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PERSPECTIVE

We, the citizens, must have a RIGHT TO RECALL our elected representatives (MPs, MLAs and councillors) when they fail to fulfil their duties satisfactorily. I just moved a Private Member's Bill to this effect.
~ Raghav Chadha, MP, (RS), National Spokesperson, Aam Aadmi Party

BPF rules out pre-poll tie-up with BJP for 2026 Assam Assembly elections

GUWAHATI

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF) has categorically ruled out any pre-poll alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections. The announcement was made by BTC Deputy Chief and senior BPF leader Rihan Daimary during a victory celebration programme at Karai Guri in Gohpur.

Addressing party workers, Daimary stated that the BPF would contest the upcoming polls independently.

"BPF will not enter into an alliance with any political party before the election," he declared, adding that any post-poll understanding would hinge on whichever party secures a workable majority and commits to the development of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

Daimary also weighed in on the ongoing debate over granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities in Assam. He said BPF would not oppose their inclusion, provided the rights of existing tribal groups remain safeguarded.

"We have no objection if the rights of current tribal groups remain protected," he said.

On the recent attack on the BTC Secretariat, the BPF leader alleged involvement of individuals linked to the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL). He urged the Assam Government to initiate strict action against those responsible.

WHO SAID WHAT

Pakistan is commenting on Arumachal Pradesh! I would like to ask Pakistan, to carefully listen to the honest advice given by- Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji for their own good! ~ Kiren Rijiju, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Minority Affairs, MP, Arumachal Pradesh

NFR approves Silchar-Sairang railway line; plans extension to Hmawngbuchhuah



AIZAWL

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has officially approved the long-awaited Silchar-Sairang railway line via Bairabi, a major boost for Mizoram's connectivity, officials confirmed on Friday.

The announcement came during a meeting with Jonathan Lalremruata, OSD to the Chief Minister and

Mizoram's representative on the Divisional Railway Users' Consultative Committee (DRUCC).

The project is expected to be virtually inaugurated by Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, along with Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, after the ongoing Parliament session.

NFR also stated that the extension of the Sairang line to Hmawngbuchhuah via Thenzawl (Peace City) has

been agreed upon in principle.

The final alignment is being decided, and the Detailed Project Report (DPR) will be prepared.

To encourage tourism, a Vistadome coach is being considered on a trial basis, offering passengers panoramic views of Mizoram's landscapes.

In a digital initiative, the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system will be integrated with IRCTC. Trains to Sairang will feature QR codes to allow passengers to register for ILPs before entering the state.

NFR is also exploring the possibility of a Passenger Reservation System (PRS) counter and parcel services in Aizawl.

For logistics, land in Sairang has been earmarked for a warehouse, which the state government or other agencies may lease for up to 35 years.

Officials added that construction of key facilities, including a merchant room, labour room, toilets, goods office, and sheds, is expected to be completed within the next two to three months.

Manipur to host Barak Festival 2025 from December 12



During the meeting, various aspects of the festival were discussed, including budget, programme schedules, transportation, promotion, and the overall positioning of the Barak Festival as a popular tourist attraction in the state.

The Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, Administrative Secretaries, Deputy Commissioner, and Superintendent of Police, Senapati, along with stakeholders from the district, were present and deliberated on various topics.

Scheduled from 12 to 14 December 2025, the 4th edition of the State Level Barak Festival will be celebrated under the theme "Heritage in Harmony" at Zilipou, Senapati District.

The festival aims to showcase the rich cultural tapestry of the region while strengthening community participation and enhancing its visibility as a key cultural tourism event in Manipur.

The Miss Barak Contest 2025 will be the main attraction of the festival.

IMPHAL

Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, chaired a meeting of the organising committee for the 4th State Level Barak Festival 2025 at Lok Bhavan (formerly Raj Bhavan), Imphal.

'Families Can't Wait': Manipur MP Urges Rapid Resettlement as Camp Hardships Persist

NEW DELHI

The prolonged struggle of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Manipur took centre stage in the Lok Sabha on Friday, as Manipur MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam urged the Centre to immediately chart a transparent and time-bound roadmap for their return and rehabilitation. The appeal was made during Zero Hour, more than a year after ethnic violence first erupted in the state in May 2023.

Speaking in Manipuri, Akoijam stressed that many displaced families continue to live in relief camps without clarity on when they will be able to return home. He warned that allowing the situation to drag on into a third year could deepen existing mistrust and prolong suffering. "People want to return with safety and dignity," he said, press-

ing the government to establish a credible mechanism to restore normalcy.

The MP further alleged that security forces had used excessive force on displaced persons during protests demanding resettlement - an approach he said only complicates prospects for a durable resolution. He hinted that the current paralysis over rehabilitation may reflect the stance of sections within the Kuki community who oppose resettlement efforts.

Calling the continued displacement a failure of administrative responsibility, Akoijam accused "vested interests" of intentionally obstructing the return of affected families. He insisted that only decisive and transparent intervention from the Centre can ensure that thousands of citizens, stranded for over a year, receive the opportunity to rebuild their lives without further delay.



'Rs 200 Coffee, Rs 20,000 Ticket': Gogoi Slams Modi Amid IndiGo Flight Chaos, Public Fury Rising



GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on December 5 criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise of making air travel accessible to the masses, arguing that rising fares and widespread flight disruptions have made the aviation sector increasingly unaffordable for ordinary passengers.

"PM Modi promised that even those who can only afford slippers would be able to fly," Gogoi said. "But the reality today is airports where coffee costs ₹200, tickets

priced at ₹20,000, and flights that are either delayed or cancelled."

His remarks came amid major travel disruptions after IndiGo, which holds nearly two-thirds of India's aviation market, cancelled multiple flights across the country on Thursday. The cancellations left hundreds stranded and triggered on-line backlash, with passengers reporting last-minute notifications, long queues at airports, and limited assistance for alternative travel

arrangements.

Many travellers took to social media to express frustration, calling out poor communication from the airline and steep fare hikes on available replacement flights. Disruptions of this scale, passengers said, have become increasingly frequent in recent weeks.

IndiGo has previously cited crew shortages, technical factors and growing air traffic congestion as key reasons behind its operational instability. Gogoi also took a dig at Air India, remarking that the situation has reached a point where even the state-run carrier appears favourable in comparison. He blamed policy gaps for enabling monopolistic dominance in the aviation sector and urged the government to ensure fair competition and reliable service standards. "We need competition, not monopolies," Gogoi said, adding that the government must take responsibility for ensuring safe, affordable and dependable domestic air travel.

The cancellations have revived concerns about India's aviation capacity, pricing structure and crisis-management preparedness-issues likely to intensify debate ahead of peak holiday travel.

Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurates Rs 646 crore development projects in Nagaland

DIMAPUR

Union Communications and DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated major development projects under the DoNER ministry, amounting to Rs 646.39 crore in Nagaland, at the multipurpose hall of Phezou Resort, Tuophema, Kohima, on Friday.

The launch signals a significant push toward strengthening infrastructure, public services, and connectivity in the state.

Five projects were inaugurated across the Power, School Education, and PWD (R&B) departments.

Under the Power Department, the upgradation of the 132 kV sub-station at Nagarjan, Dimapur, costing Rs 24.46 crore, has been completed to enhance power transformation capacity.

Under the School Education Department, two projects were inaugurated: the In-Service Teachers Training-cum-Examination Centre with residential facilities costing Rs 20 crore, and the implementation of IT infrastructure in 190 schools across Nagaland at a cost of Rs 18.95 crore.

Under PWD (R&B), two major



road projects were completed: the upgradation of the Chendang Saddle-Noklak Road at Rs 45.59 crore, and the improvement of AT Road from Tsungra to Impur Junction, including bridges, at Rs 93.98 crore.

Foundation stones of 11 new projects were also laid across the Health & Family Welfare, Youth Resources & Sports, IT & Communication, Power, and PWD (R&B) departments.

Under the Health & Family Welfare Department, foundation stones were laid for a multi-specialty hospital at Chumoukedima costing Rs 58.72 crore, and a 50-bed hospital at the new Peren district headquarters costing Rs 44.65 crore, among other projects.

Speaking at a public programme in Tuophema, Scindia thanked the people of Nagaland for their warmth, hospitality, and cultural vibrancy, saying that his experience over the past 36 hours made him feel blessed to serve the eight states of the Northeast.

He emphasised that the region is no longer the "last frontier" but the "first frontier" of India, serving as the gateway to Southeast Asia with immense economic and tourism potential.



Welcome Debraj Chakraborty



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LONG IGNORED ROHINGYA CRISIS

The Supreme Court's sharp questions on the legal status of Rohingyas living in India have once again thrust into national focus an issue that has lingered far too long without resolution. What began years ago as a humanitarian concern has, with the passage of time, transformed into a complex social, legal and security challenge. Thousands of Rohingyas who entered India illegally and without the backing of any formal refugee framework are now scattered across multiple states, integrated into localities, accessing public resources, and, in several cases, entangling themselves in criminal activity. It is no longer an abstract debate of rights and protections; it is a live and expanding crisis affecting law, order, governance, and the rights of Indian citizens.

Are Rohingyas refugees or illegal entrants? This determination is crucial because every subsequent issue—whether they can be deported, detained, provided amenities, or regularised—flows from this single categorisation. Despite years of litigation, there has been little clarity and even less progress. The matter has been allowed to drift, enabling the situation on the ground to become more complicated, more entrenched, and far more difficult to resolve. The reality remains that India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. There is no domestic refugee law. Consequently, individuals who enter India without valid travel documents are treated as illegal immigrants under the Foreigners Act and the Passport Act. Rohingyas do not automatically become "refugees" under Indian law simply by holding UNHCR cards, regardless of the persecution they may have faced elsewhere. The Supreme Court has reiterated this position in earlier orders.

What makes the situation alarming is not merely their unlawful entry but the scale and sophistication with which many Rohingyas have integrated themselves into the system. Reports from various states indicate that over time, they have managed to procure Aadhaar cards, ration cards and even electricity and water connections. Entire colonies have come up built not under any government scheme but through informal arrangements and questionable networks. More worrying is the trend of marriages within local populations, further complicating citizenship and identity concerns. This is not a theoretical threat. Several investigative agencies have flagged the involvement of Rohingyas in crimes ranging from petty thefts to organised trafficking, espionage, narcotics, and document forgery. While it would be unfair to paint an entire community with one brush, it is equally irresponsible to ignore emerging patterns. A population that has entered illegally, expanded rapidly, accessed welfare benefits meant for India's poorest, and simultaneously posed law-and-order challenges cannot be treated with exceptional leniency under the garb of humanitarianism.

States have, from time to time, rounded up Rohingyas, attempted verification drives, and even pursued deportation. Yet each attempt has run into the same bottleneck: the legality of deportation under judicial scrutiny. The Centre has repeatedly maintained that Myanmar must accept them back only after necessary documentation—a process that requires diplomatic coordination. But the larger delay has stemmed from the prolonged pendency of the matter before the Supreme Court. The result is a limbo where neither are they deported nor are they regularised; they remain in a grey zone that burdens administrative resources and creates social friction. The Supreme Court's recent intervention is therefore not only timely but essential. Its remarks—questioning whether illegal entrants deserve "a red carpet welcome" and highlighting the rightful claim of India's own poor to limited resources—reflect a long overdue realism. The decision to list the matter every Wednesday signals an intention to break the stagnation that has plagued this issue for years. India cannot afford ambiguity any longer. The presence of a large and growing illegal population poses demographic, security and socio-economic challenges. Deportation, conducted through established diplomatic channels and legal procedures, is the only viable long-term solution. The question is not whether Rohingyas should be deported but how soon the process can begin. Humanitarian considerations must not override national security or legal sovereignty. The nation now awaits not another adjournment but a firm, actionable pathway to resolve an issue that has dragged on for far too long.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Believe you can and you're halfway there

- Theodore Roosevelt

Kashmiri Pandits have existential stake in Kashmir Valley

ASHOK BHAN

"Gar firdaus bar roo-e zameen ast, hamin asto, hamin asto, hamin asto"

Kashmir was considered the abode of Saraswati, the highest seat of learning in India, and was also referred to as Sharda Peeth. So much so that students on graduating from Kashi would take four symbolic steps towards Kashmir, denoting their aspiration for higher learning. Almost the entire body of Sanskrit literature has its origins in Kashmir.

Kashmiri Pandits have rich heritage and their roots are engraved in the soil of the Kashmir Valley for more than five thousand years. That can neither be destroyed nor obliterated by any power more so by unleashing terror and vicious campaign.

Realities are, at times harsh and strange. The harsh ground reality in today's age of enlightenment is – Kashmir today is without Kashmiri Pandits. The aborigine community of Kashmir, are out in exile, in this modern age of reason and enlightenment. The forced exile of the Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, designed to effect the motivated ethnic cleansing, will go down as a big BLACK SPOT in the history of Kashmir. The aborigines are in continuous persecution and facing genocide. The atrocities peaked during despot rule of tyrant kings.

The irony is that they did not get any respite/Justice even in the bright days of the enlightened times, especially in the post-independent days of India. Whatever be the vicissitudes of their history all pale into insignificance when we look at their present plight. The colossal crisis through which the exiled community or for that matter the entire Kashmiri society is passing through is in reality- the crisis in the country's great values – the perversion in practice of its constitutional jurisprudence, the sociopolitical and moral norms.

Acute fear and scare had been created which gripped the Kashmiri Pandits from September 1989 onwards after killings of prominent members of the community. The Pandits started feeling what they had felt when hounded by Afghans in the second half of the 18th century – "there is fear and dread in the city. Prepare for journey, disorder is dominant in this city, we are the targets and victims."

There is a consensus across political spectrum in the country and in Jammu and Kashmir for the reversal of exile of KPs. The continuing promises by Modi:2.0, the expectations of the native population living as refugees in their own country, skyrocketed for the return to their homeland.

PM Modi urged people of the country and Jammu and Kashmir – come, let us all together, build a "new Jammu and Kashmir and new Ladakh" with the new India: he said, I have complete faith, under this new system, we all will be able to free Jammu and Kashmir from terrorism and separatism and mainstream it with rest of the country. He called it a Naya Kashmir of newer opportunities and forward movement toward peaceful life. Those from Jammu and Kashmir who live elsewhere for reasons of turbulence in the Valley will be helped to return to their homes the PM Modi declared.

After almost six years plus of 5th August 2019 decision of abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A, a sense is gathering around that the plight of native exiled Kashmiri population is being slowly forgotten. Everybody sheds crocodile tears over their suffering, but nothing by way of action is seemingly visible by the Modi-3:0 and JK Union Territory Government. The larger presence of Pandits, as an important stakeholder and a relevant component in strengthening the idea of India in Kashmir and ushering in peace, and civilisational inclusiveness is less talked about in the din and noise of integration and mainstreaming of Kashmir. This objective is laudable, it is unachievable without the physical presence of seven hundred thousand population of aborigines Pandits back in the valley at least in three smart cities in Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag.

Kashmiri Pandits have an existential stake in the Valley. They have to be phys-

cally present on the soil of the Valley as living component and stake holders and day to day participants in the socio-economic, political, cultural and spiritual ethos of Kashmir valley, otherwise how will the present as well as future generations realise that Kashmir is the keystone of their heritage through millennia, finding mention even in the Indian oldest scriptures?

The choice of exile was forced on the Kashmiri Pandit community by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists who imposed their writ on Kashmir by unleashing death and destruction. Killing one and scaring a thousand was a concerted plan neatly executed by local terror groups.

The state government at that time abdicated its constitutional duties, created a sociopolitical vacuum and left people's life and liberty at the mercy of looters, marauders and terror groups. The terrorist violence is unabated till this day. The terrorists maimed, killed, lynched and looted a large number of Kashmiri Pandits and other natives. The terror-stricken Pandits ran for life, leaving their homes and hearths behind them.

On 4 January 1990, Srinagar-based newspaper Aftab released a message, threatening all Hindus to leave Kashmir immediately, sourcing it to the militant organization Hizbul Mujahideen. On 14 April 1990, another Srinagar based newspaper named Alsafa republished the same warning. The newspaper did not claim ownership of the statement and subsequently issued a clarification. Walls were pasted with posters with threatening messages to all Kashmiris to harshly follow the Islamic rules which included abiding by the Islamic dress code, a prohibition on alcohol, cinemas, and video parlours and strict restrictions on Kashmiri women. Unknown masked men with Kalashnikovs used to force people to reset their time to Pakistan Standard Time. Offices buildings, shops, and establishments were colored green as a sign of Islamist rule. Shops, factories, temples and homes of Kashmiri Pandits were burned or destroyed.

Threatening posters were posted on doors of Pandits asking them to leave Kashmir immediately. During the middle of the night of 18 and 19 January, a blackout took place in the Kashmir Valley where electricity was cut except in mosques which broadcast divisive and inflammatory messages, asking for a purge of Kashmiri Pandits.

On 21 January 1990, two days after Jagmohan took over as governor, the Gawkadal massacre took place in Srinagar, in which the Indian security forces had opened fire on protesters, leading to the death of at least thirty people, and likely injured over 100.

These events led to chaos. Lawlessness took over the valley and the crowd with slogans and guns started roaming around the streets. News kept coming of violent incidents and those Pandits who survived the night saved their lives by traveling out of the valley.

Exiled Kashmiri Pandits sought refuge in Jammu, Delhi and elsewhere in the country. The ethnic cleansing process was completed and now the Kashmir Valley has a very small number of Kashmiri Pandits. Those who chose to live in the Valley are being killed by newer breed of terrorists. There is a pattern in continuing killings therefore unless the large population is not physically rehabilitated the KPs would always be the soft targets. The native Kashmiris have entered in the 33rd year of exile. Pandits crave for return to their roots. They say bidding farewell to the soil they have sprung from is too traumatic as experience to be conveyed in words. They always say – we love our homeland and every inch of its bounteous soil has nourished us all. The everyday resolve of these hapless Kashmiris is – strive, struggle and stop not till the exile is reversed and they return back to their homeland on their own terms.

The successive Central as well as state governments have failed them and done precious little for the rehabilitation of this community, which has contributed in a big way to the freedom struggle of India against the British imperialism, and also to the national reconstruction in the post-Independent era. It is a community whose history

generates envy at their achievements as well as sorrow at their plight today. The long history of these exiled Kashmiris has been of triumphs and tragedies. The antiquity of the Kashmiri natives and its Aryan origin are well established. Human memory is short and so is, unfortunately, the memory of our leaders, especially of the current dispensation.

The exiled Kashmiri Pandits for several years are demanding high level judicial commission of inquiry.

There are very strong grounds legally and otherwise to set up a Commission of inquiry headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge to be assisted by DGP, Director intelligence bureau, Director of Central Bureau of Investigation and Director General of National Intelligence Agency to probe into the heinous crimes of murders, loot, rapes, forcible land and properties, grabbing of religious endowments properties across the Valley.

Sometime back, on the recommendation of State administration the MHA while banning the separatist's outfits described ethnic cleansing & purging of Kashmiri Pandit community, as the principal ground to Seal and Ban the separatists/terror outfits operating in Kashmir. The admission by State administration & MHA through Union Home Secretary Is in public domain, These recommendations further fortify the pleas for the probe by the victim Kashmiri Pandit community

Politically, the Kashmiri Pandit's view, post inoperable Article 370 and conversion of JK State to a bifurcated Union Territory, the subject of Jammu & Kashmir has become enveloped in a dense opacity with layer upon layer of distortions of history, self serving myths and competing political interests. Peeling off these layers by revisiting history, without prejudice on the real issues involved, can only help in our collective search for a brighter tomorrow for Jammu & Kashmir.

The Jammu & Kashmir policy shall coordinate between, what the country peruses as domestic policy qua the JK Union Territory as GOI, on one hand and the treatment of Jammu & Kashmir, as an issue in Indo-Pak relations and in India's foreign policy in general. A coherent and effective policy on JK affairs must bring all these components together in an internally consistent manner.

One of the most profound and important component of the fresh policy outlook for better tomorrow in Jammu & Kashmir is- the Return, restitution and retention of exiled Kashmiri Pandit Community as a concentrated religious Minority Community in their homeland Kashmir Valley. This community by the acts of terrorist violence was ethnically cleansed and exited from their homeland where their roots are engraved for more than 5000 years.

The return of Pandits to their homeland cannot be achieved unless the Government of India and that of the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory are on same page to plan out a common and comprehensive return module and enforce the same in time bound framework.

Successive Governments have promised, the return and settlement of Kashmiri Pandits with socio-economic and political empowerment back in the Valley but so far the promise has remained hollow. Modi has n't talked to exiled KPs till now for resolution of all the issues concerning Kashmir affairs, as stakeholders.

The Pandits must be returned in a time bound manner back to the Valley, to fully enjoy with dignity and political empowerment the right to life and liberty in their homeland.

"The peace will always elude until the exiled natives of the Valley return physically to their roots and homeland"

The current Modi -3:0 Government has a constitutional and political responsibility and demonstrate a strong political will for the return and rehabilitation of native exiled Kashmiri population back to homeland. It has to create safe and secured at least three smart satellite townships with modern infrastructure, housing colonies etc, provide adequate jobs to the educated youth and rescind the distress sales of immovable properties and secure all the religious places, cultural centres and en-

downments. There is a pattern of new cultural aggression on this community by way of grabbing of religious shrines and its lands and properties. The shrines and religious endowments are in grave danger from the grabbers and vested interests! Till the time the KPs return to Valley the UT administration shall constitute a high power committee headed by Chief Secretary and induct one prominent KP on the said committee to protect, upkeep, preserve and manage the religious shrines, its properties and free them from all the illegal and fraudulent occupations.

The greater obligation that lies on the Central and the UT governments is to create a conducive economic and socio-political environment for reversing their exile, plan and facilitate their early safe and dignified return to their homeland. Otherwise Modi's tall leadership and moral authority would be seen wanting on this issue. Thirty five -35 years is too long an exile for this illustrious community to have suffered. It is now or never situation for them. Native Kashmiri Pandits are longing to return to the Valley – their roots are calling to return to homeland.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

BIG BREAKING \$ NEWS: BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa announces the "UNIT" a gold backed "money." BYE BYE US DOLLAR!!!! Stand by, stay awake, stay tuned in. DONT BE A LOSER My forecast is Savers of US dollars biggest losers. If you own US Dollars.... Hyper inflation may wipe you out. I stand by my mantra, own gold, silver, Bitcoin, and Ether. Take care stay alert.

~ Robert Kiyosaki, Author, Investor, Entrepreneur



Russia's Pivot to Asia: India Rises at the Center of the New Geopolitical Map

COL AKS MACHHRAL, M-IN-D, VSM (RETD)

The Russian President's recent visit to Asia culminating in a significant stop in New Delhi has reshaped conversations in strategic circles across the world. As Russia repositions itself amid Western pressure and global realignments, Asia has emerged as the key theatre where future power structures will be decided. And at the heart of this shifting landscape stands India, more confident than ever, more assertive than before under the leadership of Mr Modi.

This transformation is not accidental, it is driven by a leadership that understands global gamesmanship with clarity and conviction.

Modi's Leadership: The Strategic Anchor of a Rising India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is today one of the most influential leaders in the subcontinent and beyond. Politically unchallenged at home and diplomatically respected across continents, Modi has turned India into a power with agency, not a spectator in global affairs.

His leadership style rooted in strong political mandate, personal diplomacy, and uncompromising national interest, has allowed India to move in a straight line while others slip into uncertainty. Modi today stands.

Ahead of opposition leaders who struggle for national coherence. As a strategic player whose actions influence the entire region.

As a leader who hasn't seen defeat in his political journey. As a symbol of stability in an unstable world. In the evolving Asian game, Modi appears increasingly as a super leader, one who

drives regional direction rather than merely responding to it. Before the Visit: India's Calculated Groundwork.

India's position before the Russian President's arrival was measured, firm, and thoughtfully prepared. Maintaining independent stand on Russia - Ukraine Strengthening partnerships with the US, Europe, Japan, and ASEAN. Leading digital diplomacy and economic reforms. Taking charge of multilateral platforms like G20, SCO, and BRICS.

This allowed India to negotiate from a position of calm strength, a quality historically lacking in the region's diplomatic temperament.

The Visit: A Turning Point in the Asian Power Equation. The outcomes of the visit go beyond agreements. Russia reaffirmed India as an independent strategic pillar, separate from Beijing's orbit. India pushed for deeper defence co-production and long-term energy security.

Both sides discussed alternative trade mechanisms and maritime corridors. Diplomatically, India emerged as a stabilising balance between East and West.

For anyone who understands diplomacy from diplomats to analysts who have watched the game from the inside this visit was a clear signal that global power is shifting eastward, and India sits at the center of that shift.

After the Visit: India's New Trajectory. (i) Economic and Trade Rise India is quickly becoming a global market-place reliable, democratic, digitally advanced, and increasingly aligned with the world's economic

interests. With global supply chains moving away from China, India is poised to step into the vacuum.

(ii) Defence Modernisation

With Russia's cooperation and India's own capacity expansion, "Make in India" defence systems, missile programmes, drones, and advanced platforms will elevate India into a top-tier military force.

(iii) Diplomatic Superiority

India now maintains meaningful ties with the US, Russia, Europe, Middle East, Africa, ASEAN, a rare diplomatic position. This multiplies India's leverage over both allies and competitors.

(iv) Strategic Shift Against China.

India is no longer shadowed by 45 China, it is challenging it.

In economy, technology, diplomacy, and Asia-wide influence, India is emerging as the alternative global center. Lessons From the Past: Foundations for Future Power. India's long association with Russia rooted in defence, trust, and strategic convergence offers valuable lessons:

(i) Dependability builds long-term strength. (ii) Strategic autonomy is India's greatest asset (iii) Legacy partnerships must evolve into modern, outcome-driven relations

If India continues this path, it will not only match China but could surpass it in stability, reliability, and global leadership.

Conclusion: India's Era Begins. The Russian President's visit marks a pivotal shift. Not for Moscow alone but for New Delhi. India stands today.

Firm in leadership. Confident in diplomacy. Rising in economic might. Backed by a leader with unmatched political momentum. Guided by a strategic mindset shaped by experience, discipline, and vision.

Asia is entering a new age. And in this age, India is not just participating it is leading.

About the Author Ashk Machhanvi is a seasoned defence and strategic affairs analyst with over 45 years of operational and diplomatic experience. He has served abroad in multiple assignments, including with the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka, gaining first-hand exposure to international conflict environments.

A former officer associated with the Cabinet Secretariat, he has worked on sensitive national security matters, high-level intelligence assessments, and confidential diplomatic engagements. His service in this elite institution provided him deep insight into global power structures, covert operations, and bilateral relations. Over the years, he has interacted with security establishments across different countries, giving him a uniquely informed perspective on India's rise as a global leader. His writings reflect a blend of ground-level military understanding and strategic geopolitical analysis.

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SC Seeks Report on Rs 146-Crore Tawang Contracts; Khandu Govt Scrambles as Ministers Decline Comment

ITANAGAR
The Pema Khandu-led government in Arunachal Pradesh is facing mounting pressure after the Supreme Court directed it to furnish a detailed report on work contracts allegedly awarded to firms linked to the Chief Minister's family. The judicial scrutiny has sparked political unease in Itanagar, with top ministers appearing cautious and distancing themselves from the controversy.

The case centres around allegations that four companies associated with Chief Minister Khandu's wife, brother, and sister-in-law received contracts exceeding ₹146 crore over a nine-year period in Tawang district. These figures were part of an affidavit submitted by the state government in compliance with earlier court directives.

According to the document placed before the apex court, a total of 146 projects - collectively valued at ₹383



crore - were sanctioned in Tawang between 2012 and 2023, covering most of



Khandu's tenure since taking office as Arunachal's youngest and reportedly wealthiest Chief Minister. The companies identified in the filings include

those linked to his wife Tsering Dolma, former MLA and brother Tashi Khandu, and sister-in-law Nima Dreema.

The controversy reached the Supreme Court through two petitions - one filed by Voluntary Arunachal Sena chief Jodik Tali and another by the Save Mon Region Federation. The matter first gained traction legally when the Gauhati High Court, on March 18, 2025, asked the state to disclose beneficiaries of government contracts issued in Tawang, including names of relatives of the Chief Minister.

Taking cognizance of the matter on December 2, the Supreme Court sought a comprehensive response from the government while scheduling the next hearing for February 2026. The development comes at a politically sensitive time, just ahead of the December 15 Panchayat and Municipal elections, triggering intense debate among voters and the political establishment.

While the ruling BJP has rejected the allegations, the party's top ministers have refrained from detailed comment. Tourism, Rural Works and Education Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona, widely considered among the most influential members of the Cabinet, termed the charges "politically motivated" but declined further remarks, citing judicial pendency. The Health Minister adopted a similar stance.

Even the opposition Congress, reduced to a single seat in the 60-member Assembly, maintained silence, stating only that the matter is before the Supreme Court.

With the next hearing two months away, the controversy threatens to hover over Arunachal's political narrative. As judicial review progresses, the case is poised to test the Khandu administration's credibility and could shape the political climate well into the election season.

Tezpur University Faces Administrative Standstill

TEZPUR

Tezpur University has entered its third month of administrative uncertainty, prompting senior professor Dr. Dhruva Kumar Bhattacharyya to assume charge as acting vice-chancellor and initiate measures to revive academic and financial operations. The institution has been functioning without a vice-chancellor for over 75 days, leading to widespread disruption across departments.

Dr. Bhattacharyya said the prolonged absence of the VC had stalled routine approvals, leaving dozens of files pending and key decisions unresolved. "There is a rule that if the vice-chancellor is away for more than 30 days, the post must be filled. But now it has been more than 75 days. Many files are pending. Everything is completely stagnant, and we are feeling it everywhere," he said.

With end-semester examinations scheduled to begin Monday, restoring normalcy has emerged as the administration's most immediate challenge. The acting VC said he stepped in following repeated requests from students, faculty, and non-teaching staff. He has already convened a meeting with university deans and is set to meet heads of departments to ensure examinations proceed without disruption.

Among the backlog are financial clearances and fellowship bills critical for ongoing academic programmes. "There are many fellowship bills and sanctions pending for exam-related matters, which I need to clear. I have prioritised students' comfort and will try to address their needs as soon as possible," Dr. Bhattacharyya said.

In a significant development, he also confirmed that allegations of corruption had surfaced within the university. Discussions are underway to conduct a special audit, which could lead to a formal report being sent to the Ministry of Education. "There are several corruption charges, and accordingly, I have just discussed with the deans. We are considering calling a special audit to establish these charges, and then we can write to the ministry," he added.

Drone Technology Bootcamp concludes in Chandel

CHANDEL

A five-day Drone Technology Bootcamp, aimed at boosting operational readiness and technical proficiency among security personnel, has concluded at the Drone Training Node (DTN) in Chandel. Organised by Assam Rifles in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, and supported under a specialised initiative of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the training was held from 1 to 5 December.

A total of 165 personnel from the Army, Assam Rifles, BSF, CRPF, Territorial Army, along with faculty members from IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, participated in the Bootcamp. The programme focused on building technical competence in unmanned aerial systems through modules on drone electronics, flight operations, sensor integration, communication systems, and emerging innovations.

Participants also underwent simulator-based training, hands-on demonstrations, and interactive sessions led by expert instructors from IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, with technical support from MeitY and Assam Rifles mentors.

At the closing ceremony, chaired by the Deputy Inspector General of Assam Rifles, the officer praised the enthusiasm and discipline shown by the participants and underlined the growing importance of drone technology in national security, disaster management, and development initiatives. He stressed the need for continuous upskilling to keep pace with evolving operational demands.

He also appreciated the collaboration with IIT (ISM) Dhanbad and MeitY, noting that such partnerships play a crucial role in fostering innovation and strengthening technological capabilities in the region.

Manipur IDPs Intensify Protest, Demand Fast-Track Resettlement Before December

IMPHAL

A relay sit-in by internally displaced people in Manipur entered its fifth day on Thursday, with protestors urging the state government to expedite resettlement measures and honour its commitment to rehabilitate conflict-affected families before the end of December.

The demonstration, organised by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), began on December 1 at Lamboi Khongnangkhang in Imphal West. Participants have been submitting memoranda daily to the Governor and the Chief Secretary, pressing for concrete action rather than procedural assurances.

In the latest memorandum, protestors noted that only 27 days remain for the government to meet its self-declared deadline. They referenced earlier engagements between officials and IDP representatives, where assur-



ances were reportedly given that a comprehensive resettlement blueprint was in place.

While acknowledging initial

progress in Sadu Koireng and Waroiching in Bishnupur district, demonstrators described the developments as modest and

insufficient. Thousands of families, they said, continue to live in precarious conditions across relief camps.

The memorandum emphasised the need for "tangible movement on the ground," arguing that confidence among displaced communities can only be restored through visible implementation of housing, infrastructure and security support. Return to home villages, protestors insisted, must be accompanied by adequate safety measures and basic services. COCOMI has called on the government to accelerate district-wise rehabilitation and publish a timeline-based progress report to track implementation. "We are left with only 27 days to fulfil the assurance," the group reiterated.

With the deadline approaching, displaced families say they will continue their sit-in until the state demonstrates clear progress toward full-scale resettlement.

IndiGo Cancels Nine Flights at Agartala Airport, Hundreds of Passengers Stranded

AGARTALA

Air travel at Agartala's Maharaja Bir Bikram (MBB) Airport descended into chaos on Friday after IndiGo cancelled nine scheduled flights - equal to 18 operations, including arrivals and departures. The airline cited crew rostering complications tied to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's newly enforced Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms as the reason behind the abrupt disruption.

The cancellations, compounded by prolonged delays on multiple routes, left hundreds of passengers stranded at the terminal and thousands more facing uncertainty ahead of weekend travel. Two Kolkata-bound flights were delayed by more than seven hours, while at least two others faced delays of around an hour. Despite the heavy



disruptions, MBB Airport recorded 15 operational flights by evening-eight arrivals and seven departures.

Many passengers expressed anger over what they described as inadequate communication from the airline. Several travellers said they arrived at the airport only to learn that their flights had been grounded.

"No messages, calls or alerts were sent. We were left confused and frustrated," said one flyer waiting in the departure hall.

The impact stretched beyond leisure and business travel, affecting passengers from Tripura, other northeastern states and neighbouring Bangladesh - many of whom

were flying for medical treatment or urgent commitments. With Agartala Airport handling between 4,500 and 5,000 passengers daily, the sudden suspension quickly overwhelmed counters and support staff.

Airport personnel were seen managing long queues at the IndiGo desk as travellers sought refunds, rebooking or alternative connections. With limited frequency of flights from other carriers, options for stranded passengers remained scarce through the evening.

The situation is expected to ease only after IndiGo stabilises crew deployment under the revised FDTL limits, but for many travellers, Friday's breakdown highlighted the fragility of aviation connectivity in the Northeast - where a single airline disruption can ripple across states and borders.

Assam Eases Two-Child Policy for ST, SC, Tea Tribe, Moran and Matak Groups



GUWAHATI

The Assam government has officially relaxed its two-child policy for several indigenous communities, allowing members of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, tea garden workers, and the Moran and Matak groups to have up to three children without facing disqualification from government jobs, welfare schemes or electoral participation. The Health and Family Welfare Department issued a notification on December 5 amending the Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam, 2017. The revised provision takes immediate effect and marks a significant shift in the state's approach to population-based eligibility norms.

Commissioner and Secretary Patibandla Ashok Babu clarified that individuals from the notified communities will not be barred from applying for government employment, contesting elections, or receiving Self Help Group incentives if they have three children. The relaxation follows a Cabinet decision taken on October 23, which recog-

nised the demographic vulnerability of ST, tea garden, Moran and Matak groups. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier defended the exemption, arguing that enforcing a strict two-child limit could threaten the long-term survival of these communities. He warned that maintaining population restrictions could lead to numerical decline and possible extinction over the next 50 years. Assam introduced the two-child rule in January 2021 under the Assam Public Services (Application of Small Family Norms) Rules, 2019, making it a requirement for direct government recruitment. In 2018, the same mandate was extended to panchayat elections through an amendment to the Assam Panchayat Act, which also imposed minimum education qualifications and sanitation requirements for candidates. While the BJP-led government continues to support population control mechanisms, the latest exemption acknowledges differing demographic realities within the state - carving out protections for communities deemed at risk.

Darjeeling Himalayan Railway hosts 3-day Kurseong Station Mahotsav as a part of Annual Ghum Festival

GUWAHATI

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR), a UNESCO World Heritage Site under the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), successfully organised a vibrant and culturally enriching three-day Station Mahotsav as part of the Ghum Festival at the historic Kurseong Railway Station.

Kapinjal Kishore Sharma, CPRO of Northeast Frontier Railway, said in a press release that the event showcased the artistic vibrancy of the hills through music, poetry, art and enthusiastic community participation.

"It also reaffirmed NFR's commitment to strengthening heritage awareness and fostering cultural connectivity along the DHR route. As part of a pioneering cultural initiative, DHR collaborated with the nationally recognised creative collective Poets of Community to introduce the open mic culture to Kurseong and nearby hill regions. This innovative partnership provided a meaningful platform for local artists to showcase their talents and helped link the hill communities with contemporary artistic movements across the country," Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said.

He further said that the Mahotsav commenced on December 2, 2025, with two vi-



brant sessions.

"The Open Mic for Local Artists featured enthusiastic youths from Kurseong and

neighbouring areas presenting poetry, music, storytelling and stand-up performances, captivating audiences with their creativity

and confidence. The Evening Curated Showcase featured invited artists from across India and abroad, bringing a rich diversity of languages, styles and artistic expressions. Their performances added a global dimension to the celebrations, transforming Kurseong Railway Station into a vibrant and engaging cultural stage," he said in the press statement.

The CPRO of Northeast Frontier Railway also said that, continuing the celebrations, the Mahotsav featured engaging competitions for schoolchildren, including essay writing, painting and poetry, with their enthusiastic participation highlighting the creativity and cultural richness of Kurseong's young generation.

"The closing day of the Mahotsav brought a high-energy music festival where musicians and bands from across the hills infused the station with rhythm, enthusiasm and community spirit, followed by the felicitation of competition winners, encouraging them to continue exploring the arts. The successful Kurseong Station Mahotsav represents a significant milestone in NFR's ongoing efforts to blend heritage with contemporary cultural expression, transforming the iconic DHR into a dynamic cultural hub for the hill communities," said in the press release.

DHR emphasised that the Mahotsav plays a key role in furthering NFR's commitment to community engagement, heritage conservation and the promotion of cultural revival along the historic DHR corridor.

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West Bengal on high alert as suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir to lay foundation of 'Babri Masjid-style' mosque

BAHARAMPUR:

West Bengal braces for a politically fraught Saturday as suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir pushes ahead with the foundation-laying ceremony for a 'Babri Masjid-style' mosque in Murshidabad, triggering high alert and sharpened political messaging on a date laden with communal sensitivities.

The Beldanga site, where Kabir claimed "three lakh people" would assemble, has been sealed into a high-security grid, with deployment of RAF, district police, and central forces on both sides of the National Highway 12, after the Calcutta High Court declined to halt the event but placed full responsibility for public order on the state government.

The proposed mosque, which Kabir has repeatedly described as being "modelled on the Babri Masjid", has stirred political unease in a district where symbolism and mobilisation often feed off each other.

For the TMC, which has distanced itself after suspending Kabir - the optics of the foundation-laying ceremony for the mosque on December 6, the anniversary of Ayodhya's Babri Masjid demolition, carry risks it has sought to pre-empt.

The run-up to the proposed event has forced the administration to arrange for extensive security cover.

RAF teams arrived in Rejinagar on Friday and were stationed at a local school ahead of deployment, while the district police - acting on a Calcutta High Court directive to ensure law and order - have drawn up a security grid covering Beldanga, Raninagar and all approach roads

to NH-12, the state's only north-south arterial highway. A senior officer said nearly 3,000 personnel would be deployed throughout the day, with multiple diversion plans ready if turnout threatens to choke the highway. On Friday, the high court, hearing a petition seeking to halt the event, declined to intervene and placed the onus of maintaining public order on the state government, a cue that prompted the police to talk with Kabir's team via backchannel on Friday night.

Governor C V Ananda Bose, meanwhile, urged citizens not to be swayed by "provocative statements and rumours" and asked the state to ensure there was "no disturbance anywhere".

For Kabir, a Congress-BJP-turned-TMC rebel whose political career has oscillated as sharply as the reactions to his announcements, Saturday's event is both a test of his mobilisation prowess and a declaration of defiance after his suspension from the TMC on Thursday for what the party called "communal politics".

The MLA, who has often embarrassed the party with remarks that triggered showcase notices, said he would resign as legislator and launch his own outfit later this month.

On Friday, he was seen personally supervising the stage and food arrangements, appearing unfazed by either the political backlash or the administrative glare.

The scale of preparations has lent the venue the ambience of a massive public fair. A 150-ft-long, 80-ft-wide dais towers over paddy fields off NH-12, with seating arranged for 400 guests.

Two clerics from Saudi Arabia, organisers claim, will

arrive in a special convoy from Kolkata airport.

Nearly 3,000 volunteers - 2,000 of whom began work early Friday - have been tasked with regulating access roads, preventing bottlenecks and keeping the national highway running.

Seven Murshidabad-based catering agencies have been contracted to prepare shahi biryani, with an estimated 40,000 packets for guests and another 20,000 for residents.

A close aide of Kabir estimated food expenses alone at over Rs 30 lakh, with the total venue budget likely to touch Rs 70 lakh.

The day's programme, circulated by organisers, lists Quran recitation at 10 am, the foundation ceremony at noon, a community meal at 2 pm, and dispersal by 4 pm as per police instructions.

On Saturday, the ruling party will observe 'Samhati Diwas' (Unity Day) statewide with rallies to spread the message of communal harmony.

The state government has declared a holiday on the day, projecting a message of peace and restraint.

The Left Front, meanwhile, will mark the day as "Black Day" in memory of the demolition, underscoring how December 6 continues to be a political faultline.

As Bengal steps into a Saturday thick with symbolism, security and competing political narratives, Beldanga becomes the stage upon which defiance, faith, politics and electoral calculations converge.

Whether the event passes off as a controlled show of strength or becomes a fresh flashpoint will test not just the district's policing bandwidth, but the political temperature of the state.

IndiGo meltdown day 5: 400 flights cancelled on Saturday, plight reaches SC

NEW DELHI

India's aviation sector remained under severe strain on Saturday as IndiGo's operations failed to stabilise, leading to hundreds of fresh cancellations across major airports. The disruptions, now in their fifth straight day, left thousands of passengers stranded and intensified scrutiny from the civil aviation regulator.

IndiGo has cancelled over 400 flights from four major airports on Saturday. Of these, 124 flights (63 departures and 61 arrivals) were cancelled at Bengaluru airport and 109 flights - 51 departures and 58 arrivals - at Mumbai airport, they said.

The number of cancellations at Delhi airport stood at 106, including 54 departures and 52 arrivals, the sources said, adding that 66 flights have been cancelled by IndiGo at Hyderabad airport.

Although airport authorities claimed operations were "gradually resuming," queues, delays and crowding persisted across terminals nationwide. Many passengers reached airports only to discover that their flights had been delayed or cancelled. With alternative seats on other carriers filling rapidly, airfares shot up sharply, compounding the chaos for urgent travellers.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation, which on Friday granted IndiGo temporary relaxation from new night-duty and weekly-rest requirements for pilots, is now supervising a high-level inquiry into the airline's failure to maintain operational readiness. The four-member panel has been directed to examine lapses in crew management, compliance planning and internal oversight, and submit its report within two weeks.

The DGCA team - comprising Joint Director General Sanjay K Brahmane, Deputy Director General Amit Gupta, Senior Flight Operations Inspector Kapil Manglik and Flight Operations Inspector Lokesh Rampal - has been tasked with submitting its report within two weeks.

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu reiterated that IndiGo's handling of crew schedules and its pre-



paredness for the DGCA's new Flight Duty Time Limitation rules triggered the crisis. He said the ministry had constituted a committee to determine responsibility for the collapse and assured that "strict action" would follow.

IndiGo's top management has maintained that operations will stabilise only gradually, with full normalcy expected closer to mid-December. However, with cancellations continuing for the fifth consecutive day, concerns are rising over the airline's ability to manage the backlog and restore public confidence.

As the weekend rush builds and airports brace for more passenger load, authorities are advising flyers to check the latest flight status before heading to terminals, even as uncertainty prevails over how quickly India's largest airline can regain control of its schedule.

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking urgent judicial intervention into the disruptions

reported LawBeat. Filed by advocate Aman Banka on behalf of affected passengers, the plea urges the Chief Justice of India to take suo motu cognisance and constitute a special bench for immediate hearing.

It also seeks directions from the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to submit detailed status reports on the causes of the operational collapse. The petition describes the situation as a "humanitarian crisis," citing serious hardship for passengers travelling for medical emergencies, exams, official work or urgent obligations, and argues that the disruptions, coupled with poor communication and lack of support at airports, amount to a violation of fundamental rights.

Meanwhile, the pilots' body, Airlines' Pilots Association (ALPA) India, has taken a "strong" objection to the DGCA's "selective and unsafe" relief to IndiGo, saying that the relaxations have not just "destroyed regu-

latory parity but also placed millions of passengers at "heightened risk".

Following the meeting convened by the Ministry of Civil Aviation with ALPA India and other pilot associations on December 5, the Ministry announced that it has decided to place the implementation of the revised FDTL CAR in abeyance.

"ALPA India expresses its deep concern that this step directly contradicts the Court's directions, which mandate the enforcement of fatigue-mitigation standards rooted in aviation science," the Association said in a statement late Friday.

It stated that keeping the FDTL in abeyance not only undermines judicial authority but also heightens the risk to pilots and passengers by delaying essential fatigue protections.

"We urge the (Civil Aviation) Ministry and the regulator to uphold the Court's order in both letter and spirit and to prioritise the safety of the pilots and travelling public above all commercial considerations," ALPA India said. It is worth noting that IndiGo was the first carrier to oppose the new FDTL norms for pilots when they were introduced in January 2024, with a March implementation timeline.

It had been argued that the airlines require more time to put in place due to additional crew requirements. The latest FDTL norms, which entail increased weekly rest periods to 48 hours, extended night hours, and limiting the number of night landings to only two, as against six earlier, were also initially opposed by other domestic airlines, including Tata Group-owned Air India.

But they were subsequently rolled out by the DGCA following the Delhi High Court's directives, albeit with a delay of over one year, in a phased manner, and with certain variations for airlines like IndiGo and Air India.

While the first phase of these FDTL norms came into force in July, the second phase, which reduced the number of night landings from six to two earlier, was implemented from November 1.

The norms were originally to be put in place in March 2024.

INTERNATIONAL

Sri Lanka issues fresh landslide warnings as death toll hits 607

Colombo, Sri Lanka

COLOMBO:

Heavy rains triggered fresh landslide warnings in Sri Lanka's worst-affected central hills on Friday, as the death toll from last week's Cyclone Ditwah jumped to 607.

The National Building Research Organisation (NBRO), which monitors the stability of mountain slopes, said heavy rainfall could further saturate the hills and make them unstable.

"Since rainfall within the past 24 hours has exceeded 150 millimetres, if the rains continue, evacuate to a safe location to avoid the risk of landslides," the NBRO said in a statement.

The latest deluge was brought on by the onset of the monsoon rains, although some of the earlier flooding that began last week has started to subside.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said 607 people had been confirmed dead, with many of those previously unaccounted for now presumed killed in the devastating mudslides.

The number of missing was revised down from 341 to 214, while the number of people affected rose to just over two million.

The number of people in state-run refugee camps fell further to 150,000 from a peak of 225,000 as floodwaters receded in and around the capital Colombo.

Record rainfall triggered the floods and deadly landslides, which President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has described as the most challenging natural disaster in the history of the island.

Addressing parliament on Friday, Dissanayake said he had asked the IMF to delay the release of the sixth instalment of a \$2.9 billion bailout loan in order to negotiate a bigger payout.

"The IMF board was to sign off on releasing \$347 million on December 15, but we have now asked them to put it off because we want time to negotiate a bigger instalment," Dissanayake said.



He said fresh talks with the Washington-based lender of last resort were essential, because the country's economic situation had drastically changed following the disaster across the island. Friday's new landslide alert covered areas not previously identified as high risk.

Residents evacuated from the landslide-prone central hills have already been told not to return immediately to their homes, even if they were unaffected by the slips.

In the central town of Gampola, residents worked to clear mud and repair water damage.

"We are getting volunteers from other areas to help with this clean-up," Muslim cleric Faleeldeen Qadiri told at the Gate Jumma Mosque.

"We have calculated that it takes 10 men a whole day to clean one house," said a volunteer, who gave his name as Rinas. "No one can do this without help."

Sri Lanka's military said it had deployed thousands of troops in flood-hit areas to assist with clearing operations.

The top official in charge of the recovery, Commissioner-General of Essential Services Prabath Chandrakerthi, said reconstruction costs were estimated at between \$6 billion and \$7 billion.

Dissanayake announced a raft of measures to offer generous compensation to the victims to rebuild their homes as well as livelihoods.

While the government has sought donations to recover from extensive damage to roads, bridges, homes and industries, tourism authorities said hotels were back in business.

Nearly 300 tourists who were stranded due to the disaster have been rescued by helicopter, the tourism ministry said.

"We need tourism revenues to help rebuild," Deputy Tourism Minister Ruwan Ranasinghe told reporters in Colombo.

Taiwan says China is deploying warships stretching several kms from the Yellow Sea for 'military operations'



TAIPEI:

Taiwan said Friday that China had deployed warships for "military operations" stretching hundreds of kilometres from the Yellow Sea to the South China Sea, posing a "threat" to the region.

Beijing, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory, neither confirmed nor denied the manoeuvres.

Taiwan's defence ministry and other security agencies were monitoring China's activities and had a "complete grasp of the situation", Presidential Office spokeswoman Karen Kuo told reporters.

She did not say how many Chinese ships were involved in the deployment, but a security source told AFP the number was "significant". The source spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

The operations were not limited to the Taiwan Strait, but extended from the southern Yellow Sea, to the East China Sea near the disputed Diaoyu Islands and on into the South China Sea and even the Western Pacific, Kuo said.

"This indeed poses a threat and impact on the Indo-Pacific and the entire region," she said.

Taiwan urged China to "exercise restraint", Kuo said, adding: "We are also confident that we can handle this matter well."

Neither China's armed forces nor state media have announced any increased military activity in the region where Taiwan said Chinese ships had been detected.

Image used for representational purposes only. Beijing's defence ministry spokesman Jiang Bin said Friday that the navy's training on the high seas complies with international law and "is not directed at any specific country or target". He was responding to a question about a Chinese naval flotilla that reportedly may be heading towards Australia.

A spokesman for China's foreign ministry said Beijing "has consistently followed a defensive policy" and urged "relevant parties" not to "over-react or... engage in groundless hype".

China has refused to rule out using force to take Taiwan, and also contentiously claims nearly all of the South China Sea.

Taiwan's intelligence chief Tsai Ming-yen said Wednesday that October to December was the "peak season" for China's

"annual evaluation exercises".

There was a possibility that China's ruling Communist Party could turn seemingly routine military activities into drills targeting Taiwan, Tsai warned.

Taiwan's defence ministry reported at 7:00 pm (1100 GMT) that it had detected 24 Chinese military aircraft near Taiwan since 2:22 pm, including 19 that crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait to participate in a joint combat patrol with navy ships.

Last December, Taiwan said about 90 Chinese warships and coast guard vessels took part in vast exercises including simulating attacks on foreign ships and practising blockading sea routes in Beijing's biggest maritime drills in years.

Beijing did not confirm the drills at that time. The United States has long been Taiwan's most important security backer and biggest supplier of arms.

But President Donald Trump's administration signalled a potential shift in that policy on Friday, saying in a strategy document that its Asian allies Japan and South Korea should take on more of the burden of defending the region.

WB Radio Club Secretary Wins International Humanitarian Award



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

KOLKATA: The West Bengal Amateur Radio Club, known for turning a hobby into a reliable lifeline during emergencies, has earned rare international recognition. Club secretary Ambarish Nag Biswas has been selected for the inaugural Amateur Radio Hero Award by HamCation 2026, one of the world's largest amateur radio events held annually in Orlando, Florida.

The confirmation reached Biswas early Wednesday through an email from Mike Banigan, Awards Chairman of HamCation. The new award honours a ham operator who has gone above and beyond in providing communication support during disasters or moments of critical public need.

Over the past decade, amateur radio in Bengal has grown far beyond antennas and call signs. Under the West



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Biswas has been a driving force behind this transformation.

During Cyclone Amphan, Yaas, and repeated storms along the Bay coast, when mobile networks failed and towers collapsed, WBRC operators kept communication running between disaster-hit areas, control rooms, and rescue teams. Their work has also helped reunite hundreds of missing individuals, including children, with their families through a structured missing-person tracking protocol.

Banigan, in his email, praised the team's commitment to community service through amateur radio. HamCation, backed by the Orlando Amateur Radio Club, is the second-largest ham radio show in the United States. Organizers have noted that a grassroots Indian radio club receiving such recognition is both rare and striking.

Research papers and academic presentations worldwide have highlighted WBRC's work, documenting everything from their cyclone communication network to their support in emergency medical transport. The club is increasingly seen as a model of how volunteer radio can strengthen disaster management systems.

The award will be presented on February 14, 2026, at the HamCation banquet. A public announcement of the winners will be made on the programme



Ham Nation at 9 PM EST on December 3, Thursday morning in India.

Speaking after the news, Biswas said the honour belongs to Bengal and its people.

He added that ham radio has proved how a simple hobby, when used with purpose, can save lives. He thanked volunteers, government agencies, and citizens for their support, and said the club plans to expand training, cyclone-zone

communication units, and student outreach.

At a time when technology often feels commercial and automated, this award serves as a reminder that simple radios, backed by skill and compassion, can still be a lifeline. And for many who follow the work of the West Bengal Radio Club, Wednesday's announcement carried a quiet message that service to others can travel far beyond borders.

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Students Invited to Join 'Climate Change and Green Deeds' Campaign



SILCHAR

The “EARTHLEOS: Advanced Landscape Photography Workshop” was successfully conducted today at Upendra Hall, Assam University, beginning at 11:30 AM. The programme was organised by the Assam University Research Scholars’ Forum in collaboration with the KRC Foundation, KRC Times, Hope for Gems, and Voice of the Needy.

The workshop was led by

internationally acclaimed landscape photographer Dibyendu Das, who provided participants with advanced training on composition, lighting, field techniques, aesthetics, and equipment handling. A practical outdoor session enabled participants to apply their learning, significantly improving their technical and creative skills.

A special highlight of the event was the felicitation of Prof. Arun Jyoti Nath of the Department of Ecology and En-

vironmental Science, who was recently recognised among the Top 2% Scientists worldwide by Elsevier 2025.

President of the Research Scholars’ Forum, Sandeep Das, delivered the keynote address. Najima Begum, General Secretary of Voice of the Needy, and Swapnodeep Sen, President of Hope for Gems, also addressed the gathering. Swapnodeep Sen emphasised the importance of photography and informed attendees about the upcoming

North East Integration Rally, to be organised by the KRC Foundation. He also conveyed his gratitude to Biswadeep Gupta, Founder of KRC Foundation, for initiating the programme.

The event, held as part of the pre-celebration of the North East Integration Rally, concluded with a vote of thanks, acknowledging the support of the Assam University, Authority and all participants for the smooth execution of the workshop.



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 The Top performances will be invited to perform in the Main Event.
 Schools, Colleges, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.



11 JAN
Adventure Sports
 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management, Techniques, Water Sports, etc.
www.krcfoundation.org



11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders.
 Includes: NGOs, and Government officials, for better planning, awareness, and disaster management and preparedness programs. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



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

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



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Experts, Webinars, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Webinars: Journalism, Marketing, Business & Corporate HR, Entrepreneurship, Finance, Analytics, Leadership.



BROADCAST PARTNER



REGISTER HERE

Contact: info@krcfoundation.org
 WP: 0721300019



BARAK FESTIVAL 2025
PAINTING CARNIVAL
NE CULTURAL FEST
E-SPORTS
FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION
 BOOK CLUB | AWARDS | GUEST | RAMP WALK | RECORDS LIVE

10-12 JAN
Science Studio
 Real a glimpse of Science to its new heights. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents.
Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.

DEC'24-JAN'25
Photography
 Online Photography Contest: River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture.
 Real-Time Photography Contest of 'Barak Festival 2025'.

Barak Festival
Band Night 10 JAN
Musical Night 11 JAN



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



PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST
 Spend up your best photos!



Contact: info@krcfoundation.org
 WP: 0721300019

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



5E SUCCESS
STUDENT INTERNSHIP
 Discover valuable experience and learn more about the Industry.

10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #NoOneLeftBehind Campaign | Book Bank | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

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

Painting Carnival
 Water Colour painting and Draw-Race Campaign