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PERSPECTIVE

When someone smells good, it automatically makes them more attractive.

Manipur Governor, NSG DG review counter-terrorism, security preparedness in Northeast

IMPHAL
Brighu Srinivasan, Director General of the National Security Guard (NSG), met Governor of Manipur Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Raj Bhavan, Imphal, on Monday afternoon, according to a communique from Raj Bhavan. The Governor and the visiting NSG Director General discussed the NSG's role in the Northeast, including specialized counter-terrorism operations, strategies to tackle insurgency movements, investigations of terror attacks, and providing security during high-risk events. The Governor was informed that although the NSG is a national-level, federal contingency force deployed for exceptional, high-stakes situations like hostage rescues, it has actively participated in operations in the Northeast, including assisting in "Operation Green Hunt" against terror camps. The NSG applies its primary functions—counter-terrorism, VIP security, and bomb disposal—as needed to support security efforts in the region. Further, the DG briefed the Governor on the force's preparedness to face any challenges at any time. They also discussed security-related issues and challenges concerning the state. The communique stated that the Governor appreciated the NSG's role in ensuring national security and maintaining peace. Founded on 16 October 1984, following Operation Blue Star to combat terrorist activities and protect states against internal disturbances, the NSG functions as a central armed police force under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It serves as the primary quick-reaction counterterrorism force of the Government of India.

WHO SAID WHAT

Our ties with India go back nearly 5000 years. There was trade and cultural exchange with the Indus Valley Civilisation. And India continues to be one of our top trading partners

~ Dr. Abdullah bin Rashid Alzayani, Bahrain Foreign Minister

Centre to Add Two Flights, Cap Airfares from Imphal after Manipur Governor's Intervention



IMPHAL

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has agreed to take urgent steps to restore flight connectivity and curb soaring airfares from Imphal, following an appeal from Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

The decision came after Governor Bhalla wrote to Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu on October 30, flagging the severe hardships faced by the public due to the steep decline in flight operations between Imphal, Guwahati, and Kolkata. He urged the Centre to act swiftly to improve connectivity, stressing that air travel serves as a crucial lifeline for Manipur given its limited road and

rail infrastructure.

In his letter, Bhalla highlighted that the number of daily flights between Imphal and Guwahati had been reduced from five to two, while the Imphal-Kolkata route had also seen a drop from five flights to two. This sharp reduction, he noted, has left passengers with fewer options and drastically higher fares, compounding the difficulties for students, patients, and residents dependent on air transport amid unreliable road conditions and recurring floods.

Following the Governor's intervention, BJP MLA L. Susindro Meitei met the Civil Aviation Secretary in New Delhi to raise the issue of excessive ticket prices and reduced flight

frequency. Sources said that after the meeting, the Ministry assured that two new flights will be introduced shortly — one each on the Imphal-Guwahati and Imphal-Kolkata sectors.

Officials further indicated that the government is actively considering a cap on airfares at around Rs.7,000 to ensure affordability for regular travellers. Raj Bhavan, in a social media post, confirmed that Governor Bhalla is "closely monitoring the issue to ensure timely and effective action in the interest of the people of Manipur."

The development comes amid continuing restrictions on movement along the national highways connecting the Imphal Valley with other parts of the state. Residents, particularly from the Meitei community, continue to face hurdles in road travel despite the Union Home Minister's earlier directive for "free movement" of people and goods.

Officials said the restoration of additional flights is expected to bring much-needed relief to the state's travellers and help stabilise airfare levels, which have surged sharply over the past few months.

From Nov 1, Manipur starts direct cash relief for conflict-displaced citizens



IMPHAL

The Manipur government has issued new guidelines to streamline the distribution of relief assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) affected by the large-scale violence that erupted in May 2023.

According to an Office Memorandum issued by the Home Department, monetary assistance will now be directly transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries, replacing the earlier system of in-kind distribution.

The decision, effective from November 1, 2025, is aimed at ensuring "transparency, efficiency, and flexibility" in relief management.

Each IDP member will receive Rs 84 per day basis through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to the head of the household to procure daily essen-

tials such as rice, dal, water, spices, vegetables, milk, eggs, and hygiene items. District administrations have been instructed to prepare a digitised list of all camp residents and verify their identities using Aadhaar, voter ID, or other valid government documents. Beneficiaries must also have an active bank account, with local authorities directed to assist those without one in opening accounts.

While the monetary assistance will now be handled directly by the beneficiaries, district administrations will continue to oversee general camp maintenance, including electricity and sanitation. IDPs who were receiving aid from the administration until September 2025 will remain eligible for the DBT scheme.

The order also designates Sub-Divisional Officers as grievance redressal officers for each camp to address complaints from IDPs. Additionally, NFSA cardholders will continue to receive their entitled rice allocations.

Deputy Commissioners have been directed to ensure the timely disbursement of funds and guarantee that no eligible person is left out of the scheme.

Northeast leaders come together under one platform



SHILLONG
In a historic political development, leaders from across India's North East have come together to announce a "collective and historic" plan to form a "United Singular Political Entity" — an initiative aimed at giving the region a unified and stronger voice in national politics.

In a joint statement titled "ONE NORTH EAST", the initiative targets transcending party lines and consolidate regional aspirations under one political platform. The statement was signed by Meghalaya Chief Minister and NPP president Conrad K. Sangma, TIPRA Motha founder Pradyot Bikram Manikya, former BJP national spokesperson and Nagaland minister Mmholnomo Kikon, and People's Party Assam founder Daniel Langthasa.

Underlining that their "strength lies in unity," the leaders — described as "the younger generation of North East"

— "said it was time to move beyond fragmented political narratives. "For too long, we have spoken about the same issues and concerns of our people, but from different platforms. We have realised that it is time to give our people one collective voice," the joint statement read.

They reiterated that the people of the North East "deserve to be heard, respected, and represented through a strong, unified, and indigenous political voice at the national level." Marking this as the "first step" of a larger journey, they announced the formation of a committee to deliberate on the modalities, structure, and future roadmap of the proposed entity. Drawing inspiration from past leaders who "fought selflessly for the dignity and identity of the region," the joint declaration concluded with a powerful commitment: "Together, we stand committed to building a stronger, more united North East."

Inspector of schools issues SOP for half-yearly examinations 2025

GUWAHATI

The Office of the Inspector of Schools has released the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the conduct of the Half-Yearly Examinations 2025 for Higher Secondary (HS) 1st Year and 2nd Year students. The examinations are scheduled to be held from November 10 to November 26, 2025, across all colleges, higher secondary, and senior secondary schools under the Board.

According to the issued SOP, Heads of Institutions will bear full responsibility for ensuring the smooth, transparent, and fair conduct of the examinations. They have been instructed to create a conducive environment for students and to ensure all logistical and administrative arrangements are completed well before the commencement of the exams.

The Centre-in-Charge of each examination centre, designated by the Board, will oversee the distribution and safe custody of confidential question papers. As per the directive, the sealed question papers will be collected from the Zonal In-Charge on November 8, 2025, between 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM, and securely stored at the respective centres.

Heads of Institutions must verify and tally all received ques-



tion paper packets to confirm that every subject is covered in accordance with requirements. Additionally, examination centres are directed to adopt strict precautionary measures to maintain confidentiality throughout the process. The order explicitly states that any deviation or violation of these procedures will invite disciplinary action as per Government of Assam Office Memorandum No. E-647158/14, dated June 8, 2025.

Feeder institutions will collect sealed question paper packets from their designated centres following the day-wise schedule issued by the Board on October 27, 2025. All centres must main-

tain detailed records of distribution, including date, time, and recipient signatures, to ensure accountability and transparency.

On examination days, question papers are to be opened only five minutes before the commencement of each exam and distributed promptly to students. The examinations will be conducted strictly as per the approved schedule issued by the Board. The Assam Board has reiterated the importance of strict compliance with these standard procedures to uphold the integrity, transparency, and smooth conduct of the Half-Yearly Examinations across the state.

BJP skipping SIR in Assam to dodge NRC fallout: TMC MP Sushmita Dev

Sushmita Dev slams Assam CM, says BJP's popularity waning, alleges political exploitation of welfare schemes

GUWAHATI

TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev has claimed that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is "a kind of NRC," asserting that the BJP-led government deliberately avoided conducting it in Assam to escape uncomfortable questions about the outcome of the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Speaking to reporters, Dev said, "SIR is a kind of NRC and the entire opposition says this. The government did not conduct SIR in Assam, and that itself is the biggest proof that it is indeed NRC."

She added that between 2013 and 2019, the NRC exercise in Assam involved verification of documents belonging to around 3 crore people. "Now, if SIR is conducted here, the government will have to answer questions about the NRC's results. The BJP is not conducting SIR in Assam to save itself from this awkward situation," she said.

TMC MP Sushmita Dev has said that the people of Assam have lost faith in the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government following the tragic death of singer Zubeen



Garg, calling for complete transparency in the ongoing investigation. "Zubeen resided in the hearts of the people of Assam, and after the incident, people have lost trust in the government. I want to see

the SIT report or the chargesheet in the case," Dev said.

The TMC leader added that Garg's untimely death gave the people of Assam an opportunity to stand united beyond political and

communal divides, but accused the BJP government of continuing its "divisive politics." "For the past four and a half years, the BJP has been doing communal politics. After Zubeen's death, people raised their voices against it," she said.

Dev asserted that if any irregularities or inconsistencies are found in the chargesheet or the SIT report, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma should take moral responsibility and step down.

Dev's remarks come amid the ongoing political debate over the SIR exercise, which opposition parties allege is a backdoor attempt to revive the NRC process nationwide.

Earlier in October, Sushmita Dev had alleged that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is effectively a "backdoor NRC" and accused the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of protecting the BJP-led government in Assam.

Speaking to the media, Dev said, "The Special Intensive Revision is a backdoor NRC. The proof of that is the Chief Election

Commissioner himself, who on October 27 said that Assam will not face SIR because the NRC is almost complete."

She said there are two major issues concerning the NRC in Assam — first, that the exercise has remained pending since 2019, and second, that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has frequently changed his stance on it. "The Chief Minister has taken a somersault on the NRC and has even rejected it decisively," she stated.

Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Sushmita Dev launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led government in Assam, asserting that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's popularity has visibly declined across the state, a reality, she claimed, that even the Chief Minister himself has acknowledged.

Speaking to the media, Dev remarked that if the BJP leadership so desires, it could replace the current Chief Minister with a new face at any given time, hinting at possible internal dissatisfaction within the party's Assam unit.

Commenting on the ongoing in-

vestigation into the death of singer Zubeen Garg, the TMC leader stated that filing a chargesheet alone is insufficient unless supported by strong evidence and documentation. "Without proof, a chargesheet holds no meaning," she said, emphasizing the need for a transparent and thorough probe.

Addressing developments in Sri Bhumi, Dev alleged that BJP leaders are holding rallies merely to secure party tickets for the upcoming elections and lack genuine public support. She accused the ruling party of misusing welfare schemes, including Orunoday and self-help group funding, as tools to mobilize voters ahead of the polls.

Reaffirming TMC's commitment to fighting for people's rights, Dev said the party would continue its movements in Sri Bhumi district and the Barak Valley to highlight local grievances and government apathy.

On Monday, the TMC MP also participated in a rally demanding land pattas for landless residents in areas such as Eralgool, Binodini, and Usharani under Sribhumi district.



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CROWNING GLORY FOR WOMEN'S CRICKET

Indian cricket witnessed another epoch-making moment when the women's national team lifted its maiden ODI World Cup after a commanding 52-run victory against South Africa in Navi Mumbai. This triumph is not only a historic milestone but also a culmination of years of preparation, vision, and resilience. If June 25, 1983, belongs to Kapil's Team, November 2, 2025, will forever be etched as the day Harmanpreet Kaur's warriors. What makes this win extraordinary is not merely the fact that India finally secured a long-awaited world title-it is the emphatic manner in which they achieved it. This win was no narrow escape, no last-over miracle, but a comprehensive, authoritative performance befitting world champions. From the intensity shown in the semifinal against Australia to the clinical precision in the final, India played with the poise of a side that believed destiny was theirs to script. This victory was not an accident of form or fortune. It was the result of vision, long-term planning, leadership, and relentless pursuit of excellence. It was the story of a group of women who dared to dream big, worked tirelessly to bridge the gap with the world's best, and ultimately conquered it with style and authority. The road to glory was far from smooth. India's campaign was a roller coaster-peppered with close contests, patches of inconsistency, and heartbreaking defeats. But what set this team apart was an unshakable focus and a relentless hunger to improve. Each setback became a lesson; each lesson translated into tangible on-field corrections. The most striking evidence was the dramatic improvement in bowling discipline and fielding sharpness in both the semifinal and final, the two matches that matter most in a World Cup. One or two stars never win cricket. It is a team symphony, where different instruments rise at the right time. India's World Cup run embodied this philosophy. Shafali Verma's inspirational 87 and her crucial wickets, Deepthi Sharma's five-for under pressure, Smriti Mandhana's foundation-setting partnerships, Jemimah Rodrigues' calmness, Richa Ghosh's fearless finishing, and Shree Charnani's breakthroughs-every match saw new heroes emerge. This was not a collection of individuals but a well-knit unit that adapted, learnt, and delivered when it mattered. And towering above all was the leadership of Harmanpreet Kaur. Scarred by past final-over heartbreaks, she carried both experience and emotion with grace. This team did not let her walk alone; they ensured her dream became a national victory.

Behind India's rise lies the meticulous planning of head coach Amol Muzumdar. A domestic titan with 11,000+ runs but denied a Test cap, Muzumdar finally found his moment of redemption on the world stage. His role extended far beyond strategy-he instilled belief, ensured clarity in roles, selected horses for courses, and unlocked the best in every player. Muzumdar's profound understanding of the game-especially of Indian conditions and the psychology of young cricketers-proved decisive. He knew when to push and when to protect, when to take risks and when to consolidate. His emphasis on discipline, fielding drills, and adaptability was evident in the semifinal and final, where India's execution was near-perfect. Building a world-class team requires more than talent; it demands the right atmosphere, trust, and long-term vision. Muzumdar provided all three.

This victory also bears the imprint of institutional reform. Under BCCI leadership, especially the transformative decisions made during Jay Shah's tenure as secretary, women's cricket received unprecedented support. Pay parity, a 300% increase in ICC prize money, enhanced domestic infrastructure, and now a Rs 51 crore reward for the World Cup-winning team represent a seismic shift in intent. The evolution of women's cricket has also been powered by the introduction of the Women's Premier League. The league provided exposure, financial stability, and fierce competition that allowed Indian players to sharpen their skills against the best international talent. For many players, including young stars like Shafali Verma and Richa Ghosh, the WPL was the perfect training ground-a laboratory where talent was tested and confidence was built.

These reforms signalled to every young girl in India that her dreams carry equal weight, respect and opportunity. The triumph cannot be viewed in isolation from India's broader sports ecosystem. A decade of investment through the Khelo India initiative has expanded the talent pool, improved sports science support, and normalised sports as a serious career choice. Indian girls today are excelling across arenas-wrestling, badminton, boxing, athletics, and now cricket. Each champion carries a story of grit; each story inspires thousands more. From Rani of Jhansi to Harmanpreet Kaur, Indian women have always risen to the moment when history called. The difference today is that the system finally stands behind them. The presence of legends like Rohit Sharma and Sunil Gavaskar in the stands is a powerful symbol of how women's cricket has moved to the centre of national consciousness. Millions of families watched every ball of India's campaign, social media erupted with celebrations, and late-night street jublations resembled the festivals once reserved only for men's cricket. This victory is not just about a trophy-it is about a transformation in perception.

This victory must not be treated as an endpoint but as the beginning of a new chapter. The challenge now is to sustain the momentum-to deepen the domestic structure, invest in coaching at the grassroots, and nurture the next wave of talent. Other sports federations should take a cue from BCCI's reforms and ensure that gender equality becomes a lived reality, not a slogan.

Indian women's cricket has broken a barrier. It has opened doors. It has inspired a generation. And it has reminded a nation that talent knows no gender, dreams know no boundaries, and glory belongs equally to all who dare to pursue it. As India stands tall as world champions after the heartbreaks of 2005 and 2017, one thing is clear: the future of Indian sport is bright, inclusive, and unstoppable. More moments of glory await. But for now, this golden day will forever shine as a beacon of what Indian women can achieve when given the stage, the support, and the belief they always deserved.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Unlike the stomach, the brain doesn't alert you when it's empty."

- Arabic Proverb

VandeMataram: One Song, One Soul, One India

DR SACHCHIDANAND JOSHI

"Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with the winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.
Glory of moonlight dreams
Over thy branches and lordly streams
Clad in the blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother to thee I bow."

Nearly twenty years before this translation appeared in Karmayogin on 20 November 1909, the song 'VandeMataram' had already woven itself into the soul of Indian unity. Sung at rallies and whispered in homes, it charged the hearts of millions to rise above provinces and creeds. BankimChandra Chatterjee words called a nation to dream together, and Aurobindo's rendering in English became the bridge for new generations and the world to hear India's cry for freedom. The poem's publication in Karmayogin did not just translate a song; it crystallized a movement, lending voice and vision to an idea that for two decades had been uniting India beyond every divide.

People first heard VandeMataram rise like a hymn in 1896, when Rabin-dranath Tagore gave it a voice at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. That evening, the audience fell into a spell - the notes were not of defiance, but devotion. Ten years later, in 1905, as Bengal convulsed under the Partition, Tagore's nephew Abanindranath Tagore painted Bharat Mata - a saffron-robed woman holding a sheaf of grain, a book, and a rosary - the visual embodiment of Bankim's verse. This song was not merely the imagination of a poet; it was the anguished cry of a soul nurturing the intense will to survive and protect the Motherland, a yearning held deep within for years. When the British Administrators were forcing people to sing "Long Live the Queen," Bankim Chandra Chatterjee penned this anthem in a single night. It was the poetic expression of decades, even centuries, of suffering, a fervent call to awaken a nation that had become semi-conscious from enduring prolonged pain.

From the Congress convention to the gallows of Lahore, VandeMataram became the breath of rebellion. Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bakteshwar Dutt and many more shouted it as they faced death. Subhas Chandra Bose made it the marching tune of the Indian National Army. It was sung in rallies and whispered in jails; it united monk and soldier, scholar and farmer, Hindu, Muslim, people of all religions and beliefs shared chant that carried both prayer and protest.

It was not Sri Aurobindo, who first translated it, Many Indian and English scholars translated the song into English. It had also been translated into various Indian languages including Urdu. W.H. Lee, a British who was in Indian Civil Service, translated it into English in 1906. When it was prohibited even to utter the word VandeMataram, it was translated anonymously. However, the English translation by AurobindoGhose, is appended along with the original song in Bengali. No other song has travelled across generations and geographies, crossing every hue and stratum of Indian life, and yet remained at the heart of what it means to be Indian. Through subjugation and sorrow, through reform and revolution, VandeMataram endured - not as a slogan of rage, but as a salutation of love.

To understand its endurance, one must return to its origin - to a modest home in Bengal, on a luminous day that would change India's destiny. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), one of the earliest graduates of Calcutta University, had entered government service as a Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector. His job gave him access to British Archives and Gazettes - records that revealed a forgotten saga: the Sanyasi Rebellion (1763-1780), when ascetic monks had risen against imperial oppression across Dhaka and North Bengal. That story of renunciation turned into resistance inspired BankimBabu's later novel, Anandamath. But before the novel,

came the song. By the 1870s, the British Empire had begun enforcing its loyalty rituals - demanding that Indians stand for "God Save the Queen" at official gatherings and schools. To Bankim, this was not just political coercion - it was spiritual submission. A proud civilization was being trained to bow before a foreign sovereign.

It was in this moment of quiet rebellion that on Sunday, 7th November 1875 - Akshay Navami - at his residence near Calcutta, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee took up his pen. In what his contemporaries called a "transcendental mood," he wrote VandeMataram in one sitting - as though the song had descended upon him rather than been composed. When others sang to the Queen, he sang to the Motherland. He answered imperial command with spiritual surrender - not to a crown, but to a conscience, where others bowed to a monarch, BankimChandra Chatterjee bowed to the soil. That was his rebellion. Not a sword drawn, but a song born. He knew sword does not live but the words are eternal.

VandeMataram was not composed for an hour of anger, but for an age of awakening. It was not addressed to a ruler but to a realm - to rivers, fields, orchards, and winds. It was a hymn that reclaimed India's spiritual sovereignty long before she claimed her political one. As Anandamath reached readers, the song leapt from the novel into the nation's bloodstream. At the 1896 Calcutta Congress, Tagore's voice gave it wings. Within a decade, the streets of Bengal echoed with it during the Swadeshi Movement of 1905. VandeMataram then was an act of defiance. The British banned it; students were expelled; protesters were arrested. But repression only deepened reverence. In Calcutta, schoolchildren stood barefoot in the rain to chant it. In Dhaka, women embroidered it onto their saris.

Aurobindo Ghosh called it "the Mantra of India's rebirth." Sister Nivedita wrote that to hear it was "to hear the very breath of India herself." The song's power was its universality - you did not need to know Sanskrit to feel it. By the 1920s and 30s, VandeMataram was the code of courage. In prison cells, revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh etched it onto the walls. In the Andaman Cellular Jail, it echoed through corridors like a psalm of pain. Subhas Chandra Bose made it the INA's battle cry. For his soldiers, the chant was not a melody but a mandate. Even as Mahatma Gandhi advised restraint in mixed gatherings, he admitted that VandeMataram had become sacred - "a song sanctified by sacrifice."

The strength of VandeMataram lies in its imagery - a nation not of boundaries but of breath. Its motherland is not a battlefield but a being: fertile, radiant, nurturing. When Abanindranath Tagore painted Bharat Mata in 1905, he gave that being a face - serene, spiritual, self-sufficient. The painting, like the song, was both aesthetic and political, sacred and subversive.

Bankim's genius was to elevate patriotism into prayer. To love India was to reverse her, to worship the land as mother, not merely occupy it as territory.

The Anthem of Freedom
By the time India neared independence, VandeMataram had become inseparable from the idea of India itself. Yet, in the Constituent Assembly, a debate arose: which song would represent the new Republic? In 1947, "Jana Gana Mana" was chosen as the National Anthem for its linguistic universality. But VandeMataram was declared the National Song, with equal honour. Nehru called it "the song of our awakening." Only its first two stanzas - describing nature, not deity - were adopted for official use.

One Soul, One India
It is not a sheer coincidence that when the nation is celebrating 150 years of the song 'VandeMataram', it is also celebrating 150 years of the greatest unified of India - Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. While the song 'VandeMataram' described India's unity in word, it was Sardar Patel, who brought it to reality after independence. In 1947 we got the freedom but the biggest task of unifying the country and bringing all the princely states together was still pending. Without their integration the freedom of the country was meaningless. It was the Iron Man of India Sardar Patel who took up

this task single handed and unified the country. How could we have imagined our own motherland 'sujalamsuphalam' if she is fragmented into different parts and ruled by the different princely state rulers. It was the valiant effort and deep routed commitment of Sardar Patel who made this country 'sukhadam, varadham'.

Different Ways of Expression
Thus, VandeMataram remained India's eternal invocation - not of policy, but of pride. Post-Independence, the song found new avatars. In 1952, the film Anand Math, directed by Hemen Gupta, brought it to the silver screen. LataMangeshkar's crystalline voice, guided by Hemant Kumar's stirring score, turned VandeMataram into an anthem of cinematic immortality.

Half a century later, in 1997, A.R. Rahman's "MaaTujhe Salaam" rekindled its fire for a global generation. Mixing Hindustani ragas with world music, Rahman reminded Indians abroad that the Mother still waited for their song. His voice bridged centuries - from Bankim's quill to Rahman's synthesizer, the sentiment remained the same that every age sings the same mother in a different tune.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, VandeMataram has experienced a renaissance of meaning. The Prime Minister frequently invokes it at national events, seeing in it not nostalgia, but narrative - a civilizational reminder that India's freedom was born from faith, not fury. Through programs like AzadikaAmritMahotsav, school competitions, and cultural campaigns, the government has revived the song among youth. Digital choirs, drone-light shows, and orchestral renditions now accompany its melody at official events.

When Chandrayaan-3 landed on the Moon, social media erupted with "VandeMataram from the lunar soil." The anthem that once defied an empire now saluted the universe. From time to time, critics have questioned the song's imagery - reading its invocation of the Goddess as exclusionary. But they misunderstand the Indian idea of the divine. In our culture, the Mother is not theological but terrestrial. She is the air we breathe, the water we drink, the language we speak.

The first two stanzas - officially adopted - describe rivers, fields, and winds. The Mother is nature herself. VandeMataram is not about any religion or subscribes to any particular belief - it is about reverence. It celebrates not dominion, but devotion for the motherland. Not conquest, but compassion.

Why It Still Matters
In an age of fractured identities, VandeMataram offers unity through emotion. It reminds Indians that nationhood is not an ideology but an inheritance. It asks nothing but gratitude - a sentiment beyond politics, beyond creed.

It also redefines nationalism - not as chest-thumping pride, but as quiet service. In Bankim's vision, to bow to the Mother is to protect her rivers, forests, and children. As VandeMataram turns 150 in 2025, India celebrates it in new forms. AI-driven symphonies visualize its verses through satellite imagery - rivers flowing to rhythm, crops swaying to chorus. Schoolchildren from across states sing it in 22 languages. Artists remix it into rap, classical dance, and fusion.

Technology has not diminished its sanctity; it has amplified it. The Mother now speaks in code, but her song remains the same. At its core, VandeMataram is not political poetry - it is philosophy. It calls upon Indians to merge duty with devotion. To be born on this soil is fortune; to serve it, dharma.

Bankim's invocation of the Mother anticipated the environmental, spiritual, and moral questions of our time. To sing VandeMataram today is to remind ourselves of balance - between progress and preservation, power and peace. Few songs in history have outlived empires. VandeMataram did. Banned, debated, dissected - yet undefeated. Because songs that spring from soul cannot be silenced.

From colonial prisons to Olympic stadiums, from Bengal's riverside to the moon's surface, its echo endures. Soldiers whisper it before battle; chil-

dren hum it before school prayers. It is India's first language of love. When BankimChandra Chatterjee wrote VandeMataram on that Akshay Navami afternoon in 1875, he could not have known that his pen would outlast empires. That his hymn would become a nation's soul.

Today, as India rises again - confident, plural, ancient, and young - the Mother still listens. She asks no offerings, only remembrance. Every time we say VandeMataram, we remind ourselves that freedom without gratitude is hollow."

The Mother is free. The children must now prove worthy as Sri Aurobindo wrote: "For nations are not built by armies alone, but by those who can hear the voice of the Mother and bow to her with love." VandeMataram, Mother, we bow to thee.

(Dr Sachchidanand Joshi is a writer, author and Member Secretary of IGN-CA)

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Following the Governor of Manipur's communication to the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Air India Express has responded positively. The airline has decided to cap fares for the Imphal-Guwahati sector at ₹6000 and will soon operate two additional daily flights — one to Guwahati and another to Kolkata. Raj Bhavan appreciates the prompt response from @MoCA_GoI and @AirIndiaX for addressing the connectivity concerns of Manipur. Further information on the new flight schedules will follow. ~ Raj Bhavan, Manipur



Xi - A Paranoid Dictator

HARSHA KAKKAR

Dictators rule and die by the gun. Few are lucky to escape into oblivion, as their mere presence can impact those who replace them, unless they follow a system of smooth turnover after a fixed period of reign and respect their predecessors. Until Xi, China was governed by collective leadership and every head of state had a maximum of two terms of five years each. But he was determined to change it and he has, ignoring the impact this is having on the nation.

There is no democracy within China but a one-man rule, whose decisions are pushed by those loyal to him. When he assumed the mantle in 2012, Xi began removing all who were loyal to his predecessor, Hu Jintao. Since it takes time to consolidate power, the process was initially slow, gaining momentum as time passed. Like all dictators, as he gained control, Xi began believing he was untouchable. He changed all existing rules to ensure he is anointed dictator for life.

Such was his arrogance that he even insulted Hu Jintao in public, something never seen earlier in China, where previous heads of state are revered. In Oct 2022, at the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing, Hu Jintao was escorted out of the hall by Xi's security staff, in the full glare of cameras, looking visibly confused and upset. His attempt to carry some papers was blocked by Xi. None got up to help him, fearing Xi's wrath.

All dictators also possess a paranoia of being overthrown. Xi is no exception. The first action they take

is being selfish by ensuring that there is no successor announced and this is what Xi has done. The fact that such a scenario could lead to a power struggle, post his demise or removal, is of no concern. This is a copybook from Stalin and Mao Zedong.

Only two actions can remove a dictator. The first is a mass uprising and the second is powerful members of the armed forces aligning against him resulting in his removal. In 2022, Xi was compelled to back down from his infamous 'Zero COVID' policy following widespread public protests, along with rising economic and health costs. This was a surprise, as Xi had vowed to adhere to it, despite everything.

If Xi would have refused, the uprising could have created an environment to dethrone him by forcing the PLA to join hands with the protestors. Protests in a dictatorial state, where every aspect of life is controlled by the centre, is alarming and Xi was forced to concede to remain in power. Those who masterminded the protests subsequently vanished, never to be heard of again.

As far as the military is concerned, a paranoid leader surrounds himself with sycophants, as also builds a system of distrust amongst the hierarchy by creating rival factions, which continue vying for power, ensuring there is no unity against the dictator. A battle to remain within the inner circle of the leader is perpetual. In such a scenario, the leader is fed with information on those either planning his ouster or aligning with rival camps. Professionalism gives way to sycophancy, perceived as loyalty, especially at apex levels.

The result is a continuous cycle of purges. Currently, in the PLA, even Xi's own handpicked appointees, including defence ministers and senior officials have been jailed. The PLA has faced increased purges since 2023, largely on charges of corruption. Thus far, reports mention that approximately five million members of the government, at varying levels, have been arrested for corruption or near similar reasons.

Whether there is genuine corruption within the PLA, or is it distrust, may never be known. Punishing officials for corruption, an epidemic which had permeated every level of the state, including the PLA, did give Xi initial popularity. Currently, his motives are being questioned, especially as it only appears to target only senior leadership of the PLA.

Courts in China dance to the tune of the leader. None arrested for corruption has ever been set free. Many have been awarded the death penalty. None has been seen again and all have admitted to their crimes before their trial.

It is more likely that the ongoing anti-corruption or anti-disciplinary drive is an excuse to remove those whose loyalty is doubted. Charges of corruption are currently giving way to 'disciplinary violations' and 'duty-related crimes', as it happened in the case of General He Weidong, a member of the Politburo, Vice Chairman of the CMC, and the second senior most member in China's military hierarchy.

China remains a secretive society where little of what happens inside truly emerges. As per Claude Arpi there are as many as nine senior Generals missing in

recent months, including the head of the Western Theatre Command. Whether they have been purged or fallen in disfavour is unknown. Normally the announcement of their arrest is made months after disappearance. Despite placing his closest confidantes in the right appointments, Xi remains paranoid.

Some who have been arrested are subsequently reported to have committed suicide. Whether they did or were eliminated will never be known. It is also possible that there is rising discontent within the PLA, which is unacceptable, as Xi banks on the PLA to keep him in power. Xi's actions have created fear amongst the top hierarchy, as to who would be next. Professionalism is no longer the mantra of the PLA leadership, it is survival.

Xi broke all rules in place for decades and hence would have groups seeking his ouster. Whether it happens is anybody's guess. In his thirteen-year reign, Xi has gained control of every aspect of China. He placed his own trusted people in key appointments only to subsequently have them arrested under some pretext. Either his initial selection was wrong or paranoia is getting the better of him.

The reality is that no matter who is the Chinese leader, its approach to major issues, Taiwan, US, South China Sea and India are historic and would remain the same. Whoever comes to power will make no major change to policies. Even Xi's removal, when it happens, will be announced as resignation due to ill health. China would never desire that the world consider it a tinpot dictatorship.

Naga Students' Federation reaffirms ILP as top priority for protecting indigenous rights

KOHIMA

The ILRC meeting focused on strengthening the Inner Line Permit system to protect the rights and identity of indigenous Naga communities. NSF President emphasized the importance of the Inner Line Regulation and the need for enhanced enforcement of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. Concerns were raised about Dimapur due to the influx of non-indigenous people, highlighting challenges like illegal migration and low public awareness.

The Inner Line Regulation Commission (ILRC) under the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) convened a crucial consultative meeting at the Naga Council Dimapur Hall on Monday, November 3 to deliberate on strengthening the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system and ensuring robust protection of indigenous Naga rights and identity.

The meeting witnessed active participation from representatives of the



Naga Council Dimapur (NCD), GB's Union (Sardar) Dimapur, Dimapur Urban Council Chairman Forum, and the Dimapur Naga Students' Union (DNSU). It was chaired by Seve R. Vadeo, Member Secretary, ILRC, and began with an invocation by Onen Jamir, General Secretary, GB's Union (Sardar), Dimapur.

Addressing the gathering, NSF President Mteising emphasized that the Inner Line Regulation remains a top priority for the Federation. He highlighted that

the ILRC was constituted to strengthen enforcement of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR), 1873, which forms the legal basis for ILP, and to protect the land, culture, and rights of indigenous Naga communities.

Speaking on the historical role of NSF, Kelhouniezo Yhomo, Member of ILRC, recalled that since as early as 1975, the Federation had recommended that all State quotas and benefits be reserved exclusively for indigenous Nagas.

He identified Dimapur as a critical area of concern due to the increasing influx of outsiders, urging the Naga Council and GB's Union to remain vigilant and proactive.

Yhomo also flagged two pressing challenges undermining the ILP system — unchecked entry of illegal migrants and low public awareness. Referring to Article 371(A) of the Constitution, he reiterated that non-Nagas are constitutionally barred from owning land in Nagaland, calling for a unified effort among

civil bodies and student organizations to uphold the law.

Another ILRC member, Hukavi T. Yeputhomi, noted that although the BEFR, 1873, continues to serve as a crucial safeguard for the Naga people, poor awareness and the absence of a clearly defined boundary between Nagaland and Assam have weakened its implementation. He urged both the state government and local authorities to expedite boundary demarcation and reinforce enforcement mechanisms, especially in border areas, where village chairmen and GBs play a vital role in regulating ILP compliance.

Key Recommendations and Action Points

During the open discussion, several important points were raised, including: Empowering local councils and GBs for effective ILP enforcement in Dimapur.

Regulating ILP holders residing within Dimapur, beyond just tourists and dai-

ly visitors. Reclaiming local economic control and strengthening Naga ownership in business enterprises.

Creating a centralized Indigenous Certificate database to ensure authenticity and prevent misuse.

Enhancing and streamlining the ILP online portal for better transparency and management.

Collective Commitment to Naga Identity and Rights

The house unanimously resolved to work in closer coordination with government departments and civil society organizations to promote awareness, ensure effective enforcement, and safeguard the indigenous identity and heritage of the Naga people.

The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation to uphold the provisions of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, and the constitutional safeguards enshrined under Article 371(A), ensuring that Naga land, culture, and identity remain protected and preserved.

'Illegal miyas can't have peace till I am CM': Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on November 3 reaffirmed that eviction drives to remove encroachments will continue across the state, declaring that "illegal miyas" would not have peace as long as he remains in office.

"Evictions will continue. Even today, notices were served in Behali area in Biswanath district. Illegal miyas don't have peace till I am the CM," Sarma told reporters after attending an official function at Jamurghat.

The Chief Minister's remark once again underlined his government's tough stance on land encroachment issues, particularly in areas where Bengali-speaking Muslims — often referred to as "Miyas" — are settled. The term "Miyas", though traditionally used as a pejorative for Bengali-origin Muslims, has in recent years been reclaimed by some from the community as an assertion of identity.

"There will be no peace even if you pray at a samadhi. Illegal miyas have to be in tension till I am the CM. If I am not there, then it is a different thing," Sarma said, reiterating his firm position.

Sarma also announced that his government will introduce a bill to ban polygamy during the upcoming winter session of the Assam Assembly, beginning November 25. "If any person engages in polygamy, there will be seven years of rigorous imprisonment," he said. The Assam government has carried out a series of eviction drives since 2021, targeting what it terms as illegal encroachments on government and forest land. However, critics and opposition parties have alleged that the exercise disproportionately affects members of the Bengali-speaking Muslim community.

Despite mounting criticism, Sarma has maintained that the evictions are part of his government's broader agenda to protect public land and dismantle "narratives" built around illegal occupation.

Four Kuki insurgents killed in army operation in Manipur's Churachandpur



IMPHAL

In the early hours of November 4, security forces neutralised four cadres of the United Kuki National Army (UKNA), a

non-Suspension of Operations (SoO) insurgent group, during an intelligence-based operation in Khanpi village, around 80 km west of Churachandpur in Manipur.

According to defence sources, the encounter began when terrorists opened unprovoked fire on the Army column. The ensuing firefight led to the elimination of four UKNA militants.

The operation is still underway, with forces conducting searches in the adjoining areas.

The Army said the action came in response to recent atrocities committed by UKNA cadres, including the killing of a village chief, intimidation of locals, and attempts to destabilise the region.

The successful operation, it added, underscores the Indian Army and Assam Rifles' commitment to safeguarding civilians and ensuring lasting peace in Manipur.

Assam CM calling Zubeen's death a 'murder' is a bid to win sympathy before 2026 polls: Akhil Gogoi



SIVASAGAR

Sivasagar MLA and Rajior Dal president Akhil Gogoi has launched a scathing attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, alleging that a "political drama" is being staged in the name of providing justice to late singer Zubeen Garg.

Speaking to reporters at Margherita on November 3, Gogoi said, "The Chief Minister is staging a drama in the name of justice for Zubeen Garg. Zubeen will not get justice anymore."

Gogoi accused the government of manipulating the investigation to protect the powerful. He claimed that neither the government nor the investigating agencies, including the SIT and CID, collected evidence in a manner that could establish the case in court. "The probe has not been conducted as per judicial norms or international

protocols with Singapore authorities. Therefore, the Singapore report will never be accepted by the court," he asserted.

The Rajior Dal chief alleged that the Chief Minister's recent remark describing Zubeen Garg's death as a "murder" was an attempt to regain public sympathy ahead of the upcoming elections. He further charged that while the SIT questioned even small witnesses, such as a snack seller, it failed to interrogate those he claimed were key figures linked to the case — including CM Sarma's wife Riniki Bhuyana Sharma and Union External Affairs Minister Pabitra Margherita.

Gogoi claimed that the "entire act" is a carefully scripted ploy by the Chief Minister to shield the accused. "It is an eternal truth now — none of the accused in Zubeen Garg's case will ever be punished," he said.

Tripura working to bring Agartala government medical college among India's top 10: CM Manik Saha

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha today, November 3, reaffirmed the state government's commitment to strengthening the healthcare infrastructure of Tripura, emphasizing that concerted efforts are being made to elevate Agartala Government Medical College (AGMC) to rank among the top ten medical institutions in the country.

CM Saha made these remarks while laying the foundation stone for several new infrastructure projects at AGMC and GBP Hospital. The inaugurated projects include the Critical Care Building (CCB), Communicable Disease Center (CDC), a 20-bed special ward at GBP Hospital, the launch of a digital telemedicine link with Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute, Lucknow,

and the Inter-Departmental Call Management System (IDCMS).

Highlighting the importance of medical education and professional excellence, the Chief Minister — who also holds the Health portfolio — stated that there are presently 400 MBBS seats across Tripura's medical colleges.

"Students must strive to perform better in their examinations. Hospitals such as GB, TMC, and other district facilities are showing notable improvement. However, I have received reports about certain brokers operating in GB and TMC Hospitals who attempt to influence patients and direct them to private hospitals outside the state. Strict measures are being taken to curb such activities," CM Saha asserted.

He further informed that the state has successfully performed eight hip replacement surgeries so far, along with several knee replacements and other advanced medical procedures.

"AGMC Hospital now offers a wide range of specialized treatments. We are working to expand its infrastructure further to introduce advanced healthcare facilities. Nine super-specialty services have already been launched at AGMC at a cost of approximately Rs 250 crore, and four additional services will be introduced soon. I have recently met with the Union Health Minister to seek the required financial allocation for these projects. He has assured that the Central Government will support the procurement of essential medical equipment," the Chief

Minister said.

CM Saha underscored the importance of skill enhancement and professional development among doctors in Tripura, urging them to aim for national-level recognition.

"Our collective goal should be to bring AGMC within the country's top 10 medical colleges. This cannot be achieved by the government alone — it requires dedicated effort from all stakeholders," he remarked.

He also announced that a new Mother and Child Care Building will soon be constructed at AGMC and GBP Hospital, funded with Rs 192 crore sanctioned by the DoNER Ministry. Additionally, Rs 202 crore has been earmarked for infrastructure development at the Tripura Dental College.

Litfest to relive the legacy of Pragjyotishpur

NAVA THAKURIA

Third Pragjyotishpur Literature Festival with a series of fascinating deliberations will open up the doors for author-translators, art-connoisseurs, critics, budding writers, performing artists, translators with other literature enthusiasts to rediscover the cultural legacy of far eastern Bharat. Organized by Sankardev Education and Research Foundation (SERF) with the theme titled 'In Search of Roots', the annual Pragjyotishpur Litfest (PLF) will host a number of luminaries while celebrating the region's rich literary and cultural heritage. The three-day festival (14, 15 and 16 November 2025) in the prehistoric city of Guwahati will comprise a series of panel discussions, interactive sessions, a workshop on contemporary nature writing, multilingual poetry recitations, etc which is expected to emerge as an intellectual treat for the audience.

Five intriguing sessions comprising the 'Evolution of Assamese Performing Arts: From Ankiya Bhawana to Bhramyman', 'Evolution of Assamese Lyric Literature: Tracing the Journey from the 1990s to the Contemporary Era', 'Assamese Language, Literature and Journalism: Growth and Expansion', 'Transcending Language Boundaries: The Triumphant Journey of Assamese Translated Literature' and 'The Creative World of Novelist Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya: An Exploratory Journey' are

PRAGJYOTISHPUR LITFEST



প্রাগজ্যোতিষপুর সাহিত্য উৎসব
14, 15 & 16 NOV. 2025

waiting for literature enthusiasts during the up-coming PLF carnival. Special session on Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha, a towering personality contributing enormously for Assamese music, painting, literature and also politics, a workshop on nature inspiring literature, outdoor multilingual poetry sessions bringing together voices from diverse linguistic entities including Asomiya,

Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Bodo, Karbi, Mish- ing, Nepali, Bengali, Rabha, Tiwa, etc are also on the card.

Various Indian cities currently host a number of annual literature festivals propagating regional literary works with a great enthusiasm, where hundreds of thousands of readers, writer-authors, playwrights, scholars, social thinkers, music-film ap-

preciators, editor-journalists and literature-buffs rub their shoulders. The PLF has now joined in the club of national literary events comprising Jaipur Literary Festival, Apeejay Kolkata Litfest, Kalinga Litfest, Bharat Litfest, Hyderabad Litfest, Koshala Litfest, Bangalore Litfest, Kerala Litfest, Mumbai Queensline Litfest, Nagpur Orange City Litfest, Gurgaon Litfest, Chandigarh Litfest, Delhi Litfest, Patna Litfest, Nalanda Litfest, Dehradun Valley of Words, Kumaon Festival of Literature & Arts, Times Litfest, Goa Arts and Literature Festival, Bundelkhand Litfest, Lucknow Litfest, Mathrubhumi Litfest, Kashmir Litfest, Jamshedpur Litfest, Western Ghats Litfest, Guwahati Litfest, Shillong Litfest, Imphal Litfest, etc. PLF president Phanindra Kumar Dev Choudhury, emphasized on showcasing the history, culture and languages of the land, once known as Pragjyotishpur (also later Kamrup kingdom), where the capital was located roughly in the present day Guwahati, in the right perspective. Expressing dissatisfaction over the tendency of many highly educated individuals to undermine the heritage of their own land, Dev Choudhury exclaimed that many authors try to define Indian literature through the lens of foreign writers thus ignoring the serenity of ancient Indian civilizations. Prior to the PLF, Guwahati witnessed three editions of Brahmaputra Literary Festival, which was patronized by the state-owned publishing institutions namely the National Book Trust (NBT) and the Publication Board Assam at Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra. He hoped that the PLF 2025 will continue its endeavour to redefine the legacy of Kamrup-Kamakhyia civilization.

Meghalaya pulls up road agency for dumping debris into Umngot River

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board (MSPCB) has pulled up a road project agency engaged in constructing a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-funded highway from Shillong to Dawki for allegedly dumping construction debris into the Umngot River, one of India's most pristine water bodies.

Officials said the action followed complaints and viral videos showing the river's crystal-clear waters turning murky due to dumping of waste from earthwork and excavation activities. Local residents, many dependent on tourism for their livelihood, had raised concerns about the pollution affecting the river's ecology and its global reputation. The incident prompted Meghalaya MLA Ricky Syngkon to take up the matter with Union Ministers for Road Transport and Environment. Dawki, where the Umngot River flows, is renowned for its glass-like clarity, where the riverbed is visible even several feet below the surface, drawing thousands of tourists each year.

Following an inspection, the MSPCB directed the project management unit — Mylliem — overseeing the Shillong-Dawki road project, to immediately stop

debris dumping and comply with environmental safeguards. MSPCB Chairman M. R. Narmaia cited violations under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, directing adherence to the board's March 17 standard operating procedure and the prevention of further dumping. The Board's inspection found that large quantities of soil and debris had been discarded without containment measures, leading to erosion and sedimentation. It also noted that improper slope management and lack of stabilisation structures increased the risk of landslides during rainfall. Officials revealed that the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), executing the project, failed to retain protective structures like sandbags to prevent sediment flow into the river. The MSPCB has now directed the agency to conduct a detailed topography analysis and submit a corrective action plan within 15 days.

The Shillong-Dawki road, under construction since December 2021, has faced repeated environmental scrutiny for improper waste management and slope cutting. The MSPCB has warned of further legal action if the agency fails to comply with its directives.

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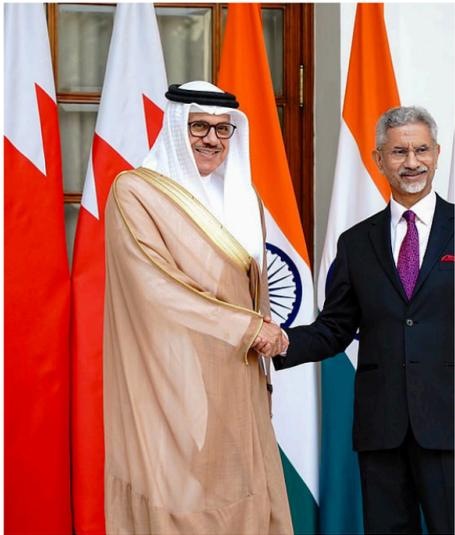
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According to scientists, men who grow beards easily and earlier in life have been found to be more likely to go bald.

India, Bahrain strengthen defence and security ties, move toward key trade and investment pacts



NEW DELHI

India and Bahrain on Monday reiterated their commitment to strengthening defence and security cooperation while advancing negotiations on major trade and investment agreements, marking a step forward in deepening their strategic partnership.

The decisions were announced after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held extensive talks with visiting Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah bin Rashid Alzayani in New Delhi during the fifth India-Bahrain High Joint Commission (HJC) meeting.

In a joint statement, both sides expressed optimism about expanding defence and security collaboration and cited the visit

of three Indian naval ships to Bahrain in September 2025 as a sign of growing maritime cooperation. The two countries unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms, including the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, and reaffirmed their resolve to combat cross-border terrorism through enhanced intelligence sharing, cyber-security cooperation, and capacity-building.

On the economic front, the two nations announced the start of negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and moved closer to finalising a bilateral investment treaty, which officials said would open new avenues for trade and capital flows.

Both sides also agreed to begin talks on a Double

Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) to eliminate tax overlaps, ensure fiscal transparency, and encourage business expansion.

Reiterating India's invitation to Bahraini investors, Jaishankar said, "The conclusion of a bilateral investment treaty and CEPA will further boost our economic ties. We welcome Bahraini investors to explore the opportunities offered by India's expanding economy."

Bilateral trade between India and Bahrain reached USD 1.64 billion in 2024-25, with both sides seeking to diversify cooperation across sectors such as electronics, petroleum, processed foods, base metals, and gems and jewellery. India remains one of Bahrain's top five trading partners, and about 332,000 Indian nationals—nearly a quarter of Bahrain's population—live and work in the Gulf kingdom.

The talks also explored emerging areas of collaboration in space, fintech, health, culture, and technology, which Jaishankar described as "new areas of promise" in an evolving partnership rooted in "centuries-old trade and people-to-people ties."

Both ministers reaffirmed their commitment to regional peace, with Jaishankar reiterating India's support for the Gaza Peace Plan and calling for a durable solution to the conflict in West Asia.

"India and Bahrain share a common vision for peace, stability, and prosperity in our region," Jaishankar said, emphasising that growing cooperation between the two nations reflects a relationship built on trust, mutual respect, and shared strategic interests.

World drawn to invest in India owing to its strong democratic foundations: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla



NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday said that the world is increasingly looking to invest in India, attracted by its strong and vibrant democratic foundations and rapid economic progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the 125th Anniversary Celebrations of the Bharat Chamber of Commerce in Kolkata, held under the theme "INDIA@100: An Age of a New

Dawn," Birla said India's robust democracy, policy stability, and investor-friendly reforms have positioned the country as a global hub for innovation and economic growth.

"The world is drawn to India not just for its market potential but for the strength and credibility of its democratic institutions. Where democracy thrives, good governance follows," Birla remarked. He added that the Modi government's policies of "minimum government, maximum governance" and the

drive to reduce bureaucratic hurdles have created a conducive environment for business and industrial expansion.

Encouraging the private sector to boost investment in research and development, Birla said the government would continue to complement private innovation with public support, helping India achieve global leadership in technology and manufacturing.

He praised the Bharat Chamber of Commerce for its historic contributions to India's industrial

and social development since its inception as the Marwari Chamber of Commerce, describing it as a "source of inspiration" for other business chambers across the country.

Highlighting India's transformation in the past decade, Birla said the nation's entrepreneurial spirit, resilience, and inclusive growth have enabled it to thrive even amid global uncertainties. He underscored that India's democracy is "not merely a system of governance but a way of life," deeply rooted in the country's cultural and social ethos.

The Speaker also emphasized the pivotal role of women and youth in India's development journey, noting their growing participation in entrepreneurship, innovation, and leadership. "Women's increasing engagement in diverse sectors and the creativity of our youth are shaping the future of a developed and self-reliant India," he said.

Reaffirming the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, Birla called for stronger collaboration between industry, government, and academia to build a resilient and sustainable economy.

He expressed confidence that India is on course to become a global leader in clean and green energy, playing a key role in tackling climate and environmental challenges.

Acknowledging West Bengal's historic contributions to India's progress, Birla lauded the state's legacy as a cradle of intellectual, cultural, and industrial excellence. He said Bengal's enduring spirit of innovation and enterprise continues to inspire the nation's journey toward a developed India.

INTERNATIONAL

External health aid to drop by 30% in 2025, WHO urges countries to increase investment in health

NEW DELHI

The WHO on Monday warned that external health aid is projected to drop by 30% to 40% in 2025 compared with 2023, causing immediate and severe disruption to health services in low and middle income countries (LMICs). The WHO urged policy-makers to make health a political and fiscal priority in government budgets even during times of crisis.

Releasing survey data from 108 LMICs collected in March 2025, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said it indicated that funding cuts have reduced critical services – including maternal care, vaccination, health emergency preparedness and response, and disease surveillance – by up to 70% in some countries.

More than 50 countries have reported job losses among health and care workers, along with major disruptions to health worker training programmes.

"Sudden and unplanned cuts to aid have hit many countries hard, costing lives and jeopardising hard-won health gains," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

"But in the crisis lies an opportunity for countries to transition away from aid dependency towards sustainable self-reliance, based on domestic resources. WHO's new guidance will help countries to better mobilize, allocate, prioritize and use funds to support the delivery of health services that protect the most vulnerable."

The WHO warning has come at a time when global health funding has fallen to its lowest level in 15 years as several countries, including the US



and some European countries, have announced reducing foreign aid.

While the US President Donald Trump has withdrawn his country from the World Health Organization (WHO) and slashed major health aid programs as soon as he took charge in January, nine European countries, including the UK and France, have also slashed its financial backing.

To cope with this sudden fund crunch, the WHO also released new guidance for countries on ways to counter the immediate and long-term effects of sudden and severe cuts to external funding, which are disrupting the delivery of essential health services in many countries.

The new guidance, called "Responding to the health financing emergency: immediate measures and longer-term shifts," provides a suite of policy options for countries to cope with the sudden financing shocks, and bolster efforts to mobilize and implement sufficient and sustainable

financing for national health systems.

This year's funding cuts have compounded years of persistent health financing challenges for countries, including rising debt burdens, inflation, economic uncertainty, high out-of-pocket spending, systemic budget underfunding and heavy reliance on external aid, it said.

WHO's new guidance urges policy-makers to make health a political and fiscal priority in government budgets even during times of crisis, seeing health spending as not merely a cost to be contained, but an investment in social stability, human dignity, and economic resilience.

The guidance emphasizes the need for countries to cushion the immediate impact of reductions in foreign assistance for health, and to adapt to a new era of reduced assistance.

The world health body came out with key policy recommendations, which included prioritizing the health services accessed by the poorest; pro-

tecting health budgets and essential health services; improving efficiency through better procurement, reduced overheads and strategic purchasing; integrating externally-funded or disease-specific services into comprehensive PHC-based delivery models; and using health technology assessments to prioritize services and products that have the greatest health impact per dollar spent.

Highlighting that several countries have already taken decisive action to strengthen their health systems and protect essential health services, the WHO said Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa have allocated additional budget funds to health, or are awaiting parliamentary approval for increases.

The new guidance builds on WHO's commitment to help all countries strengthen and sustain robust health systems, built on a commitment to universal health coverage, underpinned by strong primary health services delivering essential care to all who need it.

It also aligns with existing World Health Assembly mandates, including resolutions on "Strengthening health financing globally" and "Economics of health for all," to translate global commitments into actionable policy steps. "WHO and its partners are committed to providing technical support, analytics and peer learning to countries to manage the health financing crises and navigate the transition, including through the new UHC Knowledge Hub, a partnership with the Government of Japan and the World Bank, set to be launched in December 2025," it added.

Names of 5 million of 6 million Jews killed in Holocaust now identified



Five million of the more than six million Jews killed in the Holocaust have now been identified, and with the further help of artificial intelligence (AI), even more names could be recovered, Israeli researchers said on Monday.

Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, said the milestone marks seven decades of work and is at the heart of its mission to recover the identities of those murdered by the Nazis during World War Two.

Some one million Jewish victims are still unknown "and many will likely remain so forever," Yad Vashem said. But with tools such as AI and machine learning, it believes it could recover another 250,000 names by analysing hundreds of millions of documents that have been too extensive to research manually.

With the number of Holocaust survivors shrinking and the world soon to be without first-hand witnesses, Yad Vashem chairman Dani Dayan said reaching the five million milestone was a reminder of an unfinished obligation.

"Behind each name is a life that mattered – a child who never grew up, a parent who never came home, a voice that was silenced forever," Dayan said. "It is our moral duty to ensure that every victim is remembered so that no one will be left behind in the darkness of anonymity."

In May 2024, Yad Vashem had said it had developed its own AI-powered software to comb through piles of records to try to identify hundreds of thousands of Jewish people killed in the Holocaust whose names are missing from official memorials.

At the time, it had

tracked down information on 4.9 million individuals by reading through statements and documents, checking film footage, cemeteries and other records.

The names of Holocaust victims, as well as personal files that tell about the lives of many of them, are compiled in an online Yad Vashem database in six languages. This database, it noted, has helped countless families reunite with lost relatives and families to commemorate loved ones, particularly as most victims were left without graves.

"The Nazis aimed not only to murder them, but to erase their existence. And by identifying five million names, we are restoring their human identities and ensuring that their memory endures," said Alexander Avram, director of Yad Vashem's Hall of Names, who heads the central database of victims' names.

Nagaland University develops Biodegradable Gelatin-Based Electrolyte for safer high-performance supercapacitors

Researchers have created a patented gelatin hydrogel membrane electrolyte that enhances safety, flexibility & performance of supercapacitors, offering greener solutions for EVs, wearables & renewable energy systems



LUMAMI, NAGALAND.

Nagaland University Researchers have developed a novel eco-friendly gelatin-based hydrogel membrane electrolyte that offers a safe, flexible, and biodegradable alternative to conventional electrolytes used in supercapacitors.

Supercapacitors are fast-charging, high-output energy storage devices used in everything from electric vehicles to emergency medical equipment.

This research could pave the way for cleaner, more sustainable energy solutions. It holds the potential to have a great impact on sustainable energy storage, particularly in devices such as electric vehicles, medical wearables, and portable electronics.

Traditional energy storage systems often use liquid electrolytes that can leak, corrode components, and cause environmental damage. To address these challenges, the Nagaland University research team created a 'KI-doped glyoxal-crosslinked gelatin hydrogel membrane electrolyte' (GNHME). This innovative material combines gelatin, a naturally biodegradable protein, with glyoxal, a crosslinking agent that enhances mechanical flexibility, and potassium iodide (KI), a redox-active dopant that boosts ionic conductivity and capacitance.

The result is a semi-transparent, flexible hydrogel that safely conducts ions and maintains stability over thousands of charge-discharge cycles, making it ideal for next-generation solid-state supercapacitors.

The findings of this Research Team were published in *Materials Today Chemistry*, a reputed peer-reviewed international Q1 category journal with an Impact Factor of 6.7. (paper link: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mtchem.2024.102470>). An Indian patent for this technology has been granted to Nagaland University (Patent No.: 570983; Date of grant: 22/09/2025).

The paper was co-authored by Mr. Duangailung Kamei, Lead researcher, Mr. Dipankar Hazarika, co-researcher and Dr. Nurul Alam Choudhury, Supervisor and Principal Investigator, Naga-

land University. The research was funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC), Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

Lauding the researchers, Prof. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Vice Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, "Nagaland University is proud of this remarkable achievement by our researchers in developing a biodegradable gelatin-based electrolyte for safer and high-performance supercapacitors. This innovation reflects our commitment to advancing sustainable technologies and contributing to a greener future. I congratulate the research team for their dedication and pioneering work, which enhances the university's role in promoting scientific excellence and environmental responsibility."

Elaborating on this research, Dr. Nurul Alam Choudhury, Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry, Nagaland University, said, "The development of biodegradable, redox-active solid electrolytes marks an important step toward realising eco-friendly, high-performance energy storage systems compatible with renewable energy integration. This technology could play a key role in electric mobility and green energy applications, aligning with India's sustainable development goals."

Unlike conventional liquid electrolytes, this quasi-solid hydrogel is biodegradable, leak-proof, and exhibits exceptional electrochemical performance. The gelatin/glyoxal covalent hydrogel is a superabsorbent that absorbs water to the extent of 717%. The incorporation of KI significantly improves the energy and power densities of supercapacitors, while the use of glyoxal provides excellent flexibility and resilience compared to other crosslinking agents.

Prototype supercapacitors built using this membrane have already demonstrated their practical utility by powering LED lamps for extended durations, marking a significant milestone toward real-world applications.

Further, Lead researcher Mr. Duangailung Kamei, Research Scholar, Nagaland University, said, "Currently, our team is working to optimise dopant composition to further enhance energy density and extend the lifespan of the devices. The next phase involves scaling up the fabrication of these hydrogel membranes and integrating them with commercial-grade electrodes to assess performance in real-world energy storage systems."

Co-researcher Mr. Dipankar Hazarika, Research Scholar, Nagaland University, said, "This work underscores India's growing contribution to global clean energy research. By offering an environmentally benign, cost-effective, and high-performance alternative to traditional electrolytes, the KI-doped gelatin hydrogel technology holds immense promise for future-ready supercapacitors that can drive cleaner, safer, and more sustainable energy solutions for generations to come."

This breakthrough could result in the development of future supercapacitors that are built with safer, more environmentally friendly materials. Because the membrane is made from gelatin, a natural protein, and uses no toxic liquid electrolyte, there is far less risk of leakage, overheating, or chemical pollution.

This aspect makes it ideal for safety-sensitive settings such as wearable health monitors, implantable devices, or remote renewable energy installations where reliability and low-hazard materials are vital.

In practical use, the technology could help reduce the overall cost and environmental footprint of energy storage. By replacing costly synthetic and potentially hazardous components with a biodegradable, low-cost hydrogel membrane, manufacturers could make energy devices that are cheaper to produce and easier to dispose of responsibly.

ABOUT NAGALAND UNIVERSITY: Nagaland University, the 13th Central University and the only Central University in Nagaland,



was established based on the Act of Parliament of India and received the assent of the President of India on 20th October 1989 as The Nagaland University Act 1989. The University came into being on September 6, 1994, having jurisdiction over the entire state of Nagaland.

Nagaland University registered a significant improvement in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2025, securing a place in the 151-200 rank band.

At present, the University has three campuses, viz. (i) Headquarters at Lumami in Zunheboto district (ii) Kohima Campus at

Meriema in Kohima district (iii) Medziphema Campus (School of Agricultural Sciences) at Medziphema in Dimapur district.

There are 43 departments offering Undergraduate, Postgraduate and PhD programmes in different disciplines of Arts, Commerce, Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Engineering & Technology and Management streams. There are 76 colleges from all over the state of Nagaland currently affiliated with Nagaland University.

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National Award-Winning Filmmaker Borun Thokchom Welcomes North East Integration Rally, Celebrating Culture and Unity



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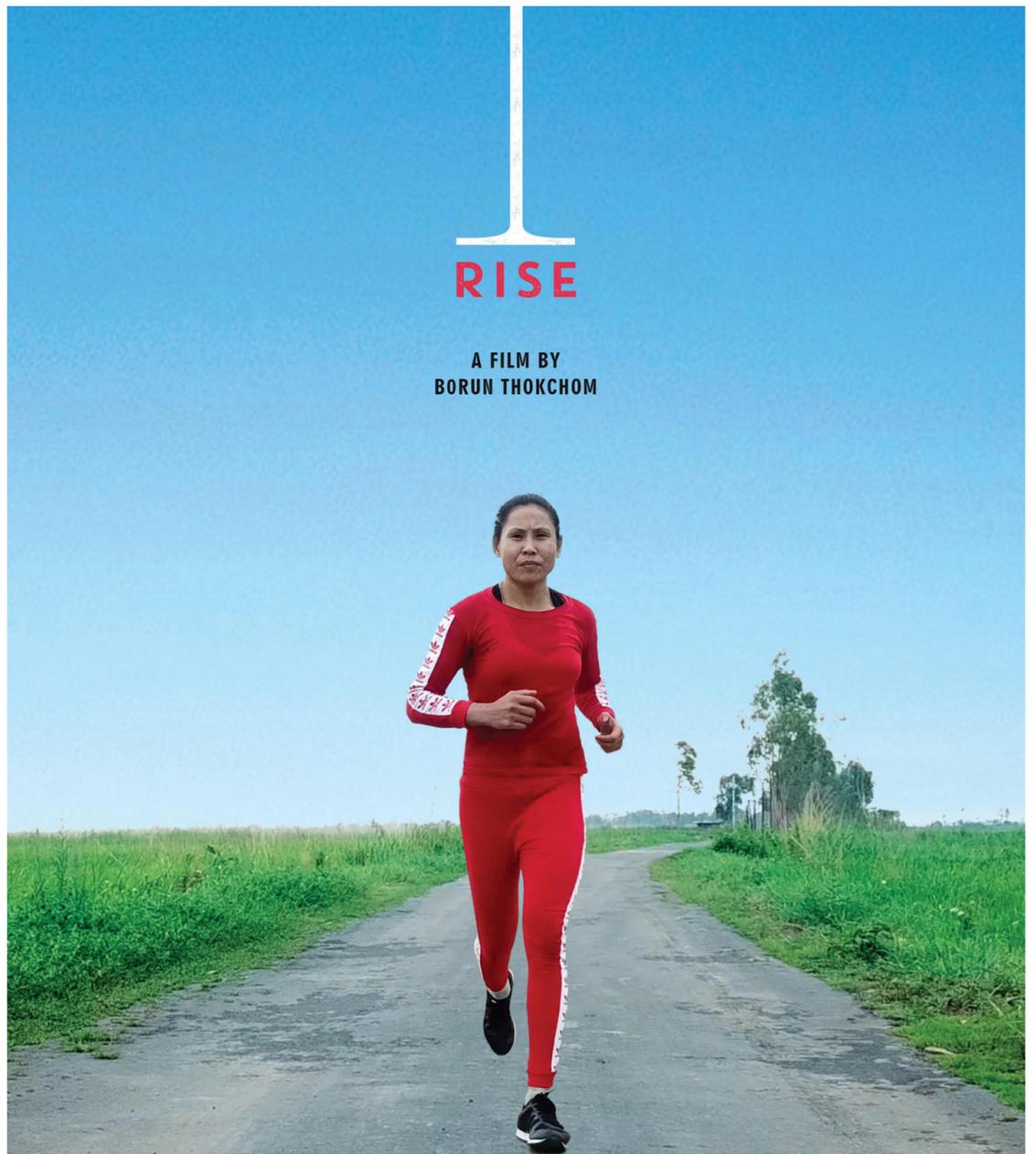
Acclaimed filmmaker and journalist Borun Thokchom has expressed his excitement and support for the upcoming North East Integration Rally, a month-long cultural journey that will begin on January 4 in Kolkata and conclude on February 4, highlighting the diverse traditions, landscapes, and spirit of the Northeast.

Borun, a National Award-winning documentary filmmaker and the Imphal Correspondent for DY365, said the rally will serve as a powerful platform to promote understanding and appreciation of the Northeast's unique cultural identity across the country. "The North East is a treasure of stories, traditions, and resilience. A rally like this helps connect people, bridge perceptions, and remind the rest of India how culturally rich and dynamic this region truly is," he said.

The rally is expected to feature cultural performances, film screenings, traditional art exhibitions, and interactive sessions showcasing the vibrant heritage of the eight Northeastern states—Assam, Ma-

nipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim. Participants will travel through various cities and towns, creating opportunities for exchange and collaboration among artists, youth groups, and cultural organizations.

Borun Thokchom, known for his internationally acclaimed documentaries "The Silent Poet"—which won the National Award—and "I Rise" produced by Films Division, Mumbai, has long champi-

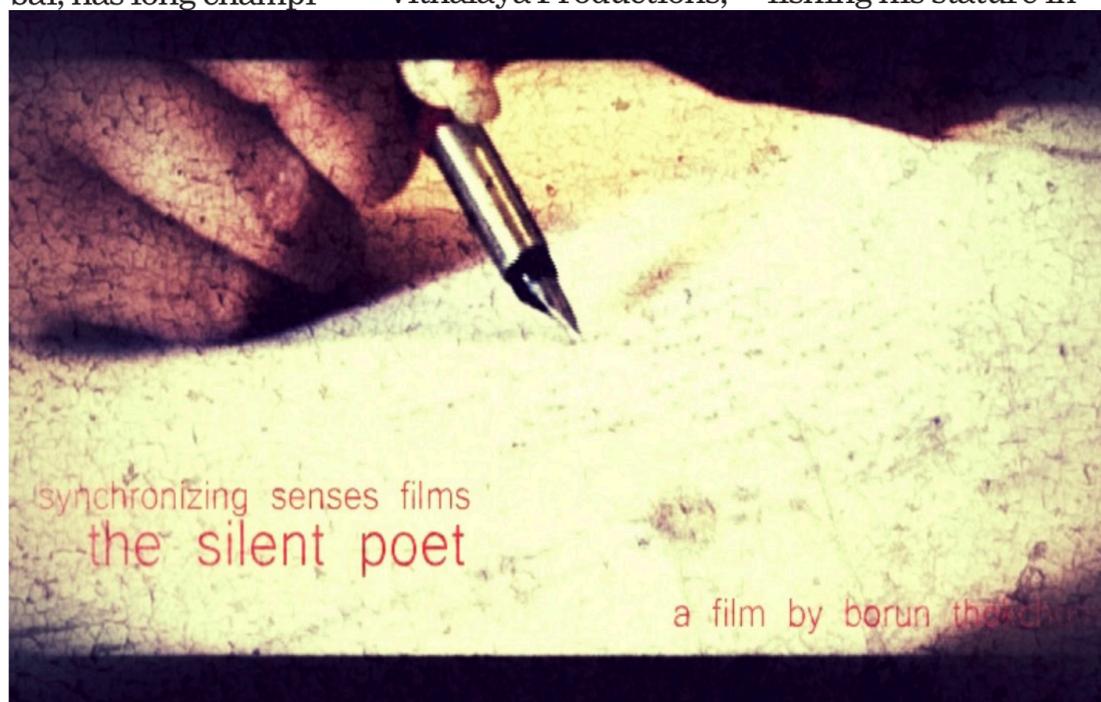


mentary filmmaking and television journalism, with collaborations that include NHK World (Japan) and Kavithalaya Productions,

69th National Film Awards and the 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Goa—further establishing his stature in

said initiatives like this are vital for shaping narratives beyond stereotypes. "Every valley, hill, and town here holds stories worth sharing. Integration is not just about geography—it's about empathy and connection. I hope this rally inspires more filmmakers, journalists, and artists to tell those stories with honesty and pride."

The rally, organized with support from cultural and youth development bodies, is expected to draw participation from hundreds of enthusiasts, artists, and social organizations. As the event aims to weave together art, culture, and travel, voices like Borun Thokchom's underscore the larger message—that unity in diversity is best understood through shared experience and storytelling.



oned stories that celebrate identity, struggle, and humanity from the region. His extensive career spans both doc-

as well as bylines in The Quint, AFP, and ABC News (Australia). In 2023, he served as a jury member at the

India's cinematic landscape. Reflecting on the spirit of the North East Integration Rally, Borun



BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM



10 JAN

NE Cultural Fest

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

11 JAN

Adventure Sports

Trekking | Canyoneering | Sport Climbing | Disaster Management Technique | Water Sports

10 JAN

Barak Valley Conclave

Theme: **POTENTIAL, ISSUES & CHALLENGES**

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BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM

JAN'25

Online Global Fest

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

12 JAN

River-Climate Conclave

Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, treatment and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competition and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.

11 JAN

5E For Success Conclave

The 4th 5E For Success Conclave is going to be held on the theme: "From School to Campus to Corporate". Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.

10 JAN

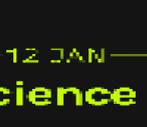
Media Conclave

Media Conclave (Webinars, Seminars, Guest Talks and Conferences) are part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: "One for All, All for One".

10 JAN

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BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM

10-12 JAN

Science Studio

Use a glimpse of Science to arts through digital. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents

10-12 JAN

E-Sports

FIFA Football | DOTA 2 | CASH PRIZES | Trophy

10-12 JAN

Book Bank

Anti-Book Campaign Book Bank Drive | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

10-12 JAN

Book Club

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

10-12 JAN

Painting Carnival

Water Colour painting and Draw-Paint Campaign

DEC'24-JAN'25

Photography

Online Photography Contest
 River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture
 Real-Time Photography Contest of "Barak Festival 2025"

11 JAN

film festival

Award-Giving (Best movie) | Film from Mizoram
 Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W's
 Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet

Barak Festival

Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion



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Barak Festival

Band Night | 10 JAN Musical Night | 11 JAN



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