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PERSPECTIVE

When you are at your lowest, you realize a lot.

HOLIDAY NOTICE

On the occasion of Christmas, KRC TIMES will not be published on Wednesday, December 25. Publication will resume as usual on Thursday, December 26. We wish our readers a Merry Christmas.

— Editor

Seven Bangladeshi nationals caught after crossing border in Sribhumi district

GUWAHATI
Seven Bangladeshi nationals were detained near the India-Bangladesh international border in Assam's Sribhumi district, officials said, prompting renewed scrutiny of border security arrangements.

Members of the Village Defence Party intercepted the group at Manatoli village under the Mahishasan border belt during routine patrolling. Officials said the individuals had crossed into Indian territory from the Deutali border area of Bangladesh before the VDP stopped them.

Authorities later handed over the seven detainees to the Border Security Force and local police for verification and further legal action. Officials did not release their identities.

According to sources, authorities had deported the same group to Bangladesh on December 19, but they allegedly re-entered Indian territory within days, raising concerns over repeated breaches along the sensitive border stretch.

Officials said they would examine the circumstances leading to the repeated crossings and review existing surveillance and monitoring mechanisms in the area.

WHO SAID WHAT

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Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Eastern Command on High Alert, India Adopts 'Wait and Watch' Approach on Bangladesh

INDIA RULES OUT MILITARY THREAT FROM NEIGHBOUR BUT REMAINS GUARDED AS INSTABILITY GROWS

SHILLONG

Indian defence forces have been placed on a heightened state of alert along the eastern frontier amid a deteriorating law-and-order situation in Bangladesh and rising concerns over radical activity, officials said.

"All wings of the defence forces are currently in a wait-and-watch mode. Assets have been moved to forward locations and the situation is being closely monitored," a defence official told The Assam Tribune.

On Tuesday morning, four Chinook helicopters and several Mi-17s were seen flying south-east of Meghalaya. The Defence PRO of the Eastern Air Command described the sorties as routine operations. Along the 443-km Meghalaya-Bangladesh border, the Border Security Force (BSF) has intensified surveillance. "BSF troops are on high alert and the entire stretch is under close watch," BSF Inspector General



O.P. Upadhyay said. Beyond Meghalaya, the Army has stepped up preparedness across all states sharing an international boundary with Bangladesh. In Assam's Dhubri district,

Army units have moved into the newly established Lachit Borpukhan Military Station, while reports indicate that some formations from the Rangia Military Station have also been redeployed to the border district.

Plans are also underway to establish an additional military base in Tripura. Eastern Army Commander Lt Gen R.C. Tiwari has recently visited forward areas in the border state to review preparedness. While Bangladesh is not seen as a conventional military threat, defence planners are exercising caution in light of escalating unrest, street violence by radical elements and reports of attacks on minorities. "There is no direct military threat from Bangladesh at present, but the situation there demands vigilance. We cannot afford complacency when a neighbouring country is witnessing sustained turmoil," the official said.

The security situation in Bangladesh has worsened following

the killing of student leader Osman Hadi in Dhaka last week. On Monday, another activist, Motaleb Sikder, was shot in the head in Khulna. Both were reportedly associated with the National Citizen Party.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has indicated that if voted to power, it would seek to restore the 1972 Constitution drafted under Ziaur Rahman, which did not explicitly enshrine secularism as a fundamental principle. The BNP has traditionally been viewed by Indian security analysts as having a pro-Pakistan and anti-India orientation.

Analysts have also flagged a rise in anti-India sentiment within sections of Bangladeshi society, driven by internal political churn and broader regional and international geopolitical factors, adding another layer of complexity to the evolving security landscape along India's eastern border.

No one can stop BJP in TTAADC, CM Manik Saha slams Tipra Motha for alliance breach

AGARTALA

With elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) drawing closer, Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha on December 23 launched a sharp attack on alliance partner Tipra Motha Party, accusing it of violating alliance discipline and making provocative statements aimed at politically isolating the BJP in tribal areas.

Addressing a public gathering in Khowai district, the chief minister strongly rebutted claims made by Tipra Motha leaders that the BJP would not be allowed to function within the TTAADC. Dr Saha asserted that no political party has the authority to prevent the BJP from organising programmes or working for the welfare of Janajati communities in Tripura.

"No one can stop us from holding party programmes. We believe in dialogue, not unrest. Our politics is rooted in law and order. BJP never believes in chaos or unruliness. Others may indulge in threats or theatrics, but our party and its leadership will always uphold democratic values," the chief minister said.

Drawing an analogy to global developments, Dr Saha compared the political posturing of some parties to external threats faced by the country. Referring to Operation Sindoor, he said that just as Pakistan once attempted to intimidate India with nuclear threats, certain political forces are now trying to create pressure through intimidation and po-

litical blackmail. He recalled that the BJP came to power in Tripura in 2018 through democratic means, not coercion.

Reaffirming the BJP's commitment to inclusive development, the chief minister said the party continues to work in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of empowering women, youth, farmers and the underprivileged. He added that while the BJP respects alliance norms, repeated violations by its partners cannot be ignored. "The Prime Minister has successfully managed coalition politics at the national level, but such irresponsible conduct has no place in Tripura's political culture," he remarked.

Responding to allegations made by the Tipra Motha MLA from Ramchandraghat, Dr Saha said it was contradictory for leaders to shift from praise to criticism without justification. He rejected assertions that the BJP would be barred from the TTAADC, stating that such remarks would not be tolerated. Highlighting development work, he said that Rs 126 crore has been invested in the Ramchandraghat constituency over the past few years, adding that people would ultimately recognise genuine efforts and reject divisive politics.

As the TTAADC elections approach, Dr Saha's remarks signal the BJP's determination to maintain its political presence in Tripura's tribal regions and underscore its emphasis on democratic processes and development-driven governance.

"Closely monitoring the situation," says Assam CM Sarma as violent protest claims two lives in West Karbi Anglong

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday stated that he is "closely monitoring" the situation in West Karbi Anglong after two people lost their lives during the violent protests in the region.

The Chief Minister affirmed that the additional security forces will be deployed in Kherani to ensure safety and peace.

"I am closely monitoring the situation in West Karbi Anglong. It is deeply painful that two people lost their lives during today's unrest. Additional security forces will be deployed in Kherani tomorrow to maintain peace. We are in constant touch with all concerned to restore normalcy and resolve issues through dialogue. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The Government will stand with all affected families and provide all necessary support," CM Sarma wrote on X.

Heavy security was deployed in Assam's Karbi Anglong district on Tuesday after a violent protest erupted a day earlier.

Earlier, a prohibitory order was issued by the District Magistrate of Karbi Anglong,



Nirola Phangchopi, imposing 163 of the BNSS from December 22 until further notice to prevent "anti-social elements" from causing ethnic or communal disturbances and to protect public life and property.

A gathering of 5 or more people is strictly prohibited, and there is a Total restriction on the movement of people and private vehicles from 5:00 PM to 6:00 AM. The order also prohibits rallies, picketing, "Mashal" (torch) processions, or dharnas in public places. Carrying firearms or setting off firecrackers is not permitted. No inflammatory or anti-national speeches, posters, or wall writing. No use of loudspeakers or microphones with-

out prior permission.

Police, military, and officials on duty are exempt from movement restrictions. People with medical emergencies may move.

Schools, colleges, universities (for exams), and government/private offices will continue to function as usual.

The escalation occurred after protesters, who were holding sit-in demonstrations demanding the eviction of illegal encroachers from the Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) and Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) lands in the hilly district, set the house of the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) on fire.

IIT Guwahati Organises State-Level 'Design for Bharat' Exhibition Ahead of VBYLD 2026

GUWAHATI

As a part of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) upcoming Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBYLD) 2026 scheduled to be in January 2026, the Department of Design at Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati hosted the State Level Exhibition for Design for Bharat - VBYLD 2026 at its campus.

Under this initiative, Design for Bharat has been launched as a national design challenge to inspire young innovators to contribute to Viksit Bharat 2047 through creative solutions addressing social, cultural, and economic concerns.

The challenge seeks to nurture critical thinking, teamwork and innovation among youth while providing mentorship from experts and an opportunity to showcase projects at the national platform. This year's theme, "Duality (Dwividhata)," encourages participants to explore the in-between spaces where transformative ideas often emerge.

The competition includes seven thematic categories: Health, Wellness, and Mental Health; Education and Learning; Connectivity and Transport; Agriculture; Sports and Hobbies; Safety and Protection; and Sustainability.

Pratul Chandra Kalita, Professor and HOD, Department of Design of IIT Guwahati, said that - "As the nodal institute for our



state, we received 15 submissions from young designers. After initial evaluation by our departmental jury, 13 promising entries were shortlisted for participation in the state-level exhibition. On 22 December 2025, the State Level Exhibition was successfully conducted with 10 teams participating in the competition."

Notable dignitaries who were present in the event were Rahul Dev Sharma, Chairman and Managing Director, Gargya Group of Companies, as Chief Guest; Pranabjit Hazarika, Assistant Vice President, TCPL Packaging, and Neelkamal Das, Administrative Officer, Assam State Space Application Centre (ASSAC), as Guests of Honour.

Prof. Pratul Ch. Kalita, HOD of Design,

welcomed the participants and guests and briefed them about the design challenge initiative. Prof. Devendra Jalihal, Director, IIT Guwahati, emphasised building a culture of innovation for academic and professional excellence for inclusive development. The distinguished guests delivered insightful and inspiring addresses, sharing valuable perspectives from entrepreneurship, industry, governance, and academia.

Their collective words of encouragement provided immense motivation to the participants, broadening their understanding of practical problem-solving as well as contributing to national development.

The exposure significantly strengthened

their confidence to engage in design-led initiatives, contributing to Viksit Bharat 2047.

During the exhibition, the shortlisted participants presented their design concepts through detailed posters and product demonstrations. The internal jury of the Department of Design, comprising Prof. Pratul Chandra Kalita, Head of the Department of Design, Prof. Amarendra Kumar Das, and Prof. Supradip Das, along with the invited dignitaries, interacted with the student teams and reviewed each entry across all evaluation parameters.

Following the assessment, the jury declared the top three rank holders.

Priyam Jyoti Das from Golaghat Engineering College secured the First Rank with his project 'Waste to Green energy and Organic Fertiliser', and he will represent Assam at the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2026 scheduled for January 2026. Team North Lakhimpur University, comprising the members Aryan Kashyap, Saurav Biswas and Dikshita Chakraborty, secured the Second Rank with their prototype 'Terrabot - Agricultural Rover'. The Third Rank was shared by Partha Protim Patir of IIT Guwahati with his prototype 'Ad-Well' and Kashyap Gogoi of Swahid Peoli Phukan College, Sivasagar, with his project 'Natural Dye Extraction from Locally Available Plants'.

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INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD CRISIS

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Martin Luther King Jr.'s warning resonates powerfully today across India's near neighbourhood-one passing through a moment of profound churn, political contestation, ideological extremism, and civilisational uncertainty.

South Asia is passing through a moment of profound churn-political, ideological, and civilisational. What we are witnessing is not a series of isolated crises, but a structural pattern of democratic backsliding, institutional hollowing, and the resurgence of fundamentalist forces. For India-a civilisation-state that understands itself as Bharat as much as Hindustan-these developments are not peripheral disturbances. They strike at the very core of our strategic interests, moral responsibilities, and historical memory.

Bangladesh, once a symbol of secularism and pluralism born from the trauma of 1971, now finds itself in political uncertainty. The removal of a democratically elected government under contested circumstances, the marginalisation of its leadership, and the vandalism of Liberation War symbols point to a deeper malaise. The reassertion of forces historically associated with collaborationism in 1971 raises troubling questions about the trajectory of the Bangladeshi state. This is not merely an internal matter-Bangladesh's stability is a cornerstone of India's eastern security architecture. Any weakening of its democratic foundations risks radicalisation, cross-border criminality, and external manipulation, with reports of violence against minorities underscoring how quickly instability can become a humanitarian crisis.

To the west, Pakistan's democratic institutions have been steadily hollowed out. The recent imprisonment and long sentencing of an elected Prime Minister-following a trial widely perceived as politically driven-reinforces the dominance of unelected power centres. The reactivation of radical modules and continued ideological radicalisation are symptoms of systemic dysfunction, with a weakened civilian state repeatedly externalising instability toward India.

India's neighbourhood is facing a moment of profound crisis-democratic backsliding, the resurgence of religious extremism, and the erosion of institutional legitimacy are no longer isolated events but structural shifts across South Asia. For India, a civilisation-state that defines itself as both Bharat and Hindustan, these developments are not distant disturbances but direct challenges to its strategic, moral, and historical responsibilities.

Bangladesh, once a symbol of secularism and pluralism born from the trauma of 1971, now finds itself in political uncertainty. The removal of a democratically elected government under contested circumstances, the marginalisation of its leadership, and the vandalism of Liberation War symbols point to a deeper malaise. The reassertion of forces historically associated with collaborationism in 1971 raises troubling questions about the trajectory of the Bangladeshi state. This is not merely an internal matter-Bangladesh's stability is a cornerstone of India's eastern security architecture. Any weakening of its democratic foundations risks radicalisation, cross-border criminality, and external manipulation, with reports of violence against minorities underscoring how quickly instability can become a humanitarian crisis.

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Pakistan's renewed diplomatic outreach to West Asia and Africa, coupled with China's expanding economic footprint and strategic investments, creates a complex challenge for India. This convergence-China's capital, Pakistan's security networks, and ideological mobilisers-forms a mutually reinforcing ecosystem that seeks to constrain India's strategic space.

India's response must be neither reactive nor episodic. Strategic restraint is valuable, but it must not be confused with strategic silence. India must articulate a clear regional doctrine that places democratic legitimacy and institutional stability at the heart of its neighbourhood engagement. This does not require ideological evangelism, but firm, multilateral conviction is essential to India's credibility as a regional leader.

India must deepen engagement beyond ruling establishments, focusing on civil society, youth, economic stakeholders, and cultural institutions across South Asia. People-to-people ties have historically insulated bilateral relationships from political shocks and must be institutionalised as a core pillar of foreign policy.

Internal vigilance is inseparable from external strategy. Extremism does not respect borders, and ideological currents in the neighbourhood often find resonance domestically. Social cohesion, institutional trust, and political unity are strategic imperatives. The enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act and related reforms are steps in the right direction, but vigilance around elections in West Bengal and the prevention of mass migrations into Indian territory remain critical.

India must leverage its growing diplomatic capital as a leading voice in the Global South and a consequential player in the Indo-Pacific. Internationalising concerns about democratic erosion and extremism in its neighbourhood-without framing them as bilateral disputes-will be key. Norm-setting, not megaphone diplomacy, will define India's leadership.

India must draw strength from its civilisational ethos-the 'idea of Bharat' has always rested on pluralism, restraint, and moral clarity.

In a region where power is increasingly asserted through coercion and exclusion, India's distinctive advantage lies in demonstrating that stability flows from inclusion, not repression.

The neighbourhood is entering a phase where political disorder and ideological radicalism reinforce each other. The costs of inaction are high, but the risks of miscalculation are higher. India must act with calibrated firmness-anchored in values, guided by strategic realism, and confident in its civilisational inheritance. Leadership in South Asia will be earned by upholding order when institutions falter, defending democracy without destabilisation, and countering extremism without abandoning principle. That is the strategic test before India today-and it is one India must be prepared to meet.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.” - Sir Edmund Hillary

A NATION BREATHING SMOKE: THE RISING AQI IN INDIA



SHANAYA SHEEN

Winter across northern India now arrives with two regular warnings. One is the temperature. The other is the bitter air that presses itself into throats and lungs before sunrise. The Air Quality Index has turned into a morning forecast for many homes. Children ask about it before they pack their bags. Adults check it before stepping out. Numbers in the very poor and severe range have become so common that people have stopped reacting. That silence is the most dangerous part of this crisis.

Delhi stands at the centre of the problem once again. The city has been waking up to AQI levels near four hundred and sometimes crossing that point. In many localities the pollution is so thick that visibility during early hours is no better than a smoky corridor. Doctors in government and private hospitals are preparing for longer queues. Patients come in complaining of coughing fits, sore throats, breathlessness and strange headaches that do not go away.

The Delhi administration has brought back a graded response plan. Construction at large sites is paused. Waste burning is restricted. Heavy vehicles are diverted. Offices encourage staff to work from home. These decisions sound strong on paper but the honest reality is that the weather does not cooperate. The air refuses to move. Cold layers sit close to the ground and lock pollution inside like a glass lid. Parents still hesitate when they send their children to school. Elderly citizens avoid morning walks.

Delhi is not alone. The entire National Capital Region has been sitting inside the same toxic bowl. Noida has recorded shocking AQI readings above six hundred. Gurgaon crossed five hundred. Bahadurgarh touched four hundred sixty. Drivers on the expressway switch on blinking lights during the day because the haze is too dense. Commuters complain that their eyes burn before they reach work.

Winter acts like a silent accomplice. The northern plains lie below the giant Himalayan wall.

Cold air sinks toward the surface during the night. Warmer air rises above it. This creates a sealed lid that prevents polluted air from escaping upward. When there is no escape route particulates from vehicles, factories and burning simply linger in the breathing zone. Wind speeds also drop during winter. Without wind the entire atmosphere behaves like a closed room with no fan.

Humidity deepens the effect. The moisture in winter air binds with microscopic pollutants and creates smog. That smog has weight. It presses downward. Even healthy people start feeling pressure in their chest after a few minutes outdoors.

Human lifestyle choices make it worse. Nobody wants to wait for a bus in the cold. More cars come out. Diesel engines remain popular. The use of heaters increases. Diesel generator sets run in marketplaces. Street food vendors burn coal. Many houses still burn wood for warmth. All these tiny practices combine into one enormous seasonal cloud.

Jammu is experiencing its own version of this winter threat. The city does not dominate national reports on pollution but residents know that the problem has been growing. The winter fog arrives early in December and it stays through long nights. Highway traffic slows because drivers cannot see ahead. The fog blends with smoke from vehicles and from roadside burning and turns into a thick grey sheet near the ground.

Jammu sits in a natural bowl. Cold air sinks and does not rise. When that happens the smoke from food stalls, buses, heaters and domestic burning stays trapped inside the fog. People describe the feeling as breathing moisture mixed with ash. School buses delay their departure. Flights experience uncertainty. Morning walkers feel irritation inside the throat within minutes.

The biggest change is cultural. What was once seen as a romantic winter mist has now become a seasonal health concern. The expansion of the city and the constant rise in vehicles mean that the fog is becoming heavier every year.

Environmental groups have begun reminding the administration that a smaller imitation of the Delhi experience is developing silently.

Other cities tell similar stories. Lucknow sees the same still air and rising smoke around industrial patches. Kanpur has the regular problem of particulate matter from tanneries and factories. Mumbai does not face the same winter trapping effect but still records unhealthy air many days of the year because of traffic and coastal humidity. Kolkata deals with congestion and industrial emissions and reports a steady rise in respiratory complaints.

A long term study of Indian cities concluded that no major urban centre achieved safe air quality across the year even once in an entire decade. That single statement is enough to show that air pollution is not a seasonal disturbance. It is a structural failure.

Health effects deepen with every winter. Children carry the worst burden. Their lungs are still developing. When they inhale particulate matter during sports or travel the particles lodge inside delicate tissues. Doctors worry that a generation of children may never reach full lung capacity. Some will develop asthma. Others will have chronic bronchitis before adulthood.

Adults who already have diabetes or heart disease face hidden risks. Thick polluted air forces the heart to work harder. Blood thickens. The chance of clotting and stroke increases. Many people do not know that air pollution is linked to heart attacks but cardiologists now treat it as a clear risk factor.

Why does the problem refuse to improve? It is because India is developing on a model that increases emissions faster than reforms can compensate. More roads are built. More cars are purchased. Real estate grows everywhere. Diesel based logistics remain dominant. The expansion is rapid but the environmental management is slow. Electric mobility grows but not fast enough. Public buses remain limited. Rules on dust control exist but enforcement is weak. Small factories continue using dirty fuel.

Citizens still treat air quality as a temporary irritation. Many speak about it the way they speak about a cricket score. Mobile applications list the AQI but nobody stops using the car. Humour hides defeat. People have accepted that breathing poison in winter is unavoidable.

There is still room for change. Cities need serious transport planning that encourages buses and metro lines. Electric vehicles require support. Violators in industry must face fines. Dust control

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Watching India push new frontiers in space fills every Indian with pride. The LVM3-M6 mission, carrying the heaviest satellite launched from our soil, the USA's BlueBird Block-2, successfully placed it into its intended orbit, marking a defining moment for India's heavy-lift launch capability & growing global commercial presence. Guided by Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji's vision, this achievement also reflects our commitment to Atmanirbhar Bharat. My heartfelt appreciation to our tireless space scientists & engineers.
~ Kiren Rijju, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister



cannot remain optional. Diesel generators should be replaced by cleaner power. Smaller cities like Jammu need more AQI monitoring so that action can be guided by evidence. Green belts in business districts can help.

Most importantly India needs a cultural shift where clean air is seen as a constitutional right. Water is protected. Food is monitored. Air is ignored. That approach must end.

The Air Quality Index is more than a number on a screen. It is a mirror showing how weak the lungs of a nation have become. A winter morning should smell fresh and should feel safe. Right now it smells like burnt fuel and dust. If the trend continues children will grow up thinking that stepping outdoors in December is a risk to their body.

Winter will return every year. Geography will not change. The only thing that can change is human intention. Clean air demands courage, persistence and long term planning. Until then every breath in the northern belt will feel like a compromise.

Two killed, 38 policemen among 45 injured in violence-hit Karbi Anglong

KARBI ANGLONG

Fresh violence rocked Assam's troubled Karbi Anglong region on December 23, leaving two people dead and at least 45 others injured, including 38 police personnel, after clashes erupted between rival groups of protesters over demands for eviction of alleged encroachers from tribal belt areas, officials said.

One of the deceased was identified as Suresh Dey (25), a specially abled youth whose body was recovered from a building allegedly set on fire by agitators. Another victim, identified as Athik Timung, was killed during the clashes, a senior police officer confirmed.

The violence forced security forces to resort to lathi-charge and fire tear

gas shells to disperse the mobs as the situation spiralled out of control.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed grief over the loss of lives and said he was closely monitoring the situation in West Karbi Anglong. "It is deeply painful that two persons lost their lives during today's unrest," Sarma said in a post on X, announcing that additional security forces would be deployed in the Kheroni area on Wednesday to maintain peace. He said the government is in constant touch with all stakeholders to restore normalcy through dialogue and extended condolences to the bereaved families, assuring all necessary support.

Assam Director General of Police Harmeet Singh said he had earlier held discussions with the protesters,

who had assured that they would not turn violent, but the situation escalated rapidly. "They are hurling bombs, shooting arrows and burning down shops. Thirty-eight police personnel, including IPS officers, were injured in the violence. A stone hit my shoulder as well," Singh told reporters, warning that strict action would be taken if agitators continued to take the law into their own hands.

Despite prohibitory orders being in force, large numbers of people gathered in the Kheroni market area, including women and children whose shops were allegedly burnt earlier, to protest. At the same time, groups demanding eviction of encroachers from tribal belt areas also assembled at the site. Attempts by security forces to pacify both sides failed as

stone-pelting reportedly began from both directions, injuring protesters, police personnel and media persons.

As tensions escalated, police resorted to lathi-charge and fired tear gas shells to disperse the crowds. Earlier in the day, agitators had also allegedly torched two motorcycles in the Kheroni area.

The unrest stems from long-standing demands by various political and social organisations for the eviction of alleged illegal settlers from Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) lands in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts. Protesters, who had been on a hunger strike for the past 15 days, called it off on Tuesday following talks with senior minister Ranaj Pegu and assurances from the gov-

ernment that tripartite discussions would be held soon.

On Monday, the agitation had already turned violent, with protesters allegedly setting fire to the residence of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council chief executive member Tuliram Ronghang and around 15 shops in Kheroni Bazaar. Four people were injured in police firing, while an attempt to attack the Kheroni police station was foiled by security forces.

Following the escalation, prohibitory orders were imposed in both Karbi Anglong and neighbouring West Karbi Anglong districts. A night curfew was also enforced in Karbi Anglong, restricting the movement of individuals, groups and private vehicles from 5 pm to 6 am. Internet services were temporarily suspended in

both districts on Tuesday to prevent the spread of rumours and maintain law and order.

Minister Ranaj Pegu said public anger was driven by concerns over alleged encroachment on PGR and VGR lands. He noted that an eviction drive initiated last year was stalled after a petition was filed in the Gauhati High Court, which issued an interim order staying the process.

Chief Minister Sarma had earlier said rumours about the arrest of hunger-striking protesters had fuelled the agitation. "No one was arrested. They were taken to Guwahati for treatment as their health deteriorated," he clarified, adding that while the situation remains sensitive, efforts are underway to resolve the issue through dialogue.

Akhil Gogoi writes to Assam CM; additional forces deployed in Kheroni

GUWAHATI

Additional security forces were deployed in Kheroni on Wednesday morning as the violence-hit Karbi Anglong district in Assam remained calm but tense, a day after two people were killed and 45 injured, including 38 police personnel.

Kheroni is a village located in Donka subdivision of Karbi Anglong district in Assam. Diphu and Donka are the district & sub-district headquarters of Kheroni village respectively.

Amid the escalation, Sivassagar MIA Akhil Gogoi formally wrote to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, urging immediate intervention to prevent further ethnic unrest and restore law and order in the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) areas.

Fresh violence had erupted on December 23 in Kheroni Bazaar following clashes between two groups of protesters over demands for eviction of alleged encroachers from tribal belt, Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) lands. The unrest quickly spiralled into arson, stone-pelting and attacks on security forces, prompting the administration to impose prohibitory orders, night curfew and suspend internet services.

In his letter to the Chief Minister, Akhil Gogoi said visuals of large-scale violence, including the torching of the residence of KAAC Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang, had shocked and disappointed him. He warned that the situation posed a high risk of ethnic clashes and urged immediate, firm action to rein in the deteriorating law-and-order situation, stressing that authorities must restore peace "at any cost" to protect lives and property in the autonomous districts.

According to official confirmation, two persons lost their lives in the violence.

Protests intensify in Sribhumi against alleged atrocities on minorities in Bangladesh

SRIBHUMI

Protests against alleged atrocities on minority communities in Bangladesh intensified in Assam's Sribhumi on Tuesday, December 23, with the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) organising a massive rally in the town. The demonstration culminated in a charged protest along the banks of the Kushiara River, close to the India-Bangladesh international border.

The rally was held to protest the reported killing of Dipu Das in Bangladesh. Hundreds of activists and supporters took part in the march, which began at AOC Point in Sribhumi and passed through major roads of the town before reaching the Kushiara riverbank.

During the protest, demonstrators burned an effigy of Yunus and raised strong slogans demanding justice for

Dipu Das. Slogans critical of the Bangladeshi government were also raised, reflecting mounting anger over what protesters described as continued violence against minorities across the border.

Addressing the gathering, leaders and speakers from the Bajrang Dal and the VHP condemned the alleged atrocities and called for immediate accountability. They urged the authorities in Bangladesh to ensure the safety and security of minority communities and warned that protests would continue until justice is delivered and the violence is halted. While the demonstration remained largely peaceful, emotions ran high, particularly due to the proximity of the protest site to the international boundary. Local authorities maintained a close vigil to prevent any untoward incident and to ensure that law and order was not disrupted.

Arunachal Pradesh Governor chairs high-level security review meeting in Itanagar

ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt. General KT Parnaik (Retd.), chaired a high-level security review meeting at Lok Bhavan, Itanagar on December 23.

According to a release, the State Home Minister Mama Natung, Chief Secretary Manish Gupta, senior officials of the State Government, representatives from the State Police, Border Roads, Assam Rifles, and Central Reserve Police Force, in addition to Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police of Tirap, Changlang, and Longding Districts, participated in the review meeting.

This was a follow-up to the Security Review Meeting, held at Namsai on July 26, 2025. The Governor emphasised that the safety and security of the people must always remain the State Government's foremost priority, and that every effort should be made to eliminate fear and instil confidence among citizens.



He stressed that peace and security are the foundations of development, and people can progress only when they feel safe in their homes and communities.

The Governor called for a people-centric approach to security, where the administration and security agencies work proactively to protect lives, livelihoods, and public trust.

He said that district-level administrations must remain constantly alert and responsive, particularly in sensitive and border areas.

Emphasising the growing role of technology, the Governor urged the security forces and the civil administration to leverage mod-

ern tools and systems to further strengthen the State's security apparatus.

Referring to the arrest of agents and highlighting the strategic importance of Arunachal Pradesh, he cautioned that external forces and elements from neighbouring States may attempt to create disturbances, and therefore, sustained vigilance and preparedness are essential to safeguard peace and stability. He added that when Arunachal Pradesh is secured, the Nation is secured.

Commending the exemplary coordination among the uniformed forces deployed in the State, the Governor remarked that cooperation and mutual trust are the keys to finding lasting solutions to security challenges.

He also lauded the armed forces for their sustained efforts in building goodwill and harmonious relations with the local population, noting that winning the confidence of the people is as vital as operational readiness.

During the discussion, the State Home Minister highlighted several important initiatives of the State Government, including the surrender policy to bring misguided youth back into the mainstream, the implementation of the e-Inner Line Permit (e-ILP) system, and other measures to strengthen internal security and governance.

He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to maintaining peace, improving service delivery, and ensuring the safety and well-being of all citizens.

The State Police, the Border Roads Organisation, and the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police provided a comprehensive update on the action taken following the deliberations of the Namsai Security Meeting. Through detailed presentations, they outlined the measures initiated on the ground, progress achieved so far, and the challenges being addressed to further strengthen the security framework of the State.

Manipur police arrest four in twin operations, seize illegal arms and ammunition

IMPHAL

Manipur Police and security forces intensified their crackdown on illegal arms and ammunition, arresting four individuals in separate operations across Imphal East district on Tuesday, December 23, 2025, officials said.

In the first operation, police arrested two persons from different locations under Porompat Police Station for possession of illegal arms and related items. The accused were identified as Thingujam Suresh Singh (40), also known as Bimol or Ibohanbi, a native of Sekmajin Khunou in Kakching district currently residing at Khurai Tongbram Leirak, and Moirangthem Dayamoi (39) of Khurai Soibam Leikai in Imphal East district. Both were apprehended from their respective residences.



During searches conducted at the time of arrest, police recovered a .32 pistol along with a magazine loaded with a live round, a BAOFENG handheld wireless communication set

with its charger, two mobile phones and an Aadhaar card. Officials said the recovery suggests possible involvement in unlawful activities, and further investigation is under-

way. In a separate operation on the same day, security forces arrested two alleged arms smugglers from Keibi Awang Leikai Yaibirel under Sagolmang Police Station in Imphal East district. The accused were identified as Lisham Naoba Singh alias Leichin (38), a resident of Uyumpong Mamang Leikai under Sagolmang Police Station, and Laishram Chingkhel Meitei alias Thoubha (23), a resident of Sugnu Tangjeng Bazar.

From their possession, security forces seized 110 rounds of 5.56x45 mm live ammunition along with two mobile phones. Authorities said the ammunition was suspected to be meant for illegal circulation, posing a serious threat to public safety.

Police said investigations are continuing to trace the source of the arms and ammunition and to ascertain whether the accused are linked to any wider network.

Daughter, son-in-law arrested for killing elderly woman over money dispute

AGARTALA

Police on Tuesday arrested a woman and her husband for allegedly killing the woman's 70-year-old mother over a dispute related to a fixed deposit and demand for a scooter in Tripura's capital, officials said.

Police identified the deceased as Sulekha Dey of the West Bhubanban area under West Agartala police station. Police took her daughter, Bulti Deb, and son-in-law, Bishnu Deb, into custody for their alleged involvement in the crime.

Sadar subdivision police officer D P Ray said the case took a dramatic turn during investigation as the complainants themselves emerged as the prime accused. "Initially, both Bulti Deb and Bishnu Deb lodged a complaint claiming that unidentified miscreants had entered their house and assaulted the elderly woman. They later shifted her to GB Pant Hospital, where she died during treatment," Ray said.

However, police found several inconsistencies in their statements. Both the accused were living with the elderly woman in the same house, and investigators failed to find evidence supporting their initial claim of an outsider's

involvement. "During further investigation, we came to know about frequent family disputes. Bishnu Deb had been demanding a new scooter from his mother-in-law, which she refused. There was also a fixed deposit of Rs 2.5 lakh that was nearing maturity. The deceased had her own plans for the money, which did not align with the wishes of her daughter and son-in-law," Ray said.

According to police, when the elderly woman resisted their demands, the accused allegedly assaulted her, causing grievous injuries. Fearing police action, they took her to the hospital, where she later succumbed.

To project the incident as a robbery, the accused allegedly moved the gold ornaments worn by the deceased. Police later recovered the jewellery from the possession of a relative, to whom it had been handed over temporarily, officials said.

West Agartala police station officer-in-charge Rana Chatterjee said digital and scientific evidence played a crucial role in cracking the case. "Based on the evidence collected, it is clear that the complainants themselves committed the crime and tried to mislead the investigation," he said.

Yuletide spirit grips Mizoram as state gears up for 155th Christmas celebration

AIZAWL

Christian-majority Mizoram has been swept up in the festive spirit as Christmas carols and hymns resonate through streets, churches and homes across the state, with people of all ages eagerly awaiting the festival. This year marks the 155th Christmas celebration in Mizoram.

Churches across the state are abuzz with preparations, with buildings and courtyards adorned in festive decorations. Youth groups from various congregations have been going from locality to locality singing Christmas hymns, spreading messages of peace, joy and goodwill. Streets in the state capital Aizawl and other towns have also been festooned to mark the occasion.

Several non-governmental organisations, churches and community groups have launched charity drives, collecting donations and distributing gifts at orphanages, jails, rehabilitation centres and hospitals. Music concerts are being organised in Aizawl and district headquarters to raise funds for the poor and needy.

"Giving presents is one of the true essences of Christmas as it symbolises the love of God," said Reverend Lalhmimgawia of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church.

Markets in Aizawl and other district head-

quarters have witnessed heavy footfall, with shoppers thronging commercial hubs ahead of Christmas. "Markets and malls are reporting higher footfalls than previous years," said Lalhmimgawia, a garment shop owner at Bara Bazaar in Aizawl.

To ensure smooth movement amid the festive rush, the state government has imposed 'no vehicle zones' in busy areas of Aizawl and other district headquarters on December 23, 24 and 31. The government has also organised a Christmas-themed costume parade and a mass carol programme to spread the message of love, peace and joy associated with the birth of Christ.

Christmas in Mizoram is also a time for family reunions, with many students and workers returning home from outside the state to celebrate with their loved ones. "I am happy to reunite with my family this Christmas for the first time since I have been away from home for more than 10 years," said Lalhmimgawia, a 26-year-old from Saitual district working in Goa.

Historians note that the first Christmas on Mizo soil was observed in 1871, not by Mizos but by British colonial troops near the Tuivai River along the present Mizoram-Manipur border, during which the soldiers were attacked by Mizo warriors.

In Mizoram, Christmas is celebrated over three days, beginning on the evening of December 24 with urlawk zan (pre-night celebration) and concluding on December 26. December 25 is devoted to worship, marked by church services, sermons and zaikhawm (congregational singing), while December 26 is re-

served for traditional community feasts, an integral part of Mizo Christmas celebrations.

While larger denominations such as the Baptist Church of Mizoram and the Presbyterian Church organise community feasts on December 26, some indigenous churches begin feasting from December 25 itself. The festive fervour is particularly vibrant in rural areas, where celebrations often extend for nearly a week.

No one can stop BJP in TTAADC, CM Manik Saha slams Tipra Motha for alliance breach

With elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) approaching, Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha on December 23 launched a sharp attack on alliance partner Tipra Motha Party, accusing it of violating coalition discipline and making provocative statements aimed at politically isolating the BJP in tribal areas.

Addressing a public meeting in Khawai district, the chief minister strongly rebutted remarks by Tipra Motha leaders suggesting that the BJP would not be allowed to function within the TTAADC. Dr Saha asserted that no political party has the authority to prevent the BJP from organising programmes or working for the welfare of Janajati communities in Tripura.

"No one can stop us from holding party programmes. We believe in dialogue, not unrest. Our politics is rooted in law and order. BJP never believes in chaos or unruliness. Others may indulge in threats or theatrics, but our party and its leadership will always uphold democratic values," he said.

Drawing an analogy with global and national security developments, Dr Saha likened the political posturing of some parties to external threats faced by the country. Referring to Operation Sindoor, he said that just as Pakistan once attempted to intimidate India with nuclear threats, certain political forces were now trying to exert pressure through intimidation and political blackmail. He recalled that the BJP came to power in Tripura in 2018 through democratic means, not coercion.

Reiterating the BJP's commitment to inclusive development, the chief minister said the party continues to work in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of empowering women, youth, farmers and the underprivileged. While the BJP respects alliance norms, he added that repeated violations by partners could not be ignored. "The Prime Minister has successfully managed coalition politics at the national level, but such irresponsible conduct has no place in Tripura's political culture," he said.

Responding to allegations by the Tipra Motha MLA from Ramchandraghat, Dr Saha said it was contradictory for leaders to swing from praise to criticism without justification. He rejected claims that the BJP would be barred from functioning in the TTAADC, asserting that such statements would not be tolerated. Highlighting development initiatives, he said Rs 126 crore had been spent in the Ramchandraghat constituency in recent years, adding that people would eventually recognise genuine work and reject divisive politics.

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13 sentenced to life over lynching of father, son during anti-Waqf Act protests in West Bengal



KOLKATA

13 persons were sentenced to life imprisonment for the lynching of a man and his son during the protests over the Waqf (Amendment) Act by a court in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Tuesday. The court also directed the state to give Rs 15 lakh compensation to the family of the victims.

Special public prosecutor Bivas Chatterjee said this is the country's second conviction in a mob lynching case and first in West Bengal.

Haragobinda Das (72) and his son Chandan Das (42) were killed by a mob at their house in Jafraabad in the Samsernaj police station area on April 12.

The court had convicted 13 accused on Monday: Dildar Nadab, Asmaul Nadab,

Injamul Haque, Ziaul Haque, Fekarul Sheikh, Azfarul Sheikh, Manirul Sheikh, Ekbal Sheikh, Nurul Islam, Saba karim, Hazrat Sheikh, Akbar Ali and Usuf Sheikh. The accused were arrested from West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand.

Each of the 13 convicts was also sentenced to 10 years in prison for dacoity, 10 years of imprisonment for house trespass and a five-year term for rioting. All the sentences will run concurrently, the court said.

While speaking to reporters, Additional Director General of Police Supratim Sarkar said, police had framed a chargesheet in connection with the case within 56 days following prompt investigations.

The Das family has

expressed their discontentment with the court verdict. Haragobinda's wife, Parul Das, said, "We want the death penalty for three of the convicts, whom we have already identified. We are not happy with the court order."

Leader of Opposition in the state legislative assembly Suvendu Adhikari said, the BJP will assist the family move the high court seeking death penalty for three of the 13 convicts. "We are not happy with this judgment," he claimed.

Adhikari alleged that the charges against the three main accused were watered down by the SIT formed to probe the case.

"The SIT could not live up to the expectation of ensuring exemplary punishment to the main culprits," he said.

Jitendra Singh lauds ISRO after successful LVM3-M6 BlueBird Block-2 launch

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Wednesday congratulated the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) following the successful launch of the LVM3-M6 mission carrying the BlueBird Block-2 satellite.

"Kudos Team #ISRO for the successful launch of LVM3-M6 carrying BlueBird Block-2," Singh said.

"With the visionary patronage of PM Sh @narendramodi, @isro continues to achieve one success after another, reiterating India's growing prowess in Space technology," he added.

Goa Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant also hailed the achievement and praised ISRO scientists for the flawless execution of the mission.

"Heartiest congratulations to @isro on the successful LVM3-M6 mission," Sawant said.

"The flawless launch of the BlueBird Block-2 satellite marks a major step in providing 4G and 5G connectivity directly to mobile phones, even in the most remote regions," he added.

"Salute to the dedication and brilliance of our ISRO scientists. Goa is proud of this remarkable achievement," Sawant said.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite of the United States' AST SpaceMobile on Wednesday. The satellite



was successfully placed in orbit and the mission was declared a success. The launch took place from the Satish Dhawan Space Station in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, at 8:55 AM IST.

The mission will deploy the next-generation communication satellite designed to provide high-speed cellular broadband directly to smartphones worldwide. The BlueBird Block-2 spacecraft would be the heaviest payload to be launched into Low Earth Orbit in the history

of the LVM3 rocket. ISRO stated that the LVM3-M6/BlueBird Block-2 Mission is a dedicated commercial mission onboard the LVM3 launch vehicle, which will launch the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite of AST SpaceMobile, USA. This mission marks the sixth operational flight of LVM3.

In this mission, LVM3-M6 will place the BlueBird Block-2 satellite into Low Earth Orbit, which is the largest commercial communications satellite to be

deployed in Low Earth Orbit. It will also be the heaviest payload to be launched by LVM3 from Indian soil.

LVM3, developed by ISRO, is a three-stage launch vehicle comprising two solid strap-on motors (S200), a liquid core stage (L110), and a cryogenic upper stage (C25). It has a lift-off mass of 640 tonnes, a height of 43.5 meters, and a payload capability of 4,200 kg to Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

INTERNATIONAL

Ex-aide says Netanyahu tasked him with making a plan to evade responsibility for Oct. 7 attack



JERUSALEM

A former close aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that immediately following the October 2023 Hamas attack that triggered Israel's two-year war in Gaza, the Israeli leader instructed him to figure out how the premier could evade responsibility for the security breach. Former Netanyahu spokes-

person Eli Feldstein, who faces trial for allegedly leaking classified information to the press, made the explosive accusation during an extensive interview with Israel's Kan news channel Monday night.

Critics have repeatedly accused Netanyahu of refusing to accept blame for the deadliest attack in Israel's history. But little is known about Netanyahu's

behavior in the days immediately following the attack, while the premier has consistently resisted an independent state inquiry.

Speaking to Kan, Feldstein said "the first task" he received from Netanyahu after Oct. 7, 2023, was to stifle calls for accountability.

"He asked me, 'What are they talking about in the news? Are

they still talking about responsibility?'" Feldstein said. "He wanted me to think of something that could be said that would offset the media storm surrounding the question of whether the prime minister had taken responsibility or not."

He added that Netanyahu looked "panicked" when he made the request. Feldstein said he was later told by people in Netanyahu's close circle to omit the word "responsibility" from all statements.

On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people in southern Israel and took 251 hostages back to Gaza. Israel then launched a devastating war in Gaza that has killed nearly 71,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants but says around half the deaths were women and children.

Netanyahu's office called the interview a "long series of mendacious and recycled allegations made by a man with clear personal interests who is trying to deflect responsibility from himself," Hebrew media reported. Feldstein's statements come after his indictment in a case where he is accused of leaking classified military information to a German tabloid to improve public perception of the prime minister following the killing of six hostages in Gaza in August of last year.

Feldstein is also a suspect in the "Qatargate" scandal, one of two close aides to Netanyahu accused of accepting money from Qatar while also working for the prime minister.

Trump flew on Epstein's private jets at least eight times: Report



WASHINGTON

An email contained in documents related to Jeffrey Epstein suggests that US president Donald Trump traveled on Epstein's private jet more frequently than previously known, according to a report by the BBC.

The email, dated January 7, 2020, appears in an exchange with the subject line "RE: Epstein flight records." While the sender and recipient are redacted, the signature line identifies the author as an assistant US attorney in the Southern District of New York, with the name withheld.

According to the email, Trump is listed as a passenger on at least eight flights between 1993 and 1996. The message states that on at least four of those flights, Ghislaine Maxwell was also present. The records further indicate that Trump traveled at various times with Marla Maples, his daughter Tiffany, and his son Eric.

The email also notes that on one flight in 1993, Trump and Epstein were the only two passengers listed. On another flight, the only passengers were Epstein, Trump, and a then-20-year-old individual whose name is redacted.

In addition, the email states that two other flights included women who could potentially have been witnesses in the criminal case against Maxwell.

In 2022, Ghislaine Maxwell was sentenced to 20 years in prison, external for crimes including conspiracy to entice minors to travel to engage in illegal sex acts and sex trafficking of a minor.

Trump was a friend of Epstein's for years, but the president has said they fell out in about 2004 - years before Epstein was first arrested. Trump has consistently denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein and his presence on the flights does not indicate wrongdoing.

US President Donald Trump talks to reporters as

he arrives on the South Lawn of the White House, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025.

The US Department of Justice (DoJ) says nearly 30,000 additional pages of documents relating to Jeffrey Epstein have been released.

It urges caution on some that reference the US president, without specifying which ones, the BBC said.

"Some of these documents contain untrue and sensationalist claims made against President Trump that were submitted to the FBI right before the 2020 election," the DoJ says in a statement posted on X.

"To be clear: the claims are unfounded and false, and if they had a shred of credibility, they certainly would have been weaponized against President Trump already."

"Nevertheless, out of our commitment to the law and transparency, the DoJ is releasing these documents with the legally required protections for Epstein's victims."

HOW THE WEST MISREAD BANGLADESH – AND UNLEASHED A WAVE OF RADICAL INSTABILITY



The political turmoil in Bangladesh has often been interpreted in Western capitals through a familiar and reassuring lens: a struggle for democratic correction, accountability, and human rights. Yet this narrative collapses under closer scrutiny. What unfolded in Bangladesh was not a principled defence of democracy but a profound strategic and moral misreading — one that weakened the very forces holding radical extremism at bay. In the process, the West helped open the door to a volatile mix of religious vigilantism, cultural erasure, and targeted violence, the consequences of which now extend far beyond Bangladesh's borders.

At the centre of this miscalculation stood Sheikh Hasina — frequently criticised abroad as an overly strong leader, yet widely recognised at home as a crucial stabilising force in a society confronting organised radicalism. Western pressure on her government was largely justified through a selective human-rights framework, one that prioritised procedural democracy while overlooking the lived reality of minorities, secularists, and cultural institutions within Bangladesh.

The irony is stark. As external pressure mounted and state authority weakened, human-rights conditions deteriorated rather than improved. Those who paid the price were not abstract political ideals but real communities — particularly religious minorities, women, artists, and cultural custodians — whose safety depended on a state capable of enforcing order.

Minorities at the Epicentre of Violence

Bangladesh's Hindu community, historically integral to the country's social and cultural fabric, has borne the brunt of this shift. Allegations of blasphemy — often flimsy, exaggerated, or outright fabricated — have increasingly been weaponised to incite mob violence. Homes have been burned, temples vandalised, livelihoods destroyed, and lives lost, sometimes in full public view and with little fear of accountability.

Women from minority communities have faced sexual violence, intimidation, and social ostracism — not merely as criminal acts but as deliberate instruments of terror meant to force silence, displacement, or submission. These incidents are rarely isolated. They reflect a broader radicalisation in which identity itself becomes a tar-

get and fear becomes a governing tool. Under Sheikh Hasina's leadership, such forces were constrained through firm policing, intelligence coordination, and an uncompromising stance against jihadist mobilisation. Once that authority weakened, impunity expanded. Radical networks, long kept in check, began operating with renewed confidence.

The Weaponisation of Faith
One of the most corrosive trends has been the systematic misuse of religious sentiment. Accusations of blasphemy — often spread through social media — have triggered lynchings, arson, and communal unrest. Legal process has increasingly been replaced by mob justice, a pattern seen elsewhere in South Asia where fear becomes the dominant social currency and the rule of law retreats.

The West's failure lies in its inability — or unwillingness — to recognise that human rights are indivisible. Protecting free expression, minority life, and

Liberation War have been vandalised, neglected, or quietly erased. Statues, murals, and cultural installations celebrating the struggle against Pakistani military atrocities have been defaced or removed. The role of secular nationalism in Bangladesh's birth is being diluted, if not outright denied.

This is not accidental. It is ideological.

The Liberation War stood for linguistic identity, secularism, and resistance to religious authoritarianism. For radical Islamist groups, that history is an obstacle. By erasing it, they seek to rewrite Bangladesh not as a plural nation born of sacrifice, but as a theocratic project aligned with transnational Islamist narratives.

History, in this context, becomes a battlefield. Control the past, and the future becomes malleable.

Assault on Culture and Creative Expression

Bangladesh's rich tradition of art, literature, music, and theatre — long



personal safety requires a state capable of enforcing order. Undermining that capacity in the name of abstract ideals does not liberate society; it hands power to those who despise pluralism altogether.

Erasing the Foundations of 1971
Perhaps the most alarming development has been the systematic assault on the legacy of 1971 — the very foundation of Bangladesh as a nation. Memorials commemorating the

counterweight to extremism — is increasingly under attack. Cultural festivals have been disrupted, progressive artists threatened, and institutions intimidated.

Writers, performers, and academics face pressure to conform or retreat into silence.

What is being destroyed is not merely art, but cultural confidence — the belief that Bangladesh can be proudly Benga-

li, secular, and inclusive. The shrinking of cultural space mirrors the shrinking of civic space, each reinforcing the other in a downward spiral.

Regional Consequences and Strategic Fallout

Beyond Bangladesh, this episode fits a troubling regional pattern. Destabilisation in Bangladesh, combined with persistent volatility in Nepal and Pakistan, has created a widening arc of instability around India.

A stable, secular Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina was a cornerstone of eastern South Asian security. Dhaka cooperated closely with New Delhi on counter-terrorism, border management, and regional connectivity. Weakening Bangladesh's internal cohesion inevitably forces India into perpetual crisis management — diverting attention and resources from its broader global ambitions.

Whether by design or negligence, the outcome serves a familiar purpose: keeping India boxed into its neighbourhood, distracted by instability rather than shaping international outcomes.

A Strategic Own Goal

The West believed it was correcting an imbalance. Instead, it committed a strategic own goal — empowering radical actors, endangering minorities, erasing historical memory, and destabilising a sensitive region.

Sheikh Hasina was not a flawless leader. But she was a necessary stabiliser. She understood a hard truth many foreign observers missed: in societies confronting organised extremism, the absence of authority does not produce freedom — it produces fear.

By undermining Bangladesh's strongest secular firewall, external pressure helped let the genie out of the bottle. The forces now unleashed — religious vigilantism, cultural destruction, historical revisionism — are not easily contained, nor are they receptive to diplomatic sermons.

A Lesson Ignored at Great Cost

Bangladesh today stands at a crossroads between the plural, hard-won identity forged in 1971 and a descent

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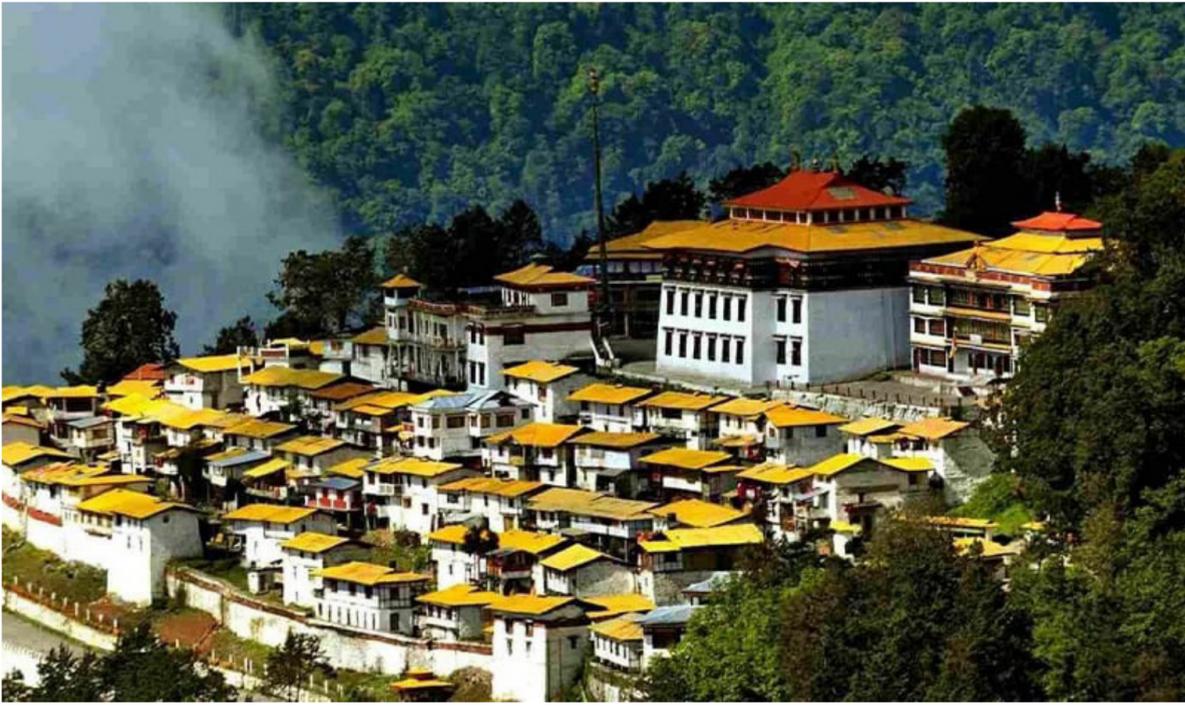


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UPS was started by two teenagers with one bicycle and \$100 borrowed from a friend.

Northeast India: A Tapestry of Mountains, Cultures, and Untamed Beauty



rice wine flow freely, and meals are often shared on bamboo trays, turning food into an act of community.

The wild landscapes of the northeast remain one of its strongest draws. Kaziranga's grasslands shelter most of the planet's one horned rhinos and invite travellers on elephant safaris and early morning birdwatching. Namdapha in Arunachal Pradesh is

cats and estuarine crocodiles. Many of these areas now rely on eco-tourism, with homestays and community treks that keep both livelihoods and nature in balance.

So why visit the northeast? Because much of it still sits off the typical tourist map. Misty stretches like the Ziro Valley, the sculpted caves of Meghalaya, and the ridge trails across Arunachal offer a sense of discovery that is hard to match. The region invites travellers to slow down and step into cultures where weaving, mask-making, drumming and age-old oral traditions remain part of everyday life. Adventure seekers find their own rhythm here, whether trekking along remote ridges, rafting the wild Siang, or rising over Tawang on a paraglider. And every meal introduces a new flavour shaped by generations of quiet experimentation.

In the end, the Northeast is

SATARUPA ACHARJEE

Northeast India feels like a world of its own. Tucked between the Himalayas and the wide Brahmaputra valley, and sharing borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal, the region sits at a meeting point of old civilisations, rare ecosystems and evolving modern life. What makes this corner of the country so compelling is the way its land, people and cultures come together with a sense of quiet intensity.

Start with geography. Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and parts of Assam and Nagaland lie along the lower ranges of the Himalayas, where peaks roll into forests and river-cut valleys. The Brahmaputra threads through the middle like a lifeline, shaping fertile plains that support rice, tea and oilseed cultivation. The region's biodiversity is astonishing: over two thousand orchid species, the elusive hoolock gibbon, the famed one horned rhinoceros of Kaziranga, and the world's only floating national park at Keibul Lamjao in Manipur. Rain defines much of the northeast, and places like Cherrapunji and Mawsynram receive such immense rainfall that it feeds a labyrinth of waterfalls from Nohkalikai to the roaring cascades hidden in the Khasi hills.

Culture here is lived through festivals that stay rooted in land and community. Assam's Bihu marks the new year with rhythm and feasting. Nagaland's Hornbill Festival brings together its tribes every December for dance, sport and shared heritage. Mizoram's Chapchar Kut celebrates the end of the jhum clearing season with bamboo dances and community gatherings. Meghalaya's Wangala resounds with hundreds of drums honouring the Garo deity Misi Salik. Losar in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim ushers in the Tibetan Buddhist new year with masked dances, chants and the glow of butter lamps. These celebrations aren't just spectacles for visitors; they pass down memory, identity and a sense of belonging.

Food reflects the same intimacy with land. Smoked and fermented



flavours dominate across the hills and valleys, from Assam's bhut jolokia to Nagaland's axone and the warm comfort of Sikkimese thukpa. Rice takes many forms such as Manipur's sticky mairam, Meghalaya's flattened khob, and Assam's fragrant joha. Bamboo shoots, wild mushrooms and tart forest fruits add their own signature. Rice beer and

a sprawling wilderness where snow leopards, red pandas and rare orchids survive far from human bustle. The evergreen forests of Dihing Patkai echo with the calls of the hoolock gibbon. Even the small mangrove belts in Assam's Goalpara, sometimes called the Sundarbans of the Northeast, protect fishing

more than a cluster of states on a map. It is a living tapestry of mountains, rivers, languages and resilient communities. Its challenges are real, but so are the possibilities it holds. As the country looks eastward, this region stands ready to connect India's deep heritage with the energy of its future.



