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PERSPECTIVE

1 text, 1 song, 1 mistake, 1 lie, 1 word, 1 truth, and 1 person could change your mood in 1 second.

'Centre will take us seriously when we unite': Pradyot

AGARTALA
Tipra Motha Party founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma has indicated plans to form a joint platform of regional parties across the North East, saying a formal announcement could come within the next three days. Speaking on social media, the royal scion said discussions are underway with several regional groups. "The Centre will take us seriously when we stop fighting against each other and unite under one voice for our people," he remarked. "Otherwise, we will remain divided, and none of the North Eastern states will gain anything."
Pradyot said the initiative aims to strengthen regional unity and ensure the voices of smaller states are heard in national decision-making. "If we come together, we can solve five problems out of ten. If we are not united, they will divide us," he added.
He also issued a warning about growing external threats, claiming that developments in Bangladesh could have serious implications for India's eastern borders. Referring to reports of Pakistani military officials being stationed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, he said, "They are saying they have come to provide medical aid. But for medical aid, doctors would come, not Brigadiers or Generals."
Pradyot expressed concern that the next Bangladeshi election could bring to power an "anti-India" government, potentially heightening tensions in border states such as Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura.

WHO SAID WHAT

MASSIVE CRASH BEGINNING: Millions will be wiped out. Protect yourself. Silver, gold, Bitcoin, Ethereum investors will protect you. Take care
~ Robert Kiyosaki, Author, Investor, Entrepreneur

KRC TIMES

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Major investment projects worth Rs 1.78 lakh crore to roll out in Assam by Dec : Himanta



GUWAHATI
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that projects valued at around Rs 1.78 lakh crore, pledged during the Advantage Assam 2.0 investment summit earlier this year, will be launched by December. He said the developments would create significant employment opportunities and strengthen the state's economy.

Speaking at a foundation stone-laying ceremony for three major ventures, Sarma said Assam is witnessing a wave of industrial growth. The projects include the Medanta Super Speciality Hospital by Global Health Limited, Cocoon Mother and Childcare Hospital by RJ Corp Healthcare, and a five-star Lemon Tree hotel. The chief minister said the government's efforts to project a new image of Assam were paying off, with investment commitments now taking shape. "A thermal power project worth Rs 40,000 crore will soon begin operations, and by December, several other ventures, including palm oil and storage projects worth Rs 30,000 crore, will commence," he said.
The three newly launched projects represent an investment of about Rs 800 crore under the Memorandums of Understanding signed during the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit in February. The Medanta Hospital will be built on 3.5 acres, the Cocoon Hospital on 1 acre, and the Lemon Tree hotel on 1.75 acres at Sarusajai in Guwahati.
Calling it a "significant day in Assam's industrial journey", Sarma said the integrated complex of hospitals, hotels, and service apartments would boost medical tourism in the Northeast and beyond. He added that such projects would ensure that "youth will no longer need to leave the state in search of jobs".
State Industries and Commerce Minister Bimal Bora was also present at the event.

Closer Bangladesh-Pakistan ties pose security risk to Northeast: Lt Gen Shekatkar



GUWAHATI
Growing closeness between Bangladesh and Pakistan is a matter of serious concern and India should adopt multi-pronged strategy to deal with the issue as in case of any eventuality, the North East region will be the worst affected. This is the opinion expressed by noted security analyst Lt Gen DB Shekatkar (Retd). In recent times, officers of Pakistani Army and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) visited Bangladesh, which proves the growing closeness between the two countries. Lt Gen Shekatkar is of the view that China might have a hand in the growing closeness between Bangladesh and Pakistan. He said that the closeness between Bangladesh and Pakistan may pose a security threat to India and in that case, the North East would be the worst affected. He said that the Chicken Neck Corridor connecting the North East with the rest of India would also come under threat as any disturbance in that area would cut off the North East from the rest of India.
Lt Gen Shekatkar expressed the view that the young generation of Bangladesh did not see the atrocities committed by West Pakistan on East Pakistan and they could be easily brainwashed against India. The present leadership of Bangladesh is taking advantage of this to create anti-India feeling among the young population. The situation is unlikely to change much even after the general elections in Bangladesh which is due in 2026, he added. Presence of large immigration population in India is also a matter of concern. Lt Gen Shekatkar said that infiltration is still going on in West Bengal. It will be naive to think that the immigrant population will support India, he added.
Lt Gen Shekatkar expressed the view that India should adopt a multi-pronged strategy to deal with the problem. The first is diplomatic and efforts should be made to ensure that Bangladesh does not get too close to Pakistan. The second is readiness of the armed forces. The forces should be kept ready to deal with any eventuality and the Chicken Neck Corridor should be kept under very close watch. The third strategy should be to ensure that the people living along the Chicken Neck Corridor and North East do not get the feel of being deprived by the Government.

Singapore sends Zubeen Garg's post-mortem report to Assam SIT; chargesheet likely by Dec 17



GUWAHATI
Singapore authorities have forwarded singer Zubeen Garg's post-mortem and toxicology reports to Assam Police, marking a crucial step in the ongoing investigation into his death.
Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on October 31 confirmed the development, stating that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the case has made "substantial progress" and will file the chargesheet within the 90-day deadline.

"When our SIT visited Singapore, the authorities there had assured full cooperation. Today, they have formally sent the post-mortem and toxicology reports, along with guidelines under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)," Sarma told reporters.
The 52-year-old singer and composer died while swimming in the sea in Singapore on September 19. The 10-member SIT has so far arrested seven individuals, all currently in judicial custody.
Sarma, who also holds the Home portfolio, expressed confidence in the investigation's progress. "The SIT is absolutely confident about ensuring justice for Zubeen. When it submits the chargesheet by December 17, people will appreciate their work," he said.
The chief minister reiterated that the state government remains committed to a thorough probe into Garg's death but emphasised that other key state issues would not be sidelined.
Aiming for the Congress, Sarma accused the opposition party of trying to "make Assam a part of Bangladesh," referring to an incident where members of the Congress Seva Dal allegedly sang Bangladesh's national anthem at a meeting in Sribhumi district. The government has ordered an inquiry into the matter.
Sarma also highlighted that issues such as "love jihad" and land encroachment continue to be major concerns for the state. "These will remain our priority along with Zubeen's case," he added.

NE at the Heart of India's Energy Transition': Pralhad Joshi

GUWAHATI
Union Minister for Consumer Affairs and New and Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi, on Friday said that the Northeast is rapidly advancing towards a cleaner, greener, and energy-secure future, fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of prosperity through sustainability.
Speaking at the 'Regional Workshop on Renewable Energy' held in Guwahati, Joshi described the Northeast, often called Ashtalakhshmi for its eight dynamic states as transforming into 'Urja-Lakshmi', the goddess of energy and progress, under the visionary leadership of PM Modi.
"The Northeast, our Ashtalakhshmi, is transforming into Urja-Lakshmi under the visionary leadership of PM Modi. We are working to realise his vision of prosperity through sustainability," the minister said.
He commended the progress made by the northeastern states in expanding renewable energy capacity and reviewed flagship schemes aimed at harnessing the region's vast potential in solar, small hydro, biomass, and green hydrogen.
The workshop also discussed actionable steps to make the region self-reliant in energy production while promoting eco-friendly development.
During his visit to Guwahati, Joshi also paid homage to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on his 150th



birth anniversary, calling him the architect of India's unity and integrity. "His vision continues to inspire generations to strengthen the spirit of oneness," he wrote in a post on microblogging site.
At an earlier event in New Delhi on October 26, Joshi highlighted the tremendous transformation of the Northeast over the past decade, attributing it to PM Modi's focused governance and dedicated initiatives. "All northeastern states are now connected by rail, airports, and highways, with major investments in tourism, industry, and skill development," he noted. "We remain committed to building an India where every citizen, region, and culture thrives with equal opportunity."
The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) has also reported record-breaking expenditure of Rs 3,447.71 crore in FY 2024-25 on projects in the region — a 74.4 per cent rise from the previous year and over 200 per cent growth in three years.
According to Minister for Communications and DoNER Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, enhanced review mechanisms and digital monitoring through the Poorvottar Vikas Setu portal have improved transparency and accountability. This has led to 97 per cent inspection coverage and 91 per cent operationalisation of completed projects. The emphasis on renewable energy, infrastructure, and connectivity reflects the government's larger goal of integrating the Northeast into India's green growth story positioning it not just as a frontier region, but as a hub of sustainable development and clean energy innovation.
As the nation accelerates its renewable transition, the Northeast is emerging as a vital contributor to India's goal of achieving energy independence and environmental resilience by 2047.

Manipur's diversity is its strength: Governor



BISWADEEP GUPTA
IMPHAL: Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, graced the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (National Unity Day) observance held at the 1st Battalion Manipur Rifles Parade Ground, Imphal. The Governor inspected the Parade and took the salute at a grand march-past presented by 13 contingents. The parade was commanded by Pramesh Arambam, MPS, Commandant, 4th Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB). The Governor also led the gathering in taking the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas Pledge.
Addressing the gathering, the Governor reflected on the enduring legacy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India, whose visionary leadership and unwavering statesmanship forged the foundation of a united, resolute, and sovereign India. He stated that the celebration of National Unity Day is a reminder of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's courage and foresight in integrating more than 500 princely states into one Republic. The Governor noted that the Statue of Unity stands as a lasting tribute to his leadership and as a symbol of India's collective strength, integrity, and resilience. The Governor urged all citizens, particularly in Manipur, to uphold this spirit of unity by work-

ing together across communities and sustaining harmony in everyday life.
Governor further emphasised that Manipur's diversity is its strength, reflected in its shared traditions, cultural harmony, and the contribution of its people — from the women of Ima Keithel to the farmers, artisans, and youth across hills and valleys. He stressed that initiatives such as the Manipur State Rural Livelihood Mission, Skill Development Programmes, and women empowerment schemes are bridging divides and promoting inclusive growth. The Governor called upon the people of Manipur to continue fostering understanding, empathy, and collaboration, affirming that true unity is built not merely on geographical integrity but on emotional integrity — the bond of mutual respect and shared purpose.
The participating contingents included the Army, Assam Rifles, BSF, CRPF, Combined Manipur Rifles, 1st Combined IRB, 10th IRB, 11th IRB, Civil Police (Imphal West and East), 9th IRB (Mahila), 14th Manipur Battalion NCC, and 65th Girls NCC. The event also featured a choreographed dance performance titled "Akhoigi Apunba Saktam" (Our Collective Identity) by Government Dance College, showcasing the spirit of unity and cultural harmony.

Jyotiraditya Scindia to launch Rs 230 crore Sohra tourism circuit in Meghalaya



SHILLONG
A major tourism infrastructure project worth Rs 230 crore will take shape in Sohra, Meghalaya, when the Union minister lays its foundation stone on November 1.
Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union minister for development of North Eastern Region and communications, will join Conrad Sangma, Meghalaya chief minister, for the ceremony marking the launch of the Integrated Development of Sohra Tourism Circuit.
Timothy Shira, Meghalaya's tourism minister, will also attend the event organised by the state tourism department alongside the DoNER ministry. Funded through

the PM-DevINE scheme, the project aims to strengthen tourism infrastructure whilst creating sustainable livelihood opportunities and preserving Sohra's distinctive cultural and natural heritage. The initiative will improve visitor facilities, encourage eco-friendly tourism practices and generate employment for local communities, ensuring tourism growth benefits residents directly. During the foundation ceremony, officials will tour stalls displaying local crafts and enterprises, meeting entrepreneurs, artisans and tourism stakeholders to emphasise the government's commitment to community-driven tourism development. A public programme and media interaction will showcase the project's potential to transform Meghalaya's tourism sector. On November 2, Scindia will visit the Mawluh Cave, recognised internationally for its geo-tourism importance. The minister will then travel to Guwahati, Assam, where he is scheduled to inaugurate several DoNER projects and visit IIT Guwahati.



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WHY NERDS ARE HERDING TO PUBS

All cats die. Socrates is dead. Therefore Socrates is a cat," said the Logician in Eugene Ionesco's play Rhinoceros. It was a deliberately broken example of Aristotle's syllogism: "All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal." Socrates, Aristotle, Ionesco, cats, and absurdity could all be hot topics for Lectures on Tap, which have become popular in America's better-educated cities over the last year. A group called Pint of View is bringing the phenomenon to India—among others, political theorist Rajeev Bhargava has done a show with them.

Lectures on Tap are ticketed pop-up events held in bars and restaurants, where a teacher from the Lawrence Livermore National Lab, MIT, or similar institute delivers a 40-minute lecture about quantum gravity or Bertolt Brecht to a nerdy audience. It's popular because many of us have unrequited intellectual passions. Woody Allen published a story about it in 1974 in *The New Yorker*. "The Whore of Mensa" was satirical noir in which a hardboiled gumshoe busted an extortion racket in which foolish men titillated by highbrow things were honey-trapped by erudite women in anonymous motel rooms: "For a price, she'll come over and discuss any subject—Proust, Yeats, anthropology. Exchange of ideas."

There it is: whether at a pop-up lecture or a motel tryst, the buyer is in search of intellectual stimulation. But why are university teachers becoming sellers of nerd entertainment? There is no causal link between these phenomena, but the demand and supply curves have met with a satisfying thump.

For at least two decades, across Western academia, there has been a withdrawal of support for disciplines that do not make much money. Fewer students have been signing up for PhDs—and the intimidating student loans that finance them. Scholarships are dwindling as higher education is commercialised and foreign students fall back on personal loans back home. The Trump effect is the \$100,000 surcharge on new H-1B applications. Foreign students have lost the standard route to residency and employment after their education. So it's harder to pay back loans, and foreign student arrivals have fallen 19 percent, with Indian arrivals down 45 percent. Some believe that the strike on HIBs actually targets elite universities.

Campuses are adjusting to budget cuts. The student paper Harvard Crimson reports that the university's faculty of arts and sciences will cut PhD admissions by 75 percent in the sciences for the next two years. Arts and humanities courses will cut PhD seats by 60 percent, and the social sciences by 50-70 percent. The sociology department will have none the year after. Nearby campuses are downsizing, too. The Brown Daily Herald reports that Brown University will drop PhD admissions in at least six humanities and social science departments, including Egyptology, Assyriology and the classics, subjects that fascinate millions.

The US has been the PhD factory of the world, and its students go on to do epic research that brings the country prestige and prizes along with industrial and military pre-eminence. Now, these eminent scholars will pitch their tents to give other nations the advantage. For instance, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Dufo, who shared a Nobel Prize in economics in 2019, are quitting MIT to start a research centre at the University of Zurich. The urge to move on is visible among younger researchers and professionals in cities like Boston, where academic and commercial labs lie thick on the ground. And attrition due to AI in the lower echelons has only begun. Transnationals like Amazon and TCS are shedding people on an unprecedented scale, and obfuscating the reason with management jargon.

So, no surprise if university teachers are venturing into side hustles in highbrow entertainment, popping up in bars and restaurants to do standup lecturing. It's like a TED talk with food and beverages—the feast of reason and the flow of soul, for a cover price. Some time ago, people would have wondered what this says about perceptions of learning. Now, we know. Maybe it gives courage to teachers who feel like they're in an extinction event, telling them that they won't have to turn to pakoda-nomics to remain relevant. In a perverse way, maybe it's even reassuring that there will be ever-bigger audiences for off-campus learning in many nations which are now thought leaders, where economic pressures could exclude more people from a life of the intellect. The geographical redistribution of talent has almost no implication for India, despite the government's earnest proposal to welcome leading academics back home. Going by past experience, India is happy to follow the lead of the US in matters of academic finance. In the early 2000s, IITs were instructed to reduce reliance on public funding and generate revenue through patents, industry partnerships, and consultancy, as American colleges do. Now, there's no opportunity to follow Trump's lead, because Indian governments have stepped on campuses hard enough.

Will Indian academics be tempted to go out and perform? Historians are having fun doing it. Will physicists follow suit, and further blur the boundary between the campus and the world? Who knows, democratised knowledge could be a refreshing change from the dogmatism in traditional academia. But we must take care: as political and commercial forces eat away at the distinction between the formal and the informal, we may come to the inescapable conclusion that Socrates is indeed a cat.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. - Marcel Proust

Our security in the face of persistent threats

MAJ GEN SANJEEV DOGRA (RETD)

The first tremors of any crisis between India and Pakistan are felt not in the corridors of power, but in the border villages of Jammu & Kashmir nestled in the shadow of the Pir Panjal ranges. Whether it's cross-LoC firing, terrorist outrages, or strategic operations, the immediate impact falls upon civilians, soldiers, and the delicate fabric of daily life. This reality demands a unified response that transcends traditional silos. The Administration, Armed Forces, Veterans, and Citizens must learn to speak the same security language, follow the same playbook, and move as one cohesive unit. Preventing, protecting, responding, and recovering together. The profound trust that binds people, administration, and armed forces during moments of both crisis and calm constitutes India's strategic center of gravity, and safeguarding it requires understanding the fundamental forces that shape the threats the nation faces.

The Fundamental Divergence in Strategic Cultures

The India-Pakistan conflict stems from a fundamental divergence in security paradigms. India's strategic decisions emerge from a democratic fusion of public sentiment, political will, and military capability, ensuring predictability and stability. Conversely, Pakistan's actions are driven by military imperative, where institutional survival depends on perpetuating the myth of an Indian threat. This structural difference, democratic deliberation versus military preservation explains why Pakistan's internal instability often manifests as external provocation, creating a relentless cycle of action and reaction that has defined decades of conflict.

The Transforming Nature of Conflict

The contemporary security landscape has undergone a fundamental transformation in both doctrine and domain. India has decisively shifted to a posture of deterrence by punishment, a calibrated strategy that guarantees swift, proportionate retaliation when red lines are crossed. This approach marks a significant evolution from past postures, blending strategic restraint with demonstrated resolve, and has established clear benchmarks for response that leave no room for misadventure. Simultaneously, the battlefield itself has been redefined. Beyond the visible proliferation of drones and smart munitions lies a deeper revolution in information processing. The real-time fusion of intelligence from satellites to soldiers has collapsed decision cycles from days to minutes. This velocity, combined with truly integrated operations across all domains, land, air, sea, space, and cyberenables precise, non-contact strikes that allow India to control the tempo of engagement. Crucially, the information domain has emerged as a decisive front. The first hour now sets the course for the subsequent days. Victory depends not only on military capability but on narrative dominance, requiring India to simultaneously project three distinct messages: calm assurance to its citizens, firm deterrence to its adversary, and legitimate context to the world. In this arena, credibility is the ultimate currency, made more vital yet more vulnerable by sophisticated disinformation.

Underpinning this new era is a core strategic asymmetry: India's autonomous path of growth and innovation stands in stark contrast to Pakistan's reliance on external patronage—a fundamental divergence that defines both the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The Five Drivers of Conflict

Five critical drivers will shape the future of the India-Pakistan conflict. First, Pakistan's internal instability, marked by economic distress, political fragmentation, and internal violence creates a powerful incentive to manufacture external crises. This diversionary tactic allows its military establishment to consolidate domestic control and redirect public frustration.

Second, Pakistan's reliance on external patronage, particularly from China and the U.S., injects volatility into its strategic calcu-



lus. Fluctuating support is often misread in Rawalpindi as a license for provocation, fostering a dangerous cycle of overconfidence and miscalculation.

Third, water scarcity, intensified by climate change and upstream infrastructure development, has transitioned from a diplomatic issue to a tangible security threat. Hydraulic infrastructure in J&K is increasingly viewed through a security lens, raising the risk of water-related escalation.

Fourth, global distraction such as conflicts in West Asia or major power tension create perceived windows for deniable aggression. When international attention wanes, Pakistan has historically been emboldened to test Indian resolve.

Finally, India's strategic stamina underpinned by economic growth, technological self-reliance, and developmental progress in J&K systematically erodes the utility of provocations. By fostering stability and opportunity in the region, India denies adversaries the political payoff they seek, turning strength into its own deterrent. Together, these drivers create a complex and evolving challenge, demanding integrated and resilient countermeasures.

Three Time Horizons of Strategic Planning

Looking ahead, India's strategic landscape does not unfold as a single, continuous path, but rather as a series of distinct phases, each defined by its own risks and opportunities. By mapping the drivers of conflict, from Rawalpindi's calculus to the pressures of climate and technology, onto the timeline of our own national ascent, three clear horizons emerge from the fog of the future.

The immediate future (0-5 years) represents a window of volatility, where perceptions of closing opportunity windows will likely lead to persistent hybrid probing through UAS swarms, cyber-attacks, and economic symbolism. This period demands exceptional vigilance and strategic patience, combining robust response capabilities with the wisdom to avoid escalation traps. The response must remain firmly anchored in proven models: swift, precise, and time-boxed, demonstrating resolve without uncontrolled escalation.

The middle future (5-15 years) constitutes a great inflection point, where India's military modernization and theater commands create an irreversible power shift that forces fundamental recalculation across the border. This period will test India's ability to convert hard power advantages into sustainable security outcomes. The choices made during this transition will determine whether the relationship moves toward managed competition or periodic crisis. India's growing comprehensive national power, if leveraged wisely, can create strong disincentives against adventurism while opening possibilities for stability.

The far future (15-30 years) will likely evolve into an era of managed hostility, where historical animosities persist but become contained by India's overwhelming comprehensive national power. During this period, the relationship may settle into patterns similar to other frozen conflicts worldwide, where occasional tensions occur within managed parameters. Climate change impacts and water resource management

may emerge as either additional sources of tension or unexpected areas of functional cooperation driven by shared existential challenges.

The Architecture of Civil-Military Fusion

Navigating future challenges demands more than just coordination; it requires a deep, structural fusion of civil and military efforts, transforming our national security approach from a series of reactive measures into a proactive, resilient ecosystem. This fusion is the bedrock of a modern deterrence posture, moving beyond traditional silos to create a society that is inherently harder to disrupt and quicker to recover.

Prevention requires integrated early-warning systems where administration, armed forces, and citizens collaborate through intelligence sharing, community briefings, and local vigilance. Thus, creating redundant layers for timely threat detection.

Protection involves collective defense hardening. The administration secures critical infrastructure and builds community bunkers, while armed forces conduct readiness drills. Veterans and citizens adopt local assets, establishing community watches that secure the crucial last mile and raise aggression costs. Response relies on unified command structures and practiced protocols. District Fusion Rooms co-locate civil and military leadership during emergencies, enabling real-time coordination. Regular evacuation exercises and golden-hour playbooks ensure all stakeholders act precisely under pressure. Recovery focuses on collaborative normalization. The administration restores essential services through pre-positioned resources, while armed forces provide engineering support. Local communities, organized into formal networks, lead rehabilitation using their granular knowledge of neighborhood needs.

Together, these interdependent pillars create a resilient architecture where coordinated action across prevention, protection, response, and recovery transforms civil-military fusion from concept into operational reality.

Building Institutional Resilience

The institutional architecture for civil-military fusion is materializing through three key mechanisms. District Fusion Rooms form the physical embodiment of this integration, serving as nerve centers where civil and military leaders co-locate, sharing real-time data and enabling unified decision-making during emergencies.

A formal Veteran-Citizen Corps systematically channels local expertise into security efforts, creating structured pathways for public participation. This approach leverages India's demographic strength, transforming citizens into force multipliers through neighborhood watches, cyber sentinels, and community-based vigilance.

A robust Two-Way Communication Spine ensures instant information flow between ground and government. Combining technology platforms with human networks, it simultaneously provides early warning of threats and disseminates verified information, creating a virtuous cycle of trust and effectiveness.

Trust is strengthened through transparent resilience scorecards, inclusive community planning, and consistent governance.

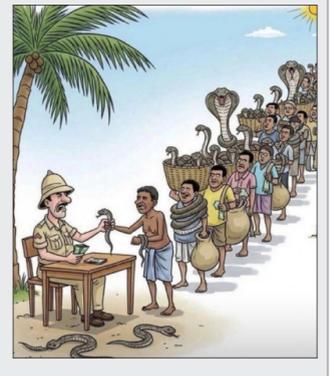
Regular drills build operational muscle memory, while after-action reviews drive continuous improvement. This integrated framework transforms civil-military fusion from concept into enduring capability.

The Path Forward

The challenges ahead are real, but India's capacity built on economic growth, technological advancement, and democratic resilience is greater. The unique partnership between Armed Forces, Administration, Veterans, and Citizens forms an asymmetric advantage no adversary can easily match. If these pillars plan, drill, and stand together, India will not just navigate the coming volatility but emerge stronger from it. The nation will set its own tempo, ensuring the safety, dignity, and confidence of its people remain non-negotiable. The blueprint is clear; what's needed now is determined implementation.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

During the British Raj, officials offered a bounty for every dead cobra to reduce their numbers. It worked, until people began breeding cobras just to claim the reward. When the scheme was scrapped, they released the snakes... and the snake population exploded. The Cobra Effect- when well-intentioned incentives backfire because human ingenuity always finds a shortcut. □
~ Harsh Goenka, Chairman, RPG Enterprises



Technology enriched India today no longer follower, beckons others to follow

DR. JITENDRASINGH

Standing at the threshold of global scientific renaissance, technology enriched India today is no longer a follower, but beckons others to follow her.

Over the past decade, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country has witnessed an unprecedented surge in science, technology, and innovation. From digital empowerment to space exploration, the contours of a self-reliant, technology-driven India—an Atmanirbhar Bharat—are becoming unmistakably clear. From the triumphs of Digital India and Startup India to the success of Swachh Bharat and One Health, the nation has demonstrated that large-scale transformation can be driven through science, technology, and innovation.

The UPI revolution has redefined digital payments globally. India's bioeconomy has seen exponential growth from growing sixteen-fold from \$10 billion in 2014 to an impressive \$165.7 billion in 2024 leading the way in biofuels, bioplastics, and green chemicals. The Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan missions have cemented India's place among spacefaring nations, while the 5G rollout and digital diplomacy have brought connectivity and empowerment to the last mile.

India is now emerging as a global leader in AI for all, ensuring that intelligence and innovation reach every sector - from agriculture to healthcare to governance. With over 100 unicorns and a thriving ecosystem of youth-led startups, the country's scientific and entrepreneurial spirit

is unmatched.

The rise of green hydrogen, quantum science and technology, semiconductor manufacturing and precision agriculture, shows that India is not merely catching up with the world - it is helping to define the future.

This is the story of Atmanirbhar Bharat in motion - a self-reliant, forward-looking India steering confidently toward Viksit Bharat 2047, the centenary of its independence.

ESTIC: From Achievement to Aspiration
Against this backdrop of progress, the Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave (ESTIC) - to be held from November 3-5, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi - marks a bold new step. Convened by 13 ministries of the Government of India, ESTIC is more than a showcase of achievement; it is a crucible for collaboration, foresight, and national strategy.

Inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, ESTIC 2025 will bring together leading scientists, innovators, policymakers, and global experts to deliberate on the future of emerging technologies. It will serve as a platform to identify gaps, forge partnerships, and co-create pathways that align science and technology with India's developmental priorities.

This is not just an event - it is a national convergence platform. uniting academia, industry, and government around one shared purpose: to power India's journey toward Viksit Bharat 2047, a fully developed, innovation-led nation by the centenary of its independence.

Built around 11 thematic areas crucial to India's self-reliance in science and technology, ESTIC will serve as a nerve center for strategic dialogue, collaboration, and showcasing Indian excellence. Besides, celebrating the current achievements, it will also enable brainstorming, gap identification, and policy interventions to ensure that India's scientific progress remains closely aligned with societal needs and global opportunities.

At its core, ESTIC is about connecting the ecosystem - ministries that design policy, scientists who innovate, industries that scale ideas, and startups that disrupt. It celebrates both the journey so far and the road ahead toward sustainable, inclusive, and transformative growth. Eleven Tracks, One Vision
ESTIC 2025 will revolve around eleven thematic tracks that together capture India's technological ambitions.

These include Advanced Materials & Manufacturing for building stronger, lighter, and smarter materials to power defense, space, and industry, artificial intelligence for transforming lives and making governance smarter and more inclusive, Bio-Manufacturing that is scaling the green economy with sustainable bioproducts and circular solutions, Blue Economy that is harnessing ocean resources responsibly for prosperity and resilience, Digital Communications driving connectivity from 4G to 5G and now towards 6G, empowering rural India, and leading global digital diplomacy, Electronics &

Semiconductor Manufacturing, turning the vision of "Make in India" into a silicon-powered reality. Emerging Agriculture Technologies that can ensure food security through innovation, precision, and sustainability. Energy, Environment & Climate that is pioneering renewable energy and green hydrogen as models for the world. Health & Medical Technologies that is delivering affordable innovation for ensuring health equity. Quantum Science & Technology for a leap in secure communications, sensing, computing and materials and Space Technology inspiring generations, and expanding scientific horizons.

These tracks together reflect India's comprehensive innovation map - a matrix where deep science, entrepreneurship, and policy converge. Towards a Viksit Bharat 2047

In many ways, ESTIC represents the curriculum of India's growing confidence as a knowledge and innovation leader. It is a national mission to ignite imagination, inspire young minds, and innovate for the century ahead. By bringing together thought leaders, Nobel Laureates, policymakers, and industry pioneers, ESTIC 2025 will position as a scientific superpower and a global hub for innovation-led development.

As India marches towards 2047, ESTIC stands as a symbolic catalyst - a space where India's scientific achievements meet its developmental aspirations, ensuring that every innovation contributes to a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive Viksit Bharat.

Displaced persons' group condemns Sangai Festival as Manipur crisis enters 30th month

IMPHAL

A students' welfare organisation representing internally displaced persons in Manipur has issued a scathing condemnation of the state government's decision to proceed with the Sangai Festival, arguing that the celebration trivialises the ongoing humanitarian crisis that has left tens of thousands homeless.

The Internally Displaced Persons Students' Welfare Association (IDPSWA), in a statement dated 31 October, questioned the moral legitimacy of hosting a tourism festival when "the economic lifelines of thousands remain broken" and displaced communities continue to depend on relief camps for survival.

"What is the meaning of economic gain when the displaced remain unemployed, when their homes lie in ruins, and when they rely on community kitchens for survival?" the organisation asked in its letter, reference number IDPSUC9/10/2019.

The statement takes particular



aim at the government's promotion of peace and tourism whilst division and displacement persist. "Tourism without truth and reconciliation is hollow," IDPSWA asserted, adding that Manipur's reality today is one of "human endurance amid displacement" rather than celebration.

The ethnic violence that erupted on May 3, 2023, has forced thousands into makeshift relief camps, where many remain without proper access to housing, livelihoods or education. IDPSWA highlighted that temporary shelters have now transformed into "long-

term dwellings, with no clear roadmap for resettlement or rehabilitation."

The organisation extended its support to earlier condemnations from the Churachandpur Meitei United Committee, the Committee on Protection of Meitei Victims, Moreh (COPMeV), and other civil society organisations that have opposed the festival.

"The grandeur of a festival cannot and should not overshadow the pain and loss endured by those forced from their homes," the statement read, arguing that proceeding with such events exposes "the state's failure to

prioritise rehabilitation and reconciliation." IDPSWA particularly criticised what it termed the "systematic neglect of IDPs—individuals and families who have lost everything: homes, livelihoods, and often, loved ones." The group warned that celebrating festivals whilst citizens remain trapped in relief camps sends an alarming message: "that the displaced are to be forgotten while the façade of normalcy is projected to the outside world."

The statement urged the Manipur government to reconsider its priorities and redirect focus towards "peace-building, dialogue, and the dignified rehabilitation of all displaced persons," whilst calling upon artists, performers, tourists and festival partners "to reflect deeply on the moral cost of celebration during crisis."

Signed by Romhoyom Prenchandia, convener and co-convener of IDPSWA, the letter concluded that "tourism and crisis are inherently incompatible" and that "peace cannot be painted over with colourful lights and cultural performances."

'Gaurav Gogoi is 100 per cent Pakistani agent, planted by foreign power': Assam CM



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on October 31 accused state Congress president and MP Gaurav Gogoi of being a "Pakistani agent" allegedly

"planted by foreign power". The remark marks an escalation in the ongoing war of words between the ruling BJP and the Congress in Assam.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a government event,

Sarma claimed, "Gaurav Gogoi is a Pakistani agent, he is purely that. He has been planted by foreign power in our country." The Chief Minister and the BJP have repeatedly alleged that Gogoi has links to Pakistan through his British wife — a claim the Congress leader has dismissed as baseless. Gogoi earlier hit back at the accusations, saying they resembled a "C-grade Bollywood film" that would "flop" because "the people of Assam understand everything".

Sarma said he would release what he called "evidence" against Gogoi, but only after the investigation into singer Zubeen Garg's death concludes. "I am not convening a press conference now to share the evidence, as some will say the Zubeen Garg issue is being diverted," he told reporters.

Tezpur University protests enter 40th day amid calls for vice chancellor's removal

TEZPUR

Tezpur University has been engulfed in continuous protests for 40 days, with students, faculty and non-teaching staff demanding the resignation of Vice Chancellor Prof Shambhu Nath Singh over allegations of administrative misconduct and financial irregularities.

The demonstrations, which began on September 19, were initially sparked by what students described as the administration's failure to appropriately honour late Assamese cultural icon Zubeen Garg. Students reported that the vice chancellor was absent from a memorial gathering held on campus and did not pay respects subsequently. When questioned about the matter, Prof Singh reportedly left without responding.

The incident catalysed broader concerns about the university's leadership. The Tezpur University Teachers' Association (TUTA) and Tezpur University Non-Teaching Employees' Association (TUNTEA) subsequently joined the movement, raising allegations of corruption, misuse of power and academic irregularities during the vice chancellor's tenure. Three separate investigations have been launched within 15 days of the protests beginning: one by the district administration, a fact-finding committee appointed by the governor, and a panel constituted by the Union Ministry of Education. Memorandums outlining demands for Prof Singh's removal have been submitted to the relevant authorities.

The campus community has maintained peaceful demonstrations throughout the 40-day period, employing sit-ins, marches, poster campaigns and cultural protests. Daily demonstrations continue on campus grounds.

Nagaland's Benreu community marks 52nd Lamsimngyi Festival in Kohima

KOHIAMA

The Benreuli Nkwa, Kohima, marked the 52nd Lamsimngyi Festival at Duolhou Garden, Billy Graham Road, celebrating the Benreu community's enduring unity, faith, and commitment to cultural preservation. The annual celebration brought together community members for a day of thanksgiving, reflection, and renewal of kinship ties. The event also highlighted the community's shared heritage and collective efforts to preserve traditional values in a changing world. Addressing the gathering, community elder Keherang Lungalang urged the younger generation to pursue excellence in education while upholding the vision and principles of their forefathers. He reminded attendees that the Benreu people have completed 125 years of Christianity, calling it "a testament to our faith and endurance."

Reflecting on the legacy of the elders, Lungalang noted that "the good deeds our forefathers have done for

us continue to bear fruit today." He also appealed to young people, particularly unmarried girls, to make thoughtful choices in marriage and to value their cultural roots when considering inter-community relationships. Emphasising the significance of Lamsimngyi, he said the festival serves as a reminder of how far the community has come and the importance of preserving its identity for future generations.

Earlier, Kiesano Nsarangbe presented awards and certificates to students who excelled in the HSLC and HSSLC examinations. The celebration featured wrestling matches, cultural games, folk songs, and a traditional attire competition, drawing enthusiastic participation from children, youth, and married men alike.

The Lamsimngyi Festival continues to stand as a symbol of unity and gratitude for the Benreu community — a celebration of faith, tradition, and the enduring spirit of togetherness.

Tripura leads North East in renewable energy, wins national award for PM-KUSUM implementation

AGARTALA

Tripura has been recognised as the top-performing state in the North Eastern region for successfully implementing the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) Scheme, earning a national award from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

The award was presented to Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath by Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi during the Regional Workshop on Renewable Energy for the North Eastern Zone held in Guwahati.

Minister Nath highlighted that Tripura is positioning itself to become a "Hydrogen Valley Hub" for blending and exporting green hydrogen. The state government, he said, is seeking financial and technical assistance from the MNRE to carry out pre-feasibility studies aimed at expanding small hydro power projects.



"Tripura is a hilly state facing geographical and infrastructural challenges, yet the government has taken remarkable initiatives to promote renewable energy," Nath said. He added that through the Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA), several programmes are being implemented to improve rural livelihoods, boost incomes, and promote sustainable energy practices.

The minister outlined the

with a total capacity of 4 MW. He added that 988 consumers have received government subsidies under the scheme.

"So far, Tripura has achieved 48.53 MW of installed green energy capacity, and the state is targeting 500 MW by 2030," the minister said.

He also noted that the expansion of renewable energy projects is expected to generate significant employment. "The growing renewable sector will require skilled manpower to manage over 813 MW of installations, which could create around 4,234 jobs by 2030," he stated.

Reiterating the state's commitment to sustainable energy growth, Nath said Tripura's advantage lies in its potential to develop as a Hydrogen Valley Hub. "To achieve our renewable energy goals, we need financial support, capacity building, and a comprehensive renewable energy policy for the North East to attract private investment," he added.

Assam Police STF wins national award for Operation Praghat

GUWAHATI

The Special Task Force (STF) of Assam Police has been awarded the Kendriya Grihmantri Dakshata Padak (KGDP) 2025 in the Special Operations category for its role in Operation Praghat.

Operation Praghat was a multi-state counter-terror mission that dismantled a jihadi network across Assam, West Bengal, and Kerala.

The STF, led by Partha Sarathi Mahanta, IPS, Inspector General of Police (STF), received one of India's top policing honours for its "remarkable success and operational excellence" during the coordinated crackdown.

Key officers recognised for their contributions include Pranab



Kumar Pegu (Addl. SP STF), Anurag Sarmah (Addl. SP STF), Kh. Satyendra Singh Hazari (Dy SP STF), and Inspectors Saroj Doley, Sankar Jyoti Nath, Kapil Pathak, and Vikram Basumatary.

Launched in December 2024, Operation Praghat was a joint counter-terror effort by the police forces of Assam, West Bengal, and Kerala.

The STF arrested eight suspects, including a Bangladeshi national,

Md Sad Radi alias Md Shab Sheikh (32), who had illegally entered India to activate sleeper cells in the Northeast and other regions.

Officials said the module operated under the guidance of Md Farhan Israk, a close aide of Jasimuddin Rahmani, head of the banned Bangladesh-based terror group Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT).

The group aimed to recruit local youth, establish training networks, procure weapons, and target members of the RSS and other Hindu organisations to incite communal unrest and destabilise the region.

In addition to the STF, officers from Assam Police's Investigation Field category were recognised for their work.

Awardees included Phulkan

Narzary (Dy SP), Akhilesh Kumar Singh (SP), Prakash Sonowal (SDPO), Madhurima Das (Dy SP), and Umesh Borah (SI). The Kendriya Grihmantri Dakshata Padak, instituted in February 2024 by the Ministry of Home Affairs under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, honours excellence in Special Operations, Investigation, Intelligence, and Forensic Science. Announced annually on October 31, the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the awards aim to maintain high professional standards and boost morale among police and CAPF personnel nationwide.

Across India, 1,466 personnel received awards in different categories this year.

Meghalaya family rescued after 200-member mob attacks home over witchcraft claim; nine held

SHILLONG

A family in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills narrowly escaped harm after a mob of around 200 people attacked their home in Sohra's Khliehshong area, accusing them of practising witchcraft, police confirmed on October 31.

The attack occurred around 9.30 pm on October 30, when the house of Ham Shangpliang was surrounded by an angry crowd that allegedly threatened to burn it down. Police said the situation became "extremely volatile" as the mob ignored repeated warnings to disperse.

A police statement said the violence was triggered by claims from a boy who alleged he had "visions" of Shangpliang and believed he had been placed under a spell. The unverified claim quickly spread through the area, sparking panic and fuelling mob mobilisation.

Sohra police teams and local magistrates rushed to the site to protect the residents. However, officers reportedly faced stiff resistance due to the size and aggression of the mob. "To ensure the safety of those inside and create a safe corridor for

evacuation, tear gas and stun grenades had to be used," East Khasi Hills Superintendent of Police Vivek Syiem told.

Additional forces, including personnel from the Special Operations Team in Shillong, were later deployed to bring the situation under control. Through a coordinated effort, the Shangpliang family and two other families—who had gathered at the home for a death anniversary memorial service—were safely evacuated. In total, 22 people, including minors, were rescued and taken to Shillong Civil Hospital for medical examination.

At least eight police personnel sustained injuries during the operation. Nine suspects identified as key instigators were arrested on Friday, and a case has been registered at Sohra police station. More arrests are expected as the investigation progresses.

Police have condemned the incident, calling on the public to reject superstition and mob violence. "Such acts of mob justice driven by superstition are dangerous and unacceptable. The law will take its course against those involved," Syiem said.

Manipur marks Rashtriya Ekta Diwas with Run for Unity across three districts



IMPHAL:

The Run for Unity event was organized on Friday simultaneously in three districts, Churachandpur, Pherzawl, and Bishnupur in Manipur, reaffirming the commitment of

all attendees to uphold the spirit of unity and national integrity.

The event was held on the 150th birth anniversary of the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Notably, the unity run came at a time when the tribal-dominated Churachandpur and Meitei-dominated Bishnupur districts had witnessed significant loss of life due to the ethnic violence that began on May 3, 2023.

The Additional District Commissioner of Churachandpur, Lalrobul Fimate, MCS, on Friday, flagged off the "Run for Unity - Run for India" from the Public Ground, Hiangtam Lamka, Churachandpur, marking the observance of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (National Unity Day).

The run aimed to promote the spirit of unity and integrity among citizens. In Pherzawl district, the celebrations also featured Unity Runs organized by Thanlon and Parbung police stations.

Around 70 participants took part in the Thanlon event, where Village Chief Th. Dongchinpau awarded prizes to the winners.

In Parbung, approximately 40 runners participated, with winners receiving honours on the spot.

Before flagging off the run, SDO Churachandpur, Vidyamari Sridhar,

IAS, administered the unity pledge to a diverse group of participants, including personnel from the Police, CRPF, Central Paramilitary forces, District Level Officers (DLOs), and students from various schools under ZEO Churachandpur.

The event concluded at the Mini Secretariat, Tuibong, Churachandpur.

As part of the observance, Bishnupur District Commissioner Pooja Elangbam also flagged off the "Run for Unity" from the Mini Secretariat Complex, Bishnupur.

The run saw active participation from athletes, youth, and officials of the District Administration, including ADM Toijam Opendro, AC to DC Sh. Gunamani, and SDO/BDO Bishnupur Loitongbam Rishikanta, along with other officers and staff.

Later, Pooja Elangbam administered the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas pledge at the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat Complex, reaffirming the commitment of all attendees to uphold the spirit of unity and national integrity.

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas is observed annually on October 31 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India, and to promote the message of national integration and unity.

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SIR sparks panic in West Bengal's Matua belt; BJP and TMC stare at losses

KOLKATA

As West Bengal braces for a fresh voter roll revision, panic, anger, and suspicion are rippling through the Matua heartland, leaving both the BJP and TMC cornered in their most crucial refugee bastion amid fears of mass disenfranchisement under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

For the Matuas, a Hindu refugee community with a decisive presence in over 40 assembly seats across the border districts of North 24 Parganas, Nadia, and parts of South 24 Parganas, the Election Commission's decision to conduct the first SIR since 2002 to remove duplicate, deceased, and ineligible voters has revived anxieties over identity and citizenship.

Those not on the 2002 voter list must now furnish documents to prove eligibility.

Thousands of Matuas have migrated from Bangladesh over decades, often without proper documentation, unsettling not only the community but also the TMC and BJP, long locked in a tug-of-war for their support.

Union minister and Bongaon MP Shantanu Thakur, the BJP's most prominent Matua face, attempted to reassure them, saying, "There is no need to worry if names of refugee Matuas are deleted. They will get Indian citizenship under the CAA."

Hisaunt, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Mamata Bala Thakur, who leads a rival faction of the Matua 'first family', has called a meeting of community leaders at Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas district on 2 November to chart next steps. "Names of Matuas will be

deleted as many who arrived after 2002 lack documents and will lose voting rights. The Matuas have been voting for us after realising the BJP's citizenship jujumla," she told.

BJP MLA Subrata Thakur, Shantanu's brother, said, "Those who arrived between 2002 and 2025 won't be able to produce the required papers. If they apply under the CAA, we can appeal to retain their names, but there is no guarantee as the EC is an autonomous body."

Subrata estimated that 30-40 lakh refugees across the state may qualify under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, adding that the government is proceeding cautiously to ensure "genuine victims of persecution get citizenship, not infiltrators or Rohingyas misusing the process."

Most Matuas have Aadhaar and voter cards, but they fear these could become meaningless during the SIR exercise. "If they apply for CAA, they will first be branded foreigners and lose voting rights. And in SIR, they will lose their voting rights anyway," said political analyst Suman Bhattacharya.

Internal mapping suggests 25-40 per cent of voters in assembly segments under Bongaon and Ranaghat Lok Sabha seats could be affected if Matuas fail to link their names to the 2002 rolls. In parts of Krishnanagar and Ranaghat, where Matua voters form nearly 60 per cent of the population, leaders are voicing similar concerns.

"The situation is one of confusion and anxiety. Both governments are talking, but neither is offering a clear solution," said Mahitosh Baidya,

general secretary of the Matua Mahasangha.

He accused both the Centre and state governments of "confusing and misleading" refugee Hindus. "There is no clarity even for those who arrived before 2014. Suppose someone came in 2005 or 2013, they don't have names in the 2002 voter list. Those who arrived after 31 December 2014 can't even apply under the CAA. What will they do?"

Baidya said that while around 400-500 citizenship certificates have been issued in North 24 Parganas, the number is negligible compared to an estimated one crore eligible applicants. "Even after decades, Matuas are still waiting for something as basic as certainty, the certainty of belonging to the land they have lived in for generations," he added.

Even within the BJP, cracks are visible. A CAA camp organised by the party in Kalyani was recently vandalised, allegedly by a rival faction. Matua leader and BJP MP Asim Sarkar warned the party could face a backlash.

"Nearly 15 lakh Matua and refugee people, who voted earlier, may lose their rights this time. Around 10 lakh of them voted for us, and others voted for TMC. The TMC that spread canards against CAA, stopping refugees from applying for it, must answer," he said.

While the TMC has publicly opposed the SIR, it remains wary of losing further ground in Matua-majority areas such as Bongaon, Gaighata, Swarupnagar, Ashoknagar, and Krishnanagar assembly seats, where the BJP made deep inroads in 2019 and 2021.

NALANDA

From Bihar's historic city of Patliputra, now Patna, to the ancient centres of Nalanda and Rajgir, the signs of change are visible. Multi-lane highways, roadside eateries, hotels, and educational institutions mark the route to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's home district — a region often showcased as a symbol of Bihar's progress.

Among Nalanda's many claims to fame, the spotlight this election season is on the revived Nalanda University. Located about 15 kilometres from the ruins of the ancient site, the 455-acre carbon-neutral campus, with economist Arvind Panagariya as its chancellor, has become a talking point in speeches by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Nitish Kumar. Amid intense campaigning, local voters seem confident that Nitish Kumar remains a strong contender. "Just as Narendra Modi did a lot for Gujarat, our Nitish Kumar has done the same for Bihar and more for Nalanda," said Devender Yadav, who runs a tea stall in Nalanda. "I don't belong to his caste, Kurmi, but I know he deserves to continue for the larger good of the state." Mohan Kumar of Daniyaba offered a different view.

"The new Nalanda University with all modern facilities is impressive, but Bihar needs the same restructuring elsewhere. Nitish Kumar must extend this blueprint beyond Nalanda," he said. Nalanda's famous sweet, khaja, continues to draw visitors to shops in Rajgir, including the popular "Kali Sah ka Khaja Dukan."

"The same is the popularity of Nalanda's politics," said retired banker Shashtri Prasad. "Here, individual candidates matter less. What matters more is the alliance. The NDA and Mahagathbandhan



are being tested, but Nalanda still stands with Nitish." He added that while MLAs face local scrutiny, Nitish Kumar's legacy and Modi's assurances could help the NDA.

The RJD-led Mahagathbandhan, meanwhile, is focusing on employment and governance issues. Some voters, though, take a practical view. "Sab kuch process se hota hai. Unemployment dur ho raha hai. Ye kabhi bhi zero nahi ho sakta India mein," said Shakunta Devi, 48, who runs a cosmetic shop with her daughter Rita.

In Bihar Sharif, Shweta Kumari, a schoolteacher, and her sister Anju, a first-time voter, expressed faith in the Modi-Nitish partnership. But their father, Dular Verma, and their brother, Mahesh,

differed. "We'll give Tejashwi Yadav's Mahagathbandhan a chance. If they fail, we'll change them next time," they said. At Nalanda University, far from the campaign noise, peace prevails. Yet, development gaps remain. "Yahan sab kuch hai, lekin road yahan aane ka abhi bhi narrow hai," said Mukesh Kumar, who runs a food stall near the campus.

"The fight here is between the NDA, led by Nitish and Narendra, and the Mahagathbandhan, led by Tejashwi and Rahul," said Anuj Kumar, an MBA graduate. "The results will depend on caste equations and how voters judge the government's record." The Mahagathbandhan relies primarily on Yadav and Muslim consoli-

ation, along with smaller castes, centred on Tejashwi Yadav's main campaign issue: unemployment. The NDA is focusing on empowering Nari Shakti and Yuva Shakti. Nalanda, with a population of 36 lakh, of which less than 7% are Muslims, remains a district where Nitish's influence is being tested. Amid the ongoing tussle over denial of seats to Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) by RJD and Congress in the Grand Alliance in the Assembly polls, CM Hemant Soren will keep away from the campaigning in these elections. Jharkhand's ruling JMM is not contesting the elections in neighbouring Bihar, in the wake of a "political conspiracy" by its allies.

INTERNATIONAL

Protests over Tanzania's disputed election, electoral results enter third day



DAR ES SALAAM

Hundreds of demonstrators faced off with police in Tanzania's commercial capital on Friday to demand the national electoral body stop announcing election results that have sparked protests, leading to the deployment of the military and an internet shutdown.

State television was broadcasting the mainland results of Wednesday's vote in which the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party that has governed Tanzania since independence in 1961 was seeking to extend its time in power.

Presidential candidates from the two main opposition parties were barred from running, and incumbent President Samia Suluhu Hassan faced 16 other candidates from smaller par-

ties who hardly campaigned.

The CCM retained the presidential seat in the semi-autonomous archipelago of Zanzibar, which remained calm Friday with a heavy military presence. Ferry services that have been unavailable for the last two days are expected to resume Friday.

The electoral commission in Zanzibar said Thursday the incumbent, President Hussein Mwinyi, had won 78.8% of the votes.

The opposition said there was "massive fraud" in Zanzibar's results and announced it would reveal its next steps.

Hundreds of protesters faced off with police in the nation's commercial capital, Dar es Salaam, on the third day of protests Friday.



Chaos erupted Wednesday afternoon as young people took to the streets to protest the harassment of opposition leaders and their limited election choices. Several vehicles, a gas station, and police stations were set ablaze by protesters.

The government has not commented on the extent of the damage or any casualties. Amnesty International has reported that two people were killed during Wednesday's protests.

The protests have spread across

the country, and the government has postponed the reopening of colleges and universities, which had been set for next Monday.

The army chief, Gen. Jacob John Mkunda, condemned the violence and said Thursday the military would work with other security agencies to contain the situation.

Tanzanians in the diaspora have been hosting daily X Spaces to analyze the protests and discuss ways of financially supporting the demonstrators.

Trump declines to clarify if US will conduct tests of its nuclear weapons



ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE:

President Donald Trump declined to say Friday whether he plans to resume underground nuclear detonation tests, as he had seemed to suggest in a social media post this week that raised concerns the US would begin testing nuclear weapons for the first time in three decades.

The president told reporters "You'll find out very soon," without elaborating when asked if he means to resume underground nuclear detonation tests.

Trump, who spoke to reporters aboard Air Force One as he headed to Florida for a weekend stay, said, "We're going to do some testing" and "Other countries do it. If they're going to do it, we're going to" but then refused to offer more details.

His comments on nuclear testing have drawn confusion inside and outside the gov-

ernment when the president seemed to suggest in a brief post that the US would resume nuclear warhead tests on an "equal basis" with Russia and China, whose last known tests were in the 1990s.

Some of Trump's comments seemed to refer to testing missiles that would deliver a warhead, rather than the warhead itself. There has been no indication that the US would start detonating warheads.

The US military already regularly tests its missiles that are capable of delivering a nuclear warhead, but it has not detonated the weapons since 1992. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which the US signed but did not ratify, has been observed since its adoption by all countries possessing nuclear weapons, North Korea being the only exception.

The Pentagon has not responded to questions. The Energy Department, which oversees the US nuclear

stockpile, declined to comment Friday.

Trump's post on nuclear tests came as Russia this week announced it had tested a new atomic-powered and nuclear-capable underwater drone and a new nuclear-powered cruise missile.

Russia responded to Trump's post by underscoring that it did not test its nuclear weapons and has abided by a global ban on nuclear testing. The Kremlin warned though, that if the US resumes testing its weapons, Russia will as well — an intensification that would restart Cold War-era tensions.

Vice Adm. Richard Correll, Trump's nominee to lead the military command in charge of the nation's nuclear arsenal, struggled to interpret the president's comments when he testified before senators during a Capitol Hill hearing Thursday, telling them, "I'm not reading anything into it or reading anything out of it."

The Deer and the Divide: Can the Sangai Festival Heal Manipur's Wounds?

When the Sangai Festival was first conceived fifteen years ago, it wasn't just meant to be another tourism event. It was born as a bridge - a living symbol of Manipur's shared geography, a celebration where the hills and valley could speak a common language of dance, crafts, and food.

In 2025, that bridge feels narrower than ever. The Manipur government's decision to scale down the 12th Edition of the Sangai Festival - hosting it largely within Imphal's boundaries - has ignited debate. For many, it feels like a retreat from the festival's founding philosophy: inclusivity. For others, it raises a haunting question - if the Sangai skips the hills, can it still be Manipur's festival?

The question isn't just rhetorical. It speaks to the heart of a state still scarred by ethnic conflict, displacement, and mutual distrust. The answer, perhaps, lies not in cancellation or containment, but in courage - in imagining a festival that can heal even when wounds remain raw.

On 29 October 2025, the Committee on Protection of Meitei Victims (COPMeV) - representing internally displaced Meiteis from Moreh, Kangpokpi, and Churachandpur - issued a boycott call. Their statement, sharp and unsparing, accused the government of insensitivity:

"Over 200 dead, thousands homeless, highways strangled, resettlement a mirage yet the government dances? The deer prances while blood dries?"

It was more than a boycott; it was an indictment of the government's moral timing. How, they asked, could the state spend on spectacle when its displaced citizens still sleep under tarpaulins?

Yet, in the same breath, many displaced families - especially women artisans - voiced something subtler: not anger, but yearning. They weren't asking for the festival to vanish; they were asking to be seen within it. "Give us stalls," said one weaver from an Imphal relief camp, "and we'll earn enough to buy Christmas gifts."

This duality - grief and grit - captures the paradox of today's Manipur. The people want justice, yes, but they also crave normalcy. They want recognition of loss, but also opportunities to rebuild lives through work, trade, and art.

To understand why this debate matters, one must recall what the Sangai Festival once stood for.

Named after Rucervus eldii eldii, the endangered brow-antlered deer that lives on the floating phumdis of Loktak Lake, the festival was envisioned in 2010 by Manipur's Department of Tourism as a soft-power tool - a cultural diplomacy initiative that stitched the state's 30-odd communities into one tapestry.

In its prime years, it was electric. Homestays brimmed from Senapati to Tamenglong; the streets of Churachandpur smelled of smoked pork and bamboo shoots; Ukhrul's youth jammed with Imphal's rock bands; Meitei and Naga marathoners ran shoulder to shoulder through misty ridges. Attendance peaked at a hundred thousand in 2019, generating crores in revenue for local entrepreneurs, taxi unions, and weavers.

It wasn't just entertainment - it was economy, empathy, and identity woven together. That was before May 2023.

On the night of 3 May 2023, Churachandpur burned. What began as a protest spiraled into one of the bloodiest ethnic conflicts in Manipur's modern history. Over 70,000 people were displaced, 200 lives lost, and towns split along ethnic lines.

Today, more than 900 days later, the state still feels divided by invisible borders. National highways that once ferried tourists to hill districts now serve as fault lines patrolled by security convoys. Entire markets remain shuttered. Relief camps across Imphal East, Bishnupur, and Kangpokpi host thousands who once lived as neighbours, now separated by fear and barbed wire.

Promises of resettlement by December 2025 have yet to materialize into budgets or blueprints. Fifty lives - including children and elderly - have been lost in the camps to disease and despair.

Against this grim backdrop, a festival proclaiming unity risks sounding hollow - unless



unity itself becomes the festival's work.

The state government, facing budgetary strain and security anxieties, decided to centralize the 2025 edition of the Sangai Festival within Imphal. The primary venues - Hapta Kangiebung and the Bhagyachandra Open Air Theatre (BOAT) - will host cultural shows, polo matches, and exhibitions.

But the omission of the Sangai Ethnic Park in Moirang Khunou - once the festival's showpiece venue - and the absence of events in the hill districts mark a sharp departure from the festival's inclusive spirit.

Officials call it "logistical prudence." Critics call it "symbolic segregation."

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, chairing a review meeting in September, emphasized that the festival would be "bigger and more vibrant than ever." Yet, "bigger" seems confined to optics, not outreach.

Because the truth is - if the Sangai does not dance in the hills, its music sounds incomplete.

The contrast with Ukhrul's Shirui Lily Festival 2025 could not be starker.

Held from May 20-24 in a Naga-majority hill district still fraught with Meitei-Kuki tensions, the Shirui festival proved that with preparation and goodwill, security need not be an excuse for exclusion.

The state deployed over 2,000 personnel, including BSF and Army units. Drone surveillance covered the roads. DGP Rajiv Singh personally oversaw ground operations. There were threats, yes, but the event concluded without incident - drawing thousands, including international visitors.

Ukhrul's message was clear: with planning, courage, and dialogue, festivals can become instruments of confidence-building, not conflict-avoidance.

If Ukhrul can bloom amid tension, why can't Churachandpur sing again? Why can't the Sangai leap where it once danced - across boundaries, not within them?

There's also a hard-nosed economic argument for going bolder. Tourism is one of the few sectors capable of generating quick, decentralized income in a conflict-ridden region.

Before 2023, the Sangai Festival was estimated to inject over ₹50 crore annually into Manipur's micro-economy - from hotel bookings to bamboo artisanship. With the state's finances stretched thin and unemployment soaring, scaling down the festival makes little fiscal sense.

A hill-inclusive festival - even if partially symbolic - could activate entire local economies.

Imagine free stalls for displaced artisans from both valley and hill camps. Imagine weaving cooperatives running demonstration booths, or youth volunteers from rival communities working side by side to manage logistics. The returns wouldn't just be monetary; they'd be moral.

In a fractured society, earning together may heal faster than mourning apart.

How could a truly inclusive Sangai Festival look in 2025? Perhaps like this:

"Shared Stages: One day each in Ukhrul, Senapati, Churachandpur, and Tamenglong, with simultaneous live feeds to Imphal. Each event themed around "Restoration," featuring joint performances by artists from divided districts.

"Safe Corridors: Security escorts and verified convoys ensuring safe passage for performers and tourists - modeled after the successful Shirui Lily logistics.

"Rehabilitation Markets: Priority stalls for IDPs - both Meitei and Kuki - to sell crafts and textiles, sponsored by state and central tourism funds.

"Cultural Diplomacy Corners: Workshops on peacebuilding through art, featuring voices from all communities.

"Symbolic Relay: A ceremonial flame or baton carried by representatives from all districts, culminating in Imphal - symbolizing

the return of shared purpose.

These are not impossible dreams; they are logistical possibilities that demand political will.

Some argue that festivals in times of conflict are tone-deaf - that celebration amid displacement is disrespectful. But history shows that cultures often recover through rhythm, not rhetoric.

The Nagas held their Hornbill Festival even in years of ceasefire uncertainty; the Mizos revived Chapchar Kut soon after insurgency ended. Both became instruments of reconciliation, not escapism.

The Sangai Festival, too, can be reframed - not as denial of tragedy but as defiance of despair.

If done inclusively, it could become a living testament that Manipur refuses to surrender its cultural pulse to violence.

In a bamboo shelter near Palace Compound, a displaced Kuki mother still weaves ponve shawls. Her earnings used to come from Sangai stalls in Moirang. "I don't need speeches," she says softly, "just one stall, one chance."

In another camp, a young Meitei musician tunes his pena. He once played fusion sets at BOAT before the clashes. "If they let me perform again," he says, "I'll play for all."

These are not grand statements of reconciliation; they are small, stubborn acts of humanity. And perhaps, the Sangai Festival's truest task this year is to give these acts a stage.

The Sangai, Manipur's state animal, doesn't recognise human boundaries. It runs where the wetlands welcome it - across grasslands, through reeds, between water and land. It doesn't know "hill" or "valley."

That is the metaphor the festival must reclaim.

To confine the Sangai Festival to Imphal is to turn a living symbol into a museum piece - beautiful, but caged. To cancel it outright would be surrender. The middle path - expanding it with caution and compassion - is where Manipur's dignity lies.

Imagine, once again, 21 November 2025. Dawn at Pudunam: the marathon flag drops, Naga runners in shawls pace beside Meitei athletes.

Afternoon at Churachandpur: displaced women sell handwoven ponve, laughter echoing through food stalls.

Evening in Ukhrul: Tangkhul dancers leap under floodlights, streamed live to Imphal where children clap in rhythm.

Night at Hapta Kangiebung: a pena meets electric guitar, and the crowd - Meitei, Kuki, Naga, tourist - roars together.

That image, however idealistic, is not fantasy. It is what Manipur used to be - and what it could be again.

The 12th Manipur Sangai Festival can still rise above symbolism. It can become a platform for revenue, recognition, and reconciliation - a proof that culture, when shared honestly, is stronger than conflict.

But for that to happen, the government must treat it not as a mere calendar event or propaganda showpiece, but as a process of healing. Free stalls for the displaced. Stages for the silenced. Security for the forgotten.

Let the festival prove that the Sangai still belongs to everyone - that the hills and the valley can still dance to the same drum.

Because if the Sangai runs only in one part of Manipur, it's not truly running free.

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Kunjarani Devi: A Legend's Enduring Strength and Her Call for Unity



The Rise of a Champion
Kunjarani Devi's tryst with weightlifting began in 1985. From the very start, she was unstoppable. Year after year, she dominated the National Weightlifting Championships, winning gold after gold in the 44 kg, 46 kg, and eventually, the 48 kg categories. By 1987, she had already set two national records in Trivandrum.

When she switched to the 46 kg category, she clinched gold at Pune in 1994. Four years later, in Manipur, she competed in the 48 kg class and earned silver—proof that even after more than a decade of competition, she remained among the best.

Making India Proud

Kunjarani's international debut came at the 1989 World Women's Weightlifting Championship in Manchester, where she won three silver medals. It was a moment of recognition that put both her and India on the world weightlifting map. She went on to compete in seven consecutive World Championships, earning medals in all but one—the 1993 Melbourne edition. Though she never stood atop the podium, her consistent silver finishes spoke of her

in Bangkok (1998). But it was in the Asian Weightlifting Championships that her brilliance truly shone. Starting in Shanghai in 1989 with one silver and two bronze medals, she built a legacy of consistency—three silvers in Indonesia (1991), more in Thailand (1992) and China (1993), and her career-best performance in South Korea (1995), where she struck two gold and one bronze. Even as competition intensified, she added more medals in Japan (1996)—two silvers and a bronze.

A Trailblazer and a National Icon

Kunjarani's achievements earned her every major sporting honour India could bestow. The Arjuna Award came in 1990. She shared the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna—the country's highest sporting recognition—with tennis ace Leander Paes in 1996–97. The same year, she received the K.K. Birla Sports Award. In 2011, the Government of India conferred on her the Padma Shri, a fitting tribute to her lifelong contribution to Indian sport.

Over her career, she has collected more than fifty international medals. Her defining moment came at the 2006 Commonwealth

and 94 kg in clean and jerk.

Beyond the Podium

Today, N. Kunjarani Devi serves as a Commandant and nodal officer for the Central Sports Team of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Her influence extends far beyond competition—she has helped shape India's sporting future as part of the committee that recommended the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award recipients in 2014, and as coach of the Indian women's weightlifting team for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Padma Shri N. Kunjarani Devi has collected over 68 international medals to her credit and for the Nation.

A Message That Resonates

Kunjarani Devi remains a symbol of strength—physical, moral, and national. Her message for the KRC Foundation event wasn't about nostalgia; it was about purpose.

Her voice, steady and grounded, carried a simple truth: unity and dedication are as vital to a nation's progress as they are to an athlete's victory.

As the North East Integrated Rally prepares to set off, her words echo a spirit

Speaking with Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee of the KRC Foundation, Commandant Padma Shri Nameirakpam Kunjarani Devi, the Olympian from Northeast India and a senior member and facilitator of Eta Northeast Women's Network. She is one of the country's most decorated weightlifters—and shared her heartfelt message of unity and encouragement as she praised the Foundation's upcoming North East Integrated Rally, scheduled from January 4 to February 4, 2026.

"Whenever there is an initiative that speaks of unity and strength, I feel deeply connected to it," she said. "We've already lived our time. It's now for the young stars, the next generation, to carry this energy forward. This initiative by the KRC Foundation is a wonderful and powerful step. I support it wholeheartedly, not just as a Manipuri but as a citizen of India. I wish the Foundation great success and pray for peace, progress, and prosperity during this mission."

Her words carried the



same conviction that defined her journey—a story of resilience, discipline, and quiet dominance in a sport that rarely made headlines when she began.

unmatched perseverance.

At the Asian Games, she won bronze medals in Beijing (1990) and Hiroshima (1994) and came close again

Games in Melbourne, where she won gold in the 48 kg category, setting a Games record with a combined lift of 166 kg—72 kg in snatch

that has guided her entire life—discipline, humility, and an unwavering belief in the power of collective strength.



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10 JAN
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11 JAN
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 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders.
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JAN'25
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 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 Experts, Webinars, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Webinars: Journalism, Marketing, Design & Content Creation, Sports, Games, AI, AI/ML, Robotics.



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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 practical of River Barak, Planning & Geography, environmental and health in the River Barak, Climate Change.



11 JAN
5E For Success Conclave
 The 5E for 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 & Colleges, Extension School, Public Speaking (College).
 In the online event, various students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.





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10-12 JAN
E-Sports
 Full featured tournaments | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



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'



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



Barak Festival
 Band Night | 10 JAN
 Musical Night | 11 JAN



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