

**Press Information Bureau  
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Ministry of Defence**

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**Defence Minister Reviews Operational Preparedness in The Northeast**

Defence Minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman, arrived at Tezpur today as part of her maiden visit to the Eastern Command as Defence Minister. The Minister who was accompanied by Vice Chief of the Army Staff Lt Gen Sarath Chand and GOC-in-C Eastern Command Lt Gen Abhay Krishna was received at Tezpur Airforce Station by GOC Gajraj Corps Lt Gen AS Bedi and other senior dignitaries of the Army and the Air Force. The visit which is part of her familiarisation with all the formations of the Indian Army & the Indian Air Force (IAF) comes close on the heels of her visit to Northern Command recently and her visit to Sikkim yesterday.

At the outset, the Defence Minister extended her good wishes to the Air Warriors on the occasion of 85th Air Force Day anniversary as she interacted with them at the strategically important Eastern airbase of Tezpur. She also reviewed the operational readiness of the airbase, seeing the Sukhoi fighter aircraft & other IAF assets at first-hand.

Thereafter, Smt Sitharaman visited the Gajraj Corps HQ where she was briefed by GOC Gajraj Corps Lt Gen AS Bedi on the overall security situation in Assam and the Kameng Sector of Arunachal Pradesh and the operational preparedness of the Corps. The Minister reiterated the Government's resolve to give further impetus to development in the border areas.

The Defence Minister subsequently visited Solmara Military Station, Tezpur where she interacted with the officers & jawans over a cup of tea. She appreciated the high standards of military discipline and preparedness of the army men and their excellent performance in the difficult terrain and challenging environment in which they are operating. Smt Sitharaman further praised them for their steadfast commitment and their high morale in facing the diverse challenges thrown up by the dynamic security environment. She exhorted the troops to continue with the same zeal and sense of pride and honour showing due respect to Human Rights. She expressed satisfaction at the level of preparedness of the forces and extended her greetings to the troops for a happy Diwali before her departure for Delhi.

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**MJPS/SG/RP**