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# KRC TIMES

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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.

### Manipur Police officer honoured with Kendriya Grihamantri Dakshata Padak 2025

IMPHAL



The Manipur Police has proudly announced that WSI Phuritsabam Romibala Devi of Jiribam District Police has been conferred the Kendriya Grihamantri Dakshata Padak 2025 in recognition of her outstanding work in the field of investigation. The prestigious national honour was awarded for her exemplary handling of a sensitive case — FIR No. 16(05)2022 JBM-PS U/S 354/376/506 IPC — involving the rape of a 22-year-old differently-abled woman in Sonapur, Jiribam District. Displaying rare professionalism, empathy, and dedication, WSI Romibala Devi ensured that the investigation was conducted with utmost care and sensitivity. She engaged sign language experts to effectively communicate with the survivor, gathered crucial forensic evidence, and secured DNA confirmation linking the accused to the crime.

Her meticulous and compassionate approach led to the filing of a watertight charge sheet on June 27, 2025, ensuring swift justice for the survivor.

The Manipur Police lauded her for upholding the highest standards of investigative excellence and human dignity, reflecting the force's commitment to justice and women's safety.

### WHO SAID WHAT

**There are two sets of laws in this country. One for the non-Hindus, and the other against the Hindus.**

~ Anand Ranganathan, Author

## Assam Governor attends 'Amar Saheed Shraddhanjali'; pays homage to brave hearts

GUWAHATI

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya attended the "Amar Saheed Shraddhanjali" and paid homage to the brave sons of the State who made supreme sacrifices in defence of the nation by laying floral wreaths at the Assam State War Memorial, at Dighalipukhuri, Guwahati, on Saturday.

The initiative of Amar Saheed Shraddhanjali was approved by the Governor during a recent meeting of the State Management Committee of the Rajya Sainik Board, Assam.

The event was organised by the Directorate of Sainik Welfare, Assam, inspired by the monthly homage ceremony held at the National War Memorial in New Delhi. During the occasion, families of the martyred soldiers laid wreaths in honour of their brave sons and husbands who made the sacrifices in line of duty. This time, Mamoni Sarma, mother of Captain Gautam Sarma, Thageswari Das, mother of Gunner Uddhab Das and Deepali Deka Barman, wife of Naib Subedar Baikuntha Barman, were invited.

Their participation lent deep emotional significance to the ceremony, which marked the beginning of a noble



tradition of monthly tributes to the martyrs of Assam.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Acharya bowed in reverence to the indomitable courage, unwavering sense of duty, and selfless devotion of the martyrs.

"Though they are no longer with us physically, their bravery, patriotism, and immortal sacrifice continue to inspire us to serve our Motherland with the same dedication," the Governor stated. Expressing deep respect to the families of the martyrs, the Governor said that the supreme sacrifice of their dear ones is inspiring. He noted that the families have borne their irreparable loss with dignity, patience, and courage, and that the nation shall forever remember their contribution.

The Governor, moreover, made special mention of three immortal sons of Assam who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

He recalled the supreme sacrifice of Gunner Uddhab Das of the 197 Field Regiment, who displayed extraordinary courage during the Kargil War on 24th June 1999 and attained martyrdom at Tiger Hill.

He also remembered Captain Gautam Sharma of the 8th Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, who laid down his life on

3rd June 2007 in the Ustad Sector while saving a fellow soldier.

The Governor further paid tribute to Naib Subedar Baikuntha Burman, who on 2nd March 1997, in the Uri Sector of Jammu and Kashmir, sacrificed his life while performing his duty.

The Governor said that the valiant sons Naib Subedar Baikuntha Burman, Captain Gautam Sharma, and Gunner Uddhab Das will forever be remembered in the annals of India's heroic legacy, adding that their devotion and sacrifice will continue to inspire future generations.

"Today's memorial ceremony is not just a tribute but a collective pledge to uphold the ideals of our martyrs," the Governor observed, adding, "Their stories of courage must continue to inspire future generations, strengthening our national spirit and sense of duty."

The program was attended by Lieutenant General (Retd.) Rana Pratap Kalita, Air Marshal (Retd.) Anjan Kumar Gogoi, Lieutenant General (Retd.) PK Bharali, Major General AK Sharma, GOC, 51 Sub Area, Director, Sainik Welfare, Brigadier Palash Choudhury, families of soldiers killed in line of duty, along with a host of other dignitaries.

## Gaurav Gogoi to Himanta Biswa Sarma: "You are a public servant, not a king"



GUWAHATI

In a sharp response to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's recent remarks, Congress MP and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, said, "CM Himanta Biswa Sarma calls himself a 'King,' but we are servants of the people. He wants to silence voices; we want people to speak freely. He wants people to fear; we want them to live without fear."

The statement comes amid an escalating political war of words in

Assam, with the Congress leader accusing the Chief Minister of fostering an atmosphere of fear and intolerance towards dissent. Gogoi emphasised that true leadership lies in serving people, not ruling over them.

Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi on November 1 accused Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of being "unfit" to lead the state, a day after the BJP leader alleged that Gogoi was a "Pakistani agent planted by a foreign power".

Responding to Sarma's com-

ments, Gogoi said the remarks exposed the chief minister's "growing fear of losing power". He also questioned the timing of the accusations, pointing out that they came on the same day the late singer Zubeen Garg's final film *Roi Binale* was released.

"Yesterday, when the entire state was watching Zubeen Garg perform for the last time, the chief minister's comments showed his growing fear of losing power," Gogoi posted on X, adding that "Himanta Biswa Sarma dangoriya has lost credibility."

Sarma has repeatedly claimed that Gogoi has links with Pakistan through his British wife, insisting he possesses evidence to support the charge. The chief minister reiterated the allegations on Friday, calling the Congress MP a "Pakistani agent" and asserting that he was "planted by a foreign power".

Gogoi, who is also the Congress deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, dismissed the accusations as baseless and politically motivated, saying they reveal the chief minister's desperation.

## New rail link from Umrangso to Lanka in Hojai approved as Assam CM, Railway Minister chart expansion plan



IMPHAL

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on November 2 announced a series of major railway connectivity projects for the state after a "very productive meeting" with Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in New Delhi.

In a post on X, the Chief Minister

said the meeting focused on broadening the railway network across Assam to improve connectivity and boost economic growth.

Among the highlights, a new rail link connecting the scenic town of Umrangso to Lanka in Hojai district has been approved.

The discussions also led to the introduction of three new Amrit Bharat trains to and from Assam, along with an agreement to expedite work on the Kokrajhar-Gelephu Mindfulness City railway line connecting Assam with Bhutan.

Additionally, the state will see more stoppages of major trains transiting through Assam to make travel more convenient for passengers.

Sarma thanked Minister Vaishnaw for his cooperation, stating, "Happy to share that the Hon'ble Minister has kindly consented to these action items."

These developments, the Chief Minister said, align with Assam's larger goal of transforming into a key logistics and connectivity hub under the 'Viksit Bharat, Viksit Assam' vision.

## On SRK's birthday, Assam CM mentions "Miyabhai Ki Daring" — but with a sharp twist



GUWAHATI

Even as fans across the country celebrated Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's 60th birthday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma grabbed attention with a remark that borrowed a famous phrase associated with the actor — but in a strikingly different context.

Taking to social media, the Chief Minister said "Miyabhai ki daring won't work in Assam", a pointed comment referring not to SRK's film persona but to a recent security operation in which 16 illegal Bangladeshi migrants were apprehended for allegedly entering the state with "nefarious intentions."

The phrase, a nod to Shah Rukh Khan's popular dialogue from *Raees*,

was used by the CM to underscore the state's tough stance against cross-border infiltration. "Assam is not a place for illegal entrants. We will find you, catch you and deport you," Sarma said, while commending the police and security agencies for their swift action.

The post went viral almost instantly, with netizens noting the timing of the remark — coinciding with SRK's birthday — and its cinematic twist.

Officials confirmed that all 16 arrested individuals have been booked under the Foreigners Act, and investigations are underway to trace the network facilitating such illegal entries.

The Chief Minister's quip — blending Bollywood punchlines with politics — has once again showcased his penchant for sharp, headline-grabbing one-liners.

## Manipur IDPs face eviction from Langol quarters, urge govt for temporary shelter

GUWAHATI

Tension has escalated among hundreds of internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing at the Langol Game Village Government Quarters in Manipur's Imphal after the district administration ordered them to vacate the premises.

Around 200 displaced families, who fled their homes during the ethnic violence of May 2023, now face uncertainty as they claim to have no alternative shelter.

The families have been staying at the Langol quarters for nearly two years since the outbreak of violence forced them to leave their native villages.

Despite repeated appeals, they allege that the government has failed to provide permanent rehabilitation, security assurances, or a roadmap for their safe return.

Mutum Yoihemba, an IDP representative from Churachandpur, blamed the authorities for neglecting their safety.

"We left our homes because there was no security. It is the government's failure. We are willing to return if safety is guaranteed," he said.

The displaced families reportedly sought a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Imphal West to present their grievances, but were denied an audience.



In response, they submitted formal petitions to both the Deputy Commissioner and the Director General of Police (DGP), Manipur, urging the government to withdraw or suspend the eviction order.

According to their memorandum dated October 31, IDPs from Churachandpur, Moreh, Kwaha, Kangpokpi, Sugnu, and other conflict-hit areas have been taking temporary refuge at the Langol quarters since May 3, 2023.

The families stated they had fled their homes to save their lives and properties and remained unable to return due to ongoing instability and insecurity in their localities.

The DC's office and the DGP

acknowledged receiving the appeals on November 2 but have not yet issued any official response or assurance.

The IDPs have urged the government to adopt a compassionate approach, emphasizing that they seek only temporary shelter until peace and normalcy return to their villages. As of now, over 60,000 people across Manipur remain displaced, staying in relief camps, government quarters, and temporary shelters set up after the May 2023 ethnic clashes.

While the government has initiated limited rehabilitation measures, many families continue to demand adequate security, compensation, and safe passage back to their homes.

## Commemoration Day of states, union territories held at Raj Bhavan

IMPHAL

The Commemoration of the Foundation Days of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Andhra Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu was held on Saturday at Raj Bhavan, Imphal.

Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, graced the occasion. The ceremony featured video messages from the Lt. Governor of Ladakh, the Governor of Punjab, and the Governor of Kerala.

As part of the programme, artistes from the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy presented a spectacular choreographic performance based on the theme 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', showcasing the spirit of uni-

ty in diversity through art and expression.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor emphasized that India's true strength lies in its unity amid diversity, where every state, culture, and citizen contributes to the nation's collective progress.

Reflecting on the celebration of Statehood Day for fifteen States and Union Territories, he said the occasion reaffirms the vision of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi — encouraging every Indian to understand, respect, and celebrate the cultures and traditions of others.

The Governor urged the younger generation to uphold these ideals by viewing India not as a collection of regions, but as one family united by shared values and aspirations.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 609

# It's Raining Freebies

## RARE EARTH ELEMENTS – A NEW OIL

World's Geopolitics is changing at a very rapid speed and unless you change yourself with the tune of changing world, you will be left behind in the race. Every Nation wants to defend its borders and more so the digital age has given rise to a new stage for global drama-one where surveillance, the weaponization of information and the erosion of trust in national and multi-lateral institutions are playing out in real time. Wars are no longer fought in traditional Artillery way. It's either in the air or in the waters that too with deadly stealth weapons of mass destruction. To manufacture these high precision weaponry, you require Rare Earth elements.

Big power houses like China, USA, Israel, India, UK, Turkey, France and others are vying for control over these resources – From Fighter Jets to Submarines, Turbines, Robotics, Electric vehicles, MRI scanners, Cancer treatment devices, Flat screen TVs and smart-phones as well. Right now India's external dependence on rare earth elements is substantial despite having large reserves available in the country itself.

What are these Rare Earth Elements(REE): It's a group of 17 elements, which has now become back bone of advanced technology and defence systems has been now coined as the "New Oil" for 21st Century.

These REEs are classified into light REEs which are common and easier to extract and heavy REEs which are found in smaller concentrations, thus making their supply chain more vulnerable and strategically significant. These elements are characterised by their high density, high melting point, high conductivity and high thermal conductance.

The term "rare" earths, however, is a bit of a misnomer with the exception of the highly unstable promethium, as these elements are found in relatively high concentrations across Earth's crust. Cerium is, in fact, the 25th most abundant element in the planet's crust, more abundant than gold, silver, tungsten, and many other elements which do not enjoy the "rare" tag.

There are two main reasons why the tag "rare" is used.

One, although moderately abundant, these elements are not found in large concentrations. This makes them difficult and costly to extract, and thus, challenging to exploit economically.

Two, according to the International Energy Agency, more than 60% of mined rare earth production currently comes from only one country: China. Moreover, Beijing controls more than 90% of the global output of rare earths in the processing stage.

The reliance lies in the production process that uses permanent magnets, which are made from rare earth alloys such as neodymium iron boron and samarium cobalt. These Magnets generate a powerful magnetic force in small components, and are used to power a wide range of military hardware such as generators, missile guidance systems, under water detectors, anti missile defence shields, radars and satellite communication systems.

Apart from magnets, these specific REEs are crucial for vital functions: Lanthanum, for instance, improves glass clarity for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, while europium is harnessed in LED lights and plasma displays. Gadolinium, samarium and yttrium are used for radar and sonar systems, while communications and avionics systems use dysprosium, erbium, europium, neodymium, and praseodymium. Tanks & Armed vehicles use europium, terbium and yttrium in their mounting systems.

According to a 2022 CAPSS journal, the global demand for REEs is projected to reach 3,15,000 tonnes by 2030. The rising demand, coupled with supply chain risk of China's dominance, highlights their significant economic & strategic value. The US department of War website says an F-35 aircraft needs about 900 pounds of REEs, whereas Arleigh Burke DDG – 51 destroyer requires 5,200 pounds and Virginia – class submarine requires 9,200 pounds of REEs.

India's dependence (Imports of REEs) on China was 92% in 2019-20 which has come down to 59% in 2023-24 to 699 tonnes out of total usage of 1185 tonnes, not that for rest, we have become self-reliant, as China had many other countries to supply so India's import volumes made to reduce. While India, US and other countries are working today to diversify and develop supply chain resilience, China already has its next 20 years plan in progress. Despite its R&D strength, the US does not have downstream processing capacity and continue to rely on China, which uses the leverage of its rare earth supplies to impact the US economy. Rare earths are not very rare, but challenges in ensuring the economic viability of extraction and processing mean that one country – China – has effectively monopolised these vital minerals. Now Beijing is using it as lever in its ongoing trade with the US.

While China accounts for approximately 60% of Global REE production, it accounts for 90% of Global REE processing, giving it a massive advantage in global supply chain. When the US imposed tariffs on China, for instance, China placed export restriction on US exports of key rare earth metals, forcing US to negotiate and allow Chinese shipments. Recent found Love of Trump with Pakistan is due to Asim Muneer's presentation to Trump, allowing production of Rare earth metals in Balochistan, albeit yet to see the pragmatic part on ground.

Starting in 1987, when Deng Xiaoping, considered to be the "architect of modern China", compared China's rare earth reserves in Inner Mongolia to West Asia's oil reserves, the country has built up near-total control of the minerals as part of its wider industrial policy.

It is not that rare earths cannot be found outside China: Brazil has large reserves, so does Australia, and even India. The problem is that most of these countries are not doing all that much in the way of mining. This is driven by both economic viability issues, as well as concerns over the pollution that rare earth mining, an extremely dirty process, causes.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

It has been said that idleness is the parent of mischief, which is very true; but mischief itself is merely an attempt to escape from the dreary vacuum of idleness. - George Borrow



POONAM I KAUSHISH

Beware Voters: With less than two weeks left for Bihar's high-octane poll tamasha be ready to open your purse strings as Parties and netas roll out a perfect electoral cake iced with populist schemes, luscious lip-smacking freebies galore for one and all. Merrily converting political sops into vote percentages wherein social and economic upliftment is weighed on vote-bank political scales. On the assumption populist hand-outs yield better electoral rewards than reasoned policies and sustainable programmes. Whereby, sound economic sense is surrendered to political gamesmanship. After all, our money is netas' money!

NDA's JD(U) Chief Minister Nitish Kumar promises to provide 10 million job opportunities to State's youth over next 5 years. Over 12 million women granted Rs 10,000 each to start businesses, remaining women who want to run businesses will be paid Rs2 lakh. Old age pension will increase from Rs 400 to Rs 1100.

BJP assures one crore jobs in next five years after disbursing Rs 10,000 each to 75 lakh women beneficiaries under Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana. Clearly, forgotten is Prime Minister Modi crying halt to free "revadi" culture.

INDIA Mahagathabandhan RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav announced: One Government job to each household, permanent job to jeevika didis with monthly salary of Rs 30,000, waiving interest on existing loans, double allowances of Panchayati Raj representatives, hikes margin of those working in public distribution network, pension and insurance coverage of Rs 50 lakh.

Raising a moot point: Where do netas get monies to fund doles? Obviously, taxing people. Should our hard-earned tax money be used to boost Parties electoral vote-banks? Shouldn't leaders, Parties pay from their pockets or funds? Are freebies different from subsidies? Are they good and bad hand-outs? Who decides?

True, Parties are obliged to be seen as populist in the no-holds-barred free-for-all electoral race, as it would be stupid to wish away political lollipops to entice voters. Correct, cheap rice, wheat or free electricity assurances can be justified. Aren't such concessions imperative in a country where 70% people live below poverty line, hungry

stomachs feed on enticing neon lights of fast food, rummage in garbage bins for rat-infested left-overs' and 600 million earn less than Rs 50 a day. Is it not our leaders' duty to take care of citizens?

Certainly, but one should never mistake political rhetoric for reality. Politicians of all hues cry hoarse for "better deal for poor." Those who want water have been given watershed management programmes. Those who want naukri have been handed NREGA. Debt-laden farmers have got loan waivers. More trees, not coveted mangoes!

However, given the level of dishonesty, populism and irresponsibility which increasingly governs our political system along-with a leech-infested environment of the undata takes it all and the economic logic there is no such thing as a free lunch, the measures announced are invitation to disaster as a populist scheme is invariably paid for either in the form of higher taxes or increasing inflation.

Underscore, what ails India and its burgeoning poor is not poverty, which can be corrected, but the ruthless heartlessness of our netagan who not only lack humility and empathy for the garib. Worse, it exposes their sheer enmity and paucity of ideas along with accentuating their moral bankruptcy. And a perspective completely divorced from reality.

Bluntly, political promises in the economic sphere should not cross prudence limits, where it starts hurting the economy. None sees the danger of economic derailment as the biggest losers are the poor in whose name freebies are justified. Sadly, there is no agency which can stop public funds from being wasted, despite views expressed by committees.

Plainly, we pay taxes for growth and development, better educational institutions, health care, hospitals, infrastructure etc. By providing voters free candies citizens have become dependent on netas resulting in no empowerment. Consequently, people are unable to critically evaluate leaders.

Ironically, vote-pressure has given birth to bigger irony for Parties whereby scarce fiscal resources are diverted from investments that could be beneficial to poor in long-term to boost short-term consumption which does nothing to solve the larger systemic problem of inequality.

See how BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP's Maharashtra's public finances are in a mess due to

Ladki Bahin Scheme burden which provides Rs 1,500 per month to women who earn less than Rs 2.5 lakhs per year.

Congress Himachal Government is struggling to fulfil its poll promises amid significant debt burden. In BJP's Madhya Pradesh Ladli Behna Scheme was a game-changer but Government is groaning under severe financial burden. Punjab's AAP Sarkar whose outstanding liabilities stand at Rs 3,51,130 crore is unable to abide by its poll promises.

Consequently, with cash handouts hardwired into manifestoes Parties expose their hypocrisy – everybody uses such schemes – but accuse each other of doling revadi underscoring India's systemic and symptomatic broken political economy than bad political intent. True, growth has created wealth and upward mobility for a section of Indians. But a large majority is living a life of extreme poverty and precarity. Unless they reap rewards of growth, they will continue expecting fiscal palliatives in return for political support.

Alas, successive Governments in their quest to garner votes have taken on spending commitments in areas they shouldn't have entered if division of spending areas for Centre-States were followed. Resulting, in squeeze on resources for strategic sectors like defence. BJP has mastered this model by using centrally-funded schemes to generate political tailwinds. Hence, increasing insecurity of Opposition Parties which add fuel to fire by seeking political insurance from populism.

What next? One, make it obligatory for Parties to inform EC where they will get monies to implement free giveaway once elected. Will they raise taxes or reduce allocation for programmes? Two, Parties should offer permanent solutions instead of seemingly advantageous, but temporary stop-gap measures. Three, EC should penalize Parties who use quick exploitative mechanism to win votes.

The Supreme Court which voiced apprehension vis-a-vis necessity for increased accountability recently, cautioned against unchecked welfare programmes that could potentially compromise a State's financial well-being and mooted a committee of Government, Niti Aayog, Finance Commission, RBI and Opposition to brainstorm "dispassionately and make recommendations two years ago, but mum is the word from Government.

Unless the economy boosts and tweaks its dynamics to create remunerative opportunities for the underclass, demand for more and more welfare schemes is unlikely to dissipate soon. It's only a matter of time before this political survival manoeuvre ends up overwhelming the fiscal capabilities of Government.

Clearly, leaders must draw a distinction between welfarism and populism. Welfarism takes needs of different sections of society as part of a large development framework. Populism is purely guided by vote-banks, granting concessions which have no economic rationale or are part of larger Governmental economic planning. It provides immediate succour at the future's expense. It is no remedy for education and health neglect, faulty industrialization and under-investment in rural areas. Time our leaders concentrate on the big picture. The real significance of any electoral battle is that unless the problem of poverty is substantially resolved and efforts made to reduce number of people in need of handouts, fake promise will continue to entice voters which could endanger our democracy. Time to draw a 'lakshman rekha' on vote-bank politics as democracy cannot allow exercise of public funds as private spending. What says you?

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Priyank Kharge is right. I am desperate. I am desperate to ensure Assam catches up with rest of India.**  
~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



## Combat impunity against crimes to journalists: PEC

PRESS EMBLEM CAMPAIGN (PEC)

GENEVA



WELCOME - BIENVENIDO - BIENVENUE

153 JOURNALISTS KILLED IN 2025: consult CASUALTIES

31.10.2025. International Day to End

Impunity for Crimes against

Journalists.

The Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) calls for new

Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), the global media safety and rights body, calls for new measures to combat impunity and its devastating effects on the occasion of 'International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists', a United Nations-recognized day annually observed on 2 November. Since the beginning of 2025, at least 153 journalists and media workers have been killed around the world, two-thirds in armed conflicts, even though they were clearly identified as 'press'. The death toll in ten months has never been so high, stated a PEC statement.

PEC urges UN member states to rally behind the idea of establishing an independent international commission, conceived under the backing of the UN secretary-general or the high commissioner for human rights. Such a body would be tasked with investigating serious violations of international humanitarian, criminal, or human rights

law committed against journalists, and with delivering recommendations for strengthening national legislation, accountability mechanisms, and redress for victims, thereby facilitating the truth and preventing relapse.

This year so far, 153 media professionals have been killed in 29 countries, where Gaza Strip comes first with 57 killed, and then the war between Ukraine and Russia with 11, followed by Yemen 11, Mexico 10, Sudan 7, India 6, Pakistan 5, Bangladesh 4, Ecuador 4, Iran 4, Philippines 3, and Syria 3. Two journalists were killed in Afghanistan, Colombia, Honduras, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, Peru, RDC, and the USA. One casualty is reported in Brazil, Guatemala, Haiti, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Turkey, and Zimbabwe.

"Never before have so many journalists been killed without investigations being carried out to identify those responsible and bring them to justice", said Blaise Lempen, president of PEC (presseblem.ch), adding that the international community must react to this tragedy to stop this violence. When a journalist is killed and the crime goes unpunished, it conveys the message that killing of journalists is acceptable. Allowing killers of journalists to walk

free sends a chilling signal that the powerful can silence voices, crush families, erase stories and escape accountability. Families of these journalists are left bereft and powerless.

Thus the collective right to know is stolen.

PEC's south and southeast Asia representative Nava Thakuria, while stating that impunity for crimes against scribes remained a major concern for the media fraternity, informed that India lost journalists Mukesh Chandrakar, Raghavendra Vajpayee, Sahadev Dey, Dharmendra Singh Chauhan, Naresh Kumar and Rajeev Pratap Singh to assailants till date in 2025.

Pakistan followed by its journo-casualties (namely Ad Shar, Abdul Latif, Syed Mohammed Shah, Imtiaz Mir and Tufail Rind). Bangladesh witnessed the murder of Assaduzzaman Tuhin, Bibhuranjan Sarkar, Wahed-uz-Zaman Bulu and Khandahar Shah Alam, where as the Philippines saw the elimination of Juan Johny Dayang, Erwin Labitad Segovia and Noel Bellen Samar. Similarly, Abdul Ghafoor Abid and Abdul Zahir Safi lost their lives in Afghanistan and Suresh Rajak in Nepal during this period.

## Gaurav Gogoi slams CM Sarma: "Will run away to Dubai or Singapore after losing power"

GUWAHATI

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi launched a blistering attack on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday, accusing him of using state machinery to "instil fear" and claiming the Chief Minister has "lost public acceptance" in Assam.

The verbal exchange comes a day after CM Sarma alleged that Mr. Gogoi was a "Pakistani agent, planted by a foreign power," a charge Gogoi immediately dismissed, calling the CM "unfit" to hold his position.

Speaking to reporters, Gaurav Gogoi sharply criticized CM Sarma's previous attempts to make allegations against him.

"September 10 was already a fop for the Chief Minister. He failed to bring out any evidence against me. Despite his tall claims, he could not say anything substantial on that day," Gogoi stated.



The Congress MP alleged that the Chief Minister is now afraid of the growing strength of the Congress in Assam, contrasting his own consistent monthly "joining programme" with the CM's alleged failure to "keep his word on anything."

In a pointed warning, Gogoi predicted a bleak future for the Chief Minister after the next election. "When that day comes, the Home Department will no longer be under his control. He should correct his words and deeds before it's too late, otherwise, Dubai or Singapore may be his only refuge," Gogoi warned.

Gogoi also targeted the state government's handling of the controversy surrounding the death of popular singer Zubeen Garg, accusing the Chief Minister and the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of misleading the public.

"The SIT has become a tool to conceal and distort facts. Even a month after the incident, neither Zubeen's fam-

ily nor his fans have been given the truth. The investigation appears confusing and manipulative," he alleged.

He further criticized CM Sarma for reportedly skipping the premiere of Zubeen Garg's final film, "Roi Roi Binale," which was released on Friday.

"The people of Assam were at the cinema hall yesterday, only the Chief Minister was missing," he remarked, contrasting it with the CM's past directives to watch "The Kashmir Files."

Addressing CM Sarma's renewed allegation on Friday that he is a "Pakistani agent" with links through his British wife, Gogoi hit back, claiming that such comments only show that Mr. Sarma is "unfit" to hold his position.

"We live in a democracy, not in a kingdom. The Chief Minister thinks of himself as a monarch and tries to rule through fear. But the people of Assam will not tolerate that," Gogoi asserted.

### Anti-infiltration drive in Meghalaya's West Garo Hills screens over 1,800 workers

SHILLONG



A sustained crackdown by the Special Squad of the Anti-Infiltration Directorate in West Garo Hills has led to the verification of more than 1,800 labourers over the past year, as authorities intensify efforts to curb the presence of illegal and unregistered workers in the district.

Between July 2024 and October 29, 2025, officials verified 554 registered labourers, 1,240 unregistered workers, and 245 local labourers during operations across construction sites and other vulnerable areas. The checks were conducted in coordination with the Labour Department and other agencies.

District police officials said the drive has helped detect a considerable number of unregistered and suspected illegal migrants lacking valid work documents. They reiterated that strict legal action would be taken against anyone found violating labour or immigration rules.

Authorities urged employers and contractors to ensure proper verification and registration of all workers before employment. The public has also been asked to report any suspicious activity or the presence of undocumented labourers to the nearest police station, outpost, or the Police Control Room in Tura.

### Manipur: Thangkul Music Festival 2025 opens with message of peace and unity



IMPHAL

The Thangkul Music Festival (TMF 2025) began at Ramrei Eco Tourism Park in Kamjong District with a strong call for peace and cultural harmony under the theme "Echoes of Peace." The three-day event has been organised by the Indian Army in partnership with the Thangkul Music Forum and local communities.

The festival's focus this year is on promoting unity through music, art, and community engagement, highlighting the Army's continuing efforts to strengthen civil-military relations in the region.

The opening ceremony featured a cultural showcase that reflected

the spirit of collaboration between the Army and the Thangkul community. The event began with a brief introduction by Phapha Gachui, followed by a musical prelude from Chanmayo Kashung and the flag hoisting led by Rewben Mashangva, a Padma Shri awardee.

Performances by the Thangkul Naga Valley Students' Association, Haola Ramrei Shanao Long, and a special act by the Indian Army drew enthusiastic applause from the crowd.

The evening performances brought together local artists and bands, blending traditional and contemporary sounds. Food stalls serving Thangkul cuisine added to the festival's local flavour, with over a thousand attendees joining the celebration.

TMF 2025 sets the tone for a weekend of music and cultural exchange, reinforcing messages of peace, partnership, and the enduring bond between the Army and the people of Kamjong.

### Ragging allegations surface after Class 7 student found dead at Sainik School Niglok

ITANAGAR

Ragging allegations have emerged after a Class 7 student of Sainik School Niglok near Ruksin in East Siang District was found dead under alleged unnatural circumstances on Friday morning, prompting the registration of a case under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS).

According to reports, the Vice Principal of Sainik School Niglok informed Ruksin Police Station around 8 AM, stating that a student had allegedly died by suicide. Following the report, police registered an FIR and sent the body to Bakin Pertin General Hospital (BPGH), Pasighat, for post-mortem examination.

Authorities confirmed that the post-mortem will be conducted on November 2 in the presence of the student's parents, who arrived this evening from Ziro in Lower Subansiri District. The family also visited the



mortuary at BPGH around 9:50 PM to see the deceased.

Speaking to this scribe, East Siang Superintendent of Police (SP) Pankaj Lamba said, "It will be too early to disclose anything at this stage as the post-mortem has not yet been conducted. The examination of the dead body will take place once the parents of the deceased arrive."

The Officer-in-Charge of Ruksin Police Station has initiated a detailed investigation to ascertain the exact cause and circumstances of the death. The

school authorities and police are maintaining close coordination with the family as part of the ongoing inquiry.

Meanwhile, the parents of the deceased student have alleged that their son was subjected to group ragging by senior hostel students. The boy's father, Tadu Tani, who visited the school and hostel this evening to collect his son's belongings, claimed that some Class 8 and Class 10 students were allegedly involved in the ragging, which might have driven the boy to his

death.

The grieving mother broke down upon seeing her son's body at the mortuary, while the family appealed to police for a thorough investigation. Members of the Apatani community residing in Pasighat also gathered at the hospital mortuary to extend support to the bereaved family.

According to the investigating officer, the boy's body was discovered on the roof of a structure adjacent to an overhead water tank, located away from the hostel. The discovery came after the student was found missing during the morning PT session. Construction workers in the vicinity spotted the body and informed the authorities. Police sources further revealed that the overhead water tank had not yet been officially handed over to the school administration.

The investigation is ongoing, with police awaiting the post-mortem report to determine the next course of action.

### Nagaland service associations continue protest over alleged IAS recruitment irregularities

KOHIIMA

The Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), an umbrella body comprising the CANSSEA, NSSA, NF&ASA, NIDA, and FONSESA, has made a fervent appeal to the citizens of Nagaland to uphold the principles of meritocracy and good governance, even as it continues its protest against what it alleges to be a government attempt to induct an ineligible candidate into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) through non-transparent means.

The JCC has been on a black badge protest since September 24, 2025, and a Pen Down Strike since October 14, 2025, after several representations to the state government went unanswered. In a public statement, the JCC clarified that its protest is not directed against any individual or the government itself, but against policies that, it claims, "subvert meritocracy and distort the very concept of fairness in public service."

According to the JCC, the controversy traces back to 2018 when the Nagaland Civil Service Association (NCSA) recommended to the government that only those recruited through the Nagaland Public Service Commission (NPSC) should be eligible for induction into the IAS under the Indian Administrative Service (Recruitment) Rules, 1954.

Subsequently, a Vacancy Circular dated July 6, 2020, approved by the Chief Minister, incorporated Clause 4, which restricted eligibility to officers recruited through the NPSC. Based on this, one non-State Civil Service (SCS) officer was inducted into the IAS without any objections from the Cabinet, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), or the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

However, when the same eligibility clause was reiterated in a March 10, 2025 Circular, the JCC alleges that the

government later withdrew the notification on April 24, 2025, and issued a new circular that relaxed the eligibility criteria, allowing non-NPSC appointees to apply.

According to the JCC, 11 applications were received under the March 10 notification, of which 10 were eligible. Six of these had Outstanding Annual Performance Appraisal Reports (APARs), and five were eventually shortlisted by the Screening Committee on September 25, 2025. But as revealed through an RTI disclosure, the JCC claims the process was manipulated to favor a non-NPSC recruit, under the pretext of procedural correction.

The JCC contends that withdrawing the March 10 circular and replacing it with the April 24 version was an act of favoritism and administrative impropriety, aimed at paving the way for a particular candidate's induction into the IAS. "When even the lowest

government recruitments are routed through NPSC or NSSB, there cannot be separate rules for IAS induction," the statement read.

The committee has urged the government and the Cabinet Sub-Committee to rectify procedural lapses and restore the March 10, 2025 Circular in its entirety, in keeping with constitutional, moral, and procedural propriety. Reaffirming its position, the JCC demanded:

Restoration of the March 10 Circular in toto, in adherence to merit-based principles.

"The JCC's movement is a call of conscience — to protect the sanctity of governance and ensure that administrative posts of the highest order are filled solely on merit."

### Manipur observes 77th Information and Public Relations Day with renewed commitment to transparent governance

IMPHAL:

The 77th IPR Day in Imphal highlighted DIPR's role in fostering transparency and effective communication between the government and the public. Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel emphasized the importance of accurate and timely communication in governance, urging DIPR to maintain reliability in the fast-paced information era. Recent achievements like the e-Gazette Portal and the National Conference on Media Coordination were praised for enhancing transparency and combating misinformation.

The 77th Information and Public Relations (IPR) Day, 2025, was celebrated with dignity and enthusiasm at the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) Auditorium, Nityaipat Chuthek, Imphal. The event highlighted the department's enduring role in promoting transparency, bridging communication between the government and the people, and strengthening democratic governance through credible information dissemination.

Puneet Kumar Goel, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Manipur, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, while Hungyo Worshang, IAS, Secretary (IPR), presided over the function. M. Joy Singh, IAS (Retd.), former Commissioner (IPR), attended as the



Guest of Honour.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Secretary underscored that transparency forms the cornerstone of good governance, and the DIPR serves as the voice of the government, ensuring the timely and accurate communication of policies, programmes, and decisions to the public. "In today's fast-moving information era, it is our shared responsibility to ensure that every message reaching citizens is accurate, timely, and trustworthy," he stated.

He further highlighted the importance of feedback mechanisms, noting that public relations is not only about informing but also about listening. Through social media, public forums, and outreach initiatives, DIPR gathers citizen feedback, helping policymakers make more responsive and inclusive decisions.

Reflecting on the department's achievements, Goel lauded the successful launch of the e-Gazette Portal on August 1, which fully digitised government notifications, enhancing transparency and accessibility. He also cited the National Conference on Coordination with States in Media and Public Communication, held in Imphal on August

5, as a milestone in combating misinformation and strengthening media coordination nationwide.

He praised the Manipur Information Commission for leading RTI Week 2025, emphasising that transparency is a mindset, not an obligation. The Chief Secretary also commended the DIPR Short Film Competitions, describing them as creative avenues for addressing social issues and inspiring positive change.

Urging officials to maintain high standards of accuracy and professionalism, he said, "Every press release, photograph, and bulletin issued by DIPR must pass the test of reliability and balance. The department's credibility is one of the State's most valuable public assets." He encouraged the responsible use of social media platforms to ensure government communication remains verified, engaging, and trustworthy.

Looking ahead, the Chief Secretary outlined DIPR's future priorities — expanding digital-first communication, institutionalising misinformation management, and modernising media archives. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to truth, clarity, and consistency, stating, "In an age when misinformation can divide and confuse, the role of DIPR is more critical than ever."

In his address as Guest of Honour, M. Joy Singh reflected on the department's rich legacy and applauded its tradition of honouring retired officials, describing the practice as "noble and inspiring." He urged the continuation of such meaningful traditions that uphold departmental camaraderie and respect.

Presiding over the event, Hungyo Worshang, Secretary (IPR), lauded the department's efforts to build harmonious relationships among staff and strengthen cooperation with media organisations, noting that collaboration with the press plays a vital role in enhancing the State's image.

Delivering the keynote address, Ngangom Uttam, Director, DIPR, highlighted the importance of reminding both government and citizens of the department's vital role in governance and public awareness. He proposed campaigns like "Think Before You Share" to combat misinformation and promote media literacy among youth, reiterating DIPR's responsibility in fostering peace, unity, and cultural harmony.

He concluded by affirming DIPR's dedication to the Government of India's motto — "Reform, Perform, Transform and Inform."

The event's highlight included the felicitation of retired DIPR officials and the distribution of prizes to winners of the short film competition on five themes — My City, My Responsibility; Say No to Single-Use Plastic; Support Don't Punish; Unity in Diversity; and E-Challan Awareness. The winning entries by Devadarshan Gurumayum, Dinku Thingnam, Bonney Takhelmayum, Sorenzang Vashum, and Kshetrimayum Priyobrata Singh were screened during the ceremony.

The celebration concluded with a traditional lunch, attended by senior media professionals and departmental representatives, marking the 77th IPR Day as a resounding success.

### Sikkim Launches SARATHI 1.0 to Build Addiction-Free and Suicide-Free State



NAMCHI:

The launch event of SARATHI 1.0, a state initiative supported by Titan Company Limited, was held on Saturday in Namchi District, marking a new chapter in Sikkim's social transformation efforts.

Envisioned by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang (Go-Lay), the programme seeks to make Sikkim addiction-free and suicide-free by promoting compassion, mental well-being, and collective community action.

Deputy Speaker of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, Raj Kumari Thapa, attended the event as the Chief Guest. The gathering also saw the presence of several key dignitaries, including Advisor to the Chief Minister Rohit Raj Maharaj, Advisor for Panchayati Raj

Rama Tamang, State Women's Commission Chairperson Tenny Doma Bhutia, and state body chairpersons Basant Yonzon, Sanjaya Dilpai Rai, and T. T. Bhutia. Namchi Municipal Council Vice Chairperson Sabitri Tamang was among the attendees. Officials from various government departments, Panchayats, Councilors, Principals, Police Officers, NGOs, and youth and women representatives also joined the programme, underscoring widespread community participation.

The launch of SARATHI 1.0 marks a key step in the state's mission to foster a healthier, more resilient, and socially responsible Sikkim through collaboration between the government, local institutions, and citizens.

## VOLUNTEER REQUIRED

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A survey says those who wear black are seen as serious and reliable - almost 50% women and 64% of men agree that black exudes confidence.

## Congress slams Delhi government's Rs 34 crore cloud seeding drive, calls it a 'cruel joke'



NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday slammed the Delhi government's cloud seeding experiment to tackle pollution, calling it a "cruel joke" that yielded only marginal, short-term improvement in air quality.

Congress communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh said the BJP government had spent Rs 34 crore on the winter cloud seeding project despite clear scientific advice against it.

The Congress leader cited a December 2024 Rajya Sabha reply from the Union Minister of State for Environment confirming that the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), and the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had all opposed the idea.

Ramesh also referred to an October 31, 2025, report from IIT Delhi's Centre for Atmospheric Sciences, which concluded that winter cloud seeding would have little to no impact on the capital's toxic air.

"Winter cloud seeding may look dramatic, but when the scientific consensus questions its efficacy, it becomes nothing more than a headline-grabbing stunt," Ramesh said. "Getting slight improvement in a limited area for a day or two is really a cruel joke."

The remarks came two days after Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa claimed that "science-driven action and enforcement" were improving the city's air quality, dismissing allegations of data manipulation. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta also insisted that pollution data "cannot be tam-

pered with."

Opposition parties, however, continue to accuse the Delhi government of wasting public funds on unproven methods and manipulating air quality data to hide the worsening pollution crisis.

"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.

## Centre's responsibility to stop infiltrators: Kunal Ghosh

KOLKATA

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh questioned the potential enforcement of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and said that if the BJP talks about Akhand Bharat, then why is it insisting on implementing SIR on Sunday.

In his interaction with media-persons, the TMC leader stated that the BJP's policy is self-contradictory, as it claims that infiltrators are entering the country, but the responsibility lies with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, since border security falls under his purview, thus making it a failure on their part. He further questioned, "If you want 'Akhand Bharat,' what is the need for an SIR?" "BJP's direction is contradictory; Self-contradictory is their policy, on one side, the BJP claims infiltrators are coming into the country. Whose responsibility is it to stop them? It is Amit Shah's responsibility. This is your failure... but on the other hand, they say we will break the borders, what is it, now they are giving an explanation, but the main point of the explanation has no explanation, because they said it...if in your mind, there is plan of making two countries united, just tell the whole country, that we want to merge Bangladesh, then why raise the issue of infiltration....If you want 'Akhand Bharat'..... what is the need for an SIR?," said Ghosh.

Earlier, Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Saturday criticised the BJP on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and said another person from West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman had died allegedly of fear sparked by SIR.

In a post on X, the TMC said the latest casualty was Bimal Santra, a migrant worker from Nabagram village under Jamalpur in Purba Bardhaman district. "Another



precious life lost to @BJP4India's politics of fear and hatred," the post reads. "In just a few days we have seen: 57-year-old Pradeep Kar of Panihati who died by suicide and blamed the NRC in his note. A 63-year-old man from Jitpur, Dinhat, Cooch Behar, who attempted to take his life, terrified of harassment under the SIR process. A 95-year-old Khitish Majumder of Kotwali, Paschim Medinipur, living with his daughter in Ilambazar, Birbhum, who ended his life," the TMC said in a post on X.

"This is the human cost of an

exercise designed to terrorise and displace. SIR is an instrument of intimidation, driving our people to despair, forcing them to question their citizenship and their right to belong. @BJP4India, your hands are stained with blood," the TMC said, adding that the people of "Bengal will seek justice, and we will make sure they answer for every life ruined by their politics of hate."

The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, will hit the streets in Kolkata on November 4 to protest against the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR). She will

also be joined by party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee in a protest rally. "Our Hon'ble Chairperson Smt @MamataOfficial and our Hon'ble National General Secretary Shri @abhishekaitc will hit the streets on 4th November 2025, FIGHTING once again for the RIGHTS OF PEOPLE. The so-called Special Intensive Revision is actually SILENT INVISIBLE RIGGING. We will leave NO STONE UNTURNED to ensure that ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS are included and not left behind in this process. For our people, we will give our all!" the TMC said in a post on X.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Nine people with life-threatening injuries after mass stabbing on UK train, two suspects arrested

HUNTINGTON

UK police arrested two suspects after a mass stabbing on a London-bound train late Saturday that left 10 people in hospital, nine likely with "life-threatening injuries".

Armed police, backed by police cars and a fleet of ambulances, swarmed a railway station in the eastern rural town of Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, after the alarm was raised about the attack and the train brought to a halt there.

"Ten people have been taken to hospital following a multiple stabbing on a train in Cambridgeshire. Nine are believed to have suffered life-threatening injuries," British Transport Police said on X, adding that counter-terrorism units were supporting the investigation.

Transport police confirmed the train was running from Doncaster in the northeast to London's King's Cross Station, a busy route often packed with travellers.

A witness described seeing a man with a large knife and told The Times newspaper there was "blood everywhere" as people hid in the washrooms.

Some passengers were getting "stamped (on) by others" as they tried to run, and the witness told The Times they "heard some people shouting we love (you)".

Witnesses told Sky News they saw a man holding a large knife on the platform after the train halted. They then saw the man tasered and restrained by police.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the "appalling" incident was



"deeply concerning".

"My thoughts are with all those affected, and my thanks go to the emergency services for their response," Starmer said in a statement on X.

"Anyone in the area should follow the advice of the police," Starmer added, while his interior minister Shabana Mahmood confirmed two people had been taken into custody.

Armed police were at the scene after being alerted around 7:40 pm (1940 GMT) just after the train had left the town of Peterborough.

Late Saturday, police were inspecting the train, which was being treated as a crime scene. People were also led away outside the station in space blankets, an AFP photographer saw.

The East of England Ambulance Service said on X that it had mobilised a "large-scale response" to Huntingdon station including ambulances, air ambulances and tactical commanders.

Train operator London North Eastern Railway (LNER) said railway lines were closed while emergency services dealt with the incident.

LNER, which runs trains along the east of England and Scotland, urged passengers not to travel, warning of "major disruption" with the lines blocked in the area. The mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Paul Bristow, said on X that he was aware of "horrendous scenes", adding that his "thoughts and prayers (are) with everyone affected".

The identity of the two people arrested was not immediately known, nor was the motive for the attack.

Knife crime in England and Wales has been steadily rising since 2011, according to official government data.

While Britain has some of the strictest gun controls in the world, rampant knife crime has been branded a "national crisis" by Starmer.

His Labour government has tried to rein in their use. Nearly 60,000 blades have been either "seized or surrendered" in England and Wales as part of government efforts to halve knife crime within a decade, the interior ministry said Wednesday.

Carrying a knife in public can be punishable by up to four years in prison, and the government said knife murders had dropped by 18 percent in the last year.

Two people were killed -- one as a result of misdirected police gunfire -- and others wounded in a stabbing spree at a synagogue in Manchester at the start of October in an attack which shook the local Jewish community and the country.

And a man appeared in a London court on Thursday charged with murder after a stabbing attack in broad daylight which left one dead and two injured.

### Supermarket explosion kills at least 23, including children in Mexico



MEXICO

A supermarket explosion killed at least 23 people in northern Mexico on Saturday, according to local officials, with investigators saying the blast was an accident possibly caused by a faulty electric transformer.

"Sadly a number of the victims we've found were minors," Alfonso Durazo, governor of Sonora state, said in a video message as he announced the toll of 23 dead and another 11 injured.

Durazo said the survivors were being treated at hospitals in the city of Hermosillo, where the explosion took place.

"I have ordered an extensive and transparent investigation to determine the causes of the incident and figure out those responsible," he said.

The prosecutor's office said in a statement that "the

working assumption is that the incident was accidental, and the investigation is looking into a transformer located inside the store."

"Once the firefighters allow access into the building... it will be possible to precisely determine the cause of the incident," it added. The explosion happened at a Waldo's store in the city center.

"Nobody will face this pain alone. From the very first moments, emergency, security and health services responded with great professionalism and commitment, controlling the situation and saving lives," the governor said.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum expressed her condolences on X "to the families and loved ones of those who died."

"I have been in contact with the Sonora governor,

Alfonso Durazo, to provide support where needed. I've instructed Interior Secretary Rosa Icela Rodriguez to send a support team in order to assist the families and the injured," she continued.

Mexican media reports said customers sought refuge inside the store after the explosion, only to become trapped by the flames. Images in local media showed the building's facade blackened from the fire with windows shattered.

Newspaper El Universal said the explosion occurred around 2:00 pm (2000 GMT) and that nearby businesses opted to close their doors in order to prevent the fire from spreading there.

Local authorities urged members of the public to avoid the area of the explosion, and canceled celebrations scheduled to be held that day in honor of the Day of the Dead holiday.

## Manipur's Opium War: Turning a Law-and-Order Battle into a Fight for Livelihoods

**M**anipur's rolling hills, once known for their serene beauty and cultural vibrancy, are now marked by the scars of a slow, devastating crisis. Beneath the surface of this fragile border state, a silent war has been unfolding—a war not only against illegal poppy cultivation but against poverty, neglect, and moral decay. The “War on Drugs” may be Manipur's most ambitious internal campaign in decades, but without an equally determined “war for livelihoods,” it risks being a cycle of destruction without recovery.

India's national imagination often paints the Northeast as a distant frontier—a land of insurgency, festivals, and forgotten promises. But today, it is also the site of one of the country's most complex narcotics challenges. What began as scattered poppy cultivation in remote hill tracts has now metastasised into a socio-economic system that funds violence, feeds addiction, and weakens state institutions. Manipur's opium economy is no longer a regional aberration—it is a national blind spot that threatens to corrode the moral and territorial integrity of India's borderlands.

To understand the depth of Manipur's opium problem, one must look beyond the moral panic of narcotics and confront the uncomfortable truth of economic desperation. Poppy farming is not simply a crime—it is often a survival strategy in regions where the state's developmental footprint fades into absence.

In the remote hill districts of Ukhrul, Kangpokpi, and Churachandpur, where roads are poor, markets distant, and irrigation non-existent, poppy is the only crop that guarantees income. It grows in harsh terrain, requires minimal investment, and commands a high price in the black market. For communities cut off from mainstream development, the choice between hunger and illegality is no choice at all.

This reality complicates the moral and legal binaries that dominate public discourse. Eradicating poppy fields may satisfy a statistic, but it destroys livelihoods overnight. The state's current approach—driven by raids, arrests, and crop destruction—has achieved visible short-term results. Satellite data from the Manipur Remote Sensing Applications Centre (MAR-SAC) shows a 60% decline in poppy cultivation between 2021-22 and 2023-24. But these victories are precarious.

Once the fields are burned, the poverty remains. The debts remain. And in the absence of an alternative, the temptation to replant inevitably returns.

There is no denying the courage and commitment of Manipur's security forces. Their operations against illegal cultivation, trafficking, and cross-border smuggling have been extensive and relentless. The numbers are impressive: over 77 square kilometres of cultivation destroyed, nearly 3,000 arrests made, and 142 hectares rehabilitated through afforestation.

Yet enforcement alone cannot win this war. The narcotics economy is adaptive and decentralized. Each destroyed field gives rise to another, deeper in the forest. Each arrested trafficker is replaced by a new recruit, lured by the same incentives.

Moreover, treating poppy farmers solely as criminals ignores the structural roots of the problem. These are not syndicates in suits—they are subsistence farmers trapped between a failing state and a thriving black market. When law enforcement becomes the only face of governance they encounter, mistrust deepens. Fear replaces cooperation.

The “War on Drugs” in Manipur, if it is to endure, must evolve from a purely punitive campaign into a holistic developmental strategy. Without this shift, the government risks winning battles while losing the war.

At the heart of the crisis lies an economic contradiction. Poppy farming is illegal, yet profitable; legal farming is permitted, yet unviable. Until that equation changes, the logic of the underground economy will persist.

Agricultural alternatives—such as ginger, turmeric, kiwi, or pineapple—have been proposed for years. But these require access to roads, storage, and markets that remain elusive in the hills. Government aid schemes, while well-intentioned, are often bureaucratic and short-lived.

Farmers complain of seeds without buyers, subsidies without follow-up, and promises without infrastructure. Simply put, eradication



must be followed by economic replacement. Development cannot arrive with bulldozers and leave with press releases. It must stay, take root, and provide consistent income.

If India can design industrial corridors across its western states, why can it not create an “Agro-Economic Corridor” across its vulnerable northeastern borderlands? Linking hill farmers to national and ASEAN markets under the “Act East Policy” could turn the geography of isolation into a geography of opportunity. Only when poppy becomes economically irrational will the narcotics economy begin to collapse.

The crisis is not confined to cultivation—it seeps into the social bloodstream. Addiction has quietly ravaged Manipur's youth, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. The state's proximity to Myanmar, coupled with weak border surveillance, has made it a major transit point for heroin and synthetic drugs.

The consequences are devastating. Families are disintegrating under the weight of addiction. Schools lose students to drugs; communities lose faith in institutions. Women are left to hold together homes torn apart by dependency and debt.

The overstretched rehabilitation centres in Imphal and Churachandpur are unable to meet demand. Civil society and church-based organisations have become lifelines of hope, offering informal counselling and moral rehabilitation. But their reach is limited, their resources thin.

Here, again, the failure is structural. Drug addiction is treated as a criminal problem rather than a public health crisis. The state spends far more on police operations than on rehabilitation and reintegration. Until this balance changes, Manipur will keep fighting symptoms rather than causes.

The opium economy in Manipur is not only a moral or social issue—it is a security threat. Drug profits sustain armed groups, finance insurgencies, and corrupt political processes. The porous Indo-Myanmar border allows traffickers to move freely, often aided by weak coordination between agencies.

But this too demands a new kind of security thinking. A counter-narcotics campaign cannot succeed without intelligence-led policing, cross-border cooperation, and community participation. Technology—satellite monitoring, drone mapping, and data analytics—must replace ad-hoc raids as the operational norm.

At the same time, security forces must be trained to see the human dimension of their mission. Eradicating poppy fields is only half the battle; restoring dignity and livelihood completes it. Each enforcement operation should be paired with rehabilitation programs, agricultural aid, and vocational training. When people see the police not as destroyers but as enablers of opportunity, the cycle of fear can be broken.

Manipur needs not just a “war on drugs,” but a “peace through development” policy—a vision where enforcement protects people as much as it punishes crime.

Why has Manipur's opium crisis remained so invisible to the national discourse? Part of the reason is geography; another part is perception. The Northeast continues to occupy a peripheral space in India's political and media consciousness. National debates seldom reach the hills, except when violence or tragedy forces attention.

Yet the implications of this crisis extend far beyond Manipur. Narcotics money sustains insurgency networks that threaten national security. Drug trafficking routes link Indian territory to international crime syndicates. Addiction weakens a generation that could otherwise contribute to the region's growth.

To ignore this crisis is to ignore the vulnerabilities of India's eastern frontier. The

moral and strategic neglect of Manipur today could mirror the mistakes of Punjab in the 1980s—where drugs, politics, and militancy once combined to create a toxic mix.

New Delhi must treat Manipur's struggle not as a local aberration but as a national imperative. The “War on Drugs” should be part of a larger Northeast Stability and Development Strategy—an integrated framework that unites enforcement, livelihood, and rehabilitation under one mission.

The crisis also calls for moral reflection. When a community turns to narcotics to survive, it signals not only economic failure but ethical erosion. The prophet Micah's words—“to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly”—resonate deeply here.

Justice means protecting the vulnerable from the lure of crime by ensuring fairness in opportunity. Mercy means treating addicts and poor farmers not as criminals but as citizens in need of help. Humility means accepting that state power alone cannot heal moral wounds—society must participate.

Faith-based organisations, women's groups, and youth collectives have already

taken up this moral calling. Their local credibility makes them crucial partners in prevention and recovery. The state should formally integrate them into anti-drug initiatives, not merely as volunteers but as co-architects of rehabilitation policy.

Manipur's battle against narcotics must now enter its second phase—a transformation from suppression to restoration. The first phase burned fields; the second must build futures.

A reimagined campaign could rest on three pillars:

1. Economic Empowerment: Immediate investment in hill economies through agri-processing, bamboo industries, and eco-tourism. Farmers who abandon poppy must be guaranteed stable markets and income.

2. Social Recovery: Expand de-addiction centres, fund community counselling, and introduce school-based drug education. Treat addiction as a public health crisis, not a moral failure.

3. Institutional Integrity: Strengthen inter-agency coordination and ensure transparency to prevent corruption within enforcement systems. The credibility of the campaign depends on fairness as much as firmness.

The ultimate goal must be not only to destroy the drug trade but to make it obsolete—economically, socially, and morally.

Manipur's poppy crisis is a mirror to India's governance and moral priorities. It reflects what happens when national attention overlooks the margins and when development skips the hills. The danger is not just the drug itself but the blindness it feeds—a blindness that treats symptoms without seeing causes.

To win this war, India must see Manipur clearly—not as a troubled periphery, but as a test of its capacity for inclusive justice. The poppy fields will wither only when the seeds of opportunity take their place—when the hills yield not narcotics but dignity.

The nation must look east, not with pity, but with purpose. Because the true victory will not be measured in destroyed fields, but in restored lives.

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## BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM





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



**11 JAN**  
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 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.  
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**11 JAN**  
**Barak Valley Conclave**  
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders.  
 Includes: KCCs, and D'governance and reform for better governance. Local government and private sector synergy. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



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



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



**10 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.  
 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.  
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 Venue: KRC Foundation, Silchar  
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 Real glimpse of Science to its new heights. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents.  
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**Photography**  
 Online Photography Contest: River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture.  
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**Barak Festival**  
**Band Night** 10 JAN  
**Musical Night** 11 JAN



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

**Painting Carnival**  
 Water Colour and Oil and Saw Paper Campaign

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