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**PERSPECTIVE**

My Guru told me "Be careful who you let on your ship, because some people will sink the whole ship just because they can't be the captain."

~ Harsh Goenka, Chairman, RPG Enterprises

## Manipur police crack down on illegal gambling, impose Rs 39,000 fines

**IMPHAL:** Manipur police launched a gambling prohibition drive and confiscated illegal items, including "Lagao sheets and one set of Lagao dice," at various locations within the jurisdiction of Lamlai police station in Imphal East district on Wednesday.

The police reported on Thursday that the confiscation indicates the game involves betting on the outcome of a six-sided dice (D6) roll.

During the drives, four Lagao sheets and one set of Lagao dice (six dice) were seized.

This form of gambling is associated with regional variations of dice betting, particularly in India, where it involves multiple gamblers.

In another operation to curb motor vehicle offenses, police issued 17 challans to offenders, totaling Rs 39,000 during the past 24 hours.

The police also addressed circulating social media videos alleging a firing incident in Jiribam during Diwali.

They clarified that these videos are false and confirmed that no firing incident occurred in the Jiribam district during this period.

Furthermore, bursting firecrackers in sensitive areas has been restricted within the district to prevent misinformation and confusion.

### WHO SAID WHAT

**The next Assembly session will be historic as many significant bills will be introduced - bill to ban polygamy and Love Jihad, Bill to preserve our Satras, bill to confer land rights to our tea garden workers among others.**

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM Assam

## Manipur crisis sparks rise in depression, insomnia among children: Mental health expert

**IMPHAL:** A sharp rise in cases relating to depression, insomnia and emotional stress have been observed in Manipur, following the recent socio-political crisis. Increasing cases of insomnia among adults, emotional disturbances and even suicidal tendencies have

This was shared by Dr H Gojendro Singh, Head of Department of Psychiatry, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal on Sunday. Dr Singh said that such cases were seen in the out-patient department records and field visits. Also Read - Nagaland University researchers identify plant compound to heal diabetic wounds Advertisement Dr Gojendro was speaking at the day-long 'Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support clinic' for internally displaced children currently sheltered at relief camps in Manipur's Thoubal and Kakching districts. The clinic was organized at the Angaan Ching Eco Park at Kakching, 50 kilometre west of Imphal.

The event was organized by the Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights in collaboration with the Department of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology, RIMS, Imphal; the Department of



Social Welfare, District Child Protection Unit (Kakching) and Child Welfare Committee (CWC-Kakching).

Dr Gojendro encouraged the children to keep faith and hope, reminding them that no problem or sorrow is permanent. He mentioned that compared to the early days of the crisis, there is now a visible change and children are showing signs of renewed hope and confidence. Citing a story of a child from a relief camp who was recently selected for MBBS, he said

that such achievements should serve as powerful motivation. He affirmed that with hope and determination, success is possible even in the most difficult circumstances. According to MCPCR sources, more than 20,000 children were displaced due to the Manipur conflict that started in May 2023.

Highlighting the significant and positive developments over the past two and half years, chairperson of MCPCR, Keisham Pradipkumar Singh hoped

# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED

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## IED blast damages railway track in Assam's Kokrajhar, train services suspended

Assam DGP reviews security in Kokrajhar following IED blast on railway track

### KOKRAJHAR

A powerful explosion damaged a section of railway track between Kokrajhar and Salakati stations in Assam's Kokrajhar district late on Wednesday night, disrupting train services and causing panic among passengers.

Preliminary reports suggest that the improvised explosive device (IED) went off about five kilometres east of Kokrajhar railway station.

The blast severely damaged a stretch of the track, prompting railway authorities to suspend traffic on both up and down lines as a safety measure.

Several trains were halted at nearby stations, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded and triggering widespread anxiety. Teams from the railway department, security



forces, and bomb disposal squads reached the site soon after the explosion to assess the damage and begin an investigation.

Officials are yet to confirm who was behind the attack, but security has been tightened across the area as inquiries continue.

Assam Director General of Police, Harmit Singh, visited Kokrajhar on Thursday, October 23 to review the security situation after a powerful

IED explosion damaged a section of railway track between Kokrajhar and Salakati stations around midnight.

DGP Singh chaired a high-level meeting with senior police officers and security officials at the 7th Battalion police camp in Charaikhola to assess the incident and discuss preventive measures to avoid any further disruptions.

During the meeting, the DGP directed authorities to intensify security surveillance across the district, focusing on railway lines and other vital installations. He emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts among state police, railway police, and central security forces.

Speaking to the media, DGP Singh confirmed that the explosion was caused by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). "Forensic teams have

collected samples from the site. The investigation is ongoing, and we will soon identify the perpetrators and their motives. The culprits will be apprehended shortly," he said.

In response to the blast, security forces have been deployed throughout Kokrajhar, and patrols along the railway tracks have been strengthened. Train services remain partially suspended while repair work continues on the damaged track.

The explosion, which occurred approximately five kilometers east of Kokrajhar railway station, caused widespread panic among passengers and disrupted rail traffic across the region. Authorities have assured that all necessary precautions are being taken to ensure passenger safety and prevent any recurrence.

## Railway services paralysed across Tripura amid bandh over immigration, autonomy demands



### AGARTALA

Rail transport across Tripura came to a standstill on Wednesday as a bandh called by the Tripura Civil Society disrupted train operations across the state. The shutdown, held to demand the detection and deportation of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, the introduction of the Inner Line Permit, and the implementation of the Tiprasa Accord, led to widespread cancellations and delays.

Protesters began blocking railway tracks from around 7:25 am at several points along the Dharmanagar-Agartala section, forcing the suspension of multiple services.

According to the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), seven trains were cancelled and several others were short-terminated or held at different stations due to the blockade. Train No.

55676 (Dharmanagar-Agartala Passenger) was terminated at Ambassa, while Train No. 15664 (Silchar-Agartala Express) ended its journey at Karimganj. Its return service, Train No. 15663 (Agartala-Silchar Express), originated from Karimganj instead of Agartala.

Local DMU services, including the Agartala-Sabroom and Agartala-Karimganj routes, were also cancelled for the day.

Long-distance trains were similarly hit. Train No. 07030 (Charlapalli-Agartala Special), which started on 20 October, was held at Dharmanagar. The Sabroom-Sealdah Kanchanjunga Express and Agartala-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus Superfast Express, both scheduled to depart today, were detained at Agartala and Jirania, respectively.

Chief Public Relations Officer Kapinjal Kishore Sharma confirmed the disruptions and advised passengers to check for the latest updates before travelling. Railway officials said services would resume once the tracks are cleared and normal conditions return.

## Nagaland University team discovers plant compound that speeds up diabetic wound healing



### KOHIMA

Researchers at Nagaland University have identified Sinapic acid, a naturally occurring plant compound, as a potential game-changer in diabetic wound treatment. The study shows that this compound, when taken orally, can significantly accelerate wound healing in diabetic conditions — a global first, according to the research team.

Published in Nature Scientific Reports, the study reveals that Sinapic acid promotes healing by activating the SIRT1 pathway, which is crucial for tissue repair, new blood vessel formation, and inflammation control. This breakthrough could pave the way for a safe, natural, and affordable therapy for diabetic patients struggling with slow-healing wounds.

The multidisciplinary work brought together scientists from Nagaland University and Lovely Professional University (LPU), Punjab, combining expertise in biotechnology, pharmacology, and biochemistry. The research was led by Prof

Pranav Kumar Prabhakar, Department of Biotechnology, Nagaland University, with contributions from Rupal Dubey, Sourbh Suren Garg, Navneet Khurana, and Jeena Gupta of LPU.

Speaking on the significance of the discovery, Prof Jagadish K Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor of Nagaland University, said the finding underscores the university's commitment to "innovation rooted in nature" and its role in tackling major health challenges. Explaining the research, Prof Prabhakar noted that diabetes continues to affect hundreds of millions worldwide, often leading to complications such as diabetic foot ulcers and amputations. "We set out seeking a safe, plant-based alternative," he said. "Sinapic acid, a natural antioxidant found in edible plants, showed remarkable ability to repair tissue, reduce inflammation, and promote angiogenesis in diabetic wounds." Interestingly, the team found that a lower dose (20 mg/kg) was more effective than a higher one (40 mg/kg), an inverted dose-response that could help refine future dosage strategies.

The discovery carries major implications for diabetic care — from reducing amputation risks to offering a low-cost, natural oral therapy for patients, particularly in rural and resource-limited areas.

The next research phase will focus on detailed molecular pathway studies, safety profiling, and formulation of capsule or nutraceutical tablet forms, followed by pilot clinical trials to test real-world efficacy and safety.

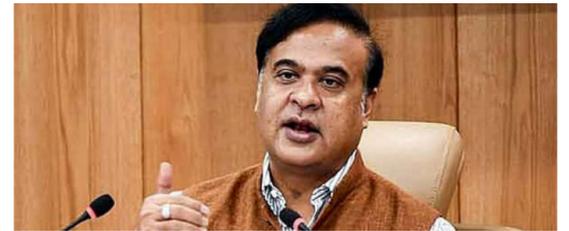
### NAGAON

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that the State Government is preparing to introduce a series of "historic and reform-oriented" bills in the upcoming session of the Assam Legislative Assembly, focusing on love jihad, polygamy, conservation of Satras, and land rights for tea plantation workers.

Assam Speaking to reporters during his visit to Nagaon, the Chief Minister said that the draft legislations are in the final stages of preparation and will soon be placed before the Cabinet for approval before being tabled in the Assembly. Also Read - State govt introduces Tiwa language in 62 primary schools to preserve linguistic legacy Advertisement "In the coming session of the State Legislative Assembly, we plan to introduce several historic bills, including those addressing love jihad, multiple marriages, and the conservation of Satras. Another important bill ensuring land rights for tea plantation workers will also be brought forward," Sarma said.

He described the proposed bills as part of the State Government's broader initiative to safeguard Assam's social and cultural fabric, while ensuring justice and empowerment for marginalised communities.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated an Olympic-standard modern swimming pool in Naga-



on's Mahatma Gandhi Path, constructed at a cost of Rs 7.12 crore under the Chief Minister's Infrastructure Development Fund (CIDF). The facility, designed to promote sports and youth engagement, was implemented under the leadership of Nagaon MLA Rupak Sarma.

"This Olympic-standard swimming pool will inspire our youth to take up competitive sports and bring laurels to Assam," Sarma said, lauding the efforts of MLA Rupak Sarma in bringing the project to fruition. In addition, the Chief Minister inaugurated Rs 4.27 crore worth office building of the Joint Director of Health Services, and a Multi-Stories Market Complex, built at a cost of Rs 8.7 crore. Completed at a cost of Rs 5.21 crore, CM also inaugurated newly constructed Gaurav Path from Nagaon Circuit House Chariali to Panigaon Chariali. These projects are aimed at boosting local infrastructure and development in Nagaon district. Highlighting upcoming developments,

the Chief Minister informed that Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to visit Assam by the end of December or early January to inaugurate the Batadrava Satra Conservation Project "Amit Shah himself laid the foundation stone for the Batadrava project before the 2021 Assembly elections, and he will soon return to inaugurate it," Sarma said.

During his visit, the Chief Minister also distributed financial aid under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA), a scheme promoting women's entrepreneurship and financial independence. Under the first phase, 26,585 women beneficiaries from the Nagaon-Batadrava constituency received Rs 10,000 each as start-up support for small business ventures. "Through this scheme, we aim to make every woman in Assam self-reliant. The government will continue supporting women entrepreneurs so they can lead their families and communities toward prosperity," the Chief Minister said.

## Ningol Chakkouba 2025: Fish worth Rs 4.5 cr sold at Manipur's annual fish fair

### IMPHAL

Approximately 1.5 lakh kilograms of various indigenous fish meant for table consumption, worth over Rs 4.5 crore, were sold during the one-day 46th Annual Fish Fair-cum-Crop Competition 2025, held at Hapta Kangleibung in Manipur's Imphal, on Wednesday.

According to a report, the Department of Fisheries organized the competition as part of Ningol Chakkouba, a grand feast celebrated by the Meitei community, where brothers and parents honor their married sisters and daughters. The Ningol Chakkouba festival falls on Thursday, October 23, 2025. The Director of Fisheries organized the event and fixed the prices of various fish varieties, ranging from Rs 240 to Rs 500 per kilogram, based on their sizes.

A total of 136 fish farmers from across the state participated in the competition and set up 141 stalls for the event.

Vendors sold locally produced fish varieties, including Meitei

Sareng (Wallago attu), Rohu, Common Carp, Silver Carp, Pengba, Khabak, Ngaton, Ngahei, Ukabi, Porom, Tunghanbi, Ngakra (catfish), Muka Nga, Ngasang, and Nungnga, among others.

Vivek Kumar Dewanga, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance), Government of Manipur, addressed the inaugural function as the chief guest.

He added that the state needs to produce at least 65,000 metric tonnes of fish annually to meet the growing demand, whereas current production stands at around 45,000 metric tonnes.

He added that the state spends approximately Rs 300 crore each year on importing table fish from other states, including Assam, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh. He further stated that the government is making every effort to boost fish production over the next five years by launching various fish production projects.

Currently, 90 percent of the state's population is non-vegetarian.



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## EMERGING THREAT OF DEEPEAKES

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence has brought with it unprecedented benefits but also equally alarming threats. One of the most disturbing manifestations of this dual-edged technology is the rise of deepfakes—AI-generated synthetic media where a person's likeness or voice is convincingly altered to create false narratives. In an age where social media is a dominant source of information, deepfakes have emerged as a potent tool for misinformation, manipulation, and character assassination. Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's recent assurance that India will soon introduce regulations to counter deepfakes comes at a critical juncture when the line between truth and fabrication is rapidly disappearing.

India's social fabric, already sensitive along communal, political, and religious lines, is particularly vulnerable to the misuse of deepfake technology. A single doctored video or audio clip can inflame passions, spread falsehoods, and trigger mass unrest before verification is even possible. During elections, deepfakes can be weaponised to malign political figures, distort public opinion, or sow distrust in institutions. The gullible and largely untrained public often struggles to differentiate between authentic content and AI-generated falsehoods. This makes regulation not merely desirable but essential for maintaining public order and trust in democratic processes. Deepfakes violate personal autonomy, privacy, and dignity, all of which are constitutionally protected rights.

Around the world, countries have already begun taking stringent steps to counter deepfakes. The European Union, under its AI Act, has imposed clear accountability on developers and deployers of AI tools. The Act mandates watermarking or labelling of AI-generated content and holds companies liable for misuse. Similarly, the United States has initiated legislative discussions such as the DEEP-FAKES Accountability Act, which calls for the disclosure of synthetic media and penalties for malicious creators. China, meanwhile, has taken a regulatory-heavy approach by enforcing rules that require deepfake creators to label their work and register their real identities before publishing AI-generated content online.

However, these frameworks, while comprehensive, are heavily legalistic and often struggle to keep pace with technological innovation. Laws alone, as India's IT Minister rightly noted, cannot effectively control a rapidly evolving digital threat like deepfakes. A hybrid approach—where law and technology complement each other—is far more sustainable. Minister Vaishnaw's announcement that India will adopt a techno-legal framework is a forward-looking strategy. Rather than merely penalising offenders after damage is done, this model envisions a system where technology itself acts as a preventive and detection mechanism. India's advantage lies in its strong IT workforce and growing AI ecosystem. With over 38,000 GPUs being made available for AI development and global tech giants like Google committing USD 15 billion to build AI infrastructure in India, the country is well-positioned to become a leader in developing counter-deepfake technologies. The Government's focus on indigenous AI models, including those with over 120 billion parameters, also underscores India's intent to create technology that reflects local realities and cultural sensitivities—free from the biases often embedded in Western models.

Deepfakes, born out of sophisticated AI, can only be effectively countered through equally powerful technological innovation. Just as "diamond cuts diamond", the antidote to deepfake lies in advanced detection systems powered by AI itself—tools capable of identifying synthetic manipulations in real time. Several Indian startups, research institutions, and tech companies are already exploring watermarking, facial mapping, and blockchain-based authentication techniques to detect forgeries.

Yet, innovation alone cannot work in isolation. There must be a strong ecosystem of collaboration between the Government, academia, private industry, and media platforms. The development of public awareness programmes is equally vital, enabling citizens to critically assess digital content before accepting it as truth. History has shown that every major technological leap comes with unintended consequences. AI was meant to empower, but it also has the potential to deceive. This is where scientists, researchers, and tech companies must step forward—not just to innovate, but to innovate responsibly. There is a moral obligation to ensure that technology remains a force for good, not a weapon of chaos. The deepfake menace will not disappear overnight, but through coordinated, intelligent, and ethical action, the country can build a digital future where truth is protected and trust restored.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

The consequences of every act are included in the act itself.

-George Orwell

# INDIA'S AFGHAN RESET: REDRAWING SOUTH ASIA'S POWER LINES



DR GANESH MALHOTRA

The visit of Taliban External Affairs Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to India signals a change in the geopolitics of South Asia. This unprecedented collaboration with the Taliban-led Afghan government demonstrates India's flexibility and resolve to use cautious pragmatism to protect regional interests. Previously, New Delhi saw the Taliban mainly as a security threat and as Islamabad's proxy. The subcontinent's security matrix and India's strategic calculations depend heavily on the wider implications of this diplomatic approach, particularly with regard to Pakistan.

Following the US withdrawal, Kabul swiftly collapsed in August 2021 following years of building and people-to-people outreach, depriving India of a diplomatic presence in Afghanistan. Once a staunch ally of the Republic government and close to non-Taliban actors, New Delhi saw the Taliban as a violent group largely controlled by Pakistan's security apparatus. Concerns were raised by India's sudden closure of its embassy and near-complete blackout with Kabul: Would Taliban rule destroy Afghanistan's strategic depth and revive anti-Indian terrorism?

India's cautious response to the Taliban, which initially began with humanitarian aid and covert channels, was a tactical response to the scenario on the ground and a pledge to keeping China and Pakistan from taking advantage of its diplomatic weakness. Given the Taliban's social policies and problematic connections to extremist organizations, New Delhi also understood the dangers of direct involvement.

India's commitment was demonstrated when, following months of diplomatic channels that were kept quiet, a brief UN travel waiver allowed Muttaqi to stay in India for eight days. Muttaqi and S. Jaishankar, the Indian External Affairs Minister, reiterated "close communication" and frequent communication, with India pledging its "full commitment" to the sovereignty and advancement of Afghanistan. India's intention to remain involved in Afghanistan's humanitarian and developmental issues was demonstrated by its decision to reopen its embassy in Kabul after four years.

According to the Taliban delegation, India, a longtime adversary, expressed "close friendship" and invited Indian companies to participate in Afghanistan's mining and economic sectors. Not rhetoric without sub-

stance. Direct flights between Kabul and Indian towns, more humanitarian aid, and Indian support for people-centred projects in war-torn Afghanistan are examples of cooperation.

India's increased presence prevents China or Pakistan from exploiting Afghanistan's power vacuum independently. Both nations have made an effort to capitalize on the shifting dynamics of the region. India would rather participate, albeit cautiously and in small measure, than cede all of its power.

The close ties between Pakistan's intelligence services and the Taliban are widely known. Nonetheless, India has benefited from the Taliban's outrage at Pakistan's autocratic attitude, which is evident in recent bloody border confrontations, economic disputes, and policy autonomy. Rarely used in diplomatic discussions, the India-Taliban statement denounced regional terrorism aiming at Pakistan.

The Taliban's engagement with India extends beyond trade relations. In light of Kabul's turbulent relationship with Islamabad, it declares its autonomy from Pakistan and expands diplomatic options for regime legitimacy. By court- ing India, the Taliban hope to reduce Pakistan's ability to use force and secure diplomatic recognition and financial support to stabilize Afghanistan's economy. India's soft-power approach to fostering goodwill among Afghans and elites includes trade, economic activity, and humanitarian assistance. The Taliban's economic reliance on China and Pakistan is lessened by open mining and connectivity routes for Indian companies, which could also give them more negotiating power in future trilateral or multilateral agreements.

Pakistan is enraged and nervous about Muttaqi's visit to India. The growing Delhi-Kabul relationship angered Pakistani officials and media, who dismissed it as a betrayal of Islamist solidarity between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Rising tensions were indicated by high-profile meetings in New Delhi that coincided with clashes on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

The grievances of Pakistan are not just symbolic. Pakistan, which has historically looked to Afghanistan to bolster its claims abroad, blasted the Taliban for their support of "respecting India's sovereignty" over Jammu and Kashmir. Days prior to his visit to India, Muttaqi openly declined an official invitation from Islamabad. This was a snub that was nearly unimaginable just

a few years ago and demonstrated the Taliban's mounting discontent with Pakistan's patronage system.

Pakistan believes its influence over the Taliban is eroding. The willingness of the Taliban to openly back India demonstrates to Islamabad that the Afghan government desires an independent foreign policy. Pakistan's regional security doctrines became more complex as a result, and its capacity to use Afghanistan as a "strategic depth" buffer against India was diminished. The mutual denunciation of terrorism, which specifically targets organizations based in Pakistan, strengthens New Delhi's stance and draws more attention to Islamabad from around the world.

Since total ostracism in Afghanistan has not worked, Central Asian nations, Iran, and Russia are looking for measured dialogue with the Taliban. As China pushes for economic and connectivity reasons, India acts opportunistically to take advantage of economic and security advantages and cautiously to limit enemy encroachment. This is important because New Delhi made significant investments in the Chabahar port and other regional connectivity projects that impact Afghan trade and transit calculations.

The world maintains a watch on India's pragmatic nature. New Delhi's willingness to work with the Taliban demonstrates its ability to adjust to national security, even when ideology and principles clash, even though it does not recognize them and maintains a strong stance against terrorism. Given that the humanitarian and security needs in Afghanistan cannot be ignored, this may encourage other players—particularly those in Europe and Southeast Asia—to exercise flexibility.

India deliberately seeks "engagement without recognition." New Delhi pursues particular benefits like security guarantees, restrictions on anti-India terrorists, and economic opportunities while remaining ambiguous about the Taliban's global stance. Sustained development projects, humanitarian assistance, and engagement with Afghan civil society all contribute to preventing further losses and preserving goodwill among Afghans, many of whom are doubtful of Taliban governance.

In the new Afghanistan-India dynamic, India can highlight its strategic balancing role in West and Central Asia by leveraging its geographic and economic advantages. A future in which India seeks significant benefits for both itself and the Afghan people is suggested by the opening of direct flights, the proposal of Indian investments in infrastructure and mining, and practical diplomatic engagement.

Multisectoral economic partnerships, crisis management, and dialogue should all be used to institutionalize this policy change. Working with Iran and the Central Asian nations should also be part of a proactive strategy to stop Afghanistan from turning into a safe haven for terrorists.

The measured but firm approach taken by India toward Pakistan demonstrates its strategic resilience. By strengthening its relationship with Kabul, India challenges the notion that Pakistan has sole control over Afghanistan and creates new pressure points to combat infiltration and terrorism sponsored by Pakistan.

Amir Khan Muttaqi's trip to India is a significant step against Pakistan's regional strategy and a practical reset in Indian Afghan policy. Despite the difficulties of interacting with the Taliban, India must put its own interests first, whether that be through dialogue, finan-

cial assistance, or security. This engagement will have long-term regional effects as India tries to stabilize its Western frontier through resilience and realism and Pakistan tries to reposition itself.

India's strategy for Afghanistan will now be characterized by both tactical adaptability and moral toughness, interacting with all parties when necessary for national security without ever sacrificing sovereignty, pluralism, or peaceful coexistence. New Delhi can negotiate these challenging waters with the aid of strategic patience, historical ties, and unwavering engagement.

(The author is J&K based Strategic and Political Analyst)

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**THE RICH get RICHER: while I am personally happy gold, silver, Bitcoin, Ethereum are going up.... My concern is the price of life.... AKA...inflation... makes life harder on the poor and middle class. Please do your best to not be a victim of a broken and corrupt monetary system. Government money is fake money. Government money makes the rich richer.... unfortunately the poor...poorer. Please save real money.... Gold, silver, Bitcoin, Ethereum....not Fake government Money. Take care.**

~ Robert Kiyosaki, Author, Investor, Entrepreneur



## BIHAR LEADERS FACE YOUTH TEST

SANDEEP SHASTRI

With the Bihar election campaign gaining steam, the spotlight is increasingly focused on three key factors—the caste calculus, alliance chemistry and women's vote—that past elections have highlighted. Yet another issue gaining ascendancy this time is the role of the state's young voters. Youth across South Asia have been at the forefront of change in recent times. Will they be a decisive factor in Bihar too? And whose electoral fortunes are they most likely to affect?

At the start, it may be useful to elaborate on the significant presence of youth in Bihar. There are varying reports on the numbers. Many times, the percentage of youth in the total population is given, while at others, their share in the electorate is considered.

A recent release of cohort-wise elector information projected that the 18-29 cohort constituted almost a fourth of the total electors in the state as on January 1, 2024. If every one in four voters are from this age segment, their impact would be significant as well as strategic. Further, the youth variable remains crucial in all the three factors mentioned earlier—caste calculations, alliance support and women's vote.

Studies done in the late 1990s and the

2000s indicated that the youth vote in India went more or less in the same direction as that of older voters. Unlike in some Western democracies, one did not see too much variation.

This trend appeared to change in the 2010s. Several studies that focused on the political attitudes and perceptions of the youth in this period indicated there has been a visible change in their political attitudes, aspirations and perceptions. This could be linked to their increasing numbers, greater access to education, and changing power dynamics within families. Bihar seems to be no exception.

The way the three major players in the state—the NDA, Mahagathbandhan and Jan Suraj Party—have been focusing on the youth vote is indicative of their capacity to tilt seats. The ruling NDA banks on the charisma of the prime minister and the promise to industrialise Bihar, increase employment opportunities, and prioritise law and order.

The fact that Nitish Kumar has been chief minister for little less than two decades—save for the nine months between May 2014 and February 2015—those aged 18-29 were either born after he became CM or were socialised during this time. This explains the anti-incumbency sentiment against the CM.

However, this outlook may not translate into unhappiness with the NDA itself. This helps understand why the BJP seems to be at the forefront of the campaign and Nitish has fallen in line. A recent study by Vote Vibe estimated that the broader NDA coalition's support is compensating for anti-incumbency against Nitish. The study also showed that the youth among those who strongly feel the anti-incumbency sentiment. Yet, the intensity of unhappiness among the youth is less visible when it comes to the NDA.

The Mahagathbandhan, on the other hand, is making a strong pitch for local employment opportunities.

The decade after the 2011 census, which showed about 61 percent literacy in Bihar, has seen greater access to higher education and a resultant rise in aspirations among the youth.

Today, they seek quality education and meaningful employment within the state. A 2024 International Labour Organization study had indicated that about a fourth of those who migrate to other states do so mainly for employment opportunities.

Amid this, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav's campaign focuses on the younger generation, with a strong focus on job guarantees. One is not sure whether the squabbling over ticket distribution within the Mahagathbandhan

will frustrate the younger generations, who want "a government that performs and not merely promises".

The impact of Prashant Kishor and his Jan Suraj party will be clearer as the campaign unfolds. In the past, a lot of survey respondents indicated that they decide their votes once the candidates are announced and the campaign is rolled out.

The youth have clearly been impressed by Kishor's agenda, but it is still unclear whether that fascination will translate into votes. Studies have also indicated Jan Suraj may well cut into both the NDA's and the Mahagathbandhan's vote shares.

It's important to note that the youth voter of Bihar is difficult to win over. He has been increasingly frustrated by the absence of attractive job opportunities in the state and continues to desire a government job. At another level, young people aspire for education and skills that will make them more employable, something missing in their state.

These are also generations that will not be gullible to tall assurances and would prefer to go by actions on the ground. So Bihar is a litmus test for not just the promises made, but the youth's belief in the intention and capability of the one making the promise. This factor will be a key deciding dynamic in the coming polls.

# Arunachal to hold panchayat, municipal elections in December



## ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Pradesh State Election Commission (APSEC) has announced that elections for panchayati raj institutions and municipal bodies in Itanagar and Pasighat are scheduled for December.

According to a recent notification, officials have been instructed to start preparations for the elections and to ensure that seats reserved for women in zilla parishads, gram panchayats, and municipal bodies are properly allocated.

The commission has directed that official election notifications be issued by October 30.

As part of the process, draws of lots will be conducted to determine which seats are

served for women in the upcoming panchayat elections.

These draws will take place in Arunachal's Changlang, Itanagar, Keyi Panyor, and Kurung Kumey districts.

The draws in Changlang, Itanagar, and Kurung Kumey are set for October 28, while Keyi Panyor's draw will be held on October 29.

In Itanagar, the draw for reserving seats in the civic body will be conducted at the DK State Convention Centre at 11 am on October 28.

This will be carried out under Section 15(2) of the Arunachal Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 2019, which mandates that one-third of seats be reserved for women from the Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled

Tribe.

The event will be attended by MLAs from Itanagar and Doimukh constituencies, the mayor and deputy mayor, corporators from all 20 wards, and representatives of major political parties.

In Keyi Panyor, the draw will take place on October 29 at the deputy commissioner's conference hall in Yachuli.

In Kurung Kumey, the draw covering the Lower and Upper Koloriang Zilla Parishad constituencies will be held at the DC's conference hall in Koloriang.

District Election Officers, including Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta, confirmed that public representatives, officials, political party members, women's

organisations, and accredited media personnel have been invited to witness the process.

All Block Development Officers (BDOs) have been instructed to widely circulate information and ensure the participation of panchayat representatives.

The APSEC stressed that the exercise is time-sensitive, with reports required on the same day to facilitate the issuance of official notifications by October 30.

Security personnel will be deployed at all venues, and political parties, Zilla Parishad members, Gram Panchayat members, and Gram Panchayat Chairpersons have been urged to actively participate in the process.

## Thuingaleng Muivah reiterates Naga National Flag and Constitution as non-negotiable

### IMPHAL

Thuingaleng Muivah's return to Somdal after 50 years was marked by a massive public reception, highlighting his significance in the Naga community. Muivah emphasized that the Naga National Flag and Constitution are non-negotiable in peace talks with the Indian government. He accused the Government of India of violating the Framework Agreement by not recognizing the Naga Flag and Constitution. In a rare public appearance marking his return to his native village after five decades, NSCN-IM supreme Thuingaleng Muivah on Wednesday, October 22 reaffirmed that the Naga National Flag and Constitution remain non-negotiable in the ongoing peace talks with the Government of India (GoI).

The 93-year-old Naga leader, who arrived at Ukhrul headquarters before proceeding to his hometown Somdal, was given an emotional welcome by thousands of residents. Muivah was received at Bakshi Ground, followed by a massive procession to TNL Ground, where locals dressed in traditional attire lined the streets to greet him. The town came to a standstill as shops and business establishments remained closed for the occasion. Due to ill health, Muivah's speech was read out by another NSCN-IM leader during the homecoming ceremony. In the statement, Muivah reiterated that any political settlement must adhere to the "letter and spirit of the Amsterdam Joint Communiqué (2002)" and the "Framework Agreement (2015)", describing them as the unifying foundation for all Nagas. Recalling his revolutionary journey that began in 1964, Muivah stated that the Indo-Naga peace process—initiated with a ceasefire on August 1, 1997—was built on political recognition and unconditional dialogue at the highest level in a neutral country.

## Manipur Police detain two teenage militants en route to Myanmar border town



### IMPHAL

Manipur police intercepted two juvenile members of the banned United Tribal Volunteers group near Chakpikarong on October 18, marking a significant disruption to cross-border militant activity in Chandel district.

The apprehension occurred at Salluk, close to the Chakpikarong police station, as the underage cadres travelled from Churachandpur towards Tamu, a Myanmar border town. Authorities have not disclosed the identities of the detained

juveniles, citing legal protections for minors.

The United Tribal Volunteers remains an active militant organisation in Manipur's troubled border regions, where insurgent groups have historically exploited porous international boundaries for recruitment and operations.

In a separate development, Manipur Police launched an anti-gambling operation across multiple sites in Imphal East district on October 22. Officers attached to Lamlai police station seized four Lagao betting sheets and one set of dice during the prohibition drive, which targeted illegal gambling activities in the area.

The seizure of juvenile militants underlines ongoing concerns about the recruitment of children by armed groups operating along Manipur's international frontier, whilst the gambling crackdown reflects broader efforts to enforce prohibition laws across the state.

## JCC alleges irregularities in IAS induction process, demands cancellation of panel list

### KOHIMA

The Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) on IAS Induction, comprising CANSSEA, FONSESA, NIDA, NSSA, and NF&ASA, has alleged serious procedural lapses in the recent IAS induction process and demanded the immediate cancellation of the final panel list.

In a statement issued by its Media Cell, the JCC said that during its meeting with the Cabinet Sub-Committee on October 20, several "disconcerting facts" were placed before the government to facilitate a transparent and lawful decision by the state cabinet.

The committee pointed out that while the government acknowledged procedural lapses in the Vacancy Circulars dated July 6, 2020, and March 10, 2025, these were later ratified by the cabinet on March 27, 2025—two days after the withdrawal of the March 10 circular and a day after the appli-

cation deadline had expired.

The JCC noted that the July 6, 2020 circular had previously served as the basis for the induction of a Non-State Civil Service (Non-SCS) officer into the IAS, with no objections raised by the UPSC or the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). It argued that the circular was legally valid as it aligned with the Supreme Court's judgment in Civil Appeal Nos. 4426-4466 of 2023, which allows executive instructions to supplement existing rules in cases of ambiguity.

However, the committee alleged that the subsequent withdrawal of the March 10, 2025 circular and the issuance of a new one on April 24, 2025, "in the guise of correcting procedural lapses," effectively enabled a Non-NPSC candidate to be included in the final panel. According to the JCC, the Non-NPSC candidate had submitted the application under the March 10, 2025 circular, which

explicitly stated that only officers recruited through the Nagaland Public Service Commission (NPSC) were eligible. "The question now is, why was the application accepted when the applicant was not eligible under the stated circular?" the JCC asked.

The committee further claimed that when the March 10 circular was withdrawn and re-advertised on April 24, no fresh applications were received, and earlier applicants did not resubmit their forms as per the new guidelines. "When no new application was received under the new circular, on what basis did the Screening Committee finalise the panel list?" the JCC questioned, calling the entire exercise "procedurally invalid."

Citing the DoPT Office Memorandum dated October 7, 2020, the committee said that an appointment that is not made through a sanctioned process or by qualified candidates is considered "illegal,"

and therefore, such a person cannot be inducted into the IAS.

The JCC alleged that "every step had been custom-made to facilitate the candidature of a particular Non-NPSC officer" and warned that this could open the door for similar irregular appointments in the future.

The committee has demanded two immediate actions:

Cancellation of the current IAS Panel List, which it claims is based on flawed applications and procedural errors.

Restoration of the March 10, 2025 Vacancy Circular in full, asserting that it is consistent with the Supreme Court judgment and upholds the integrity of the recruitment process. The statement concluded that the JCC will continue to push for transparency and fairness in the IAS induction process to uphold administrative integrity and protect the interests of eligible NPSC officers.

## Meghalaya tribal council passes resolution against Centre's uranium mining policy

### SHILLONG

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has passed a resolution formally opposing a controversial government directive that removes the requirement for public consultations before uranium mining can commence in tribal regions.

Council leaders expressed alarm over a September memorandum from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change that exempts mining projects involving atomic minerals, including uranium, from mandatory public hearings. The directive applies to minerals listed under the amended Mines and Minerals Act of 2023, streamlining approval processes for what the government classifies as critical and strategic resources.



Chief Executive Member Winston Tony Lyngdoh presented the resolution during the council session on October 22, describing the policy as a threat to indigenous rights and environmental safety.

According to him, the memorandum undermines centuries-old tribal customs by permitting resource extraction without community consent, potentially exposing local populations to serious health and ecological risks. The council's resolution formally requested that tribal areas under its administration be excluded from the memorandum's scope. Lyngdoh revealed that officials had previously written to the ministry secretary seeking such exemptions but had not received a satisfactory response. However, opposition leader Titosstarwell Chyne argued that the resolution does not go far enough. He contended that requesting exemption only for the Khasi Hills territories would implicitly sanction uranium mining in neighbouring tribal regions such as the Jaintia Hills and the

Garo Hills. Chyne advocated for a complete withdrawal of the memorandum, noting that indigenous communities across the state have consistently resisted uranium extraction attempts by the central government. The opposition leader warned that eliminating public hearings would effectively silence indigenous voices on mining decisions that directly affect their ancestral lands. He emphasised that the policy's impact extends beyond administrative boundaries, threatening the entire state's tribal population. Chyne pointed out that previous attempts by the Centre to establish uranium mining operations in the region have faced strong local resistance, reflecting widespread concerns about the industry's environmental and social consequences.

## Tripura CM warns against divisive politics, vows legal action against threats to BJP

### AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha strongly condemned attempts to create divisions in the state, particularly targeting the Janajati community.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Takajala Mandal office in West District, he said politics aimed at sowing rifts—reminiscent of past communist strategies—will not succeed.

"Tripura's people value peace, development, and democracy. Our government will not tolerate the use of muscle power under any circumstances. If anyone attacks us, we will respond firmly through legal channels," Dr. Saha asserted.

During the event, 690 new voters from 200 families joined the Bharatiya Janata Party. Dr. Saha recalled the sacrifices of BJP founders, including Dr. Shyam Prasad Mukherjee, and reiterated the party's guiding principles inspired by Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. "Those who think they can threaten us are living in a dream. Temporary obstacles or acts of violence will not deter us," he added.

Dr. Saha contrasted the BJP's

governance with previous regimes, citing incidents of violence during Communist and Congress rule.

"Politics should be conducted with dignity. The BJP believes in 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas'—progress must include everyone. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are working to ensure development for all," he said.

Focusing on the Janajati community, the Chief Minister emphasised that their socio-economic development is a priority for the government. "Earlier, the community was used for vote-bank politics and misled onto the streets. Since our government came to power, we have taken steps to empower them and ensure fair development," he noted.

He added that while the BJP does not seek conflict, it will take legal action against anyone attempting to harm its workers or obstruct development. "We want a peaceful environment in Tripura. People are welcome to voice their opinions, but any unjust aggression will be met with justice through proper legal channels," Dr. Saha said.

## Assam Governor adopts 100 TB patients, stresses on collective fight against tuberculosis

### GUWAHATI

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya adopted 100 TB patients under the Ni-kshay Mitra initiative, emphasizing community involvement in TB elimination. Assam's TB testing rate increased significantly, leading to a 90% treatment success rate and a decline in TB mortality from 3.1% to 2.4%.

The Governor praised PM Modi's leadership in making TB elimination a people's movement and urged more community and corporate involvement.

In a significant step towards strengthening Assam's fight against tuberculosis, Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Wednesday, October 22 adopted 100 TB patients from Kamrup Metro and Nagaon districts under the Ni-kshay Mitra initiative of the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP). The adoption ceremony took place at Raj Bhavan, Guwahati.

During the event, the Governor distributed nutritional food baskets to five TB patients and felicitated five Ni-kshay Mitras along with five TB Champions for their outstanding contribution to the state's mission of eliminating tuberculosis.

Emphasising the need for community participation and compassion, Governor



Acharya said tuberculosis remains one of India's major public health challenges but expressed confidence that it can be eradicated through collective efforts, empathy, and sustained engagement. He termed the adoption of 100 patients as a personal pledge and social duty, underscoring that the battle against TB involves not just medical treatment but also emotional and social support.

The Governor lauded Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's efforts in transforming the national TB elimination drive into a Jan Andolan (people's movement) and urged more individuals, corporate entities, and organisations to join the mission.

Highlighting Assam's progress in TB control, Acharya pointed out that the state's TB testing rate has seen a sharp rise—from 842 per lakh population in 2022 to 2,915 per lakh, leading to earlier detection

and faster treatment. With a 90% treatment success rate, Assam has emerged as one of the leading states in TB care and prevention. He further noted the deployment of AI-based innovations like the Prediction of Adverse TB Outcomes (PATO) system, which helps in predicting complications early and improving recovery outcomes. "Due to these advancements, Assam's TB mortality rate has declined from 3.1% to 2.4%, a remarkable sign of progress," he added. Governor Acharya also appreciated the 100-Day TB-Free India Campaign and various awareness initiatives undertaken by Raj Bhavan and the State Health Department, including programmes in educational institutions and the provision of financial and nutritional support for TB patients. Since the launch of the Ni-kshay Mitra initiative on September 9, 2022, Assam has registered over 21,600 Ni-kshay Mitras who continue to extend comprehensive medical, nutritional, and emotional assistance to TB patients across the state. Reaffirming his dedication to the cause, Acharya said, "While medical care is essential, it is compassion, empathy, and community involvement that restore dignity and hope to those affected by the disease." The event witnessed the presence of Dr. P. Ashok Babu, Commissioner and Secretary of Health and Family Welfare; S.S. Meenakshi Sundaram, Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor; along with senior officials from Raj Bhavan, the National Health Mission, and the State TB Cell.

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## Modi to join ASEAN Summit in Malaysia virtually; Congress claims PM staying away to avoid Trump



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate virtually in the ASEAN-India Summit to be held in Malaysia from October 26 to 28.

Modi conveyed this during a phone call with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Thursday, congratulating him on Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship and extending best wishes for the success of the upcoming summit.

"Look forward to joining the ASEAN-India Summit virtually, and to further deepening of the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," Modi posted on X.

Malaysia has also invited US President Donald Trump and other leaders from ASEAN's dialogue partner countries to attend the meetings. Trump is scheduled to visit Kuala Lumpur on October 26 for a two-day trip.

Meanwhile, the Congress on Thursday claimed that the reason for his not going was that the PM doesn't want to be cornered by US President Donald Trump.

"Posting messages in praise of President Trump on social media is one thing, but being seen hobnobbing with a man who has claimed 53 times that he stopped Operation Sindoor and five times that India promised to stop buying oil from Russia

is far too risky for him," Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said on X.

Taking a dig at the Prime Minister, Ramesh added, "For days the speculation has been, will he or won't he? Now it appears certain that the PM will not go. It means the loss of many opportunities to hug world leaders or flaunt himself as the self-styled Vishwaguru. The PM may well be recalling that old Bollywood hit Bachke rehna re baba, bachke rehna re."

Ramesh further alleged that Modi had similarly skipped the Gaza peace summit in Egypt "for the same reason."

Government sources, however, maintained that the Prime Minister's absence from the ASEAN meetings, scheduled from October 26 to 28 is due to "scheduling issues."

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is expected to represent India at the summit, with the possibility of Modi joining the ASEAN-India session virtually.

India has traditionally been represented by the Prime Minister at both the ASEAN-India and East Asia summits. The ASEAN grouping comprises 10 Southeast Asian nations, and India's ties with the bloc have strengthened in recent years, particularly in trade, investment, security, and defence cooperation.

## Bihar polls: Tejashwi Yadav named Opposition's CM face; Mukesh Sahani is Deputy CM pick



PATNA

The opposition Mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) on Thursday named RJD leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav as its chief ministerial candidate for the November's assembly elections in Bihar.

Senior Congress leader Ashok

Gehlot made the announcement at a joint press conference in Patna, where he also named Vikassheel Insaan Party chief Mukesh Sahani as the coalition's deputy chief ministerial nominee.

The announcement came amid controversy after photographs of top INDIA bloc leaders were missing from a banner at the Mahagathbandhan's

joint press conference. The banner, images of which went viral on social media, featured only a large photograph of Tejashwi.

Tejashwi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar assembly, accepted the nomination, thanking alliance partners and expressing confidence that the Mahagathbandhan would unseat the NDA.

"We, the people of Mahagathbandhan, do not just want to form the govt or become the CM, but we want to make Bihar, that is why we are together... I thank all the members of the Mahagathbandhan for showing trust in me. I want to tell all of them that I will do everything possible to live up to your expectations and together we will throw the 20-year-old government that is currently in power," he said.

Tejashwi also claimed that the BJP would not back JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar for another term as chief minister, alleging that "injustice" was being done to him within the NDA.

"We have done a joint press conference. Injustice is being done to Nitish Kumar in the NDA. Not even a single joint press conference has been held. No official announcement has been made for their CM face. We have been saying from the beginning that the people of the BJP are not going to make Nitish Kumar the Chief Minister," he said.

TNIE earlier reported that the RJD had pressed for naming the alliance's chief ministerial candidate during a closed-door meeting on Wednesday between senior Congress leaders, including Ashok Gehlot and Krishna Allavaru, and RJD chief Lalu Prasad and Tejashwi Yadav.

Gehlot said ties within the opposition bloc remained strong, calling the discussions with RJD leaders "fruitful" and asserting that the alliance would contest the elections "unitedly."

While he avoided commenting directly on Tejashwi's possible nomination as the bloc's chief ministerial face, Gehlot said any "confusion" would be addressed at Thursday's joint press conference.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Iran faces 'permanent state of crisis' as time wanes and sanction pressure grows

DUBAI

Iran has been bombed, seen United Nations sanctions reimposed and its economy collapse further into the red this year. But its theocracy so far hasn't taken any major action to halt the slide, restart crucial nuclear negotiations with the West nor fully prepare for possible further hostilities with Israel and the United States.

In the past, Iran's 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei heralded the benefit of Tehran's "strategic patience" in confronting its enemies. Now, however, concern is growing that patience has slipped into paralysis as Iran's partners in its self-described "Axis of Resistance" have been devastated and there's no overt sign of materiel support from either China or Russia.

"One of the harms and dangers facing the country is precisely this state of neither war nor peace, which isn't good," Khamenei himself warned in September.

But there's been no move to change that calculus, as Iranians themselves remain fearful of war resuming. Each fire or industrial accident becomes grist for new worry as they watch their life savings further dwindle as Iran's rial currency falls to historic lows against the US dollar.

"Even if we accept that the possibility of a second war exists, the right approach to governing the country is not to keep public opinion in constant anxiety through recurring alerts every few days," said Ali Abdullah Khani, an analyst with Iran's Presidential Strategic Affairs Office, in an interview published in October by the website NourNews.

"Such a policy places the nation in a permanent state of crisis — a condition in which it always seems that war could break out at any moment, and as a result, all managerial and political capacities are consumed by confronting



a presumed and hypothetical conflict."

The United Nations reimposed sanctions on Iran last month, but Tehran has sought to downplay their effect or even insist they don't exist. The sanctions date from Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal and were reimposed by a mechanism known to diplomats as "snapback."

China, Iran and Russia issued a tripartite statement over the weekend, decrying them as "legally and procedurally flawed." But while China and Russia have signaled they won't enforce the sanctions, the US, European nations and others are.

Some of the measures are pretty out of date — for instance, sanctions on Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in an American drone strike in Baghdad during US President Donald Trump's first term in 2020.

But the main ones squeeze Iran's Central Bank and its oil exports, or of

the few sources of hard currency for the government. That could allow for the seizure of Iranian crude oil shipments on the seas, something that in the past has sparked confrontations with Tehran.

The June war saw Israel kill top leadership in Iran's regular military and its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, a force answerable only to Khamenei that controls its own arsenal of ballistic missiles. In the time since, Iran has held no major military parades and conducted only limited drills at sea — likely out of the concern of providing Israel with any tempting targets.

Criticism is slowly rising to the surface of Iran's theocracy, which under Khamenei has grown into various competing camps and agencies often tasked with the same missions.

Ali Shamkhani, a top adviser to Khamenei who survived an Israeli attack targeting him during the war, said in an online video that Iran's earlier attacks against Israel in 2024 "did not achieve the outcomes" sought by Tehran — a rare acknowledgment by a senior official of the low accuracy plaguing the theocracy's vaunted missile arsenal.

He also even went as far as to openly muse about Iran pursuing a nuclear weapon — something Tehran long has insisted it doesn't want to do despite the West and the International Atomic Energy Agency saying the Islamic Republic had an organized weapons program up until 2003.

"Now that it has become clear, Iran should have developed this capability for itself," Shamkhani said.

After the interview, Shamkhani found himself targeted by the leak of a video from his daughter's wedding, in which she was unveiled and wearing a wedding dress with a plunging neckline — something criticized by hard-liners who have been calling for a new campaign targeting women over the mandatory hijab, or headscarf.

Former President Hassan Rouhani, who reached the 2015 nuclear deal, meanwhile has stepped up his criticism of hard-liners and sought to organize his fellow Shiite clerics in Qom, the Iranian seminary city. Executions are also now at a decades-long high.

The theocracy meanwhile has largely been mute about the economic turmoil, sparked by exchange rate pressure, loose fiscal policies and sanctions, the International Monetary Fund said this week. The IMF estimates annual inflation in Iran to be 45% by the end of the year, further eating into people's already-shriveled savings.

Then there is Khamenei himself, with no clear front-runner to succeed him. His profile has dropped since the war, with more delays surrounding the release of his remarks — likely again a security measure against possibly being targeted by Israel.

Yet at a moment when talks with the US and the Europeans represent one path out of Iran's issues, he's been adamant that negotiations can't be held. He gave a speech as both Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi went to New York for the UN General Assembly, which had the effect of stopping them from having direct negotiations.

"Once a decision is made, everyone must follow it — whether they support it or not," Araghchi told the state-run IRNA news agency in August, before the summit.

Speaking to athletes on Monday, Khamenei kept up his criticism of the US president and insisted Iran "will not submit to coercion."

Trump "prides himself on bombing and destroying Iran's nuclear industry," Khamenei said. "Fine — keep living that fantasy."

But for now, it doesn't appear time is on Iran's side.

### European Union agrees on new sanctions against Russia targeting its shadow oil fleet and LNG imports



BRUSSELS

The European Union has agreed on a new raft of sanctions against Russia targeting its shadow fleet of oil tankers and banning its imports of liquefied natural gas, the Danish EU presidency announced Thursday.

"Today is a good day for Europe and Ukraine," Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said in a statement, as EU leaders were gathering for a summit in Brussels.

He said that the new sanctions "will introduce new and comprehensive measures on oil and gas, the shadow fleet and Russia's financial sector."

The move comes a day after US President Donald Trump's administration announced new sanctions against Russia's oil industry that are aimed at moving Russian President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table and ending Moscow's war on Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will take part in the one-day summit in Brussels, as he and his European backers press for a ceasefire to halt almost four years of fighting.

"Both support for Ukraine and pressure on Russia remain the two necessary requirements to achieve a just and lasting peace," EU Council President António Costa, who will chair the meeting, said in an invitation letter to the leaders.

The summit comes after Trump said that his plan for a swift meeting with Putin was on hold because he didn't want it to be a "waste of time." It was yet another twist in Trump's stop-and-go effort to end the war.

The leaders are eager for any progress on Trump's Gaza peace plan, and will debate ways to keep the 27-nation bloc involved in proceedings.

The EU is the world's

biggest provider of aid to Palestinians but has little leverage over Israel — in part because European nations are divided over how to handle the conflict — and it has struggled to play a role of consequence. It's role in the war in Ukraine is clearer, and the summit takes place as Russian armed forces strike at the conflict-torn country's power grid just as the weather starts to turn colder.

Earlier this week, Ukraine's strongest European backers who form part of the "coalition of the willing" said they opposed any push to make Ukraine surrender land captured by Russian forces in return for peace, as Trump most recently has suggested.

The UK will host a meeting of the members of that coalition of more than 30 countries on Friday. On the EU side, leaders intend to push forward with plans to use billions of dollars in frozen Russian assets to help fund Ukraine's war efforts, despite some misgivings about the consequences of such a step.

The biggest tranche of frozen assets — some \$225 billion worth — are held in Belgium, and the Belgian government has been reluctant to take any risks on using the money without firm guarantees from its European partners.

Ukraine's budget and military needs for 2026 and 2027 are estimated to total around \$153 billion.

The EU leaders are also likely to sign off on a new "road map" to prepare Europe to defend itself against a Russian attack by the end of the decade. Top officials believe that Russian could be ready to take aim at another European country within 3-5 years.

## India at the Crossroads of Health: Global Study Warns of Rising Lifestyle Diseases

The landmark Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2023, published this week in The Lancet and Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC), shows that while people worldwide are living longer, health inequalities and chronic lifestyle-related diseases are on the rise.

The GBD 2023, presented at the World Health Summit in Berlin, reveals that deaths from infectious diseases like tuberculosis, diarrhoea, and malaria have dropped sharply since 1990.

However, deaths due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, and mental health disorders now dominate, accounting for nearly two-thirds of global mortality.

"The rapid growth in the world's ageing population and evolving risk factors have ushered in a new era of global health challenges," said Dr. Christopher Murray, Director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington.

In fact, the evidence presented in the Global Burden of Disease study is a wake-up call, urging government and health leaders to respond swiftly to the disturbing trends reshaping public health.

India reflects the same paradox. While life expectancy in the country has improved dramatically — reaching over 70 years on average — the healthy years of life, free from disease or disability, remain far fewer.

The GBD 2023 data show that India has achieved a massive decline in infant and maternal mortality, but now faces rising threats from hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and air pollution.

India is experiencing what is called a 'double burden of disease'. It is also an issue of concern that infectious diseases still persist in some regions, but lifestyle disorders have exploded, especially in urban centres.

Air pollution, unhealthy diets, and mental stress are now among the most pressing health threats in India.

According to the report, nearly half of all death and disability worldwide could be prevented by addressing key modifiable risks — including high blood sugar, high body mass index (BMI), high blood pressure, smoking, and exposure to particulate air pollution.

Between 2010 and 2023, the rate of death and disability due to infectious and nutritional diseases fell globally by about 26 percent.

However, NCD-related disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) — the total years of healthy life lost — have surged. Ischaemic heart disease, stroke, and diabetes now top the list of causes of premature death and disability.

The GBD 2023 analysis of 375 diseases and 88 risk factors across 204 countries and 660 sub-national regions found that while the world's population has grown and aged, the pattern of disease has changed dramatically.

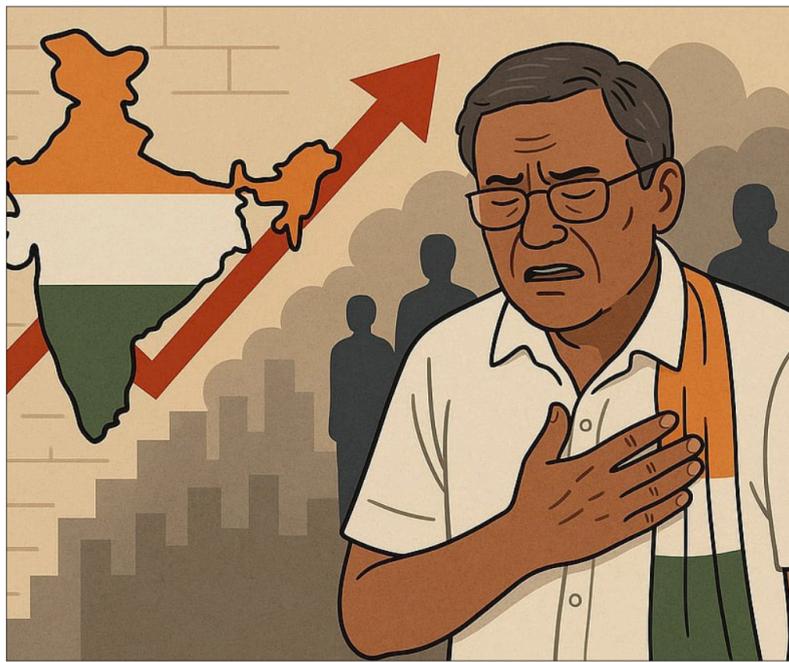
Communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis declined sharply, while conditions linked to modern lifestyles — such as metabolic syndrome, anxiety, depression, and cancer — have grown rapidly.

The challenge is not just to treat disease, but to prevent it through environmental and behavioural change. And, India's future health will depend on how effectively we



Never lie to someone who trusts you, and never trust someone who lies to you.

address pollution, food systems, and mental well-being. The JACC paper, Global, Regional, and National Burden of Cardio-



vascular Diseases and Risk Factors, 1990–2023, paints a particularly alarming picture for India.

Cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of death globally — responsible for 19.2 million deaths in 2023 — with India contributing a significant share. Cases of ischemic heart disease and stroke have doubled since 1990, and hypertension is now one of the country's most prevalent chronic conditions.

The study estimates 437 million cardiovascular DALYs worldwide, up from 320 million in 1990. Nearly 80 percent of this burden is linked to modifiable factors such as high blood pressure, poor diet, high LDL cholesterol, and air pollution.

The researchers warn that India's youthful population is not immune. Urbanisation, sedentary work culture, high stress, and dietary transitions are leading to early-onset heart disease — sometimes striking people in their 30s and 40s.

At the same time, under-diagnosis and inadequate follow-up care in rural regions make the challenge even more complex.

The GBD 2023 data also highlight a global mental health emergency. Anxiety disorders have risen by 63 percent and depression by 26 percent since 2010. Mental illness now ranks among the top 10 causes of health loss worldwide — particularly among young adults.

In India, suicide remains a leading cause of death among those aged 15–29 years. Yet, mental health receives less than 1% of the national health budget, and stigma often prevents people from seeking help.

Mental health must be treated as a mainstream health issue as it affects productivity, education, and social stability. Investing in mental well-being is an investment in national development.

India's demographic shift has brought new gender and age-related challenges. Women now live longer than men — averaging 73 years — but face disproportionate rates of anaemia, diabetes, and osteoporosis, compounded by poor healthcare access in rural areas.

Elderly Indians, meanwhile, face multiple chronic diseases without adequate geriatric support.

Globally, women's mortality from cardiovascular disease has risen closer to men's, but female heart disease remains underdiagnosed.

In South Asia, the "invisible patient" problem persists — many women delay seeking care until advanced stages of illness.

Among all environmental risks, air pollution stands out as India's most urgent public-health crisis. The GBD 2023 study ranks particulate matter pollution as the second leading environmental cause of global disease burden, with the highest DALY rates observed in South Asia.

Exposure to PM2.5 particles in-

creases the risk of heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and even neurological disorders.

India's fast-growing cities are among the most polluted on Earth, with pollution levels often exceeding WHO safety limits by tenfold.

At the same time, climate-related factors such as heat stress, drought, and displacement are exacerbating health risks in vulnerable populations.

Everyone should understand that the environment is not separate from health, so clean air, safe food, and green infrastructure is as vital to health as hospitals and medicines.

It is unfortunate that India's

healthcare spending remains at around 2 percent of GDP, among the lowest in the G20.

Public hospitals face overcrowding, and primary healthcare in rural areas is under-resourced. While initiatives like Ayushman Bharat and the NPCDCS are improving access, gaps remain in prevention, mental-health coverage, and air-quality regulation.

The GBD 2023 findings also call for an integrated national response — linking environment, economy, and health.

Policy experts recommend expanding early screening, investing in clean energy, promoting healthy lifestyles, strengthening mental health services, and using digital health data for better monitoring.

As India's youth are both a demographic strength and a responsibility, the policy makers must act now — through prevention, education, and environmental stewardship — to ensure a healthier, more resilient generation.

The Global Burden of Disease 2023 findings are both a triumph and a warning.

They celebrate human progress in extending life but expose the vulnerabilities of modern living.

India's success in controlling infectious diseases is undeniable, yet its rising tide of chronic illness demands urgent, coordinated action. The message from global scientists is clear: without sustained investment in prevention, environmental protection, and equitable healthcare, the gains of the past decades could unravel.

As people live in times of great opportunity, they should always remember the great risk. And, the future of health will depend on how decisively the people act today.

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I. M. GunadonSingha, S/o. Purnachand B Singha, R/o. House No. 33, New Link Road, ADC Colony, Rongpur Part-IV, Silchar Pin Code - 788009, Cachar, Assam have changed my name to GunadonSingha for all future purposes.

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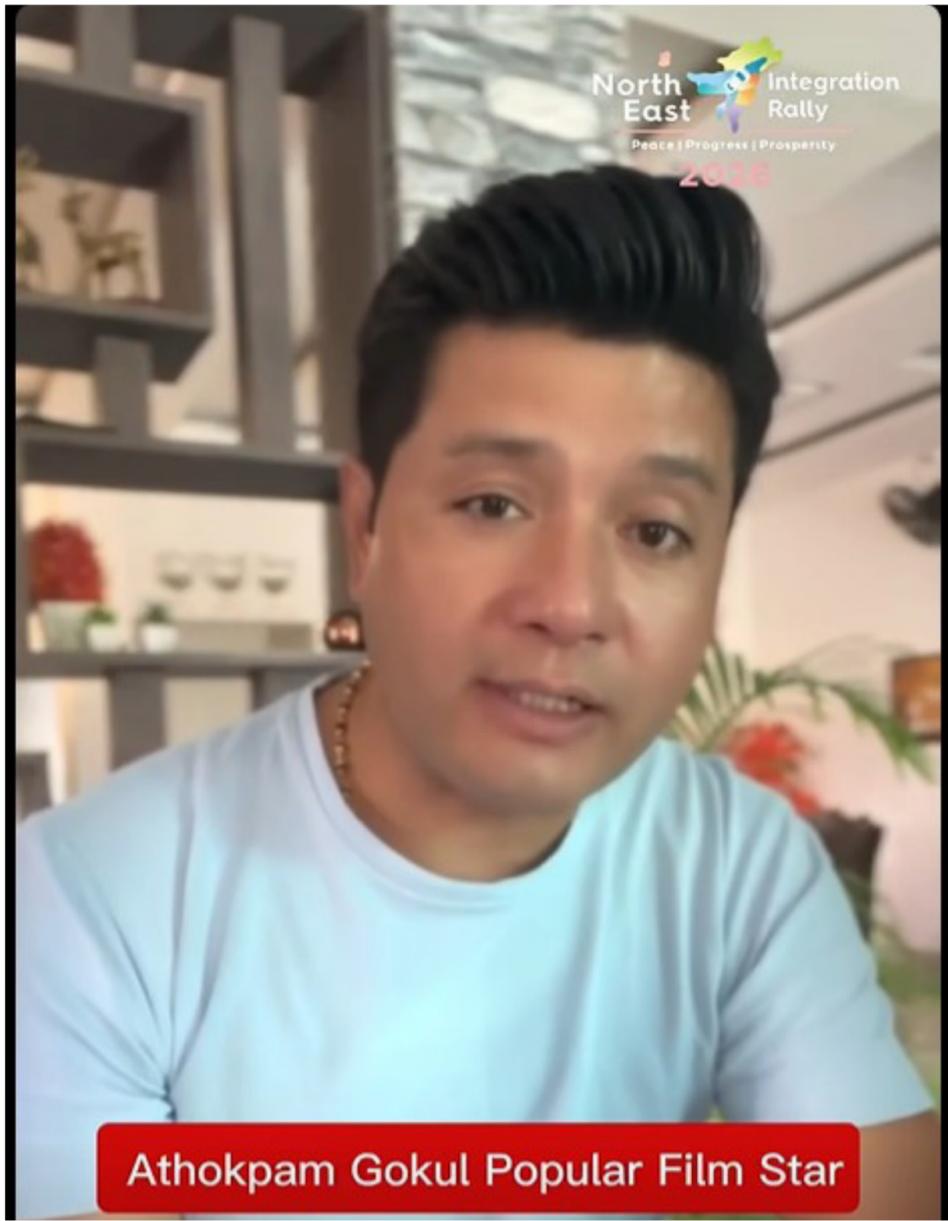
**2026**

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## Popular Film Star c Extends Best Wishes to NEIR 2026



Athokpam Gokul Popular Film Star

IMPHAL:

Renowned Manipuri film actor Athokpam Gokul has extended his best wishes to the Northeast Integration Rally (NEIR) 2026, applauding the event's vision of unity and regional pride.

Speaking about the initiative, Gokul said that such efforts go beyond adventure and travel—they help strengthen emotional and cultural connections across the eight northeastern states. He commended the organisers for creating a platform that celebrates diversity while promoting shared identity.

Athokpam Gokul (also known as Gokul Athokpam), often affectionately called the "Dawn Actor," is a prominent Indian actor renowned for his contributions to Manipuri cinema (Meitei films). Born and raised in Thangmeiband, Imphal, Manipur, he has established himself as a versatile performer through his work in films, theatre, and traditional Shumang Leela (a form of street theatre in Manipur). His career highlights his dedication, starting from antagonistic roles to leading dramatic performances, and he has also ventured into film production.

Gokul began his artistic journey alongside his studies, participating in bodybuilding and tutoring younger students while in the 12th grade. He transitioned into acting through theater, appearing in several acclaimed Shumang Leelas such as Lidishigi Gulap (also spelt Lidicegee Gulap), Nangna Luhongdringei, and Lambidudei. In 2001, he joined the celluloid artist group under the Bright Film production titled "Dawn," earning him the enduring nickname "Dawn Actor." This marked his formal entry into Manipuri films, where he initially took on challenging antagonistic roles to build his craft.

He has been recognised for his hard work in an industry that demands resilience, particularly as an "upcoming" talent who rose through determination despite early struggles.

Gokul's talent has been honoured multiple times by Manipuri film bodies: Film Academy Manipur (FAM) Special Awards: Selected for the 4th Film Vision Special Award (2009–10) and 5th Film Vision Special Award (2010–11).

3rd Sahitya Seva Samiti Manipur Film Award (SSS MANIFA 2014): Won Best Actor for Thajagee Maihing, presented on April 21, 2014, at Kakching Khullen Ibudhou Khamlangba Laikol, organized by Sahitya Seva Samiti Kakching and Film Forum Manipur.

The Northeast Integration Rally 2026 aims to celebrate NE achievers and showcase the breathtaking landscapes, rich traditions, and resilient spirit of the region through a series of interconnected circuits. The event has already drawn strong interest from riders and enthusiasts across India.

Registrations for NEIR 2026 are now open, with early bird discounts available for a limited time. Interested participants can visit [northeastintegrationrally.in](http://northeastintegrationrally.in) to secure their slots.

## Col. Shanti Kumar Sapam (Retd.) Extends Support to Northeast Integration Rally 2026



IMPHAL:

Col. (Retd.) Shanti Kumar Sapam has extended his warm wishes to the organisers and participants of the upcoming Northeast Integration Rally 2026, calling it a unique initiative that blends adventure, culture, and the spirit of unity.

Praising the event as a celebration of pride and togetherness, Col. Sapam said the rally represents more than just a journey across the region—it's a reaffirmation of identity and shared purpose among the people of the Northeast. "The rally is more than an adventure—it's a statement of who we are as a people bound by diversity and shared purpose," he said. "It's heartening to see such efforts that bring together our communities through exploration, cooperation, and mutual respect." The Northeast Integration Rally 2026 will traverse all eight states of the region, covering scenic routes that highlight the Northeast's breathtaking landscapes, traditions, and cultural richness. Each circuit will include night halts, local cultural programs, and interactive sessions designed to help participants connect with different communities and gain a deeper understanding of each state's unique heritage.

Organisers have announced early bird registration discounts, with limited slots available for each circuit. The event aims to promote regional harmony, foster people-to-people ties, and strengthen the emotional and cultural bonds that unite the Northeast.

Col. Sapam expressed hope that such initiatives would not only attract adventurers and travel enthusiasts but also contribute to long-term peace and understanding among the northeastern states.

"When people travel, meet, and experience each other's way of life, barriers begin to fade. This rally, I believe, will bring a renewed sense of connection and harmony across the Northeast," he added.

Col Sapam is also a member of the Organising Committee of NEIR 2026

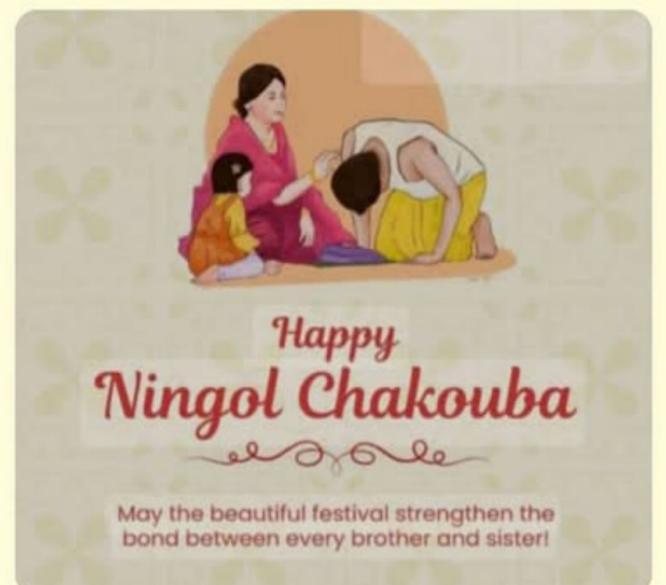
For more details and registration, interested participants can visit [northeastintegrationrally.in](http://northeastintegrationrally.in).



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## BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM





**10 JAN**  
**NE Cultural Fest**  
 Any Form of Art and Cultural showcase can be showcased here. The Top performances will be invited to perform in the Main Event. Schools, College, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.



**11 JAN**  
**Adventure Sports**  
 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.



**11 JAN**  
**Barak Valley Conclave**  
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations. Includes NGOs, and Government can register for participation. Registration fee is 500/- and participation is through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



**12 JAN**  
**River-Climate Conclave**  
 Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competitive and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.



**JAN'25**  
**Online Global Fest**  
 All can participate online and send a video clip on Poems, Songs and Dance Performances, Bengali, English, Hindi & Manipuri. Last Date: 31st December 2024.



**10 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
 Media Conclave: Media Science, Development, and the Future. Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome your ideas, stories, proposals, queries & contribute for our sponsors, guides, speakers, members.

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Barak Festival 2025



Culture Promotion



REGISTER HERE

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 info@krcfoundation.org



**11 JAN**  
**5E For Success Conclave**  
 The 4th Annual Success Conclave is going to be held at the theme: 'From School to Campus to Corporate'. Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.  
 Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & College Extension, Seminar, Public Speaking (College) & an online event where students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.



**10 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
 Media Conclave: Media Science, Development, and the Future. Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome your ideas, stories, proposals, queries & contribute for our sponsors, guides, speakers, members.



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**10-12 JAN**  
**Science Studio**  
 Get a glimpse of Science to its new heights. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents. Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.

**DEC'24-JAN'25**  
**Photography**  
 Online Photography Contest: River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture. Real-Time Photography Contest of 'Barak Festival 2025'.

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Barak Festival 2025

Musical Night | 10 JAN

Band Night | 10 JAN



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**10-12 JAN**  
**E-Sports**  
 Full-Blown Demos | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



**11 JAN**  
**film festival**  
 Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Manipur. Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W & Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet.



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**10-12 JAN**  
**Book Bank**  
 #NoOneLeftBehind Campaign | Book Bank | Donate | Borrow | Reuse

**Book Club**  
 Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books

**Painting Carnival**  
 Water Colour and Oil and Soap Plate Campaign



**Watch Out!**  
**Film Festival**

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