



# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED



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**PERSPECTIVE**  
If you want to grow as a man, Never stay in the same place for too long. Explore the world. Stay detached.

## Earthquake of magnitude 3.5 hits Noney district

**IMPHAL**  
An earthquake of magnitude 3.5 struck Noney in Manipur on Thursday, the National Centre for Seismology (NCS) said.

In an X post, NCS stated that the earthquake occurred at a depth of 26 kilometres at 5:42 am today. "EQ of M: 3.5, On: 27/11/2025 05:42:11 IST, Lat: 24.57 N, Long: 93.22 E, Depth: 26 Km, Location: Noney, Manipur," the nodal agency posted on X.

Earlier today, an earthquake of magnitude 4.0 struck the Bay of Bengal at 2:59 am. "EQ of M: 4.0, On: 27/11/2025 02:59:55 IST, Lat: 20.25 N, Long: 91.31 E, Depth: 10 Km, Location: Bay of Bengal," NCS wrote.

Earthquakes are a frequent phenomenon in Manipur and north-east India, which witnessed several earthquakes between November 2024 and January 2025.

Meanwhile, on November 21, Dhaka and several parts of Bangladesh experienced strong tremors following a 5.5-magnitude earthquake near Narsingdi, tremors of which were felt in parts of India, including West Bengal and adjoining north-east India, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS).

The USGS reported that the quake occurred at 10:08 am (IST). Tremors were widely felt in Dhaka around 10:40 am.

### WHO SAID WHAT



**Violence has no place in America. Michelle and I are praying for the servicemembers shot in Washington, DC today, and send our love to their families as they enter this holiday season under the most tragic of circumstances.** ~ Barack Obama, Former US President

## ED Tracks Border Syndicates: Major Raids in Mizoram, Assam & Gujarat Over Money Laundering

**NEW DELHI**

In a first-of-its-kind action near the town bordering Myanmar, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted searches at various locations across Mizoram, Assam and Gujarat.

The search operations were carried out under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, at various locations across Aizawl and Champhai in Mizoram, Sribhumi (Karimganj) in Assam, and Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

ED initiated an investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by Mizoram Police under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, wherein 4.724 kgs of Heroin valued at Rs 1,41,66,000 were seized from six individuals.

From the financial analysis of the arrested persons, financial linkages between Mizoram-based firms and Gujarat-based firms were established.

"Gujarat-based firms supplied Pseudoephedrine tablets (Schedule-A, B, C substances in the NDPS-RCS Order 2013) and Caffeine



Anhydrous (Pre-Precursor used in manufacturing of Methamphetamine Tablets) to firms based in Mizoram, with links to drug smugglers who carry out their smuggling and hawala transactions through habitual offenders of Champhai, Mizoram. Financial linkages of the Mizoram-based firms have also been found with Kolkata-based shell entities, who had procured the said consignment of Caffeine Anhydrous," said the ED.

The agency stated, "The precursors used in the production of Methamphetamine are transported from India to Myanmar through the porous international borders, where they are manufactured, and the fi-

nal products are transported from Myanmar to India majorly through the state of Mizoram."

As per the ED, huge credits of Rs 52.8 crores were noted in bank accounts of narco hawala operators, including cash deposits in Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, West Bengal, Tripura and Delhi.

"The detailed statements of narco hawala operators are going on." During the investigation under PMLA, 2002, the agency said that the search proceedings led to the recovery of cash amounting to Rs 35,00,000 along with other evidence in digital devices, which are being examined.

## Meghalaya imposes night curfew along Bangladesh border to curb infiltration

**SHILLONG**

Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district administration on Tuesday imposed a night curfew in areas along the India-Bangladesh border amid concerns over infiltration by illegal migrants and members of banned militant groups, officials said.

The night curfew takes immediate effect and will remain in force from 8 pm to 6 am for two months within a one-kilometre radius of the 'Zero Line' along the border.

Issuing the order, District Magistrate R. M. Kurbah noted that certain stretches of the international border in the district remain porous and susceptible to infiltration by illegal migrants, members of proscribed militant outfits, smugglers, and organised crime networks linked to anti-national elements.

"Such elements may attempt to gather in large numbers during night hours near the 'Zero Line' to carry out activities that could disturb peace and tranquillity in the district," it said. During curfew hours, any movement by individuals attempting to cross into Bangladesh or enter Indian territory illegally will be strictly



prohibited, the order stated. It further bars the unlawful gathering of five or more people, the carrying of arms or objects that could serve as weapons, and "all illegal activities, including the smuggling of cattle, contraband items, betel nut, betel leaves, dry fish, cigarettes, and tea leaves."

## Assam Govt to issue police appointment letters on Dec 3, extend Orunodoi to BTC



**GUWAHATI**

A series of major announcements concerning employment, student welfare and social security schemes were made on Wednesday, including police appointments, financial aid for HSLC students and the expansion of the Orunodoi scheme to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) area.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said appointment letters would be distributed on December 3 in Guwahati to candidates who have successfully cleared recruitment examinations for various posts in the police department, including constable, commando, Armed Branch (AB), Unarmed Branch (UB) and Sub-Inspector (SI).

"On December 3 in Guwahati, appointment letters will be handed over to all those who have cleared

the police, commando, AB, UB and SI recruitment examinations. This is a step towards strengthening our police force and ensuring fair and transparent recruitment," he said.

The Chief Minister also announced a special support scheme for students preparing for the HSLC examination, aimed at ensuring proper nutrition and well-being during the crucial exam period. Under the initiative, eligible candidates will receive Rs 300 per month.

"The dates for HSLC have been announced. To help students stay healthy and focused, we have introduced a scheme under which students will receive aid to arrange essential supplies and nutritional support. An amount of Rs 300 will be credited monthly.

The payment for November will be released on November 28, and the instalments for December, January and February will follow accordingly," Sarma stated. On the Orunodoi scheme, he said the final list of beneficiaries is nearing completion and confirmed its formal rollout in BTC areas during his visit to Kokrajhar on December 12.

"The people of BTC have been frequently asking about Orunodoi. We have almost finalised the list, and from December 12 onwards, when I visit Kokrajhar, beneficiaries in BTC will begin receiving the benefits of the scheme," he added.

## 'Not Against Anyone': Meghalaya CM Clarifies Vision Behind 'One North East' Initiative

**SHILLONG**

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma on Thursday, November 27 emphasized that the initiative of 'One North East' is not directed against any individual or group, but is rooted in the need for unity among indigenous populations whose voices, he said, are often "suppressed or unheard" when they act alone.

Sangma arrived in Agartala to attend a massive gathering of One North East at Swami Vivekananda Maidan today.

He told reporters that when people remain individual and are not united, their voices are suppressed and sometimes not heard.

"This has nothing to do with anybody else, nor are we trying to go against anyone. This is purely about bringing all of us together. We are looking ahead to bringing our voices, our concerns, our strength, other issues, and also being there for each other. We need to make sure that nobody feels they are alone. Through this platform, we will be making a difference that we have been wanting for a long time. I am very happy to see the kind of response where leaders from various communities are standing together," said the Chief Minister.



He said that this will have a very positive impact not just in the North East but across the entire country, and would send a powerful message.

"That indigenous people of this region are coming together, and we are going to work together and fight together for the future generations and the present as well. There is al-

ways more to be desired, and there is always a concern that people could have done much more for this region. We had been together in the past also, and challenges were there; even now, challenges remain. But we are committed, focused, and sure that we will take this forward for the welfare of our people," he added.

## IIT Guwahati researchers develop Advanced Epoxy Coating to protect steel in harsh marine conditions

**GUWAHATI**

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati have developed a corrosion-resistant epoxy coating to protect steel structures exposed to seawater and high-salinity environments.

The findings of this research have been published in the prestigious journal Advanced Engineering Materials, in a paper co-authored by Prof. Chandan Das, Dept. of Chemical Engineering, IIT Guwahati, and research scholar Dr Anil Kumar.

Corrosion is a natural and gradual process that weakens metal surfaces and shortens the lifespan of essential structures, particularly those exposed to saltwater environments, such as offshore platforms, coastal bridges, port infrastructure, and marine pipelines. It has also played a role in major industrial incidents such as the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy and the 1992 Guadalajara explosion.

Corrosion also causes environmental degradation and impacts human and aquatic



life. Although barrier coatings are widely used for corrosion protection, they do not completely protect the surface and develop microscopic defects over time, allowing moisture and salts to penetrate and damage the underlying metal.

To address this challenge, researchers worldwide have experimented with strengthening epoxy coatings by adding

various nanomaterials.

Nanomaterials are ultra-small particles, thousands of times smaller than the width of a human hair, that can enhance the strength, durability, and protective performance of coatings. While many studies have explored individual materials or simple combinations, no prior work has combined reduced graphene oxide (RGO), zinc oxide (ZnO), and polyaniline (PANI) within a single epoxy coating for marine corrosion protection.

Researchers at IIT Guwahati have combined these three materials into one coating system. The novel nanocomposite has been developed by attaching zinc oxide nanorods to reduced graphene oxide and then wrapping this structure with polyaniline.

The composite was then blended into an epoxy coating and evaluated using several characterisation methods.

The developed epoxy coating has shown improved performance compared to standard epoxy. It formed a denser and more uniform barrier, showed stronger adhesion

to the steel surface, and slowed the movement of corrosive elements more effectively.

These characteristics make it suitable for applications in marine infrastructure, offshore platforms, shipbuilding, coastal pipelines, and other steel structures that must withstand continuous exposure to saltwater.

Speaking about the research, Prof. Chandan Das said, "The incorporation of RGO-ZnO-PANI nanocomposite into epoxy coating offers a promising strategy for achieving long-term corrosion resistance in harsh marine environments. As the next step, we are working towards assessing the long-term durability, real-world performance, and life-cycle impact of this coating."

The work from IIT Guwahati contributes to ongoing research on corrosion-resistant materials and provides a pathway to improve the reliability and longevity of structures operating in marine and high-salinity environments.

## Manipur Governor Calls for Unity, Rejection of Violence on Constitution Day

**IMPHAL**

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Wednesday urged citizens to uphold constitutional values, reject violence, and protect the dignity and rights of every community as the state observed Constitution Day at the Palace Auditorium of the Manipur State Film Development Society (MSFDS).

Addressing the gathering, Bhalla called on the people to strengthen democratic institutions and reaffirm their commitment to the ideals laid down by the framers of the Constitution. He said embracing constitutional duties and promoting unity were essential for peace and progress in Manipur.

The observance, held under the theme "Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Swabhimān," commemorated the adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949. As part of the ceremony, the Governor led participants in reading the Preamble, highlighting the core values of

justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

Reflecting on India's constitutional journey, Bhalla paid tribute to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and other members of the Constituent Assembly, noting that their vision and scholarship had shaped one of the world's most enduring democratic frameworks. He emphasised the importance of constitutional morality, adherence to the rule of law, and the responsibility of every citizen—especially the youth—to uphold democratic values.

Bhalla said Manipur's resilience, vibrant civil society, and youth-led initiatives across education, sports, arts and entrepreneurship demonstrated how constitutional ideals continue to guide the state toward a harmonious and progressive future.

The event was attended by former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, Rajya Sabha MP Leishemba Sanajaoba, MLAs, senior officials, teachers and students.



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## COP30 ACHIEVEMENTS

The UN Climate Conference (COP29), world's largest climate conference that brought together nearly 200 countries in Baku, Azerbaijan, wrapped up with a hard-fought agreement on climate finance but uncertainties over the climate crisis mitigation still looms large. Tripling finance to developing countries from \$100 billion to \$300 billion annually by 2035, aiming to scale up finance to \$1.3 trillion from public and private sources, will be of little use if the issue of "who pays what is not decided" and the fund committed is not delivered in time.

The question is of paramount importance at this time, as we have witnessed an earlier target of \$100 billion set in 2009, which was reached for the first time only in 2022, after a delay of 13 years. On business-as-usual scenario, the world is set to pay a too heavy a cost. The road ahead seems to be rocky, suggests the work done so far not only on funding but also on climate crisis adaptation and mitigation.

A deal to advance a UN-governed global carbon market was also signed early in the conference fund projects cutting greenhouse gas emissions. This market will facilitate the trading of carbon credits, incentivizing countries to reduce emissions and invest in climate-friendly projects. Other steps forward at COP29 included extension of a programme centred on gender and climate change, and agreement on support for the least developed countries to carry out national adaptation plans.

However, funding agreement for \$300 billion yearly by 2035 reached under New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) frustrated the negotiators from the developing countries and the island states that are hit hardest by the climate crisis, and many among them are undergoing an existential crisis. Civil society groups and developing nations were totally disappointed with the funding pledges from wealthier countries. Several countries had also boycotted the final negotiation meeting extended after the scheduled conclusion of the summit.

Developing nations who had sought over \$1 trillion in assistance called the agreement "insulting" and argued it did not give them the vital resources they required to truly address the complexities of the climate crisis.

Reacting to the outcome, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "I had hoped for a more ambitious outcome – on both finance and mitigation – to meet the great challenge we face. But this agreement provides a base on which to build", but adding "It must be honoured in full and on time. Commitments must quickly become cash. All countries must come together to ensure the top-end of this new goal is met." For many vulnerable nations, it represents a glimmer of hope—but only if commitments translate into swift action, he emphasized.

Focusing on the step forward the outcome represents, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell said, "It has been a difficult journey, but we have delivered a deal. This new finance goal is an insurance policy for humanity amid worsening climate impacts hitting every country, but like any insurance policy, it only works if premiums are paid in full and on time. He further has emphasized that the world leaves Baku with a mountain of work to do. "So, this is no time for victory laps. We need to set our sights and redouble our efforts on the road to Belem" the city that will host COP30 next year.

India's representative strongly denounced the new goal, calling it a "paltry sum" and emphasizing, "We seek a much higher ambition from the developed countries and the amount agreed does not inspire trust that we will come out of this grave problem of climate change."

A representative from a group of small island nations said: "After this COP29 ends, we cannot just sail off into the sunset. We are literally sinking," and the conference outcome highlighted "what a very different boat our vulnerable countries are in, compared to the developed countries".

A major issue now will be deciding who pays what. The list of richer countries responsible, drawn up in 2002, is outdated. Countries like China and India have since developed rapidly and increased their emissions. There are also questions about how the funds will be distributed and ensuring accountability. Some developed nations argued that these rapidly developing countries should also contribute.

The next major milestone in the global climate effort will be the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled for June 2025 in Seville, Spain. That event would focus on mobilizing financial resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, with climate finance as a key component.

Another important thing is the Nationally Determined Contributions, that are to be submitted afresh by every country by February 2025. The current NDC commitments are not enough to deal with the current climate crisis. Moreover, the commitments are not being fulfilled by many countries leaving vast gap between the efforts and what is actually required to keep the temperature at 1.5 degree Celsius by 2030 under Paris Agreement of 2015.

Several unresolved issues will be sure to spill over to COP30 to be held in Belem in Brazil in November 2025, which will be a crucial moment for countries to strengthen their national climate action plans and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy. The conference will place a strong emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting clean energy technologies, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNCCC) has said.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

— George Bernard Shaw

# INDIA'S ECONOMIC OUTPERFORMANCE IN A FRAGMENTED GLOBAL ECONOMY

T. SHAILLY

The global economic outlook over the past few years has been characterised by deceleration, financial instability, and geopolitical uncertainty. Advanced economies continue to cope with persistent inflation, tighter monetary conditions, and the aftermath of supply chain disruptions triggered by the pandemic and conflict in Europe. In this subdued recovery environment, India has emerged as a critical driver of global economic momentum. Recording a growth rate of 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, India has solidified its status as the world's fastest-growing large economy. The significance of this performance becomes clearer through comparative analysis: the United States is growing at approximately 2 per cent, major Eurozone economies are struggling to remain above 1 per cent, and China, the engine of emerging market expansion, is stabilising around 4 to 4.5 per cent. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India will contribute almost 16 per cent of global growth in 2025, demonstrating not only national resilience but also systemic importance.

India's economic trajectory is underpinned by three core strengths: robust domestic demand, a conducive policymaking environment, and strategic investment in productive capacities. Private consumption constitutes nearly 60 per cent of national output, supported by a youthful and expanding middle class whose aspirations increasingly align with global patterns of modern consumption. This persistent demand base has cushioned India from the sharper downturns visible in export-driven economies exposed to weakened global trade flows.

Infrastructure development has likewise played a decisive role in shaping growth momentum. The Union Budget 2024-25 allocated a record 11 lakh crore rupees to capital expenditure, channelled into transport networks, logistics infrastructure, energy projects, and urban development. These investments not only create employment but also reduce bottlenecks, enhance productivity, and support the emergence of new industrial clusters.

A notable structural shift is visible in the manufacturing sector, encouraged by Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes designed to build domestic supply chain capacity while attracting foreign capital and technology. India's mobile phone exports, surpassing 15 billion USD in 2023-24, mark a symbolic transformation from import dependency to export competitiveness. The government's pursuit of semiconductor capacity, coupled with expansion in pharmaceuticals, green technology, and advanced materials, suggests a deliberate rebalancing of the economy toward high-value production. Such shifts conform with the broader national strategy of reducing external vulnerabilities and scaling up contributions to global industrial output.

India's services sector, particularly digital services, continues to demonstrate unmatched dynamism. With IT and IT-enabled services achieving exports of over 260 billion USD in 2024 and employing more than five million professionals, India remains a cornerstone of global technological operations. The digital ecosystem, rooted in the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile trinity, has enabled transformative financial inclusion. Over 50 crore citizens now have access to banking services integrated with secure digital identity and mobile connectivity. The public digital infrastructure has strengthened welfare delivery, expanded credit access, and positioned India as a global reference point for inclusive digital governance.

Performance on human development indicators has advanced alongside economic expansion. The Ayushman Bharat health protection scheme, covering nearly 60 crore citizens, represents the most extensive public healthcare coverage programme in the



world. The Har Ghar Jal initiative, which has extended piped water to more than 14 crore rural households, has materially reduced health risks while supporting gender parity by easing domestic labour burdens. Increasing broadband penetration, with the number of internet users crossing 850 million, has significantly bridged urban-rural divides in education, market access, and public service delivery. These shifts highlight a model of growth that increasingly integrates social protection and welfare enhancement.

India's renewable energy transition underscores its commitment to sustainable modernisation. With installed renewable capacity reaching 190 gigawatts in 2024, India is now the third-largest renewable energy generator globally. Progress in solar and wind projects, electric mobility, and emerging green hydrogen infrastructure reflects a conscious alignment between economic development and environmental responsibility, particularly critical for a nation facing acute climate vulnerabilities.

The strength of India's economic fundamentals becomes more pronounced when analysed alongside those of neighbouring South Asian economies. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, India's closest economic comparators, have experienced severe headwinds in recent years, ranging from debt distress to balance-of-payments crises. Pakistan has grappled with high inflation, currency depreciation, and limited fiscal space, resulting in reliance on external bailouts and constrained developmental investment. Sri Lanka's 2022 sovereign debt crisis has had prolonged consequences, affecting public finance, essential imports, and social stability. Bangladesh, once celebrated for its rapid export-driven growth, has recently faced foreign exchange shortages and industrial vulnerabilities amid a global demand downturn.

In contrast, India's external and fiscal positions remain comparatively robust. Foreign Direct Investment inflows touching 71 billion USD in FY 2024 demonstrate enduring investor confidence. Foreign exchange reserves remain among the world's largest, offering a buffer against global financial volatility. Demographic advantages also differentiate India from its neighbours. While Pakistan and Bangladesh face employment stress and governance challenges, India's demographic dividend, with over 65 per cent of the population below 35 years, emerges alongside a strengthening technological ecosystem and expanding skilled workforce. This places India in a structurally advantageous position for long-term productivity gains.

Moreover, India's approach to economic governance has provided relative insulation from extreme shocks. Monetary policy has maintained a careful balance between inflation management and growth promotion, while fiscal policy has prioritised public investment rather than indiscriminate con-

sumption-driven stimulus. By avoiding the systemic crises faced elsewhere in the region, India offers a landscape of political and macroeconomic stability that is increasingly vital for sustainable growth.

India's progress, however, is accompanied by systemic challenges requiring sustained attention. Unemployment among educated youth remains a complex concern, signalling a need for accelerated job creation in advanced manufacturing and emerging technology sectors. Regional imbalances continue to influence development outcomes, as states in central and eastern India lag behind their southern and western counterparts. Skilling demands have intensified due to rapid technological change; thus, education systems must evolve to enhance innovation capacities and critical employability skills. Infrastructure expansion, although substantial, will require deeper urban planning reforms to ensure mobility, housing, and sustainability amid growing urbanisation.

These structural challenges do not negate India's economic strength but instead highlight areas where future policy focus will be essential to sustain long-term momentum.

India's rise carries broader geopolitical significance. As global supply chains diversify away from concentrated manufacturing networks, India is emerging as a preferred alternative destination due to its scale, stability, and market depth. The country's energy transition underscores its role in shaping climate-responsible economic development. Its digital governance capabilities have become models for emerging economies seeking low-cost, high-efficiency public systems. With increasing stakes in global economic governance institutions, India's role in shaping international trade and investment norms is set to strengthen.

India's growth thus moves beyond national economic performance; it contributes to a redistribution of economic power in the international system. While many large economies face demographic contraction, rising debt, or eroding competitiveness, India's expanding internal market and increasingly sophisticated industrial base position it as a long-term pillar of global economic stability.

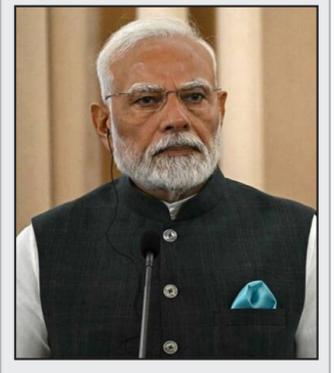
India's economic ascent in a fractured global environment highlights the significance of resilient domestic demand, strategic investment, and inclusive technological governance. Through advances in manufacturing competitiveness, digital infrastructure, renewable energy, and social protection, India has demonstrated a development trajectory that integrates economic dynamism with equitable progress. A comparative analysis across South Asia underscores India's relative security, stability, and future-focused economic architecture. Challenges remain particularly in employment generation, skilling, and regional development but they exist alongside a strong reform foundation.

In a world searching for engines of

renewed growth, India stands at the forefront, not only as a beneficiary of global change but increasingly as a shaping force in economic transformation. Its trajectory affirms that stability, ambition, and inclusive innovation can coexist as a sustainable pathway for national and global prosperity.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**A historic first for India's high-tech manufacturing! The Union Cabinet has approved a scheme to establish India's first integrated ecosystem for manufacturing Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM), which are essential components in electric vehicles, wind turbines, defence systems and aerospace technologies. This initiative aims to create domestic capacities and reduce imports. It also focuses on green technologies.**  
~ Narendra Modi, PM



## Dipping into the new data protection regime

ATUL N MENON

November 14 was an important date in India's digital journey, marking a milestone by bringing to life a comprehensive framework that fundamentally changes how companies handle personal data. One of the major things that changes with the notification of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025—at least in theory—is the way an individual's browsing history, e-commerce trail, or social media use can be used by advertisers. We are all used to privacy policies posted on these platforms, though hardly anyone reads them. What's critical for the layman to note is that the DPDP framework transports privacy from a constitutional promise to enforceable rights and duties.

The good news is that companies can no longer hide behind impenetrable legal jargon. There has to be a clear and understandable request from the person determining the purpose and means of processing personal data (data fiduciary), for consent from the person whose data is being processed (data principal). The request shall be accompanied by a notice informing the principal of the purpose for processing the personal data, the way the principal can withdraw or modify consent, the grievance mechanism available, and the way complaints can be raised against the data fiduciary.

The rules provide timelines for data fiduciaries to maintain records before erasing them

from their system. It is also significant to note that the rules apply to processing personal data outside India if it is in connection with offering goods or services within India.

The rules also provide for registration of 'consent managers', entities that play the role of a trusted intermediary between data principals and data fiduciaries, by assisting the data principal to manage their consents through a given platform. Consent managers have certain obligations too, such as implementing reasonable technical and organisational measures to prevent personal data breaches, and maintaining detailed records of every consent given, denied, or withdrawn, along with related notices and data sharing.

Ultimately, the consent must be a clear affirmation of an agreement to process personal data for a specific purpose. This shows a fundamental shift in power by placing the individual—data principal—at the centre of the framework. The DPDP rules that convert the framework into day-to-day obligations.

The DPDP framework also takes data breaches seriously. The haunting stories of password leaks, personal photos getting exposed, and bank details stolen cannot be dealt with silently by companies accountable for the breach. There is a mandatory requirement for them to report to the Data Protection Board without delay, and the board will thereafter have to take note of the steps taken by the company to remedy the wrong

or mitigate the risk. The board is designed to be entirely digital. This means filings, hearings, and decisions are all expected to be done online.

Another important point to note (especially if you are a parent) is that your children are protected. Data fiduciaries cannot process your child's data without your verifiable consent. Companies cannot track your child's behaviour or show them targeted advertisements.

The penalties that the Board can impose range from ₹10,000 (for data principals who provide wrong information or impersonate another person through the data they provide) to ₹250 crore (for violations of the Act by data fiduciaries). These fines are designed for body corporates to take notice. However, not all body corporates are treated the same way; the central government's department for promotion of industry and internal trade-recognised startups have lighter compliance mandates. Further, the rules provide softer tools, such as mediation and voluntary undertakings.

There are also certain legitimate uses that are exempted. For example, in case of a medical emergency that poses a threat to life or immediate health of the data principal, or in taking measures to prevent an epidemic. The central government itself has been given a wide range of exemptions. It can process data for 'security' or 'public order'. While the government maintains that public interest overrides privacy concerns to the worry of critics, the exemptions granted

to them remain a concern, as they reignite the debate over unchecked surveillance and abuse of power.

Unlike the General Data Protection Regulation, 2018, which is the comprehensive data privacy law enacted by the European Union, which demands strict necessity, proportionality, and independent oversight, India's DPDP leaves these boundaries unclear, echoing the longstanding constitutional worries.

Importantly, a recent notification states that the law will be rolled out in a staggered manner. While some provisions take effect immediately, the main compliance requirements for companies will take effect after 18 months. While this appears to be extremely practical, the most crucial citizen facing rights, such as informed consent, breach notification, data correction and erasure, and grievance redressal, are deferred for 18 months. The Data Protection Board, scheduled to be set up in the next year for digitally accessible grievance redress, faces scrutiny for potentially limited independence—appointments and removals are tightly managed by the central government.

In any event, the notification of the DPDP marks a transformative moment and plays a crucial role in India's growing digital economy. Its success shall inevitably rest on the shoulders of the citizens, corporates and the regulators in creating an ecosystem that is both secure and inclusive.

# Assam Cabinet Clears ST Status Report for Six Communities, Approves Land for Textile Heritage Museum

GUWAHATI

The Assam Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Wednesday approved a series of key decisions aimed at strengthening community inclusion, safeguarding cultural heritage, and improving institutional frameworks across the state.

In one of the most significant moves, the Cabinet cleared the report prepared by the Group of Ministers (GoM) on granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six major communities-Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Koch-Rajbongshi, and Tea Tribes (Adivasis). The GoM, led by Education Minister Ranaj Pegu with Ministers Pijush Hazarika and Keshab Mahanta as members, was tasked with examining the long-pend-



ing ST status demand.

Following the Cabinet's approval, the report will be placed before the Assam Legislative Assembly, after which it will be forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs for further action. The development marks a critical step in addressing decades-old sociopolitical con-

cerns surrounding tribal recognition in the state.

The Cabinet also greenlit the transfer of three bighas of land from the Government Muga Farm at Reshom Nagar, Khanapara-under the Handloom, Textiles & Sericulture Department-to the Cultural Affairs Department. The land will be used to set up a state-of-the-art textile heritage museum aimed at showcasing Assam's diverse weaving traditions.

Supported by JSW I&P Holdings Pvt. Ltd., the museum will prominently display the iconic Vrindavani Vastra, a historically significant textile created during the Vaishnavite renaissance led by Srimanta Sankardeva. The rare artefact is being brought on loan from the British Museum in London. Officials

said the museum will serve as a cultural landmark celebrating the state's famed muga silk and broader textile legacy.

In another administrative reform, the Cabinet approved the Assam Survey and Settlement Training Centre Teachers' Service Rules, 2025, which will govern recruitment norms, service conditions, and career progression for faculty at the Assam Survey & Settlement Training Centre (ASSTC) in Dakhingaon, Guwahati. The updated rules are intended to enhance training quality and institutional efficiency in land administration.

The decisions taken reflect the state government's continued push toward community welfare, cultural preservation, and administrative modernization across Assam.

SRIBHUMI

A powerful explosion caused by a leaking LPG cylinder triggered panic in Sribhumi's Charbazar area late on Wednesday, leaving around 20 people injured, several of them critically.

The blast, which occurred at the residence of Munna Kurmi, was followed by a fire that quickly spread through the congested neighbourhood. Emergency responders, assisted by local residents, rushed the injured to Sribhumi Civil Hospital soon after the incident.

With multiple victims requiring urgent specialised care, authorities transferred the critically wounded to Silchar Medical

College Hospital for advanced treatment.

In the wake of the accident, residents voiced sharp criticism of the Sribhumi Civil Hospital, alleging a serious lack of essential medical facilities. Many families said they were compelled to arrange basic supplies from outside, raising questions about the hospital's emergency preparedness.

Locals have demanded immediate upgrades to the region's healthcare infrastructure to ensure timely and adequate response during such crises.

Officials have launched an investigation into the source of the LPG leak and are assessing the extent of the fire-related damage.

## Assam Rifles seizes methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 13.33 crore along Indo-Myanmar border

CHAMPHAI

Assam Rifles seized methamphetamine tablets valued at Rs 13.33 crore during an operation near the Indo-Myanmar border in Mizoram's Champhai district.

According to the Assam Rifles, the operation was launched on November 25 following specific intelligence inputs about possible narcotics movement along World Bank Road in the Zokhawthar area, a key transit point for cross-border trafficking. A team from the force conducted surveillance in the area and detected suspicious activity, prompting immediate action.

During the subsequent search, security personnel recovered 4444 kg of methamphetamine tablets. The substance, classified as a psychotropic drug under Indian law, is among the most trafficked narcotics in the region due to its high demand in international markets.

One individual, identified as Bawi Kanthanga, a male national of Myanmar, was apprehended at the site. Initial assessment indicates that the consignment was likely part of a larger trafficking network operating across the porous border. The relevant authorities will conduct further investigations and interrogations. Assam Rifles stated that the seized narcotics were handed over to the Excise and Narcotics Department in Champhai for detailed examination and initiation of legal proceedings as per existing regulations.

Zokhawthar, located along the India-Myanmar border, has witnessed several narcotics-related incidents in recent years. Security forces routinely conduct joint and independent operations to curb the trafficking of methamphetamine tablets, heroin, and other contraband that often originate from drug-producing hubs in the region.

## Rs 200-Crore Irregularities Alleged in Arunachal Frontier Highway Land Compensation; USDLSU Seeks Probe

ITANAGAR

The Upper Subansiri District Law Students' Union (USDLSU) has accused officials associated with the Arunachal Frontier Highway project of large-scale financial irregularities, alleging that nearly Rs 200 crore was siphoned off in the name of land compensation under Packages 4 and 5.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Union said the suspected mismanagement of public funds raises "serious questions" over transparency in one of the state's most strategically significant infrastructure projects. It warned that if the allegations go unaddressed, the rights of genuine landowners-whose compensation the funds were intended for-would be severely compromised.

USDLSU said such lapses not only hinder the highway's pro-

gress but also risk eroding public trust in government-backed development projects. The Union demanded an impartial and time-bound investigation into the compensation process and urged the state government to hold responsible officials and departments accountable for any discrepancies.

The organisation also pressed for stringent safeguards to prevent corruption in future disbursements, arguing that clean and transparent compensation mechanisms are critical for the smooth execution of the frontier highway, which is designed to bolster border connectivity and national security.

The Arunachal Frontier Highway, a mega project of strategic importance, has already encountered delays amid rising public concerns. Authorities have yet to respond to the latest allegations, and further inquiry into the purported scam is awaited.

## Manipur BJP MLA Flags Rising Infiltration, Land Encroachment in Zeliangrong Areas



IMPHAL

Manipur BJP legislator Dinganglung Gangmei has sounded the alarm over what he described as increasing infiltration and land encroachment in areas inhabited by the Zeliangrong community.

Gangmei, who represents the 54-Nungba (ST) Assembly Con-

stituency and is a retired IAS officer, issued a statement on Facebook cautioning that "new villages are sprouting up along the highway, and outsiders are claiming ancestral land rights." He said the trend was particularly worrying in Zeliangrong-populated belts of Manipur.

The MLA, a prominent mem-

ber of the Zeliangrong Naga community, said the perceived silence within the community was "detrimental" to its long-term interests. "It's time for the present generation to stand up and assert our rights, protecting our land and heritage," he added, calling for collective action to safeguard traditional territories.

His remarks come just days after the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) - an underground outfit currently engaged in peace talks - launched its fourth anti-poppy operation in Kangpokpi district on November 21. During the operation, ZUF cadres reportedly intercepted poppy growers who were unable to speak Manipuri, triggering questions about their identity and origin.

The group later stated that the inability of the cultivators to communicate in the state's official language indicated they were "foreign refugees and illegal intruders" engaged in illicit drug cultivation on Zeliangrong ancestral land. The operation took place in Pongringlong (Charoipandonga) under Saitu Sadar Hills in Kangpokpi district.

"It's time for the present generation to stand up and protect our rights, our land and identity," Gangmei said, calling for coordinated efforts, greater assertiveness and solidarity to safeguard the future of the tribe.

## 700 Acres of Illegal Poppy Cultivation Found in Manipur's Reserved Forests: Ex-CM

IMPHAL

Former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Wednesday claimed that a recent aerial survey has uncovered nearly 700 acres of illegal poppy cultivation in the hill ranges of Kangpokpi district, deep inside protected forest zones.

According to Singh, the proliferation of poppy fields has caused extensive damage to reserved forests and poses a serious threat to Manipur's ecological balance and cultural heritage. He called for urgent, intensified counter-narcotics operations to curb what he described as a rapidly escalating crisis.

In a post on X, the former chief minister said repeated warnings issued during his tenure about the expansion of the "deadly drug corridor" from the Golden Triangle into Manipur had often been ignored.



He said vast stretches of forest land had been steadily swallowed by illegal poppy cultivation despite alerts raised by his government.

Singh, however, acknowledged the "commendable work" being carried out by the present govern-

ment in coordination with the Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, NCB, Manipur Police and other agencies. He said joint teams are destroying poppy plantations across multiple locations every day, but cautioned that the magnitude of the problem

remains overwhelming. Some pockets, he warned, would require heavy manpower and prolonged, month-long operations to fully clear.

Sharing aerial footage, Singh said the survey conducted on November 24, 2025, detected roughly 700 acres of poppy fields in the Makhon village hill ranges under the Sapomeima Police Station in Kangpokpi. The area, he noted, falls inside the Kanglelongbi-Kangpokpi Reserved Forest and lies close to Mount Koubru, a sacred site revered by Indigenous communities.

Reiterating the seriousness of the situation, Singh said the level of forest destruction and cultural danger posed by large-scale illicit cultivation is "real," emphasising the need for sustained and intensified action to safeguard Manipur's ecological and cultural integrity.

## Union minister seeks NHIDCL report on rapid deterioration of Tripura's alternative highway



AGARTALA

Union Minister for Tribal Welfare Jugal Kishore Singh has sought a detailed report from the National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) after the alternative Agartala-Kumarghat highway in Tripura reportedly deteriorated barely a year after its facelift, officials said on Wednesday.

The route, which runs through Khowai and Kamalpur, was upgraded by NHIDCL last year to serve as a key alternative corridor. However, several stretches

have now become severely damaged, prompting local residents to describe them as a "death trap."

The issue resurfaced after Chief Minister Manik Saha flagged the matter with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in July, urging urgent intervention to restore the highway to safe condition.

Oram, who arrived in Tripura on Tuesday and held a review meeting in Kailashahar, Unakoti district, assessed the progress of centrally sponsored schemes with senior officials and state ministers. During the meeting, Unakoti District Magistrate Tamal Majumder updated him on the worsening state of the highway, noting that the rapid deterioration drew the Union Minister's displeasure.

Majumder said Oram has now asked NHIDCL to submit a formal report on the status, quality and maintenance of the alternative highway. Despite the concerns, the Union Minister expressed satisfaction with the overall implementation of central schemes, including those under the Tribal Welfare Ministry, and urged officials to ensure timely execution of all ongoing projects.

## Tripura Governor attends Constitution Day programme at KV Kunjaban in Agartala

AGARTALA

Tripura Governor N Indrasena Reddy graced the Constitution Day programme held at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Kunjaban in Agartala.

Speaking on the occasion, he highlighted the importance of rules and discipline in every institution, including schools. "Just as schools function smoothly by following their rules, a country also runs efficiently when its citizens follow national laws."

He explained that all the country's rules and guiding principles are compiled in a single book known as the Constitution. This Constitution establishes the legal framework, rights, duties, and guidelines that govern the nation's functioning.

Every country operates according to its own Constitution, which ensures order, justice, and democratic governance.

Students and teachers enthusiastically participated in the programme, making the observance of Constitution Day both informative and inspiring.



India celebrated the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution on Tuesday with a solemn national ceremony held in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, reaffirming India's collective commitment to the ideals and values of the Constitution.

President Droupadi Murmu presided over the ceremony, which was attended by the Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Speaker Om Birla, Union

Ministers, Members of Parliament, and other dignitaries.

The President released the Constitution of India in nine languages-Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Punjabi, Bodo, Kashmiri, Telugu, Odia and Assamese-prepared by the Legislative Department.

The President, in her address, underscored the Constitution's pivotal role in guiding India's democratic journey and called on citizens to up-

hold its core principles - justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity.

The President said that the all-inclusive vision enshrined in constitutional ideals provides direction to our governance system. She said that in 2015, the year of Babasaheb Ambedkar's 125th birth anniversary, it was decided to celebrate November 26 annually as Constitution Day. That decision has proven to be really meaningful.

On this day, the entire nation reaffirms its respect for our Constitution, the foundation of Indian democracy, and its makers. "We, the people of India," express faith in our Constitution, both individually and collectively.

The Constitution of India was adopted on November 26, 1949, and came into effect a few months later, on January 26, 1950. The document was extensively debated and agreed upon by the Constituent Assembly. The document established India as a "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic" with the aim of securing Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity for all citizens.

It is the longest written Constitution in the world, demarcating the separation of powers, structure of administration, courts and legislative departments for the country. The Constitution calls for adhering to constitutional supremacy.

### Quest!

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## ‘Not just a book, but sacred promise of equality, justice’: Rahul Gandhi on Constitution Day



NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Wednesday, greeted the public on Constitution Day, echoing the principles of equality and justice.

In an X post, Rahul Gandhi said that the Constitution is not merely a book, but a “sacred promise” to citizens of the country. Further, he asked the people of India to pledge not to allow any “attack on the Constitution.”

Gandhi wrote on X, “The Constitution of India is not just a book; it is a sacred promise made to every citizen of the country. A promise that no matter what religion or caste one belongs to, whichever region one comes from, whatever language one speaks, whether poor or rich, one will receive equality, respect, and justice. The Constitution is a protective shield for the poor and the deprived; it is their strength, and it is the voice of every citizen.”

“As long as the Constitution is secure, the

rights of every Indian are secure. Let us pledge that we will not allow any kind of attack on the Constitution. It is my duty to protect it, and I will stand first in front of every assault on it. Heartfelt greetings to all of you on Constitution Day. Jai Hind, Jai Samvidhan,” he added.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Udit Raj launched an attack against the ruling regime, alleging that the Constitution is “broken into pieces today.” He said, “We will not allow an assault on the Constitution. It should be remembered that the Constitution is being broken into pieces today.

Referring to 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, Raj added, “Terror attacks can happen any day and anti-Constitution elements do not see the Constitution Day before attacking. That was also an attack on the Constitution. I pay tribute to the martyrs.”

On November 26, 1949, the Indian Constituent Assembly formally adopted the Constitution, which came into effect on January

26, 1950. The day is marked by the Central government’s celebration of the principles of democracy, justice, and equality.

Congress has directed all its state units to observe November 26 as ‘Samvidhan Bachao Divas’ at Pradesh Congress Committees (PCC) offices and district headquarters across the country.

In the letter, the Congress highlighted the importance of the occasion, stating, “On the solemn occasion of Constitution Day, the Indian National Congress calls upon all Pradesh Congress Committees to observe 26 November as Samvidhan Bachao Divas across the country. This year’s observance carries profound significance given the unprecedented challenges facing our democratic institutions and the very spirit of our Constitution.”

The party emphasised that the fundamental values enshrined in the Constitution, including justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, and the protection of every citizen’s rights, are currently under visible strain. “The country is witnessing a growing attack on the constitution marked by systematic vote theft, electoral malpractices, abuse of institutions, and the dubious Special Intensive Revision (SIR)-driven attempts to distort the electoral rolls. These actions strike at the very heart of our constitutional morality and democratic traditions. It is our collective responsibility to expose these dangers before the people, and to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to defend the Constitution, its institutions, and its values,” the letter stated.

## Internal security, anti-naxal strategy to dominate DGP-IGP meet beginning from Nov 28 in Raipur; PM Modi, Amit Shah to attend



NEW DELHI

Internal security, strategies to combat Left Wing Extremism (Naxalism), counter-terrorism efforts, drug control, cyber security, and border management are among the top key issues to be discussed in the all-India conference of Director Generals and Inspector Generals of Police in Chhattisgarh from November 28 to 30.

The three-day high-profile security conference is being held for the very first time in Chhattisgarh’s capital, Raipur, officials said.

The 60th edition of the annual national conference is scheduled

to be inaugurated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. At the same time, the valedictory session is likely to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The event is being organised at the new Marine Drive complex in New Raipur, where Directors General of Police and Inspectors General from across the country will participate.

“The conference will deliberate on key issues related to internal security, including strategies to combat Left Wing Extremism (Naxalism), counter-terrorism efforts, drug control, cyber security, and border management,” said the

officials privy to the development. According to official sources, this year’s conference will place “special emphasis on Naxal-affected regions.”

In recent times, joint strategies of state police and central forces in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh have yielded remarkable successes. “Plans in this direction will also be discussed,” said the officials.

Significantly, this will mark Prime Minister Modi’s second visit to Chhattisgarh within a month, as he had attended the State Foundation Day celebrations on November 1. The sources also clarified that PM’s programme may

change as per the situation.

PM Modi also attended the 59th edition of the conference, held from November 30 to December 1, 2024, at the State Convention Centre, Lok Seva Bhawan, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

The deliberations focused on critical components of national security, including Counter Terrorism, Left Wing Extremism, Coastal Security, New Criminal Laws, and Narcotics, among others. The President’s Police Medal for distinguished service was also awarded during the conference.

The conference also provided an interactive platform for senior police professionals and security administrators in the country to freely discuss and debate diverse national security-related issues, as well as various operational, infrastructural and welfare-related problems faced by the police in India. Its deliberations included the formulation and sharing of professional practices and processes to address challenges in crime control, law and order management, and internal security threats.

PM Modi has consistently shown a keen interest in the DGP-IGP conference. The Prime Minister not only listens attentively to all contributions but also fosters an environment of open, informal discussion, allowing new ideas to emerge. He encouraged the annual DGSP-IGSP conference to be organised all across the country since 2014.

The conference has been held in Guwahati (Assam), the Rann of Kachchh (Gujarat), Hyderabad (Telangana), Tekanpur (Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh), the Statue of Unity (Kevadiya, Gujarat), Pune (Maharashtra), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), New Delhi, and Jaipur (Rajasthan).

## INTERNATIONAL

### What we know about Hong Kong’s deadly high-rise fire that killed at least 44



HONG KONG

A devastating fire tore through a Hong Kong high-rise residential complex, killing dozens of people with hundreds still missing.

The inferno – the financial hub’s worst in decades – sent shock waves through the city, which has some of the world’s most densely populated and tallest residential blocks.

Here’s what we know about the fire and its possible cause:

Intense flames burned on bamboo scaffolding on several apartment

blocks of Wang Fuk Court, a residential complex undergoing repairs in the northern district of Tai Po, on Wednesday.

The blaze rapidly engulfed several towers at the housing estate, which includes eight buildings of 31 floors each and that have a combined total of 1,984 units.

Firefighters, one of whom was killed, battled the inferno overnight and it was still burning in spots on Thursday morning.

Hong Kong’s fire department said at least 44 people have died

and authorities have said hundreds remain missing.

Around 900 residents have been moved to temporary shelters and dozens were in hospital, some in critical condition.

Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places in the world, making urban disasters a significant risk.

Its 7.5 million residents are squeezed into islands covered in steep hills.

The city’s population density is more than 7,100 people per square

kilometre of land, on par with packed metropolises like Tokyo.

The financial hub is famous for its dramatic skyline of sky scrapers set against a picturesque harbour, many of which are home to residents as well as banks and commercial offices.

The city’s construction boom in past decades has been largely fuelled by residential towers to house its growing population.

Much of the new residential development in recent decades has been in the New Territories, the area where Tai Po is located.

Hong Kong has 569 buildings above 150 metres, the most in the world, according to a tracker from the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.

The original source of the fire is not clear but investigators were already probing the installation of flammable materials during the construction on the buildings as a potential factor in the dramatic escalation of the blaze.

Police have arrested three men from the construction company involved, accusing the firm of gross negligence leading to the accident and causing the fire “to spread rapidly beyond control”.

The external walls of the soaring residential towers were covered in bamboo scaffolding and wrapped in netting and plastic sheeting.

Police said after preliminary investigations they suspected many of those materials did not meet fire safety standards.

Investigators also found packaging foam at the site which they said was highly flammable and could have contributed to the quick progression of the blaze.

Breezes of around 14 kilometres (nine miles) an hour were recorded in the area around the time the fire started on Wednesday afternoon.

### Myanmar’s military rulers grant mass amnesty ahead of December election



BANGKOK

Myanmar’s military rulers have granted amnesty to more than 3,000 political prisoners locked up for opposing army rule and dropped charges against over 5,500 others ahead of next month’s election, state media reported Wednesday.

An official from Yangon’s Insein Prison, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to release information, told the AP on Thursday that prisoner releases would begin that day, but he did not provide the numbers and names of inmates to be freed. In some past amnesties, releases have taken several days.

Outside of Insein Prison, which for decades has served as the main place of detention for political prisoners, dozens of people gathered Thursday morning to welcome friends and relatives who were being freed under an amnesty.

It was not immediately clear whether the prisoner release would include former leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been held virtually incommunicado since the military’s seizure of power in

February 2021. State-run broadcaster MRTV said Wednesday that the amnesty was granted “to ensure that all eligible voters do not lose their right to vote and can cast their votes freely and fairly in the upcoming multi-party democratic general election” on Dec. 28.

This is a locator map for Myanmar with its capital, Naypyidaw.

MRTV said Myanmar’s State Security and Peace Commission, which functions as the authority overseeing the transition to elections, granted amnesties covering 3,085 prisoners convicted under Section 505(A) of the penal code.

The provision, known as the incitement law, makes it a crime to spread comments that create public unrest or fear, or spread false news.

Many political detainees have been held on a charge of incitement, widely used to arrest critics of the government or military and punishable by up to three years in prison.

A total of 724 prisoners were given conditional release, meaning any future offense will require them to serve both the remaining

portion of their original sentence and any new sentence, according to the announcement.

A separate announcement said 5,580 people – either being prosecuted under the same charge or in hiding after being prosecuted under the charge, also will receive amnesty and have their cases closed. Critics have asserted that the election will be neither free nor fair because there is no free media and most of the leaders of Suu Kyi’s dissolved National League for Democracy party have been arrested.

Some 22,708 political detainees, including Suu Kyi, were in detention as of Wednesday, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an independent organization that keeps detailed tallies of arrests.

The 80-year-old Suu Kyi is serving a 27-year sentence after being convicted in what supporters have called politically tinged prosecutions.

The army takeover in 2021 was met with massive nonviolent resistance, which has since become a widespread armed struggle.

## ASSAM'S SHIFTING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: WHY THE OPPOSITION IS STRUGGLING TO FIND ITS VOICE

For much of Assam's political history, dissent was not merely an accessory to democracy—it was its defining pulse. From the Assam Movement to the decades of negotiation that shaped modern Assamese political identity, protest once emerged from deep ideological conviction, organisational discipline, and a sense of collective destiny. But the dynamics of power and public engagement have changed dramatically over the past decade. Today, the Opposition in Assam finds itself navigating a political landscape where traditional modes of protest have lost traction, legislatures have become increasingly polarised, and electoral incentives reward visibility more than vision.

The latest Winter Session of the Assam Legislative Assembly laid bare this transition. What unfolded was not simply another round of government-opposition confrontation but a more telling phenomenon—an Opposition struggling to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving political culture. Placards replaced policy notes, sloganeering drowned out debate, and staged disruptions overshadowed substantive arguments. Instead of challenging the government on complex issues such as migration, environmental degradation, border tensions, unemployment, and resource management, the Opposition resorted to tactics that often appeared disconnected from the state's pressing realities.

The story, however, is far larger than a single Assembly session. It speaks to the deeper churn within Assam's political system and the structural crisis confronting Opposition parties across the Northeast.

**The Governance Shift: When Performance Politics Collides With Delivery Politics**

To understand the opposition's current predicament, it is essential to examine the transformation of governance in Assam over the past decade. The state has witnessed a visible push for administrative efficiency, digital monitoring of welfare schemes, rapid infrastructure expansion, and centralised delivery of social benefits. Whether one agrees with the model or critiques its long-term sustainability, one fact is undeniable: public expectations have undergone a seismic shift.

Voters, especially younger ones, prioritise stability, service delivery, and material improvements in day-to-day life. In this climate, political messaging rooted in emotional appeal or identity alone has lost some of its earlier resonance. Governments are increasingly judged by road construction, power supply, healthcare upgrades, and timely subsidy transfers.

This makes the Opposition's task more complicated. For decades, disruptions in the Assembly or dramatic street protests could spark public sympathy. Today, they often fall flat because they do not match the electorate's primary concerns. When people are measuring governance through quantifiable results, symbolic protest loses its persuasive impact.

The Opposition, however, continues to operate as though the old model of agitation politics still carries the same appeal. This strategic mismatch has opened a credibility gap.

**The Lost Culture of Structured Opposition**

Assam has historically valued disciplined collective action—the Assam Movement, the anti-dam agitations, and multiple student-led protests relied on coordination, ideological clarity, research-driven advocacy, and moral conviction. Even within the legislature, opposition leaders from earlier eras were known for intricate debate, fact-backed questioning, and long hours of committee work.

Today's Union of Opposition parties is far more fragmented. Many lack ideological coherence or shared long-term vision. Some are wrestling with internal leadership disputes. Others have lost organisational networks to the rise of digital-first campaigning and centralised party structures. In this vacuum, theatrical protest becomes a convenient but shallow substitute for rigorous political work.

The performative disruptions in the Assembly—noisy walkouts, unruly protests, repeated interruptions—signal a deeper institutional erosion. The Opposition appears to be signalling dissatisfaction without translating it into policy alternatives. In a democracy, disruption has a place, but it cannot replace deliberation.

**A Changing Northeast: Quiet Governance vs. Noisy Politics**



As a Man you need to learn the habit of not talking too much.

This dynamic is not unique to Assam. Across the Northeast, a transformation is visible. Governments have embraced a technocratic style—prior-



itising infrastructure, digital monitoring, and welfare delivery. This has introduced a quieter, more administrative form of governance.

But it has also created a paradox. On one hand, citizens appreciate improved services and stable administrative functioning. On the other, this governance style reduces the political space traditionally occupied by the Opposition. When governance becomes more centralised, error-proofed, and visible, it leaves less room for politically exploitable gaps. The Opposition is forced to either specialise in policy critique or resort to symbolic actions.

Many are choosing the latter because it is easier, more media-friendly, and less resource-intensive. The problem is that it rarely aligns with public sentiment.

**Why Performative Dissent Isn't Working Anymore**

The decline in effective opposition politics in Assam is not simply a reflection of weak leadership. It is the result of a changed political ecosystem with new rules of engagement:

1. Voters are increasingly issue-focused, not rhetoric-focused.
2. Disruption without data or policy alternatives feels shallow to a public that wants solutions.
3. Media cycles reward visual spectacle, not nuanced debate.
4. Opposition leaders chase headlines, often at the cost of strategic depth.
5. Fragmented opposition parties struggle to present unified positions.

Inconsistency dilutes credibility. Legislative disruptions make it harder to hold the government accountable. Debate becomes impossible, questioning time decreases, and committees remain underutilised.

The public expects a mature opposition capable of policy critique.

Not just protest—but thoughtful counter-narratives.

- These factors have created a cycle: performative dissent offers quick visibility but undermines long-term political legitimacy. This, in turn, drives the Opposition further toward spectacle as a survival tactic.
- The Democratic Cost: When Legislative Time Is Sacrificed
- One of the most worrying outcomes of this disruption-centric approach is the erosion of legislative scrutiny. Assam faces pressing challenges that require detailed debate:
- precarious ethnic relations
  - demographic pressures and cross-border migration
  - the future of land rights and forest governance
  - climate volatility and recurrent floods
  - unemployment among educated youth
  - resource distribution and regional imbalances
  - the economic future of the Northeast

Yet these issues often fail to receive the sustained discussion they deserve. When the Assembly is consumed by procedural chaos, even well-intentioned Opposition leaders lose opportunities to question the government meaningfully. The legislature becomes a stage, not a forum.

The public, observing this breakdown, grows more cynical about politics altogether.

**The Opposition's Dilemma: Reinvention or Irrelevance?**

The Opposition now stands at a crossroads. It can continue down the path of symbolic confrontation—which generates publicity but not trust. Or it can undertake the far more challenging task of reinvention. Reinvention requires:

- better research units to scrutinise government policies
- articulate spokespersons capable of explaining complex issues
- grassroots engagement beyond election cycles
- consistency in public messaging
- a willingness to invest in legislative expertise
- building alliances based on shared agendas, not temporary convenience

This is not merely a political necessity; it

is a democratic one. A robust, responsible Opposition ensures checks and balances, improves governance quality, and reflects the diversity of public opinion. In a region as complex as Assam and the wider Northeast, this role becomes even more critical.

**A Way Forward: The Politics of Responsible Dissent**

Assam does not need an Opposition that protests less—it needs one that protests smarter. Dissent, when grounded in evidence and principle, strengthens democracy. But dissent that prioritises optics over substance weakens the very institutions meant to protect citizens.

A responsible Opposition would:

- question budgetary allocations and policy gaps
- engage constructively on issues like border management, climate resilience, and development planning
- hold the government accountable for delays, mismanagement, or structural flaws
- offer alternative development models
- maintain decorum while remaining uncompromising in oversight

Such an Opposition would not be silent—but strategic. Not performative—but purposeful. Not reactive—but visionary.

**Conclusion: The Future of Assam's Democracy Will Be Decided by the Quality of Its Dissent**

Assam's political climate is entering a new phase. Governance models are shifting. Public expectations are changing. But one democratic constant remains: the need for a strong Opposition capable of challenging power constructively.

The theatrics of disruption may produce momentary headlines, but they do not build political credibility or public trust.

If Assam's Opposition hopes to shape the future rather than merely react to it, it must move beyond symbolic gestures and embrace a new kind of politics—one rooted in research, organisation, and responsible dissent. The coming years will reveal whether opposition parties adapt to this new reality or remain trapped in outdated modes of agitation.

Ultimately, Assam's democracy will not be strengthened by the loudest protest but by the most thoughtful one.

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# THE CHARISMATIC KOKRAJHAR



**T**he NEIR-2025 will have its activities in Kokrajhar on January 9, following the flag-off from Siliguri. Kokrajhar doesn't push itself forward the way bigger towns do. It sits in western Assam with a confidence that comes from knowing exactly who it is and what it has lived through. People often treat it as a transit point on the way to Bhutan or Arunachal or the hills beyond Alipurduar. But if you pause here, even for a day, you sense a place shaped by resilience, politics, forests, and a cultural memory that refuses to fade.

## A Frontier That Never Forgot Its Edges

Kokrajhar lies close to the border with Bhutan, and that geography shapes the region's personality. There's a sense of openness in the landscape. The plains stretch out calmly, and the foothills rise just enough to remind you that mountains are never far away. This is why the air feels different. You see trucks heading toward border trading posts, students returning from Guwahati, workers crossing districts, and farmers carrying produce from villages that look untouched by time.

It's a district built on movement. Goods, ideas, communities, anxieties, hopes—they've all travelled through these roads.

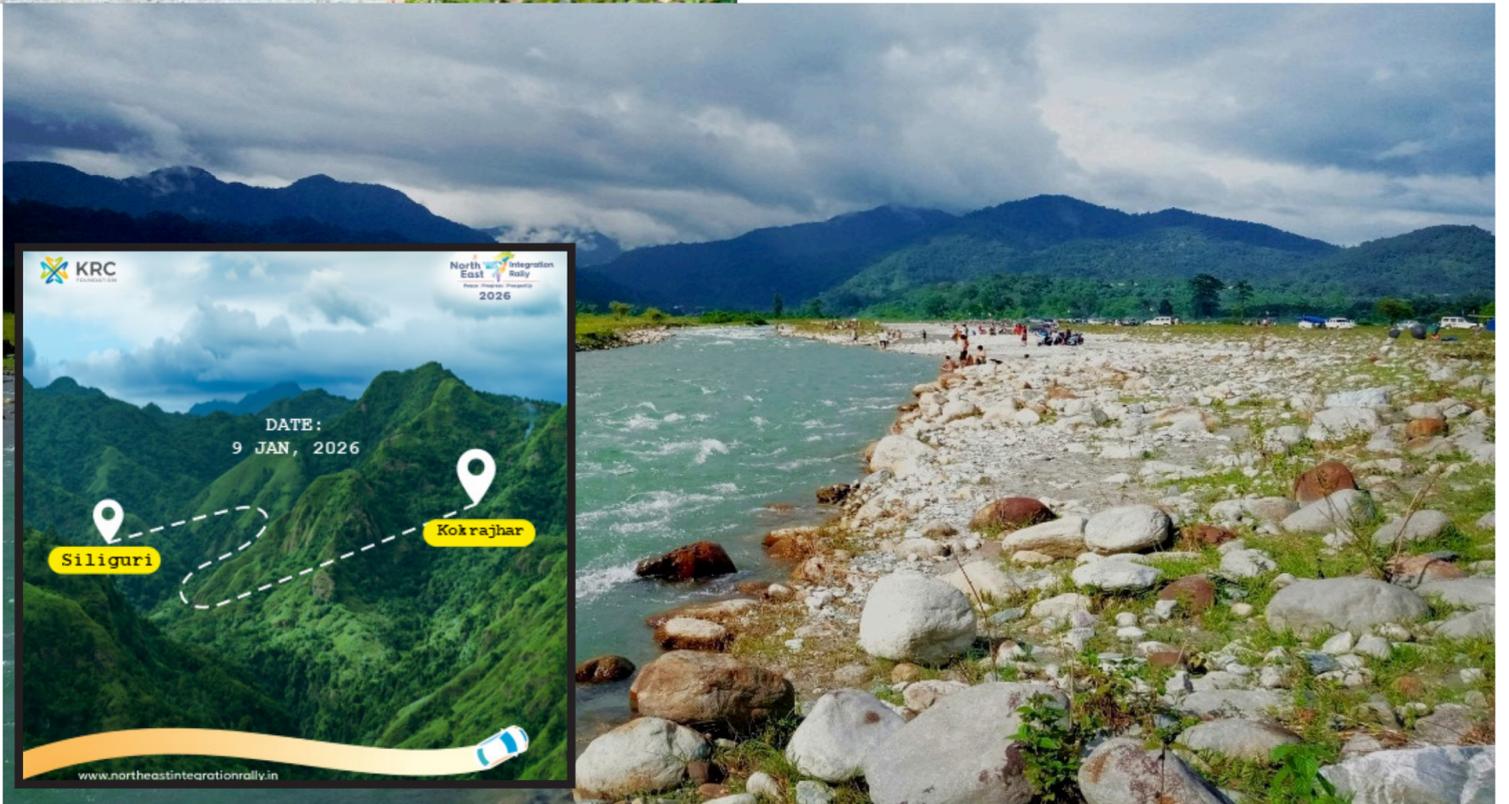
## The Place Where the Bodo Story Breathes

Here's what matters. Kokrajhar is the political and cultural heart of the Bodo community, and you can't understand the town without understanding that. The Bodoland Territorial Region takes shape here, and the institutions, conversations, and aspirations of the community run through everyday life.

But Kokrajhar's identity isn't soft or curated. It has weathered decades of conflict, negotiation, and reinvention. The peace accords, the rise of regional leadership, the push for autonomy, the debates over language and land rights—all of that is woven into its public memory. You meet people who have lived through moments of turbulence and still speak about the future with a kind of steady clarity.

That's the thing about Kokrajhar. It carries its political history without letting it define its present.

**A Town Built Around Its Youth**  
Walk near Kokrajhar Government College or the university campus, and you understand how much of the region depends on young people. Students come from rural pockets across the BTR, from Dhubri, from Chirang, even from parts of North Bengal.



They crowd the tea stalls in the afternoons, argue about football in the evenings, and talk about exams, jobs, migration, and identity in ways that feel unfiltered and honest.

Education is one of the strongest anchors here. Families invest in it even when resources are stretched. Many students dream of Guwahati, Shillong, Delhi, or Bangalore. Some come back. Some don't. That tension—between aspiration and belonging—sits quietly under the surface of the town's youth culture.

**The Rhythm of the Land**  
Kokrajhar still relies heavily on agriculture, especially paddy. The region's economy isn't flashy, but it runs on steady, quiet labour. Farming families depend on monsoon patterns; traders depend on weekly haats; transporters depend on the long chain of markets that link this part of Assam to the rest of the Northeast.

And then there's the forest. Manas National Park isn't far away, and its influence is unmistakable. The region carries a conservation instinct that isn't born from policy documents. It comes from proximity. People talk about elephants not as wildlife but as neighbours who sometimes wander too close. The boundary between human settlement and forest isn't a clean line. It shifts, sometimes daily.

That relationship with nature

skill, and they do it without ceremony. Musicians keep alive instruments and rhythms that belong to this soil. Festivals aren't curated events. They're embedded in households, neighbourhoods, and community spaces.

And yet, Kokrajhar is not frozen in cultural nostalgia. It absorbs influences from across Assam and the Northeast. Pop culture from Korean dramas to Assamese indie music shapes the tastes of its young crowd. English schools stand next to traditional singing schools. It's a town comfortable with having several identities at once.

## The Challenges It Has Learned to Navigate

What this really means is that Kokrajhar carries layers of complexity. Development hasn't always kept pace with need. Healthcare gaps persist. Road conditions vary widely as you move away from the highway. Employment opportunities often push the youth toward cities. Flooding affects pockets of the district. And although peace has held for years, the memory of conflict shapes people's expectations from leaders and institutions.

But Kokrajhar doesn't talk about its challenges with bit-

terness. It talks about them with determination.

There's a sense of wanting to move past old divisions without forgetting why they mattered.

## Where Politics Feels Local

Politics here isn't distant. People speak about it with the same ease they use to discuss farming or the price of rice. Local leadership matters. Local issues matter. Land, rights, identity, devel-

opment, representation—these aren't abstract concepts. They're part of everyday conversation.

The town is filled with offices, party flags, meetings, rallies, debates, and community discussions. It's not chaotic. It's normal. Politics feels like a living system here, not something that exists far away in a capital city.

**The Everyday Faces That Anchor the Place**  
If you want to understand Kokrajhar, sit with a tea seller near the bus stand, or with a group of teachers waiting for school to reopen after the rain, or with farmers resting after a morning in the fields. They speak in a language of practical hope. They know the region's faults, they know its troubles, and they still speak of it with pride.

That pride isn't performative. It comes from survival, community, and a sense that this land has given them an identity no city could replace.

## Why Kokrajhar Matters Today

Kokrajhar stands at a crossroads where history, culture, conflict, resilience, and ambition meet. It's not trying to imitate Guwahati or Siliguri or any other northeastern hub. It's building itself in its own rhythm, on its own

terms. To understand Assam beyond its capital, you start here—where borders shape trade, where forests shape life, where culture breathes quietly, and where people rebuild their future with both caution and conviction.

Kokrajhar won't overwhelm you when you arrive. But if you give it time, it reveals a depth you don't forget.





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 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

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



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