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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 923 | SILCHAR WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

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Supreme Court seeks Centre, Assam government's response to AASU plea for fresh NRC review

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK



GUWAHATI:AASU seeks re-examination of Assam's final NRC, alleging discrepancies in the updation process; petition questions the sharp decline in exclusions from the draft to the final list.

The Supreme Court has issued notices to the Centre and the Assam government on a petition filed by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), seeking a fresh examination of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam over alleged discrepancies in the final list.

A two-judge bench comprising Justice P S Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe took up the matter on Monday and sought responses from both the governments. AASU president Utpal Sarma and the organisation's chief adviser, Dr Samujjal Bhattacharya, were present during the proceedings.

In a joint statement, AASU president Utpal Sarma and general secretary Samiran Phukan said Assam deserved an accurate and error-free NRC. They maintained that the demand for a correct register of citizens had been central to the state's prolonged movement over the issue.The NRC updation exercise was subsequently undertaken under the supervision of the Supreme Court. However, AASU alleged that administrative and government-level lapses during the process resulted in discrepancies in the final document.The students' body particularly questioned the significant difference between the number of exclusions in the draft and final NRC. Around 40 lakh names were excluded from the first draft, while the number came down to approximately 19 lakh in the final list. According to AASU, the figures have raised serious questions about the accuracy and credibility of the final NRC. The organisation said both the people of Assam and the students' body remained dissatisfied with the outcome.AASU also pointed out that although the government had expressed dissatisfaction with the final NRC, it had not moved the Supreme Court seeking a re-examination of the document.Against this backdrop, the organisation approached the apex court, seeking judicial intervention for a fresh review of the citizens' register.

With notices issued, the Centre and the Assam government will now have to respond to the concerns raised in the petition. The Supreme Court's next course of action will depend on the submissions made by the two governments.connectivity vision.

PERSPECTIVE

Blind people smile despite never seeing anyone smile before because it's a natural human reaction.

NFR completes 100% electrification of active railway network across Northeast

GUWAHATI

Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved 100 per cent electrification across all active railway sections under its jurisdiction in the Northeast, completing a major infrastructure modernisation programme in less than a decade.

The Maligaon-headquartered railway zone has electrified a total of 4,311.96 route kilometres (RKM) across its jurisdiction, according to cumulative progress recorded up to 2026-27.

NFR Chief Public Relations Officer Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said railway electrification in the region began in 2017-18, as there had been no electrified railway sections in the Northeast before 2014.

He said the initiative had steadily expanded across the states under NFR, strengthening railway connectivity while making train operations more efficient, reliable and environmentally sustainable.

Of the total electrified network, Assam accounts for the largest share at 2,546.04 route kilometres. West Bengal has 987.51 RKM and Bihar 427.49 RKM.

The state-wise figures for the Northeast include Tripura with 269.45 RKM, Mizoram with 52.88 RKM, Arunachal Pradesh with 11.67 RKM, Meghalaya with 9.58 RKM, Nagaland with 6 RKM and Manipur with 1.35 RKM.

The pace of electrification gathered momentum over the past few years. NFR completed 915.62 RKM during 2023-24 and 1,141.38 RKM in 2024-25. Another 445.66 RKM was electrified in 2025-26, while 141.77 RKM has been covered so far in 2026-27.

WHO SAID WHAT



Journalism is not an easy job. It comes with many challenges, long working hours and often limited financial benefits. Yet, journalists work hard to keep people informed. Our government is committed to the welfare of journalists and will continue to support their well-being and interests.

National Press Day celebration, Itanagar

~ Pema Khandu, CM, Arunachal Pradesh

Assam to cancel licences, vehicle registrations for repeat helmet offenders: CM



GUWAHATI

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma warns of tougher action against motorists repeatedly violating helmet rules; statewide enforcement drive to continue under his personal monitoring.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has warned that repeated violations of mandatory helmet rules could result in the cancellation of driving licences and vehicle registrations, signalling a tougher crackdown on traffic offences across the state.

In a social media post on Tuesday night, Sarma said riding a two-wheeler without a helmet would no longer be treated as a minor traffic violation punishable only with a monetary fine. He stressed that helmets are essential safety equipment and should not be worn merely to avoid penalties or police checks.

Highlighting the dangers of non-compliance, the Chief Minister cited a recent report which found that 60.1 per cent of people killed in two-wheeler accidents were not wearing helmets.

Sarma also reminded motorists that the mandatory helmet requirement applies to both riders and pillion passengers. He urged people not to put their lives at risk for momentary excitement or an adrenaline rush.

The Chief Minister said he had directed the agencies responsible for enforcing motor vehicle laws to take a stricter approach towards violations. Those repeatedly caught riding without helmets could face cancellation of their driving licences or vehicle registrations, he cautioned.

He further indicated that the statewide enforcement drive scheduled for Wednesday was only the beginning of a sustained campaign against traffic violations. The checking operation will continue across Assam, with Sarma saying he would personally monitor the implementation of the measures.

The proposed action comes amid continuing concerns over road accidents and fatalities involving two-wheelers. The state government is seeking stricter adherence to helmet regulations as part of its broader road safety enforcement efforts.

Three of Family, Including Two Children, Killed in LPG Blast at Manipur Home

IMPHAL

Three members of a family, including a woman and her two minor sons, were killed after an LPG cylinder exploded inside their residence in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Tuesday evening.

The explosion occurred around 7.15 pm on November 17 at Maibam Chingning Makha Leikai, partially damaging the house and leaving two other people injured.

The deceased have been identified as Khanjarakpam (Ongbi) Ranjana, 37, wife of Kh Narendra, and their sons Pibarelnganba, 14, and Poireingamba, 7. All three were inside the house when the cylinder exploded.

According to preliminary reports, Narendra and a 13-year-old neighbour sustained injuries in the blast. Both were rushed to a nearby health centre, where they are currently undergoing treatment.

Following the incident, a team from the Forensic Science Unit visited the site and conducted an inspection to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the explosion.

However, the bodies of the three victims had not been retrieved until around 9.30 pm on Tuesday, when the initial report was filed.

The exact cause of the explosion remains unclear. Further details are awaited as the investigation proceeds.

75-year-old Katigorah man remains 'Streamline Foreigner' as tribunal clears five family members

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

SILCHAR:A 75-year-old man from Saidpur village in Assam's Katigorah constituency has been left with an uncertain citizenship status even as the Foreigners Tribunal in Silchar has recognised his deceased wife and four children as Indian citizens following a fresh examination of documentary evidence.

The Fourth Foreigners Tribunal, in its revised opinion delivered on November 6, classified Mohanlal Das as a 'Streamline Foreigner', holding that he had entered India after 1966 but before 1970. The tribunal, however, accepted the citizenship claims of his wife, Pramila Das, and their four children, reversing its earlier findings against the family.

The matter was reconsidered following directions from the Gauhati High Court, which on September 16, 2022, remanded three related cases - FT 4th/379/2017, FT 4th/380/2017 and FT 4th/113/2019 - to the tribunal for fresh adjudication.

During the proceedings, the family submitted original documents to establish their Indian citizenship. The tribunal examined the evidence and recorded fresh statements before delivering its revised opinion.

Mohanlal had claimed that he entered India on September 30, 1964. To substantiate his claim, he produced a Relief Eligibility Certificate, a 1967 land deed and electoral rolls dating from 1970 onwards. However, the tribunal did not accept the Relief Eligibility Certificate as duly proved and concluded that his entry into India took place between 1966 and 1970.

The position of his wife and children was different. Their citizenship claim was supported by a 1966 electoral roll carrying the name of Pramila's father, Jamini Kanta Das. The document was produced by her brother, Dilip Kumar Das, and helped establish their father's presence in India before 1966.

On that basis, the tribunal recognised Pramila and her four children - Pushpabala Das, Sumanbala Das, Sudhan Das alias Shridham Das and Madhu Das - as Indian citizens.

Advocate Dharmananda Deb, who represented the family along with advocate Debasmita Som, said more than 16 original documents, including electoral rolls, land records and birth and death certificates dating back to 1964, were placed before the tribunal.

Describing the decision as significant, Deb said the fresh adjudication had overturned the earlier adverse opinions against five members of the family.

He nevertheless expressed concern over the outcome in Mohanlal's case, pointing out that the 75-year-old could remain deprived of voting rights for another ten years following his classification as a 'Streamline Foreigner'.

The three cases were originally linked to the citizenship status of the same family. The latest tribunal opinion has brought relief to five members, but Mohanlal's classification has left the family's long-running legal battle with an unresolved chapter.

Nyishi-language film makes history as four Northeast productions enter IFFI 2026

From an indigenous-language psychological thriller to a documentary on a Karbi weaver's journey to Cannes, the Indian Panorama selection brings diverse stories from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Mizoram to the national stage.



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

GUWAHATI: Four films from the Northeast have earned a place in the Indian Panorama of the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), with an Arunachal Pradesh production achieving a milestone as the first Nyishi-language film to be selected for the prestigious section.

The four films - two feature-length productions and two documentaries - will be screened at the festival in Goa from November 20 to 28. Their selection highlights the region's growing presence in Indian cinema through indigenous-language storytelling, social narratives and accounts of cultural heritage.

The landmark entry is Urum (Spirit), a psychological thriller directed by Duyu Tabyo. Set in a remote mountain village in Arunachal Pradesh, the film explores indigenous memory, trauma and buried truths through the story of a father haunted by guilt and recurring visions following his young daughter's death. The film will have its world premiere at IFFI.Assam's Surjyamukhi (Sunflower), directed by actor and filmmaker Antara G.G. Choudhury, is the second feature film in the selection. The drama follows two colleagues, Pushpal and Prarthana, whose workplace rivalry gradually gives way to friendship and romance. Their relationship faces an unexpected test after they discover a bag containing money, setting off a series of moral dilemmas. The film will also have its world premiere at the festival.

The documentary selections bring two distinct aspects of Northeast India into focus. Red Carpet, a 30-minute Assamese documentary written and directed by Aimee Baruah, follows a Karbi woman weaver from Donkamokam in the hills of Karbi Anglong to the red carpet of the Cannes Film Festival.Through her journey, the film documents traditional Karbi handloom practices and the efforts of indigenous artisans to sustain their weaving heritage.

The other documentary, Chalo India With Eric Ji - Mizoram, directed by Rajdeep Choudhury, is a 48-minute English-language production. It follows former British MP and history teacher Eric Ollerenshaw as he travels across Mizoram, exploring its culture, social life and institutions.

The film looks at the state's literacy levels, civic practices and football culture, while also highlighting the contributions of Mizo women in business, education and community leadership.Together, the four selections offer contrasting perspectives on life in the Northeast - from psychological conflict rooted in indigenous memory to changing relationships, traditional craftsmanship and contemporary society. The recognition also places regional languages and stories before a wider national and international audience.

Amit Shah's Arunachal visit set for November 20 amid Siang project protests



ITANAGAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to visit Arunachal Pradesh on November 20 for a two-day programme, with his engagements coming amid protests over the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) and growing focus on security and infrastructure development in the border state.During the visit, Shah will present medals to police personnel in recognition of their service and attend two public programmes - one at the Police Training Centre (PTC) in Banderdewa and another at IG Park in Itanagar, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said.A review meeting with the state government has also been proposed to assess Arunachal Pradesh's progress, development priorities and key challenges.Khandu described the visit as an important opportunity for the state, saying the Centre remained concerned about its development and security. He said law and order would feature in discussions, given the Home Minister's responsibility for internal security.

However, the Chief Minister clarified that international affairs, including matters concerning neighbouring countries, fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of External Affairs.

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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 923

INDIA'S UKRAINE PEACE INITIATIVE

With renewed outreach to Moscow and Kyiv, India is signalling its willingness to contribute to ending the war. But its ability to bring the two sides closer will depend on engaging Washington and Europe while pursuing practical, limited agreements on food security, maritime safety and energy infrastructure.

The Russia-Ukraine war has become a prolonged conflict with no clear end in sight. Despite repeated diplomatic initiatives, neither side has been able to secure a decisive outcome, while efforts by global leaders to broker a ceasefire have produced little tangible progress. US President Donald Trump, who had promised during his election campaign to end the war, has also failed to deliver a breakthrough so far. The inability of major powers and international institutions to stop the fighting has exposed the limitations of the existing global diplomatic framework.

Against this backdrop, India's renewed engagement with both Moscow and Kyiv deserves attention. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and reiterated India's willingness to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Around the same time, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a telephone conversation with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during which the Ukraine war and ongoing diplomatic efforts were discussed.

India's position remains consistent with Modi's repeated assertion that this is not an era of war and that disputes must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. New Delhi has maintained close relations with Moscow while keeping communication channels open with Kyiv. Modi's personal engagement with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Zelenskyy could provide India with a diplomatic opening, although personal rapport alone cannot guarantee progress.

The immediate challenge is to translate diplomatic goodwill into practical outcomes. Rather than attempting to resolve every political and territorial dispute at once, India could begin by identifying areas where both sides have an immediate interest in reaching an understanding.

Food security, the safety of commercial shipping and sailors, the restoration of grain exports through the Black Sea, and protection of energy infrastructure offer possible starting points. These issues are not merely regional concerns. Disruptions to Ukrainian grain exports affect food supplies and prices across Asia and Africa, while attacks on energy infrastructure have consequences for civilians and economic stability.

Zelenskyy has reportedly welcomed India's willingness to help facilitate food corridors, expressing hope that such efforts would continue. This could provide New Delhi with an opportunity to pursue a limited but meaningful diplomatic initiative. Food corridors are particularly suitable for an initial agreement because they are directly linked to humanitarian needs rather than questions of territorial control or military alliances. Ensuring the safe movement of grain, protecting civilian shipping and reducing attacks on critical infrastructure could create a measure of confidence between the warring parties. Such limited arrangements may appear modest in comparison with the ambition of a comprehensive peace agreement. Yet they can establish habits of cooperation and demonstrate that negotiated commitments are possible even amid deep political disagreements. In many conflicts, meaningful progress begins not with a final peace treaty but with smaller humanitarian and security-related understandings. However, India's potential role will face important diplomatic challenges. The first concerns the United States. President Trump has already sought to position himself at the centre of efforts to end the Ukraine war. Although those efforts have yet to produce a breakthrough, Washington may not readily surrender its leadership of the peace process. India would therefore find it difficult to pursue an effective initiative while keeping the US administration at a distance.

Jaishankar's statement that India remains in contact with the American administration on peace efforts is encouraging. New Delhi will need to maintain that engagement and ensure that its initiative is viewed as complementary to, rather than competitive with, Washington's diplomatic efforts.

Europe is the second indispensable stakeholder. The war is taking place on European soil, and its consequences are directly linked to the continent's security, economy and political future. The European Union and NATO member countries cannot be excluded from any credible effort to establish lasting peace.

India must reassure European leaders that its engagement with Moscow is not intended to undermine their security concerns. Instead, New Delhi could use its longstanding relationship with Russia to facilitate communication where existing diplomatic channels remain constrained. Its role would be more effective if it complemented the broader international effort.

There are also fundamental principles that must guide any serious peace process. First, meaningful negotiations require an environment in which military operations are brought under control. A sustained ceasefire would provide the necessary space for dialogue. Continued attacks and casualties make it difficult to establish the trust required for compromise. Second, both Russia and Ukraine must recognise that external assistance may be necessary to end a conflict they have been unable to resolve independently. International involvement should not automatically be viewed as interference, provided the process respects the sovereignty and legitimate concerns of the parties. Third, negotiations must be based on consent and international law. Territorial questions, border security, military alliances and the political rights of affected populations will inevitably remain central to the dispute. These issues cannot be settled through force alone. Any lasting arrangement must take account of international legal principles and the interests of the people directly affected. Fourth, the peace process must be treated as a sustained exercise rather than a one-time diplomatic event. Questions relating to territorial control, security guarantees, sanctions, reconstruction and the future European security architecture will require prolonged and detailed negotiations. The negotiating environment will also need careful management. Provocative statements, misinformation, political ego and mutual suspicion can quickly undermine diplomatic progress. There may also be vested interests in prolonging the conflict, including sections of the arms and energy industries. Their influence on the political and economic calculations surrounding the war cannot be ignored. India's diplomatic strength lies in its ability to maintain relationships across competing geopolitical blocs. Its historical partnership with Russia, expanding engagement with Western countries and close ties with the developing world give it a distinctive position. But turning that position into effective mediation will require patience, sustained coordination and a reputation for engaging all sides without prejudging the outcome.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

- Mark Twain

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH MUST NOT COME AT THE COST OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

DURJATI MUKHERJEE

Industrial development is undoubtedly essential, particularly for states that have lagged behind in this sector. However, NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Ashok Lahiri's recent observation that imposing a blanket ban on the acquisition of multi-crop agricultural land for industrial purposes would be inappropriate has raised several important questions. Speaking on the sidelines of the 19th Banking Colloquium organised by the eastern region of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Lahiri argued that such restrictions could impede industrial growth and that each case should instead be assessed individually, with adequate compensation provided to landowners.



While the need to promote industrialisation cannot be disputed, his argument appears to overlook the long-term consequences of converting fertile, multi-crop agricultural land into industrial zones.

Referring to West Bengal's high population density, Lahiri acknowledged the importance of both agriculture and industry but appeared to favour industrial expansion. He argued that relatively low agricultural productivity justified giving greater priority to industry. He also suggested that setting up industries in hilly areas or near forests could be difficult because of inadequate infrastructure.

But why should infrastructure development necessarily come at the expense of agricultural land? Nor can monetary compensation alone be considered a practical solution. A large section of farmers, particularly those with limited education and alternative livelihood opportunities, may not possess the skills or resources required to build sustainable sources of income with the compensation they receive.

Such an argument is difficult to justify in a predominantly rural country like India, where agriculture and allied activities remain major sources of livelihood. Rather than viewing agricultural land as an obstacle to industrialisation, policymakers should explore ways to increase farm productivity, diversify agricultural output and encourage high-value crops. Institutions such as the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) could work together to develop innovative solutions. Lahiri should also consider urging NITI Aayog to take a more proactive approach towards strengthening the agricultural economy.

The experience of Singur in West Bengal offers an important lesson. During the Left Front government's tenure, multi-crop agricultural land was acquired for the Tata Motors factory, triggering a prolonged political and public movement. The controversy became one of the major factors behind the Trinamool Congress's landslide victory in 2011. The present BJP government has expressed its intention to pursue a policy of purchasing land directly from landowners rather than resorting to compulsory acquisition for industrial projects. However, the more fundamental question remains: how will the long-term rehabilitation and livelihood security of displaced farmers be ensured? This must be treated as a priority.

There is another aspect that deserves serious consideration. Despite increasing mechanisation over the years, the industrial sector has failed to generate sufficient employment opportunities for India's expanding workforce. It is unclear whether this limitation has received adequate attention in the arguments favouring large-scale industrialisation. Instead, promoting agro-based industries, particularly those geared towards export markets, could generate substantial employment while strengthening rural economies.

India's vast population makes it imperative to maintain a balance between agriculture and industry. A significant proportion of the population continues to depend on farming for its livelihood. Improving farmers' incomes must therefore remain a fundamental objective of economic policy. The challenges of a densely populated country, where millions live in rural and economically backward regions, cannot be addressed through the expansion of heavy industries alone.

Experts have repeatedly raised concerns about the acquisition of agricultural land belonging to Adivasis, Dalits and fishing communities. In several instances, allegations of coercion, forced eviction, arrests and violations of legal safeguards have surfaced. Meanwhile, hills and forests are being cleared to make way for development projects, while villages are left vulnerable to submergence and displacement.

Ironically, those living in relatively secure and unaffected areas often justify these developments as an unavoidable price of progress. People who oppose such projects are frequently branded as anti-national, while those supporting marginalised communities are sometimes accused of being criminals, religious conversion agents or foreign-sponsored elements. Over the past century, many of these communities have systematically lost their land, cultural identity, languages and traditional ways of life. Their cultural contributions are often celebrated when the country seeks to showcase its diversity, but their economic and social rights receive far less attention. Poor and marginalised people are repeatedly promised employment and a better standard of living in the name of development. Yet, in many cases, they eventually find themselves reduced to wage labourers on land that once belonged to them, dependent on the goodwill of outside investors and employers.

This is hardly an acceptable model of development. Is the primary objective of economic policy merely to increase per capita income among the top seven to eight per cent of the population while overlooking the condition of the bottom 25 to 30 per cent?

Lahiri has also expressed views favouring large industries over micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). His argument is that lending to a single large industrial unit is less expensive and administratively more convenient for banks than extending credit to numerous smaller enterprises. However, figures indicate that large companies accounted for an additional industrial credit expansion of Rs 2 lakh crore, while the MSME sector received Rs 1.6 lakh crore. These numbers underline the importance of ensuring that smaller enterprises, cottage industries and startups receive adequate institutional support. Startups deserve particular attention because of their technological capabilities and potential to expand rapidly in global markets. Encouraging these enterprises could also create new opportunities in technology-driven employment, allowing talented engineers and skilled professionals to put their expertise to productive use. Smaller enterprises and startups are often fertile grounds for innovation, and the government can play a crucial role by providing the necessary support for research and development (R&D).

Another important question concerns the rationale behind the incentives and concessions extended to large corporate houses. Their primary objective, after all, is profit maximisation. Many large companies generate relatively limited direct employment because of their capital-intensive operations and do not always demonstrate a strong commitment to the welfare of communities living around their project sites. In such circumstances, the justification for providing extensive public support to big corporations deserves closer scrutiny. Otherwise, economic policy risks reinforcing a model that disproportionately benefits corporate capital.

The challenge before India is not simply to accelerate economic growth but to ensure that development is genuinely inclusive. Backward and marginalised communities must be integrated into economic activity, with particular attention paid to those at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. Growth that excludes them cannot be considered sustainable or equitable.

Economist Ashok Lahiri may not agree with this approach, but an observation made by Mahatma Gandhi in the mid-1950s remains relevant to the debate. Gandhi envisaged the development of electricity, iron and steel, shipbuilding, machinery and other major industries. However, he argued that the priorities of industrialisation needed to be reversed. Instead of destroying villages and traditional handicrafts, industries should serve rural communities and strengthen their economic foundations.

Gandhi's vision may not be entirely applicable to the complexities of the modern economy. But that does not mean fertile agricultural land should simply be handed over to corporate houses in the name of industrial progress. India must explore a more balanced development model that protects agricultural livelihoods while creating opportunities for industrial expansion.

Rather than concentrating incentives and concessions in the hands of large corporations, the government should encourage young entrepreneurs with innovative ideas and help them establish and expand their startups. Industrial growth is necessary, but it must not become a justification for undermining the livelihoods, land rights and economic security of those who have the least power to defend them.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Every commercial vehicle in Assam must install a Speed Limiting Device within one month.

This is non-negotiable and I will personally monitor that this drive is executed to the T.
~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam





Karbi Anglong leaves conflict behind, embraces culture and education: Himanta Biswa Sarma

At Platinum Jubilee celebrations, Assam CM highlights the region's transition towards peace and development; 702 teacher appointment letters distributed as 15,000 performers from 17 communities stage traditional Nimso Kerung dance in Diphu.



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

DIPHU: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Karbi Anglong had moved beyond years of violence and armed conflict and was now charting a new course through education, culture and sports.

Addressing the Platinum Jubilee celebrations marking 75 years of the district's formation at Taralangso in Diphu, Sarma said the region had entered a new phase of peace and development, with cultural identity and education emerging as key drivers of its progress.

"There is no longer the sound of weapons here; there are no rifles, grenades or gunshots. Today, we are moving forward with a renewed resolve to conquer the world through our culture, education and sports," the Chief Minister said.A major highlight of the celebrations was the distribution of appointment letters to 702 selected candidates appointed as teachers under the jurisdiction of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).The celebrations also witnessed a massive cultural performance at KASA Stadium, where 15,000 young men and women representing 17 communities within the KAAC area came together to perform the traditional Karbi folk dance 'Nimso Kerung' in their respective traditional attire.Describing the performance as a significant initiative towards securing a place in the Guinness Book of World Records, Sarma announced that a similar programme would be organised in Guwahati at a later date. He also announced a financial incentive of Rs 25,000 for each participating artiste.

The Platinum Jubilee marked the 75th anniversary of the formation of the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District on November 17, 1951. During the programme, the Chief Minister released a commemorative souvenir and felicitated artistes of the Karbi Cultural Society for winning the first global prize at the 16th International Cultural Performing Arts Olympiad held in Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.Another notable feature of the event was the collective rendition of a traditional prayer by 2,000 Karbi priests in the presence of the Chief Minister.Recalling the historical journey behind the formation of the district, Sarma acknowledged the contributions of prominent Karbi leaders, including Khorsing Terang, Samsonsing Engti, Sarsing Teron, Song Be and Nihar Rongphar.He referred to the political developments of the 1930s, when the Mikir Hills were classified as a Partially Excluded Area under the Government of India Act, 1935, following the recommendations of the Simon Commission. Khorsing Terang subsequently won the 1937 Assam Provincial Legislative Assembly elections, becoming the first legislator from the region.The Chief Minister also recalled that during the visit of then Assam Governor Sir Robert Neil Reid in December 1937, Samson Sing Ingti, Song Be and Khorsing Terang raised the demand for a separate district.The movement gathered momentum with the establishment of the Karbi Adorbar at Kathalguri in Nagaon in 1945. With Sarsing Teron as its president and Samson Sing Ingti as general secretary, the organisation continued to press for a separate administrative identity. Following sustained efforts and the intervention of then Assam Premier Gopinath Bordoloi, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District was formally constituted on November 17, 1951.

Three Myanmar nationals arrested with 7.4 kg yaba, 3 kg opium in Manipur



IMPHAL

Manipur Police have arrested three Myanmar nationals and seized a large consignment of narcotics, including yaba tablets and opium, from a village near the international border in Churachandpur district.

The arrests were made on Tuesday at Behiang village, located along the India-Myanmar border, according to a police official.

The accused have been identified as Paukhanpiang Milun (38), Liansianminthang Milun (27) and Paukhantuang Milun (27). All three are residents of Tedim township in Myanmar.During the operation, police recovered approximately 7.4 kg of yaba, a synthetic stimulant drug, and 3 kg of opium from their possession. Three mobile phones and two motorcycles were also seized.

Yaba, commonly known as a combination of methamphetamine and caffeine, is a prohibited narcotic substance in India.

A case has been registered against the arrested persons under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and the Foreigners Act. Further investigation is underway.

The seizure comes amid continuing concerns over cross-border drug trafficking along the India-Myanmar frontier. Manipur shares a 398-km international border with Myanmar, of which around 55 km has been fenced.

Former Assam MP Ranee Narah faces trial proceedings in 2018 corruption case

GUWAHATI

Special Judge's Court to examine allegations of irregularities in the implementation of public welfare schemes during Narah's tenure as a Member of Parliament.

A corruption case against former Assam Member of Parliament Ranee Narah over alleged irregularities in the implementation of development schemes during her tenure is set to proceed before a Special Judge's Court.

The case was registered by the Chief Minister's Vigilance Cell in 2018 following allegations of financial and administrative irregularities in the execution of various public welfare projects during Narah's tenure as an MP.

The allegations concern the implementation of development schemes and the handling of funds allocated for projects intended to benefit the public. However, details of the specific schemes involved and the exact nature of the alleged financial irregularities have not been made available.Following the investigation initiated in 2018, the matter has now moved to the stage of proceedings before the Special Judge's Court, where the allegations will be examined through the judicial process.The case relates to Narah's tenure as a parliamentarian and alleged lapses in the execution of development projects during that period.

The court proceedings mark a fresh development in the eight-year-old case. However, the allegations against the former MP remain subject to judicial determination and have not yet been established.

NPP seeks Governor's intervention over Wildlife Protection Act in Nagaland

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

KOHIMA: The National People's Party (NPP) has approached Nagaland Governor seeking a comprehensive constitutional and legal review of the applicability of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and its subsequent amendments in the state, citing the special safeguards provided under Article 371A of the Constitution.

In a representation submitted on Tuesday, NPP national vice-president Vevoyi Wideo urged the Governor to examine the legal basis for implementing the Act and its amended provisions in Nagaland, particularly where they may affect matters protected under the constitutional provision.

The party sought verification of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly's resolution dated September 18, 1981, through which the Act was adopted, along with the relevant Gazette notification and



subsequent official records.

The NPP pointed out that the legislation underwent major amendments in 1991, 2002, 2006 and 2022, raising questions about whether the amended provisions were legally extended to Nagaland and whether further legislative approval was necessary.

Article 371A provides special constitutional safeguards for Nagaland. It stipulates that no Act of Parliament concerning Naga religious or social practices, customary laws and procedures, and ownership and transfer of land and its resources will apply to the state unless the Nagaland Legislative Assembly decides otherwise through a resolution.

The party observed that hunting and the relationship between Naga communities and their natural environment are closely connected with customary practices, community traditions and village-level regulatory systems in several local contexts.

Clarifying its position, the NPP said it did not question the importance of wildlife conservation. Rather, it maintained that conservation measures should be implemented in a manner consistent with the constitutional protections available to Nagaland.

It also expressed concern that the absence of an authoritative clarification had created uncertainty among enforcement agencies and local communities, potentially resulting in avoidable disputes and tensions.

The party urged the Governor to refer the matter to the state government for examination in consultation with the concerned departments and bring it to the attention of competent authorities, including the Speaker of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly.

The representation further called for a detailed legal assessment of the four amendment Acts and clarification on whether a fresh Assembly resolution, legislative clarification or any other lawful measure was required.

The NPP also proposed examining the possibility of a Nagaland-specific administrative or legislative framework that could address the relationship between wildlife conservation and recognised Naga customary practices.

The party has requested the Governor's office to inform it of the action taken on the issues raised in the representation.

Assam reviews Rs.17,829 crore Finance Commission allocation for rural, urban local bodies

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK



GUWAHATI: Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota on Tuesday reviewed the devolution of funds under the 16th Finance Commission and the progress of ongoing development projects, with a focus on strengthening rural and urban local bodies across the state.According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Kota chaired a meeting of the High-Level Monitoring Committee under the 16th Finance Commission and the State-Level Monitoring Committee under the 7th Assam State Finance Commission.The meeting reviewed the allocation and utilisation of funds, implementation progress and financial preparedness of local self-governing institutions.

A major focus was Assam's allocation of ?17,829 crore for Rural and Urban Local Bodies under the 16th Finance Commission for the 2026-31 period. Of this amount, ?14,580 crore has been earmarked for Rural Local Bodies (RLBs), while Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) will receive ?3,249 crore.

Discussions covered the strategic utilisation of basic, performance-based, tied and untied grants, along with measures to improve revenue mobilisation, financial compliance and the delivery of services entrusted to local bodies.

The committee also examined conditions for the release of grants, pending audits and utilisation certificates, revenue-generation potential and administrative issues concerning Sixth Schedule areas. The constitution of urban local bodies and the timely conduct of elections also featured in the discussions.

Under the 7th Assam State Finance Commission for 2026-31, recommendations involving ?15,434 crore were reviewed. The proposed amount includes ?7,128 crore in devolution grants and ?8,306 crore in specific grants for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), urban local bodies and Sixth Schedule areas.

The meeting also examined development proposals worth ?347.46 crore for the 2026-27 financial year. These cover roads, drainage systems, street lighting, markets, sanitation facilities and office infrastructure.

Outstanding liabilities and pending utilisation certificates were also reviewed as part of the exercise.

Emphasising financial discipline and accountability, the meeting called for outcome-oriented expenditure and stronger institutional monitoring through regular inspections, geo-tagging, quarterly reviews and third-party assessments.

The CMO said the discussions underscored that Finance Commission allocations should go beyond the transfer of funds and help build financially empowered local institutions, strengthen grassroots planning and accelerate infrastructure development and essential service delivery across Assam.

Manik Saha Predicts BJP Sweep in Tripura's 21 Urban Local Bodies, Rules Out Strong Opposition



AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has expressed confidence that the BJP will win all 21 urban local bodies in the state in the upcoming elections, claiming that the party faces no serious electoral challenge from its political opponents.Addressing a BJP rally at Sonamura on November 16, Saha said the response to his recent door-to-door campaign reflected strong public support for the ruling party and its development-oriented governance.

Elections to the 21 urban local bodies, comprising the Agartala Municipal Corporation, municipalities and Nagar Panchayats, are scheduled for November 27. The newly established Bishramganja Nagar Panchayat is also part of the electoral exercise. Counting of votes will take place on December 2.Referring to the 2021 urban local body elections, the Chief Minister said the BJP had won 20 of the 21 bodies and was confident of improving its performance this time.

Saha argued that the party had managed to counter the usual anti-incumbency sentiment associated with governments remaining in power by focusing on development and continuous public service.

"For us, the BJP means development and continuous work," he said, adding that the government was following the path laid down by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Appealing to voters to give the BJP a mandate across all 21 urban local bodies, Saha said the electoral outcome would also reflect public confidence in Modi's leadership.

The Chief Minister maintained that the BJP's principal competition was with its own past performance rather than other political parties. He said the organisation was focused on delivering more for the people instead of engaging in political confrontations.

Saha also stressed the importance of taking all communities along in the state's development process. He said minority communities and people from different social and tribal backgrounds had an important role in building a new Tripura.

Codeine-based cough syrup worth approximately Rs 30 lakh seized in Agartala; 3 detained

AGARTALA : In a major anti-narcotics operation ahead of the ongoing Urban Local Body (ULB) elections in Tripura, police seized eight cartons of codeine phosphate-based cough syrup, reportedly worth approximately Rs 30 lakh.

The eight cartons of codeine phosphate-based cough syrup were seized from a vehicle in the Moharajganj police station area on Tuesday evening. Three persons were found inside the vehicle.

According to police officials, preventive operations have been conducted regularly across the state in view of the ongoing civic body elections. During one such operation, Krishnadhan Sarkar, the Officer-in-Charge of East Agartala police station, noticed a vehicle allegedly attempting to flee after spotting a police vehicle near the hanging bridge.

Suspecting suspicious activity, the police officer chased the vehicle and intercepted it near Soni Temple on Jogendramura Road.

During the initial inspection, the officer found three persons inside the vehicle along with several cartons. A strong medicinal smell emanating from the cartons further raised suspicion.

The officer immediately informed Inspector Krishnadhan Sarkar, the OC



of the concerned police station, who subsequently alerted senior police officials about the incident.

Following the information, an Executive Magistrate and a Drug Inspector were called to the spot. Two independent witnesses were also arranged before the search operation was conducted.

In the presence of the Executive Magistrate, Drug Inspector and independent witnesses, police searched the vehicle and recovered eight cartons containing codeine phosphate-based cough syrup.

Police officials confirmed that the seized cough syrup falls under the category of contraband substances and a case is being registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

The approximate market value of the seized consignment is stated to be around Rs 30 lakh.

SDPO Sadar Pannalal Sen said, "Preventive measures were being carried out daily in view of the ongoing ULB elections. Officer-in-Charge Krishnadhan Sarkar noticed the vehicle attempting to flee after spotting the police vehicle near the hanging bridge and intercepted it near Soni Temple on Jogendramura Road." Sen said that after the vehicle was stopped, three persons and several cartons were found inside.

"A strong medicinal smell coming from the cartons raised suspicion, following which the OC informed him about the incident. An Executive Magistrate and Drug Inspector were called to the spot, along with two independent witnesses, before the search was conducted," Sen said.

The SDPO said, "Eight cartons containing codeine phosphate-based cough syrup were recovered during the search and that the substance was contraband." He added that a case was being registered under the NDPS Act.

We will share further details with you from time to time as the investigation progresses, Sen said.

"Further investigation is underway to ascertain the source of the consignment, its intended destination and the involvement of the three persons found inside the vehicle," Sen said.

Quest!

On the Titanic, the band all died, as they stayed on board, playing music as it went down.



NATIONAL

'Leader of anti-India propaganda': BJP slams Rahul Gandhi over remarks at Columbia University



NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his remarks on the Indian economy at Columbia University and said he is the "leader of anti-India propaganda" who repeatedly speaks ill of the country on foreign soil.

Citing projections by various global agencies, the BJP said the world recognises India as one of the fastest-growing economies, but Gandhi is busy portraying India as an "economic disaster".

In a fireside chat at Columbia University in New York on Tuesday, Gandhi said India is sitting on an "economic disaster" with massive unemployment, a broken manufacturing base and deep-rooted problems in its education system.

He said India's economic model "stopped giving results almost a decade ago" and criticised the government's initiatives such as 'Make in India' and 'Start-up India', claiming they had failed to revive the country's "broken" economic backbone.

In a post on X, BJP national media convenor Ashish Usha Agarwal accused Gandhi of repeatedly portraying India negatively on foreign soil, saying this has become a "recurring pattern".

"While the world recognises India as one of the fastest-growing major economies, Rahul Gandhi is busy portraying the country as an 'economic disaster' on foreign soil," he said.

IMF and Moody's have projected India's economic growth to be 7 per cent for FY27, while RBI's professional forecasters have estimated a 7.1 per cent growth rate for the same period. Goldman Sachs expects India's real GDP to grow by 6.9 per cent in 2026 despite global economic uncertainties, Agarwal said.

Citing a World Bank report, the BJP leader said poverty at the lower-middle-income benchmark has declined from 57.7 per cent to 16.1 per cent, lifting an estimated 496 million people out of poverty.

"From infrastructure and manufacturing to digital transformation, services, investment and financial inclusion, India is advancing across sectors and strengthening its position in the global economy," he said.

Agarwal asked why Gandhi has repeatedly chosen foreign platforms to portray India in a negative light even when global economic institutions have acknowledged the country's growth and transformation.

"What exactly is the objective behind this narrative?" he asked.

"India is moving forward with the resolve to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Its economic progress is backed by data, its global standing is rising, and no political narrative can erase the aspirations of 1.4 billion Indians," he said.

BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said, "Rahul Gandhi has become the leader of anti-India propaganda."

He alleged that Gandhi made foreigners criticise India's democracy during the Bharat Summit in Hyderabad and questioned his conduct as the LoP.

"Rahul Gandhi's inherent hate for India's progress & Indian democracy makes him speak ill about India every time he goes abroad. Rahul Gandhi insults the spirit of India's national flag by speaking against Indian democracy," Bhandari said on X.

Comparing Gandhi with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bhandari said the PM upholds India's national interests during his official foreign visits.

The BJP spokesperson said Gandhi is a "disaster as a responsible LoP".

In a post on X, BJP leader C R Kesavan accused Gandhi of resorting to "toxic lies" and "third-rate politics" on foreign soil.

"Rahul Gandhi terming the vibrant Indian economy being on the brink of a disaster when New India is rising on the international stage as the world's fastest (-growing) economy only exposes the political bankruptcy of the failed and frustrated Rahul Gandhi," he said.

India, Japan set to review defence ties as Rajnath, Jaishankar arrive in Tokyo

NEW DELHI



India and Japan are set to review their bilateral defence ties and strategic cooperation as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrived in Tokyo on Wednesday for the fourth edition of the 2+2 ministerial dialogue.

Singh and Jaishankar will co-chair the Foreign and Defence Ministers' Dialogue (2+2) with their Japanese counterparts, Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

The two-day visit comes a day after the Quad leaders' summit in Manila, Philippines and as India hosts a joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) exercise involving the four member countries.

The Quad, comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia, is a strategic grouping focused on promoting a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific through cooperation in maritime security, technology, infrastructure and disaster response.

The India-Japan 2+2 dialogue follows the previous round held in New Delhi on August 20, 2024.

India and Japan will review the full range of bilateral strategic and defence cooperation, exchange views on regional and global developments and reaffirm their shared commitment to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific, the MEA said.

The two sides are expected to discuss defence equipment and technology, maritime security, joint military exercises across all three services and defence industrial partnerships, it said.

Singh will also hold a bilateral meeting with Koizumi, while Jaishankar will hold the 19th India-Japan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Motegi.

The meeting between Singh and Koizumi will be their third this year, following their engagements in New Delhi in August and on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus in Cebu in October.

In a post on X ahead of the visit, Singh said India and Japan shared a common vision for a "free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific", grounded in mutual trust and democratic values.

He said he would review progress in defence and security cooperation and explore new opportunities to deepen collaboration in technology, maritime security and regional stability.

Koizumi, replying to Singh's post, said he looked forward to discussing a range of issues, including maritime security cooperation. He also said he would welcome the Indian minister to his hometown of Yokosuka and take him on a tour of a Mogami-class frigate.

Singh said on Wednesday that he was on his way to the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force's naval base at Yokosuka, adding that his Japanese counterpart was "playing the perfect host".

New Delhi and Tokyo will also revie w understandings reached during the 15th and 16th India-Japan annual summit meetings, held in August 2025 and July 2026, respectively.

Jaishankar will also participate in the third edition of Raisina Tokyo during the visit.

India and Japan share a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" anchored in democratic values, mutual trust and respect for the rule of law, with both countries committed to a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific, the MEA said. The Indian Embassy in Japan said Ambassador Nagma Mallick welcomed Singh and Jaishankar on their arrival in Tokyo on Wednesday.

The visit comes a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined the leaders of the US, Australia and Japan for the Quad summit in Manila on Tuesday.

India is also hosting the annual joint HADR exercise, 'Sahayata Setu', at the Air Force Station in Jamnagar from November 17 to 19.

The MEA said Australia, India, Japan and the US were participating as observers in the exercise, hosted by the Indian Air Force.

India, as chair of the Quad HADR Working Group, also convened a meeting to review progress in disaster response and strengthen cooperation in regional preparedness, it said. The Quad's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) framework seeks to strengthen coordination among the four countries in responding to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump wants to show strength in China, but series of technological snafus raises concerns at home

SHENZHEN

US President Donald Trump is heading to China on Wednesday, wanting to reinforce America's status as the world's leading technology power, but a distressing series of technical outages back home has left the administration scrambling to calm the American public.

Trump had been nonchalant on his first day on the ground in Asia about the outages that left people in the US worried about accessing their email, checking their bank accounts or safely flying on an airplane.

"It's fine," Trump pronounced on Tuesday from the Philippine capital of Manila, suggesting it was all just a consequence of being a nation that is "big and powerful."

But the outages involving Microsoft, the Federal Aviation Administration, JPMorgan Chase and the National Security Agency's communications network are starting to overshadow Trump's visit.

They raised the spectre that artificial intelligence can disrupt daily life, as new cyber vulnerabilities identified require software to be constantly upgraded to fix flaws or other security holes, known as patching, which is supposed to improve how the technology runs.

So at the start of the second day of Trump's trip, Secretary of State Marco Rubio stepped in to reassure Americans on Trump's behalf. He told reporters there was "zero" evidence that the outages are connected or tied to rival nations, cyber hackers or criminals.

"Sometimes when you are going in to fix your system because you've identified a vulnerability, it creates a short-term disruption," said Rubio, who is also Trump's national security adviser. "That's how it's been described to me in terms of the role" that AI "might have played in it."

The issues put the administration on the defensive at a moment when the president wants to project strength and certainty at a potentially complicated trilateral meeting in China with that country's president, Xi Jinping, and Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Trump has signalled that he wants to take an improvised approach during his time in Shenzhen, China, the skyscraper-filled tech hub that is hosting world leaders for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. It's a bet that his unscripted brand of diplomacy based on personal relationships can create some kind of legacy to reshape world affairs during his final two years in the White House.

Trump said he plans to talk with Xi and Putin about limiting nuclear weapons and bringing an end to the war in Ukraine, which began in 2022 with Russia's invasion. Analysts are not expecting substantive breakthroughs, despite the unprecedented nature of the meeting.

Before the trip, Trump's aides had told reporters that the war in Ukraine would not be part of the trilateral meeting. Still, the president said on Tuesday that the deaths of tens of thousands of Russian troops every month had created an opening to resolve the conflict.

"I think it's very close to getting it done," Trump said. "We're going to have a good meeting on that."

Trump also teased the possibility of a private meeting with Putin and a separate sit-down with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, though neither event has been confirmed beyond the US president's own musings.

Rubio clarified on Wednesday that Trump was "serious" about meeting with Kim as a way of resolving tensions with North Korea. But he suggested no meeting was currently scheduled between Trump and Kim for Thursday.

"I'm not telling you that there will be a meeting tomorrow," Rubio said. "I'm just saying that" the president "is willing to meet and discuss, as he did during his first term."

The US president started his day in the Philippine capital, Manila, where he may have a short reunion with Imelda Marcos, the former first lady, whose son is now president. Trump was having lunch with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. at the Malacanang Presidential Palace.

Marcos noted that he had sent fast food from the Philippine chain Jollibee to the US delegation for a late-night snack Tuesday and complimented Trump for "working very hard."

The US president praised the US bond with the Philippines and the interior decoration of the presidential palace.

"Our people share common history, common values, common interests, common architectural tastes," Trump said. "I love what you've done here."

Trump plans to depart in the afternoon for Shenzhen, and he expressed excitement about the arrival ceremony that awaits him.

"I am the guest of President Xi and I hear we're going to have quite a landing," he told reporters. "It's going to be a beautiful thing."

The US president on Thursday will participate in the APEC summit and then hold his meeting with Xi and Putin, before then returning to the US. The prospect of Trump meeting with two of America's largest geopolitical rivals has been a source of unease as the US president has been less welcoming of historic allies such as Canada and NATO partners in Europe. His tariffs that were intended to curb China's trade surplus have done little to stop the progress of the world's dominant manufacturer, which for the second straight year will have exported USD 1 trillion more in goods than what it imported.

On Tuesday, Xi met with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and they agreed to further reduce tariffs on each other's goods. Carney has cultivated tighter economic ties with China and the European Union in response to strains in Canada's relationship with Trump, who at times has said he wants to make the country America's 51st state.

Even without the digital outages in the US, questions about how to handle AI loom over the summit.

The technology is viewed as key to unlocking faster economic growth, but its rapid development has meant it poses national security risks and could evolve in ways that put AI beyond human control.

Trump's close tech industry ally Jensen Huang was recently removed as the CEO of Nvidia after he admitted to an affair with a woman alleged to be an agent of the Chinese government.

Beijing has denied that she was a spy, yet the affair raised concerns about how China has been able to access Nvidia computer chips to develop its own AI models that are competing with the US

When asked this week why the US had not been more aggressive in cutting off China's access to advanced computer chips, Trump said there were differences of opinion inside his administration and that "We have a very good relationship with China, and you don't want to insult them."

Both Russia and China have provided support to Iran after Trump launched a war there in late February to halt that country's development of nuclear weapons. The war has pushed up inflation and slowed global growth as energy prices have swung in response to each escalation and every pause in the conflict.

Trump has said he intends to talk about the Iran war and efforts to reduce nuclear weapons. He said he does not plan to bring up Taiwan, a self-governing island that China claims as its own. Taiwan is the leading manufacturer of advanced computer chips, including those designed by US companies.

US proposes stricter green card rules, longer hiring process for foreign workers



WASHINGTON

The US has proposed stricter rules for employment-based green cards for foreign workers to ensure Americans get priority in recruitment for jobs ranging from physical therapists and nurses to highly skilled professionals.

The Department of Labour on Tuesday proposed a new rule to modernise the labour market test under the Programme Electronic Review Management (PERM) immigrant visa process, marking the first major revision of the rules in 20 years.

Under the proposed changes, employers would be prohibited from tailoring job opportunities to foreign workers. The rule would require employers to level the playing field during recruitment by using the same channels and methods to advertise vacancies.

The proposal seeks to replace traditional print advertisements with online recruitment through employer websites, job portals, social media platforms, job fairs and campus recruitment.

It would also extend the minimum advertising period for vacancies from the existing 30 days to 90 calendar days and require employers to demonstrate that they had made genuine efforts to recruit qualified American workers.

"This proposed rule change will ensure American workers are first in line for high-skilled, high-paying job opportunities over foreign labour," Secretary of Labour Keith Sonderling said. The department also proposed eliminating the administrative exemption that allowed employers to bypass the statutory labour market test for certain occupations.

Under the revised framework, employers recruiting physical therapists, nurses and candidates for positions requiring exceptional ability in the sciences or arts would have to consider qualified American applicants.

The proposal also seeks to strengthen safeguards for American workers who have been laid off. Employers would be required to continue considering qualified laid-off workers throughout the labour certification and immigrant petition processes. It would also bar certain employers who have laid off American workers within the preceding two years from seeking permanent labour certification for the same or similar positions. PERM labour certification is the first step for most US employers seeking to sponsor foreign nationals for permanent residency.

Under the existing process, employers must test the domestic labour market and establish that no able, willing, qualified and available American worker has applied for the position. The Labour Department said the current rules no longer reflect contemporary recruitment practices and allow some employers to use different hiring procedures for sponsored positions than those followed for regular vacancies.

Christian Legislators and Ministers Submit Joint Representation, Appeal to CM for Complete Repeal of APFRA



DR YUMRI TAIPODIA



A significant appeal for the complete repeal of the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 1978, has been placed before the Government of Arunachal Pradesh through a joint representation submitted to the Hon'ble Chief Minister on 6 March 2026. The representation, signed by Christian Members of the Legislative Assembly and Ministers of the State, expresses concern over the legislation and earnestly appeals to the State Government to consider its complete repeal in the larger interest of religious freedom, equality, communal harmony and peaceful coexistence.

The significance of this representation lies in its collective appeal by elected representatives who have sought to bring the concerns of the Christian community to the attention of the State Government through a constitutional and democratic channel. Its language reflects a spirit of humility, institutional respect and constructive engagement. Rather than adopting a confrontational approach, the signatories have appealed to the Government to consider the matter with sensitivity, wisdom and due regard for the longstanding harmony of Arunachal Pradesh.

Arunachal Pradesh has long been recognised for its peaceful and harmonious social environment. People belonging to diverse tribes, cultures and religious faiths have lived together with mutual respect and understanding. The values of tolerance, unity and brotherhood have remained important features of the State's collective identity. This tradition of coexistence is a shared social inheritance that must be preserved and strengthened through decisions that inspire confidence among all communities.

It is against this background that the concerns surrounding APFRA have assumed particular significance. The joint representation draws attention to the apprehensions that have emerged among members of the Christian community regarding the Act, especially in connection with its proposed implementation.

A noteworthy development mentioned in the representation concerns the State Government's response to an enquiry by the Gauhati High Court, following which the Government sought an extension of time to frame the rules under APFRA. This development has sparked widespread protests by Christian groups across the State, reflecting the seriousness of the concerns surrounding the legislation.

The representation acknowledges that the Act intends to address concerns regarding forced religious conversions. Nevertheless, members of the Christian community perceive the legislation as anti-Christian and fear that its implementation could potentially give rise to misunderstandings and social tensions. These apprehensions deserve thoughtful consideration, particularly in a State whose people have historically cherished religious diversity, mutual accommodation and peaceful coexistence.

The central concern expressed by the signatories is not detached from the constitutional framework governing religious freedom in India. Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, including the right to profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to the constitutional provisions and limitations.

The representation specifically expresses concern that the implementation of APFRA could impinge upon these freedoms.

Freedom of faith and belief is an important dimension of individual liberty. In a society characterised by religious and cultural diversity, the assurance that every citizen can freely follow and practise their faith is essential to maintaining mutual confidence. The apprehension expressed by the Christian community, therefore, merits serious and sympathetic consideration by the State Government.

An important principle articulated in the joint representation is that laws should strengthen trust, unity and mutual respect among all communities, irrespective of their faith or belief. This is a significant consideration for any government committed to maintaining social harmony. Legislation should be assessed not only in relation to its stated objectives but also with due consideration for the confidence, reassurance and peaceful relationships that it ought to promote among citizens.

The signatories have consequently appealed to the Government to take appropriate steps towards the complete repeal of the APFRA. Their appeal is founded upon the longstanding tradition of harmony and the spirit of coexistence that the people of Arunachal Pradesh have always cherished.

The proposed repeal is presented as a thoughtful step towards reinforcing the principles of equality, harmony and secularism in the State. It would also provide reassurance to different communities that Arunachal Pradesh will continue to uphold an environment in which every citizen enjoys freedom of faith and belief in a spirit of mutual respect.

The collective appeal of Christian legislators and Ministers deserves particular attention because it communicates a concern through the very institutions of democratic representation. Their approach demonstrates the importance of constructive dialogue between elected representatives and the Government on matters that touch upon religious freedom and social harmony.

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh is therefore respectfully urged to give due consideration to the joint representation submitted by them. The concerns articulated by its signatories deserve a response that reflects constitutional sensitivity, democratic responsibility and an appreciation of the State's pluralistic social character.

The issue should not be allowed to become a source of unnecessary misunderstanding between religious communities. Arunachal Pradesh belongs equally to all its citizens, irrespective of their religious convictions. The preservation of its peaceful social environment requires mutual understanding, equal respect and a continued commitment to the values of tolerance, unity and brotherhood.

Ultimately, the appeal for repeal is an appeal for reassurance, confidence and the preservation of a harmonious society.

The complete repeal of APFRA, as requested in the joint representation, would be a considered response to the apprehensions expressed by the Christian community and an opportunity to reaffirm the State's commitment to equality, religious freedom and secular principles.

It is hoped that the Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh will consider this collective appeal in the spirit in which it has been submitted and initiate appropriate steps towards the complete repeal of the Act.

Let the enduring identity of Arunachal Pradesh remain rooted in tolerance, unity and brotherhood, where every citizen can enjoy freedom of faith and belief without apprehension, and where mutual respect continues to unite people across all communities.



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