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**PERSPECTIVE**

**Actions speak louder than words. We can apologize over and over, but if our actions don't change, the words become meaningless.**

**Biren Singh heads to Delhi, fuels buzz over revival of popular govt**

IMPHAL



Former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Thursday left for New Delhi, triggering renewed speculation over possible moves to restore a popular government in the state as President's Rule approaches its expiry next month.

Speaking briefly to mediapersons before his departure, Singh declined to elaborate on the purpose of his visit but said the Central government would take action "very soon," adding to political anticipation in the state.

President's Rule in Manipur is set to lapse in February, and political circles have been abuzz with speculation that a new elected government could be formed without seeking any further extension of central rule.

Singh's visit comes against the backdrop of a meeting held last month in New Delhi, where senior BJP leaders had summoned all party MLAs from Manipur, cutting across community lines. Almost all BJP legislators attended the meeting, a development that further strengthened expectations of government formation.

While there has been no official announcement from the BJP or the Centre so far, Singh's trip to the national capital has lent fresh momentum to discussions on Manipur's political future and the likelihood of restoring an elected government in the state.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**"It is reiterated that all Indian citizens and PIOs (persons of Indian origin) should exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests or demonstrations, stay in contact with the Indian Embassy in Iran and monitor local media for any developments,"**

Ministry of External Affairs

**Tripura reports no Nipah cases; Health Department ramps up preventive measures**

AGARTALA

Tripura has not reported any cases of Nipah Virus Disease (NVD), even as new infections have been confirmed in other parts of the country, officials said. The state Health Department has assured that adequate preventive and preparedness measures are in place to safeguard public health.

Speaking at a press conference, Mission Directorate National Health Mission (NHM) Saju Vaheed described Nipah as a rare but serious zoonotic disease. "Nipah Virus can spread from animals to humans and also through human-to-human transmission. Fruit bats, commonly known as flying foxes, are the natural reservoirs of the virus. Though infections in humans are uncommon, the disease can cause severe illness and may be fatal," he said.

According to Vaheed, most Nipah cases in India have historically been reported from Kerala since 2018, including an outbreak in July 2025 in Palakkad and Malappuram districts. Recently, two cases were reported in West Bengal. "So far, no outbreak or suspected case has been detected in Tripura," he added.

The Health Department explained



the virus can be transmitted through the consumption of raw or unprocessed date palm sap contaminated by bats, fruits contaminated with bat saliva or urine, close contact with infected individuals including exposure to body fluids and inadequate infection control practices in healthcare settings.

"The public should watch for symptoms such as fever, headache, body ache, vomiting, weakness, cough, and breathing difficulties. Severe infections can lead to encephalitis, resulting in confusion, seizures, or unconsciousness," Vaheed said.

A departmental statement empha-

AGARTALA/UDAIPUR

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday flagged infiltration as one of the gravest security challenges confronting the Northeast, asserting that while Assam and Tripura have taken firm action along the Indo-Bangladesh border, West Bengal must also act decisively in the national interest.

Speaking to mediapersons after offering puja at the Mata Tripura Sundari Temple in Udaipur in Tripura's Gomati district, Sarma said infiltration from Bangladesh continues to pose a serious and sustained threat not only to Assam but to the entire Northeastern region.

Several Northeastern states share long international borders with Bangladesh, including Assam (262 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Tripura (856 km) and Mizoram (318 km), making border management a critical security concern.

"Infiltration is a major issue for the whole Northeast. Assam is the worst



affected and is facing direct attacks. After the Census, the minority population in Assam is expected to be around 40 per cent, which makes the situation extremely complex," Sarma said.

Stressing the need for coordinated action, the Chief Minister said Assam and Tripura have been detaining infiltrators, but alleged that similar measures are not being taken in West Bengal. "Tripura and Assam are acting against infiltrators, but Bengal is not. If West Bengal does not respond to the national cause, the entire country will suffer," he said.

Sarma underlined that safeguarding the Northeast requires sustained and robust measures along the Indo-Bangladesh border. "To keep the Northeast secure, it is very important

to have strong governments in Assam, Tripura and Bengal," he added.

Commenting on the situation in Bangladesh, Sarma said it would not have an impact on the upcoming Assam Assembly elections. However, he noted growing public anger in the state. "The Bangladesh issue will not affect the Assam elections, but people are angry over the atrocities being committed against Hindus in Bangladesh," he said.

Tripura Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha announced on Friday that Assam is exploring the possibility of exporting its surplus electricity to Bangladesh through Tripura, which has been supplying power to the neighbouring country since 2016.

Speaking to reporters during a programme for distributing woollen clothes and blankets in Agartala, Dr. Saha said Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visited Tripura yesterday to discuss key bilateral issues, including infrastructure and energy cooperation.

"The main discussion took place at the Churaibari check post along the Assam-Tripura border. The road on both sides is very narrow, causing heavy traffic jams. I requested the Assam CM to consider widening the road," Dr. Saha said.

On electricity, the Tripura Chief Minister added, "The Assam CM informed that Assam, like Tripura, is generating surplus power and is keen to export this excess electricity to Bangladesh. Since Tripura already has an operational framework for supplying power to Bangladesh, Assam expressed interest in using Tripura as a transmission route."

Dr. Saha also briefed CM Sarma on Tripura's existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh for power supply, which is due for renewal in March. "Tripura will continue its electricity exports even after March, and following the MoU renewal, Assam will be able to channel its surplus power to Bangladesh through Tripura," he said.

**Security forces launch major anti-insurgency operation in Manipur's Churachandpur**



IMPHAL

Security forces, including personnel from the Para Special Forces and Assam Rifles, on Friday launched coordinated anti-insurgency operations targeting suspected militant hideouts in the interior areas of Manipur's Churachandpur district, officials said.

"The operations were conducted in the Henglep area, targeting forested regions known to harbor militant groups," an official said, adding that troops were deployed into the jungle terrain with helicopter support.

While details are awaited on the specific groups being targeted, the area has a history of activity by the United Kuki National Army (UKNA), which is a non-signatory to the Suspension of Operations agreements, another official

**PM Modi to visit Assam on Jan 17-18; to flag off Amrit Bharat trains**

GUWAHATI,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive in Assam on January 17 for a two-day visit, marking his second trip to the state in less than a month, officials said.

Soon after his arrival in Guwahati on the evening of January 17, the Prime Minister will witness a large-scale cultural programme featuring the Bodo folk dance Bagurumba, with around 10,000 artistes performing at the Arjun Bhogeswar Barua Sports Stadium.

On January 18, Modi will travel to Kaliabor, where he will lay the foundation stone of the ₹6,957-crore Kaziranga elevated corridor project. The project is aimed at easing chronic traffic congestion along the Kaziranga National Park stretch of National Highway-37, while also improving road connectivity and ensuring the protection of wildlife in the ecologically sensitive area.

During the visit, the Prime Minister is also expected to virtually flag off two Amrit Bharat Express trains - the Dibrugarh-Gomti Nagar (Lucknow) service and the Kamakhya-Rohtak service. He will later address a public meeting at Kaliabor.

Modi's upcoming visit follows his two-day tour of Assam from December 20, during which he inaugurated the new terminal



building of the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati and unveiled a statue of Assam's first Chief Minister, Gopinath Bordoloi, after whom the airport is named.

During that visit, the Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for a ₹10,601-crore brown-field ammonia-urea plant in Dibrugarh and addressed public meetings in Guwahati and Nampur, in what was seen as an early push ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections.

Officials said the January visit underlines the Centre's continued focus on infrastructure development, connectivity and cultural engagement in the Northeast, with particular emphasis on Assam.

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## STARTUP INDIA

At the turn of the last decade, India was widely seen as a country of ideas, but not yet a country of startups. Entrepreneurial energy existed, ambition was plentiful, and technology costs were falling, yet the system surrounding founders was brittle. Innovation struggled to move beyond concept, scale was elusive, failure was penalised, markets were closed, and exits were rare. Entrepreneurship, for most Indians, was an act of personal risk rather than institutional support. The absence was not talent, but structure.

The launch of Startup India in 2016 marked a deliberate attempt to correct this imbalance. Under PM Modi, the objective was not to create isolated success stories but to redesign the full startup lifecycle. The transformation that followed is best understood by examining how five long-standing barriers were systematically dismantled, using policy, capital, and regulatory reform grounded in evidence rather than aspiration.

### Repairing the Missing First Mile of Innovation

Before 2016, India's startup challenge began at the idea stage, where innovation routinely failed to secure its first institutional backing. There was no national seed funding architecture for startups. The World Bank's 2014 Enterprise Innovation survey found that young Indian firms cited lack of early financing as the primary constraint on innovation. Formal angel investment was scarce, with industry bodies estimating that fewer than 300 startups per year accessed structured angel funding nationwide, concentrated in three cities. Innovation was gated by personal wealth and geography, not by the quality of ideas.

Startup India addressed this first-mile failure by institutionalising seed capital. The Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, launched in 2021 with a Rs 945 crore corpus, was designed specifically to fund proof of concept, prototyping, product trials, and market entry. As of 2025, 219 incubators across India have been approved to deploy this capital, ensuring sectoral and regional coverage.

In parallel, formal recognition expanded rapidly, with DPIIT-recognised startups growing from around 500 in 2016 to over 2 lakh by 2025. India shifted from anecdotal innovation to a pipeline-driven system where ideas could mature institutionally.

### Bridging the Valley Between Early Promise and Scale

Even when startups survived their early phase, scaling remained a systemic bottleneck. Prior to 2016, India's venture capital ecosystem was shallow and skewed toward early exits or late-stage bets. Tracxn and VC Circle data showed a steep drop in deal volumes and deployed capital, exposing the absence of shock absorbers for young firms. Promising startups stalled or shut down once private capital retreated.

Scale financing was redesigned through public anchoring of private capital. The Fund of Funds for Startups, with a Rs 10,000 crore corpus managed by SIDBI, was created to crowd in private investment. Government commitments of over Rs 11,800 crore have been channelled through more than 150 SEBI-registered AIFs, which have collectively invested over Rs 22,900 crore in more than 1,270 startups across sectors. Complementing equity, the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups, launched in 2022, enabled collateral-free loans up to Rs 20 crore, with over Rs 750 crore in loans guaranteed within three years. Scaling became a function of market performance rather than access to foreign capital alone.

The scale of this structural shift is reflected in capital flows. Over the past decade, Indian startups and emerging enterprises have attracted more than \$150 billion in private investment, spanning venture capital, private equity, and growth funding, placing India among the largest startup investment destinations globally.

### Replacing Regulatory Uncertainty with Predictable Risk

Before Startup India, regulations amplified risk rather than managing it. India ranked 130th in the World Bank's Doing Business 2016 report, reflecting pre-reform conditions, with weak scores on starting a business and resolving insolvency. Startups were subject to the same inspection regimes as large firms, while angel tax provisions introduced in 2012 created valuation uncertainty and discouraged early-stage investment.

Startup India normalised risk through compliance reform and legal clarity. DPIIT-recognised startups were allowed to self-certify compliance with nine labour laws and three environmental laws, avoiding inspections for up to five years. More than 64 regulatory reforms have been undertaken since 2016 to reduce compliance burden and ease capital raising. Also, more than 47,000 compliances have been reduced, with over 4,458 provisions decriminalized.

Crucially, fast-track exit mechanisms under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code now allow eligible startups to close operations within 90 days. Risk shifted from regulatory survival to innovation outcomes.

### Opening Markets That Were Once Structurally Closed

Capital without customers left startups stranded. Before 2016, government procurement rules mandated prior turnover and prior experience, effectively excluding startups from India's largest buyer ecosystem. The Kelkar Committee on Public Procurement noted in 2015 that the framework was biased toward incumbents and hostile to innovation. Reviews found negligible participation of new firms in central procurement. Startups lacked credible domestic buyers to validate and scale solutions. However, Startup India mandated relaxation of turnover and experience criteria for DPIIT-recognised startups in public procurement. Through the Government e-Marketplace in Startup Mahakumbh 2025, startups have completed transactions worth over Rs 38,500 crore, with more than 30,000 startups.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Live in the sunshine, swim the sea, drink the wild air."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

# CHINA'S DISCURSIVE WAR LESS REASONS FOR INDIA TO INDULGE



DR. BHAVNA SINGH

A report by the US Pentagon recently became the reason for unease amongst the apparatchiks in the Chinese political circles with the US disclosing a huge build-up of China's military arsenal. The assessment exposed that in 2024 China "tested essential components" of Taiwan invasion options, "including through exercises to strike sea and land targets, strike US forces in the Pacific, and block access to key ports." US assessment of China's military capabilities took into consideration the fact that its primary focus will be the First Island Chain that runs from the Japanese archipelago to the Malay peninsula and the PLA continues to make steady progress toward its 2027 goals where PLA will try to achieve "strategic decisive victory" over Taiwan. That is, to be able to fight and win a war on Taiwan by end of 2027.

US experts believe that China would not rule out unification of Taiwan by brute force and this could mean an amphibious invasion, fire-power strike and possibly a maritime blockade. This is augmented by its ambitions to crackdown on proponents of separatist movements such as the "Tibetan independence" and the creation of "East Turkistan." The report also highlighted that since the first full year of Xi Jinping in power, China's announced defense budget has nearly doubled. In July 2024, Beijing announced a new wave of reforms for the PLA focused on political discipline and military modernisation, largely on spurring military-civilian fusion. This would be achieved through three major strategic capabilities – "Strategic decisive victory, strategic counter balance and strategic deterrence and control." An interesting aspect of their understanding of Chinese strategic behaviour was how China views defense and

military engagements as a tool to punish or reward the US for its perceived behaviour.

The reaction from Chinese officials was strong. The Chinese Ministry of National Defense and Foreign Ministry have strongly pushed back on the Pentagon's annual report by stating that it misrepresents the country's military intentions and distorts its defense policy, accusing the US of harbouring a 'cold-war thinking.' China also urged the US to stop fabricating false narratives and avoid stoking confrontation by interfering in its internal affairs. China strongly rejected claims by the US that it may have deployed over 100 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Chinese officials denied this interpretation and countered that the US is using such narratives to justify its own nuclear expansion, calling on Washington to reduce its arsenal and promote real arms control. Even Chinese state media and military experts echoed government criticisms that US warnings were exaggerated or misinformed, sometimes framing the report as part of sustained US efforts to contain China.

As a response to the US report, China imposed sanctions on 30 US firms and individuals on 26 December 2025, after the Donald Trump administration approved a USD 11.1 bn arms sale to Taiwan. It also imposed sanctions on several US defence firms, including a branch of the US's Boeing and Northrop Grumman Systems Corporation, over their sale of weapons worth over USD11 billion to Taiwan. Notably, even the Taiwanese Parliament faced hurdles to push through a USD37 billion special military spending package due to political disagreements between China and the US.

Overall, the report highlights several issues that are critical to understand the Chinese military modernisation from the US perspec-

tive but more importantly, only a few days before, China had also published its White paper on 'China's Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation in the New Era' (27 November 2025, previous ones in 1995 and 2005), which re-emphasized its position vis-à-vis the current international security situation and reiterated its commitment to governance norms based on peaceful use of science and technology; entwining it with its peaceful rise and harmonious society perspectives. China's assurances that it is firmly opposed to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery, and it intends to strengthen its domestic export controls, are however by no means a guarantee against its domestic use of force against any threat that it considers needs a military response. In fact, the White paper only bolsters its confidence and showcases its increased capabilities as far as new frontiers of strategic security including outer space, cyberspace and artificial intelligence.

Notwithstanding the retorts from the Chinese government, it is extremely clear that the US assessment is likely the closest to reality that one can get considering China's opaqueness in sharing its data and technology. While the US report is sensitive in nature due to the issues it raised, the Indian defence establishment has less inclination to comment on our neighbour's military build-up and its cooperation with Pakistan. There was no formal statement from the Ministry of external Affairs directly addressing the Pentagon's 2025 'China military and Security Developments report.' On the other hand, China itself accused the US of trying to "undermine Sino-Indian ties" and distort its policies stating that China's relationship with Pakistan was driven by Indian concerns.

So, though tensions have eased between the two Asian neighbours,

renewed risks of friction on territorial issues could be portended. Perhaps, India has taken note of China's attempts to frame its position on Arunachal Pradesh as a "core interest" but has not responded to a US sponsored document. India's position on Arunachal has been clear and the understanding to resolve it bilaterally is what drives responses from the Indian government and the strategic community. India is likely to continue to handle its relations with China based on its own risk assessments and also the need not to derail the process of disengagement at the border.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

"The Supreme Court has exposed the truth about the Mamata Banerjee government. The Supreme Court clearly stated that anarchy would prevail. The Supreme Court's observations themselves reflect the law and order situation in Bengal... The Chief Minister herself interferes in the IPAC investigation, taking away files... The Supreme Court's statement makes it clear what kind of chaotic situation exists there." Meanwhile, West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose also emphasised that "everyone must follow the law." Speaking to reporters, Bose said, "There are courts. Everyone must follow the law. Whatever the Supreme Court has said is final." The remarks came after the Supreme Court on Thursday issued notices to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and senior state-police officials on pleas filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), alleging interference by state authorities during search operations at the premises of political consultancy firm I-PAC under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Sanjay Sarawagi  
Bihar BJP chief



## Asom Bani died silently, an unceremonious departure for the news weekly

NAVA THAKURIA

Amid existential crisis in northeast India's well-known media house the Assam Tribune group of newspapers, which worsened after the Covid-19 pandemic, a popular Assamese weekly newspaper lost its publication in the later part of 2025. Asom Bani, once a mainstream weekly for Assamese readers for decades, stopped hitting the stand since September last year, as the management lost interest to continue its printing on every Friday. Even though the seven decades old Guwahati-based Assamese-language weekly was lost in the media market, the management did not make any statement about Asom Bani's fate. Prior to its departure, the weekly was merged with Dainik Asom, an acclaimed Assamese daily from the prestigious media house, as its Friday supplement.

Once edited by prominent Assamese journalist-authors namely Satish Chandra Kakati, Tilak Hazarika, Phani Talukdar, Nirod Choudhury, Homen Bargohain, Chandraprasad Shaikia, the weekly had Dilip Chandan as its last editor, who served Asom Bani for nearly three decades. Launched on 1 July 1955 by legendary Assamese entrepreneur Radha Govinda Baruah, the weekly witnessed and reported various important socio-political developments including Assamese medium (of instruction in schools) movement, Assam anti-influx agitation, abrupt rising of separatist-influenced insurgency, social unrest, emergence of regional politics and its diminishing popularity with all sincerity to the indigenous population.

As the pandemic severely affected the

circulation of all newspapers published by the Assam Tribune group, the subsequent impact was observed in shrinking advertisement revenues from commercial entities. Like many other media institutions across India, the Assam Tribune group also faced a severe financial crisis that started reflecting in irregular salary disbursements to the employees including the working journalists. The employees union came to the public with various difficulties including the unpaid dues meant for the retired employees. The union leaders also made allegations that their group was not receiving a heavy amount of money from the State information & public relations directorate (against the published advertisements).

Soon rumours spread over the probable sale of the entire media group to another city-based television house. The Tribune management initially denied it terming those as false and motivated interpretations. In an official statement, the management assured its firm commitment to its editorial independence, journalistic integrity, and continuing services to its readers, advertisers, and stakeholders. The management even urged all concerned to 'disregard such baseless speculation and refrain from spreading misinformation'. Needless to mention that its primary news outlet The Assam Tribune, which came to light on 4 August 1939 (first editor being Lakshminath Phukan) and continues to be the highest circulated English daily in the north-eastern region.

But assurances of the management led by Prafulla Govinda Baruah (second son of

RG Baruah, who lately died on 14 December at the age of 93) did not prevent from handing over the responsibility of Dainik Asom, by now its over six decades old publication, to a different media group owned by young entrepreneur Kishor Borah that runs an Assamese satellite news channel ND24. The deal was made public on 17 September last year following which new management took the responsibility to publish Dainik Asom, but did not prefer to take care of Asom Bani (which already ceased to be an independent publication). As a supplement of Dainik Asom, the weekly hit the stands on 12 September 2025 for the last time.

The new management of Dainik Asom did not pick up all the engaged media employees and on a single day on 18 September over 70 employees (many of them were enjoying extended tenures with a monthly lump sum payment) lost their jobs. The Assam Tribune management assured them of all legal dues within a few weeks, but it was not materialised. Having no options, they have approached the labour court demanding their dues (which seemingly to the tune of rupees six crores altogether). It's unfortunate that the media house, which was India's first institution to implement the recommendations of statutory Majithia Wage Board in 2012, now takes the route of escapist (avoiding the legal payments to the retired employees).

Media observers believe that the Tribune house usually maintained its credibility while disseminating information, editorial viewpoints and other pieces of articles, but

in recent times the same principles were largely compromised. Their prime mover (The Assam Tribune) lavishly supported the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act movement that broke out in 2019, where it provided huge space to the public uprising that denounced the Union government's initiative to politically persecute the persecuted Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian families coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to India. The chaos engulfed the Brahmaputra valley of Assam for weeks with the narrative that the new citizenship law would discredit the Assam Accord (signed in 1985 to culminate the six years long anti-foreigner agitation). Moreover, the people of Assam remember when the newspaper produced a series of voluminous reports on the backdrop of a city press club election with little credibility, where the editorial focus was exposed as biased, unprofessional and maligned with character assassinations to the then secretary of Guwahati Press Club putting its hard earned integrity on stake. The Assam Tribune, in particular, exercised its liberty (but with no accountability) to report over the matter according to the callous planning of some ill-motivated reporters. If the present financial state of Assam Tribune group becomes dire, it was not entirely orchestrated by the pandemic alone, rather the situation made complicated by a section of arrogant media professionals, who enjoyed all due benefits but upon creating disorders in the media house, and shockingly the management preferred to remain a mute spectator to the entire developments.

# Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya inaugurates GI Mahotsav in Guwahati, champions 'Vocal for Local'

GUWAHATI

In a major initiative to promote India's indigenous heritage, traditional craftsmanship, and local economy, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Thursday, January 15, inaugurated the GI Mahotsav - "Promoting India's Heritage through GI Products" - at Arya Vidyapeeth College Ground in Guwahati. The festival is organised by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) with support from the Office of the Development Commissioner (MSME), under the Ministry of MSME, Government of India.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Acharya described the GI Mahotsav as a powerful embodiment of the "Vocal for Local" vision, providing national and global visibility to products crafted over generations by artisans, farmers, weavers, and craftsmen. He said the festival serves as a platform where India's

rich cultural heritage meets economic opportunity, strengthening grassroots economies.

"GI certification links a product to its geographical origin, establishing its quality, reputation, and unique characteristics," Shri Acharya said. "These products reflect the traditional identity, cultural heritage, and indigenous knowledge of communities, especially those from rural, marginal, and indigenous backgrounds, whose craftsmanship has gained recognition worldwide."

He lauded the Ministry of MSME and PHDCCI for conceptualising the initiative, noting that it exemplifies a meaningful convergence of culture, commerce, and community empowerment. Highlighting India's strong presence in the global GI landscape, he said the country ranks among the leading nations in registered GI products, reflecting its centuries-old traditions and cultural diversity nurtured at the village level.



Focusing on Assam, the Governor cited the state's unique contributions to India's GI ecosystem, including Muga and Eri silk, the weaving tradition of

Sualkuchi, bell metal craft of Sarthebari, terracotta art of Asharikandi, Assam tea, and GI-tagged Kaji Nemu. He emphasised that promoting GI products not only safeguards folk art and traditional knowledge but also enhances livelihoods, income, and dignity for artisans and farmers.

Governor Acharya also highlighted government initiatives supporting GI-linked MSMEs, including the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), RAMP, Micro and Small Enterprise Cluster Development Programme, Revival Fund Scheme, Credit Guarantee Scheme, and the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative. He stressed that these programmes transform traditional skills into sustainable, market-driven enterprises.

Underlining the role of women and youth, the Governor said they are the driving force of the GI-based economy. He encouraged youth-led innovation,

technology adoption, startups, and e-commerce as key tools to boost branding and market access for GI products. He called for coordinated efforts by the Centre, states, industry bodies, and private stakeholders to unlock the sector's full potential.

Concluding his address, Shri Acharya said, "The GI Mahotsav is not merely an exhibition but a celebration of India's cultural soul, economic resilience, and self-reliant future. It is a call for all stakeholders to safeguard and promote our nation's GI heritage collectively."

The inaugural programme was attended by PHDCCI Secretary General Dr Ranjit Mehta, MSME Committee Chairman Vinod Karwa, former NER President A. Towi Chopi, North Eastern Council Secretary Satinder Kumar Bhalla, along with entrepreneurs, artisans, farmers, youth representatives, and other dignitaries.

## Mizoram suffers Rs 114.64 crore loss from African Swine Fever in 2025

AIZAWL

Mizoram suffered a financial loss of Rs 114.64 crore in 2025 due to African Swine Fever (ASF), which claimed the lives of more than 9,700 pigs across the state, an official of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department said.

Deputy Director (Disease Investigation and Epidemiology) Esther Lalzoni Ralte told PTI that 9,711 pigs died due to ASF between March and December last year, while another 3,620 were culled as a preventive measure to contain the spread of the disease. The outbreak affected 3,867 families during the period.

ASF was first detected in Mizoram on March 21, 2021, at Lungsen village in Lunglei district near the Bangladesh border. Since then, the disease has had a devastating impact on pig farming in the state. According to official figures, a total of 72,012 pigs have died since 2021, affecting more than 12,500 families and resulting in cumulative financial losses of Rs 1,011.27 crore.

Of the total pig fatalities since 2021, 52,979 animals were culled as part of disease-control measures, Ralte said. The last reported pig deaths due to ASF in the state were recorded on December 8, 2025.

She said compensation amounting to over Rs 14.51 crore, jointly provided by the Centre and the state government, has been disbursed to farmers for pigs culled up to 2023. A proposal seeking Rs 24.94 crore as compensation for pigs culled in 2024 has been submitted to the Centre, with the amount to be shared equally by the Centre and the state. However, no compensation is provided for pigs that die due to the disease.

Mizoram recorded the highest pig fatalities in 2021, when 33,417 pigs died, followed by 14,950 deaths in 2024 and 12,795 in 2022. The state also suffered its highest financial loss in 2024, estimated at Rs 336.4 crore, followed by Rs 334.14 crore in 2021 and Rs 210.32 crore in 2022.

## Manipur SSC assures corruption-free, merit-based recruitment for subordinate posts

IMPHAL

The newly constituted Manipur Staff Selection Commission (MSSC) on Thursday reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring a transparent, corruption-free and merit-based recruitment process for subordinate posts in the state.

Addressing a media briefing at the Commission's temporary office in the Deputy Commissioner Complex, Imphal West, MSSC Chairman T Ranjit Singh said the Commission is focused on building a secure and efficient recruitment framework, even as it operates with limited manpower during its initial phase.

Singh, a retired IAS officer and the first Chairman of the MSSC, said he assumed charge on September 2, 2024, following his appointment under the Manipur Staff Selection Commission Act, 2022. He clarified that the Commission will conduct recruitment examinations for Group C and Group D posts,

while gazetted posts will continue to fall under the purview of the Manipur Public Service Commission (MPSC).

Highlighting a major reform, the Chairman announced that the state government has approved the introduction of Computer-Based Testing (CBT) for recruitment examinations-marking the first such initiative in Manipur. The move, he said, is aimed at minimising human intervention, curbing manipulation and ensuring a fair, transparent and smooth examination process.

Singh informed that the Commission has issued its first recruitment notification for around 10 regular posts of Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS). While government appointments are typically made on a contractual basis initially, he said special approval was obtained from the Governor-in-Council to make these appointments on a regular basis, as the state is currently under President's Rule.

## Assam igniting startup revolution, committed to strengthening ecosystem: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday reaffirmed the state government's commitment to building a strong and vibrant startup ecosystem, asserting that innovation and entrepreneurship are key to shaping India's future.

Marking National Startup Day, Sarma said Assam is focused on empowering young entrepreneurs by providing the right support, opportunities and an enabling environment that encourages innovation and impact-driven ventures.

"In Assam, we remain committed to nurturing a vibrant startup ecosystem, enabling young entrepreneurs with the right support, opportunities and an environment to innovate and grow," the Chief



Minister said in a post on X. Highlighting the progress made so far, Sarma said 615 startups have been incubated under

the Northeast Entrepreneurship and Startup Training (NEST) programme through the Assam Startup initiative since 2021.

He also noted that the state has set up a Rs 200-crore Assam Venture Capital Fund to provide financial backing to emerging startups and help them scale their ideas into sustainable businesses.

In addition, the Chief Minister said the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Assam Abhijan (CMAAA) is supporting thousands of young entrepreneurs across the state by offering institutional support and resources.

Sarma said the government's startup-focused policies are aimed at igniting a startup revolution in Assam, empowering youth to innovate, generate employment and contribute meaningfully to the state's economic growth.

## 'Many questions, no answers': Gaurav Gogoi seeks central probe into Zubeen Garg death case

GUWAHATI

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Friday demanded a central investigation into the death of iconic Assamese singer Zubeen Garg, alleging glaring contradictions between the Assam government's claims and the findings of authorities in Singapore.

Speaking to ANI, Gogoi said several questions surrounding Garg's death remain unanswered even months after the incident. He pointed out that while Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had described the case as a "murder," Singapore authorities, following their investigation, concluded that the singer's death was natural and involved no foul play.

"Whom should we trust? The Assam Chief Minister said Zubeen Garg was murdered and, through an SIT, five people were arrested. The chargesheet also framed conspiracy charges against five to six persons. On the other hand, the Singapore government, after a thorough investigation, has said



the death was natural," Gogoi said.

The Congress leader also questioned the absence of a probe by the Centre, noting that the event Garg attended in Singapore was organised by the Indian government and the Indian Embassy. "Why is the central government not conducting any investigation?" he asked, adding that the

swers," he said.

Earlier this week, the Assam cabinet approved the appointment of a team of Special Public Prosecutors to pursue the case. The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting held at Lok Sewa Bhawan in Guwahati under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sarma.

Announcing the decision, Sarma said senior advocate Ziaul Kamar has been appointed as Special Public Prosecutor, with Brojendra Mohan Chaudhuri as Additional Special Public Prosecutor. Kishor Dutta, Pranjal Dutta and Vikash Jammur will serve as Assistant Special Public Prosecutors. The cabinet also approved an allocation of Rs 5 crore to the Zubeen Garg Memorial Trust.

In December 2025, seven accused in connection with the case were produced virtually before the District and Sessions Court of Kamrup (Metro) in Guwahati.

Zubeen Garg, one of Assam's most celebrated singers and cultural icons, passed away in Singapore on September 19, 2025.

## Manipur IPS officer Dr Sarangthem Ibomcha Singh receives Chief of Army Staff Commendation 2026



IMPHAL

professional excellence.

The prestigious honour was announced on January 15 as part of the Army Day 2026 celebrations. It acknowledges Dr Singh's significant contributions to national security and his role in strengthening coordination between the civil police and the Army in sensitive and challenging operational environments.

Official sources said the commendation recognises his operational leadership, commitment to professionalism and sustained efforts to enhance security preparedness. Dr Singh has led elite police and commando units with strategic precision and discipline, particularly in complex security scenarios.

The Chief of Army Staff Commendation is awarded to officers who demonstrate exceptional dedication and performance that substantially improve operational effectiveness. Dr Singh's selection places him among a select group of officers honoured at the national level for exemplary service.

## Rare woolly bat recorded in Meghalaya, first confirmed Indian record of Kerivoula titania

SHILLONG

In a discovery highlighting the rich yet underexplored biodiversity of Northeast India, researchers have recorded Titania's woolly bat (*Kerivoula titania*) in Meghalaya, marking the first confirmed record of the species in the country.

The finding, from the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, extends the known geographical range of this elusive bat nearly 500 km westward and takes India's total bat diversity to 137 species. The discovery has been documented in a recent study published in the scientific journal *Animal Taxonomy and Ecology*.

The research was conducted by a team comprising Uttam Saikia, Manuel Ruedi, Rohit Chakravarty, Jennifer Lyngdoh, Rajib Goswami and Gabor Csorba. According to the study, a single male specimen was captured during a field survey in December 2024 in a community-owned forest near Thankharang village in the East Khasi Hills district, at an elevation of about 870 metres above sea level.

The bat was trapped at around 7.30 pm using a two-bank harp trap



placed across a narrow forest trail under dense canopy cover. To enhance capture efficiency, the researchers deployed a specialised bat lure that played pre-recorded ultrasonic echolo-

cation calls. The specimen was handled in accordance with internationally accepted mammalogical and ethical research protocols, the study said.

Detailed analyses-including exter-

nal morphology, craniodental measurements, echolocation call characteristics, wing structure assessment and mitochondrial DNA sequencing-confirmed the specimen's identity as *Kerivoula titania*. The researchers also provided the first-ever description of the species' baculum, or penile bone, offering an important anatomical reference for future taxonomic and evolutionary studies.

For comparative analysis, co-author Gabor Csorba examined the holotype along with 18 other specimens from Vietnam and Cambodia, strengthening the identification. The study noted that *Kerivoula titania* was previously thought to be confined to parts of Southeast Asia, including Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and China's Yunnan province. Earlier reports from Taiwan and Hainan were later shown to be misidentifications of the closely related *Kerivoula furva*.

Phylogenetic analysis based on two mitochondrial genes placed *Kerivoula titania* in a distinct evolutionary clade, separate from the hardwickii species complex, a conclusion reinforced by the inclusion of the newly recorded Indian specimen.

Researchers said the discovery underscores the importance of sustained biodiversity surveys in Northeast India, particularly in community-managed forests, which continue to reveal species previously unrecorded from the country.

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## Not just addressing current challenges but preparing for future wars too: Army chief



useful for both military and civilian purposes, contributing to the overall development of the country.

On organising the parade in Jaipur, he said Rajasthan is a land where many heroes have made history and therefore the land was chosen for the Army Day parade.

He said the Russia-Ukraine conflict has underlined that the duration of any war cannot be predicted in advance, and future conflicts could last either a few days or stretch into years.

"The Bhairav Battalion has been created to fill the gap between the Ghatak and Special Forces. New organisations have been established. More changes will also come. The battlefield is changing rapidly, and we need to move quickly to keep up," he said.

"We cannot predict the future, so it is essential to adapt to changing circumstances. Whether today's war will last four days or four years will only be known on the battlefield," he said. The Army chief laid emphasis on research and development in the country.

He said equipment and supplies should be manufactured and repaired within the country for fighting a long war.

"Research and development are very important. Until India focuses on research and development we will not be able to fight a long war and achieve complete self-reliance," he said.

"Therefore, research is crucial. Keeping this in mind, the Indian Army, in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation and academia, is deliberating on how to move forward," he said.

The Army chief also said that credibility is essential in information warfare.

like the Bhairav Battalion and Shakti Baan Regiment have been raised.

"This reflects the creation of an agile, responsive, and mission-oriented Army, aligned with future challenges," he said.

He said that today's parade showcased a beautiful blend of tradition and transformation.

"The Nepal Army Band reflected our strong ties, while the new units demonstrated the Army's emerging strength," he said.

"The Indian Army is fully prepared at all times for any kind of attack. We are fully prepared for future warfare. We demonstrated this in the parade. Such preparations will continue to increase in the coming days," he said, adding that the Indian Army will continue to adapt itself with time and will bring about the necessary changes.

He said that with the display of 'Made in India' equipment, the parade reflected that the foundation of transformation is self-reliance.

"The Indian Army needs equipment in the future that is designed and developed in India. Indigenisation is not just a goal; today, it has become a strategic necessity," he said.

General Dwivedi said that special emphasis is being placed on resources that are

### JAIPUR

Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Thursday said the institution is moving forward as a future-ready force and underscored the need for indigenous equipment, calling it a "strategic necessity".

"The Indian Army is moving forward as a future-ready force, possessing well-trained soldiers, modern equipment, and multi-domain operational capabilities. Technology is being used to make the soldier even more capable," he told reporters in Jaipur after the Army Day parade.

He said that there has been a clear shift in the Indian Army's thinking in the last few years.

The Operation Sindoor established a "new normal" according to the Army chief. "It demonstrated the Indian Army's ability to respond with speed, coordination and precision. The operation reflected a mature and confident force, capable of safeguarding national interests through measured, firm and responsible action," he said.

"We are not just addressing current challenges but also preparing for future wars. New structures are being created in this direction, which are being equipped and trained according to future needs," he said.

He said that new units

# India fastest-growing major economy in world: PM



### NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India has turned diversity into the strength of its democracy, and shown the world that democratic institutions and processes give stability, speed and scale to its development.

Inaugurating the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC), Modi also said democracy delivered results in India because the people of the country were at the heart of governance.

"In India, democracy means last-mile delivery," he said, adding that welfare measures undertaken by the Government with a spirit of public welfare, reach every individual without discrimination.

"Due to this spirit of welfare, 25

crore people have come out of poverty in recent years. In India, democracy delivers," he said.

The Prime Minister recalled that when India gained Independence, many doubted whether democracy could survive amidst the country's immense diversity.

"However, this very diversity became the strength of Indian democracy," he said.

Modi said there were also doubts about India's progress even if democracy did take root in the country.

"Contrary to these doubts, India has demonstrated that democratic institutions and processes provide stability, scale, and speed to its development," he said.

The Prime Minister said India was the fastest-growing major economy

in the world, has the world's largest digital payment system through UPI, and the largest vaccine producer.

He said India was also the second-largest steel producer, has the third-largest start up ecosystem, the third-largest aviation market, the fourth-largest railway network, the third-largest metro rail network. It is also the largest milk producer, and the second-largest rice producer.

Sixty-one speakers and presiding officers from 42 Commonwealth nations were attending the CSPOC which was being hosted by India for the fourth time.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Hariyansh, President of Inter Parliamentary Union Tulia Ackson, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary

Association Christopher Kalila were present among other dignitaries at the event.

Modi said nearly 50 per cent of the Commonwealth's total population resided in India which has consistently sought to contribute as much as possible to the development of all nations.

"India continuously makes efforts to learn from fellow partners and also ensures that India's experiences benefit other Commonwealth nations," the Prime Minister said.

Modi said at a time when the world is undergoing unprecedented transformation, it is also the moment for the Global South to chart new pathways.

The CSPOC is deliberating on a wide range of contemporary parliamentary issues, including the role of speakers and presiding officers, in maintaining strong democratic institutions.

The use of artificial intelligence in parliamentary functioning, the impact of social media on Members of Parliament, innovative strategies to enhance public understanding of Parliament and citizen participation beyond voting, among others, are also being discussed at the conference.

Modi said the scale of India's democracy is truly extraordinary and cited the 2024 general elections where 980 million citizens were registered to vote, a number larger than the population of some continents.

The Prime Minister said there were more than 8,000 candidates and over 700 political parties contesting, and the elections also witnessed record participation by women voters.

He said Indian democracy was rich in diversity with hundreds of languages being spoken. The country also has over 900 television channels across different languages, and thousands of newspapers and periodicals published.

The Prime Minister said very few societies manage diversity at such a scale, and India celebrates this diversity because its democracy has a strong foundation.

"India's democracy is like a large tree supported by deep roots. India has a long tradition of debate, dialogue, and collective decision-making," he said while noting that India is called the 'Mother of Democracy'.

## INTERNATIONAL

### US strikes deal with Taiwan to cut tariffs, boost chip investment

#### TAIPEI

Taiwan vowed Friday to remain the world's "most important" AI chipmaker, after reaching a trade deal with the United States that will reduce tariffs on the island's shipments and increase Taiwanese investment on US soil.

Taiwan is a powerhouse in producing chips -- a critical component in the global economy -- but the United States wants more of the technology made there.

The agreement "will drive a massive reshoring of America's semiconductor sector," the US Commerce Department said.

Under the deal, Washington will lower tariffs on Taiwanese goods to 15 percent, down from a 20 percent "reciprocal" rate meant to address US trade deficits and practices it deems unfair.

Taiwanese Premier Cho Jung-tai praised negotiators Friday for "delivering a well-executed home run" following months of talks.

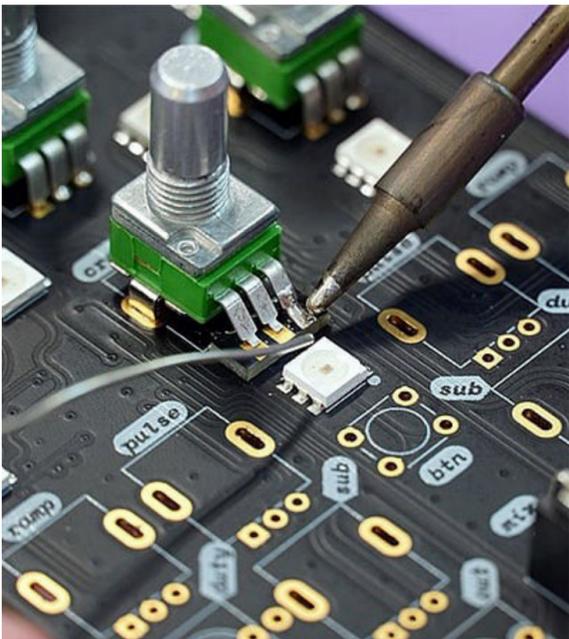
"These results underscore that the progress achieved so far has been hard-won," Cho said.

Taiwan's dominance of the chip industry has long been seen as a "silicon shield" protecting it from an invasion or blockade by China -- which claims the island is part of its sovereign territory -- and an incentive for the United States to defend it.

But the threat of a Chinese attack has fuelled concerns about potential disruptions to global supply chains, increasing pressure for more chip production beyond Taiwan's shores.

"Based on current planning, Taiwan will still remain the world's most important producer of AI semiconductors, not only for Taiwanese companies, but globally," Taiwanese Economic Affairs Minister Kung Ming-hsin assured reporters on Friday.

Production capacity for the advanced chips that power artificial intelligence systems will be split about 85-15 between Taiwan and the United States by 2030 and 80-20 by 2036, he projected.



The deal will need to be approved by Taiwan's opposition-controlled parliament where lawmakers have expressed concern about the potential for Taiwan to lose its chip dominance.

Sector-specific tariffs on Taiwanese auto parts, timber, lumber and wood products will also be capped at 15 percent, while generic pharmaceuticals and certain natural resources will face no "reciprocal" duties, the US Commerce Department said.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese chip and tech businesses are set to make "new, direct investments totalling at least \$250 billion" in the United States to build and expand capacity in areas like advanced semiconductors and AI, the department said.

Taiwan will also provide "cred-

it guarantees of at least \$250 billion to facilitate additional investment by Taiwanese enterprises," it said, adding that this would support the growth of the US semiconductor supply chain.

Taiwan's government said the new tariff will not stack on top of existing duties, which had been a major concern for local industries.

"Of course it's good that the reciprocal tariff has been lowered to 15 percent -- at least it puts us on par with our main competitors South Korea and Japan," said Chris Wu, sales director for Taiwanese machine tool maker Litz Hitech Corp.

But, given the company's single-digit profit margins, "there is no way we can absorb the tariff" for US customers, he said.

More than half of Taiwan's exports to the United States are information and communications technology products -- including semiconductors.

"The objective is to bring 40 percent of Taiwan's entire supply chain and production, to domestically bring it into America," US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick told CNBC.

"We're going to bring it all over, so we become self-sufficient in the capacity of building semiconductors," he added.

The announcement did not mention names, but the deal has key implications for Taiwanese chip-making titan TSMC, which last year pledged to spend an additional \$100 billion on US plants.

Frenzied demand for AI technology has sent profits skyrocketing for the company, the world's biggest contract maker of chips used in everything from Apple phones to Nvidia's cutting-edge AI hardware.

"As a semiconductor foundry serving customers worldwide, we welcome the prospect of robust trade agreements between the United States and Taiwan," TSMC said in a statement Friday.

"Strengthened trade relations are essential for advancing future technologies and ensuring a resilient semiconductor supply chain," Lutnick said TSMC has bought land and could expand in Arizona as part of the deal. "They just bought hundreds of acres adjacent to their property. Now I'm going to let them go through it with their board and give them time," he told CNBC.

Taiwanese producers who invest in the United States will be treated more favorably when it comes to future semiconductor duties, the US Commerce Department said.

A day prior, US officials held off imposing wider chip tariffs, instead announcing a 25 percent duty on certain semiconductors meant to be shipped abroad -- a key step in allowing US chip giant Nvidia to sell AI chips to China.

### South Korea's ex-President Yoon gets five years in prison on charges related to martial law decree



#### SEOUL

A South Korean court sentenced former President Yoon Suk Yeol to five years in prison Friday in the first verdict from eight criminal trials over the martial law debacle that forced him out of office and other allegations.

Yoon was impeached, arrested and dismissed as president after his short-lived imposition of martial law in December 2024 triggered huge public protests calling for his ouster.

The most significant criminal charge against him alleges that his martial law enforcement amounted to a rebellion, and the independent counsel has requested the death sentence in the case that is to be decided in a ruling next month.

In Friday's case, the Seoul Central District Court sentenced Yoon for defying attempts to detain him, fabricating the martial law proclamation and sidestepping a

legally mandated full Cabinet meeting.

Yoon has maintained he didn't intend to place the country under military rule for an extended period, saying his decree was only meant to inform the people about the danger of the liberal-controlled parliament obstructing his agenda. But investigators have viewed Yoon's decree as an attempt to bolster and prolong his rule, charging him with rebellion, abuse of power and other criminal offenses.

Judge Baek Dae-hyun said in the televised ruling that imposing "a grave punishment" was necessary because Yoon hasn't shown remorse and has only repeated "hard-to-comprehend excuses." The judge also restoring legal systems damaged by Yoon's action was necessary.

Yoon, who can appeal the ruling, hasn't immediately responded to the ruling. But when the independent counsel demanded a

10-year prison term in the case, Yoon's defense team accused them of being politically driven and lacking legal grounds to demand such "an excessive" sentence.

Prison sentences in the multiple, smaller trials Yoon faces would matter if he is spared the death penalty or life imprisonment at the rebellion trial.

Park SungBae, a lawyer who specializes in criminal law, said there is little chance the court would decide Yoon should face the death penalty in the rebellion case. He said the court will likely issue a life sentence or a sentence of 30 years or more in prison.

South Korea has maintained a de facto moratorium on executions since 1997 and courts rarely hand down death sentences. Park said the court would take into account that Yoon's decree didn't cause casualties and didn't last long, although Yoon hasn't shown genuine remorse for his action.

## Bhogali Bihu Celebrated in Kolkata with Rupohi Haat and Community Feast

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SANJEEV BAISHYA

Kolkata came alive with the spirit of Bhogali Bihu as the Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association hosted a grand celebration at Assam Bhawan. The programme included Rupohi Haat, a fair of indigenous products from the Northeast, and Uruka, a traditional community feast.

The event highlighted Assamese culture, food, and local enterprise. People from different communities joined in large numbers, giving the celebration a warm and festive feel.

Rupohi Haat has been organised by the Association since 2023. It brings vendors from different districts of Assam who sell traditional food items, handloom textiles, ornaments, and crafts. Over the years, the fair has built a strong identity in Kolkata and has become a meeting point for Assamese and Bengali cultures.

This year, the fair was inaugurated by Chhattisgarh Governor Ramen Deka. The programme was attended by



Good friends, good books, and a sleepy conscience: This is the ideal life

Association president Dr Khanindra Pathak, Joint



Resident Commissioner of Assam Bhawan Randeep Dam, Chief Advisor Dev Sonowal, and other members. The Governor inaugurated the fair by opening a specially designed entrance gate inspired by the traditional Assamese nongola.

In his address, Governor Deka spoke on women's empowerment, self-reliance, and environmental care. He shared examples of doctors turning to floriculture and praised the work culture of Chhattisgarh. He also urged

people to plant at least one sapling to help fight climate change. Working president Hiten Hatkhowa said the Association has long supported such eco-friendly ideas.

The Governor also spoke about the uniqueness of Assamese language and culture. He said every culture has its own identity and should not be compared with others. He added that cultures grow stronger when they support each other and said Rupohi Haat in Kolkata is a fine example of cultural

harmony.

Participants this year came from Sualkuchi, BARPETA, Sribhumi, Chirang, Guwahati, parts of Nagaland, and also from Chhattisgarh, which joined as a guest state. The Governor visited the stalls and interacted with the vendors, offering guidance and encouragement.

On the final evening, around 400 people took part in the Bhogali feast and enjoyed traditional Assamese dishes. A cultural programme followed with performances by Indira Deka, Sujata Paul, Abhipriya Goswami, Kanushree Baruah, Anwesa Borah, Harsh Shandilya, and Swapnil Kashyap.

General Secretary Indukalpa Saikia, while anchoring the programme, said the aim of such events is to introduce Assamese language, literature, and culture to the younger generation in Kolkata and to bring the community closer.

The celebrations ended on a joyful note with a lottery draw. Before dinner, a meji was lit and prayers were offered for peace and prosperity. Joint Resident Commissioner Randeep Dam and actress Jaya Seal were among the guests present at the Bhogali feast.

# CAU Pasighat Opens Tribal Girls' Hostel and Agro-Eco Tourism Park, Launches Border Agriculture Project



**BISWADEEP GUPTA**

## PASIGHAT

The College of Agriculture under the Central Agricultural University (CAU), Pasighat, held a public programme on Wednesday. The event marked the inauguration of a Tribal Girls' Hostel and an Agro-Eco Tourism Park. It also saw the operational launch of the "Aditya-Prabha Gram Project: Fostering Agricultural Harmony in Border Communities of the Eastern Himalayas". The project is supported by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Government of India, through the North Eastern Council (NEC).

Satinder Kumar Bhalla, Secretary, NEC, Shillong, attended the programme as the Chief Guest. While addressing the gathering, he spoke about the vision of Viksit Bharat. He stressed the need to raise farm production, improve value addition, and create better livelihood options in border areas. He pointed out Arunachal Pradesh's strong potential in kiwi cultivation. He also encouraged youth to take up entrepreneurship and start-up ventures, saying youth-led enterprises are key to building a self-reliant and developed India.

Earlier, L. M. Garnayak, Director of Research, Central Agricultural University, Imphal, explained the background and goals of the project. He said the Aditya-Prabha Gram Project aims to strengthen agriculture through inclusive transformation of youth in agri and allied sectors. He added that the project also focuses on building rural awareness to support better human aspirations. According to him, the main goal is to promote agricultural harmony in border communities of the Eastern Himalayas.

Tapir Gao, Member of Parliament from Arunachal Pradesh, said the Aditya-Prabha Gram Project is a pilot initiative. He explained that it is designed to test new and innovative models for agricultural and rural



development in border regions. He also referred to the Vibrant Village Programme and said both initiatives work together to strengthen border villages. Gao urged the implementing agencies to bring more creativity and innovation so that the

benefits reach people at the grassroots level.

He further informed that a total outlay of 5 crore has been allocated for the Aditya-Prabha Gram Project. He expressed hope that if the pilot project is successful, similar initiatives

will be expanded to other border regions in the future. As per project details, the initiative covers two Northeastern states, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. It spans seven border districts that share international boundaries with China, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, and Tibet. Over a period of three years, the project is expected to benefit 70 target villages and around 2,100 farm families.

Dr. Anupam Mishra, Vice-Chancellor of CAU, Imphal, said, "We proposed this project because we truly believe in it. Our vision is clear. We want to grow into a leader in Southeast Asia. We have thought about how this can happen and what steps are needed to become one of the leading institutions in the world. There are many cultural, social, and ecological factors involved. That is why this project was proposed. He also stressed the need to focus on border areas. For projects to succeed, a strong and foolproof multi-level system is needed. Our institution has qualified staff, researchers, and experts to carry this forward. That is why we proposed this project."

In Arunachal Pradesh, the project will be implemented in Tawang, Upper Subansiri, Shi-Yomi, Upper Siang, Dibang Valley, and Changlang districts. In Sikkim, the project covers Soreng district. The programme was attended by local MLAs Tapi Darang from Pasighat East and Ninong Ering from Pasighat West. The programme highlighted CAU's commitment to tribal welfare, promotion of eco-tourism, agricultural development, and sustainable growth in border areas of the Northeastern Re-

gion. Dean of the College, Prof. Sanjay Swami, delivered the vote of thanks. He thanked all stakeholders and underlined the need for coordinated efforts to ensure long-term development of the region.



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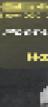


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The 4th 5E For Success Conclave is going to be held on the theme: 'From School to Campus to Corporate'. Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.

Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & Colleges, Extension, Seminars, Public Speaking (College) | In the online event, former students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.

**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 news channels, journalists, media & corporate PR, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.



**Barak Festival 2025**  
PAINTING CARNIVAL  
NE CULTURAL FEST  
E-SPORTS  
FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION  
BOOK CLUB | SPEECH & DEBATE  
RACE MARATHON | CONCLAVES

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**10-12 JAN**  
**Science Studio**  
Use a glimpse of Science to arts through projects. 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 Outlines  
Real-Time Photography Contest of 'Barak Festival 2025'



**Barak Festival**  
Band Night | 10 JAN  
Musical Night | 11 JAN

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**10-12 JAN**  
**E-Sports**  
FIFA Football | DOTA 2 | CASH PRIZES | Trophy

**11 JAN**  
**film festival**  
Award-Giving (One month) | Film from Manipur  
Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W & Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet



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Discover valuable experience and learn more about the industry.

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**10-12 JAN**  
**Book Bank**  
Anti-Risk Campaign: Book Bank | 100 books | 100000+ users | 100000+ books

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

**Painting Carnival**  
Water Colour painting and Draw-Paint Campaign

**Watch Out! Film Festival**



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