without a cogent plan for which high national priority is accorded and apex level guidance is provided through a governance structure that has cross-ministerial authority.

We can wax eloquent about the blue economy and launch major projects like the Galathea Bay and build new shipyards, but where will the human resource come from if we do not educate, train and skill?

The maritime domain is a specialist arena but its management at the apex level has been left to generalists who have no understanding or connection with the oceans; and the possibilities they hold for our future well-being.

The start point is awareness and education. Our academic fraternity will do well to engage the services of the handful of professionals that are available and willing to help in this regard. This, if done correctly, will truly be a nation-building effort.

The understanding of the maritime domain, its sustainable development as well as providing it robust security are key to realising our national potential in the coming decades.

India missed the Industrial Revolution and has been slow on development of critical technologies such as semiconductors.

The Maritime Revolution is upon us.

If we continue in this manner, it will slip by from under our noses. That will be extremely unfortunate. Don't say you were not warned!

Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta (retd) is a former commander-in-chief of the Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command. g members

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

After two successful editions now comes Khel Maharan 3.0

Assam's biggest grassroots sporting movement returns on 7 November. Now it's time to get ready. Game on!

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam.

is instructive. Following recent attacks on Saudi Arabia, Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to the Mecca agreement but said no military response had been discussed under the pact at that point.

That episode illustrates the difference between a collective-defence commitment on paper and the political decisions governments must make when a real crisis occurs.

A decision that requires careful calculation

For Bangladesh, the Mecca pact offers possible diplomatic and defence benefits, but it also introduces questions about strategic autonomy, relations with India, military obligations and involvement in conflicts outside South Asia.

Dhaka has therefore been right to emphasise assessment rather than haste.

The country can deepen relations with Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan without necessarily making every relationship part of a formal military alliance.

At the same time, if a formal invitation eventually arrives, Bangladesh will have to examine the precise treaty obligations, decision-making mechanisms and military commitments involved.

The central issue is not whether the Mecca pact is desirable or undesirable in the abstract. It is whether its obligations and benefits correspond with Bangladesh's own security requirements. Geography remains a powerful factor in foreign policy. Bangladesh shares its longest and most consequential border with India, faces Myanmar across another frontier and sits astride the Bay of Bengal. Its economic relationships are similarly regional as well as global.

Dhaka has therefore has several strategic interests to balance simultaneously. The Mecca pact may become an important part of that calculation. But membership would represent a significant foreign-policy commitment, and the details of that commitment—not merely the symbolism of joining a Muslim-majority defence grouping—will ultimately determine its consequences.

For Bangladesh, the prudent course is to assess those consequences in full before making a decision that could shape its security and diplomatic choices for years to come.

Manipur conflict caused over Rs 1,200 crore GST revenue decline: CM



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday said the prolonged ethnic conflict in the state resulted in a decline of more than Rs 1,200 crore in Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue between 2023 and 2026. Addressing the 52nd Foundation Day celebration of the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) in Imphal, Khemchand said repeated bandhs and blockades had disrupted economic activity and affected the state's development. "Prolonged conflict in the state had resulted in a decline of more than Rs 1,200 crore in GST revenue from 2023 to 2026, putting considerable pressure on Manipur's

economy," he said.

The chief minister appealed to civil society organisations to avoid using bandhs and blockades as a means of protest, citing their impact on economic activity and livelihoods.

He called for collective efforts to create conditions conducive to economic recovery and development in the state.

The ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities broke out in May 2023 and has since been accompanied by prolonged disruptions to the movement of people and goods, including blockades affecting key routes.

According to officials, the violence has claimed at least 306 lives, while 49 people remain missing and thousands

have been displaced.

Manipur CM announces hike in journalists' pension

During the AMWJU programme, Khemchand also announced an increase in the monthly pension for journalists from Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000.

The family pension for eligible beneficiaries will also be raised from Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,000, he said.

The chief minister further said pending advertisement bills amounting to around Rs 1 crore had been disbursed.

The announcements were made as the state government acknowledged the role of journalists and the media in reporting on issues affecting Manipur and its people.

Manipur forms panel to examine Dhanamanjuri scholars' stipend demand

IMPHAL

The committee, headed by the Director of University & Higher Education, has been asked to recommend the fellowship amount, duration, eligibility criteria and other modalities within 15 days. Imphal: The Manipur government has constituted a committee to examine the demand for fellowship or stipend support for research scholars of Dhanamanjuri University, following their week-long hunger strike over pending financial assistance.

In a circular issued by the Higher and Technical Education Department on Wednesday, the government said it had taken note of the concerns raised by research scholars pursuing studies at Dhanamanjuri University. The government said it was agreeable in principle to facilitating quality research through fellowship or stipend support. The committee, headed by the Director (University & Higher Education), Manipur, will examine the matter and work out a framework for providing financial assistance to eligible research scholars.

The panel will determine the proposed fellowship amount, duration, eligibility criteria, norms and other modalities. Officials from the State Finance Department have also been included in the committee. The government has directed the panel to submit its recommendations within 15 days. The move followed a hunger strike launched by Dhanamanjuri University research scholars over their demand for stipends. The protest had continued for nearly a week. Appealing to the protesting scholars to suspend their agitation, the government said the steps initiated by the department were intended to address their concerns and sought their cooperation with the committee.

3 bodies to be exhumed in Assam in Tripura teacher case

SRIBHUMI

Three unidentified bodies buried in Assam's Sribhumi district around 15 years ago are set to be exhumed as part of an investigation into the disappearance of a schoolteacher from Agartala, Tripura, in 2011.

The exhumation has been ordered by a court to determine whether any of the remains could belong to Ashish Som, who went missing from Agartala in 2011. DNA samples from the remains will be collected and compared with samples from Som's family members in Agartala.

Som's family had filed a missing-person complaint after failing to trace him for a prolonged period. Investigators later received allegations that he had been abducted and that his family was asked to pay a ransom of Rs 25 lakh.

Investigators subsequently suspected that Som may have been killed after the ransom was not paid.

Around the same period,

an unidentified body was recovered from the Sonbeel area of Sribhumi. Following the required legal procedures, the body was buried. Two other unidentified bodies were also reportedly buried in the area around the same period.

Nearly 15 years later, the graves have come under scrutiny as investigators revisit the circumstances surrounding Som's disappearance.

A team from Tripura Police has reached Sribhumi to carry out the exhumation in accordance with the court's directions. Since investigators have not been able to establish which grave could contain Som's remains, all three graves will be opened for DNA sampling.

The samples will be sent for forensic testing against DNA samples obtained from Som's family.

The identity of the remains and whether they are linked to the missing teacher will be established only after the DNA test results are available.

Manipur Governor urges new officers to listen to people, understand their needs

IMPHAL:

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Wednesday urged newly recruited civil servants to put public welfare at the centre of their responsibilities and work with sincerity, integrity and dedication.

Bhalla was addressing newly recruited officers of the Manipur Civil Service (MCS), Manipur Finance Service (MFS), Sub-Deputy Collector (SDC) and Manipur Secretariat Service (MSS) at the inaugural function of their three-month Foundation Training in Imphal.

Congratulating the officers on their selection, the Governor encouraged them to use the training period to broaden their understanding of Manipur, interact with people and fellow trainees, and develop a service-oriented approach.

"Public servants must listen to the people, understand their requirements and work towards addressing their genuine needs," Bhalla said. He urged the trainees



to make the most of the learning opportunities available during their training, work hard and continue developing their professional skills. The Governor also stressed the importance of understanding Manipur's diverse communities, their aspirations and the challenges faced by people across different sectors.

He said the newly recruited officers should contribute to the welfare and development of the state while upholding integrity, responsibility and the values of public service throughout their careers.

Bhalla also interacted with the trainees and shared his experiences during the programme.

Newly recruited officers from Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts participated in the programme virtually.

Chief Secretary Rajeev Singh Thakur and senior officials from the Administrative Reforms Department and the State Academy of Training (SAT) also attended the inaugural function.

Tripura UCC debate: Jitendra Chaudhury flags concerns over minorities, tribal customs

AGARTALA:

Tripura Leader of Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury on Wednesday opposed any move to introduce the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state, raising concerns over its possible implications for religious minorities and communities governed by customary practices.

His remarks came a day after Chief Minister Manik Saha said Tripura would implement the UCC if the Centre issued a direction, while indicating that tribal areas under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) could be exempted.

Chaudhury, a CPI(M) leader, said his party had opposed the UCC from the outset and questioned how a common civil law would apply in a state with diverse religious, cultural and customary practices.

He said India's constitutional



framework recognises the country's diversity and alleged that the proposed code could have a disproportionate impact on Muslims and other minority communities.

"If this is an attack on Muslims today, tomorrow it could be on tribals, the day after tomorrow on Dalits, and then on other minorities based on their language, culture and other

identities," he said.

Chaudhury also highlighted the diversity among Tripura's tribal and indigenous communities, noting that different groups follow Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and traditional faiths.

He questioned how a uniform civil framework would accommodate differences in social and cus-

tomary practices, including those between areas governed by the TTAADC and regions outside its jurisdiction.

The UCC debate in Tripura has intensified after Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the BJP-led NDA governments in 21 states would introduce the code before the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

Chaudhury said the CPI(M) would oppose any move to implement the UCC in Tripura and called on political parties, social organisations, cultural institutions and people from different sections of society to engage with the issue.

"We have no conflict with Hindus or Hinduism. Our opposition is to the exploitation of religious sentiments for political purposes," he said.

He urged stakeholders to consider Tripura's social and cultural diversity while examining any proposal related to the UCC.

Assam students need 70% attendance to retain government scheme benefits

GUWAHATI

Students enrolled in Assam's government and provincialised colleges and higher secondary schools must maintain at least 70 per cent attendance to continue receiving benefits under state government schemes and scholarships, Education Minister Ranoj Pegu said on Wednesday.

Pegu said students who fail to meet the attendance requirement could be removed from the respective schemes. The condition applies to the fee waiver scheme as well as the Nijut Moina and Nijut Babu schemes.

Speaking on the sidelines of a programme to distribute National Post-Matric Scholarships to Scheduled Tribe students, Pegu said his department had received complaints that some colleges were not providing fee waivers to eligible students after admission.

"However, as per our guidelines to continue availing the scheme, 70% attendance is mandatory," he said.

Pegu said the government had not agreed to demands for lowering the minimum attendance requirement.

"In a recent visit to Gujarat, I observed that there is a condition of 80% attendance there. Here in Assam, we have not been able to approve the appeal to lower



the mandatory 70% attendance mark," he said.

Exemptions in special circumstances The minister said principals could exempt students from the attendance requirement in special circumstances, in-

cluding natural calamities, health emergencies and deaths in the family.

However, he said the government did not intend to provide further relaxation in the minimum attendance requirement. Pegu said student organisations had

been asked to suggest an alternative attendance threshold if they disagreed with the 70 per cent requirement, but no such proposal had been received so far.

He also clarified that students with academic backlogs would continue to be eligible for the 50 per cent fee waiver, subject to the applicable rules. The minister urged colleges and higher secondary schools to ensure regular classes, warning that prolonged absenteeism could affect students' academic performance and eventually their eligibility for government schemes. "If there are no regular classes, students will fail, and failing would lead to their cancellation from the scheme," he said, adding that fee waiver funds were directly provided to institutions and their loss could also affect the institutions.

Attendance concerns across Assam Pegu's remarks come amid concerns over student absenteeism in the state. Earlier data indicated that around 5.5 lakh students enrolled in schools were absent from classes.

The issue was also discussed at the recent two-day District Commissioners' Conference in Jorhat, where education, including high dropout rates in secondary schools, was among the areas examined by the state government. Meanwhile, scholarships totalling Rs 194.55 crore were distributed among 1,66,124 students under the National Post-Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Tribe students for the academic years 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26.

The scholarships were distributed under the Department of Tribal Affairs (Plain).

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Atychiphobia describes a person who fears that they aren't good enough to be in a relationship with a specific person.

EPFO wage ceiling raised to Rs 25,000, 51 lakh more workers to get coverage



NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday approved raising the wage ceiling for mandatory coverage under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to Rs 25,000 per month from the existing Rs 15,000. The move is expected to bring more than 51 lakh additional employees under the social security system. Till now, a person joining a new job with a monthly wage above Rs 15,000 was not automatically required to be covered under EPFO. With the new ceiling, employees earning up to Rs 25,000 a month will come under mandatory EPFO coverage, subject to applicable rules. With this, workers will get access to provident fund savings, pension benefits and insurance cover. A higher wage ceiling

also means the employer will have to contribute a higher amount towards PF and pension contribution of the employee. Usually, an employer contributes 12% of the wage ceiling towards the employee's PF account. With a higher wage ceiling, the employer's contribution will increase. On the flip side, an employee's take-home salary will reduce. The wage ceiling was last hiked to `15,000 in September 2014. The government said the latest increase takes into account the rise in wages and incomes and the expansion of formal employment over the past 12 years. The annual government expenditure on the expanded coverage is estimated at around Rs 11,339 crore, compared with the

existing annual budgetary support of about Rs 10,250 crore. Estimated expenditure in five years is around Rs 56,696 crore. According to Puneet Gupta, Partner, People Advisory Services-Tax, EY India, the increase in the EPF wage ceiling "will have a direct cost implication for employers through higher PF, pension contributions." Wage ceiling up to Rs 25,000 per month from Rs 15,000. A higher wage ceiling means employer will have to contribute a higher amount towards PF and pension contribution of employee. On the flip side, an employee's take-home salary will reduce. Hike accounts for rise in wages and expansion of formal jobs

Instead of theatrics, vacate our territory: India hits out at Pakistan-China boundary panel



NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday rejected the newly formed Pakistan-China Boundary Joint Commission, saying Pakistan has no authority to enter into arrangements concerning territories that New Delhi regards as being under its illegal occupation. Reacting to reports of the

commission's first meeting in Islamabad, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said New Delhi's position remained unchanged. "There is no boundary between Pakistan and China. We reject the so-called Joint Commission, which is without any legal basis," Jaiswal said. The commission held its first

meeting to discuss cooperation on border management, joint border surveys and trade. Jaiswal reiterated India's position on Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, saying the two Union Territories "have been, are and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of India." "Pakistan has no locus standi to enter into arrangements concern-

ing Indian territory under its illegal and forcible occupation," he said. India has consistently rejected the 1963 China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement, under which Pakistan ceded territory in the northern areas of Jammu and Kashmir to China. New Delhi maintains that Pakistan had no authority to enter into such an agreement over territory claimed by India. "We have never recognised the so-called 'China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement' of 1963 and have consistently maintained that it is illegal and invalid," Jaiswal said. "Instead of engaging in such theatrics, we call on Pakistan to immediately vacate areas under its illegal and forcible occupation," he added. India has also opposed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), arguing that portions of the project pass through Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. New Delhi said any attempt by Beijing and Islamabad to institutionalise border cooperation involving territories claimed by India would not affect its sovereignty claims. "Any so-called boundary cooperation between China and Pakistan concerning Indian territories would be completely unacceptable and would have no bearing whatsoever on India's sovereignty over these territories," Jaiswal said. India called on Pakistan to withdraw from areas that New Delhi says remain under its "illegal and forcible occupation", saying the latest development does not alter its longstanding position on the territorial dispute.

INTERNATIONAL

US House approves Russia sanctions bill threatening 100% tariffs on India, other trading partners



WASHINGTON

The US House of Representatives has passed a bill that would authorise President Donald Trump to impose sanctions on Russia and steep tariffs on its trading partners in oil and gas, including India and China, as lawmakers look to deprive President Vladimir Putin of the financial resources needed to wage the war against Ukraine. The Lindsey O Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026, passed by the US Senate last

month, was approved by the House in a 262-159 vote on Wednesday evening and will now go to Trump to be signed into a law. Besides 203 Republicans, 58 Democrats and one Independent voted in favour of the legislation. Seven Republicans and 152 Democrats opposed it. Democratic opposition largely centered around the tariff authorities provided to Trump. The bill is named after Senator Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican who died in July after

spending more than a year building support for it. "What we're not for is giving more tariff authority to this president," Congressman Richard Neal, a Democrat, said during debate on the bill. The bill seeks to impose sanctions not only on Russia's leadership and energy sector, but also on the "shadow fleet" of vessels that enable Moscow to evade sanctions on oil deliveries. It also seeks to authorise Trump to impose stiff tariffs on China, India

and other countries to reduce their dependence on Russian oil and gas, as well as additional sanctions on Iran. "China and India, you better buy your oil and gas somewhere else," Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal, told reporters after the passage of the Bill. "Russia is getting that oil and gas sold by using the shadow fleet, which means that it's being bought at less than market rates, and it's going mostly to countries like China and India," Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen said. "China is the top user of Russian oil and gas, and we need to send a very strong message, not just to Putin, but to China, and to anybody who is buying Russian oil and gas, that they are going to pay a price for that," Shaheen said. The passage of the bill comes days ahead of China's President Xi Jinping's official visit to the US. The Senate overwhelmingly passed the bill by a vote of 86-11 last month, but momentum slowed in the House. Passage of the bill in the House came on the final day that the House is expected to be in session for votes before the Nov. 3 elections. The vote on the bill is taking place at a time when pro-Ukraine groups have stepped up efforts to lobby support for their cause. The Ukraine Action Summit, organised by the American Coalition for Ukraine, is underway here to lobby with US lawmakers for continued support of Kyiv.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen says she wants Canada to become the bloc's 1st associate member

STRASBOURG European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed Wednesday making Canada the European Union's first associate member, a striking overture as U.S. President Donald Trump's threats drive Ottawa closer to Europe. Speaking in Charlotte, North Carolina, Trump suggested that allowing Canada to become an associate EU member could be a "hostile act" and threatened to respond to the proposed move by imposing more tariffs on the bloc. Trump conditioned his threat on the "intention" of European leaders, saying that, "If it's a good intention, that's fine. If it's a bad intention, we'll put very heavy tariffs on Europe." He also suggested the U.S. could cut off trade with Europe in certain areas. Trump called the prospect of Canada joining the EU "laughable" and called America's neighbor a "terrible trade partner." He also on Wednesday ratcheted up his trade war by signing an order restricting the U.S. government's purchases of Canadian goods. Trump's tariffs and repeated talk of making Canada the 51st state have soured the relationship between the North American neighbors. Canada is seeking to reduce its dependence on the United States, the destination for roughly 70% of its exports, and Prime Minister Mark Carney has called for a "unique alliance" with the EU. In her annual State of the European Union address, von der Leyen said Canada and the EU would build on their existing free trade agreement, known as CETA, with a broader "Alliance for the Future" aimed at creating "a common prosperity and economic security space." She said that closer relationship as rooted not just in trade but in shared democratic values. "Above all, dear Mark, Europe and Canada believe

in democracy," von der Leyen said to Carney, who received a standing ovation at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. He is due to address the Parliament on Thursday. A Canadian official familiar with the discussions told The Associated Press last week that Ottawa was exploring ties with the EU that could stop just short of membership. The official said Canada would seek an arrangement allowing its citizens to live and work in Europe without visas as part of a broader strategic partnership. Jonathan Wilkinson, Canada's ambassador-designate to the EU, said Wednesday that Ottawa had discussed associate membership with European officials before von der Leyen's speech and "knew that that was something that was on the table." He said Canada had talked to the EU about an "Alliance for the Future," while European officials had raised associate membership. Wilkinson said Canada is not seeking full EU membership because it would require surrendering some sovereignty. Instead, Ottawa wants "to get as close as we possibly can" to the bloc in a way that strengthens Canadian sovereignty rather than diminishes it, he said. Carney's office welcomed von der Leyen's proposal, saying Canada was deepening ties with the EU "to strengthen our sovereignty" and supported a move beyond CETA. Von der Leyen said the expanded partnership would cover advanced manufacturing, technology, defense production, the Arctic, energy, critical minerals, batteries, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cybersecurity and economic security. "This is a partnership not against anyone else, but for our common strength," she said. "In short, we want to bring the relationship with Canada to the highest level possible."

Because Canada joining the EU as an associate member would be a first, there is no rule book on how that would work or what it would mean in practice. It is unclear who would need to approve membership, and how long that could take. Wilkinson said Ottawa and Brussels are deliberately focusing first on the substance of the relationship rather than what to call it. "Before you actually get to the point where you decide what you're going to call something, you should actually know the shape," he said. He said the shape is likely to become clearer at the Canada-EU summit in October, when the two sides expect to make an announcement and may settle on how to describe it. Currently, all steps toward EU membership must be approved unanimously by the 27 member countries. The idea of associate membership has been floated in the past for Ukraine, or for post-Brexit Britain, but no concrete steps have been taken. The relationship between Canada and the European Union has reached a point where the two sides need to move beyond rhetoric and start building something more substantive, said Tobias Cremer, a German member of the European Parliament. "Now is the time to stop sending each other love letters and put meat on the bone," said Cremer, from the center-left Social Democrats. He argued that any new arrangement should be more ambitious than another trade or defense agreement, describing the goal as a more holistic strategic alliance between Canada and the EU. Existing frameworks such as CETA could provide a foundation, Cremer said, but should be used more fully and expanded. The case for closer ties, he said, is increasingly being driven by geopolitics as much as economics.

Amit Shah's Alleged Assurances to Tipra Motha on ADC Funding and Land Rights Trigger Political Debate in Tripura



JAYANTA DEBNATH

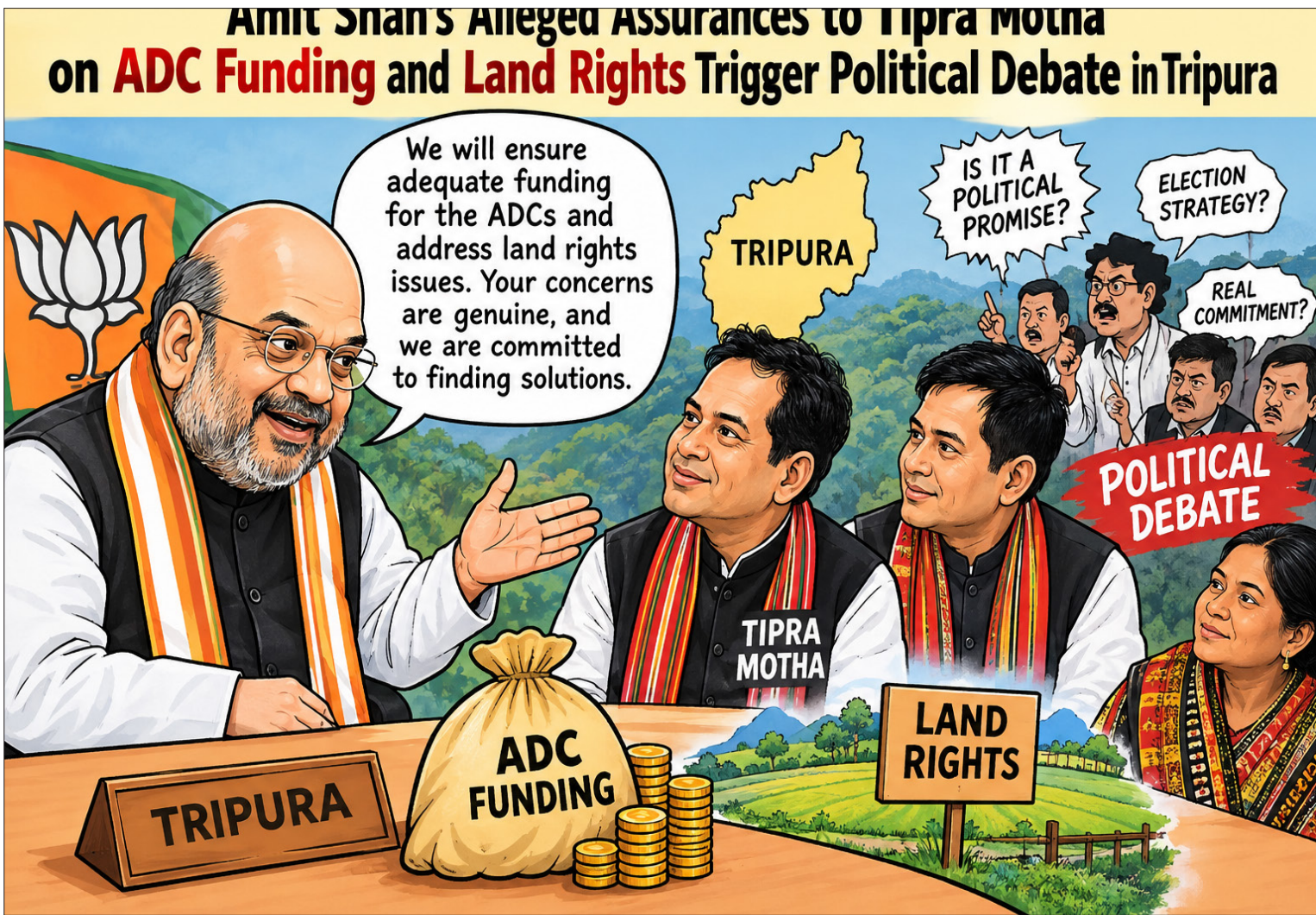
With the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTA-ADC) Village Council elections approaching, alleged assurances made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Tipra Motha leaders regarding direct funding for the ADC and speedy implementation of comprehensive land rights have emerged as a politically sensitive issue in Tripura. Claims regarding the alleged commitments have reportedly been highlighted by Tipra Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma and party MLA Ranjit Debbarma, prompting concern and strong reactions among sections of the Bengali community and unease among some BJP leaders.

At the centre of the controversy is the question of whether the proposed "direct funding" mechanism can actually be introduced within the existing constitutional and financial framework. A document examining the constitutional position points out that the Sixth Schedule gives Autonomous District Councils specific legislative and administrative powers, while their financial arrangements remain governed by constitutional provisions. It notes that grants and other financial resources are subject to the prescribed constitutional mechanism and states that "no other mechanism" has been provided.

The issue of land rights is equally significant. Under Paragraph 3(a) of the Sixth Schedule, the District Council has powers relating to land within council areas for residential, agricultural and allied purposes. The document also refers to existing provisions under the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms framework for allotment and setting apart of land, suggesting that any broader or "full" land rights arrangement would have to operate within the constitutional and legal framework governing land in the state.

The constitutional dimension has therefore become an important part of the political debate. The document stresses that India's

Union and State governments function within their respective constitutional



limits and that laws or powers exercised under the Sixth Schedule cannot operate in conflict with the Constitution or applicable Union and State laws. It also describes the Sixth Schedule as providing special protections and powers for tribal areas while emphasizing the need for constitutional balance.

The reported assurances have consequently raised a larger question: if the commitments regarding direct funding and expanded land rights were indeed made, through what constitutional, legislative or administrative route will the Centre and the Tripura government implement them? This question assumes particular importance ahead of the Village Council elections, when political parties are attempting to consolidate their support among different sections of the electorate.

The political response has so far appeared cautious. While sections of the BJP leadership are reportedly uncomfortable with the issue, the Congress and CPI(M) have largely avoided an aggressive reaction, a stance that may be linked to the electoral calculations surrounding the forthcoming ADC Village Council polls. The relative silence of the opposition parties has itself become a talking point in political circles. For many in Tripura, the controversy is not simply about an electoral promise but about the potential implications of changes in financial and land-related arrangements within the ADC areas. The document stresses that the constitutional objective of the Sixth Schedule is to protect tribal communities while maintaining diversity and ensuring that the interests of all sections of society are protected. It also emphasizes cooperation and cohesion rather than creating divisions between tribal and non-tribal communities.

Ultimately, the political debate will depend on whether the reported assurances translate into concrete policy decisions. The real test now is how the Centre and the Tripura government propose to implement the alleged commitments on direct funding and comprehensive

land rights while remaining within the constitutional framework of the Sixth Schedule and the existing financial and land laws. With the Village Council elections drawing closer, the issue is likely to remain a major subject of political discussion across Tripura.

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