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PERSPECTIVE

Remember, for everything you have lost, you have gained something else. Without the dark, you would never see the stars.

Manipur Gets Its First Woman State Information Commissioner

IMPHAL
In a landmark moment for Manipur's transparency and governance framework, Nungshitombi Athokpam was sworn in on Friday as the State Information Commissioner - becoming the first woman to hold the post in the state.

The oath of office was administered by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla during a ceremony at the Durbar Hall of Raj Bhavan, Imphal, according to an official communique.

Athokpam's appointment has been made under the provisions of Section 15(3) of the Right to Information Act, 2005. Her tenure and terms of service will follow Section 16(1) of the Act.

Speaking after the ceremony, she said her primary focus would be to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information to citizens while upholding administrative efficiency. She stressed that an informed public is essential for understanding government decision-making without disrupting developmental activities.

She further assured that she would carry out her responsibilities with integrity and in the larger interest of the people.

The event was attended by MLA Th. Biswajit Singh, the Chief Secretary, Security Advisor, Additional Chief Secretary, Advocate General, and several senior state government officials.

WHO SAID WHAT

"In Assam, we can't win more than 100 seats. That is the population pattern. We can contest in 103 of the 126 seats in Assam. But it does not mean that we can't contest in other seats. In terms of the population pattern, the BJP and our ally parties can only reach 103 seats. Our footprint will be in 103 seats... earlier BJP would have contested in 90 constituencies. But after the delimitation, 10-15 new constituencies have formed where there is no MLA today. Organically, we can bring forward youth and women this time. BJP will get Assamese Muslims' vote, but will not get Miya Muslim vote... - Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM

Sangai Festival Opens in Imphal Amid Full Boycott, Heavy Security

Manipur Governor inaugurates 12th Manipur Sangai Festival 2025, urges 'spirit of oneness'

IMPHAL
The 12th edition of the Manipur Sangai Festival was inaugurated yesterday by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Hapta Kangleibung, Imphal, an event shadowed by unprecedented opposition, widespread protests, and a near-total public boycott across the state. The much-anticipated festival, returning after a two-year hiatus, commenced under multi-layered security arrangements as several key organizations, including the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) and groups representing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), strongly condemned the decision to host the event.



Protesters argued that celebrating a cultural festival is "highly insensitive" while thousands of citizens remain displaced from their homes due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and state-wide normalcy has not been restored. Reports from the inauguration at the Bhagyachandra Open Air Theatre (BOAT) confirmed one of the sparsest public turnouts in the festival's history, with the crowd largely comprised of security personnel and government officials.

Clashes between demonstrators and security forces were reported in Imphal East district on Friday, as protesters, including displaced families, attempted to march towards the festival venue. The opposition also triggered a 'cease work' call by COCOMI, leading to a shutdown-like scenario in Imphal Valley with markets closed and public transport largely off the roads. Addressing the gathering, Governor Bhalla, accompanied by the First Lady, defended the celebration,

framing the Sangai Festival as a "Festival of Oneness" and a crucial platform for economic revival and tourism promotion.

"Manipur's cultural heritage is a national treasure," the Governor stated, noting that the multi-venue format adopted this year demonstrates the state's resilience and collective drive toward economic recovery, expected to boost livelihoods for artisans and local enterprises. He also reiterated the state's legacy as the birthplace of Modern Polo (Sagol Kanglei) and efforts to conserve the endangered Manipuri Pony. Acknowledging the humanitarian crisis, the Governor stressed that the welfare of IDPs remains a top government priority. He outlined ongoing state measures for affected families, including: The Governor appealed to the public to uphold the festival's spirit of unity and expressed a strong hope for the swift return of peace and harmony.

The 10-day festival is scheduled to feature a range of events, including cultural showcases, indigenous sports, adventure tourism, literary sessions,

the Hiyang Tannaba boat race, and the Cherry Blossom Festival at Mao.

The governor appealed to the people to reaffirm the festival's spirit of oneness, expressed hope for lasting peace, and urged people to participate in the festival wholeheartedly.

Imphal: Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, on Friday, inaugurated the 12th Edition of the Manipur Sangai Festival, 2025 at Hapta Kangleibung in Imphal, marking the premier cultural and tourism showcase. The festival embodies the essence of the 'Festival of Oneness,' celebrating entrepreneurial energy, tourism potential, indigenous dance, music, crafts, and traditional sports.

The festival stands not only as a cultural celebration but also as a symbol of resilience and social harmony, as over 135 potential tourist sites are being identified for holistic development. Addressing the inaugural function at the Bhagyachandra Open Air Theatre (BOAT), the Governor underscored that Manipur's cultural heritage is a treasure for the entire

nation and noted that the expanded multi-venue format reflects Manipur's renewed confidence and collective commitment to economic revival, with the festival acting as a catalyst for livelihood generation across artisans, youth, and local enterprises.

Acknowledging the plight of Internally Displaced Persons, he stressed that their well-being remains a paramount State responsibility.

He noted government measures, including phased rehabilitation, financial assistance, prefabricated housing, and cash-based support systems to restore stability and dignity.

The governor appealed to the people to reaffirm the festival's spirit of oneness, expressed hope for lasting peace, and urged people to participate in the festival wholeheartedly.

The 2025 edition will feature cultural performances, indigenous sports, adventure activities, literary sessions, film screenings, tourism familiarisation tours, the Hiyang Tannaba boat race, and the Cherry Blossom Festival at Mao.

BJP to contest assembly polls with partners in Assam

GUWAHATI
Assam State BJP has been holding marathon meetings at the state BJP headquarters in Guwahati to prepare the roadmap of the assembly polls in the state next year.

As part of the preparations, BJP general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh arrived on Thursday evening at the party's state headquarters, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan in Guwahati. He is on a two-day visit to the state.

He participated in a series of party meetings, outlined the organisational action plan and election strategy for the upcoming assembly elections, and set the target of winning every booth of the state through the Ashirbad Yatra, a BJP release said.

The party has decided to contest the upcoming election in alliance with its partners and aims to win at least 103 seats.

Pparty spokesperson Jayanta Kumar Goswami stated that Santhosh held a meeting yesterday with the state spokespersons, the media department, the media relations department, and the media convenors of various morchas.

"He discussed the current political situation of Assam and provided various suggestions and guidance on creating a favourable public narrative for the party. He also assigned responsibilities and tasks to each functionary. From 8 pm onwards, he held an extended meeting with the party's social media department, IT department, and social media & IT convenors of every morcha, where he discussed in detail all preparations regarding dissemination of party and government achievements among the public through social media

during the election," Goswami said.

"Today morning, in the presence of state president Dilip Saikia and state general secretary (organisation) Rabindra Raju, he held a closed-door meeting with the state general secretaries. He thoroughly examined the organisational status of the party in Assam, the strength of booth-level structures, and prepared strategies to ensure 100 per cent victory, prioritising the party's core 103 constituencies," Goswami added.

On Friday, Santhosh attended an all-day meeting with the newly appointed coordinators and in-charges of each assembly constituency.

Saikia, state in-charge Harish Dwivedi, Rabindra Raju, and other senior office bearers were also present. They held constituency-wise discussions on preparations and programmes for the upcoming elections.

Attending the concluding session of the meeting of the newly appointed coordinators and in-charges of all 126 assembly constituencies, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma discussed strategies for disseminating government initiatives and achievements among the public through party workers.

The Assam Chief Minister stated that in the coming days, the government will take stricter measures to curb issues "such as polygamy, love jihad, and land jihad".

He also said that strict action will be taken against illegal encroachers occupying "government land, forest land, PGR/VGR land, tribal belts, and Sattralands".

IMPHAL

Following a clash between the Manipur Police, IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and people under the aegis of COCOMI (Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity) who were attempting to boycott the Sangai Festival, police said that the law-and-order situation in the state is now "normal."

According to a press note issued by the Manipur Police on Friday, adequate security measures have been taken to ensure the successful and smooth conduct of the event.

During the last 24 hours, the overall law-and-order situation in the state was normal. The state-level Sangai festival, 2025 officially commenced today at the Bhagyachandra Open Air Theatre, Imphal, with the Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, inaugurating the 10-day celebration, the press note said.

Senior officials of the government, including the Chief Secretary and the DGP, and other elected leaders attended the opening ceremony too, which was marked by cultural performances highlighting the state's rich cultural heritage. Further, Manipur Police appeal to the public for cooperation in carrying out their duties.

The clash broke out as the Internally Displaced Persons demanded their rehabilitation amid the ongoing humanitarian

BIG PUSH FOR NORTHEAST CONNECTIVITY:

IWAI signs Rs 3,000 crore agreements for waterway and logistics expansion



NEW DELHI

The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) on Friday signed major agreements worth around Rs 3,000 crore to strengthen inland water transport and industrial logistics in Assam and other states of the Northeast.

The MoUs were signed during India Maritime Week 2025 and are aimed at improving cargo movement, boosting

river tourism, and enhancing passenger transport systems across the region.

The event also witnessed a review meeting chaired by Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal. Senior officials of the ministry and IWAI reviewed key projects across Assam, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, and Meghalaya, including

those being developed under Central Sector Schemes.

One of the major MoUs was signed between IWAI and Assam Petro-Chemicals Ltd. (APL) to transport Methanol and Formalin through National Waterways and the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route.

This agreement will enable industrial cargo movement from IWAI terminals at Bogibeel, Pandu, and Jogighopa to Bangladesh and Southeast Asia. For domestic movement, the cargo will also be transported through National Waterways-1 and 2.

The project is backed by Rs 400 crore in investments and is expected to help APL move its annual production of nearly 3 lakh tonnes in a cost-effective and eco-friendly manner.

For this initiative, IWAI will provide technical support, navigation facilities, firefighting systems, bunkering services, and access to terminals. APL will manage vessel operations and required clearances. The deal also includes the development of 10 tanker barges to sup-

port smooth cargo transport.

IWAI also signed a MoU with the Government of Assam to build an Urban Water Transport (UWT) system, also known as a Water Metro, in Guwahati, Tezpur, and Dibrugarh.

This system will integrate ferries and electric hybrid passenger boats with existing roads, railways, and bus networks to make water travel safe and

seamless. The cost of this project is estimated at around Rs 1,000 crore, excluding land, and a feasibility report is being prepared by Kochi Metro Rail Ltd.

Speaking at the event, Sarbananda Sonowal said the agreements will help fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of transforming the Northeast into a hub of inland water connectivity and industrial growth. He added that

the government is committed to using rivers as engines of economic development.

Another notable agreement worth Rs 500 crore was signed with Heritage River Journeys Pvt. Ltd. to expand cruise tourism in Assam. This will help develop new cruise vessels and make river tourism more attractive along the Brahmaputra and other waterways.



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ZERO TOLERANCE FOR TERRORISM

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting in Moscow has once again placed the global fight against terrorism at the forefront of international discourse. External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar's categorical assertion that the world must display "zero tolerance" toward terrorism without justification, without selective blindness, and without whitewashing captures a truth that the international community can no longer afford to ignore. Although the SCO was founded to counter the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism, the response of member states over the years has often lacked the collective will necessary for meaningful action. India, having faced the gravest consequences of terrorism for more than four decades, continues to urge the grouping to confront this menace with honesty, consistency, and unity. No SCO member is untouched by terrorism. From Central Asia to China, extremist networks and cross-border structures have undermined security, stability, and economic progress. Yet, the political will to act in unison remains diluted by geopolitical calculations. Terrorism, however, cannot be compartmentalised. It does not discriminate between regions, religions, or regimes. It is the most heinous crime against humanity, and geopolitical convenience cannot be its shield.

India's perspective on terrorism is shaped by lived experience. Since the late 1980s, India has endured an unending chain of terror attacks targeting legislatures, security installations, diplomatic missions, religious sites, and civilians. From the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and Parliament attacks in 2001 to Mumbai, Pathankot, Uri, Pulwama, Pahalgam and numerous strikes in Jammu and Kashmir, the list is painfully long. While Ajmal Kasab, the Pakistani terrorist involved in the Mumbai attack, was brought to justice, the masterminds behind nearly every major attack continue to roam free, shielded by Pakistan's deep state. Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism is no longer a matter of allegation but open admission. Its own Science and Technology Minister, Fawad Chaudhary, acknowledged Islamabad's role in the Pulwama attack on the floor of the National Assembly. Despite dossiers, diplomatic outreach, and global pressure, Pakistan has persisted in using terrorism as an instrument of state policy. With a military establishment, political apparatus, and intelligence networks deeply intertwined with terror outfits such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizbul Mujahideen, and others, Pakistan has consistently undermined regional peace.

However, the India of today is not the India of the 1990s or early 2000s. With each terror incident, New Delhi has raised the cost of Pakistan's adventurism. Surgical strikes, the Balakot airstrike, and now the full-fledged Operation Sindoor have demonstrated a decisive shift in India's counter-terror posture. India has made it abundantly clear—terrorism will be met with firm, proportional, and sovereign responses. EAM Jaishankar's declaration at the SCO that India has the right to defend its people and will exercise it has reaffirmed this national resolve. But India's message is not merely about defending its own borders. It is a call for global partnership rooted in shared security. Terrorism erodes economies, destabilises societies, and disrupts development. SCO nations, many of which seek accelerated economic growth, cannot afford the drain caused by extremism and cross-border violence. Peace and prosperity are inseparable; one cannot exist without the other.

Yet, divisions persist. China's selective approach to terrorism—particularly its diplomatic shield to Pakistan-based groups at the UN—remains a stumbling block. While Beijing joined the consensus at Tianjin and Moscow to condemn terrorism "in all forms", meaningful progress demands consistency, not episodic alignment. SCO cannot fulfil its potential as a counterweight to Western strategic dominance if internal contradictions weaken its moral authority and strategic coherence. For SCO to truly transform into a platform of trust and cooperation, its member states must walk the talk. This requires abandoning geopolitical hedging, acknowledging hard truths, and ensuring accountability. A united SCO stance will not only enhance regional security but also unlock immense economic and cultural potential through trade diversification, infrastructure cooperation, people-to-people ties, and innovation networks.

The world does not need another wake-up call; the alarms have been sounding for decades. The time for collective resolve is now. Only then can the SCO—and the world—hope to secure a future grounded in peace, stability, and mutual prosperity.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"But remember, this power of the people on top depends on the obedience of the people below. When people stop obeying, they have no power."

- Howard Zinn

NEW INDIA-US BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER



SHASHI THAROOR

In a world increasingly defined by fragmentation and flux, the relationship between India and the US remains one of the few partnerships with the potential to shape a more stable, democratic, and innovative global order. The recent confirmation of a new US ambassador to India—a close aide of Donald Trump, albeit with no prior diplomatic or India experience, Sergio Gor—signals Washington's intent to reinvest ties with New Delhi at a time when both countries face shared challenges and converging opportunities.

President Trump's recent remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling him "a strong leader and a great friend", mark a notable shift in tone from earlier weeks of undiplomatic statements and social media posts. While recent frictions over tariffs and trade imbalances have strained the relationship, the current moment appears to offer a chance to reset. Encouraging signs point to the possibility of a new bilateral trade deal, which could unlock growth, investment, and innovation across sectors ranging from pharmaceuticals and semiconductors to clean energy and artificial intelligence.

But to seize this moment, both sides must confront and clarify the geopolitical realities that shape their choices. At one time, both Washington and New Delhi saw the spectre of Chinese assertiveness looming large—from the Himalayas to South China Sea, from cyber intrusions to supply chain dependencies—and made common cause in recognising the need to constrain it. But after the recent 'G2 Summit' in Busan, there is renewed confusion about whether the US still sees China as a strategic competitor and global rival, or whether we are witnessing the dawning of a co-operative condominium arrangement between the two great powers of our times.

For India, the challenge is existential: we must defend our sovereignty while accelerating our development. Washington must decide whether it is strategic—balancing deterrence with diplomacy, and maintaining influence

in a region where its primacy is no longer assured—or as Trump's recent silence on the Quad suggests, the Indo-Pacific is no longer a priority.

Seen from New Delhi, a deeper US-India partnership is not merely desirable; it is imperative. Yet, it cannot be built on sentiment alone. It must be anchored in structural reforms, mutual strategic clarity, and a shared vision for the 21st century.

First, both countries must remove the impediments that have long hampered economic cooperation. The legacy of US tariff policy—particularly the withdrawal of India's benefits under the generalised system of preferences during the first Trump administration, and the punitive 50 percent tariffs this year that have cost jobs in India and done real damage to our exporters—leaving deep wounds that could turn into lasting scars.

While some of these measures were aimed at protecting American industry, they also signalled a retreat from the strategic vision of the last quarter-century. A renewed push to reduce tariffs, eliminate regulatory barriers, harmonise standards, and facilitate cross-border investment would send a powerful message: that economic alignment is a pillar of strategic trust.

Second, India must continue its path of economic reform—not just to attract foreign capital, but to ensure policy certainty and transparency. Investors, both domestic and foreign, seek stability in taxation, clarity in digital regulation, and predictability in dispute resolution. In Trump's America, where executive volatility has become a feature of governance, India's steadiness can be an asset—but only if it is matched by reformist ambition.

Third, the movement of people must be restored as a cornerstone of bilateral ties. The Indian diaspora in the US—now over 5-million-strong—has been a bridge of talent, entrepreneurship, and cultural diplomacy. Yet recent restrictions on work permits, H-1B visas, and green card processing have frayed that bridge. Liberalising skilled migration, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, would not only benefit both economies but also reinforce the human dimen-

sion of the partnership.

Fourth, both countries must develop mutual clarity on the China challenge. While India faces direct military pressure along its borders, the US grapples with economic and technological competition. A shared framework, distinguishing between necessary engagement and strategic deterrence, could help both sides avoid misalignment. Joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and coordinated diplomacy in forums like the Quad must be deepened.

Finally, and most crucially, the two countries must embrace innovation and cooperation in artificial intelligence as a no-brainer for strategic convergence in the second quarter of the 21st century. AI is not just a tool, it is the terrain on which future power will be contested. From healthcare diagnostics to battlefield autonomy, language models to climate forecasting, AI will shape the contours of governance, security, and society. India's 1.4 billion people represent the globe's largest source of trained brainpower and data. With 40 percent of those working on AI in Silicon Valley being of Indian origin, it's time for the US to embrace India's potential in AI.

With its vast data sets, engineering talent, and democratic ethos, India offers a unique counterpoint to China's authoritarian AI model. The US, with its research universities, venture capital ecosystem, and regulatory experience, brings complementary strengths. Together, they can build an AI alliance that is ethical, inclusive, and globally competitive. Joint research centres, interoperable standards, and shared protocols for AI safety could form the backbone of this collaboration.

Of course, such ambition requires political will. It demands that both governments look beyond short-term irritants and electoral cycles. It requires the recognition that in an era of multi-polarity, bilateralism must be bold, not bureaucratic. The appointment of Ambassador Gor, the warmth of Trump's recent statements, and the tentative progress on trade all suggest that the window is open. But windows do not stay open forever. The world is watching—whether the world's largest democracy and its most powerful one

can move from rhetoric to results.

In the end, the US-India relationship is not just about tariffs or visas. It is about the kind of world we want to build in the 21st century: open or closed, cooperative or coercive, innovative or insular. If Delhi and Washington can align their strengths, respect their differences, and invest in their shared future, they may yet prove that democracy and development can be strategically complementary and mutually reinforcing. The time to act is now.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

It was a gladdening and moving experience for me to witness a performance of the South African Girmitya song 'Ganga Maiya' in Johannesburg. Another special part of this performance was the rendition in Tamil! This song carries with it hope and unbroken spirit of those who came here many years ago. They faced numerous hardships on the way but that did not deter them. They kept India alive in their hearts through songs and prayers. Thus, it is commendable to see this cultural connect kept alive.
~ Narendra Modi, PM India



The Bangladesh dilemma beyond l'affaire Hasina

PINAK RANJAN CHAKRAVARTY

It would be puerile to believe that the death sentence passed by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) on Sheikh Hasina was fair. The trial was riddled with faults on various judicial counts.

Hasina was found guilty of mass murder by the ICT, which itself was set by the Hasina government in 2009 to try those accused of war crimes during the 1971 War of Liberation. A majority of the war criminals were from the Jamaate-Islami (JI), the largest pro-Pakistan organisation that had collaborated with the Pakistani Army in committing genocide. Some JI leaders were hanged, and others jailed for life after conviction. The proceedings against Hasina were vitiated from the very beginning after Muhammad Yunus, a sworn enemy of Hasina nursing political ambitions, was foisted on Dhaka as the head of an interim government (IG). This interim arrangement is widely considered unconstitutional when parliament and the Constitution are both suspended. The JI and other Islamist outfits, all deeply connected to Pakistan, are now the backbone of the IG and are calling the shots. The ICT's mandate was changed by adopting unconstitutional methods that were rubber-stamped by the partisan judiciary. The chief prosecutor in Hasina's case is a JI lawyer who had defended the war criminals. Hasina was not permitted to choose her defence team. All these factors have raised serious questions about the validity of the judgement.

The IG's ire against Hasina and the Awami League (AL) is well known. They are weaponising

a compromised judiciary to attack opponents while the media remains bludgeoned into submission. Judges have been forced out and new ones affiliated to JI appointed en masse. The IG has systematically conducted a campaign of revenge, allowing mobs to kill Awami workers and destroy their properties. Thousands have lost their lives and many have fled the country. Scores of journalists and civil society activists have been jailed with false murder charges and been denied bail. Minority communities have also been attacked all over the country, with Yunus dismissing it as "political violence" or Indian propaganda. Such violence has caused trans-border tremors in India.

Hasina's opponents, from Yunus downwards, are elated at the verdict and hail that she has been held accountable for her crimes. Ironically, Yunus himself dodged accountability in legal cases in which he was accused of tax evasion and money laundering by promptly annulling these cases when he took over as head of the IG. The recent visit by Bangladesh's National Security Advisor for a multilateral meeting in Delhi came on the heels of the Hasina verdict. It is likely that the demand for handing over Hasina would have been made. Will India comply and allow Hasina to be taken to the gallows? It seems very far-fetched that India will comply after an unfair trial with a pre-arranged verdict. The bilateral extradition treaty between the neighbouring countries explicitly exempts extradition for "an offence of a political character" (Article 6).

In truth, Bangladesh was the victim of a regime-

change operation. Such operations are conducted by hegemonic powers to pursue their geopolitical interests. When the leader of a country refuses to accept certain demands, they are overthrown by the traditional gunboat diplomacy and direct operations by intelligence agencies that attempt to oust the incumbent leader, as we are witnessing against Venezuela.

The other option is the more subtle one—influence operations via non-governmental organisations and/or social media platforms to exploit an agitation on domestic issues. Bangladesh was a victim of this kind of operation. American NGOs like the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute are well known for such activities under the radar of "promoting democracy" and "human rights". They are known to work in tandem with the American deep state. On a visit to the US, Yunus acknowledged that the regime change was "meticulously" planned.

Hasina's death sentence portends further political volatility in Bangladesh unless the IG moves quickly to conduct a free, fair, and inclusive election. Continued doubts about the elections scheduled in February 2026 are testing public patience. The current ban on the Awami League is another factor in rising uncertainty about the political process. The League is Bangladesh's largest grassroots party and cannot be wished away. Hasina may not be able to participate in elections, but her party should be allowed, to ensure inclusivity and fair representation.

The Hasina factor will remain an irritant in bilateral ties. The unpredictability of Bangladesh's

future trajectory is an overhang that will define India's strategic options. India is currently exercising strategic patience. Trade, energy and supply of essential commodities continue unhindered.

India will endeavour to restore the status quo in bilateral ties leaving the Hasina episode aside. This effort will be facilitated if an elected government is in place in Dhaka through a free, fair and inclusive election next year. How to deal with political flux, rise of radical religious and anti-India groups in the political space, who seek to reorient Bangladesh ideologically, will pose a strategic dilemma.

Bangladesh's geography constricts the Siliguri Corridor or 'Chicken's Neck', which connects the northeastern states of India to the rest of the country. Hence, this remains a strategic concern if Bangladesh provides opportunities to powers hostile to India. For instance, if Bangladesh provides military facilities to China along the Bay of Bengal, it will pose a dilemma and trigger options to counter these moves.

Periodic challenges to India's Neighbourhood First policy are bound to arise owing to domestic political upheavals and security threats that may spill over into India. The IG in Dhaka has increasingly aligned with Islamabad. This will be watched closely because of the potential of Pakistan organising terrorist attacks from Bangladesh. Frequent visits by Pakistani generals, and by representatives of internationally designated terrorist organisations Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, have been reported.

Form 8 Could Let External Voters Sway 2026 Assam Elections, SC Must Step In: Akhil Gogoi



JORHAT
Rajior Dal chief and Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi

on Friday sounded a strong alarm over alleged loopholes in the voter list correction system under Form 8, warning that the provision could al-

low large numbers of non-residents to be added to Assam's electoral rolls ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections. Addressing journalists at the Jorhat Press Club, Gogoi claimed that the current mechanism enables individuals registered as voters in other states to apply for inclusion in Assam's rolls, creating the potential to tilt results in at least 50 constituencies.

"If even five lakh external voters are added from outside Assam, the power to form the government may no longer remain with the people of Assam. The election outcome could be altered through a system that lacks proper verification," he alleged.

"A Loophole Open to Manipulation"
Gogoi pointed to the two options available in Form 8: the applicant may either furnish an Aadhaar number or simply declare that they do not possess one. The second option, he said, opens the door to large-scale misuse.

"There is no mechanism to verify whether a person actually does not have an Aadhaar card. Someone from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh can tick that option and apply for inclusion in Assam's voter list. This creates space for

manipulation," he warned.

According to Gogoi, the loophole could even enable individuals to vote multiple times by successively adding and deleting their names from electoral rolls in different states.

"A person can vote in UP, transfer their name to Bihar and vote there, then move to Assam just before nominations and vote again - before returning to their home state and re-enrolling. This is not electoral reform but an organised vote theft," he asserted.

Charges Against Government Machinery
The Rajior Dal leader accused the ruling establishment of enabling such practices, claiming that administrative machinery could be misused to help non-residents secure voting rights in Assam.

"If this system continues, the question will no longer be who the people of Assam want in power, but who is being imported to decide Assam's future," he said, calling the alleged situation a direct threat to democracy.

He added that while earlier electoral discrepancies dealt largely with the presence of deceased persons on voter rolls, the current concern was

far more damaging.

"Earlier, it was about dead voters. Now it is about live voters being transported across states to influence results. Only 10,000 new voters across 50 constituencies can change the government. This is extremely dangerous for Assam's democracy," Gogoi said.

Call for Supreme Court Intervention
Describing the issue as a "battle for the survival of the Assamese nation," Gogoi urged opposition parties and civil society organisations to unite and challenge the process before the Supreme Court.

"To correct this unconstitutional process, we must seek protection from the Supreme Court and create strong public opinion," he said.

Gogoi demanded an immediate review of the Form 8 provisions and stricter verification protocols to ensure that only genuine residents of Assam are included in the voter list.

"The Election Commission must ensure that voter rolls are not turned into tools for political engineering. If this process is not stopped, the credibility of the 2026 elections will be seriously compromised," he cautioned.

Nephew kills retired police officer uncle, then dies by suicide

IMPHAL

A 25-year-old man allegedly shot his father's younger brother (paternal uncle) to death and then killed himself in Singjamei Mayengbam Leikai, about 1 km from the Singjamei police station in Manipur's Imphal West district on Friday noon, officials said.

The deceased has been identified as Akoijam Santikumar, a retired Additional Superintendent of Police of the Manipur government.

The incident took place at the residence of the retired officer, located in Mayengbam Leikai near the NRL Oil Pump on National Highway 102, around 12:30 pm on Friday.

The accused, Akoijam Kishan, 25, was found in a pool of blood with a gun apparently used in the crime.

His lifeless body was discovered inside his house, which is adjacent to the residence of the deceased.

The deceased suffered three bullet injuries to his head and chest. Police suspect the incident may have occurred over a family dispute.

The weapon used in the crime has been recovered.

Meanwhile, police said a case has been registered in connection with the incident, and legal proceedings are underway.

Tear Gas Fired as IDPs Attempt to Return to Churachandpur, Tension Flares at Phugakchao Ikhai

BISHNUPUR

Tension flared at Phugakchao Ikhai in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Thursday after a large group of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Churachandpur, Torbung Bangla and several abandoned villages attempted to march back to their native homes. Security forces halted their movement and fired tear gas shells when the situation turned volatile.

The displaced families, who had fled their homes during the ethnic violence more than two years ago, gathered in significant numbers demanding safe passage to their original settlements along the Bishnupur-Churachandpur border. Security personnel stopped the group at Phugakchao Ikhai - the last point up to which Meiteis are permitted to move - prompting tension and heated exchanges. Tear gas was used after the marchers insisted on proceeding despite repeated warnings.

One protester said the IDPs had decided to march after observing that the President's Rule administration was going ahead with the Sangai Festival, projecting a narrative of normalcy.

"If Manipur is stable enough to host such a big festival, why can't we return to our homes? True normalcy will be when displaced people can go back," he said, adding that protests will continue unless the government provides escorted resettlement.

A similar protest earlier in the day in Imphal East added to the unrest. IDPs attempting to march towards the Sangai Festival venue at Hapta Kangjeibung were stopped at Khurai Lamlong, where a brief scuffle ensued. Tear gas was reportedly used there as well to disperse the crowd.

Security forces remain deployed in the affected areas, and further demonstrations are anticipated as displaced families continue to press for their return.

ASF-Infected Pigs Seized at Assam-Bengal Border; Illegal Syndicate Defies Statewide Ban

KOKRAJHAR

In a major biosecurity breach, officials intercepted two trucks carrying pigs infected with African Swine Fever (ASF) at the Srirampur Gate along the Assam-Bengal border, exposing the continued operation of an illegal livestock supply network despite a statewide ban on pig transportation from outside Assam.

The seizure was made during a routine inspection by members of the Assam Pig Farmers' Association from Kokrajhar and Chirang. Veterinary tests later confirmed that the pigs, transported from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, had tested positive for ASF - a highly contagious viral disease that has wiped out thousands of pigs across several states.

According to existing gov-



ernment protocol, ASF-positive consignments must either be returned to their point of origin or culled and buried under strict biosecurity guidelines. However, pig farmers in Lower Assam and the Bodoland Territorial Region

(BTR) have urged authorities not to allow burial anywhere in the region, warning that improper disposal could trigger fresh outbreaks in areas that have so far remained free of the disease.

The seized vehicles - HR 68C 0189 from Haryana and UP 19T 9510 from Uttar Pradesh - were reportedly headed toward Dimapur via Srirampur when officials detected the infection.

Local pig farmers allege that a well-organised illegal syndicate continues to smuggle pig consignments into Assam - "under the protection of influential circles," despite the state government's ban on the transportation of pigs across seven Upper Assam districts due to rapid ASF spread.

The persistent influx of infected pigs has raised alarm in Kokrajhar and Chirang, where

pig rearing is a major source of livelihood. Farmers fear that unchecked illegal trade could devastate the piggery sector across the region.

The All Assam Pig Farmers' Association has demanded:

"An immediate halt to all illegal pig entries into Assam

"Strict enforcement of the statewide transportation ban

"Transparent action against those facilitating the illegal trade

"Assurances that ASF-positive pigs will not be buried in unaffected zones of Lower Assam or BTR.

The association warned that failure to take swift corrective measures could lead to severe economic losses and the rapid spread of ASF into regions where the disease has not yet been detected.

Tipra Motha leader criticizes Tripura law and order; challenges BJP on home department

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha Party leader and Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma on Friday issued a strong critique of the state's law and order management, openly challenging the BJP to allow a Tipra Motha MLA to take charge of the home department.

He claimed that his party could restore law and order within three months if entrusted with the responsibility.

Tipra Motha, which holds ministerial positions, is a junior partner in the BJP-led coalition government in Tripura.

Debbarma made the remarks shortly after visiting his party's office, which had been vandalised by unidentified miscreants.

Expressing concern over the situation, he said the recent inci-



dents demonstrated a worrying decline in administrative control.

He clarified that he was not staking a personal claim to the post of Home Minister but emphasised that the party was prepared to assume greater responsibility "for the betterment of all."

The comments are being viewed as a direct challenge to Chief Minister Manik Saha, who currently holds the home portfolio.

The statement carried an

implied criticism that the government had been ineffective in preventing political violence in recent days.

Debbarma also accused the police of failing to act when the Tipra Motha office was attacked. He said he had been informed that, despite being present at the spot, police personnel did not attempt to stop the miscreants.

He alleged that workers affiliated with other political parties appeared to be immune from police action, while Tipra Motha supporters were continuously targeted.

He said the sequence of events over the past few days clearly indicated that Tipra Motha did not initiate the violence and had instead been attacked first.

Addressing questions on the stability of the alliance, Debbarma

said Tipra Motha remained committed to the coalition and respected its leadership, including Pradyot Kishore Debbarma.

However, he said respecting the alliance did not mean staying silent in the face of repeated provocations and baseless accusations.

He stated that his party was being attacked and then unfairly blamed, a situation he described as "absurd and illogical." He added that a time would come when the party would place all facts before the public.

Debbarma was accompanied during the inspection by MLAs Biswajit Kalai and Swapna Debbarma.

Chief Minister Manik Saha also visited Khumulung earlier in the day, where tension had reportedly persisted for the past few days.

Arunachal CM Assures APFRA Rules Will Protect All Communities, Not Target Any Religion



ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday reaffirmed that the rules being framed under the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (APFRA) will be applied uniformly and will not single out any religious group. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the 41st Nyishi Elite Society (NES) Conference at Koloriang, Khandu said the legislation is intended solely to safeguard the state's vulnerable Indigenous communities.

Acknowledging that the six-month deadline set by the High Court for framing the rules has already lapsed, the Chief Minister said the committee responsible for drafting the provisions is actively working to complete the process. "The Act will apply equally to all religions and will not affect or target any particular community," he said. "Its

purpose is to protect the Indigenous population of Arunachal Pradesh."

Addressing concerns over a recent order halting the construction of a mosque near the Naharlagun Hellpad, Khandu said there was "nothing to worry" about reports of alleged influx of Bangladeshi Muslims into the state.

He said the Home Department is maintaining strict vigilance, with intensified Inner Line Permit (ILP) checks underway across all 27 districts to curb illegal entry.

At the NES conference, the Chief Minister praised the Nyishi community-Arunachal's largest tribe for their contributions to peace, development and social progress. He commended the Nyishi Elite Society for its efforts in organising the event and electing a new executive committee, noting that such initiatives strengthen community-led reforms and promote socio-economic growth.

"Laziness Can Destroy Ambitions": Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika Urges Digboi Students to Pursue Discipline and Hard Work

DIGBOI

Assam Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika on Friday delivered a motivational address to students of RD Senior Secondary School in Digboi, stressing that discipline, determination, and consistent hard work are essential ingredients for success.

Speaking during an interaction programme on the school campus, Hazarika reminded students that India's growing stature on the global stage is fuelled by its immense talent pool, noting that many leading CEOs in the United States and elsewhere are Indians. "This shows that our country has no shortage of potential," he said, adding that success is shaped as much by perseverance as by intelligence.

Sharing a personal anecdote, the Minister said a defining incident from his student days had fuelled his determination. "Had I not been driven by strong determination following an unforgettable incident in my student life, I would not



have become a Minister today," he told the gathering. "No matter how intelligent one is, laziness can destroy ambitions."

In a departure from political rhetoric, Hazarika kept his address strictly motivational, focusing on student welfare rather than partisan themes.

The Minister was accompanied by Sadiya MLA Bolin Chetia, Digboi MLA Suren Phukan, senior BJP leaders, and several local educationists. He commended the RD School management and faculty for maintaining high academic standards

and highlighted the rapid expansion of higher education institutions across Assam, which he said has opened new avenues for young aspirants.

Discussing the state's development trajectory, Hazarika said industrial and infrastructure growth has led to increasing reverse migration, with more youth opting to stay and work in Assam. He cited Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's work ethic as an example for students: "Our Chief Minister sleeps only four hours a day because of his commitment

to the people. Students should also study with seriousness and dedication."

Referring to insights shared by Tinsukia Superintendent of Police Mayank Kumar, Hazarika said students from Bihar often excel in competitive exams due to their exceptional commitment and hard work. "This is why Bihar produces some of the highest numbers of IAS and IPS officers," he noted, underscoring that strong marks alone are insufficient without sustained effort.

During the programme, RD Senior Secondary School Director Simi Dhanowar spoke about the institution's decades-long legacy of academic excellence, while RD English Academy Principal Dibya Jyoti Dey highlighted the school's contribution to local employment and Digboi's economic growth.

Hazarika also felicitated Digboi CO-District Superintendent of Police Himangshu Gohain and Inspector Dibya Jyoti Dutta, who were recently honoured with the Ministry of Home Affairs' Best Police Station Award.

The Minister concluded his visit by paying floral tributes to singer Zubeen Garg and former Congress veteran Rameswar Dhanowar, the founding chairman of the RD Sports and Educational Trust.

Quest!

Scientists have accidentally found a new method to convert carbon dioxide to ethanol, which could help in the fight against climate change.

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PM Modi arrives in South Africa to discuss key global issues at G20 summit amid US boycott

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Johannesburg on Friday to a vibrant cultural welcome featuring folk performances representing India's diversity. Rhythms of a United India, a programme presented by members of the Indian community, showcased traditional dances from 11 Indian states, setting a colourful tone for the PM's arrival.

Soon after his arrival, Modi held a bilateral meeting with his Australian counterpart, where the two leaders discussed regional cooperation and ongoing strategic initiatives.

At the hotel, Modi was greeted by a group of children who recited a prayer, followed by performances from local artists highlighting cultural traditions from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The event reflected the diaspora's continued efforts to preserve cultural ties with India.

Modi expressed appreciation for the reception, saying he

was "deeply touched by the warm welcome from the Indian community in Johannesburg," noting that the affection symbolised the "enduring bond between India and South Africa," a relationship grounded in historical links and shared values.

Ahead of his departure for the G20 Summit, Modi said the gathering would provide an important platform to discuss key global issues. "The Summit will be an opportunity to discuss key global issues. The theme of this year's G20 has been 'Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability', by which South Africa has carried forward the outcomes from the previous Summits held in New Delhi, India and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I will present India's perspective at the Summit in line with our vision of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' and 'One Earth, One Family and One Future,'" Modi said.

The summit opened amid diplomatic tensions following the Trump administration's clarification that the United States was not ending its boycott of the Johannesburg meeting. South Africa had earlier hoped that

Washington would rejoin discussions, a claim strongly refuted by the White House. "The United States is not participating in official talks at the G20 in South Africa," Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said. A White House official also criticised South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, cautioning him against "running his mouth" about the U.S. and President Donald Trump.

Earlier, Washington had sent a diplomatic note to the South African government confirming its participation in Sunday's G20 handover ceremony, which will be led by U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Marc Dillard and an eight-member delegation, diplomatic sources said. The United States is the next host of the summit.

South Africa responded by stating it would not hand over the G20 presidency to what it described as a "junior" American official at the close of the summit. Despite the absence of the US participation, diplomatic sources confirmed that G20 envoys had reached a draft leaders' declaration ahead of the weekend deliberations.

Positive changes made to history textbooks, Akbar and Tipu no longer called 'great': RSS leader

NAGPUR

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader Sunil Ambekar has said that many positive changes have been introduced in history textbooks, and epithet 'the great' is no longer used to describe Mughal emperor Akbar or Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan.

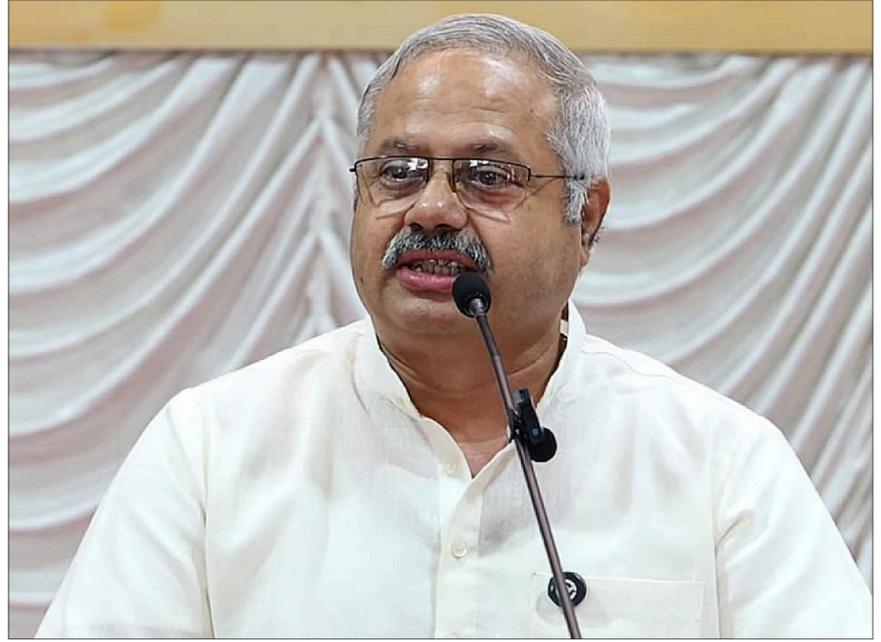
Although the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has brought these changes, "nobody has been removed" from these textbooks as the new generation should know their cruel deeds.

Ambekar addressed a gathering at the Orange City Literature festival organised by SGR Knowledge Foundation here on Friday.

"India has vast and rich resources of ancient knowledge, which if we learn and understand can help us a lot in our lives. This rich knowledge can be given to the world as well, but for that we also need to focus on that knowledge," the Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh of the RSS said.

"Now, history textbooks are changing and I am very happy that NCERT took a very good initiative and made changes in the books of 11 classes out of the textbooks of 15 classes. The changes in the books of Classes 9, 10 and 12 will be introduced next year," he said.

"I could see that many good changes have been brought in the history books, and more could be done in the future. But now, they (history textbooks) do not have 'Akbar the Great' nor do they have 'Tipu Sultan the Great'. Many changes have been brought, although nobody has been removed from these books as the new generation should know their cruel deeds and should also know because of whom we were victimised and from whom we should be free," he said.



Some people say this should not be said but this cannot happen and it should be told.

Ambekar also talked about Nalanda University and said that people think that only Ved Puran, Ramayana and Mahabharata were taught there.

"But if you go through the syllabus of Nalanda University, you will get to know what was taught there. It is a very old university," he said.

Along with literature, 76 types of skill-based courses were also taught in Nalanda University, which were taught to all and these skills included farming, urban planning, make-up, secret agent, political governance, mechanisation and several others, Ambekar said.

According to the RSS leader, India is prospering and we should think about what our future society should be like.

People across the world kept compromising on their civilization and culture in the process of development, and surrendered to the markets and new technologies. Although it brought facilities, it came at the cost of personal and family life, our values and relations, he added.

Talking about Ram temple in Ayodhya, he said some people think why RSS put all its strength for the construction of this temple.

"I would say it was not just about building the temple... It was built, but we should

think about our relation with Lord Ram along with the temple. What is our relationship with the culture of Lord Ram, what is the meaning of the culture of Ram and what relationship does it have with the culture of our country and our future life. It was a campaign to make people understand all this and it was done very nicely and I think now the youth are keeping self respect about the dharma," he said.

Ambekar praised the country's youth, saying the new generation is very able and has all the exposure.

They are very patriotic and patriotism is a cool thing for them, he said.

INTERNATIONAL

Africa's first G20 summit opens with an ambitious agenda and tries to move on from Trump's boycott



JOHANNESBURG

The first Group of 20 summit to be held in Africa opens on Saturday with an ambitious agenda to make progress on solving some of the long-standing problems that have afflicted the world's poorest nations.

Leaders and top government officials from the richest and leading emerging economies will come together at an exhibition center near the famous Soweto township in South Africa — once home to Nelson Mandela — to try and find some consensus on the priorities set out by the host country.

They include more help for poor countries to recover from climate-related disasters, reduce their foreign debt burdens, transition to green energy sources and harness their own critical mineral wealth — all in an attempt to counter wide-

ening global inequality.

"We'll see," United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said on if the G20 could prioritize developing world countries and make meaningful reforms. "But I think South Africa has done its part in putting those things clearly upon the table."

The two-day summit will take place without the world's biggest economy after United States President Donald Trump ordered a U.S. boycott of the summit over his claims that South Africa is pursuing racist anti-white policies and persecuting its Afrikaner white minority.

A months-long diplomatic rift between the U.S. and South Africa deepened in the buildup, but while Trump's boycott dominated the pre-talks talk in Johannesburg and threatened to undercut the agenda, some of the leaders were

eager to move on.

"I do regret it," French President Emmanuel Macron said of Trump's absence, "but it should not block us. Our duty is to be present, engage and work all together because we have so many challenges."

The G20 is actually a group of 21 members that includes 19 nations, the European Union and the African Union.

The bloc was formed in 1999 as a bridge between rich and poor nations to confront global financial crises. While it often operates in the shadow of the Group of Seven richest democracies, G20 members together represent around 85% of the world's economy, 75% of international trade and more than half the global population.

But it works on consensus rather than any binding resolutions, and that is often hard to

come by with the different interests of members like the U.S., Russia, China, India, Japan, the Western European nations France, Germany and the U.K., and others like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

Guterres cautioned that rich nations have often failed to make the concessions required to strike effective climate or global financial reform agreements.

G20 summits traditionally end with a leaders' declaration — which details any broad agreement reached by the members — but even that was proving hard to come by in Johannesburg.

South Africa said the U.S. was exerting pressure on it not to issue any leaders' declaration in the absence of the U.S. and instead tone down the final document to a unilateral statement from the host country.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa responded to that by saying "we will not be bullied" and has promised a declaration from all members present at the close of the summit on Sunday.

Even so, the direction of the G20 bloc is likely to change sharply given the U.S. takes over the rotating presidency from South Africa at the end of this summit and the Trump administration has derided the focus on climate change and inequality.

The only role the U.S. will play at this summit, the White House said, will be when a representative from the United States Embassy in South Africa attends the formal handover ceremony at the end to accept the G20 presidency.

South Africa said it's an insult for Ramaphosa to hand over to what it considers to be a junior diplomatic official.

India to extend airspace restrictions for Pakistan aircraft till December 24



NEW DELHI

The Indian government plans to extend the airspace closure for Pakistan by one more month, said Civil Aviation Ministry sources. The reciprocal gesture is in light of Pakistan issuing a fresh NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) on Thursday extending the closure of its airspace for Indian aircraft by one more month.

This will mark the eight consecutive month that the two countries will be closing their airspace for each other.

NOTAM is a crucial notice issued to pilots by regulating authorities. The Pakistan Aviation Authority has announced

the extension of its closure until December 24 (5.29 am). The present ban period is on until the morning of November 24.

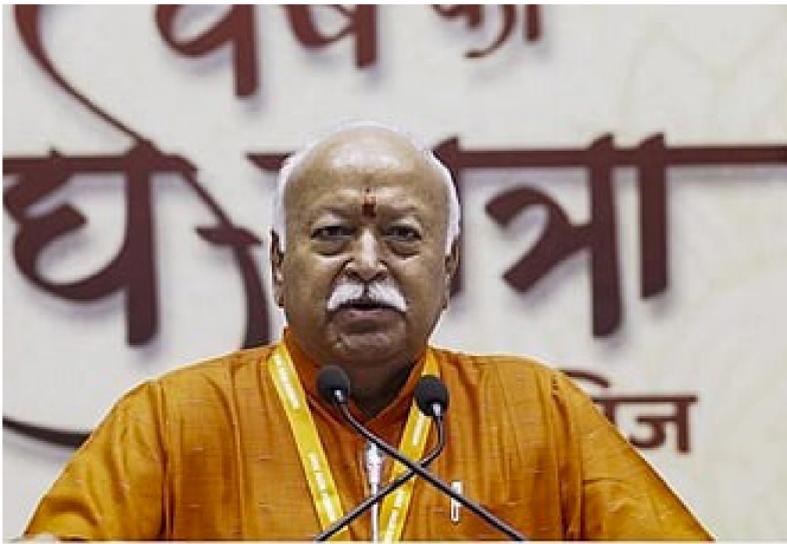
A source said, "We have taken the decision to continue with the closure of our airspace for Pakistan. The official order will be issued in a day or two. Pakistan has already taken the decision. Of course, we will also be reciprocating in a similar fashion."

The NOTAM would state that Indian airspace is not available for aircraft registered in Pakistan or that operated, owned, or leased by Pakistani airlines or operators, including military aircraft.

Pakistan had closed its airspace to India by one month on April 24, two days after the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed. India responded in kind. Since then, both countries have extended the closure through monthly NOTAMs.

Airlines in both countries are reeling under severe losses due to the mutual ban which forces them to take a circuitous route shooting up their fuel charges. Air India has requested the Indian government to urge China to permit it to use a portion of its sensitive airspace in order to reduce its losses to some extent.

“Everyone Who Loves Bharat Is a Hindu”: Mohan Bhagwat Concludes RSS Centenary Visit to Assam



As the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) enters the hundredth year of its organisational journey, Sarsanghchalak Dr Mohan Bhagwat's two-day tour of Assam concluded on Wednesday with a message that blended civilizational assertion, cultural reassurance, and a renewed call for social cohesion. Delivered at a series of engagements with scholars, intellectuals, youth groups, and civil society leaders, his remarks reflected the organisation's evolving vision for the Northeast and its role in shaping India's national identity.

During an interactive session on Tuesday, attended by writers, academics, editors, and entrepreneurs, Dr Bhagwat articulated what he described as the Sangh's civilizational worldview. Central to his address was the assertion that the term “Hindu” should be understood not as a narrow religious marker but as a civilizational identity rooted in a shared cultural consciousness spanning millennia.

“Anyone who takes pride in Bharat and loves the nation is a Hindu,” he said, reiterating a formulation he has frequently used in recent years. According to him, the identity is inclusive, civilizational, and expansive enough to embrace India's diversity of traditions, languages, and modes of worship. “Bharat and Hindu are synonymous,” he emphasised, arguing that India's ethos itself reflects the essence of a “Hindu Rashtra,” without the need for constitutional declarations.

RSS Philosophy and Historical Context

Explaining the ideological foundations of the RSS, Dr Bhagwat said that the organisation was never conceived as an agency of conflict or confrontation. Instead, he described its primary mission as *Vyakti Nirman*—the construction of individual character—and contributing to India's emergence as a *Vishwaguru* (global guide). He encouraged people to engage with the Sangh by visiting local *Shakhas* rather than relying on narratives shaped by external perception. “The methodology to unite Bharat amidst diversity is called the RSS,” he said, portraying the organisation as a national force for cohesion.

He also invoked historical memory, highlighting the participation of RSS volunteers in India's freedom struggle—particularly the involvement of Dr K.B. Hedgewar, the organisation's founder, in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements. Countless *Swayamsevaks*, he said, contributed to the Quit India Movement of 1942, despite contemporary political debates about the Sangh's role in that period.

Northeast as a Symbol of Unity in Diversity

Calling the Northeast a “shining example of Bharat's inherent unity expressed through cultural diversity,” Dr Bhagwat stressed that regional icons such as Lachit Borphukan and Srimanta Shankardeva hold significance beyond Assam and must be recognised as national figures. He suggested that the Northeast represents both India's cultural richness and its civilizational strength, an argument he has often employed to counter claims that the region is culturally distinct or distant from the mainstream.

At the same time, he voiced concerns about the region's demographic and cultural transformations. He referred to illegal infiltration, shifts in population patterns, and pressures on cultural identity in Assam, calling for vigilance, confidence, and a firm connection to one's land. He reiterated the RSS's long-held stance on the need for a balanced population policy, including a “three-child norm for Hindus,” and urged communities to resist “divisive religious conversions.” He further appealed for responsible use of social media,

particularly among young people, warning against misinformation and polarisation.

Five Transformations for Social Renewal

Dr Bhagwat outlined the RSS's centenary-year framework for targeted social transformation, articulated as *Panch Parivartan*, or five major areas of reform:

1. Social harmony
2. Kutumb Prabodhan (family awakening)
3. Civic discipline
4. Self-reliance
5. Environmental protection

Among these, he gave special emphasis to strengthening family institutions. He urged households to preserve stories of ancestors, cultural memory, and moral responsibility, suggesting that families are the first school of character and national consciousness.

Youth Engagement: “A Nation Rises Only When Society Rises”

On 19 November, addressing a large youth conclave in Assam, Dr Bhagwat focused his remarks on the younger generation. He cautioned them not to form opinions about

the RSS based on what he termed “motivated propaganda” or inherited biases. “Understand the Sangh by observing its actions,” he urged, inviting young people to participate in RSS activities at their own pace, interest, and capacity.

In a broader reflection on national development, he argued that the world's most advanced nations spent the initial century of their growth focusing primarily on internal social unity and strength. “Indian society must evolve similarly,” he said, asserting that only a united, disciplined, and quality-driven society can guide a nation to progress. He reiterated the principle of ‘India First’ as the backbone of national reconstruction, arguing that strengthening society is the indispensable pathway to strengthening the nation.

He also observed that the Sangh's organisational network in the Northeast—once sparse—has steadily expanded over the past decades. The RSS, he said, is increasingly integrated with the social fabric of the region, contributing to local initiatives, cultural revitalisation efforts, and youth engagement platforms.

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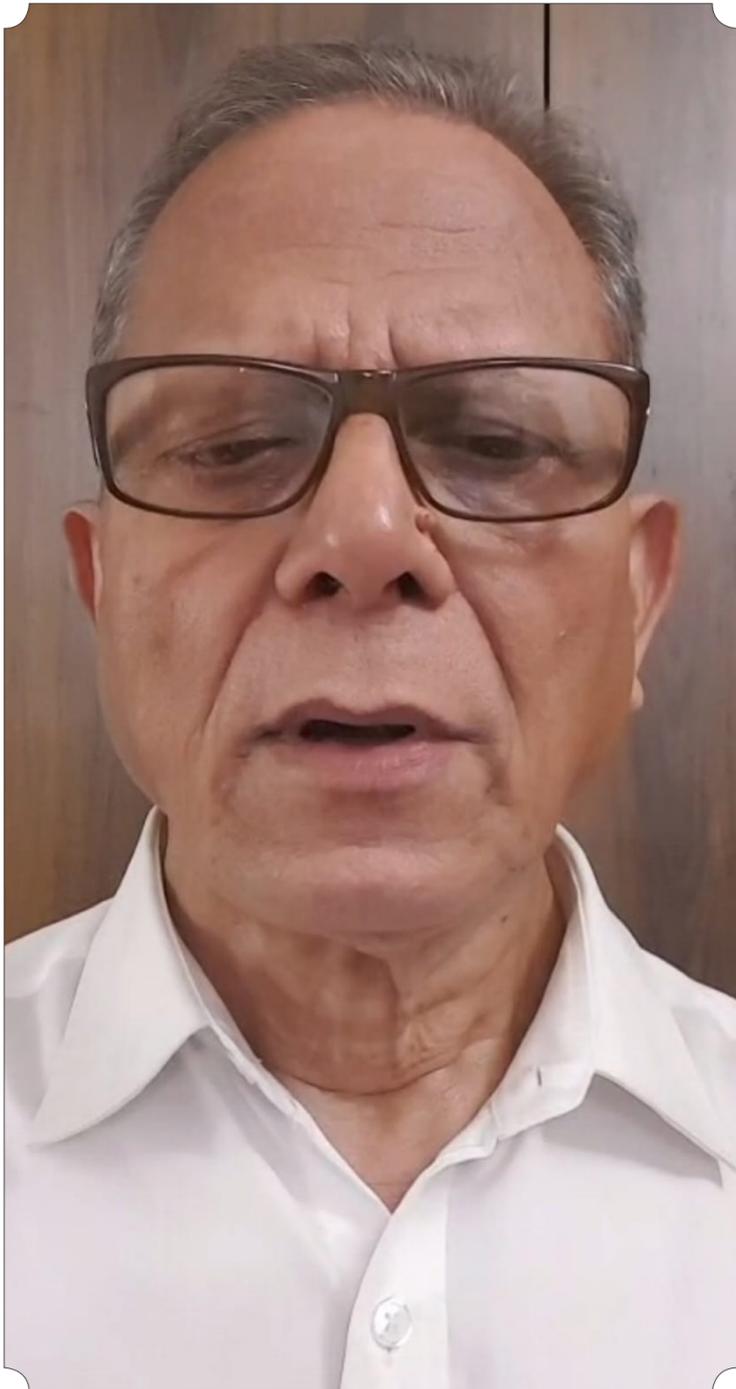
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If you're up late doing homework, listen to Hans Zimmer Pandora. It has no distracting lyrics, and the scores are intended to motivate.

A Rally of Connection and Purpose: Tapash Roy Praises Vision Behind North East Integration Rally 2026



land and its people.

Here's what matters. Roy sees the northeast as one of the clearest expressions of India's unity in diversity. That spirit, he says, sits at the core of the rally. The route will wind across hills, valleys and towns, but what it really hopes to cross are social divides. It is meant to be a journey of connection, celebrating shared identity and the cultural wealth that binds the region together.

What this really means is that the rally is not just about vehicles on the road. It is tied to a larger mission that includes strengthening ham radio networks for disaster management, raising awareness on climate change, improving earthquake preparedness and promoting road safety. Roy believes each of these efforts can trigger a chain

keep such initiatives alive through patient, quiet work.

Roy's message to the KRC Foundation was one of respect for a vision he believes can transform attitudes and build resilience. His message to participants was different in tone — he described them as the carriers of hope, the ones who would give the rally its soul. And to the northeast itself, he offered gratitude. The region, he said, gave him identity and purpose, and speaking for the rally is one way he hopes to give something back.

As preparations continue, the North East Integration Rally 2026 is shaping up to be more than a logistical exercise. It promises to be an expression of pride, harmony and collective strength. If the sentiment shared by

pulverised fuel-fired power station.

He later joined CESC, where he spent most of his professional life. Across his years there, he helped shape key projects, from preparing technical specifications and assessing bids to supervising the installation and commissioning of transformers, switchgear, and substations. His work included India's first 150 MVA EHV underground substation at Park Circus and several GIS installations across the CESC network.

He also brought his expertise to Gem Refineries, Dolphin Laboratories, and Philips India between 1985 and 1990, strengthening their engineering and project operations.

Roy was part of the CESC core group involved



The North East Integration Rally 2026 has begun to gather momentum long before its engines start. At the heart of this growing excitement is the KRC Foundation's attempt to turn a simple idea into a unifying movement. The rally, designed as a non-competitive car and motorcycle journey across the region, aims to bring people together through shared purpose rather than speed or spectacle.

Among those lending their voice to the initiative is veteran power engineer Tapash Roy, who carries a deep sense of belonging to the region. Born in Digboi, raised in Duryodhan, and shaped further by his engineering years in Tripura, he describes the northeast not as a backdrop to his life but as the place that formed him. While speaking about the rally, he didn't dwell on his 37 years of professional experience. Instead, he returned again and again to a simple point: everything he has become comes from this

reaction of positive change if people participate with sincerity.

He called the rally an awakening rather than an event — something that honours the past while preparing communities for a safer, more connected future. His words also carried a generous acknowledgement of the people who often remain unseen: the volunteers, organisers and support teams who

voices like Roy's is any indication, the road ahead is already lit with purpose.

Tapash Roy is an electrical engineer with a long record of work across power generation, transmission, and distribution. He graduated at the top of his class from the University of Calcutta in 1979 and began his career with Durgapur Projects Limited, handling electrical maintenance at a major

in the technology-transfer collaboration with Singapore Power and contributed to national standards work as a member of the BIS Working Group ETD-06. Over the years he has taught substation operation and maintenance in several training programmes, presented a paper at ELECRAMA 2004, and served on the Board of Governors of NIT Agartala from 2006 to 2011.



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, Colleges, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.





11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different sector stakeholders. Includes NGOs, and Governmental institutions for their potential awareness, awareness enhancement, and awareness campaigns. Participation through invitation only. Different awards are provided.

11 JAN
Adventure Sports
 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigations, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Techniques, Water Sports



10 Jan
Barak Festival: Peace Progress & Prosperity



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.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate change will accelerate on Global Change, climate and water. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Barak, Planning & Geography, environment and development in River Barak, Climate Change.





BROADCAST PARTNER



REGISTER HERE

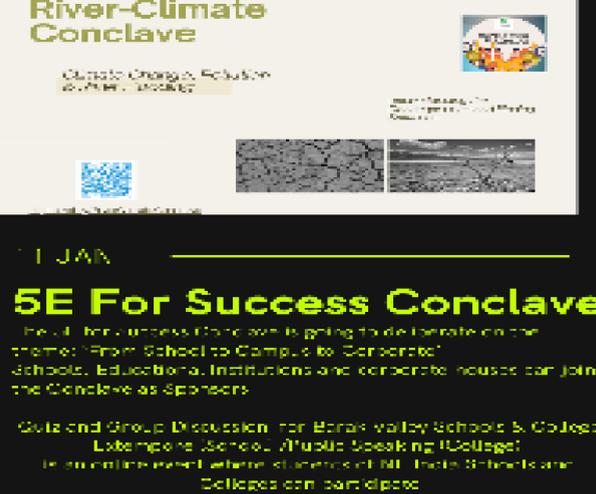
CONTACT: info@krcfoundation.org

10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave, Media Awards, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome journalists, students, producers, media & corporate houses, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.



11 JAN
5E For Success Conclave
 The 5E for Success Conclave is going to be held on 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, Seminars, Public Speaking (College) & an online event where students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.





PAINTING CARNIVAL
NE CULTURAL FEST
E-SPORTS

FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION
 BOOK CLUB | AWARDS & GUEST
 NEW BARRAK | RECORDS

CONTACT: info@krcfoundation.org

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'.



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



Barak Festival 2025
Band Night 10 JAN
Musical Night 11 JAN



CONTACT: info@krcfoundation.org

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



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #NoOneLeftBehind Campaign | Book Bank | e-books | e-audio | e-video

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

Painting Carnival
 Water Colour and other Drawing Competition





STUDENT INTERNSHIP

Discover valuable experience and learn more about the Industry.

- Outreach Executive
- Event Management
- Programme Coordinator

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