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**PERSPECTIVE**

As a man, 97% of your attention should be about money, fitness, and purpose. Everything else? distraction.

## Meghalaya CM lauds Assam's concert push

SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma on Tuesday welcomed Assam's efforts to position Guwahati as a global music destination, calling it a "healthy and positive competitiveness" that can benefit the entire Northeast. Responding to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's recent announcement about Guwahati emerging as a top destination for international concerts, Sangma said such initiatives align with the region's broader cultural aspirations.

"Healthy competition is important. Meghalaya and Shillong have their own niche and uniqueness, which is different from Guwahati. Each city brings something special to the table," Sangma told The Assam Tribune.

He added that building on these unique strengths offers strategic advantages, urging all Northeast states to collaborate in promoting the region's concert economy. "We have always said the Northeast is a natural music destination. We welcome Assam's move and hope all states work together to develop the music and concert ecosystem," Sangma said.

Sangma's remarks follow Sarma's announcement on December 8, after the Post Malone concert in Guwahati—the first under Assam's newly launched concert economy initiative. Sarma highlighted that the event attracted audiences from the US and UK, with hotels fully booked, boosting the local economy despite no financial backing from the state government for the concert. "There was a time when fans flocked to Shillong for rock shows. Today, Guwahati takes centre stage, marking a new beginning for our cultural journey," Sarma posted on social media, framing the concert as a milestone for Assam's rise as a cultural hub.

**WHO SAID WHAT**



When it comes to AI, the world is optimistic about India! Had a very productive discussion with Mr. Satya Nadella. Happy to see India being the place where Microsoft will make its largest-ever investment in Asia. The youth of India will harness this opportunity to innovate and leverage the power of AI for a better planet.

~ Narendra Modi, PM India

# Manipur gears up for President Droupadi Murmu's two-day visit

## MANIPUR POLICE ARREST TWO INSURGENTS AHEAD OF PRESIDENT DROUPADI MURMU'S VISIT

IMPHAL

Manipur has begun extensive preparations for President Droupadi Murmu's expected two-day visit starting December 11.

Officials said on Tuesday that workers are repainting the median along the 7-km stretch from Imphal airport to the Nupi Lal Memorial Complex and decorating it with colourful flags.

A 20-foot welcome banner for the President has already been installed near Kelsampat Junction on the airport route.

"We have not received the official itinerary yet, but instructions have come to put security measures in place for a VVIP visit," an official confirmed.

Meanwhile, a coalition of militant groups has announced a "total shutdown" to protest Murmu's visit.

According to another official,



the President is likely to attend a programme in Imphal on December 11 and pay homage to women freedom fighters at the Nupi Lal Memorial Complex on December

12. Nupi Lal marks two historic women's uprisings — in 1904 and 1939 — against British colonial actions and is observed every year on December 12.

The President is also expected to travel to the Senapati district, a Naga-majority region, for another event on December 12, the official added. Commandos of Lamphel Police Station arrested an active extortionist of the Kangleipak Communist Party, People's War Group (KCP-PWG), from the Langol Laimanai area under Lamphel PS in Imphal West district on Tuesday.

Ahead of President Droupadi Murmu's proposed visit to the border state, Manipur police commandos arrested two underground cadres during separate operations in sensitive locations, officials said on Wednesday.

Commandos of Lamphel Police Station arrested an active extortionist of the Kangleipak Communist Party, People's War Group (KCP-PWG), from the Langol Laimanai area under Lamphel PS in Imphal West dis-

trict on Tuesday.

The arrested cadre, Akham Romesh Singh, also known as Thoisanana (30), hails from Toupokpi Mayai Leikai in Bishnupur district. Police recovered a mobile phone and an Aadhaar card from his possession.

In a second operation, security forces apprehended a cadre of the banned Kanglei Yaol Kanna Lup (KYKL), identified as Ahanthem Punikanta Singh, also known as Deepak (43), a resident of Phumlou Maning Leikai in Imphal West. He was nabbed near Sunrise Ground in Moreh under Moreh PS in Tengenoual district.

President Droupadi Murmu is likely to begin her two-day visit to Manipur on December 11, with authorities tightening security despite a "total shutdown" call issued by several militant outfits opposing the tour.

## Assam Movement will always have a prime place in our history": PM Modi



NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday marked Swahid Diwas by paying tribute to those who took part in the Assam Movement, stressing that their contribution holds a defining place in India's history and reaffirming the Centre's commitment to advancing Assam's cultural and developmental aspirations.

In a post on X, PM Modi wrote, "Today, on Swahid Diwas, we recall the valour of all those who were a part of the Assam Movement. The Movement will always have a prime place in our history. We reiterate our commitment to fulfilling the dreams of those who participated in the Assam Movement, notably the strengthening of Assam's culture and the all-around progress of the state."

Earlier, in a post on X, Minister Sarbananda Sonowal described the Assam Movement as a "monumental struggle" aimed at protecting the State's language, culture, demographic identity, and its very existence.

"The historic Assam Movement was

a monumental struggle to protect the language, culture, identity, and existence of Assam.

It was a movement that inspired the greater Assamese society to unite strongly in the national interest. The spirit of that movement lives on in the hearts of every Assamese as an unwavering pledge to safeguard our identity. During this agitation, while protecting the motherland and upholding national interests, 860 brave sons of Assam attained martyrdom, while countless others faced persecution and permanent disability," the minister posted.

"On this sacred occasion of Swahid Diwas, I offer my deepest reverence and humble tributes to them. The Assam Movement will forever remain the embodiment of national consciousness, sacrifice and courage.

It will continue to inspire every Assamese to stand united and contribute towards the welfare of our nation," he added.

The Swahid Diwas is celebrated every year on December 10 to pay tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the Assam movement. The civil disobedience movement was launched by the Assam Students Union (ASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AASGP) in 1979 against the infiltrators who entered Assam from Bangladesh.

The movement ended in 1985 after the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed the historic Assam accord that assured the detection of the illegal foreigners and promised to ensure Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social and linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.

## Surrendered ULFA(I) Cadre Says Paresh Baruah Hiding in China

GUWAHATI

Recently surrendered United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) member Arunodoi Dohotia has claimed that ULFA-I commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah has been stationed in China for nearly a decade and has not visited the organisation's Myanmar bases during this period. Dohotia, also known as Arunodoi Asom, laid down arms recently, offering fresh insight into the outfit's rapidly deteriorating presence across the Myanmar border.

Senior Assam Police officials told The Assam Tribune that Dohotia's surrender has helped security forces assess the current state of ULFA-I's operations in Myanmar. According to his account, the camps-once the outfit's principal bases of training and shelter—are now struggling with dwindling morale, leadership disconnect, and relentless pressure from targeted drone strikes.

Officials said the drone attacks have triggered anxiety even among Naga rebel factions, who have traditionally sheltered ULFA(I) cadres. The increasing risk of cross-border surveillance and strikes has made these groups reluctant to maintain close links, fearing "unwanted complications".

Why Dohotia walked away, Police sources said Dohotia's decision to surrender stemmed from both operational fatigue and disillusionment. The once-structured militant network, he revealed, now faces a crisis of discipline and ide-



logical vacuum. Among the key reasons he cited:

"Drone strikes have eroded morale, making militant movement risky and unpredictable."

"Young recruits lack ideological grounding, with no political or orientation classes being conducted in recent years."

"Cadres see no future in prolonged conflict, prompting growing interest in surrender among those still stationed in Myanmar."

Dohotia also claimed that communication gaps and mistrust have widened within the organisation. He said Baruah has been operating remotely, rarely interacting with ground commanders. The rift deepened further after the Kakopthar Army camp attack—allegedly executed under Baruah's direc-

tion without consulting Dohotia. Family left behind, cadres willing but unable to return.

Police sources added that Dohotia's wife and two children remain in Myanmar. He reportedly fled with only one bodyguard, leaving his family behind due to the risks involved in escaping across the border.

According to Dohotia, a significant number of ULFA(I) cadres are eager to surrender but remain trapped inside Myanmar due to heavy monitoring, logistical challenges, and fear of reprisal. The camps are currently under the control of senior leader Michael Deka Phukan. As the ULFA-I leadership remains scattered and its Myanmar bases come under sustained pressure, security officials believe more defections may follow—potentially signalling one of the outfit's most fragile phases in years.

# Assam University physicist contributes to landmark study on Mizo astronomy

OUR CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR: The Mizoram Science Centre hosted the release of History of Astronomy of the Mizo People, a volume that researchers described as a rare and important effort to document the region's indigenous sky-watching traditions on December 8. The book grew out of an astronomy workshop held in May 2023 and brings together contributions from scholars who have studied how Mizo communities interpreted stars, seasons, and celestial events.

Prof Himadri Sekhar Das of the Physics Department at Assam University, Silchar, is among the contributors. He was one of the invited speakers at the 2023 workshop and later joined the team of writers who developed the manuscript. His chapter adds scientific context to traditional Mizo observations and highlights their relevance in understanding how different cultures have engaged with the night sky.

Edited by Dr Lalrinkimi, Dr Lalthakimi Zadeng, and Dr Martin George, the book is one of the first



focused academic compilations on Mizo astronomy. It brings together star lore, traditional timekeeping, and cosmological beliefs preserved through oral narratives.

Senior government official Pu Vanlaldina Fanai attended the release programme, along with academics, researchers, and cultural practitioners. Speakers stressed that

indigenous knowledge systems often fade without proper documentation and that this volume helps safeguard a body of wisdom that has shaped community life for generations.

**Welcome Limhathung Lotha**

Member Organising Committee, NEIR 2026

www.northeastintegrationrally.in



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## Perils of an unchecked narrative

According to some scholars, the worst tragedy in human history was an outcome of a misleading media narrative. Responding to the Allied Forces' terms of surrender in July 1945, Japan's prime minister used the word 'mokusatsu' to mean 'silence'. Western media mischievously interpreted it to mean 'ignore'. Enraged, the US president decided to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki to devastation. It triggered a nuclear arms race that the world is still suffering from.

Misleading narratives in quest for sensational headlines can wreak havoc. The 2025 Bihar election outcome is a case in point. Nearly every political leader and policymaker in the country believes that the cash scheme of ₹10,000 to a woman in every family, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi just two months before the election, was the game-changer. As a result, this will further intensify the race among parties in other states to distribute 'cash for women' in the belief that it is the magic bullet. This competitive populism can send the entire nation spiralling down a path to eventual fiscal catastrophe, political emptiness, and social disorder. Worse, this is a false narrative much like the 'mokusatsu' misinterpretation. Contrary to the Election Commission's boast that women's turnout percentage in the 2025 election was the highest in 75 years, it was nothing extraordinary in number. About 1.4 crore women voted in the 2010 Bihar election, 1.9 crore in 2015, 2.1 crore in 2020 (Covid year), and 2.5 crore in 2025. If a student scores 75/100 (75 percent) one year and 77/90 (86 percent) the next, her score has only increased marginally; but her percentage increase looks much higher because the denominator is lower. This is exactly what happened with the EC's women turnout percentage. Due to the cleaning up of voter lists through the special intensive revision, the denominator of total women electors was smaller than it would have been otherwise and inflating the turnout percentage.

Yes, for the first time, slightly more women than men voted, but that is as much a result of fewer-than-expected men voting due to male migration out of Bihar than any sudden increase in women voters. The women's turnout in this election was merely a continuation of previous trends and was neither extraordinary nor sudden.

It is not even the case that women voters, lured by the cash scheme, shifted their support en masse from the opposition Mahagathbandhan alliance to the ruling NDA. The percentage of women who voted for the opposition MGB in both the 2020 and 2025 election was the same at 37 percent. The NDA vote share increased by nearly 10 percentage points in 2025, driven by Chirag Paswan's LJP party joining the alliance, and not by a shift of women's votes. The increase in NDA vote share came equally from both men and women. This is clearly seen in districts such as Begusarai and Khagaria, where the NDA vote share increased by 18 percentage points; but the share of women voters remained the same as in 2020. So, neither was there a sudden sharp increase in women voters, nor was there a huge shift of them from the MGB to the NDA.

The cash scheme for women in Bihar cost ₹12,000 crore, which is the same as the annual health budget for the whole state for 2023-24. To put it simply, the amount of money needed to provide medical facilities for the entire population of Bihar for one year was given away as free cash in two months.

Bihar was the 12th state to indulge in such election throwaways in the last two years. It began with Karnataka in 2023, when the Congress party announced ₹2,000 a month for women just before the election and won. Election consultants and the media painted a narrative of this scheme being the clincher, when in reality the Congress would have won even without this scheme due to a heavy anti-incumbency trend.

But that false narrative set off a series of such pre-election announcements in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Rajasthan, Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Delhi, and now Bihar. Six of these states do not even have enough money to pay salaries for government staff. Many have cut their development expenditure on hospitals, schools, roads, water, and roads to fund their cash schemes.

This misguided race has burnt a ₹2-lakh-crore hole in state finances annually, about the amount the Union government spends on rural jobs, drinking water, and rural roads combined for the country. The total debt of these states has doubled in three years. When states cut back on development and borrow heavily, it is the same poor woman who received the cash that is impacted the most.

Further, merely throwing cash before elections hollows out the essence of democratic politics. Such blind faith in a 'cash for women' magic wand to win elections breaks the connection between governance and elections, and renders leaders lazy and redundant. Why have an entire political party apparatus if all one needs to win is to throw money a few months before elections and have paid 'jeevika didis' go door-to-door to campaign?

Such cash transfer schemes also hollow out the very essence of governance. After all, without adequate health infrastructure, well-paved roads, or high-quality public education, people cannot just wave a bunch of currency notes to improve their lives. Distributing free cash by reducing other development expenditure and letting people fend for themselves can turn societies chaotic.

Misleading narratives of electoral outcomes, while seemingly innocuous, can be extremely dangerous. In the interest of the nation, it is time all political parties learned from the 'mokusatsu' mistake and stopped this race to the bottom.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"It may seem difficult at first, but everything is difficult at first." - Miyamoto Musashi

# Human Rights violation of Hindus continue



RONIK SHARMA

Every year, the whole world observes International Human Rights Day to commemorate the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This day not only celebrates everyone's fundamental freedoms but also rights around the globe and this year's theme is "Our Everyday Essentials". Factually, every year on December 10th, we are reminded of the importance of equality and fundamental freedoms for all people, which are crucial subjects for each person's consciousness and development. Due to this the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December, 1948, and this day is widely recognised as "International Human Rights Day". Everyone knows that the celebration of the International Human Rights Day on 10th December every year has its own significance, with events conversions, seminars and initiatives happening all across the world by the various forums working on the human rights of an individual. Primarily, the 1948 Declaration also defends and includes Human Rights of an individual, Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for everyone without any discrimination and interference. It also emphasises on Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities. It also empowers Humanity and protects Human Rights so that no one is left behind and no one faces any discrimination. It also encourages to Stand Up for Human Rights, Freedom and dignity without any discrimination. Logically, as per many reports, including media and social media concerning human rights violations of the Hindu community in different countries where they are in minorities and the number of times highlighting persecution of Hindus in the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia etc. As the whole world including the organizations working effectively on human rights violations observes this occasion every year, the hope and promise of the Universal Declaration of International Human Rights still remains unfulfilled for Hindu minority community people

living in the countries where they are in the minority, who are deprived of their basic dignity, freedom of conscience, societal prejudices and fundamental rights. The Declaration outlines many of the fundamental civil, social, political, cultural, and religious rights that form the basis of contemporary international human rights law. Hindus have been subjected to various human rights breaches throughout the majority of South Asian countries, particularly in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and some other countries. In several Nations, the Hindu population is persecuted in addition to its quick decline. Thousands of Hindus disappeared, yet this has gone unnoticed by the world for working for the human rights. They have failed to take strict actions against the persecution of Hindus. Apart from this, in many South Asian countries, Hindus face economic and social marginalization, physical attacks, forced conversions, rape, discrimination, attacks on places of worship, restrictions on their freedom of religion, human rights violations and discriminatory laws. Islamic fundamentalists continue to carry out ethnic cleansing targeting Hindu minority population in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and some other countries. This includes everyday acts of forced conversions, murder, rape, kidnapping, demolition of Hindu community sacred places and physical intimidation. According to various reported incidents that have been documented, Hindus who live outside of Bharat face discrimination, murder, sexual violence, forced conversions, ethnic cleansing, temple destruction, socio-political exclusion, and disenfranchisement.

In certain nations where Hindus are in minorities, the fundamentalists, with the active connivance of politicians as well as the government establishment, foster hate against these Hindu minority community people and ethnic cleansing of Hindus is their exclusive agenda. Human rights organisation's operations are called into question because Hindus who live in the minority groups

around the world frequently experience daily human rights violations at the hands of state establishments and civil society actors, frequently with no support from local establishments or the global community, and because laws protecting minorities are merely in written form only, and practically the ground situation is totally different. The minority Hindu groups not only face persecution but also experience a variety of forms of physical violence in various parts of the world where they are a minority, including kidnappings, forced disappearances, child trafficking, sexual abuse, looting of shops, vandalism, desecration of holy and religious places, etc. In order to further deny the Hindu community of their basic rights, non-state actors use physical violence in conjunction with state-sponsored violence and legal discrimination by governments and official institutions. Systematic violence and prejudice can take many forms, such as powerless, migration or being barred from public office. The international community frequently downplays or ignores these human rights abuses, which not only harms Hindu's religious freedom but also human rights in general.

To mitigate violence against the Hindu community in countries where they live in a minority, the present governments and their establishments must prioritize the protection of minorities by enhancing police and military presence at Hindu sites, promote religious freedom of minority community, conducting prompt investigations of assaults, and prosecuting the perpetrators of such violence. International organizations as well as the United Nations exert pressure on countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and other countries to implement more stringent sanctions against those who perpetrate violence and also hold them accountable for the violence against the innocent Hindu minority community. To ensure accountability and prevent regular mob violence against the innocent Hindu minority community, human rights organizations must guarantee the establishment of independent commissions to monitor minority rights and their violations. Strict laws that forbid forced conversions, underage marriages, and the misuse of blasphemy must be passed in addition to removing discriminatory provisions that support extremism. In order to conduct comprehensive investigations into occurrences the state should ensure the safety and protection of the minorities and should also establish a Minority Rights Commission and bolster the National Human Rights Commission. International organizations like the United Nations and Amnesty International call for interfaith discussions to foster tolerance, public denunciations of violence, and support for Hindus temple restoration targeted and vandalised by the perpetrators of the violence. International human rights organizations must highlight systematic shortcomings in international studies, so that affected groups may apply for refuge or relocate to safer areas. Bharat has been the home of Hindus for all of recorded history, and Hindus who are dispersed around the world are descended from Bharat. No matter where they are in the globe, Hindus

still regard Bharat as their motherland. Therefore, it is the grave responsibility of the government of India, regardless of who is in charge, to keep speaking up on behalf of the persecuted Hindus who are dispersed throughout the world. Hindus are the most peaceful, law-abiding people who genuinely adhere to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Additionally, Hindus honor and revere all of the divine incarnations and also give respect to every religion. Hindu human rights must be taken into consideration by the UN and other organisation, and they must be shielded from persecution. The Indian government must assume the duty of defending Hindu human rights wherever they are violated worldwide and providing assistance to Hindus in need in order to safeguard and maintain Hindu's cultural legacy and human rights.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**From a proud father: On Friday, 5th December, my son Nandil completed the Ironman 70.3 in Bahrain — a gruelling 1.9 km swim, 90 km cycle and 21.1 km run, all in one continuous push. He finished in 6 hours 48 minutes, after just 3–4 months of preparation. He now sets his sights on a full Ironman — 3.8 km swim, 180 km cycle and 42.2 km run — which he hopes to conquer before graduating from National Law University, Bengaluru next May. Wishing him strength, joy, and the courage to keep pushing his limits ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM Assam**



## GROWTH WITH HUMAN FACE

### PROF M K BHAT

As the robust economic growth of 8.2% in Q2, higher than six consecutive quarters, was published, a flood of misinformation was unleashed by Modi baiters. The problem with the gang is that they can't appreciate anything good taking place in the country and above all how a ChaiWala dare to put economy on right track without their intellectual prowess. The height of things was that in one podcast an economist put economy at stage where it was before one decade, termed growth as jobless and revived the 70-year old ghost of Vakil Brahmanand v/s Mahalanobis model to address the growing income inequality in the country. The social media is veering around the strategy of top-down v/s bottom-up approach towards economic growth of the country. It is worth pointing out here that top-down approach was adopted by Pt. Nehru by applying Mahalanobis model in 2nd five-year plan and it resulted in unequal distribution of income in the country. The top-down approach stressed on heavy industrialisation and capital goods while as bottom up prioritised on production of essential consumer goods particularly through agriculture sector.

Economic theories are subject to the approval of Political decision of the rulers in the country. The top-down approach was adopted with an intention that prosperity will trickle down and encompass the whole nation within its ambit. This approach also gave politicians enough scope to showcase their achievements to public and win elections. The trickle

down did not take place as desired so patches of prosperity came into existence with masses remaining far behind in the race. The subsequent governments with left or right ideology simply followed the approach with minor adaptations here and there and the result is the creation of India and Bharat within the same geographical area.

The former is quite ready to catch with the prosperous nations of the world and the latter is still struggling for its survival. Contrary to this whether the bottom-up approach with agriculture as the pivot could have attained the high growth rate or not is debatable but harmonious development would have been there, a few enjoying and the majority falling behind perhaps would not have taken place. However, it may be said to credit of the Modi regime that it has lessened the income disparity gap through its various social service schemes. Things are visible and get reflected by the electoral victory of NDA election after election.

The debate has got more heat ever since PM Modi gave target of Viksit Bharat by 2047. Sceptics crib growth as jobless, favouring a few industrialists and project income inequality to promote their narrative. The fact is that India at present is the fastest growing economy in the world. It is already fourth largest economy and may soon attain its third position before 2028 provided growth rate continues to remain at a higher level. The fallacy of economic growth due to a few industrialists is busted by the increase in per capita income and as per IMF world econom-

ic outlook (April 2025) GDP nominal per capita of India for 2025 is projected at \$2878 at current prices while as in 2014 it stood at approximately \$1631. The per capita income of the country in nominal terms doubled since 2014-15, when Narendra Modi came to power and at constant prices the per capita income increased by 35 percent from 2014-15 to 2022-23. This proves that economy has performed better under the leadership of ChaiWallah than the economist prime minister. However sordid story of our growth trajectory becomes evident when we compare the life style of India with the developed countries. However, we shall not ignore that the high growth rate provides us a chance to invest on social development and thereby helps us to attain better life for ourselves.

Extreme poverty (share of population living on less than \$2.15 per day) dropped to 2.3% in 2022-23 from 16.2% in 2011-12, as per world Bank, further 171 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty in the last decade. This is a remarkable achievement in one decade for a country of India's size, diversity and talks of economic progress being shared more evenly across population. Here the present government deserves kudos for its consistent policy focus on reducing poverty, expanding financial access and delivering welfare support to those who need it the most. This was possible because of certain key initiatives taken by Modi government, namely:

PM Jan Dhan Yojana: financial inclusion has not only reduced corruption but it has come up as a major push for social equity of the country. There

were 55.69 crore people with Jan Dhan accounts on June 25, 2025. It gave them direct access to government benefits and formal banking services, thereby reduced the scope of money lender and middle man in government benefits. Secondly, 142 crore Aadhar cards have been issued in the country till July 3, 2025. These cards ensured the benefits reach to the right person. Thirdly, the Ayushman Bharat scheme provides health coverage up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year. Upto July 3, 2025 41.34 crore Ayushman cards were issued empanelling 32000 hospitals in the country. Besides, this the government launched Ayushman Vay Vandana scheme to extend this coverage to all citizens aged 70 and above, irrespective of their income. Fourthly Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. Food security has contributed a lot as social security to the vulnerable sections of society. The scheme offered free food to 80.67 crore people in Dec. 2024. Fifthly, there are certain schemes for developing entrepreneur qualities in weaker sections of society mention can be made of, Stand up India; under this scheme loans between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore are provided to SC/ST and women entrepreneurs for setting greenfield enterprises. As of July 3, 2025 more than 2.75 lakh applications have been sanctioned with total funding of RS 62 807.46 crore. PM Vishwakarma Yojana provides collateral free loans, tool kits, digital training and marketing support to traditional artisans and crafts men and as of July 3, 2025, 29.95 lakh individuals had registered under this scheme.

# NEC releases Rs. 56 crore for Northeast; key projects completed in Nagaland, Mizoram

GUWAHATI

The North Eastern Council (NEC) disbursed over ₹56.22 crore in November to accelerate development activities, cultural preservation, livelihood support, and research across all eight Northeastern states, according to the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and the NEC Secretariat in Shillong.

Nagaland and Mizoram emerged among the key beneficiaries, with the completion of major infrastructure and community-linked projects last month.

Nagaland receives ₹4.78 crore; two major projects completed. Of the total funds released, ₹4.78 crore was allocated to Nagaland for schemes aimed at strengthening cultural heritage institutions, youth and sports facilities, and initiatives that promote indigenous



traditions, tourism, and entrepreneurship.

Two significant projects reached completion in November:

“Rain Water Reservoir for Fire Safety & Skill Training Centre

Sanctioned in March 2023 at a cost of ₹3.81 crore, the project is designed to improve fire safety and disaster response capacity, particularly along inter-state borders. Rainwater harvesting structures have been set up at Dimapur (Assam border) and Khuzama (Manipur border), alongside a Skill Training Centre facility at Chiechama.

“Bamboo-Based Craft Concentration Centre at Sovima, Chümoukedima

Built at a cost of ₹4.48 crore, the centre aims to boost bamboo craft production, vocational training, and traditional live-

hood chains in the region.

Mizoram granted ₹9.44 crore for cultural, environmental and agri-value expansion

Mizoram secured ₹9.44 crore for cultural conservation, afforestation, agriculture development, and sports infrastructure upgrades.

A major portion of the funds will support:

“Construction of the Zomi Cultural Centre and preservation of Zomi historical sites in Champhai

“Afforestation projects in degraded hill slopes of Champhai to restore ecological balance and enhance climate resilience

“Value-addition initiatives for areca nut plantations in Kolasib and Mamit, focusing on productivity, processing, and market access

“Construction of an auditorium at Bethel Veng, Champhai

“Upgradation of Ngopa playground sports infrastructure in Saitual district

Focus remains on sustainable, balanced regional growth. The NEC said it continues to prioritise infrastructure, agriculture, skill development, education, innovation, and livelihood enhancement across the region. It added that active coordination with state governments is underway to ensure timely execution of community assets and long-term development programmes.

The council emphasised that cultural preservation, ecological restoration, agricultural value-chain strengthening, and youth and sports development will remain central to its Northeast outreach in the coming months. the occasion.

## Assam Rifles busts illicit cigarette racket in Cachar; two apprehended

SILCHAR

Acting on specific intelligence, a team of Assam Rifles in coordination with Cachar Police carried out an operation in the general area of Tarapur, Silchar, recovering 3,060 packets of illegal cigarettes with an approximate market value of Rs 1.83 crore, according to a release.

Two individuals, Hanannan Husain Burnhuiya, a resident of Islamabad, Cachar, and Islamuddin Laskar, a resident of Bagha, Cachar, were apprehended in connection with the seizure. In this connection, a vehicle was also seized.

All recovered items and apprehended persons were handed over to the Cachar Police for further legal action on Monday.

The official press release said the operation reaffirmed the Assam Rifles' 'unwavering commitment' to curbing smuggling and safeguarding the region from illegal trade.

Meanwhile, Assam Rifles, in a joint operation with Police and CRPF, seized 50,000 Yaba tablets worth Rs 12.5 crores from a vehicle in Jiribam, Manipur and apprehended two individuals on Saturday.

Acting on specific intelligence on drug trafficking, Assam Rifles in Jiribam launched a joint operation with the Police and CRPF on December 6.

“The team successfully intercepted a narcotics consignment, leading to the recovery of 50,000 WY/R tablets worth about Rs 12.5 crore, which was being transported in a vehicle. Two individuals in possession of mobile handsets were also apprehended, who were later handed over to Jiribam Police,” the release stated.

The operation underscored the Assam Rifles' commitment to combating NDPS activities and safeguarding the region from the narco menace, the force said.

## Tripura artisan Ranjit Das bags President's Award for bamboo craftsmanship



KRC TIMES NEWS

**TRIPURA:** Tripura's bamboo craft tradition received a major boost on Tuesday after East Nalchar artisan Ranjit Das was honoured with the President's Award at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi. President Droupadi Murmu presented the award as part of the National Handicrafts Awards for 2023 and 2024, which celebrate master artisans who keep India's traditional crafts alive.

Twelve artisans were named

Shilp Gurus this year and thirty six received National Awards. Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh and senior officials attended the ceremony, underscoring the importance of the handicraft sector in preserving cultural knowledge and supporting livelihoods.

Das learned the craft from his father and has spent years refining his bamboo basket work. He and his family continue to produce bamboo items, and he trains young artisans to ensure the skills are passed on. His wife, Phul Kumari, said the award recognises his long commitment to the craft.

The achievement has been warmly welcomed in Tripura, a state known for its bamboo-based artistry. Community members and officials said the recognition will inspire more young people to view the craft as a viable profession and help protect the region's artistic heritage.

## Meghalaya boosts education spending as Conrad Sangma outlines reforms at Nartiang school event



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

**MEGHALAYA:** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said on Tuesday that the state is beginning to see clear results from the steady rise in education spending. The budget for the department has gone up from two thousand crore rupees to three thousand five hundred crore in recent years, the

highest allocation the sector has received.

Speaking at Nartiang Presbyterian Higher Secondary School, he said the investment is driving the changes the government set out to achieve when it made education a priority in 2018. He reminded the audience that schooling is not only about academic achievement but also about shap-

ing young people with discipline, faith, respect, hard work, and a sense of purpose.

Sangma pointed to Meghalaya's unusually high number of schools. The state has about fourteen thousand institutions compared with Tripura's four thousand and Manipur's five thousand. It also employs fifty five thousand teachers, far more than its neighbours. The chief minister acknowledged the problems that come with this density. Two hundred and six schools have full teaching staff but no students, while nearly two thousand have five to seven teachers for only one to five students. He called rationalisation a sensitive but necessary issue.

He said the government is close to finalising a structured salary system for ad hoc and SSA teachers that will introduce job

security, yearly increments, and retirement benefits. A decision is expected before Christmas.

Sangma added that officials are reviewing the growing demand for science streams in higher secondary schools so students are not held back by limited options. He announced twenty lakh rupees from the Chief Minister's Special Development Fund for the development of the Nartiang school building and said the state is working with the Centre to set up girls' hostels to widen access to education. Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar joined the event to mark the school's fiftieth year. He praised the community, teachers, and management for their role in the school's growth. The Golden Jubilee programme featured a souvenir release, the school anthem, and a fusion dance performance by students.

## Himanta Biswa Sarma says over 850 youths killed by Congress-era forces during Assam Agitation



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday alleged that more than 850 young people were killed during the Assam Agitation due to the “brutality of the then Congress government”. He said the victims' only demand was a secure Assam and an end to illegal infiltration.

Sarma, recalling what he termed as one of the darkest periods in the state's history, claimed that 860 youths and citizens lost their lives during the 1979-1985 unrest.

“All we know is that the Congress ruled at that time, and during that period, 860 youngsters were killed merely for demanding a safe Assam, merely for protesting against illegal infiltration, merely for asking for our rights to live,” Sarma said.

As a tribute to those who died, the state government has built a Shahid Smarak Shetra (martyrs' memorial complex), which will feature musical fountains, a library, and a martyrs' gallery. The chief minister informed that the memorial will be dedicated to the people of Assam and the nation on Martyrs' Day, December 10.

The Assam Agitation was a mass movement against illegal immigration from Bangladesh, led largely by student organisations. The six-year movement saw prolonged protests, confrontations with the state, and violent crackdowns, resulting in hundreds of deaths across the state.

Sarma said the memorial stands as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the youth during the movement and the continued need to safeguard Assam's identity and demographic integrity.

## Manipur University hosts international conference to spotlight Northeast's innovation landscape



IMPHAL

The Manipur Institute of Technology (MIT) under Manipur University on December 9 inaugurated the Northeast India International Conference on Innovation in Science and Tech-

nology, a three-day academic event designed to showcase cutting-edge research and strengthen the region's innovation ecosystem. The conference, sponsored by the North Eastern Council (NEC), Shillong, will run from December 9 to 11 at the Court Hall of the Vice-Chancellor's Secretariat.

The inaugural session was presided over by MIT Principal Prof. Th. Suresh Singh, with Manipur University Vice-Chancellor Prof. N. Lokendra Singh attending as Chief Guest. Guests of Honour included Prof. N. Basanta Singh, Dean of the School of Engineering; Prof. N.C. Shivaprakash (Retd.) of IISc Bengaluru; and former Dean Prof. R.K. Hemokumar Singh.

Addressing participants, Vice-Chancellor Lokendra Singh highlighted the Northeast's emergence as a growing technological hub and emphasised research-driven collaboration between industry and academia. He underscored the role of interdisciplinary pursuit and innovation-led development in shaping the region's economic future.

Delivering the keynote address, Prof. N.C. Shivaprakash called for deeper institutional cooperation to accelerate scientific breakthroughs. He described Artificial Intelligence as an inherently multidisciplinary domain-crossing psychology, linguistics, computer science, and engineering and outlined its expanding

influence across automobiles, aerospace, healthcare, biotechnology, nanotechnology, renewable energy and connectivity challenges in rural and urban spaces.

Dean Prof. Basanta Singh outlined the conference's core objective: fostering inquiry-driven research and developing AI-based solutions tailored to the Northeast's unique developmental challenges. He extended gratitude to the NEC for supporting the initiative.

In his presidential remarks, Prof. Suresh Singh announced that 125 research papers had been accepted for presentation across eight technical sessions. Topics will range from disaster-resistant infrastructure and green energy to smart city systems, AI applications and engineering advancements.

Dr. K. Rambha Devi, convener of the conference, delivered the welcome address, while co-convener Dr. Rajeev Rajkumar proposed the vote of thanks. Dr. Sanabam Sujen Singh, Extension Officer (Seismology), Department of Science & Technology, NEC, attended the inaugural function as a representative of the sponsoring body.

The conference aims to deepen research networks, strengthen industry linkages and promote innovation suited to the Northeast's evolving technological and developmental landscape.

## MZU to launch diploma in spoken Burmese; initiative expected to aid refugee students in state

AIZAWL

Mizoram University (MZU) has entered into an academic collaboration with Myanmar's Institute of Chin Affairs, paving the way for new educational exchanges, language training and joint research between the two institutions, officials said on Tuesday.

The Memorandum of Understanding was formally signed by MZU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dibakar Chandra Deka and the Institute's Deputy Executive Director Mai Lucy Mawi. Under the agreement, the university will introduce a diploma course in spoken Burmese, alongside provisions for admitting students from Myanmar and undertaking collaborative research projects.

University officials noted that the arrangement seeks to deepen cross-border academic ties while offering practical support to communities affected by ongoing turmoil in Myanmar. The cooperation also carries significant social implications for Mizoram,

which currently hosts more than 31,000 Myanmar refugees, largely from Chin State.

According to officials, hundreds of refugee children are already enrolled in schools across Mizoram, and the new partnership is expected to expand their pathway to higher education. Language training, they said, will be particularly crucial in enabling refugee youth to continue studies, navigate administrative systems, and participate in academic exchanges.

The initiative, they added, is designed not only to promote cultural understanding and scholarly collaboration but also to create long-term opportunities for displaced students seeking educational stability.

With the rollout of the spoken Burmese diploma and research linkages, MZU is positioning itself as a regional academic bridge-connecting communities divided by conflict through shared knowledge, culture and education.

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## Goa inferno: INTERPOL issues blue corner notice against absconding accused

NORTH GOA

In a major development in the ongoing investigation in Goa's Romeo Lane fire incident, a 'blue corner notice' has been issued by INTERPOL against the absconding accused, Gaurav Luthra and Saurabh Luthra, just two days after the incident took place, state police said on Tuesday.

The brothers fled to Thailand after the fire, which claimed 25 lives, and are now being tracked by international authorities.

"It was a very painful accident in which 25 people lost their lives. To identify the bodies, conduct post-mortem, timely handover of the bodies to the relatives and alongside carrying out the investigation... The accused were immediately charged and arrested. We took immediate action against the owners by issuing LOC against them. We have come to know that the club owners are in Phuket, and we are taking action with the help of CBI and INTERPOL. Our teams are present in Delhi. We are issuing advisories and guidelines to restaurants, conducting foot patrolling in view of the upcoming season. Total of 21 bodies have been handed over; two are remaining," Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Goa Police, Varsha Sharma told.

Meanwhile, Goa Tourism's Rohan Khaunte said a strict investigation will be conducted from "down to top" and that "some heads need to roll."

"Goa Police has achieved a major breakthrough in the investigation of the Birch by Romeo Lane fire incident. A Blue Corner Notice has been issued by INTERPOL against the absconding accused," Goa police said in a statement.

Goa Police said, "Normally, this process takes a week or more, but because of the con-

certed efforts of Goa Police and the strong support from central agencies, it was completed much faster."

This notice will help trace the accused and prevent them from immigrating to any other country from their current destination, the state police said.

Meanwhile, Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte, while condoling the deaths in the fire, said that a "wrong message of tourism" has gone out due to this incident. He said he has spoken with Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, called for a strict investigation, demanded corrective action by the government, and that some "heads need to roll."

He also said the restaurant was not under the state tourism ministry's purview for registration.

"What has happened is a very tragic incident, this particular happened at Birch by Romeo Lane, which does not come under the purview of the tourism department in terms of registrations. So what has happened is that the tourists were affected, and a wrong message towards tourism has gone out, and we have to learn that as we talk about the families who have lost their families in this incident, it is very important for due correction that the government needs to do," the minister said.

"I have shared my thoughts with CM, and we need to ensure that the investigation will be done in this whole episode from down to the top, everyone who was there, some action needs to be initiated, some heads need to roll," the tourism minister said.

"Tourism department is always serious about seeing that we promote tourism in the right manner for domestic and international destinations. We ensure that enforcement is done in our areas, and we also need to

ensure a peaceful, good stay for the tourists wherever they go," state minister Khaunte added.

Earlier today, authorities had demolished part of the Romeo Lane restaurant, the chain owned by the Luthras, at Goa's Vagator beach, citing encroachment by the restaurant.

Deputy Director of Goa Tourism, Dhiraj Wagale, had said, "We will demolish the encroachment on the beach side. The total area to be demolished is 198 square meters."

"The beach comes under the tourism department, so we are demolishing it (the restaurant)," he said. According to him, the authorities had demolished part of the restaurant in July, but the owners had rebuilt it. "We will take action again if they rebuild it again. Supervisors and Wardens are at the beach; they are our ears and eyes, so they report any illegalities," he said.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Goa Police, Varsha Sharma, said that Lookout Circulars (LOCs) have been issued against the Luthra brothers (owners of the establishment), and they are taking the help of Interpol and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to bring them back. In a major escalation in the probe, the state police have initiated international coordination to trace and bring back the absconding owners of Birch.

Addressing a press conference, Sharma said, "LoC has been issued against them (Luthra brothers). They are not in India. We are taking the help of Interpol and CBI to bring them back. They were not in Goa on the incident date."

The DIG further said that Ajay Gupta, a co-owner and partner in the business, has also been named among the accused and is now on a Lookout Circular.

## "Anti-national act": Rahul Gandhi slams RSS, ECI over "vote chori" in Lok Sabha; BJP accuses LoP of 'lying in Parliament

NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Tuesday reiterated his allegations of "vote chori", accusing the Election Commission of colluding with the ruling BJP to "shape elections". The Bharatiya Janata Party, meanwhile, accused the Congress of subverting the country's institutions through constitutional amendments during its regime.

Addressing the Lower House of Parliament during a discussion on electoral reforms, Rahul Gandhi questioned the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government about the rationale for removing the Chief Justice of India from the committee to select the Chief Election Commissioners and Election Commissioners. He also slammed the Centre for providing immunity to the CEC. Amid uproar by NDA MPs, Rahul Gandhi reiterated his claims of electoral fraud in the Haryana Assembly elections. He said, "The Election of Haryana was stolen. Theft ensured by the Election Commission... The biggest anti-national act you can do is vote-chori. There is no bigger anti-national act than vote-chori because when you destroy the vote, you destroy the fabric of this country. You destroy modern India; you destroy the idea of India. Vote-chori is an anti-national act, and those across the aisle are doing an anti-national act," he said.

He further alleged that the ECI was "captured" by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as part of its project to take over the country's institutions.

"The project of the RSS was to capture the institutional framework of the country... and the third capture is of the institution that controls the election system in the country, the Election Commission," he said.

The Congress MP added, "I want to ask three questions which will make it very clear that the BJP is directing and using the Election Commission to damage India's democracy. The first question is, why is it that the CJI removed



from the selection panel of the Election Commissioner? Why is he not in that room? I sit in that room. It is so-called a democratic decision. On one side, PM Modi and HM Amit Shah. On the other side, the leader of the opposition. I have no voice in that room. What they decide is what happens. So the first question, why is the Prime Minister and Amit Shah so keen on choosing exactly who the election commissioner is going to be?" "No Prime Minister has done this in the history of India. In December 2023, this government changed the law. They changed the law to make sure that no Election Commissioner could be punished for any action they take while they are an Election Commissioner. Why would the Prime Minister and Home Minister give this gift of immunity to the Election Commissioner?" he asked.

In 2023, the Supreme Court formed a selection committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha LoP, and the Chief Justice of India. This norm was to continue till a law was enacted by the Parliament. Later that year, the Centre brought in a law to include the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha LoP, and a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the PM in the committee.

Meanwhile, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey hit back at Gandhi, alleging that the Congress party had subverted mul-

multiple institutions through constitutional amendments in the 1970s.

He rubbished Rahul Gandhi's earlier accusation that the current institutions have been "captured by the RSS." Dubey cited the 1976 Swaran Singh Committee, which led to the 42nd Amendment, saying it stripped the President of powers. He criticised Gandhi's claims, pointing out Congress's own history of influencing institutions and appointments.

"In 1976, the Swaran Singh Committee was made, and they finished all institutions, which they are trying to do today too. In the Constitution, the President is mentioned 121 times, and you will be surprised that with 1 amendment, Congress finished all the powers of the President. The president became a rubber stamp. Whatever the cabinet will say, the President will approve, the institution was finished," the BJP MP said.

The BJP, in an X post, also responded to Rahul Gandhi, saying he does "drama" instead of assisting the selection committee. The party claimed that former CECs Navin Chawla and VS Sampath were appointed directly by the Congress.

The BJP wrote, "Rahul Gandhi lies in Parliament. Rahul Gandhi says Election Commissioners used to be selected by a committee consisting of the CJI and LoP. Can Rahul name one election commissioner during the Congress government, chosen by the committee with either the CJI or the

LoP? The committee was made temporarily till a new law was made. Congress PM till now appointed Election Commissioners directly."

"Did Rahul Gandhi Forget his UPA Rule? In 2005, Sonia Gandhi appointed Navin Chawla as Election Commissioner. What authority did Sonia have? In 2012, a New Chief Election Commissioner was to be appointed to overlook the Lok Sabha 2014. LK Advani JI suggested that Congress make a collegium to select the CEC. Congress ignored it and directly appointed VS Sampath as CEC, immediately got clearance from President Pratibha Patil," the party added. The party added that today, the LoP is taken into account when selecting the CEC, unlike in the UPA regime. "Opposition wasn't even taken into confidence on the appointment. Today, LoP is part of the committee to select CEC. Instead of constructively assist in the selection of a new CEC, all Rahul Gandhi does is Drama," the X post read.

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party chief and Lok Sabha MP Akhilesh Yadav raised concerns in Parliament over the deaths of Both Level Officers (BLOs) engaged in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh, urging the Centre to extend financial and institutional support to their families. He also reiterated his party's long-standing demand for ballot papers in elections, arguing that multiple questions continue to be raised about electronic voting systems. Speaking in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on electoral reforms, the SP Chief said, "Till now, 10 BLOs have lost their lives in the state during the ongoing SIR process. We demand that families of the deceased BLOs be given Rs 1 crore as ex-gratia amount and a government job be given to one member of the deceased's family."

"Elections should be conducted using ballot papers because many questions are being raised on the use of electronic devices," the SP chief added.

The Upper House of the Parliament is also set to take up the discussion on the electoral reforms after further discussion on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram on Wednesday.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Over 1 billion faced childhood sexual violence in 2023, highest in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa: Lancet

LONDON

Over a billion individuals worldwide aged 15 and above had experienced sexual violence during childhood, while around 608 million females were exposed to intimate partner violence in 2023, according to estimates published in The Lancet journal.

Highest prevalence of both intimate partner and sexual violence were found to be concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

In these regions, the health impacts of violence are compounded by high rates of HIV and other chronic conditions, researchers noted.

In India, the prevalence of intimate partner violence was estimated at 23 percent among women aged 15 and above. Over 30 percent of women and 13 percent of men aged 15 and above are estimated to have experienced sexual violence as a child.

The researchers analysed data from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2023, the "largest, most comprehensive effort to quantify health loss across places and over time."

The US' University of Washington coordinates the GBD study.

"Globally, in 2023, we estimated that 608 million females aged 15 years and older had ever been exposed to IPV (intimate partner violence), and 1.01 billion individuals aged 15 years and older had experienced sexual violence during childhood," the authors wrote.

The study provides new evidence linking sexual violence against children and intimate partner violence to a wider range of health outcomes than previously



recognised, resulting in significantly higher levels of health loss and disability, they added.

Anxiety and major depressive disorders were among the eight leading causes of disability developed as a result of intimate partner violence, while experiencing sexual violence as a child was associated with 14 health outcomes, including mental health and substance use disorders and chronic illnesses.

Intimate partner violence was linked to 145,000 deaths worldwide, mostly from homicide, suicide, and HIV/AIDS.

The researchers also estimated nearly 30,000 women to have been killed by their partners in 2023.

Exposure to sexual violence as a child was associated with 290,000 deaths worldwide in 2023, predom-

inantly from suicide, HIV/AIDS, and type 2 diabetes, the study found.

Self-harm and schizophrenia were found to be the leading causes of disability among men - and anxiety the leading cause among women - due to sexual violence during childhood, especially in South Asia.

Addressing violence against women and children is not only a matter of human rights but also a crucial public health priority that can save millions of lives, improve mental health outcomes, and build resilient communities, the researchers said.

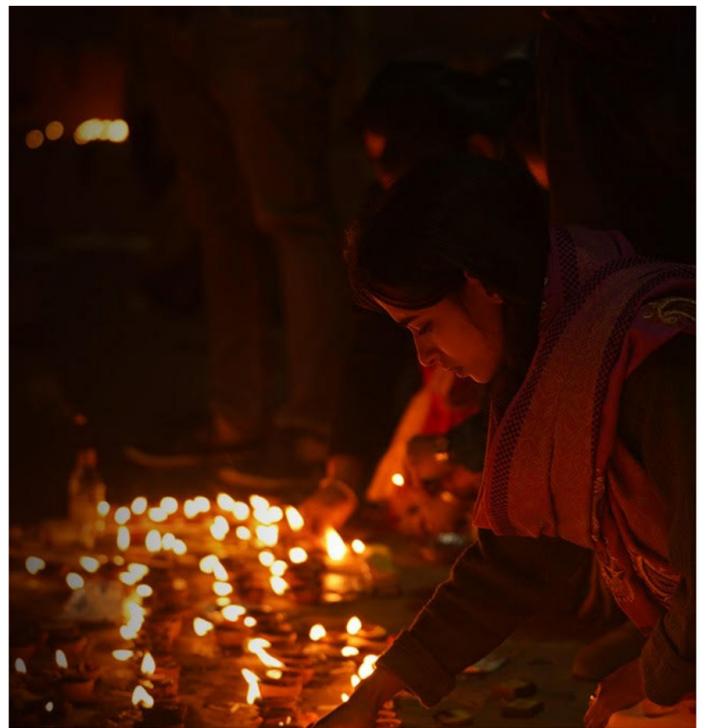
"These findings fundamentally challenge the persistent view of SVAC (sexual violence against children) and IPV as primarily social or criminal justice issues and under-

score their status as major public health priorities," lead author Luisa Sorio Flor, assistant professor at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), said.

The findings also underscore an urgent need for preventive measures such as strengthening legal frameworks, promoting gender equality, and expanding support services for survivors to reduce health toll caused due to violence, the team said.

The World Health Organization, in a global report published in November, estimated that over a fifth of females in India aged 15-49 were subjected to intimate partner violence in 2023, while nearly 30 percent have been affected during their lifetime.

### Deepavali enters UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list; Tangail saree weaving also recognised



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

Deepavali has now joined the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The festival of lights appears on the 2025 list alongside 19 other cultural traditions from around the world.

UNESCO created this list to protect living traditions that shape the identity of communities. It covers practices passed down through generations, from festivals and rituals to performing arts, oral traditions, and traditional craftsmanship.

India's entry this year is Deepavali, celebrated

across the country as a symbol of joy, renewal, and community bonding. The traditional Tangail saree weaving art, rooted in Bengal's craft heritage, has also earned a place on the list.

UNESCO describes intangible heritage as a set of living practices that are traditional and contemporary at the same time. It emphasises community participation, cultural diversity, and mutual respect among cultures.

With Deepavali added this year, India's recognised entries include Durga Puja in Kolkata, Kumbh Mela, Nowruz, Ladakh's Buddhist chant-

ing, Manipuri Sankirtana, Chhau dance, the craftsmanship of Punjab's Thatheras, Mudiyyettu of Kerala, Ramman festival of Garhwal, Kutiyattam, Ramlila, and Vedic chanting. Deepavali's inscription strengthens global recognition of India's living cultural traditions and adds another chapter to the country's growing presence on UNESCO's heritage map.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the start of the 20th session of UNESCO's Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage in New Delhi, calling it a proud cultural moment for the country.

## Vande Mataram: A Legacy to Uphold, Not a Tool to Wield

There are moments in the evolution of a nation when symbols transcend art, rhetoric or ritual—they become memory. Vande Mataram is not merely a song, nor a slogan repeated in patriotic crescendos; it is a vessel of India's freedom struggle, a reminder of sacrifice, a whisper of hope carried across decades of subjugation, rebellion and awakening. Composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in the 1870s and immortalised within the pages of Anandamath, the song travelled far beyond literature. It became war-cry, prayer and promise. It was invoked by revolutionaries who marched unarmed against colonial power, by thinkers who dreamed of a free motherland, and by millions of ordinary Indians who quietly believed that independence was not only inevitable, but sacred.

For generations, Vande Mataram symbolised the idea of India-plural, resilient, defiant. Yet in the Lok Sabha, during what could have been a dignified reflection on this national treasure, the debate swerved sharply off course. The discussion turned personal after Priyanka Gandhi Vadra directed remarks at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and suddenly, a moment meant to honour heritage became a theatre of antagonism. A deliberation that should have invoked history, scholarship, and collective pride instead reminded the country how easily national symbols today are pulled into political gravity, eroding the sanctity they command.

A song born of revolution, carried by courage

Vande Mataram was never meant to be casual commentary. It was born from resistance—not the loud, impulsive kind that fizzles in spectacle, but the quiet, incandescent resistance that builds movements. Freedom fighters like Subhas Chandra Bose adopted it as a rallying anthem; Aurobindo Ghose wrote extensively about its spiritual power and civilisational imagery. It was sung in streets and in jails, in clandestine meetings and mass processions. It belonged to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, tribal communities, peasants, students, women, workers—anyone who imagined a sovereign future.

To debate a symbol of such depth requires intellectual discipline. It demands that parliamentarians speak not as party rivalries, but as inheritors of history. Critique is vital to democracy, but when national icons are transformed into rhetorical targets, the debate loses moral substance. The recent Lok Sabha exchange illustrated this clearly: substance was overshadowed by spectacle.

A question of tone, timing and responsibility

Priyanka Gandhi's intervention, which quickly drew national attention, did not merely provoke political disagreement—it struck at the emotional core of those who consider Vande Mataram a fundamental thread of Indian identity. The issue was not dissent; dissent is the oxygen of democracy. The concern was the mismatch between the gravity of the subject and the tone of the remarks. A debate on a song intertwined with India's soul demanded solemnity, research, perhaps even a moment of silence. Instead, it swerved into a personal joust that diluted the weight of the discussion.

Across the country—and notably in the Northeast, where cultural resurgence and national pride are increasingly embraced by the youth—symbols like Vande Mataram are seen as anchors of belonging. Leaders, therefore, are expected to approach them with sensitivity. When political interventions dismiss or diminish such symbols, they risk appearing disconnected from the emotional pulse of the public. The government's defence of Vande Mataram resonated with many precisely for this reason—it reflected an instinctive public expectation that certain values must be upheld above party lines.

Parliament in the public eye  
Modern parliamentary debate does not exist in a vacuum. Every word is clipped, broadcast, tweeted, and interpreted through layers of political allegiance. There was a time when sharp exchanges remained confined to the Lok Sabha archives, revisited only by historians and scholars. Today, a single sentence can spiral into national conversation within seconds.

In this hyper-visible environment, provocations may win applause within political bases, but they rarely advance public understanding. India's parliamentary tradition has historical pillars—Atal Bihari Vajpayee's lyrical balance of passion and respect, N.G.



If you repeatedly criticise someone for liking something you don't, they won't stop liking it. They'll stop liking you.

Goray's reasoned dissent, Hiren Mukherjee's intellectual sharpness driven by ideological conviction. They demonstrated that disagreement can coex-



ist with dignity. The nation now watches, sometimes with impatience, as contemporary debate tilts increasingly toward theatre over thought.

Cultural resurgence and shifting public expectations

The political landscape of the past decade has also reshaped expectations around cultural heritage. The government has invested heavily in museum revivals, archaeological preservation, language promotion, festival digitisation and heritage tourism. These initiatives signal a broader civilisational assertion—a desire to reclaim narratives lost, diluted or neglected during colonial and post-colonial transitions.

In such a climate, criticism aimed at national symbols or civilisational identity may land with less resonance than before. Opposition politics that underplays cultural heritage risks alienating citizens who now perceive tradition not as nostalgia, but as an engine of self-worth and national vision. Advocacy rooted in respect, knowledge and nuance therefore has greater persuasive power than provocation.

Dissent is necessary—but must be meaningful

Democracy thrives when the government is questioned boldly. However, dissent gains force only when it brings alternative ideas to the table—when it challenges policy, proposes reform, argues with evidence. Targeting cultural emblems, particularly those with revolutionary history, achieves little beyond momentary turbulence.

In the case of Vande Mataram, the opportunity was vast: parliamentarians could have debated its evolving cultural meaning, its linguistic nuance, its role in modern education, or its place in national ceremony. They could have explored whether India needs more heritage songwriting, more curriculum-based cultural literacy, or comparative study of national symbols across democracies. Instead, the House shifted toward reactive defence and counter-critique. A chance to deepen collective memory was lost.

The ripple effect beyond Parliament

When national symbols become political ammunition, society absorbs the consequences. Reverence may weaken. Younger generations—still learning what it means to belong to a republic—may inherit cynicism instead of pride. Democracy depends not only on institutions of governance but also on intangible reservoirs of shared respect. When those reservoirs are eroded, unity fragments more easily, discourse calcifies, and political culture slips into perpetual combat.

India's challenges today are too complex for performative disagreement: rapid economic transition, border tensions, shifting global alliances, climate volatility, technological disruption. The country needs debates that inform policy, not debates that trigger outrage.

Reclaiming dignity in national conversation

If the Vande Mataram episode teaches anything, it is that dignity in discourse is not a relic of the past—it is a necessity for the future.

Restoring that dignity requires intention. Leaders must privilege facts over friction. They must speak not only to benches across the aisle, but to citizens watching from liv-

ing rooms, classrooms and tea stalls. Cultural symbols should evoke seriousness, not scoring. Parliament must not only legislate—it must educate, illuminate and inspire.

A discussion on Vande Mataram, framed with historical depth and cultural literacy, could have demonstrated unity across ideological divides.

It could have reminded the world that India debates fiercely but reveres its soul. Instead, it became another instance where anger outpaced reflection.

A message for the next generation

For young citizens—especially in the Northeast, where identity revival and national assertion run parallel—the message is clear. National symbols are not stage

props. They are links to history, belonging and moral imagination. Songs like Vande Mataram do not belong to governments, parties or politicians—they belong to the nation.

Parliament, as the highest democratic forum, carries the responsibility to honour those symbols. If it succeeds, public discourse becomes richer. If it falters, symbols lose meaning, memory loses coherence, and the emotional rhythm of the republic weakens. The task is not merely to sing Vande Mataram. The task is to understand it, debate it responsibly, preserve its dignity, and pass its legacy forward.

Because the true power of national symbols lies not in how loudly they are invoked, but in how sincerely they are upheld.

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# The distinctive Dimapur to host NEIR activities



January 17 (2026) should be a remarkable day for the NEIR 2026. The distinctive Dimapur will host the NEI Rally. Dimapur is the capital of Dimapur district and the most populous city in Nagaland. It serves as the state's key commercial centre. Set in a hilly landscape along the Dhansiri River and close to the Assam border, Dimapur also hosts Nagaland's only railway station and airport.

Dimapur doesn't announce itself the way some cities do. It doesn't lean on colonial nostalgia, or mountain drama, or any of the clichés people associate with the Northeast. Instead, it moves with a kind of grounded self-assurance. It knows what it is: a commercial hub, a crossroads, a place where Nagaland meets the rest of the region, and where people from every direction stop, trade, settle, or simply pass through. If Kohima holds the political soul of the state, Dimapur carries its everyday pulse.

Dimapur works because it doesn't try to impress you. It draws you in through movement. Roads always feel busy. Markets stay crowded. New buildings rise between old ones. Trucks line up on the highways. Students spill out of coaching centres. Auto drivers navigate traffic with a choreography you only understand after watching them for a while. The city keeps shifting but remains recognizable.

To understand Dimapur, start with its geography. It sits at the border of Nagaland and Assam, making it both an entry point and a buffer. National Highway 29 cuts through the city like a spine. Trains come in with the kind of purpose that reminds you why this is Nagaland's only major railhead. The airport receives flights from across the region. All this connectivity shapes the city's personality. People from Manipur, Assam, Arunachal, Meghalaya, and even farther come here to study, shop, work, or trade. Dimapur is where cultures meet—not ceremonially, but casually, in the rhythm of daily life.

The city's past adds another layer. Long before it became a modern commercial centre, Dimapur was the seat of the Kachari kingdom. The ruins still sit quietly in the middle of the city. Tall monoliths carved with geometric patterns stand scattered across a grassy compound. They look almost acci-

dental, as if the modern world grew around them without quite knowing what to do with them. Spend a little time there and you realise these stones connect centuries of history with a city that otherwise feels relentlessly forward-looking.

Hong Kong Market and New Market are the city's heartbeats. You walk through narrow lanes packed with imported clothing, electronics, Korean skincare, gadgets, and fabrics. The energy is electric. Vendors call out offers without sounding pushy. Customers bargain with practiced ease. Everyone seems to know where they're going. There's a rhythm to the chaos, as if the entire market shares a single pulse.

Dimapur offers the kind of diversity you won't find even in larger cities. Naga cuisine sits comfortably with Assamese thalis, Bengali fish curries, North Indian snacks, Korean fried chicken, and Burmese dishes that arrived through migration routes and stayed because people loved them. Smoked pork dominates the Naga side of the plate, soft and flavorful from hours of curing. Bamboo shoots add sharpness. Fermented soybean adds depth. Even a simple meal can open a window into the land's traditions.

Cafes are becoming their own scene. Young entrepreneurs run spaces where you see students working on laptops, musicians holding small gigs, and conversations stretching late into evening. There's a creative spark in the city, shaped by educated youth who want to build something modern without letting go of their roots.

Move away from the markets and the pace shifts. Residential neighbourhoods stretch out with a calmer rhythm. Churches anchor these communities. Nagaland has strong Christian roots, and in Dimapur you feel that through architecture, music, and weekly gatherings. Sunday mornings bring a sense of collective pause. Streets go quiet. Families dress elegantly for service. Choirs fill the air with harmonies that carry across lanes.

For Nagaland's interior towns, this is the supply route. Trucks bring in essentials. Goods move upward to Kohima, Wokha, Phek, Zunheboto, and beyond. Students coming home from other states land here first. Medical referrals often pass through Dimapur's hospitals. Even cultural events find their way here—music gigs, fashion shows, sports

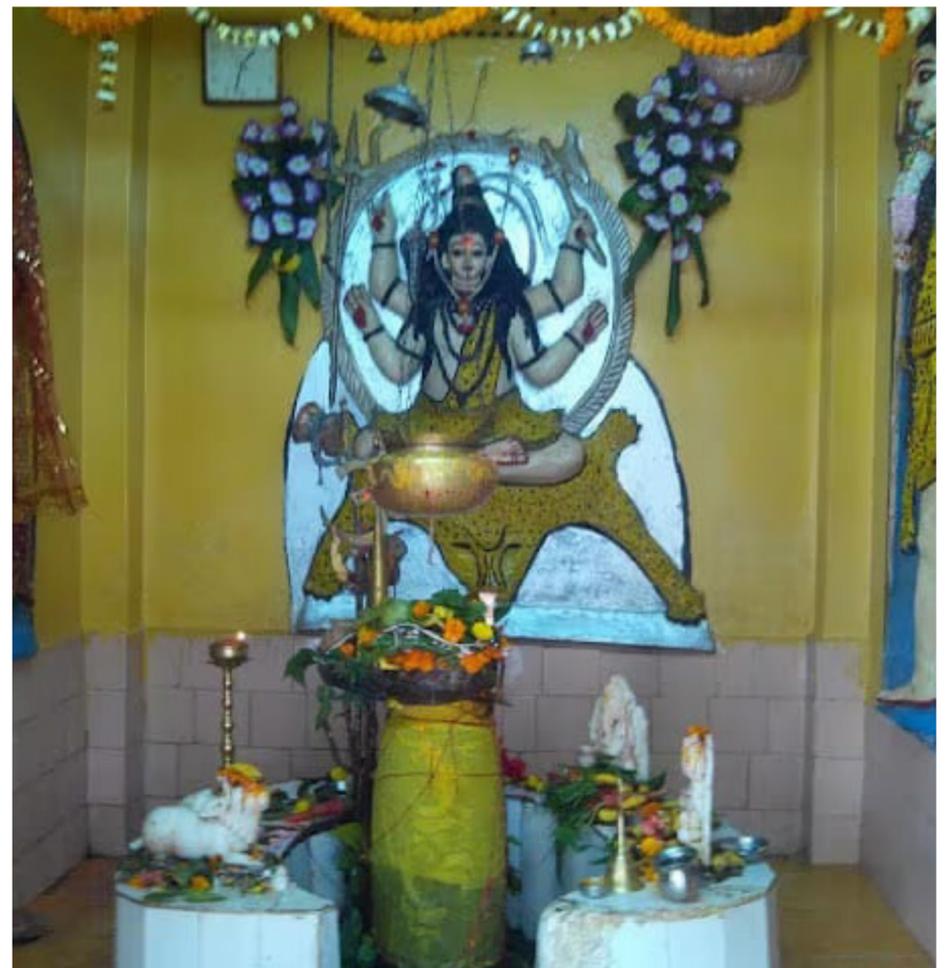
meets, exhibitions. The city acts like a staging ground for the rest of the state.

Nature still asserts itself. The Dhansiri River edges the city, giving it a quiet contrast to its otherwise busy pace. The surrounding plains and gentle hills remind you that you're still in a region ruled by landscape, not concrete. Drive a little farther and the terrain begins to rise. The foothills lead you toward Kohima, and beyond that to deeper ranges where villages balance tradition and change.

Dimapur holds a multicultural population. Nagas share space with Bengalis, Assamese, Marwaris, Nepalis, Biharis, Punjabis, and people from the rest of the Northeast. The mix is unique. People get used to

special media trends hit the city fast.

Yet beneath that modern layer lies a quieter foundation. Family networks remain strong. People still know their neighbours. Many businesses are run by families that have been here for generations. Work might change, but relationships stay steady.



hearing many languages in a single day. Shops carry Korean fashion, Burmese foods, and North Indian festival decorations all in the same season. This blend doesn't erase differences. Instead, it creates a city where everyone negotiates space while keeping their own customs.

Dimapur has one of the youngest populations in the region. Colleges, coaching centres, and vocational institutes attract students from across states. You see them on their way to classes, in cafes, outside bookshops, hanging around bus stands, discussing music, politics, football, or fashion. They shape the city's culture far more than any single institution does. And because youth culture in the Northeast has a natural tilt toward music and style, Dimapur reflects that. Bands rehearse in garages. Shoe shops carry the latest sneakers. Thrift culture thrives. So-

Dimapur is a border town that outgrew the label. It's a trading hub that became a cultural meeting point. It's a chaotic, expanding city that still finds room for ancient ruins in its centre. It carries the weight of Nagaland's aspirations without losing the earthiness that defines it.

Dimapur isn't a place you understand in a single visit. It doesn't reveal itself efficiently. It shows you fragments—a crowded market, a quiet church lane, a street full of imported goods, a roadside stall selling smoked meat, a river bending gently around the edge of town, a group of students planning their futures with unfiltered ambition. Piece those fragments together and you begin to see Dimapur clearly. A city built by movement, held together by community, and always looking ahead.



## BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

### ACTIVITY PROGRAM



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





**11 JAN**  
**Adventure Sports**  
 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.



**11 JAN**  
**Barak Valley Conclave**  
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley to be discussed by stakeholders. Includes NGOs, and Government officials, industry representatives, local community and government employees. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.

**10 Jan**  
**Barak Festival: Peace Progress & Prosperity**





**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.





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Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion

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



**11 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
 An Online Event





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**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'. Welcome your views, suggestions, proposals, queries & comments for any sponsors, guides, speakers, members.



**10-12 JAN**  
**5E For Success Conclave**  
 The 4th Annual Success Conclave is going to be held at the theme: 'From School to Campus to Corporate'. Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.

Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & College Extension, School, Public Speaking (College) & an online event where students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.



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



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





## Barak Festival

Band Night | 10 JAN  
Musical Night | 11 JAN

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



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





**10-12 JAN**  
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