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Barak Valley, Assam | JAN-MAR 2025
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PERSPECTIVE

When you're happy, you enjoy the music. But, when you're sad, you understand the lyrics.

Karbi Anglong crisis deepens; govt agrees to scrap post-1951 trade licences after tripartite talks

KARBI ANGLONG
Karbi leader Litsong Rongphor on December 26 said the situation in Karbi Anglong has turned "extremely critical" following recent violence and alleged atrocities, even as the Assam government agreed to cancel all trade licences issued after 1951 to address long-standing tribal land concerns.

Speaking after a tripartite meeting held in Guwahati, Rongphor, who was part of the talks, said the unrest in the district reflected deep-seated public anger and unresolved grievances that had accumulated over decades. He said the state government had accepted a key demand of Karbi organisations by agreeing to cancel trade licences issued after 1951, a move linked to the protection of tribal land and rights.

Rongphor said the government had also agreed in principle to evict outsiders occupying departmental and reserve lands, including areas under Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR). However, he cautioned that the situation on the ground remained tense and fragile.

He added that Karbi society would collectively assess the decisions taken during the meeting before expressing satisfaction with the outcome. Emphasising the nature of the movement, Rongphor said it was being led by the Karbi people as a whole and not by any single organisation or political party.

WHO SAID WHAT



On the sacred Parkash Utsav of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, we bow in reverence to him. He remains an embodiment of courage, compassion and sacrifice. His life and teachings inspire us to stand for truth, justice, righteousness and to protect human dignity. Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji's vision continues to guide generations towards service and selfless duty. ~ Narendra Modi, PM

Assam to move HC, cancel illegal trade licences and fence reserve land to defuse Karbi Anglong unrest

GUWAHATI

The Assam government on December 26 announced a series of measures to address the violence in West Karbi Anglong and resolve the long-pending disputes over Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) land, following a tripartite meeting in Guwahati involving the state government, Karbi organisations and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

Briefing the media after the meeting, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said all stakeholders would jointly approach the Gauhati High Court to seek an early resolution of the VGR-PGR dispute. He said the government had also decided to shift all government offices located within PGR and VGR areas and immediately fence all vacant land to prevent fresh encroachment.

Sarma said a deforestation drive would be carried out in vacant reserve areas as an additional safeguard against illegal occupation. He further announced that trade licences illegally issued over the past five years would be cancelled, and eviction proceedings would be initiated against encroachers on various categories of government and departmental



land, including irrigation department land.

The Chief Minister said the family of the person killed during the recent violence would be provided a government job, and police cases related to the agitation would be withdrawn. Another round of talks is scheduled for January 16 or 17 to address remaining concerns.

Sarma also pointed to a key procedural lapse, saying the KAAC had failed to file its affidavit before the Gauhati High Court for the past two years, delaying judicial resolution of the issue. He said the

council has now been directed to file the affidavit by January 5 to remove legal uncertainty. Expressing optimism, Sarma said the government stood with the people of Karbi Anglong and was committed to resolving the issue amicably.

Karbi leader Litsong Rongphor, who participated in the meeting, said the situation in Karbi Anglong had become extremely critical due to recent violence and alleged atrocities. He said the government had agreed to cancel all trade licences issued after 1951 and to evict outsiders occupying departmental, tribal and coun-

Assam CM flags demographic change, cites Bangladesh-origin influx



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday raised concerns over what he described as

a significant demographic shift in the state, claiming that the proportion of Bangladesh-origin Muslim residents could rise sharply by the time the next official

census figures are released.

Referring to the 2011 Census, Sarma said Muslims accounted for 34 per cent of Assam's population at the time. He added that around 3 per cent of this figure comprised indigenous Assamese Muslims, while the remaining 31 per cent, according to him, were of Bangladesh origin.

"There was no census in 2021," the Chief Minister said, pointing to the postponement of the national headcount. "When the census report comes out in 2027, the Bangladesh-origin Muslim population will be around 40 per cent."

Sarma's remarks come amid long-standing political and social debates in Assam over migration, identity and citizenship, particularly in

the context of allegations of undocumented immigration from neighbouring Bangladesh. Demographic change has remained a sensitive issue in the state, influencing electoral politics and policy decisions over the years.

The Chief Minister's projection has triggered mixed reactions across the political spectrum, with some leaders supporting the emphasis on demographic trends, while others cautioned that such assertions could heighten communal tensions.

The next census data, expected after the delayed 2021 enumeration, is likely to be closely scrutinised by policymakers, political parties and analysts, given its potential implications for Assam's socio-political landscape.

KOHIIMA

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on December 26 announced the launch of the Naga International Studio in collaboration with renowned composer and music maestro A R Rahman, calling it a significant step towards nurturing creative talent and taking Naga culture to a global audience.

In a social media post, Rio said the studio would function as a global creative hub for talent development, storytelling and the production of world-class music and creative content rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the Naga people. He thanked Rahman for recognising Nagaland's creative potential and for choosing to invest in the state.

The Chief Minister said the initiative is expected to open up new opportunities

for young artistes, musicians, filmmakers and storytellers from Nagaland and the wider Northeast, allowing them access to professional infrastructure and global exposure without having to leave the region.

According to Rio, the Naga International Studio will focus on blending traditional Naga narratives, music and indigenous art forms with contemporary production techniques, helping preserve cultural identity while making it accessible to international audiences.

Officials said the collaboration with A R Rahman, who enjoys a global reputation for musical excellence and innovation, is likely to position Nagaland as an emerging cultural and creative destination. The studio is also expected to generate employment, promote creative entrepreneurship and strengthen the state's creative economy.

Mizoram's nine-year-old singing prodigy Esther Hnamte honoured with Bal Puraskar



NEW DELHI

Nine-year-old Esther Hnamte from Mizoram has been conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025 in the Art and Culture category, India's highest civilian honour for children. She received the award from President Droupadi Murmu at a ceremony held in the national capital on December 26.

Hnamte shot to national prominence at the age of four after her stirring renditions of

A R Rahman's Maa Tujhe Salaam and the national anthem went viral on social media. Her performances drew widespread appreciation, including praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, for promoting national unity through music.

She was among 16 children from across the country recognised this year for exceptional achievements in fields such as bravery, social service, environment, sports, art and culture, and science and technology. Congratulating the awardees, President Murmu said the children had brought pride to their families, communities and the nation, and expressed hope that their achievements would inspire young people across the country.

The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar honours individuals under the age of 18 for extraordinary accomplishments.

Hnamte's latest recognition adds to a growing list of honours. She received a special appreciation award from the Governor of Mizoram in 2020 and the Young Achievers Award from Dalmia Cement Bharat Limited in 2021. In the same year, the Mizo Zaimi Inzawmkhawm, the state's singers' society, presented her with a "non-native award" for a Jana Gana Mana music video produced in collaboration with the Indian Army.

423 PMGSY machines lost in Manipur crisis; road works hit across hill districts

IMPHAL

More than 400 heavy machines and equipment deployed for rural road construction under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) were lost during the Manipur crisis that erupted on May 3, 2023, dealing a major blow to infrastructure development across the State's hill districts.

Disclosing this on the sidelines of the silver jubilee celebrations of PMGSY, Chief Engineer of the Manipur State Rural Road Development Agency (MSRRDA), Kh Temba Singh, said a total of 423 machines and equipment belonging to contractors were destroyed or lost during the violence. "So far, no compensation has been paid to the affected contractors. The estimated cost of the lost machinery is around Rs 70-80 crore," he said.

The loss has significantly impacted the pace of PMGSY works, particularly in the hill districts, where a large number of projects remain incomplete. Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts account for the highest number of pending works, with 55 projects yet to be completed. Tamenglong and Noney districts follow closely, with 44 pending works.

According to officials, 89 per cent of the pending works under



PMGSY Phases I and II are located in the hill districts, while only 11 per cent pertain to the valley districts.

Reviewing the implementation of PMGSY in Manipur since its launch in December 2000, the Chief Engineer said the State has achieved 95 per cent habitability connectivity under the scheme. A total of 1,931 works, including construction of roads and bridges, have been completed at an estimated cost of Rs 4,780 crore, with the bulk of the projects executed during

PMGSY Phase I (2000-2021). PMGSY aims to provide all-weather rural road connectivity to unconnected habitations with a population of 250 or more, based on the 2011 Census, as part of a nationwide poverty reduction strategy.

Manipur Chief Secretary Dr Puneet Kumar Goel, Commissioner (Rural Development and Panchayati Raj) Sumant Singh, former chief engineers of MSRRDA, and senior engineers and staff were present at the programme.

Cybercrime police arrest youth for inciting communal violence online

IMPHAL

The cybercrime police of Manipur's Imphal East district have arrested a young man for allegedly uploading and circulating content on social media that promoted enmity among different communities, officials said on Saturday.

The accused, identified as Mitrang Mangal, also known as Napik, a resident of Nongpok Heirok Maning Leikai in Imphal East, was arrested from his residence on Friday. Police said he was involved in inciting violence, disturbing social harmony and mistusing social media platforms for unlawful activities.

According to the Manipur Police morning bulletin, the arrest was made in connection with a video that went viral on Facebook from an account

named "Luwang Punshiba." The content was found to be provocative and aimed at fomenting communal discord among communities in the state.

Manipur has 36 communities recognised by the state government, and officials said the circulation of such content posed a serious threat to public order and communal harmony. Police further stated that the accused was produced before a magistrate and bound down under relevant legal provisions.

Reiterating its commitment to maintaining peace and public order, Manipur Police warned that strict action would be taken against anyone found attempting to incite violence, promote communal hatred or misuse social media platforms for unlawful purposes.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 658

BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENTS HAVE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES

The political developments in Bangladesh including violence against any one opposing the fundamentalists are having dangerous consequences for India involving the security and geopolitical stability in the sub continent. According to this writer who has been following the churning in the newly liberated nation since 1971, the outlook for India in terms of its relationship with its neighbour has never been so grimmer. India has been put in a situation now when the centre can watch the evolving developments in Bangladesh as an outsider with hardly any effective tools to influence the situation.

Why the developments in the last three days have more dangerous implications for India than any time during the last 53 years? First India has no friend now in Bangladesh politics with whom they can have relations. The Awami League leaders are in jail or hiding. The grass roots workers are organizing sudden meetings, but then disappearing fearing backlash. A virulent anti-India section of the NCP is the main instigator of violence against Awami League, the Indian consulates and even the democratic minded BNP leaders.

Soon after Osman Hadi, a prominent leader of July 2024 movement's death reached Dhaka from Singapore early this week, the worst type of propaganda against Awami League leaders, Indian government agencies, as also anyone who talked of restoring calm were attacked in the Facebook, pages of the NCP and Jamaat. The activists threatened many BNP nominees not to submit papers to the Election officials. A reign of terror is prevailing while the nomination process is going on. One BNP leader's family house was burnt and his youngest daughter was killed and three others sustained burn injuries.

The problem is that the law and order machinery is under threat from both NCP and Jamaat activists. This has led to a dangerous situation during the nomination process. The entire process will be over by January 21 and from January 22, the notified candidates will be starting their campaign for the polling to be held on February 12. The nomination process can never be normal unless the interim government administration headed by Dr. Muhammad Yunus conducts impartially by restoring law and order and ensuring that those taking law in their hands, will not be spared.

The entire Dhaka media knows that this is not happening. Dr. Yunus also is playing a game and he is backing his favourite NCP contestants as also those in Jamaat who are close to him. For his own reasons, Dr. Yunus is maintaining a political distance from the BNP, though the BNP is expected to emerge as the single largest party as per the opinion polls. BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia is critically ill in Dhaka. Her son Tarique Rahman is expected to arrive in Dhaka on December 25 and it is likely that he will stay back till the elections are over and give leadership to the BNP campaign in the absence of his mother.

Apart from virulent anti-India campaign and doing everything to destroy the legacy of the 1971 liberation struggle, the fundamentalist demonstrators are now targeting the cultural organisations and the artists who are known for their faith in democracy and secular ideals. In 1971, just before the surrender of the Pakistan army on December 16, the rajakars carried out the killings of a large number of intellectuals of then East Bengal. This time, the killings have not taken place, but the fringe elements attacked and burnt the offices and full complex of two leading cultural groups of Dhaka Chayanaut and Udichi who have been active in the cultural arena of Bangladesh since its beginning. These two groups consist of the icons of the cultural world of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi took to the streets of the Dhaka on Saturday morning staging a protest march and rally to condemn the arson attack on its central office—an assault that, the organisation says, has wiped out 55 years of cultural archives and struck at the heart of the country's progressive movement.

The procession began at 11:00 am from Paltan intersection and moved steadily toward Satyen Sen Chatter, in front of Udichi's central office opposite the National Press Club. Artists, cultural workers, journalists, and supporters joined the march, holding placards and chanting slogans that linked the attack on Udichi to a broader threat against freedom of expression.

Slogans such as "Udichi Te Hamla Keno, Jobab Chai," "Muktijuddher Chetona Hariye Jete Dibo Na," and "Baul-er Upor Hamla Rukhte Hobe" echoed through the streets, framing the arson not as an isolated crime but as part of a sustained assault on the ideals of 1971 and the spirit of cultural resistance. Amit Ranjan Dey, general secretary of Udichi said that there are not random acts. These represent a deliberate threat to freedom of expression and democratic rights.

On Thursday, the fundamentalists burnt the offices of media group publishing Daily Star and Pratham Alo, the most popular Bengali daily in Bangladesh. The offices were burning for three hours and despite repeated calls, the police and fire brigade came only after after the hooligans left. The media people said that the extremists gave threats to the media group but still the administration did not take action. A recent Swedish think tank study has said that in Bangladesh, 80 per cent of the journalists feel threat to their security under the present Yunus regime.

So what can India do at this moment? The election process has begun. In a recent interview, Sheikh Hasina's son Joy Wajed has said that the February 12 elections are illegal without the participation of Awami League. At this stage, India may not be able to do anything on that. But what certainly, India can do is to impress on the western governments, especially the USA to ensure that the elections are held in a transparent manner and the parties get a level playing field. The western nations are monitoring but they have little stake in Bangladesh polls. They are all busy with Ukraine war. So it is in India's immediate interest to organize global opinion in favour of holding polls on February 12 in a peaceful fair manner. The holding of elections in Bangladesh on February 12 should be of big interest to India irrespective of nature of formation. If the uncertainty prolongs in the neighbouring country, that will endanger India's security further.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." — Marie Curie

CHECKMATING CHINA-PAK NEXUS IN BANGLADESH



RAJAN KOUR

Amid the changing geopolitical scenario and increasing anti India sentiment in Bangladesh, there are significant decisions India has to take to safeguard its interests.

In this backdrop, the visit of the Eastern Command's General Officer Commanding Lt General RC Tiwari's visit to Thuampui near Aizwal in Mizoram on December 19 last week, assumes substantial significance.

In view of the volatile situation since August 2024, after the forcible ouster of Sheikh Hasina government, India is cautiously charting the course not only to keep the anti India activities of its hostile neighbour in check but to also secure its territory and more than 40 million people residing in its northeastern states.

The concerns of India to the evolving situation in Bangladesh are valid. India's northeastern states are connected to the rest of India by Siliguri Corridor—a narrow 22 kms stretch known popularly as 'Chicken neck'. Therefore protecting Northeastern states which share 1880 kms of border with Bangladesh, further consolidating of this corridor is being considered as a foremost national security priority by the government.

Since Sheikh Hasina, former Prime minister of Bangladesh was forced to abdicate her post due to protests launched by student activists and her consequent refuge in India, incidents inimical to interests of India are emanating from the soil of Bangladesh.

Alongside the palpable Chinese influence, past couple of days have particularly exposed the dirty games being played by Pakistan in order to flare up not only anti Indian stance in Bangladesh populace but to use its radical elements to issue threats to sovereignty of India. This has brought to the fore that the ouster of Sheikh Hasina and collapse of her party Awami League has hit the interests of India to an extent. Hasina during her tenure of fifteen years ensured relatively stable India- Bangladesh ties. She was also instrumental in curbing anti India activities to a considerable extent.

Recently in an inflammatory speech, Hasnat Abdullah, previously a student activist now a leader of newly launched National Citizen party, threatened to sever North Eastern India from rest of the country besides sheltering separatists targeting these states.

Added to this, the killing of staunch critic of India and leader of Bangladesh student led uprising which brought down Awami League government, Sharif Osman Hadi on December 18, the Bangladesh is on the edge with Islamist fanatics blaming India for allegedly shielding assailants of Hadi. The very recent attacks on Indian diplomatic missions in Dhaka are enough to gauge how hatred against India is being professed and practiced particularly at the behest of Pakistan aided by China.

Question is who helped in radicalising the campuses and who gave students the spine to issue threats to a powerful nation as India? India certainly knows that the lid has been blown off the China Pakistan nexus. Their strategies to destabilise India by taking radical elements in Bangladesh on board is out in the open. As such backed by Pak army and rouge agency ISI, infiltrators may be pushed inside India. Moreover India may find it increasingly difficult to reign in the separatist groups operating in Northeastern states which could be further strengthened with shelter and arms by China and Pakistan. Controlling the flow of drugs and ammunition inside Indian territory may be another headache for the Indian agencies.

Alongside the fears of Chinese attempts to sever the Siliguri corridor are not unfounded. Being a narrow land bordered by Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and close proximity to Chumbi valley controlled by China, it has compelled India to prioritise strong defence network around the strategic corridor. Moreover past strifes over Doklam raise concerns over China's intentions regarding Chicken neck corridor.

More so with reports of China helping Bangladesh in reviving the World War II inactive airbase at Lalmonirhat which is at a bare

distance of 12-15 kilometres from the Indian border is causing concern as it may provide China surveillance into India's Eastern Air Command. It may also increase the strategic vulnerability of the Siliguri passage.

Such unfolding of events is being deemed by many defence analysts as collaborative China- Pakistan overtures precisely aimed at encirclement of India's Eastern front, with an aim to contain India. However China continues with no dubiety to consolidate itself all across Himalayan stretch while gaining access to Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh.

Hence India's concern is justified due to political changes in neighbourhood which has forced it to revisit the security of this region.

In the past one year, after setting three new army bases in Kisanganj in Bihar, Bamunigaon in Assam and Chopra in West Bengal to fortify the Chicken neck corridor, the defence authorities are working to set up the fourth base in Mizoram.

As such the GOC Eastern Command's visit to this region is being emphasised for securing the stretch militarily with permanent army bases equipped with the most modern weapon systems.

While several major infrastructure projects were being developed as the Gorakhpur-Siliguri Expressway with many others in the pipeline, India was bolstering connectivity through Bangladesh to reduce leaning solely on this narrow corridor.

Sheikh Hasina's fall however has brought uncertainty on all fronts concerning both countries including connectivity which is vital to India's economic and defence interests.

After Operation Sindoor, Pakistan as well as China have become wary of India's tactical and calibrated war strategy. So this nexus is trying to unleash unruly fundamentalist and radicalised groups in Bangladesh. Or what else can explain the sudden surge of youth nationalism there?

However with the elections scheduled to be held in Bangladesh in February 2026, alongside the newly launched parties by student activists, the previously

banned Jamaat-e-Islami too has returned and is in the fray.

So it would be prudent on the part of India to address and deter unconventional threats on its eastern front by securing it robustly. Secondly, all security threats triggered from Bangladesh need to be dealt with firm diplomatic measures, especially taking on board countries having strong

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

No civilization is perfectly level. Therefore, either a civilization is expanding or contracting. Collapsing birth rates mean that most cultures are tending towards extinction!

Expanding is the only option for those who want LIFE, for those who CARE about the FUTURE.

~ Elon Musk, American Entrepreneur



ties with India. Next, while focussed approach should be on infrastructure and human resource development in Northeastern states, the separatist groups operating should be dealt with iron hands. Besides India should wait and watch which party assumes power if elections are held as scheduled in Bangladesh and try to engage with it.

However what needs to be acknowledged is that the evil China- Pakistan nexus is in India's backyard for some serious dirty games. Though it would be a long haul for India yet steadfast strategic thinking and its consequent execution on ground is the need of the hour.

How politically astute and militarily potent India checkmates China and Pakistan operating against its interests in Bangladesh will come to the fore sooner rather than later.

Assam BJP government has no plan to grant status to six communities: State LoP Debabrata Saikia

GUWAHATI

Assam assembly LoP Debabrata Saikia on Friday slammed the BJP-led state government stating that it has no concrete plan or genuine intention to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the six communities of the state, as per a release by Assam Congress.

Addressing a press conference today, Saikia stated that, despite Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's public claims, the government has taken no substantive steps to grant ST status to the six communities.

Saikia said that if the government truly had the political will, it could have easily moved forward by issuing the required notification. He alleged that although the matter had reached the Rajya Sabha and there was no complexity thereafter, the BJP government deliberately created confusion and complications under the pretext of a Ministerial Group report.

He pointed out that during the con-

cluding session of the Assam Legislative Assembly, the Ministerial Group's report on the ST status of the six communities was tabled.

"Earlier, during the Budget Session, I had introduced a Private Member's Bill stating that the ST status of the six communities should be implemented as per earlier decisions. At that time, Tribal Affairs Minister Ranaj Pegu assured that the Ministerial Group report would be submitted within one month. Although this was not done within a month, the report was finally tabled after eight months on the very last day of the session, without allowing any discussion or debate. The House was abruptly adjourned," Saikia said.

He criticised the Chief Minister's subsequent statements claiming that ST status would not be granted before elections and that certain organisations had allegedly opposed pre-election implementation. "We do not know which organisations the Chief Minister is referring to. If one looks at the

archives of his own statements, it will be clear that before the 2019 elections, he himself publicly announced that the issue of ST status had been resolved. From 2019 to 2025, seven years have passed with no meaningful progress," Saikia said, terming it a clear example of BJP's deception in the name of tribal recognition.

Saikia asserted that the demand for ST status for the six communities is not a new political claim but a long-standing question of justice. He said previous Congress governments had taken genuine legal and administrative steps, while the current BJP government has deliberately delayed the issue in the name of consultations.

He emphasised that ST status is directly linked to social justice and opportunities. Due to the denial of this status, many members of the six communities have been deprived of education, employment, and development schemes, leading to widespread distrust. Referring to constitutional provisions, Saikia said that when the Con-

stitution was adopted in 1950, it clearly laid down mechanisms for reviewing tribal status based on socio-economic conditions. However, no such surveys have been conducted even today.

Clarifying further, Saikia said there is no grievance against existing Scheduled Tribes, but opposing the aspirations of other deserving communities goes against the spirit of the Constitution. He accused the BJP of treating the issue casually and using it merely as an electoral slogan, calling it a gross insult to the six communities.

Citing Article 342 of the Constitution, Saikia stated that only Parliament has the authority to grant ST status, not the state government alone. He recalled that the Congress had sent formal proposals to the Centre as early as 2005 and 2006, along with reports and surveys prepared much earlier. "By distorting facts, the BJP government has insulted these communities," he said.

Tracing the historical efforts, Saikia

noted that the Congress first took decisive steps in 1996 under the late Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia, when the Koch-Rajbongshi community was granted ST status through a central ordinance. In subsequent years, several Congress MPs including Madhab Rajbongshi (1998), Bijoy Krishna Handique (1999), and others, introduced Bills in Parliament advocating ST status for the six communities. A parliamentary committee had also studied the issue in Assam and recommended granting ST status.

He alleged that since coming to power in 2016, the BJP has ignored these historical facts, despite forming its own committees. Saikia demanded that the government publicly disclose which organisations have allegedly opposed granting ST status before elections, as claimed by the Chief Minister.

Saikia further alleged that over the past ten years, the BJP has played a "shameful political game" with the aspirations of the six communities.

He recalled that in 2016, then Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram had promised that ST status would be granted within six months of BJP forming the government in Assam—a promise that remains unfulfilled. With no answers today, Saikia said, the BJP is attempting to mislead people and shift blame onto the Congress.

He also mentioned that in 2014, an all-party committee led by the then Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly had submitted a detailed report to the Union Home Minister and the Union Tribal Affairs Minister outlining the process for granting ST status to the six communities.

Commenting on the recent situation in Karbi Anglong, Saikia criticised the Chief Minister's remarks regarding eviction drives in the PGR-VGR areas. He termed the comments irresponsible and laughable, especially when the state government is already facing contempt of court proceedings in the Supreme Court over eviction-related issues.

Forced religious conversion a crime, says Tripura CM Manik Saha

AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on December 25 called for a social movement against forced religious conversion, describing it as a crime and asserting that religion must remain a matter of personal choice.

The chief minister made the remarks while speaking to reporters at a gurdwara in Chandmari on the outskirts of Agartala during the observance of Veer Bal Diwas. The day commemorates the martyrdom of Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, the younger sons of Sikh Guru Gobind Singh.

Recalling the sacrifice of the Sahibzade, Saha said their martyrdom continues to inspire generations. He noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2022 announced December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas to honour the courage and sacrifice of the two young sons of Guru Gobind Singh, aged nine and six, who were executed for refusing to renounce their faith.

Referring to the historical context, Saha said the killing of the Sahibzade reflected the "extreme inhumanity" of Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. "They were martyred only because they declined to abandon their religion. Their sacrifice stands as a symbol of courage and resistance against oppression," he said.

Highlighting the relevance of Veer Bal Diwas in contemporary times, the chief minister said the observance serves as a reminder to speak out against forced religious conversion. "Religion is an individual's choice, and any conversion carried out through force or inducement is a crime," he said, while also referring to the persecution faced by Kashmiri Pandits. Saha expressed concern over the steady decline of the Hindu population in Pakistan, saying demographic changes since independence point to a troubling trend.

COCOMI presses Manipur govt for written IDP resettlement plan, seeks action within December

IMPHAL

A Meitei civil organisation has urged the Manipur government to immediately issue a clear, written and time-bound resettlement policy for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), asserting that their safe and dignified return is a constitutional and moral obligation of the state.

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) raised the demand in a memorandum submitted to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on December 26. The organisation expressed serious concern over the absence of a defined rehabilitation framework for thousands of people displaced by the ethnic violence that erupted in the state earlier this year.

COCOMI said the lack of a structured resettlement plan has prolonged uncertainty and hardship for IDPs living in relief camps and temporary shelters. It

called for a comprehensive policy that includes adequate security deployment in vulnerable areas, restoration of basic infrastructure, and facilitation of the safe return of displaced families to their native villages.

In its memorandum, the organisation stressed that the rehabilitation of displaced persons should not be treated as a discretionary executive decision but as a constitutional responsibility of the state. It urged the administration to initiate the resettlement process within December, citing deteriorating humanitarian conditions in relief camps.

COCOMI warned that further delays in rehabilitation could erode public trust and exacerbate social tensions. The organisation appealed to the governor to intervene and direct the state administration to act decisively to ensure justice, safety and dignity for all displaced citizens of Manipur.

Gaurav Gogoi condemns anti-Karbi slogans, urges unity amid Karbi Anglong unrest

GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on December 26 strongly condemned slogans allegedly raised against the Karbi community during recent unrest in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, describing them as ignorant, deeply disrespectful and against the core values of the state.

Expressing shock over the reported remarks, Gogoi appealed for restraint and unity, urging all sections of society to maintain peace and calm. He also called on the state government to urgently address the underlying issues that have led to the current situation.

In a statement, Gogoi said slogans targeting the Karbi people reflected a disturbing mindset and warned that such rhetoric could further inflame an already volatile atmosphere. He stressed that Assam's strength lies in its diversity and coexistence, and cautioned that attempts to divide communities would only weaken the social fabric of the state.



His remarks came against the backdrop of escalating tensions in Karbi Anglong, particularly in the Kheroni area, where protests turned violent on December 24. According to officials, non-tribal residents allegedly raised slogans such as "Karbi Chinese go back" against the indigenous Karbi community, triggering outrage and fresh clashes. At least two people have been killed in the violence, while several others, including security personnel, sustained serious injuries.

The unrest has once again brought to the fore long-standing

tensions between indigenous Karbis and non-tribal settlers in the district. Karbi groups have been demanding the eviction of what they term illegal settlers, alleging that unchecked encroachment threatens their land, cultural identity and survival. The issue is particularly sensitive as Karbi Anglong falls under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which provides special protections to tribal areas and restricts land ownership to indigenous communities.

Violence reportedly broke out during protests by Karbi tribal

organisations seeking the removal of alleged encroachers from Professional Grazing Reserve and Village Grazing Reserve lands. Several shops, houses and other establishments were set on fire in Kheroni and nearby areas. The ancestral residence of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang at Dongkamukam was also allegedly targeted, further escalating tensions.

Large contingents of security forces have been deployed to bring the situation under control, and prohibitory orders imposed in sensitive areas to prevent further violence. Authorities said efforts are underway to restore normalcy and ensure action against those involved in violence and hate slogans.

Reiterating his appeal, Gogoi said only a peaceful and inclusive approach—one that respects constitutional safeguards while addressing genuine community concerns—can lead to a lasting resolution in Karbi Anglong.

Pradyot Debbarma denounces 'Go Back to China' slogans amid Karbi Anglong unrest

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha leader Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barma on December 26 strongly condemned slogans allegedly raised against the indigenous Karbi community during recent violence in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, saying such remarks were deeply hurtful and posed a serious threat to social harmony.

In a post on social media platform X, Deb Barma said branding indigenous people as "Chinese" in their own homeland and asking them to "go back to China" was unacceptable. Expressing solidarity with the Karbi community, especially its children, he described the slogans as absurd and reiterated his support with the hashtag

#OneNortheast.

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi also expressed shock and condemnation over the reported slogans, calling them ignorant, disrespectful and contrary to the inclusive values Assam stands for. Urging restraint, Gogoi appealed to all sections of society to maintain peace and unity, while stressing that the state government must urgently address the root causes of the unrest. In a statement, Gogoi warned that rhetoric targeting the Karbi community reflected a disturbing mindset and risked further inflaming an already volatile situation. He said Assam's strength lies in its diversity and coexistence, cautioning that any attempt to divide communities would weaken the state's social fabric.

The violence has once again brought into focus long-standing tensions between indigenous Karbis and non-tribal settlers in the district. Karbi organisations have been demanding eviction of what

they describe as illegal settlers, alleging that encroachment threatens their land, cultural identity and survival. The issue remains highly sensitive as Karbi Anglong is a Sixth Schedule area, which provides special constitutional protections to tribal regions. Meanwhile, Karbi leaders were scheduled to hold discussions with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma later on December 26 as the state government works to defuse tensions and chart a path toward normalcy. Heavy security deployment and prohibitory orders continue in sensitive areas to prevent further flare-ups, while authorities said action would be taken against those involved in violence and hate speech.

Security forces carried out a series of coordinated operations across Imphal East and Imphal West districts on December 26, leading to the arrest of eight active cadres belonging to different factions of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP). Arms, ammunition, communication equipment and other incriminating materials were recovered during the operations.

In the first operation, an active cadre of KCP (Ibungo Ngangom), identified as Kshetrimayum Binoy Singh alias Kebi (41), a resident of Singjamei Wangma Torban Kshetri Leikai in Imphal East district, was apprehended from a farmhouse at Langol Game Village Zone-III under Lamphel Police Station in Imphal West district. A mobile phone and an Aadhaar card were seized from his possession.

In a separate operation, security forces arrested three active cadres of KCP (Taibanganba) who were temporarily staying at the Langol Game Village Relief Camp in Zone-II under Lamphel Police Station. The arrested persons were identified as Amom Somendro Singh alias Kangleibung

Eight KCP cadres arrested in coordinated operations across Imphal; arms, radios seized

IMPHAL

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(32) of Wangoo Ahallup Makha Leikai, Bishnupur district; RK Bishworjit Singh alias Boinao (38) of Nambol Thiyam Makha Leikai, Bishnupur district; and Ningthoujam Santosh Singh (30) of Saikot Zaion Veng, Churachandpur district. Two mobile handsets were recovered from them.

In another major operation, four active cadres of KCP (PWG) were arrested from the Andro Leitapekpham area under Andro Police Station in Imphal East district. They were identified as Ningthoujam Birjit Meitei alias Tocha (36), Pangabam Meiraba Meitei alias Nongpokngakpa (32), Mutum Norin Meetei (33), and Ningombam Robi Meitei alias Akhup (32), all residents of Imphal East district.

Security forces recovered one .32 pistol with a magazine, three live rounds of .32 ammunition, four mobile phones, an Aadhaar card, a sky-blue Santro car bearing registration number MN01W 9427, and two Baofeng radio sets from their possession.

Security agencies said further investigation is underway to ascertain the network and activities of the arrested cadres.

Bengali United Forum protests before Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Guwahati

GUWAHATI

The members of the Bengali United Forum on Friday held a protest before the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Assam's Guwahati against the reported atrocities being committed against minorities in the neighbouring country.

Bengali United Forum member Santanu Mukherjee said, "We condemn the attack on Bangladeshi Hindus and request the government to take immediate steps to stop the killings."

Meanwhile, 12 people were arrested in Kolkata today for protesting against the atrocities being committed against minorities in Bangladesh.

The pro-Hindu activists, who carried out a rally and sat outside the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission office in Kolkata, were produced before the Alipore Police Court.

The court granted them bail on a bond of Rs 3,000 each.

Advocate Chandan Kumar Saha told, "The court has granted bail to them on a bond of Rs 3,000 each."

Thousands of saffron-clad activists, associated with pro-Hindu organisations, gathered in Kolkata on Friday and sat outside the Bangladesh Deputy High



Commission to protest the atrocities being committed against minorities in the neighbouring country.

The pro-Hindu activists held a rally, which was accompanied by West Bengal Leader of Opposition (LoP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Suvendu Adhikari. They entered the premises of the Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh to speak to the authorities regarding atrocities against Hindus.

Adhikari demanded that atrocities against Bangladeshi Hindus be stopped and warned of an intensified protest if demands were not met.

"1,000 sadhus have gathered here against what happened with Dipu Das and the atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh. We demand that the atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh should stop. If our demand is not met, all saints who come to Ganga Sagar Mela will come

and sit in protest here," the BJP leader told. On Wednesday, The Daily Star reported that a Hindu youth identified as Amrit Mondal was lynched at Hosendanga village of Kalimohun union in Rajbari's Pangsha sub-district over an extortion allegation.

Police rushed to the spot upon receiving information last night and rescued Samrat in a critical condition. The murder of Mondal took place days after the mob lynching and burning of the Hindu youth, Dipu Chandra Das, in Bangladesh's Mymensingh district.

A worker in a garment factory, Dipu Chandra Das, was beaten to death by a mob over alleged blasphemy charges and had his body hanged and set on fire on December 18. The Daily Star, citing Mymensingh's Additional Superintendent of Police, Abdullah Al Mamun, stated that a factory official had informed Bhaluka police that a group of workers attacked Dipu inside the factory, accusing him of making "derogatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammad" in a Facebook post.

However, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)-14 Company Commander in Mymensingh, Md Samsuzzaman, told The Daily Star that investigators found no evidence suggesting the deceased had posted or written anything on Facebook that could have hurt religious sentiments, adding that neither residents nor fellow garment factory workers could point to any such activity by the victim.

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Gen Z, Alpha will lead India to the goal of Viksit Bharat: PM Modi



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the new policies are being framed with a focus on youth empowerment, placing young people at the center of nation-building.

Addressing the Veer Baal Diwas programme at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, he remarked that they represent Gen Z and Gen Alpha, and it is their generation that will lead India to the goal of becoming a developed nation, according to an official release.

He stated that he sees and understands their competence and confidence, and therefore places great trust in them. Quoting the adage, PM Modi explained that even if a child speaks wisely, it should be accepted, meaning that greatness is not defined by age but by deeds and achievements. He underlined that young people can accomplish tasks that inspire others, and many have already demonstrated this. However, he stressed that these achievements should be seen only as a beginning, as there is much further to go, with dreams to be taken to

the skies.

Noting that this generation is fortunate, the Prime Minister said the nation stands firmly with their talent, unlike earlier times when youth feared even to dream due to an environment of despair. He remarked that today the country seeks out talent, provides platforms, and aligns the strength of 140 crore citizens with their aspirations.

He highlighted that with the success of Digital India, the youth have the power of the internet and resources for learning, with missions like Startup India for those pursuing science, technology, and entrepreneurship, and Khelo India for those advancing in sports. He mentioned that only two days ago, he participated in the Sansad Khel Mahotsav, underscoring the many platforms available to support youth progress.

The Prime Minister urged them to remain focused, cautioning against being trapped in the glitter of short-term popularity, and emphasised that clarity of thought and principles is essential. He called upon them to learn from ideals

and great personalities of the nation, and to ensure that their success is not limited to themselves but becomes the success of the country.

He highlighted that through platforms like Mera Yuva Bharat, efforts are being made to connect youth, provide them opportunities, and develop leadership skills. PM Modi emphasised that whether it is advancing the space economy, promoting sports, expanding fintech and manufacturing sectors, or creating opportunities for skill development and internships, youth remain at the core of every initiative. He further underlined that new opportunities are opening for youth in every sector.

On the occasion of the Prakash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji on 9th January 2022, the Prime Minister had announced that 26th December would be observed as 'Veer Baal Diwas', to commemorate the martyrdom of Sahibzadas Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji, the sons of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, whose unparalleled sacrifice continues to inspire generations.

“India has successfully bridged tradition with modernity by preserving core civilisational values”: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said that India has successfully bridged tradition with modernity by preserving core civilisational values while simultaneously embracing cutting-edge technologies, with the ultimate aim to ensure ease of living for common citizen, according to an official release by the Ministry of Science & Technology.

He was addressing the inaugural session of the Bharatiya Vigyan Sammelan 2025 at the National Sanskrit University here on Friday.

Singh said that India's transformation into a global science and technology leader over the last decade under PM Narendra Modi has been enabled by decisive policy support from the top political hierarchy.

Jitendra Singh said that over the last decade, science, technology, and innovation have received unprecedented policy focus and budgetary support since 2014, removing long-standing bottlenecks that earlier constrained India's scientific potential. He said that the talent pool in the country was never lacking, but enabling ecosystems and political will were missing, which have now been decisively addressed.

Highlighting India's rapid innovation growth, the Minister said the number of startups has increased from around 300-400 in 2014 to nearly 200,000 today, placing India among the top three startup ecosystems globally. He noted that India's rank in the Global Innovation Index has improved from 81 to 38, while the country now stands sixth worldwide in patent filings, with more than half of the patents being filed



by resident Indians, the release stated.

Singh said that India's achievements in space and strategic technologies have drawn global attention. He cited the country's lunar missions, which provided the first confirmed evidence of water on the Moon and achieved the world's first landing near the lunar south pole. He also highlighted the growing strength of India's indigenous defence manufacturing ecosystem, noting that defence exports have reached Rs. 23,662 crore, with Indian-made systems being supplied to nearly 100 countries.

Referring to recent global developments, the Minister said that India's indigenous missile and defence technologies have demonstrated their credibility and reliability, leading to growing international demand. He underlined that these capabilities are the result of sustained investments in atomic energy, space, and advanced research over

the past decade. On healthcare, Singh said India has emerged as a global leader in preventive healthcare and affordable medical solutions. From developing and sharing COVID-19 vaccines with the world to exporting medical devices and implants worth billions of dollars annually, India's healthcare innovation ecosystem has gained international trust and recognition. The minister also highlighted India's growing impact in scientific research and publications, stating that the country now ranks fourth globally in scientific paper output and third in citation impact, reflecting both quantitative and qualitative progress in research.

Singh emphasised that science in India is no longer confined to laboratories but is being used to enhance ease of living through initiatives such as smart cities, telemedicine, satellite-based communication, geotagging, and digital governance platforms. He said major national missions, includ-

ing space, nuclear energy, deep ocean exploration, Himalayan research and the Aroma Mission, are opening new frontiers for economic growth and youth entrepreneurship. The minister announced that large-scale translation of science textbooks and curricula into regional languages has been undertaken over the last decade to democratise scientific knowledge and education, ensuring that every citizen can participate in India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047. The inaugural session was attended by RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, senior scientists, academicians, and representatives from scientific institutions across the country. The Bharatiya Vigyan Sammelan 2025 is being held at Tirupati from December 26 to 29, bringing together stakeholders to deliberate on the future roadmap of Indian science, technology, and innovation.

INTERNATIONAL

At least 25 injured as mob violence, stone-pelting disrupt Bangladesh rock singer's concert



DHAKA

A concert by Bangladesh's veteran rock singer James was cancelled late on Friday after an attack disrupted celebrations marking the 185th anniversary of Faridpur Zilla School, leaving at least 25 people injured, local media reported.

The performance by James, frontman of the band Nagar Baul, was scheduled to close the two-day anniversary programme at the school premises in Faridpur district and was due to begin around 9:30 pm.

According to the daily Prothom Alo, a large number of unregistered outsiders gathered near the venue after learning of the concert. Organisers said the event was restricted to registered



current and former students. When the group was denied entry, they allegedly attempted to climb over the boundary wall, hurled bricks and stones into the school grounds and tried to seize the stage.

Students of Faridpur Zilla School resisted the attackers, forcing them to retreat, organisers said. As many as 25 to 30 people inside the premises were injured by flying bricks and stones, the report said.

At around 10:00 pm, organising committee convener Mustafizur Rahman Shamim announced from the stage that James's performance had been cancelled on the instructions of the Faridpur district administration due to the deteriorating security situation, local media reported.

Rajibul Hasan Khan, convener of the publicity and media sub-committee, said at least 15 to 20 students were injured in the violence. "We had made all necessary preparations for the concert, but we still do not understand who carried out the attack or why," he said, adding that the programme was called off following orders from the district administration.

The anniversary celebrations began on Thursday morning and were scheduled to conclude on Friday night with a raffle draw, cultural events and the headline performance by James.

Established in 1840 during British rule, Faridpur Zilla School is among the oldest government-run schools in Bangladesh and has played a prominent role in the region's educational, cultural and social life.

Thailand and Cambodia agree to 'immediate' ceasefire after weeks of deadly border clashes



PHNOM PENH

Thailand and Cambodia agreed to an "immediate" ceasefire on Saturday, the two countries said in a joint statement issued by the Cambodian side, pledging to end weeks of deadly border clashes.

The neighbours' long-standing border conflict reignited this month, shattering an earlier truce and killing at least 47 people, according to official counts. Around a million people have also been displaced.

"Both sides agree to an immediate ceasefire after the time of signature of this Joint Statement with effect

from 12:00 hours noon (local time) on 27 December 2025, involving all types of weapons, including attacks on civilians, civilian objects and infrastructures, and military objectives of either side, in all cases and all areas," said the statement signed by the two countries' defence ministers.

Both sides agree to freeze all troop movements and allow civilians living in border areas to return home as soon as possible, the statement said.

They also agree to cooperate on demining efforts and combatting cybercrime.

The ceasefire will go into effect at 12:00 pm (0500

GMT) to end battling over a smattering of ancient temples in disputed zones along the two countries' shared frontier.

It comes after three days of border talks announced following a crisis meeting of foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which both Cambodia and Thailand are members.

The United States, China and Malaysia also pushed for the warring neighbours to resume their ceasefire.

The three countries brokered a truce to end five days of deadly clashes in July, but the ceasefire was short-lived.

BANGLADESH: Yunus administration accused of fuelling instability ahead of polls

As Bangladesh moves towards parliamentary elections scheduled for February 12, 2026, critics are increasingly accusing the interim administration led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus of presiding over - and possibly enabling - a climate of political chaos that could undermine the credibility of the electoral process.

The debate intensified following the killing of Osman Bin Hadi, a radical youth leader who rose to prominence during the July 2024 uprising. Hadi served as a spokesperson for Inquilab Mancha, a post-July platform aligned with protest groups and the National Citizen Party (NCP). Educated in Islamic institutions, Hadi was known for hardline television appearances, incitement against journalists and political commentators, and attacks on symbols associated with Bangladesh's Liberation War. He had also publicly advocated the idea of a "Greater Bangladesh" incorporating parts of India. On December 11, shortly after the Yunus administration announced the election schedule, Hadi declared his intention to contest the Dhaka-8 seat as an independent candidate. The constituency is traditionally dominated by BNP heavyweight Mirza Abbas. The very next day, Hadi was shot dead at point-blank range by a motorcycle-borne assailant in broad daylight.

Video footage indicated that the



killed in the immediate aftermath, while nearly 50,000 are said to have fled to India. Senior and mid-level leaders are either jailed or in exile, with several reported deaths in custody. Industrialists perceived to be close to the Awami League have also been imprisoned, their businesses shut down, and thousands of workers rendered jobless.

The repression has extended beyond party ranks. Former chief justices, senior lawyers, retired bureaucrats, police officers, academics, editors and journalists have been arrested on what critics describe as fabricated murder and terrorism charges. According to rights groups, at least 300 journal-

centres on whether the assailant was genuinely an Awami League activist or an Islamist operating under its banner. Several leaders of the NCP previously belonged to the Awami League's student wing, while Jamaat-e-Islami has acknowledged operating covertly within student bodies during the July 2024 protests. Jamaat activists later went on to win university elections, reinforcing claims of long-term infiltration.

These developments have sharpened scrutiny of the Yunus administration's political orientation. Despite Yunus's international reputation as a peace advocate, critics argue that his government is

Analysts note that Mirza Abbas, the BNP candidate in Dhaka-8, is an experienced politician with little apparent reason to view Hadi as a serious electoral threat. Observers argue that no student leader from the 2024 protests could realistically win a parliamentary seat without backing from either the BNP or Jamaat. In this reading, Jamaat and the NCP emerge as the principal political beneficiaries of Hadi's death, using the incident to stoke anti-India and anti-Awami League sentiment - a strategy that, critics argue, itself suggests neither India nor the Awami League had any role in the killing.

Concerns extend beyond the single incident to the overall architecture of the coming election. The Awami League, estimated to command around 30 per cent of loyal voters, has been formally banned from contesting. The Jatiya Party, with a 7-8 per cent vote base, has faced intimidation rather than reconciliation. Together, critics say, these exclusions leave an election involving parties that represent barely half of the electorate. While the BNP - with roughly 30 per cent support - remains in the race, administrative backing is widely perceived to favour Islamist forces led by Jamaat, historically a five per cent party. Adding to the controversy is the decision to tag a constitutional referendum onto the election, a move supported by Jamaat but opposed by the BNP as unconstitutional. Jamaat and the NCP are believed to fear that a BNP victory would derail their long-term political project. In this context, critics allege that fresh unrest is being deliberately manufactured.

Since Hadi's killing, reports of arrests and violent incidents have risen. Jamaat's student wing, along with the Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and the NCP, have issued threats to shut down the Indian mission in Dhaka, while the Yunus administration has appeared to shift diplomatic pressure towards New Delhi.

Taken together, these developments have fuelled fears that Bangladesh is heading into an election marred by exclusion, instability and escalating street politics - with consequences that could extend well beyond polling day.



shooter belonged to a group closely associated with Hadi himself. Subsequent inquiries identified the alleged assailant as a former low-level Awami League student leader who had earlier been accused of armed robbery following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina in August 2024 - and later released on bail. The circumstances surrounding the bail have raised sharp questions, given the broader political context.

Since Hasina fled the country aboard a military aircraft, the Awami League has faced an extensive crackdown. Hundreds of party activists were reportedly

ists currently face criminal cases. Over the past 18 months, an average of one senior journalist has been arrested every month. With even schoolchildren reportedly detained for chanting the Liberation War slogan "Jai Bangla," freedom of expression is widely seen as being at its lowest ebb in Bangladesh's history.

Against this backdrop, observers have questioned how an accused robber - allegedly linked to the Awami League - could secure bail at a time when courts are accused of acting largely on executive direction.

The Yunus administration, critics note, has dropped cases or granted bail to hundreds of convicted militants, raising concerns over selective application of justice.

Another line of questioning

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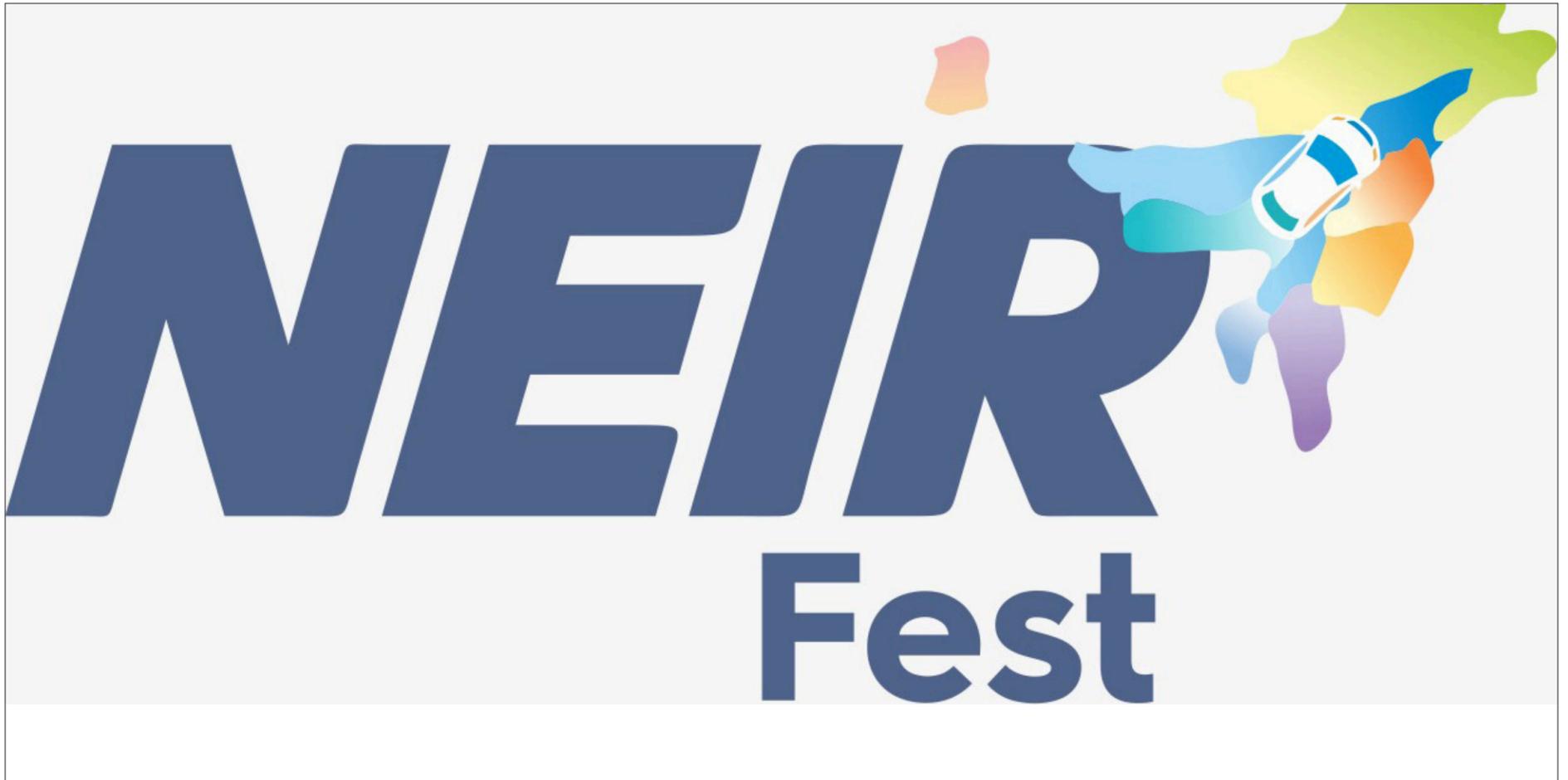
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NEIR Fest: A 30-Day Journey Turning Participation into Peace Across the North East



PEACE stands for Participate, Engage, Attend, Collaborate, Enjoy. Simple words. Clear intent. That clarity sits at the heart of the NEIR Fest, a moving, living festival that will unfold across the North East over 30 days.

From January 4, when the journey begins in Kolkata, to February 4, when it culminates in Guwahati, NEIR Fest is not tied to a single venue or a fixed audience. Each day, wherever the caravan stops, the festival takes shape. It adapts to the place, the people, and the moment. That is the point.

NEIR Fest is not about spectacle. It is about participation. Youth, students, activists, artists, workers, elders, and everyday citizens are not being invited as spectators. They are being called in as collaborators. The idea is to engage, to attend, to contribute, and to enjoy together. PEACE is not a slogan here. It is a method.

Every stop on this 30-day drive becomes a space for exchange. Cultural expressions, local art forms, music, food, conversations, and lived traditions come to the foreground. The focus is on bringing out the best of the region's cultural and social life, not as a performance for outsiders, but as a shared experience among communities within the North East.

The North East is often spoken of as a single region, but lived as many worlds. Languages change every few kilometres. Customs shift. Histories intersect and diverge. NEIR Fest acknowledges

this complexity without trying to flatten it. Instead of forcing uniformity, it creates room for connection. Integration here does not mean sameness. It means understanding, respect, and cooperation.

What this really means is building peace from the ground up. Not peace as silence or absence of conflict, but peace as active participation in each other's lives. When people engage through culture, dialogue, and shared economic activity, trust grows. That trust becomes the foundation for progress.

The festival also places strong emphasis on work and livelihood. Prosperity, as the organisers see it, does not arrive through slogans or shortcuts. It comes from genuine hard work, local enterprise, and meaningful economic activity. By highlighting regional skills, crafts, and creative labour, NEIR Fest links culture with the economy. Art is not separated from survival. Society is not divorced from livelihood.

There is also something quietly powerful about the journey itself. A 30-day drive across cities, towns, and smaller habitations sends a message. This region is connected. Its people are reachable. Dialogue is possible if we are willing to travel, listen, and stay present.

NEIR Fest is, at its core, an invitation. An invitation to show up. To engage honestly. To collaborate across differences. To enjoy what we share without erasing what makes us distinct.

Peace, in this vision, is not abstract. It is lived daily, stop by stop, conversation by conversation. And if that spirit holds, the journey from Kolkata to Guwahati may end on February 4, but the work it begins could travel much further.

North East Integration Rally
Peace | Progress | Prosperity
2026

4TH January - 4TH February

NE Integration Rally 2026, (Car & Motorcycle category) organised by Knowledge Resource Centre Foundation (KRC Foundation) - a think tank based out of NE India working in the field of Media & Communication, Training & Development, Events, Entrepreneurship and Consulting is conceptualised with the following Objectives:

- Infrastructure Development of NER (Roads, Rails, Aviation, Hydropower & Security)
- Promoting Tourism, MSME, Agro & Horticulture, Act East Diplomacy
- Disaster Management, Adventure Sports & Climate Change
- Art & Culture, Theatre, Cinema, Media & Entertainment
- SE for Success: Promoting - Education, Employment, Employability, Entrepreneurship & Emotional Intelligence

The North East Integration Rally 2026 is designed with the theme of 'Peace, Progress, Prosperity'

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JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM





10 JAN
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11 JAN
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11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders.
 Includes: MOUs, and 20 general discussion sessions for development, awareness, awareness, awareness, and awareness.
 Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, climate and river. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Basin Planning & Geography, riverine and central in the River Basin, Climate Change.

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



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
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DEC'24-JAN'25
Photography
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Barak Festival 2025

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Musical Night 11 JAN



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10-12 JAN
E-Sports
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11 JAN
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