

**Barak Festival**  
NE INDIA ADVENTURE SPORTS,  
ART & CULTURE PROMOTION



Barak Valley, Assam | JAN-MAR 2025  
www.krctimes.com  
www.krctimes.com  
Phone: 8721838313

**North East Integration Rally**  
Peace | Progress | Prosperity  
2026

Registrations  
**OPEN**



www.northeastintegrationrally.in  
+91 935 083 0085

Get all the latest and updated news of today in the evening. For subscribing to this e-paper contact at -8721838313

**SUBSCRIBE**  
₹300 / year



WhatsApp payment details : 8721838313  
info@krctimes.com

**PERSPECTIVE**

**Actions prove who someone is; words just prove who they want to be.**

**Assam to establish new land customs station at Samrang on Indo-Bhutan border**



**GUWAHATI**

A new Land Customs Station (LCS) is being established at Samrang along the Indo-Bhutan border in Assam's Udalguri district.

Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota and Bhutan's Consul General in Guwahati, Jigme Thinlye Namgyal, met on Sunday to discuss the operationalisation of the LCS.

The officials focused on interim arrangements to enable the station's functioning.

Earlier this year, a committee of representatives from all stakeholder agencies conducted a joint site visit to assess ways to develop Samrang into a functional border point, to boost import and export activities.

Currently, Assam has two operational LCSs along the Bhutan border, Darranga in Baksa and Hatisar in Chirang.

In 2023-24, trade through Darranga reached Rs 1,096 crore, with Rs 736.42 crore in exports and Rs 359.61 crore in imports.

Trade via Hatisar amounted to Rs 811 crore.

**WHO SAID WHAT**



**The EU should be abolished and sovereignty returned to individual countries, so that governments can better represent their people**

~ Elon Musk, American Entrepreneur

**Meghalaya to get new Weavers' Service Centre: Union Minister Giriraj Singh**

**GUWAHATI**

Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh announced that a Weavers' Service Centre (WSC) will be established in Meghalaya once the state government allocates land.

Currently, the northeast has only one WSC in Guwahati.

He announced after inaugurating the Integrated Textile & Tourism Centre (ITTC) at Nongpoh in Ri-Bhoi district and launching the 'EKTA Meghalaya' initiative.

The proposed WSC will provide weavers with technical, and marketing support.

The ITTC will serve as a hub for training, design development, silk processing, product diversification, and textile tourism, helping artisans reach wider markets.

Singh highlighted efforts to modernise weaving technologies, strengthen handloom clusters, and promote natural fibres.

Calling the northeast the "pride of India's textile heritage," he said the government aims to support every stage of the textile value chain



in the region.

The minister also announced plans to boost farmers' income by expanding Muga sericulture, increasing crop cycles from two to

three, which could generate four to five lakh rupees per acre.

The Central Silk Board and Meghalaya's sericulture department will jointly implement this initia-

tive.

India produces all four major types of silk: Muga, Tasar, Mulberry, and Eri. Scaling up Muga and Eri production in the northeast

could strengthen India's global position as other countries shift to synthetic fibres.

Union Minister Pabitra Margherita noted the international recognition of northeast artisans, citing a Meghalaya weaver who showcased their work at the global textile event 'BharatTex'.

He added that 52 percent of India's handlooms are in the region and announced that state textile ministers will meet in Guwahati next month to discuss development plans.

Meghalaya Textiles Minister Metbah Lyngdoh described the ITTC as a transformative project that will support artisans, revive silk heritage, and position Nongpoh as a textile and tourism hub.

Developed under the North East Regional Textile Promotion Scheme, the centre will function as an artisan hub, a living textile museum, and an innovation space.

State Principal Secretary Frederick Kharkongor said the project marks Meghalaya's "textile renaissance."

**Ministry signals inquiry into Tezpur University VC; Dhruva Bhattacharyya takes interim charge**

**GUWAHATI**

Dhruva Kumar Bhattacharyya, the senior-most professor at Tezpur University, has officially taken charge as the Acting Vice Chancellor, effective from the afternoon of December 4, 2025.

The appointment comes amid prolonged absence of Vice Chancellor Shambhu Nath Singh and concerns over the non-functioning of the Vice Chancellor's office during a period of heightened unrest on campus.

According to a statement issued by the University's Public Relations Office, the decision was taken to restore administrative normalcy and ensure smooth functioning of the institution.

Bhattacharyya's appointment is in accordance with Statute 2(6) of the Second Schedule of the Tezpur University Act, 1993 — a provision also cited by the Minister of State for Education in response to an unstarred question in the Lok Sabha on December 1, 2025. Following the assumption of charge, the University acknowledged receiving an officially minuted communication from Saumya Gupta, Joint Secretary at the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education.

The communication, addressed to the Registrar and emailed after her meetings with students, faculty, and non-teaching staff on December 7 at the Tezpur University campus, documented several concerns raised by stakeholders regarding the governance style of Singh.

In her note, the Joint Secretary stated that the Department of Higher Education would initiate a "strict and time-bound inquiry" into the allegations against Singh.

Importantly, it was also recorded that Singh would not administer the University while the inquiry is underway. The communication further clarified that, until further orders, the status quo would remain in place — meaning Bhattacharyya will continue to serve as the Acting Vice Chancellor. The University administration said it is committed to stabilizing campus operations and addressing concerns raised by various sections of the university community.

The university witnessed high drama from Saturday afternoon until early Sunday, when a high-level delegation from the Union Ministry of Education—led by Secretary Vineet Joshi—was unable to leave the campus around midnight. The team remained stuck in their vehicles for more than three hours.

They were finally allowed to exit after Joint Secretary Saumya Gupta, who was part of the delegation, provided a written assurance on a blank sheet of paper. Students, teachers, and non-teaching staff, united under the Tezpur University United Forum (TUUF), have been protesting against the embattled Vice Chancellor since mid-September, alleging corruption and other irregularities. They have demanded his removal and a formal inquiry into his actions.

**'Threat Politics Has No Future': Manik Saha on BJP's Increasing Tribal Reach**

**AGARTALA**

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said that politics based on spreading confusion, creating division, and inciting communalism will never be fruitful, and that the BJP-led government is working for the overall development of the Janajati community.

CM Saha said this while participating in an organisational function at Barakathal Bazar under the Simma Assembly constituency on Saturday.

CM Saha welcomed 107 families comprising 312 dedicated voters who joined the Bharatiya Janata Party.

While addressing the gathering organised by Simma Mandal, CM Saha said that a few days ago, it was stated that national political parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party would not be allowed to enter the TTAADC area.

"We often hear threats. So I am saying one thing—that the more threats are given, the stronger we will become. What I have heard is that here, in Barakathal Bazar, no activities will be allowed, the Chief Minister will not be allowed to come, the Janajati Welfare Minister will not be allowed to come, and no one from the BJP will be allowed to come. But this place is not anyone's personal property. This property belongs to everyone. Any party can go anywhere. But the BJP will never tolerate intimidation through force or different forms



of pressure," said CM Saha.

The Chief Minister said that Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee sacrificed his life in Jammu and Kashmir to protect the integrity of the country, and Pandit Deen Dayal was also killed in Mughalsarai.

"BJP is one of the best parties in the whole of India. We have no conflict with regional parties. They will do whatever they want to do. But politics that spreads confusion or division in various ways and provokes communal sentiments will never be fruitful. This has been proven in the past as well. Development cannot happen through such politics. So I will again say that the doors of the BJP are still open for those who think like this but are being misled by others through misinterpretation. I urge all of them to join the banner of the BJP, because the graph of the BJP is gradually rising," said CM Saha.

Speaking at the meeting, the Chief Minister also said that peace has now been established in the North East under the leader-

ship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Earlier, many people were inclined towards extremism, especially some people from the Janajati section. Because they did not understand who their real guardian was. Some people misled them for their personal interests. Today, about 11-12 agreements have been signed in the North East, bringing peace. But still, efforts are being made to weaken the country," said CM Saha.

The Chief Minister stated that due to the tireless efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 7 prominent personalities from the Janajati section of the state have been awarded the Padma Shri consecutively.

"After our government came to power, Agartala Airport has been dedicated in the name of Maharaj Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, the architect of modern Tripura. The day of Saangramma Puja has been declared a restricted holiday. The government holiday for Gariya Puja has been increased from one day to two days," he said.

The program was attended by Janajati Welfare Minister Bikas Debbarma, BJP General Secretary Bipin Debbarma, West District Sadar Grameen President Gauranga Bhowmik, Janajati Morcha Vice President Mangal Debbarma, Lefung RD Block BAC Chairman Ranbir Debbarma, and other top leaders and workers.

**Work will begin only if people want it: CM Sarma on Silchar elevated corridor**

**CM Sarma confirms early-stage talks on AIIMS-model institute for Barak Valley**

**DHOLAI/HAILAKANDI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday reiterated that the proposed elevated corridor in Silchar will be executed only if residents deliver a clear, controversy-free consensus, making it clear that the government will not push ahead amid divided public opinion.

Speaking on the sidelines of a programme in Dholai, Sarma said the administration moved swiftly on the project in response to public concern over rising traffic congestion in Silchar.

"We are doing it on public demand. If people want it, it will happen; if they don't, it won't," he said. "I am neutral. Once the public decides, we will begin."

The Chief Minister affirmed that the government is fully prepared to commence work. "We are ready. The

contractor is ready, funds are ready. If people say start tomorrow, we will start tomorrow," he added.

The 3.5-km elevated corridor, approved by the Cabinet at a cost of ₹564.50 crore, reached the tendering stage in August this year.

As part of efforts to assess public opinion, the District Administration conducted a meeting on November 19, chaired by Cabinet Minister Kaushik Rai. While a majority of attendees supported the project as a solution to chronic traffic bottlenecks, a section of traders voiced apprehension over the design and its possible impact on commercial establishments. With differing views now recorded, Sarma said the government will wait for a final collective mandate from the people before taking further action.

Responding to questions on the protest by 108 ambulance employees, Sarma asserted that the issue is

linked to the private operator, not the government.

"This is related to privatisation. They are not government employees but employees of EMRI," he said. "The protest is against them, not the government. We release funds as per tender norms, and salaries thereafter fall under the agency's purview."

Earlier in the day, Sarma distributed seed capital under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) in Hailakandi and Dholai. A total of 17,774 women in Hailakandi and 20,045 in Dholai received ₹10,000 each as financial support to promote women-led entrepreneurship.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that preliminary discussions have begun on setting up an AIIMS-model medical institution in the Barak Valley, marking the first official indication of the government's intent to expand

advanced healthcare infrastructure in the region.

Addressing the media during a seed capital distribution programme under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) in Hailakandi, Sarma said the proposal is still in its infancy but reflects growing demand for a premier medical institute equivalent to AIIMS Guwahati.

"There is already a discussion that since we have an AIIMS in the Brahmaputra Valley, we should have another in the Barak Valley. Nothing concrete yet - it is still preliminary," the Chief Minister remarked.

He added that Patharkandi MLA Krishnendu Paul has offered land in his constituency for the project. An AIIMS-standard institution, he noted, would require nearly 1,200 bighas of land, and identification of a suitable site could take time. "The process is

at a very initial stage," he said.

Sarma later reiterated the government's position on a microblogging platform, stating that early steps are being taken to ensure "world-class healthcare reaches every corner of Assam. No region will be left behind."

The development comes amid a string of health and infrastructure announcements in the Barak Valley, including approval for a ₹295-crore, 208-bed super-speciality wing at Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH), and clearance for the long-pending greenfield airport at Doloo Tea Estate.

The Chief Minister also referenced the Centre's cultural promotion efforts, saying, "Modi ji is popularising Assam's Gamusa and Tea as well."

Earlier in the day, Sarma distributed ₹10,000 cheques to 17,775 women SHG members in Hailakandi under the Mohila Udyamita Scheme.





VOLUME:1, ISSUE 642

## NEW ERA OF INDO-RUSSIAN TIES

The 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit in New Delhi was far more than a diplomatic routine. It was a reaffirmation of a time-tested friendship that has weathered wars, shifting global alliances, ideological differences, and a rapidly mutating geopolitical landscape. President Vladimir Putin's visit—rare in recent years—carried unmistakable symbolism: in a world splintered by conflict and mistrust, the Indo-Russian relationship remains anchored in trust, warmth, and strategic depth. For India, Russia continues to be a reliable partner; for Russia, India remains a stabilising global force and an indispensable economic and geopolitical ally.

Since India's independence, Russia has stood by New Delhi at critical historical junctures—political, military, economic, and diplomatic. The phrase "all-weather ally" has often been used loosely in international relations, but in the India-Russia context, it has been validated repeatedly through actions, not rhetoric. For decades, the backbone of India's defence capability has been Russian-origin equipment. The Indian Air Force soared on wings provided by MiG-21s, MiG-29s, and, later, the formidable Sukhoi-30MKI fleet. The Indian Army's armoured formations have relied heavily on Russian T-72 and T-90 main battle tanks. Even India's aspiring defence manufacturing ecosystem—embodied today in the LCA Tejas and homegrown MBTs—owes much to technology transfers and industrial cooperation extended by Moscow. The partnership has not been transactional; it has been transformational.

Today, India's operational aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya, too, is a Russian gift of friendship. And more recently, the delivery of cutting-edge S-400 air defence systems and Russian drone technology played a pivotal role in safeguarding Indian airspace during Operation Sindoor. Few nations have so consistently enabled India's security, sovereignty, and technological evolution.

Carrying this relationship forward, the Modi-Putin talks focused heavily on security cooperation, condemning the terror attacks in Pahalgalam and at Moscow's Crocus City Hall. Their call for an "uncompromising" global fight against terrorism without hidden agendas or selective standards reflects a shared frustration with global hypocrisy on the issue. Russia's support for India against cross-border terrorism and its consistent backing of India's bid for permanent membership at the UN Security Council underscore a convergence of strategic narratives. In a world where terrorism is increasingly aided by digital tools, unmanned systems, and opaque financial pathways, the Delhi Declaration on countering the misuse of new technologies has given India and Russia a new frontier for cooperation. As both countries face threats emerging from the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands, their joint emphasis on preventing radicalisation and curbing extremist ideological spread online is timely and necessary.

Despite facing heavy tariffs and sanctions from the USA for importing discounted Russian crude, India has not hesitated to honour its energy needs and maintain its sovereign economic choices. In return, Russia—long isolated by the NATO-EU sanctions regime—has benefited enormously from India's vast and stable oil purchases. At a time when Moscow's assets are frozen abroad, New Delhi became one of its most significant economic lifelines. Yet the relationship is not one-sided. India's ability to secure affordable energy during the post-COVID inflation spiral was critical to stabilising domestic prices and shielding millions from economic shocks.

The summit's biggest promise lies in the new five-year roadmap for trade and investment and in accelerating negotiations for a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union. For India, a partnership with Russia opens doors to Eurasian markets that remain underserved and ripe for expansion. For Russia, India offers one of the world's largest consumer markets and a dependable, depoliticised trading partner. Despite a current trade deficit of nearly USD 59 billion—skewed due to massive oil imports—Putin's visit signals new sectors of opportunity: energy collaboration, technology transfer, advanced drones, mobility agreements, investment protection frameworks, and the push for greater Indian exports to the Russian market.

The world order is undergoing tectonic shifts. The continuing Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Israel-Iran flashpoints, instability in Afghanistan, and the recalibrated US-Pakistan dynamics have created new uncertainties. In such turbulent times, nations are seeking dependable partners, not fair-weather alliances. For both India and Russia, the relationship today is driven by realism and mutual need. Russia is looking for reliable partners beyond Europe and the United States, and India is looking for long-term technological and strategic allies who do not impose political preconditions. Moscow's growing military expertise in drones, electronic warfare, and battlefield technology—honed in the Ukraine conflict—could be critical for India as it faces similar asymmetric threats from Pakistan-based terror proxies.

Equally significant is Russia's unique influence over China. While Moscow's proximity to Beijing has increased, Putin's personal rapport with Indian leadership and Russia's long-standing respect for India's strategic autonomy act as valuable moderating factors. Moscow remains one of the few powers capable of nudging Beijing toward a calibrated approach vis-à-vis India. In a volatile Indo-Pacific region, this quiet leverage is indispensable.

President Putin's limited foreign engagements have made his New Delhi trip especially meaningful. It signals that India occupies a privileged place in Russia's diplomatic priorities. The warmth of the welcome—Prime Minister Modi personally receiving him at the airport and hosting him for a private dinner—echoed a friendship rooted not merely in agreements, but in an emotional and historical connection. The symbolic gifts exchanged—Assam tea, Murshidabad silver, Kashmiri saffron, an ornate chess set, and a Russian edition of the Bhagavad Gita—celebrated shared civilisations, artistry, and cultural bonds. They reflected a partnership that goes beyond transactional diplomacy.

The Indo-Russian relationship today blends nostalgia with renewed strategic purpose. From defence manufacturing to energy security, from terrorism to geopolitics, from digital threats to humanitarian concerns in Afghanistan—the partnership spans a vast terrain. As the world fragments into competing blocs, India's balanced but assertive diplomacy and Russia's search for stable partnerships create a perfect alignment. This visit was not routine; it was a strategic milestone. It deepened trust, opened new avenues, and reminded the world that the Indo-Russian axis continues to be a pillar of stability in an increasingly unstable world. For both nations, it is indeed a win-win partnership—rooted in history, relevant in the present, and poised to shape the geopolitics of the future.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

**"Time is more value than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time." - Jim Rohn**

# Aviation Turbulence: India's Fragile Sky and the Costs of Systemic Neglect



NIL KONSAM

India's recent aviation crisis—triggered by a sudden roster change in the country's largest airline and cascading into nationwide cancellations and passenger stranding—cannot be dismissed as an unfortunate operational mishap. It is a symptom of a deeper institutional fragility that has been building steadily for over a decade. The incident has exposed not just an airline's capacity shortfall, but the widening fault lines within India's regulatory framework, the over-reliance on foreign systems and hardware, and the troubling degradation of public institutions entrusted with anticipating and preventing exactly such failures.

At the heart of the episode is a regulatory misjudgment. In a sector where personnel planning is complex, aircraft utilisation tightly optimised, and crew training pipelines notoriously slow to scale, a sudden shift in roster norms was bound to cause supply-side shock. Pilots and flight operations support staff cannot be recruited, trained, type-rated, and deployed overnight. These facts are well known to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Their inability—or unwillingness—to anticipate the consequences places regulatory responsibility squarely at the government's door.

Yet the story is more layered. The disruption has amplified calls to expand pilot intake and domestic flight-training capacities. This raises a pointed question: who stands to benefit? India's flight-training ecosystem is dominated by private entities, several of them linked—directly or indirectly—to airline promoters, airport operators, or politically connected business groups. Thus, while no explicit collusion can be asserted, the alignment of incentives is unmistakable. A crisis that weakens an airline and pressures it to expand pilot requirements simultaneously strengthens entities already positioned to profit from training contracts and long-term supply agreements.

But the current turbulence cannot be understood through personnel issues alone. India's civil aviation rests on a structural imbalance: we operate one of the world's fastest-growing domestic markets with one of the world's weakest indigenous aviation ecosystems. Nearly 80-85% of India's commercial fleet is leased, mostly from Ireland- and Singapore-based lessors. Leasing is not inherently problematic, but India's near-total reliance—far above global averages—creates financial vulnerability, forex outflow, and regulatory risk. The Go First collapse and the subsequent friction with aircraft lessors under India's

insolvency regime illustrate how exposed the system is.

The dependence is even starker on the maintenance and technology front. An estimated 80-90% of India's MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) spending flows abroad—to Dubai, Singapore, Germany, France, and OEM facilities elsewhere. India lacks certified engine-overhaul capacity for most modern commercial engines (CFM LEAP, Pratt & Whitney GTFs, Rolls-Royce Trent variants). Even heavy airframe checks for larger aircraft are often routed outside. Domestic MRO firms have long complained of a policy environment that is unpredictable, uncompetitive, and tilted toward foreign service providers. The 2024 reform introducing a uniform 5% tax on aircraft and engine parts was meant to correct this, but its impact will play out slowly.

Beyond hardware, India is deeply dependent on imported aviation software and operational systems. The booking engines that power airline ticketing, the slot allocation tools used by airports, the crew scheduling algorithms, safety-management systems, and the baggage-handling automation frameworks—virtually all come from foreign vendors. While this is common worldwide, the difference lies in domestic capability. India has not cultivated a homegrown aviation software industry with globally certified products. Nor has it invested in regulatory digitalisation that matches international best practice. As a result, everything—from ticketing to turnaround—is vulnerable to vendor concentration, licensing costs, and systemic failures originating far outside India's control.

Meanwhile, the government's preferred narrative trumpets a different achievement: the accelerated construction of airports. New terminals, new runways, and dramatic time-lapse videos of infrastructure being unveiled at breakneck speed dominate official publicity. What receives far less attention is the second half of the aviation equation: airlines, regulators, technical capability, trained personnel, air navigation systems, and financial resilience.

Airports do not make aviation safe. Airports do not prevent cancellations. Airports do not improve aircraft reliability or reduce engine failures. Airports do not replace the complex operational capacities that keep aircraft in the air and passengers moving reliably.

Yet this infrastructure-heavy approach has become the governing logic. Invest in the visible; neglect the critical. Build glass and steel terminals; underfund oversight. Announce new airports; ignore staffing shortages. Showcase expansion; overlook

systemic load-bearing capacity. The result is an ecosystem with glossy facades and fragile foundations.

The fragility becomes glaring during stress. The latest disruption showed how a single airline's crew shortfall could paralyse airports across the country. Gate hold-ups, missed international connections, stranded students, medical passengers trapped mid-journey—such scenes are not isolated failures. They signal an ecosystem operating at the edge of tolerance. They reveal what aviation experts have long warned: that India is running a high-density, high-growth civil aviation sector on under-developed institutional musculature.

In the midst of the crisis, another troubling pattern emerged. As flights were cancelled and demand spiked on alternative routes, some airlines engaged in predatory pricing, with domestic tickets crossing 1 lakh even on short-haul sectors. For a country where aviation has been positioned as an accessible middle-class service, such exploitative spikes are unacceptable. Price deregulation must not become a licence for opportunistic profiteering during system breakdowns. The fact that such market behaviour was allowed to persist unchecked underscores a deeper policy vacuum.

The turbulence, therefore, is not merely about one airline's rostering failure. It exposes what years of institutional weakening, regulatory complacency, and policy over-centralisation have produced: a system without buffers, without redundancy, and without the empowered, independent oversight needed in a sector that deals with human lives daily. Aviation cannot be micromanaged through political announcements or bureaucratic firefighting. It requires stable rules, insulated regulators, technologically competent oversight, and long-term capability building.

India must confront four uncomfortable truths. First, the government's regulatory apparatus must be strengthened, depoliticised, and granted functional autonomy. Aviation safety and operational reliability cannot depend on headline-driven decision-making.

Second, the country must accelerate the localisation of MRO, software systems, and operational technologies. No large aviation market can sustain itself while importing everything from engines to algorithms.

Third, the financial and institutional health of airlines must be treated as a national economic priority, not an afterthought. Airlines are not mere private companies—they are essential infrastructure.

Fourth, crisis-time predatory pricing must be addressed through transparent, rules-based intervention. Market freedom must not come at the cost of public trust.

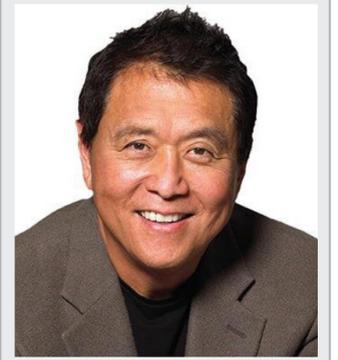
India's civil aviation success story is often told through three metrics: passenger growth, airport expansion, and airline orders. But true aviation success is measured in operational resilience, regulatory foresight, indigenous capability, and public-interest orientation.

The recent fiasco is not an aberration. It is a warning. The question is whether India will treat it as an inconvenience to be forgotten—or a signal to rebuild the institutional spine of a sector that too many people now depend on, and too few truly understand.

Nil Konsam  
ideaswisdoms@gmail.com

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Than 2 years. Many have been trying to explain away this looting by citing, among others, demand-supply logic, etc! And now, we have this crisis because airlines couldn't comply with the new FDTL issued by DGCA, and the country has awoken because the "Nation" is being affected! For instance, the Ministry has responded by IMPOSING a price cap on airfare and setting up real-time price monitoring, etc! Despite people having been raising this unjust pricing, including on the floor of the HOUSE, why has SUCH ACTION not BEEN TAKEN UP then? The answer is the naked truth: For most people in this country, Manipur, and the Northeast in general, are not part of the RASTRA Chetna, the national consciousness. This civil aviation crisis is another stark reminder of this naked truth! ~ A. Bimol Akoijam, MP, Manipur Inner**



## India's paradox: Rising growth and falling rupee

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Last week, India and Indians got a happy surprise. India's GDP grew by 8.2 percent in the second quarter—way higher than all estimates. This week, Indians bore the brunt of a nasty surprise. The rupee hit 90.28 per dollar, crossing a milestone and into a psychological zone. The strange cohabitation of rising growth and falling currency highlights the faultlines and one of many paradoxes flickering in the political economy.

Consider the journey of the rupee. It began the year at 85.80, and by December, it had depreciated by around 5 percent. Imagine estimating the fall and cost of hedging against it. What is noteworthy is that in these 12 months the dollar index DXY yo-yoed up and down, from 109 to 96 and 99. The rupee went down with the dollar and continued sliding even when the dollar recovered. Unsurprisingly, the rupee has got tagged as the worst-performing currency in Asia.

One would think that the rupee's depreciation would merit attention, but it didn't find mention in Friday's monetary policy statement. It would seem it was par for the course. At the presser, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the RBI will intervene to curb volatility and doesn't have a target level for the rupee. Arguably, there is not much the RBI on its own can do—it has intervened in recent weeks, but clearly

there are limitations to using the \$686-billion war chest.

The rupee's fall is triggered only partly by mood mechanics and is mostly affected by moolah mathematics. The establishment has come to believe that the rupee's slide is caused by Trump's tariff tantrums and the stalled trade deal. While India is negotiating a trade deal, Trump seems to be negotiating a geopolitical deal. It is true high tariffs and uncertainty have affected sentiments. That said, it cannot be an alibi for a falling currency. Mexico is yet to get a deal and the peso is strengthening; the yuan has appreciated although the US-China deal is yet to fructify.

The immediate cause of the rupee's fall is essentially about supply and demand. India's dollar needs and dollar income are scaffolded by overseas remittances, and foreign direct and institutional investment flows. India is the fastest growing large economy, ranked fourth on GDP. Yet, India has struggled to woo FDI. India punches way below its stature and is ranked 15th by UNCTAD on investments. It is yet to cross the \$100-billion mark; the gross FDI is at \$50.3 billion and net FDI barely \$7 billion.

Money chases safety and returns. India grew at 6.5 percent in 2024-25 and is averaging above 7 percent this year. India has stable macros and has lived up to its word on deficits. Inflation is within the target band. Corporate results have been good. It has a billion-plus consump-

tion base. India's stock indices are hovering at record highs, but foreign portfolio investors have pulled about \$18 billion out of the market.

Strangely, a choir of policy makers and economists seem to welcome the rupee's fall. It could be argued that the slide was unavoidable, but the whoopies defy logic given the construct of the economy. India imports more than it exports. It imports 88 percent of its crude oil, 26 million tonnes of liquefied gas, around 240 MT of coal, 7 MT of pulses, plus electronics, gold, and intermediates for the domestic market and exports. The thesis that a cheaper rupee equals higher exports is fallible. A costlier dollar will only hurt in an economy that depends on import of intermediate goods—gold, gems, petroleum, textiles, chips, electronics, and pharma ingredients.

The value of the rupee rests on the robustness of growth. Economic growth can be propelled with public spending and private consumption. India has banked on public infrastructure to boost growth. This year, as the infra story took a pause, India tweaked income tax and GST rates to push private consumption. Ideally, sustainable growth calls for a balance of both public and private consumption. This calls for enabling the virtuous cycle—investment to jobs to income to consumption to demand to investment. India is in a 'Goldilocks' spot, but the private sector is shying away from big-tag investment and seems to prefer sitting on cash.

There are visible and invisible causes for this hesitancy.

An economy aspiring to a \$10-trillion GDP must address the issues haunting entrepreneurs and clear the parade of paradoxes. Consider the construct of a gross domestic economy. Three decades after liberalisation, agriculture hosts nearly half the workforce and manufacturing is yet to touch 20 percent of GDP. Between 2019 and 2024, exports have barely nudged ahead from 19.8 percent to 21.2 percent of GDP. It is well established that it is the small and medium enterprises that catalyse export growth. But MSMEs struggle with regulatory overhang and poor access to affordable credit.

Among the paradoxes, the most perplexing is the cost of money. This week, the RBI cut interest rates by 0.25 percentage points, taking the interest rate to 5.25 percent. The question is, at what rate is credit available to different risk groups. While the RBI has slashed rates by 1.25 percentage points over the past year, the weighted average lending rate of banks has dipped by barely 0.70 percentage points for fresh rupee loans. Effectively, this means lending rates for AAA corps hover near 8 percent and that for medium enterprises is in double-digits.

Trumponomics is a well-timed lesson on the consequences of unattended causes. The question that begs to be asked is what is India's leverage? What can India produce that the world cannot do without?

# Assam CM launches seed capital cheque distribution for women of Hailakandi and Dholai

## HAILAKANDI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday launched the distribution of seed capital cheques under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan for women beneficiaries of Hailakandi and Dholai Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LACs) in the Barak Valley.

A total of 17,774 beneficiaries from Hailakandi LAC and 20,045 beneficiaries from Dholai LAC have received cheques of Rs 10,000 each under this initiative.

Speaking on the occasion of the distribution of cheques to beneficiaries of Hailakandi LAC in a programme held at Mela Field in Hailakandi, the Chief Minister said, "The scheme was launched to ensure sustainable economic empowerment of women in Assam."

He informed that in the past two

months, cheque distribution programmes had been completed in 50 constituencies, benefitting 12 lakh women across the state.

CM Sarma highlighted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi envisions transforming three crore women across India into "Lakshmi Didis", who can earn more than Rs 1 lakh annually through various income-generating activities.

Referring to Assam, he said 40 lakh women in the state are associated with 4 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and the government aims to transform each one of them as "Lakshmi Baideu", through this initiative.

Urging beneficiaries to make the best use of the fund, the Chief Minister emphasised, "Today's Rs 10,000 cheque is only the beginning. If women deposit this seed fund in their SHGs, a working capital of Rs 1 lakh can be created, which can be used either for group-

based enterprises, individual ventures or expansion of existing family businesses. After an assessment of fund utilisation in six months, beneficiaries will be eligible for subsequent support of Rs 25,000 and Rs 50,000. Only beneficiaries with up to three children will be eligible for these benefits, he added."

Stating that the Assam Government has been working diligently for the uplift of all poor and middle-class families, the Chief Minister said, "Under Orunodoi 3.0, an additional two to three thousand new beneficiaries from Hailakandi LAC will be included so that all eligible families are covered."

He further announced that from January 1, ration card holders will be able to buy dal, salt and sugar at Rs 100 per kg, instead of the existing Rs 117.

Speaking about the development initiatives for Hailakandi, the Chief Minister said that to strengthen health services in Hailakandi, an MRI machine

will be installed at the Hailakandi Civil Hospital.

He has also directed the District Commissioner to identify land for the construction of a medical college in Hailakandi. Construction of the new Circuit House is progressing rapidly, he said, adding that the Hailakandi District Stadium, being built at a cost of Rs 3 crore, will receive an additional Rs 2 crore for its completion.

The event at Hailakandi was attended by Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister Krishnaendu Paul, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Kaushik Roy, MLAs Zakir Hussain Laskar, Nijam Uddin Choudhury, Bijoy Malakar, Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha, ASRLM Mission Director Kuntal Moni Sharma Bordoloi, former Minister Gautam Roy and several senior officials, dignitaries and beneficiaries.

Earlier in the day, before attending the cheque distribution function,

the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the installation of a statue of Bharat Kesari Syama Prasad Mukherjee on Puranibazar Road, Hailakandi.

Later, at a programme held at Borjalenga Field in Dholai LAC, Sarma launched the distribution of seed capital cheques under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan for 20,045 women beneficiaries, each receiving Rs 10,000.

Speaking at the programme, Chief Minister Sarma said the State Government has been consistently working to empower women associated with Self-Help Groups and help them progress step by step to become successful entrepreneurs under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan.

He noted that by engaging with SHGs, these women have been making significant contributions not only to their families but also to the overall economy of the state. Their involve-

ment in income-generating activities has enabled them to become self-reliant while enhancing their status within their families and society.

The Chief Minister stated that more than eight lakh women in Assam have already become Lakshmi Baideus. Urging the beneficiaries to utilise the seed capital effectively for productive activities, he said that women who properly use the initial support of Rs 10,000 will subsequently receive Rs 25,000 and Rs 50,000, amounting to a total assistance of Rs 85,000 per beneficiary. With the judicious use of this capital, SHG members will not only become Lakshmi Baideus but also emerge as role models for other women in their localities, he added.

MP Parimal Suklabaidya, MLA Nihar Ranjan Das, Dipayan Chakraborty, MD ASRLM Kuntal Moni Sarma Bordoloi and several other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

## Mizoram nears peace pact with Hmar militant faction: CM Lalduhoma

### AIZAWL

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Friday said his government is on the verge of finalising a peace agreement with the Lahmingthanga Sanate-led faction of the Hmar People's Convention (Democratic), signalling a possible breakthrough in efforts to stabilise Hmar-inhabited regions of the state.

Speaking at the Hmar Students' Association (HSA) General Assembly during the Sikkui Ruoi festival in Kolasib district, Lalduhoma said ongoing negotiations aim to facilitate the return of militants to mainstream society.

"We are hopeful that we can soon sign an agreement to restore peace in Mizoram, particularly in Hmar-dominated areas," the Chief Minister said.

The Sanate faction, which has a presence in neighbouring Assam's Cachar district, has been associated with cases of extortion and other criminal activities in Mizoram. The proposed agreement would follow the 2018 peace accord with another HPC(D) faction, which resulted in the creation of the Singlung Hills Council (SHC) to administer Hmar-majority villages in northeastern Mizoram.

Calling for greater unity among tribal communities, Lalduhoma urged the Hmar people-one of the largest Mizo tribes-to continue contributing to peace-building and inter-community harmony. He also lauded the HSA for its work in education, cultural promotion and community welfare.

Outlining the state's development priorities, the Chief Minister said farmers remain at the core of the government's 'Bana Kaih' programme. He added that employment generation has improved over the past two years under the Zoram People's Movement-led administration.

Assembly Speaker Lalbiakzama and Revenue Minister B. Lalchanzova were present at the event, underscoring the government's intent to move forward simultaneously on peace, governance and economic development.

## Arunachal Pradesh: Namsai administration issues final warning, prepares for stringent action against illegal poppy cultivation



NAMSAI

The Namsai district administration has issued a final and uncompromising warning to individuals involved in illegal poppy cultivation, signalling an imminent crackdown across the region. The move follows an extensive ground survey that confirmed multiple sites where cultivation of narcotic poppy crops was underway or being prepared.

Officials said the Anti-Drug Squad of Namsai Police, along with Chongkham Police, recently carried out a coordinated inspection of suspected locations. The survey identified several plots engaged in illicit plantation, prompt-

ing authorities to escalate enforcement measures.

The administration has now announced that a comprehensive anti-narcotics drive will be launched shortly, with zero tolerance for violators. Police stated that anyone-cultivators or landowners-linked to illegal poppy farming will face immediate arrest. Destruction of crops, seizure of assets and stringent action under relevant laws are expected to follow.

"There will be no excuses, no negotiations, and no second chances," officials warned, urging residents to cease illegal cultivation without delay.

The district administration further appealed to the public to support its anti-drug campaign, stressing the long-term social and economic harm caused by narcotic-linked activities. All cultivators have been directed to halt poppy plantations and cooperate with enforcement agencies as the crackdown intensifies.

## Citizen Action Party flags concerns over SIR, seeks protection of state's constitutional safeguards

### GANGTOK

The Citizen Action Party-Sikkim (CAP-Sikkim) has urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to incorporate key identity documents unique to the state into the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. A party delegation met the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) at the Election Office in Balwakhani, Gangtok, on December 4 to put forth the demand.

The delegation included CAP-Sikkim Vice Presidents Bhushan Adhikari, Deependra Rai and Kiran Zimba, along with District President Jorbu Tsh. Lepcha. They sought a detailed briefing on the progress, procedures and implementation status of the SIR being carried out across Sikkim.

The party has issued a press release appealing to the Commission to officially include the Sikkim Subject Certificate (SSC) and Certificate of Identification (COI) as accepted



documents during the review process. The party stresses that adding these documents is crucial for ensuring the electoral rolls' accuracy and transparency, describing the Special Revision of Electoral Rolls (SIR) as a vital exercise.

The delegation also appealed to the Election Commission to exercise "special care and sensitivity" while conducting the SIR in the state, citing the unique constitutional protections granted to Sikkim under Article 371F. These safeguards, they said, are integral to preserving the rights and identity of the indigenous population.

Calling for a more participatory process, CAP-Sikkim requested the CEO's office to roll out widespread public awareness campaigns across the state. Such outreach, they said, would help citizens better understand the objectives of the Special Intensive Revision, the documentation required, and the steps involved in enrolment and verification.

Following the meeting, the party expressed confidence that the Commission would consider the concerns raised and ensure that the SIR is conducted in a manner that respects constitutional provisions and the sentiments of Sikkim's people.

## Tezpur University turmoil intensifies as Vice-Chancellor stripped of administrative powers; MoE orders inquiry

### TEZPUR

The prolonged crisis at Tezpur University entered a critical phase on Saturday, December 6, after the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued a written resolution relieving Vice-Chancellor Prof. Shambhunath Singh of all administrative responsibilities. The ministry has also ordered a formal inquiry into his conduct, marking a significant breakthrough in the nearly three-month-long student agitation.

The decision came amid dramatic scenes on campus during a visit by an MoE delegation headed by Higher Education Secretary Vineet Joshi. The team was met with massive student demonstrations on Day 79 of the continuous protest, demanding accountability, administrative reform and redressal of long-standing grievances.

Student representatives said the



delegation initially failed to offer concrete assurances or timelines, prompting frustration and escalating the standoff. Thousands of students later staged blockades across internal campus roads, halting movement and effectively paralysing university operations. The delegation was prevented

from leaving the campus for several hours until students insisted on receiving a written and verifiable commitment from the Centre.

Protesters said repeated appeals, memorandums and fact-finding visits over the past two months had led to "silence, delay and systemic indifference," eroding trust in insti-

tutional mechanisms. With tensions peaking, student bodies announced a complete shutdown of academic and administrative functions-a step they described as inevitable after exhausting all peaceful methods of negotiation.

Security presence on the campus has been sharply increased as uncertainty persists over the university's functioning. The mood among students and faculty remains tense, with protests expected to continue until the MoE finalises a time-bound roadmap addressing all demands.

Late Saturday night, officials confirmed that the MoE delegation exited the campus only after delivering key assurances, including the removal of the Vice-Chancellor from administrative charge and the initiation of a formal probe against him - a development widely viewed as a pivotal moment in the ongoing movement.

## Nagaland dispatches first commercial Zanthoxylum seed consignment to Dabur, eyes bigger role in herbal economy

### KOHIMA

Nagaland marked a milestone in its medicinal plant sector on Saturday with the dispatch of its first commercial consignment of Zanthoxylum seeds - locally known as Michinga or Tomar - to Dabur India Limited's North-East Unit in Tezpur, Assam. The initiative, led by the Nagaland Bio Resource Mission, is expected to expand market access for farmers and strengthen the state's position in India's growing herbal and medicinal value chain.

Speaking at the flag-off event, mission team leader Dr. Krolalie Tsurho described the moment as both "an opportunity and a blessing," crediting farmers, entrepreneurs and mission members for the successful supply chain effort. He said Dabur had tested and approved the seeds as premium raw material, noting that the consignment reflects a collective commitment to quality.

Chief guest Sentiyanger Imchen highlighted Nagaland's rich reservoir of herbs and medicinal plants and urged stakeholders to scale up production to meet industry demand. "It should not stop with Michin-

ga alone," he said, calling for long-term planning, quality assurance and sustained partnerships to help the state emerge as a major player in the national medicinal plant market. He encouraged young entrepreneurs to adopt scientific, market-driven practices to build trust and competitiveness.

Representing Dabur, Narayanan Renganathan, Head of Central Procurement & Planning Division, affirmed the company's interest in expanding collaboration with growers in the region. He said the rising demand for natural herbal inputs offers significant opportunity for Nagaland, which he described as a high-potential hub for both herbs and spices.

The programme culminated with a stakeholder conclave at the SIRD Conference Hall, where participants discussed strategies to strengthen local value chains, improve processing capacity and position Nagaland as a sustainable supplier in the medicinal plant industry. Local farmers, entrepreneurs, Dabur officials and mission representatives attended the event.

## Tripura CM announces major expansion of civil defence volunteer base in state

### AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said that a target has been set to make 1 per cent of the total population Civil Defence volunteers in the coming days.

He said that, in addition to humanitarian work, Civil Defence and Home Guard volunteers play a significant role in dealing with disasters.

Chief Minister Saha said this at the 63rd All India Civil Defence and Home Guard Day programme organised at the Manoranjan Debbarma Smriti Stadium in AD Nagar, Agartala, today.

Speaking at the programme, CM Saha said that this year the parade of Civil Defence, Home Guard, Apada Mitra and other volunteers has increased significantly compared to the previous year.

"We thank them for this. Every year, Civil Defence and Home Guards Day is celebrated on December 6. This year, we are celebrating it as the 63rd All India Civil Defence and Home Guards Day. This day is observed as a symbol of the selfless work and sacrifice of Civil Defence and Home Guards volunteers in dealing with disasters, along with upholding humanity. Your bright presence beside the helpless and distressed



undoubtedly creates hope in their minds, which is a great example of service," said Saha.

He said that while the Civil Defence Act was enacted in India in 1968, Civil Defence was recognised in Tripura in 1971.

"Our Civil Defence was under the control of the District Magistrate of West Tripura district. Then in 2019, it was handed over to the Home Department of the State Government and later, in 2020, to the Revenue Department. After coming under the Revenue Department, Civil Defence activities in Tripura were expanded to all districts of the

state in July 2021," said Saha.

The chief minister informed that there are 8 districts with Civil Defence. ADMs and Collectors have been nominated as Civil Defence Controllers of the respective districts.

Saha also informed that the Director of the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation and Disaster Management has been nominated as the Director of Civil Defence in the state. Currently, there are about 5,000 trained Civil Defence volunteers deployed across the state. Regular training programmes are being conducted at the Cen-

tral Training Institute and training centres identified at the district level.

The Chief Minister said that, as per the decision of the state government, a target has been set to train Civil Defence volunteers equivalent to 1 per cent of the total population in the coming days.

"In addition to the state government's target for training Civil Defence volunteers, this year the Government of India is implementing a project to enhance the skills of Civil Defence volunteers. About 3,000 Civil Defence volunteers will be trained by March 31, 2026," he said.

Saha, who is also the Home Minister of the state, said that currently there are about 2,500 trained Apada Mitra volunteers in the state.

"Other volunteers, including the state Home Guard, are also actively involved in disaster management. Civil Defence and Apada Mitra volunteers are now regularly engaged in control room duties, rescue and relief operations during disasters, awareness creation among the general public, skill development, and other relevant administrative activities. The state is currently receiving financial assistance from the Ministry of Home Affairs to enhance the skills of these volunteers. Civil Defence and Apada Mitra volunteers have a significant role in making Tripura a disaster-resilient state," said Saha.

Chief Secretary JK Sinha, Director General of Police Anurag, and other high-ranking officials were present as distinguished guests at the event.

### Quest!

Socrates taught Plato, Plato taught Aristotle, then Aristotle taught Alexander the Great.

## VOLUNTEER REQUIRED

@ NEIR 2026

- We are looking for volunteers across Northeastern India and West Bengal.
- Interested candidates (College students, youths)

CAN REGISTER AT [https://northeastintegrationrally.in/Volunteer\\_Registration.aspx](https://northeastintegrationrally.in/Volunteer_Registration.aspx) or send an email: [neintegrationrally@gmail.com](mailto:neintegrationrally@gmail.com)

[www.northeastintegrationrally.in](http://www.northeastintegrationrally.in)

## PM Modi to initiate debate on Vande Mataram in Lok Sabha on Monday

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will initiate the debate on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram in Lok Sabha on Monday, while Home Minister Amit Shah will begin the discussion in Rajya Sabha on December 9.

Lok Sabha has listed 'Discussion on the 150th anniversary of national song Vande Mataram' on Monday and allocated 10 hours for the debate.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will speak after the prime minister in Lok Sabha, while opposition Congress has decided to field Deputy leader Gaurav Gogoi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in the discussion.

The government was

keen on having a debate on Vande Mataram, composed in Sanskrit by Bankimchandra Chatterjee, that was a source of inspiration during the freedom struggle.

Prime Minister Modi had hit out at the Congress, accusing it of removing key stanzas from the song in 1937 and sowing the seeds of partition.

On November 7, Modi launched year-long celebrations to commemorate the 150th year of Vande Mataram, aimed especially at youth and students to deepen awareness of the song's significance.

On Tuesday, Shah is scheduled to initiate the debate on Vande Mataram in Rajya Sabha and Health Minister JP Nadda will be

the second speaker.

Lok Sabha will take up the debate on election reforms, which will cover all aspects of the contentious subject, including the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Rajya Sabha will take up the debate on election reforms on Wednesday and Thursday.

The proceedings of the first two days of the Winter session that started on December 1 were disrupted due to the opposition's protests on the SIR leading to repeated adjournments.

The Monsoon session of Parliament was a virtual washout over the demand by the opposition for a debate on the SIR, then being held in Bihar.



## Goa nightclub tragedy: Fire erupted on dance floor, says eyewitness



PANAJI

At least 100 persons were on the dance floor of a nightclub in North Goa when a fire broke out there, and in an attempt to escape, some of them ran downstairs to its kitchen where they got trapped along with the staff, according to an eyewitness.

While the state police said the blaze occurred at the nightclub due to a cylinder blast after midnight on Sunday, some of the eyewitnesses claimed the fire started on the club's first floor, where tourists were dancing.

At least 25 persons were killed in

the fire at Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub, a popular party venue at Arpora village, located 25 km from the state capital Panaji, police said.

Most of the dead were the club's kitchen workers, and included three women, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said. There were, three to four tourists, among those killed, he added.

"There was a sudden commotion as the flames started erupting. We rushed out of the club only to see that the entire structure was up in flames," Fatima Shaikh, a tourist from Hyderabad, told at Arpora in the wee hours of Sunday.

The nightclub was jam-packed as it

was the weekend, and at least 100 persons were on the dance floor, she said.

Shaikh said that after the blaze erupted, some of the tourists started running downstairs and, in the melee, went to the kitchen located on the ground floor. "They (tourists) got trapped there along with other staff. Many managed to run out of the club," she added.

In no time, the entire club was engulfed in the fire.

"There was a temporary construction made up of palm leaves which easily caught fire," she said.

The nightclub is situated in the backwaters of the Arpora river and has a

narrow entry and exit. There was no access for the fire brigades to the club because of the narrow lanes and their tankers had to be parked about 400 metres away from the spot.

A senior officer from the Fire and Emergency Services told PTI that the narrow access made it difficult to reach the spot, which in turn made controlling the blaze a challenging task.

He said that the majority of the deaths were caused by suffocation, as the victims remained trapped on the ground floor CM Sawant, who visited the spot after the incident, told reporters that the nightclub had not followed the fire safety norms.

Sawant said he would order an inquiry into the incident, while action would be initiated against the club management and the authorities who allowed the establishment to function.

Arpora-Nagoa panchayat sarpanch Roshan Redkar said the club was run by Saurav Luthra, who had a dispute with his partner.

"There was a dispute between them and they had filed a complaint against each other with the panchayat. We had inspected the premises and found that they did not have the permission to construct the club," he said.

The panchayat had issued a demolition notice, which was stayed by the officials of the Directorate of Panchayats, Redkar said.

The original owner of the premises had sublet the place to Luthra, he said.

"The fire incident that happened was unfortunate. We have been issuing notices to the establishments that are seen violating the norms. Now, we have to be more vigilant," he said.

Calangute MLA Michael Lobo, who also visited the site after the incident, said the local panchayats will conduct a fire safety audit of all the nightclubs to ensure such an incident does not recur.

The Calangute panchayat will issue notices to all the nightclubs on Monday, asking them to provide fire safety permissions, the MLA said.

The licenses of clubs not having the necessary permissions will be cancelled, he added.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Drone strikes on Sudan kindergarten, hospital kill dozens: Local official



PORT SUDAN

A recent paramilitary drone attack on the army-held town of Kalogi in Sudan's South Kordofan state hit a kindergarten and a hospital, killing dozens of civilians including children, a local official told AFP on Sunday.

The attack, which took place on Thursday, involved three strikes, "first a kindergarten, then a hospital and a third time as people tried to rescue the children", Essam al-Din al-Sayed, head of the Kalogi administrative unit, told AFP using a Starlink satellite internet connection.

He blamed the assault on the Rapid Support Forces and their ally, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North faction (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, which controls much of South

Kordofan and parts of Blue Nile state.

Since April 2023, the army and the paramilitary RSF have been locked in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands and displaced nearly 12 million.

Independent verification in Kordofan remains difficult due to spotty communications, restricted access and ongoing insecurity.

The UN children's agency said the attack killed more than 10 children aged between five and seven, while the army-aligned foreign ministry put the overall death toll at 79, including 43 children.

"Killing children in their school is a horrific violation of children's rights," UNICEF Representative for Sudan Sheldon Yett, said in a statement on Friday, urging all sides to stop their attacks and allow humanitarian aid.

Following their late-October capture

of El-Fasher - the army's last stronghold in western Sudan - the RSF has pushed eastward into the oil-rich Kordofan region, divided into three states.

Reports of mass killings, sexual violence, looting and abductions followed El-Fasher's fall.

UN Human Rights commissioner Volker Turk said on Thursday he "feared another wave of atrocities in Sudan amid a surge in fierce fighting" in Kordofan.

"It is truly shocking to see history repeating itself in Kordofan so soon after the horrific events in El Fasher."

Since the RSF captured the North Kordofan city of Bara on October 25, the UN said it had documented at least 269 civilians killed by aerial strikes, artillery shelling or in summary executions.

A drone strike by the army in Kauda

- the SPLM-N faction stronghold in South Kordofan - killed at least 48 people last week, according to the UN.

More than 40,000 people have fled Kordofan in the past month, according to the UN.

Analysts say the RSF offensive aims to break the army's final defensive arc around central Sudan and set the stage for attempts to retake major cities, including the capital Khartoum.

Thursday's attack in Kalogi came as the army and the RSF traded accusations over a series of drone attacks across the country.

On Friday, the RSF accused the army of carrying out a drone strike on the Adre border crossing with Chad, a key humanitarian and commercial route, alleging that the army wanted to block aid.

The military has not commented on that allegation.

Local sources, speaking anonymously to AFP because they were not authorised to brief the media, attributed an explosion at Adre on Friday to transport vehicles catching fire after a petrol canister detonated.

Satellite imagery and fire monitoring data, verified by AFP, showed no visible signs of smoke or fire in Adre on Thursday or Friday.

The army has accused the United Arab Emirates of supplying the RSF through Chad, accusations that UN experts have described as credible. Abu Dhabi has always denied providing support to the RSF.

In North Darfur, the World Food Programme also reported an attack last Thursday on one of its trucks near the town of Hamra El-Sheikh.

The truck, part of a 39-vehicle convoy delivering food to families displaced from El-Fasher to Tawila, about 70 kilometres west, had its cabin destroyed while the driver was seriously injured, the WFP said.

### No breakthrough at 'constructive' Ukraine-US talks



MIAMI

Three days of talks between Ukrainian and US officials produced no apparent breakthrough Saturday, with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy committing to further negotiations toward "real peace," even as Russia launched another series of drone and missile strikes on its neighbor.

Zelenskyy said he joined his negotiators for a "very substantive and constructive" call with US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, as part of the third day of meetings in Florida.

"Ukraine is committed to continuing to work honestly with the American side to bring about real peace," Zelenskyy said on Telegram, adding that the parties agreed "on the next steps and the format of the talks with America."

In Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron said he will meet Zelenskyy, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in London on Monday to

"take stock" of the negotiations on the US-drafted plan on how to end the almost four-year war.

Ahead of Saturday's talks, Russia launched over 700 drones and missiles at Ukraine overnight, targeting critical infrastructure, such as energy sites and railways, and triggering heating and water outages for thousands of households.

"The main targets of these strikes, once again, were energy facilities," Zelenskyy said earlier in the day on social media. "Russia's aim is to inflict suffering on millions of Ukrainians."

As with previous waves of attacks, the Russian defense ministry said they had targeted "Ukrainian military-industrial complex enterprises and the energy facilities that support them," and added that "all designated targets were hit."

The talks come after Witkoff and Kushner met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin on Tuesday, with Moscow rejecting parts of the US proposal.

"Both parties agreed that

real progress toward any agreement depends on Russia's readiness to show serious commitment to long-term peace, including steps toward de-escalation and cessation of killings," said a readout of the Miami talks posted Friday by Witkoff on X.

Also on Friday, US and Ukrainian officials "also agreed on the framework of security arrangements and discussed necessary deterrence capabilities to sustain a lasting peace."

Macron announced he would travel to London on Monday to meet with Zelenskyy together with the German and British leaders, slamming what he called Russia's "escalatory path."

"We will continue these efforts with the Americans to provide Ukraine with security guarantees, without which no robust and lasting peace will be possible," the French president wrote on X.

He added: "We must continue to exert pressure on Russia to compel it to choose peace."

# IN BANGLADESH, EVERYTHING IS UP IN THE AIR



**W**ith the end of the year approaching, Bangladesh is now awash with tales or rumours or speculations about the election projected for February next year.

A bare two months before the voting takes place, if at all it takes place, it is quite natural that the mood of citizens will be focused on politics and particularly throughout December.

The Yunus regime remains fully aware of the need to fulfil its promise to hold an election in order for the country to get back on its democratic rails.

But then comes the crucial question: to what extent will the election be considered as an exercise without any taint attached to it?

In recent weeks, both at home and abroad, pressure has clearly been growing about the requirement of a free, fair, inclusive and therefore credible election.

has no room for the former ruling party just might not be held, that indeed newer possibilities are being explored?

The Awami League apart, the position of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has also been under public scrutiny. In fact, the question about the BNP is simple and yet loaded: has the party shaped any policy on its electoral participation?

The failure so far of the party's acting chairperson to return home from his long exile in Britain has been giving rise to all manner of stories related to his present, with particular reference to his past.

The rumour mills have been working overtime, with talk moving on to the pledges Tareque Rahman may have made before the last military-led caretaker regime (2007-2009) before he left the country.

Could those pledges, if they were at all made, have turned into a straitjacket for him?

The BNP would certainly like to return to power. It has been out of it



That in essence has revived the place of the Awami League in the political sphere. With the recent visits to Delhi and Doha by Yunus' national security advisor and his meetings with Indian, American and Qatari emissaries, the thought cannot be dismissed that Bangladesh's future was at the core of the talks.

In other words, the shadow of the Awami League has begun to loom large over Bangladesh's politics.

Does it then seem that an election that

since October 2006, which is a terribly long time for a political party to be in the woods.

But how prepared is it to take part in the election?

And how confident is it that it can win the vote and re-ascend to power?

Again, the Jamaat-e-Islami, its erstwhile junior partner in its days in government as well as opposition, has clearly moved miles ahead of it in terms of political consolidation.

At the public universities, in the banks and to a large extent in the civil administration the Jamaat is unquestionably in a comfortable position.

The BNP has clearly fallen behind. Besides, the Jamaat has given little hint of whether it wants an election at this point.

Its emphasis on elections being

conducted on the basis of a proportional representation related to seats in parliament may not have attained any traction yet. But it remains part of Jamaat policy.

One goes back to the election question. How will a credible and inclusive election take place in the ongoing febrile atmosphere in the country?

The Awami League, which is yet to reorganise itself effectively before it can reclaim its place in the political centre, would certainly not wish to go for an election organised by the Yunus regime. That position obviously has support among its adherents.

Move on to the next question: if the 35-40 per cent of voters who generally have voted for the Awami League in the past stay away from the February election — if the election is held — the entire electoral exercise will be rendered hollow.

Elections held with such a bulk of voters staying home do not guarantee political stability. If anything, they only worsen conditions.

At a time when Bangladesh's economy is on a steep downward slide, with as many as 353-plus garment factories closing down and their workers suddenly unemployed — unemployment figures overall have kept going up in other sectors — with foreign investment remaining conspicuous by its absence, the country's political future does not quite appear encouraging.

Education is in a mess; the middle and poor classes are barely managing to survive, if keeping the nose above water can be considered survival.

Now, Bangladesh's people, more than sixteen months after the fall of the Awami League government, are in dire

need of an elected political dispensation that will lead the country into the future.

But with the Awami League prevented from or unwilling to accept any election under the present non-elected regime and the BNP wary about the nature of an election that might be held on the watch of the Yunus regime, the imperative is loud and clear.

It is that an election organised by a non-partisan caretaker administration established on a constitutional basis (the recent restoration of the caretaker system by the judiciary is a point of reference) will be the only way for the country to return to an elected parliament and a government chosen by the people through a free exercise of the ballot.

At this point everything is up in the air. Statecraft is being conducted in a vacuum, with parliament dissolved, with the Speaker having resigned.

If and when a new parliament is elected, who will swear the new lawmakers into office? To what degree can the President of the republic exercise his authority? How do the Awami League and the BNP respond to these queries?

Might they, rather improbably, go for an informal alliance on the election issue?

And do not forget that in this month of the commemoration of Bangladesh's battlefield victory over Pakistan in 1971, the history of the country, history that has been under systematic mob assault since August 2024, is being re-asserted across the country and among the Bengali diaspora abroad.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is all up in the air

## SPACE FOR YOU ONLY

Rs. 150/- per day

### PLACEMENT

Fresher, job seekers can register with KRC Placements. Send resume to - 5eforsuccess@gmail.com To source candidates, organisation can contact KRC Placements at info@krccfoundation.org For Details Visit: <https://bit.ly/krccplacements> Apply here: <https://bit.ly/KRCPlacementForm>

### VOLUNTEERS REGISTERS @ NEIR 2026

We are looking for volunteers across NE & West Bengal Interested candidates (College students, youths) can register at [https://northeastintegrationrally.in/Volunteer\\_Registration.aspx](https://northeastintegrationrally.in/Volunteer_Registration.aspx), send an email: [neintegrationrally@gmail.com](mailto:neintegrationrally@gmail.com)

### BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Business establishments, educational institutions, individual service providers etc. can enlist themselves or advertise their products or services at the most reasonable cost in InfoCom Diary. Send your details to InfoCom Solutions at: [infocom.krc@gmail.com](mailto:infocom.krc@gmail.com) Submit Here: <https://bit.ly/InfoComDiaryForm>

### STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP

Students can apply for a three-months internship with KRC Foundation. During the internship the student can get an opportunity to work on a live project. On successful completion the student is awarded a certificate. Apply to 5E for Success: [5eforsuccess@gmail.com](mailto:5eforsuccess@gmail.com) For Details Visit: <https://bit.ly/krccstudentinternship> or [www.krccfoundation.org/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship](http://www.krccfoundation.org/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship)

### NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

Participate in NE India Writing Star Contest and get your writings published. Eligibility: From Class VI onwards. Each participant receives a digital participation certificate. Send articles at: [info@krccfoundation.org](mailto:info@krccfoundation.org) For Details Visit: <https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest> [www.krccfoundation.org/campaigns-csr/ne-india-writing-star-contest](http://www.krccfoundation.org/campaigns-csr/ne-india-writing-star-contest)

### CONNECT@ KRC TIMES



### KRC TIMES

To engage with KRC TIMES, please use the following e-mails and WhatsApp Nos: For News: [krctimes@gmail.com](mailto:krctimes@gmail.com) / WP: 8721838313 For Advertisement: [info@krccfoundation.org](mailto:info@krccfoundation.org) / WP: 9330830083 For Subscription: [krctimes@gmail.com](mailto:krctimes@gmail.com) / WP: 8721838313 Editor: [biswadeep.gupta@gmail.com](mailto:biswadeep.gupta@gmail.com) / WP: 8721838313

KRC FOUNDATION

North East Integration Rally

Peace | Progress | Prosperity

2026

Registrations OPEN

Whatsapp only +91 933 083 0083

[www.northeastintegrationrally.in](http://www.northeastintegrationrally.in)



Do it with passion or not at all.

# Two villages called Jariguri and Pokonia, where Women Weave Dreams on Eri Silk



Colourful, ready-to-wear dresses on display



Artisans show colourful, ready-to-wear dresses



Artisans welcome the Author to the Pokonia village



Hospitality gesture, carefully serve the food



Artisans show colourful, ready-to-wear dresses



Pork cooked with local leaves - a special item



Artisans show colourful, ready-to-wear dresses



Leisurely children, the elder one carries the younger one



Author in leisure heaven on the bamboo-split floor

PROF (DR) SUKAMAL DEB, ADVISOR, NEIR, 2026

The North East Integration Rally, 2026, among others, aims to unfold the untold stories from the isolated landscapes of the North East that bring appreciation for its vivid culture, the warmth and myriad traditions. Today's story is about the two contiguous villages, Jariguri and Pokonia, that I visited. The names themselves are storytellers. Here, Jari means a tree, and Guri means beneath. Thus, Jari Guri together means that a person is trapped in a flood, so he shelters under a tree as he can't move away. Pokonia means encircled or surrounded. Here, Pokonia conveys that the entire habitat is encircled by floodwater, the village is captured by floodwater, and they are isolated from the rest. These are terms coined by the Mising Tribe. These two are adjoining Mising villages in Nowboicha Circle, North Lakhimpur, Assam.

Women of both villages are amazing artisans, spinning and weaving Eri silk on simple country looms, their prime livelihood. Their golden fingers are a metaphorical expression that gives an elegant texture with their traditional motifs and nature's gentle and delicate touch. They have outstanding features in traditional handloom weaving. Their designs can have captivating impressions, inspired by nature, folk arts and the life they live. Mising Community, self-dependent on clothes, contribute immensely to preserving their culture and identity through artistic creativity. There was a time when clothing was a challenge to the tribal communities of this region. Out of dire need, they tried various ways to face

the challenges of their clothing, which perhaps eventually made the tribal textiles so elegant, creative and matchless, using a wider variety of natural raw materials.

The Mising population in Assam is estimated to be around 800,000, while in Arunachal Pradesh, it is approximately 30,000 (Census, 2011). In Assam, they predominantly inhabit various districts, like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. Mising is an endonym which literally means "man on the soil".

Both the villages are a part of a newly created constituency named Ranganaadi and also fall under the Ranganadi Gaon Panchayat. Jariguri and Pokonia villages are located in the Nowboicha block of North Lakhimpur, 30 km from the district headquarters in North Lakhimpur. While Jariguri has 152 households with a population of 760, the other one has 79 households with around 600 people. The Mising Community has inhabited these tribal villages for ages internally without access to a better habitat.

Although the Eri silk textiles they make are elegant, colourful and artistic, they produce them for self-consumption. This is probably because they do not have access to the outside markets. They live in a guild partitioned from the bigger world of ours. While continuing her spinning work on Takli, a simple tool that supports the spindle for making yarn by twisting, Sewali Pegu (50) said that they sometimes sell Eri yarn that costs Rs 5000 to 8000 per kg these days. The villagers are doing Eri cocoon rearing; in local terms, they

say Polu rearing. Their talents could have been harnessed, providing them with much-needed support and introducing them to an outside market.

There are only two LP schools, although they have government employees from these villages who work as police, defence staff, or school teachers. Jyoti Pegu, who appeared in the class XII examination, Karisma Doley, who passed the class XII and Dipika Pegu, who appeared in the class XII examination, all housewives narrated their intimacies with the Polu rearing and weaving of Eri silk textiles as a means of their livelihood.

They narrated the stories of design thinking they portraying on Gero, the women's special dresses they wear during festivals. Gero is an exquisite pure handloom shawl cum stole skillfully made by them, crafted from the finest Eri silk-cotton blend and adorned with a traditional design that seamlessly combines comfort and style. Ali Aye Ligang is the main festival of the ethnic Mising Community; they perform traditional rituals and dances. This is celebrated on the first Wednesday of Phagur month, which falls in mid-February.

Ali Aye Ligang is a festival of the Mising tribe, Assam's second-largest tribe. This festival is a remembrance of their rich crafts and cultures. The artisans of these villages don't work on cotton yarn; they say that work on cotton fabric fades faster, unlike the Eri. They also work with wool. Women Development Centre (WDC), an NGO, has guided and supported these artisans.

To keep us away from the full sun, the scorching heat of the sun in

August, penetrating our skin, the villagers arranged our sitting for interactions at Pokonia village under the deep bush of tall Jati Bamboo (a species of bamboo called Jati baa in Assamese and Bamboosa Tolda botanical name) on the sandy village link road. We all sat there and interacted on issues that connected their life, crafts, and the rich traditions they fostered for generations, silently, away from so-called fast-developing India, with visible poverty here and there.

With great esteem and admiration, we saw the Eri textiles they had woven and made, displayed at the place where we had our conversations, spread carefully on the village street. We savoured their tribal food again at Prabin Morang and Ganaka Rani's elevated bamboo house.

The women served us delicious country chicken, pork with Sai Mod or PorroApung (traditional wine) and red rice (that sometimes my mother used to cook decades back in my village; I felt nostalgic).

The food was served on "Kahor Kahi", a special bell metal or bronze plate occasionally used for esteemed guests. To our utter surprise, later we came to know that the owners were not at home when we were relishing food in their kitchen, they went to attend a meeting in town and being this house is a better place to welcome guests, the neighbours were entrusted to take care of us in their absence here, I could see in it, again, the admirable community cohesion of tribal communities.

The warmth and love that surrounded us in a short spell of time is unforgettable, the best part of my visit.

