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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.

Dimapur Bans Drones, RPAs in Red Zones on Republic Day

DIMAPUR
Nagaland's Dimapur Police Commissionerate has imposed restrictions on the operation of drones and remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) within its jurisdiction on January 26 to strengthen security arrangements for Republic Day celebrations. Dimapur Commissioner of Police Aotula T. Imchen, in an order issued under Rule 24 of the Drone Rules, 2021, said areas within a two-kilometre radius of selected locations have been declared "red zones" or no-fly zones. The restrictions will be in force from 2 am to 6 pm on January 26. The locations notified as red zones include Dimapur DDSC Stadium, Chumoukedima Samaguting Stadium and Niuland Public Ground. As per the order, no person will be permitted to operate any drone or RPA in these areas during the stipulated period without prior permission from the competent authority. The move is aimed at ensuring public safety and preventing any security breaches during the Republic Day events.

WHO SAID WHAT

"On the occasion of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary, observed as Parakram Diwas, I offer my humble tribute to this great leader of India's freedom struggle. His call for independence awakened a spirit of courage, self-confidence, unity, and nationalism in the hearts of millions of Indians. Through the Indian National Army, he not only provided decisive leadership to India's freedom movement but also elevated it to the international stage. His ideals continue to inspire every Indian even today,"
Droupadi Murmu

ULFA, Other Militant Leaders Spotted in Bangladesh, Assam CM Warns of Fresh Security Threats

GUWAHATI
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday raised serious security concerns for the state and the Northeast, citing intelligence inputs that suggest the presence and movement of senior leaders of banned militant outfits, including the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), in neighbouring Bangladesh. Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Sarma said intelligence agencies had recently detected visits by top commanders of ULFA and other militant groups that are not part of any ceasefire arrangement. "Recently, certain visits have taken place involving top commanders of ULFA and some other small militant groups that are not under ceasefire. Their presence has been noticed on the soil of Bangladesh," the Chief Minister said. Referring to past cooperation between India and Bangladesh, Sarma said the support extended by the Awami League government under former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had



been instrumental in curbing militancy and restoring peace in Assam and the wider Northeast. "We have been able to tame ULFA and militancy in Assam because of the help we received from the then Bangladesh regime. Assam and the Northeast would not have been peaceful without Sheikh Hasina. That is the reality," he said. The Chief Minister cautioned that any deterioration in ties or a rise in hostility towards India following po-

Killing of Meitei Civilian Rishikanta Singh Handed to NIA

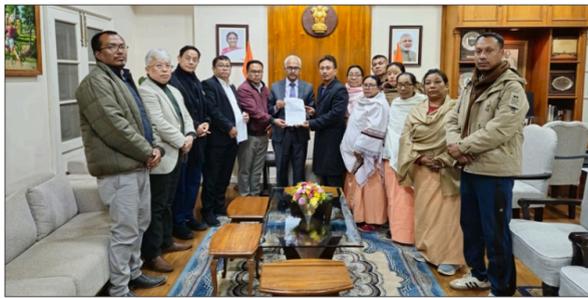
MANIPUR GOVERNOR ASSURES IMPARTIAL PROBE

IMPHAL

The killing of Meitei civilian Mayanglambam Rishikanta Singh will be investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla said on January 22, assuring an impartial and thorough probe into the incident.

A Joint Action Committee led by Inner Manipur Member of Parliament Dr Angomcha Bimol Akoiijam, along with MLAs Thokchom Lokeshwar Singh and Kangujam Ranjit Singh, called on the Governor at Raj Bhavan and submitted a memorandum seeking appropriate action in connection with Singh's death. The delegation was accompanied by family members of the deceased.

During the meeting, the representatives expressed serious concern over the incident and stressed the need for a fair, transparent and time-bound investigation to ensure accountability and justice for the victim's family.



Expressing deep sorrow over the killing, Governor Bhalla conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and informed the delegation that the case has been handed over to the NIA to ensure an impartial and professional investigation.

The Governor also said that intensive combing operations have been launched since the previous night to apprehend those responsible. He added that the operations are being

carried out on a war footing, with coordinated efforts by both state and central security forces.

Reiterating the government's commitment to maintaining law and order and restoring public confidence, Governor Bhalla assured the delegation that all necessary steps are being taken strictly in accordance with the law, and expressed his profound regret over the tragic loss of life.

Bangladesh Cannot Sever Northeast's Link with India, Says Former BSF Chief SL Thaosen



GUWAHATI

Former Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF) SL Thaosen has dismissed claims by some leaders in Bangladesh about cutting off the Northeast from mainland India, asserting that such threats are unrealistic and cannot be translated into action.

Thaosen said the idea of severing the strategic Siliguri Corridor popularly known as the Chicken Neck-will "always remain a dream" for those making such statements. He underlined that Bangladesh lacks the military capability to challenge India on the ground.

"Those who are threatening to cut off the Chicken Neck Corridor will never come down to the ground and fight. Such a move would require direct military confrontation, and Bangladesh can never match the might of the Indian armed forces," he said.

Thaosen remarked that while Indian forces are battle-hardened and combat-ready, Bangladesh's military does not have comparable experience. "Indian forces are always prepared. Bangladesh has largely an ornamental army that has not fought major battles," he added.

Commenting on the broader politi-

cal situation in Bangladesh, the former BSF chief said recent developments are a cause for concern for India, particularly as anti-India forces appear to be gaining ground. However, he cautioned against generalising public sentiment in the neighbouring country.

"Not all people in Bangladesh are radicals," Thaosen said, expressing hope that the situation would stabilise once an elected government assumes power.

On measures needed to prevent anti-India elements from infiltrating through the Bangladesh border, Thaosen advocated a multi-layered security approach. He noted that while the BSF guards the international border, difficult terrain in certain stretches makes it impossible to maintain round-the-clock vigilance along every inch.

"If someone manages to sneak in, they will have to use public transport such as buses or trains. That is where vigilance must be stepped up," he said, calling for heightened monitoring across all modes of transport.

Thaosen also stressed the importance of involving local communities in border areas. "People living along the border should be taken into confidence so that they can alert authorities if they notice unfamiliar faces," he said.

Expressing optimism about the future, the former BSF DG said he hoped an elected government in Bangladesh would rein in the influence of hostile external agencies. "An elected government will not give free rein to Pakistan's ISI to operate there," he said.

He added that while Bangladesh may be able to survive without India's support, the quality of life of its people would deteriorate significantly without close cooperation with its larger neighbour.

Nagaland Makes Birth Certificate Mandatory for School Admissions, Government Jobs and Services

KOHIMA

The Nagaland government has made birth certificates the sole mandatory document for school admissions, government employment and access to a wide range of official services, following the enforcement of the Nagaland Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Rules, 2024.

Advisor for Economics and Statistics, Evaluation and IT&C, S Setronkyu Sangtam, said the amended rules are aimed at strengthening the civil registration system and ensuring a uniform, legally sound mechanism for establishing individual identity across the state. He described the registration of births and deaths as a critical state responsibility, essential not only for legal identity but also for effective planning and delivery of welfare programmes.

Sangtam said civil registration is a continuous, permanent and compulsory process that records vital life events such as births and deaths. He noted that the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 was amended by Parliament in 2023 and came into force across the country on October 1, 2023. In line with the central amendment, the Nagaland Legislative Assembly passed corresponding state rules in 2024, which were formally notified on February 8, 2025.

Under the revised framework, a birth certificate will now be the only valid document for school admissions, appointments to government jobs, issuance of driving licences, registration for Unique Identification (UID), marriage certificates and other official purposes.

Hoax Bomb Threats Cause Panic in Guwahati Schools; Security Tightened

GUWAHATI

Guwahati city police on Friday dismissed bomb threat emails sent to several schools as a hoax, assuring the public of safety after extensive searches found no explosives or suspicious materials. The incident triggered brief panic on Saraswati Puja, prompting heightened security measures ahead of Republic Day.

The emails, received by some schools around 9.45 am, claimed that an improvised explosive device (IED) would explode by 1 pm. Following the alerts, city police immediately activated standard operating procedures and deployed bomb disposal squads to the concerned institutions.

"As soon as the information was received, we activated our standard operating procedures," Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Nomal Mahato said. "With the help of the Bomb Disposal squad, thorough searches were conducted at the concerned schools. No explosives or suspicious materials were found during the

checks."

Police officials confirmed that the emails were completely fake and described them as a malicious attempt to create panic during the Saraswati Puja celebrations. "This appears to be an attempt by miscreants to dampen the festive spirit," an official said.

Reassuring students, parents and school authorities, DCP Mahato said the situation was brought under control without delay. "There is absolutely no bomb in any school. We want to clearly assure everyone that the threat was a hoax and there is no cause for panic," he said.

According to the police, the threatening emails were sent under the name Rupan Kumar Dhar. "We are tracking the individual who sent the email. The technical source of the mail is being examined by cyber and technical experts, and further investigation is underway," Mahato said, adding that strict legal action would be taken once the sender is identified.

PM Modi to Visit Assam on February 14, Amit Shah on Jan 30: Himanta Biswa Sarma



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on January 22 announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are scheduled to visit the state later this month, signalling a series of high-profile engagements ahead of the Assam Assembly elections. Addressing the media, Sarma said Prime Minister Modi will visit Assam on February 14, while Home Minister Amit Shah is slated to arrive on January 30. The Chief Minister shared the details through a Facebook Live from Davos, where he is attending the World Economic Forum. During his February 14 visit, the Prime Minister is expected to inaugurate a bridge over the Brahmaputra connecting two parts of Guwahati and dedicate the Indian Institute of Manage-

ment (IIM), Guwahati, to the nation. Sarma said several other development projects are also likely to be inaugurated during the visit.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will travel to Dibrugarh on January 30 to lay the foundation stone of Assam's second legislative assembly complex and address a public rally. According to the Chief Minister, the visit reflects the Centre's emphasis on strengthening administrative infrastructure in Upper Assam.

Sarma noted that the Prime Minister's upcoming visit will be his third to Assam within a span of three months, underscoring sustained central focus on the state. He added that Modi may also lay the foundation stone of a railway coach manufacturing factory at Kokrajhar. The Chief Minister further said that a Peace Area and Advanced Landing Facility is being developed at Moran in Dibrugarh district. Once operational, it is expected to significantly reduce travel time between Dibrugarh and Itanagar by facilitating direct flights and improved highway connectivity.

Highlighting the frequency of visits, Sarma said the Prime Minister has already been to Assam twice in recent months, reflecting the Centre's continued engagement with the state.

Sikkim wildfire near Indo-China border brought under control

GUWAHATI

The budget session of Assam Legislative Assembly is set to begin from February 16.

In a notification issued by the Assam Legislative Assembly Secretariat stated, "In exercise of the powers conferred under Article 174(1) of the Constitution of India, as amended up-to-date, I, Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Assam, hereby summon the Budget Session (Vote on Account) of the Assam Legislative Assembly to meet at 9.30 A.M. on Monday, the 16th February, 2026 at the Assembly Chamber in Dispur."

According to the Assam Legislative Assembly Secretariat, the Assam Governor, Lakshman Prasad Acharya, will attend the session on the first day, and the state budget will likely be tabled on February 17, but the date will be finalised at the BAC meeting. Meanwhile, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiran Rijju will convene an all-party meeting of floor leaders of both Houses of Parliament on Janu-

ary 27, ahead of the upcoming Budget Session.

As per sources, the meeting is scheduled to be held in the main Committee Room of Parliament. The government is expected to discuss important national issues and legislative business likely to come before the Houses during the upcoming session.

The Budget Session will commence on January 28 and continue till April 2, with one break. The first phase is scheduled from January 28 to February 13, while the second phase will run from March 9 to April 2. A total of 30 sittings are expected during the session.

The Union Budget 2026-27 will be presented on February 1. The session will formally begin with the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, addressing members of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

The all-party meeting on January 27 is expected to set the agenda and ensure smooth proceedings for the forthcoming Budget Session of Parliament.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 683

TIME TO OPEN THE CLOSED DOORS

National Girl Child Day is observed to raise awareness about the rights, education, health and empowerment of girls, and to promote gender equality. Initiated in 2008, this day reflects a changing reality in which girls are increasingly excelling in education, sports and leadership. Yet, challenges such as child marriage, female foeticide and malnutrition continue to persist. Through legal measures and initiatives like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, sustained efforts are being made to eliminate these social evils so that girls may emerge as symbols of pride and progress for society. The core objective of National Girl Child Day is to spread awareness about girls' rights, reduce gender discrimination, and emphasize the importance of education, health and nutrition. Today, girls are advancing in fields such as science, technology, defence and leadership, reflecting a gradual but meaningful shift in societal attitudes. Legal provisions including the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the POCSO Act, and government schemes such as Mission Vatsalya and PM CARES for Children are actively working toward the welfare of girls.

Despite these efforts, girls continue to face exploitation and discrimination. Although the child sex ratio has shown improvement, harmful practices like child marriage and female foeticide have not been completely eradicated. Nutritional challenges such as anaemia and underweight conditions among girls remain serious concerns. There is an urgent need to dismantle patriarchal mindsets and ensure equal opportunities for girls. In the Amrit Kaal of independence, India is reshaping itself with renewed confidence, aspirations and resolve. If there is one strongest foundation of this transforming nation, it is the girl child. National Girl Child Day offers an opportunity for introspection—to assess the condition of our girls, the direction they are moving in, and the kind of future society is creating for them. The fundamental question remains: are we truly building an India where a girl child is not seen as a burden at birth, but as a creator of the nation's future? Only when the combined strength of men and women works in harmony can a truly new India be realized.

Over the past few decades, there has been remarkable progress in the status of girls. Their participation in education has increased significantly, and girls and women have achieved extraordinary milestones in sports, science, administration, politics and entrepreneurship. Today, even daughters from rural India are making their mark in space science, startups, the armed forces and civil services. This transformation signals that in the Amrit Kaal, women and girls will not merely be participants, but leaders—becoming the driving force that will elevate the nation to its highest potential. However, alongside this hopeful picture lies a harsh reality that cannot be ignored. Crimes against girls and women—including sexual violence, domestic abuse, child marriage and cyber harassment—continue to challenge the conscience of society. Incidents of rape and violence are not merely failures of law and order; they reflect a deep collapse of our collective mindset. When a girl's safety cannot be ensured at home, in school, on the streets or in the digital world, claims of development remain incomplete and hollow.

The vision of a New India—developed, equitable and inclusive—places women's power, especially the empowerment of girls, at its very core under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His approach goes beyond welfare schemes to call for a transformation of social attitudes. Initiatives like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao have helped shift perceptions, encouraging society to view girls not as liabilities but as national assets. Programs focusing on education, health, nutrition, sanitation, digital empowerment and safety have opened new avenues of opportunity for girls. The Prime Minister's message is unequivocal: until girls are educated, secure and self-reliant, the dream of a developed India will remain unfulfilled. His broader vision recognizes girls not merely as individuals to be protected, but as active contributors to leadership, innovation and nation-building. This is why today's girls are confidently advancing in science, sports, governance and entrepreneurship—signaling the emergence of a balanced, equitable and empowered India led by Nari Shakti.

The root of the problem is not only the criminal, but the mindset that perceives girls as weak, dependent and submissive. This thinking originates within families and extends into society and institutions. Even today, discrimination between sons and daughters is evident in the distribution of resources, opportunities and freedom. Girls are taught silence in the name of "values," while boys are granted entitlement and autonomy. This unequal social conditioning eventually gives rise to violence and exploitation. What is needed today is a new social perspective—one that focuses not merely on reacting after crimes occur, but on preventing them before they happen. Society must recognize that atrocities against women are not women's issues alone; they represent a moral failure of the entire community. Strict laws are necessary, but far more essential is a transformation in social consciousness. As long as questions are directed at the victim—about her clothing, her timing, her freedom—the confidence of perpetrators will remain intact.

At the same time, girls and women must also reshape their own thinking. Self-reliance is not only economic, but mental and intellectual. Education must aim beyond degrees, fostering self-confidence, self-respect and decision-making ability. Girls must be empowered to recognize their rights, raise their voices against injustice and never consider themselves inferior in any form. The need of the hour is to raise girls who are not merely "tolerant," but alert, aware and empowered. Governance and administration play a decisive role in this transformation. Policies will be effective only when they reach the grassroots and are implemented with sensitivity. Gender sensitization must be mandatory across policing, judiciary, education and healthcare systems. Fast-track justice, survivor-centric procedures and psychological counseling must move beyond policy documents and become lived realities. In the digital age, specialized strategies are also required to address cyber safety and online harassment.

Equally important is the role of men and boys. Gender equality is not solely a women's responsibility. Boys must be taught respect, coexistence and equality from an early age. True balance will emerge only when men see themselves not as "protectors," but as partners. Patriarchy will weaken only when both fathers and mothers equally believe in the capabilities and potential of their daughters. The vision of a "developed nation" in the Amrit Kaal cannot be realized if half of its population continues to live in fear, discrimination and insecurity.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The biggest adventure you can take is to live the life of your dreams." —Oprah Winfrey

PAK AND CHINA PUSH FAKE NARRATIVE ON JF17



HARSHA KAKAR

In recent days Islamabad has been pushing the narrative of increased global demand for the Pak-China manufactured JF17 aircraft. Pakistan and China both claim that their aircraft (JF10 and JF17) brought down a Rafale in Operation Sindoor, without an iota of evidence, with the intent of increasing their global sales. French intelligence reports mention of a joint Pak-China disinformation campaign to discredit the Rafale in favour of Chinese products, especially in SE Asia.

Suddenly, out of the blue Pak began making daily announcements on sale of the JF17. On 07 Jan, Pak media mentioned Bangladesh would procure JF17s, 08 Jan, the Saudis suddenly appeared on the horizon, 09 Jan, the Sudanese came running, and a couple of days later it was Indonesia's turn. A few days earlier, Libya, Sudan and Iraq were supposedly jumping for the aircraft. If the intent is to play a narrative, then Pak handles should have displayed intelligence, so at least it could be believed.

Even Pakistan's defence minister, Khawaja Asif, was brought into narrative building. He mentioned in an interview, 'we are receiving so many orders (for the JF 17 aircraft) that Pakistan may not need the International Monetary Fund in six months.' The JF17 aircraft is 58% produced in Pakistan and 42% in China, though Pak announces it as its own product. Chinese handles were also roped

as demand for their equipment is losing steam amid inputs on failure of Chinese air defence equipment in Venezuela, after Pakistan. Even nations which procured JF17s earlier, have regrets.

Nigeria had procured three JF17 jets. As per reports, these possess 'sluggish manoeuvring, limited avionics, and outdated radars,' in addition to 'frequent technical glitches and difficulties in basic maintenance of the aircraft's systems.' JF17s have proved to be ineffective even in counter-insurgency operations where there is little retaliatory fire. In desperation, Nigeria has gone onto procure Italian M-346FA jets and the JF17s are in cold storage.

Another nation which made the blunder was Myanmar. This was because of Chinese influence. Jets were delivered between 2019-21. Myanmar has been forced to ground most of its fleet largely due to 'structural cracks and other technical glitches soon after delivery.' Inputs indicate that Myanmar declared them 'unfit for operations.' Pak engineers failed to repair them resulting in strained ties between the two states. Myanmar was compelled to procure SU 30 from Russia.

China has claimed its JF10 achieved success in Sindoor. The truth is that no nation has expressed interest in purchasing the aircraft due to 'performance and reliability issues,' despite China's fake narratives. Carried by Chinese propaganda on success in Sindoor, Indonesia did show interest,

The recent visit of the Indonesian defence minister to Pakistan led to the head of Pakistan's lying machine, its DGISPR, announcing that Jakarta was interested in the JF17. This input flowed only from Pak. The Jakarta times mentioned on the visit, '(it) focused on discussing general defence cooperation, including strategic dialogue, strengthening communication between defence institutions, and opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation.' There was no mention in considering any Pak equipment, let alone the JF17. Why would a nation purchasing 66 Rafale aircraft purchase poor quality, unreliable JF17s.

A similar story was of the sale of these aircraft to Saudi Arabia, in exchange for the USD 2 Billion loans provided by Riyadh, which Pak can never repay but only request that they be rolled over. The announcement was again made by Pakistan's DGISPR. When questioned, Pakistan's own foreign office spokesperson mentioned he had no inputs.

There was also no confirmation from Riyadh that such a discussion had even taken place. If such a procurement does take place, it would never be for the Saudis but for possibly the Sudanese faction which it backs. Why would Saudi Arabia, operating F 15s and Eurofighter, while seeking to acquire the F 35, purchase failed and outdated JF17s.

Azerbaijan had in late 2024 placed orders for 16 JF17s with Pak. In Nov last year, five of these aircraft were flown as part of a military parade.



in. The intent was to push Chinese and Pak manufactured aircraft as compared to the Rafale, especially

but soon realized the truth. It continued with its purchase of Rafale aircraft.

It is unknown if it has taken delivery of the balance aircraft. Inputs mention that it remains unhappy

even with those it procured as they have not performed upto accepted standards. Azerbaijan is keen to upgrade its air fleet from old Soviet era aircraft.

There are also reports of possible sales to Bangladesh, Libya, Iraq and Sudan. In the case of Bangladesh, there is no confirmation from Dacca, only from Pakistan. It is possible that Pakistan offered Bangladesh the aircraft but announced it as a sale to boost their global standing. Similar one-sided statements have been the case with Libya, Iraq and Sudan.

Nations display interest whenever equipment is offered as part of a visit, solely from diplomatic courtesy. Rejection comes later. The Indo-US F35 offer from Trump is an example. Moving forward with procurements is a different ballgame. The aviation world is aware that the JF17 has poor reliability and avionics and hence are suitable

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

"We see they are trying to demolish the history of the nation. Trying to insult our eminent personalities. Freedom of India was Netaji's dream; he formed the Planning Commission, which was dissolved, and they formed NITI Aayog... It is unfortunate that Netaji's birthday is not declared a national holiday. We know about the birth date of Netaji but don't know about his demise."

Subhas Chandra Bose was an Indian freedom fighter who was born in Cuttack, Odisha, on 23 January 1897. Bose is also known for establishing the Azad Hind Fauj and his role in the Indian freedom movement.

January 23 is also celebrated as 'Parakram Diwas' to commemorate the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Further, taking a jibe at the Centre and the Election Commission of India (ECI), CM Banerjee claimed that Chandra Kumar Bose, from the family of Subhas Chandra Bose, was called up for the hearing during the SIR exercise.

"Family members of Netaji also received a notice of the SIR hearing. Chandra Basu is here who got this notice. Why don't we raise our voice against SIR daily? Many people have lost their lives due to SIR. Shame on the Election Commission... The Government of India should take responsibility for all deaths (during the SIR exercise)."

Mamata Banerjee



only for display in ceremonial fly-pasts, not operations.

The fake Pak-China narrative of downing Indian rafale aircraft is what has worked initially to their advantage. The world ultimately saw through the game, aware of losses suffered by Pak and the failure of Chinese air defence equipment and missiles. However, a few, close ally Azerbaijan, under sanctions Libyan regime or unable to procure costly aircraft like Iraq and Sudan have been compelled to consider this failed product.

Pak media personalities, embedded in global media outlets have begun pushing this narrative, on behalf of their DGISPR, largely quoting unnamed sources. Nations which make the mistake of procuring them would face the Nigeria and Myanmar example where they would be compelled to discard them for their low quality, poor reliability and no back-up service.

Pakistan's JF17 narrative gained pace as India announced plans to procure 114 plus Rafale aircraft. This was possibly aimed at its own public to assuage them that additional Rafale should not be a concern, as the JF17 is a world favourite. Frankly, any narrative emerging from Pakistan must be considered with bags of salt.

Sonowal Targets Congress Over MGNREGA, Credits Modi Government for Inclusive Growth

DIBRUGARH

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress, alleging that its failure to implement welfare schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with sincerity and transparency resulted in limited impact on poverty alleviation.

Addressing a press meet here, Sonowal said that although MGNREGA was conceptualised during the Congress regime, it was never executed in a scientific or honest manner. He claimed the scheme was often used for political mileage and was plagued by delayed wage payments, ghost beneficiaries and inadequate banking infrastructure, which prevented rural workers from receiving their dues on time.

"Poverty alleviation under the Congress remained largely confined to slo-



gans like 'Garibi Hatao'. There was no sincere effort to ensure last-mile delivery," Sonowal said.

In contrast, the Union Minister said the present government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has focused on delivery, accountability and dignity for the poor, marking a decisive shift in India's development approach after decades of unfulfilled promises.

Guided by the principles of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and

Sabka Prayas, Sonowal said the Modi government has pursued inclusive growth since assuming office in 2014, bringing people from all sections of society into the development process.

"For the first time since Independence, social justice has translated into tangible benefits for the poor," he claimed.

Highlighting the impact of the Jan Dhan Yojana, Sonowal said more than 60 crore people have been brought into the formal banking system, including villagers and tea garden workers who earlier had no access to banking facilities. He added that nearly 25 crore beneficiaries, including farmers and labourers, are now receiving government benefits directly through transparent transfer mechanisms.

"This financial inclusion has strengthened people's dignity, confidence and mental resilience," he said, adding that improved connectivity and infrastructure in rural and backward

areas have contributed to India emerging as the world's fourth-largest economy.

Emphasising the importance of rural development, Sonowal said India's strength lies in its nearly seven lakh villages, where the majority of the population resides. He argued that holistic development across education, healthcare, finance, sports, industry, science and research at the village level is crucial for India to become a fully developed nation.

The Union Minister also spoke about the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rojgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VBGRAM-G), describing it as a model rural employment initiative inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. Drawing a comparison with MGNREGA, Sonowal said the new scheme addresses past shortcomings by guaranteeing 125 days of employment per rural family annually, compared to 100 days under MGNREGA, and ensuring wage payments within a week.

'Even Cows Not Safe in Cowsheds Under BJP Rule in Assam,' Claims Gaurav Gogoi

GUWAHATI

Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi on January 22 launched a sharp attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, alleging large-scale corruption, the proliferation of illegal syndicates and the transfer of state land to major corporate groups under the BJP-led government.

Speaking to reporters, Gogoi claimed that valuable government land in Assam has been handed over to corporate houses during the current regime. He alleged that the Chief Minister's involvement in corruption and scams is widely known among the people of the state.

"Under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's rule in Assam, the land of the state is being given away to corporate groups. His alleged involvement in corruption and scams is known to the people. Our party work-

ers will go from house to house and inform citizens about the corruption and scams that have mushroomed under his rule," Gogoi said.

The Congress leader further alleged that several illegal syndicates have flourished during the tenure of the present government. Using a metaphor to underline his charges, Gogoi said that even cows were not safe in cowsheds under the current administration.

"Cows are going missing from cowsheds. Coal and sand syndicates have been mushrooming, and Himanta Biswa Sarma has been involved in all these syndicates," he alleged.

Gogoi said the Congress would intensify its campaign against the state government in the coming days and raise these issues among the public. There was no immediate response from the Assam government or the Chief Minister to the allegations at the time of filing this report.

Assam to Receive 90:10 Central Funding Under New Rural Employment Law

GUWAHATI

Assam is set to receive enhanced central assistance under the newly enacted Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rojgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VBGRAM-G] Act, 2025, with the Centre extending a 90:10 funding pattern to the state to strengthen rural livelihoods and infrastructure development.

The announcement was made by Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles Pabitra Margherita while addressing a press conference at the Jorhat Circuit House on January 22.

Describing the passage of the VBGRAM-G Act as a historic milestone, Margherita said the legislation represents a decisive shift in India's rural employment policy and aligns with the national vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. He said the new framework moves away from a relief-centric model to a productivity-oriented approach that views villages as engines of economic growth.

Attributing the policy shift to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the minister said the government's focus is on dignity of labour, sustainable livelihoods and long-term development rather than temporary relief. He also expressed gratitude to Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, saying his understanding of grassroots realities was instrumental in shaping the legislation.

Margherita said the transition from MGNREGA to VBGRAM-G is a natural evolution informed by more than two decades of implementation experience. While acknowledging that MGNREGA initially played a crucial relief role, he said structural weaknesses such as fragmented asset creation, governance gaps, fake job cards, ghost beneficiaries and inflated muster rolls gradually emerged. Repeated audits, he said, exposed systemic flaws that necessitated comprehensive reform.

Jyotiraditya Scindia to Tour Tripura, Assam from Jan 23-25

NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya M. Scindia will undertake a three-day visit to Tripura and Assam from January 23 to 25, during which he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for a series of development projects aimed at strengthening infrastructure, healthcare, tourism and livelihood opportunities in the Northeast.

According to officials, the minister will roll out projects worth more than Rs 574 crore in Tripura under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER), in addition to launching sector-specific initiatives in Assam. Scindia will arrive in Agartala on January 23 and attend an inauguration and foundation-laying ceremony for multiple MDoNER-funded projects at Rabindra Satabarshiki Bhawan in Indranagar. During his visit, he is scheduled to inspect the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Wing at Agartala Government Medical College and visit the Agartala Government Dental College. The day will conclude with prayers at the Tripurasundari Shaktipeeth, popularly known as the

Matabari Temple.

On January 24, the Union Minister will travel to Kadamtala in North Tripura district to inaugurate agarwood-based projects valued at Rs 78.53 crore, aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods and value-added forest-based industries. He will also visit the Unakoti heritage site, a key cultural and tourism landmark in the state.

The Tripura leg of the visit will conclude on January 25 with the launch of the Matabari Tourism Circuit project at Dumbur, involving an investment of Rs 276.78 crore. The project is expected to boost religious and eco-tourism while improving connectivity and visitor infrastructure in the region.

Later the same day, Scindia will proceed to Guwahati, Assam, where he will participate in the foundation-laying and launch of bamboo-based projects, reinforcing the Centre's push to promote green industries and local entrepreneurship in the Northeast. Officials said the visit reflects the Union government's continued emphasis on accelerating region-specific development, with a focus on infrastructure creation, tourism promotion and livelihood-driven projects across the northeastern states.

Assam Became First State to Enter Oil Production in 2025: CM Sarma

GUWAHATI

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said Assam became the first state in the country to be engaged in oil production in 2025 following the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Namrup-Borhat block, marking a major milestone in the state's economic and industrial journey.

Currently in Davos, Switzerland, for the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting, Sarma said the development would significantly strengthen government revenues and accelerate Assam's overall growth trajectory.

"Assam is not only defined by its glorious past, it is steadily shaping new milestones," the Chief Minister said in a social media post, highlighting the crude oil discovery by Oil India Limited (OIL) in the Namrup-Borhat block.

OIL had discovered hydrocarbons at the Namrup-Borhat-1 well in Dibrugarh district in July 2025. Officials said the find adds a new chapter to Assam's long-standing association



with the hydrocarbons sector, which dates back over a century to Asia's first oil well at Digboi.

Assam currently holds around 12 per cent of India's natural gas re-

serves and accounts for nearly 50 per cent of the country's onshore natural gas production, positioning the state as a critical pillar in India's energy landscape.

The Chief Minister emphasised that increased oil production would boost the state exchequer through higher royalties and associated revenues, while also generating employment, stimulating ancillary industries and supporting infrastructure development.

"This milestone will have a multiplier effect on Assam's economy, particularly in Upper Assam, which has traditionally been the hub of oil and gas activities," Sarma said.

Industry experts believe domestic discoveries such as Namrup-Borhat will contribute to India's broader objective of reducing dependence on crude oil imports and strengthening national energy security. For Assam, the project also aligns with the state government's push for industrial expansion, investment attraction and sustainable economic growth.

Reiterating the state's forward-looking development agenda, Sarma said the Namrup-Borhat discovery stands as a testament to Assam's growing role in India's economic and energy future.

UPPL to Finalise Alliance Strategy by Month-End Ahead of Assam Polls: Pramod



CHIRANG

With the Assam Assembly elections drawing closer, the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) on Thursday said it would take a final decision on its alliance strategy by the end of the month, following crucial organisational meetings.

Addressing a press briefing in Chirang, UPPL president Pramod Boru said the party's stand on political alliances would be decided after deliberations at its Central Executive Committee meeting scheduled for January 24 and the

Central Conference to be held on January 30 and 31. "On January 24, we have our Central Executive Committee meeting, and on January 30 and 31, the Central Conference will be held. Several issues are under discussion, but the final decision on political alliances will be taken during the Central Conference," Boru said.

The statement comes amid speculation over possible realignments in the Bodoland/Territorial Region (BTR). However, prospects of an alliance between UPPL and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) appear remote. Earlier this month, BPF president and Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) chief Hagrama Mohilary categorically ruled out any understanding with UPPL in the region.

Mohilary had said that while UPPL's participation could be acceptable at the state or central

level, it had no role in the BTC. "UPPL has been part of the NDA in the state Assembly and at the Centre, but not in the BTC. If the BJP decides to share power with UPPL at the state or central level, we have nothing to say. However, UPPL has no stake in the BTC," he had said, reiterating that there was no question of the two parties working together in Bodoland.

Meanwhile, commenting on the recent violence in Kokrajhar, Boru said the situation was brought under control within a day due to coordinated efforts by all stakeholders. He praised the Assam Police and the district administration for their swift response. "It is a big thing that the incident was contained within a day. We were worried when it occurred, but thanks to the Assam Police, the authorities and everyone's intervention, the situation was brought under control," Boru said.

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40-Foot Saraswati Idol Unveiled in Agartala; Tripura CM Highlights Importance of Education



AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on January 22 unveiled a 40-foot-high idol of Goddess Saraswati in Agartala, marking one of the largest Saraswati Puja celebrations in the state this year and underscoring the role of education in shaping society.

The idol was installed at the premises of Bardawali Higher Secondary School in Ward No. 40 of the Agartala Municipal Corporation during the Bani Bandana programme organised by the Dhaar Committee. Large numbers of devotees gathered at the venue, turning the school campus into a major focal point of the festival.

"This is Ward 40 of the Agartala Municipal Corporation and also my Vidhan Sabha constituency, where a 40-foot-high idol of Goddess Saraswati has been unveiled," the Chief Minister told reporters. Referring to Tri-

pura's rich festive tradition, he said the state observes numerous religious festivals throughout the year. "In Tripura's tradition, Saraswati Puja, Durga Puja, Kali Puja or Lakshmi Puja - in 12 months, 13 festivals are conducted here," he said. Saha noted that the six-day celebration has been organised by the local corporator and will feature various cultural programmes. Emphasising the significance of Saraswati Puja, he said the goddess of education is worshipped to seek wisdom and intellect. He added that young people, particularly those between 18 and 35 years of age, should use education and knowledge to contribute to the progress of the state.

During the programme, the Chief Minister also presented awards and felicitated individuals for their contributions in social, cultural and educational fields. He interacted with local residents and praised the organisers for their efforts in preserving cultural traditions and fostering community participation.

A fair organised alongside the puja added to the festive atmosphere, attracting steady crowds throughout the day. The event was attended by local representatives, eminent personalities and devotees, highlighting the cultural and religious significance of Saraswati Puja in Tripura.

Union Minister B. L. Verma Reviews Infrastructure Projects, Welfare Schemes in Nagaland's Chümoukedima

KOHIMA

Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Social Justice & Empowerment, B. L. Verma, on January 21 reviewed ongoing infrastructure projects and the implementation of key government welfare schemes in Nagaland's Chümoukedima district as part of a two-day visit to the state.

The Union Minister was accompanied by Advisor for Food and Civil Supplies and Legal Metrology K. T. Sukhalu, Chümoukedima Deputy Commissioner Polan John, and senior officials from various line departments. The visit focused on assessing the progress of infrastructure works, service delivery mechanisms and the effectiveness of centrally sponsored schemes at the district level.

During the visit, Verma inspected the construction site of the Unity Mall at Chümoukedima and reviewed the pace and quality of work. Interacting

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with contractors and officials on-site, he emphasised adherence to prescribed quality standards and timely completion of the project. He also visited the Anganwadi Centre at Diphuphar, the Centre for Disease Control and the Cancer Treatment Centre at the Referral Hospital in Chümoukedima to assess infrastructure preparedness, availability of manpower and the quality of healthcare and nutrition services.

The Union Minister further inspected a Fair Price Shop in Chümoukedima, where he interacted with beneficiaries and officials. Reiterating the Centre's commitment to strengthening the Public Distribution System, he stressed the need for transparency, accountability and efficient delivery of essential commodities to eligible beneficiaries.

Later, Verma chaired a review meeting on the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes at the Deputy Commissioner's office. Addressing officials, he reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment to the overall development of the Northeastern region, stating that the region has received unprecedented attention under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Referring to the Prime Minister's vision of the Northeast as "Ashta Laksh-

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mi," he underscored its importance to national growth and progress.

Highlighting improvements in road, air and rail connectivity, Verma said enhanced infrastructure has reduced isolation and created new opportunities for trade, tourism and employment. He expressed satisfaction over the implementation of flagship initiatives such as PM-DevINE and programmes under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, while directing officials to strictly follow scheme guidelines to ensure timely and targeted delivery of benefits.

Appreciating the efforts of the district administration, the Union Minister called for coordinated teamwork to develop the newly created Chümoukedima district into a model of efficient and transparent governance. He directed departments to expedite delayed works and ensure optimal utilisation of central and state funds.

During the meeting, departments including Medical, Rural Development, Social Welfare, Food and Civil Supplies, PHED, Land Resources, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Sericulture, Water Resources, PWD (National Highways), PWD (Roads and Bridges), Horticulture, Power, Tourism, Agriculture, Urban Development and Transport made detailed presentations on progress under various central schemes.

Addressing the media later, Verma said the Centre remains fully committed to strengthening infrastructure and improving public service delivery in Nagaland.

He stressed that regular monitoring, transparency and people-centric governance are essential for inclusive development, and urged officials to proactively address public grievances to ensure welfare benefits reach the grassroots.

Netaji's Unmatched Patriotism Inspires Generations: Kharge

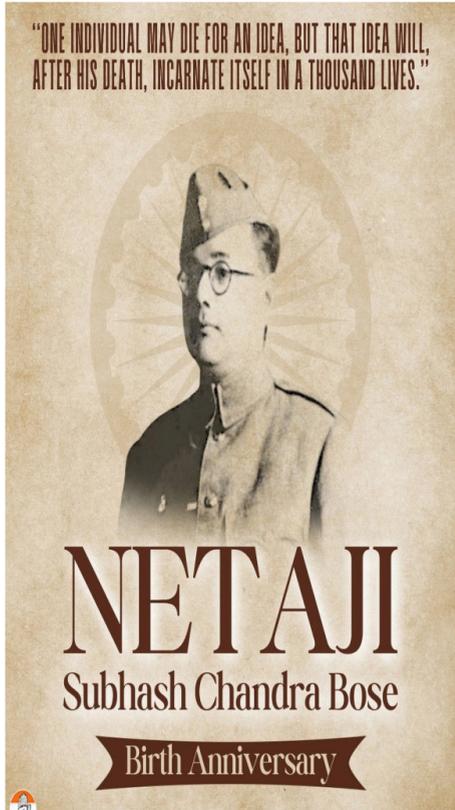
NEW DELHI

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday paid tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his 129th birth anniversary, saying his unparalleled love for the motherland and dedication to serving the nation continue to inspire everyone. He also praised his role in awakening patriotism and a revolutionary spirit among Indians through slogans like "Jai Hind" and "Tum mujhe khoon do, main tumhe azaadi doonga."

In a post on X, Kharge wrote, "On the birth anniversary of the great freedom fighter, former Congress president, and our source of inspiration, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who awakened patriotism and revolutionary spirit among his countrymen through powerful slogans like 'Jai Hind' and 'Tum mujhe khoon do, main tumhe azaadi doonga', we pay him our heartfelt tributes."

"His unparalleled love and devotion to the motherland, along with his unwavering opposition to communalism, continue to inspire us all to serve the nation," the post read.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also paid tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and recalled the courage and contribution of the freedom fighter, stating that "his ideals continue to inspire generations." Highlighting Bose's patriotism on his birth anniversary, also known as Parakram Diwas, the PM took to X to post, "On the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, which is commemorated as Parakram Diwas, we recall his indomitable



courage, resolve and unparalleled contribution to the nation." Praising his ideas as timeless and an inspiration for generations, he further added, "He epitomised fearless leadership and unwavering patriotism. His ideals continue to inspire generations to build a strong India."

Subhash Chandra Bose was an Indian freedom fighter who was born in Cuttack, Odisha, on January 23, 1897.

Bose established the Azad Hind Fauj. While there is a controversy over Bose's death in a plane crash in Taipei on August 18, 1945, the Central government had, in an RTI (Right to Information) in 2017, confirmed that he had died in the incident. In 2021, the central government officially designated January 23 as Parakram Diwas to mark the birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose.

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Thursday issued a notification detailing the questionnaire to be used for Phase I of the Census of India 2027, which covers the Houselisting and Housing Census.

The notification, issued by the Office of the Registrar General of India, authorised census officials to collect specified housing and household-related information across the country.

Exercising powers under Section 8(1) of the Census Act, 1948, the Central Government has superseded an earlier notification issued in January 2020, while safeguarding actions already undertaken under the previous provisions.

As per the latest notification, Census Officers will be permitted to collect data within their respective jurisdictions using a structured household listing and housing census schedule.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 8 of the Census Act, 1948 (37 of 1948), and in supersession of the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Office of the Registrar General, India) number S.O. 120(E), dated the 7th January, 2020 published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii), dated the 9th January, 2020, except as respects things done or omitted to be done before such supersession, the Central Government hereby instructs that all the Census Officers may, within the limits of the local areas for which they have been respectively appointed, ask all such questions from all persons on the items enumerated below for collecting information through the houselisting and housing census schedule in connection with the Census of India 2027," reads the notification.

The notified questionnaire includes 33 items of information, covering details such as building and census house numbers, materials used in floors, walls and roofs, condition and use of houses, household size, ownership status and the number of dwelling rooms. It also seeks demographic information about the head of household, including gender and social category.

Further, data will be collected on the availability of basic amenities such as drinking water, electricity, toilets, bathing facilities, kitchens and LPG and



PNG connections, along with details on cooking fuel, waste water outlets and access to communication and transport facilities, including internet, mobile phones, computers, televisions and vehicles. Mobile numbers will be collected strictly for census-related communication purposes, the notification clarified.

The Ministry has also stated that the questionnaire for Phase II of the Census of India 2027, which pertains to Population Enumeration, will be notified separately in due course. The notification, signed by Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India Mr. Nitin Kumar Narayan, provides the administrative framework for conducting Phase I of the nationwide census exercise.

On January 7, the MHA had notified that the houselisting operations for the Census of India 2027 will be conducted between April 1 and September 30 this year across all states and Union Territories (UTs). The houselisting exercise will be carried out over a 30-day period to be specified separately by each state and UT within the notified timeframe.

The government had also provided an option for self-enumeration, which will be conducted for a 15-day period immediately prior to the commencement of the house-to-house houselisting operations.

In the recently concluded winter session, the MHA informed the Lok Sabha that the upcoming Census 2027 exercise will take place in two stages, beginning with houselisting and housing data collection in 2026.

The first phase will be carried out over a 30-day period between April and September 2026, based on timelines decided by respective states and Union territories. The second phase, involving the population enumeration, is scheduled for February 2027.

Responding to a question from Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai reaffirmed that March 1, 2027, at 00:00 hours will serve as the reference date for enumeration across the country. However, for Ladakh and snow-bound regions of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the population count will be conducted

earlier in September 2026 with October 1, 2026 as the reference date.

When asked whether the government would incorporate lessons and best practices from earlier census rounds, including caste-based surveys conducted in some states, Rai said the process already factors in learnings from previous exercises and stakeholder consultations.

Regarding public input on questionnaire drafting, the MHA stated that census questions are finalised only after discussions with relevant ministries, user organisations, and subject experts. The draft questionnaires undergo field testing to evaluate practicality before being notified in the official gazette.

A nationwide pre-test for Census 2027 concluded on November 30 and the final questionnaire is expected to be released shortly, the Ministry added.

The houselisting phase pilot conducted between November 10 and 30, 2025, also tested the digital data collection model and allowed respondents to self-enumerate between November 1 and 7, 2025.

As per Rule 6 of the Census Rules, 1990, the Census questionnaires and schedules are notified by the Central Government in the Official Gazette under sub-section (1) of section 8 of the Act. The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner is in the process of finalising the questionnaire.

During the Census, the MHA told the Lok Sabha that the primary school teachers are usually appointed as enumerators. "The timeline for Census 2027 has been kept same like the past practices followed in previous censuses."

In the Census, it further said, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are enumerated strictly as per the notified list of SCs and STs, notified vide the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 (as amended time to time).

It was later informed that in Census 2027, caste enumeration will be done as decided by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs vide its decision dated April 30, 2025. "The census questions are notified after finalisation. Under sub-section (2) of section 8 of the Census Act, 1948, the respondent is required to answer questions to the best of his knowledge or belief."

INTERNATIONAL

US federal agents detain 5-year-old boy, school official says he was used as 'bait'

MINNEAPOLIS

A 5-year-old boy arriving home from preschool in Minnesota was taken by federal agents along with his father to a detention facility in Texas, school officials and the family's lawyer said, making him the fourth student from his Minneapolis suburb to be detained by immigration officers in recent weeks.

Federal agents took Liam Conejo Ramos from a running car in the family's driveway Tuesday afternoon, Columbia Heights Public Schools Superintendent Zena Stenvik told reporters Wednesday. The officers told him to knock on the door to his home to see if other people were inside, "essentially using a 5-year-old as bait," she said.

The father told the child's mother, who was inside the home and has not been named, not to open the door, Stenvik told reporters Thursday. The family, who came to the U.S. in 2024, has an active asylum case and had not been ordered to leave the country, Stenvik said.

"Why detain a 5-year-old?" she asked. "You cannot tell me that this child is going to be classified as a violent criminal."

Liam Conejo Ramos, 5, is detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers after arriving home from preschool, Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, in a Minneapolis suburb.

Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that "ICE did NOT target a child." She said Immigration and Customs Enforcement was arresting the child's father, Adrian Alexander Conejo Arias, who McLaughlin said is from Ecuador and in the U.S. illegally. He fled on foot, "abandoning his child," she said.

"For the child's safety, one of our ICE officers remained with the child while the other officers apprehended Conejo Arias," McLaughlin said, adding that parents are given the choice to be removed with their children or have them placed with a person of their choosing.

Minnesota has become a major focus of federal immigration sweeps. Greg Bovino, a U.S. Customs and Border



Protection official who has been the face of the crackdowns, said immigration officers have made about 3,000 arrests in Minnesota in the last six weeks.

Stenvik suggested that the father did not run. She said another adult who lives at the home was outside when the father and son were taken, but agents wouldn't leave Liam with that person. DHS didn't immediately respond to an email Thursday asking if Conejo Arias had asked to keep his son with him.

Mary Granlund, school board chair for Columbia Heights Public Schools, told reporters Thursday that she had told agents she would take the child before they left with him.

Rachel James, a Columbia Heights city council member who lives nearby by the family, said she saw another neighbor from across the street tell the agents they had papers authorizing them to take care of Liam on behalf of the parents. The agents ignored them,

James said.

The family's lawyer, Marc Prokosch, said Thursday that Liam and his father were taken to an immigration lockup in Dilley, Texas, and that he assumes they're in a family holding cell. He said they have not been able to have "direct contact" with them.

Liam Conejo Ramos, 5, is detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers after arriving home from preschool, Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, in a Minneapolis suburb.

"We're looking at our legal options to see if we can free them either through some legal mechanisms or through moral pressure," he said at a news conference.

Vice President JD Vance met with Minneapolis leaders Thursday and said he heard the "terrible story" but later learned the boy was only detained, not arrested.

"Well, what are they supposed to

do? Are they supposed to let a 5-year-old child freeze to death? Are they not supposed to arrest an illegal alien in the United States of America?" said Vance, noting that he's the parent of a 5-year-old.

Vance wasn't asked about why immigration officers allegedly wouldn't leave the boy with the other adult who lives at the home and offered to take him.

Families are reporting that children are malnourished, extremely ill, and suffering profoundly from prolonged detention at the Dilley lockup, where conditions are worse than ever, said Leecia Welch, chief legal counselor at Children's Rights. Welch visited the facility last week as part of a lawsuit over the welfare of immigrant children in federal custody.

"The number of children had skyrocketed and significant numbers of children had been detained for over 100 days," Welch said. The administration in December acknowledged that about 400 children had faced extended detention. "Nearly every child we spoke to was sick," Welch said.

Liam Conejo Ramos, 5, is detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers after arriving home from preschool, Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, in a Minneapolis suburb.

Columbia Heights Public Schools has five schools and about 3,400 students from pre-K to 12th grade, according to its website. Most come from immigrant families, Stenvik said. Before Liam, a 17-year-old was taken Tuesday while heading to school, and a 10-year-old and a 17-year-old have also been taken, Stenvik said. Attendance has dropped over the past two weeks, including one day where about one-third of the students were out from school, she said.

"Over the last few weeks, ICE agents have been roaming our neighborhoods, circling our schools, following our buses, coming into our parking lot multiple times and taking our kids," said Stenvik, adding that this is causing "trauma."

Ella Sullivan, Liam's teacher, described him as "kind and loving." "His classmates miss him," she said. "And all I want is for him to be safe and back here."

At Davos, Zelenskyy blasts EU's lack of 'political will', says US security guarantees ready



DAVOS

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday blasted the European Union's lack of "political will" in countering Russian leader Vladimir Putin, in a fiery address criticising some of Kyiv's top allies at the World Economic Forum.

The speech to the Davos elite came minutes after Zelenskyy had met with US President Donald Trump, a conversation he said had brought agreement about what post-war US security guarantees for Ukraine would look like.

Zelenskyy did not say what they included, only that they were "done" and were ready to be signed by the leaders and ratified by

the Ukrainian parliament and US Congress.

But in a marked departure from his usual warm rhetoric towards the European Union, Kyiv's main political and financial backers, Zelenskyy slammed what he cast as inaction. "What's missing: time or political will?" he said at one point, referencing delays over the establishment of a European war crimes tribunal on the Russian invasion.

He also said Europe, without mentioning any single country, was failing to agree on how to address global problems. "There are endless internal arguments and things left unsaid that stop Europe from uniting and speaking honestly enough to find

real solutions," Zelenskyy told the forum. "Instead of becoming a truly global power, Europe remains a beautiful but fragmented kaleidoscope of small and middle powers," he added. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, right, arrives for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026.

"Europe looks lost trying to convince the US President to change," said Zelenskyy. "But he will not change. President Trump loves who he is, and he says he loves Europe, but he will not listen to this kind of Europe," he said. Trump had hailed a "good" meeting with Zelenskyy in the Swiss ski resort, hours before his envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were due in Moscow for talks with Putin. "This war has to end," Trump told reporters including AFP when asked what message he was sending to the Russian leader.

Zelenskyy said the question of territory was the one outstanding issue in the talks to find an end to the war.

"It's all about the eastern part of our country. It's all about the land. This is the issue which we (have) not solved yet."

He also said the United Arab Emirates would host "trilateral" talks on the Ukraine war Friday and Saturday with Ukrainian, US and Russian negotiators. "It will be the first trilateral meeting in the Emirates," said Zelenskyy, without elaborating on the format of the talks. "Russians have to be ready for compromises," he added. Russia, which occupies around 20 percent of Ukraine, is pushing for full control of the country's eastern Donbas region as part of a deal - but Kyiv has warned ceding ground will embolden Moscow.

NEIR 2026 Flags Off from Imphal with Message of Unity, Love Across Northeast

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OUR CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL

The Northeast India Rally 2026, widely known as NEIR 2026, began its long journey on January 4 with a grand flag off from Imphal. The event marked the start of a unique and ambitious effort to connect the many communities of the Northeast through a message of love, unity, and shared understanding.



The flag off ceremony was held with much enthusiasm and was attended by several dignitaries from different parts of the region. Speakers at the event praised the organisers for thinking of such a bold and meaningful initiative. They said it is not easy to plan a rally of this scale in a region as diverse and complex as the Northeast. Still, they added, the very idea of reaching out to people across states, cultures, and communities makes the rally special.

The dignitaries said the main strength of NEIR 2026 lies in its purpose. The rally aims to travel across the Northeast and learn about the lives, traditions, and concerns of different communities. It is not just a journey across roads, they said, but a journey into the hearts of the people. By meeting communities directly, the rally hopes to break barriers, reduce misunderstandings, and spread a message of harmony and mutual respect.

The speakers described the initiative as noble and timely. In a region known for its rich diversity, such efforts help build bridges and create stronger bonds among people. They said the attempt to connect and integrate with almost every community in the Northeast is itself a great step and deserves full support.

The rally was officially flagged off from Kangla North Gate and will travel up to Moirang as part of its initial route. The flag off was done by Meghalaya MLA A. L. Hek and L. Hemochandra Singh, National Vice President of the National People's Party. Both leaders wished the rally great success and said such initiatives are important for strengthening unity in the region.

Several speakers at the ceremony called the rally a challenging task.

They said covering the vast Northeast, with its difficult terrain and remote areas, is not easy. Yet, they expressed confidence that the team behind NEIR 2026 has the commitment and vision needed to complete the journey. They wished the rally

team all the very best and hoped it would achieve its goals.

The speakers also thanked the KRC Foundations for taking up this responsibility. Special appreciation was extended to Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee and CEO of KRC Foundations, for leading the initiative. They said his effort to bring people together through such a platform deserves praise and encouragement.

NEIR 2026 is expected to explore different parts of the Northeast and interact closely with local communities.

Through this journey, the rally hopes to understand the region better and share stories of unity, peace, and cooperation. Many at the event said they believe the rally will leave a lasting impact and inspire more such efforts in the future.

As the rally set off from Imphal, there was a sense of hope and optimism in the air. NEIR 2026 is not just about travel. It is about listening, learning, and building connections across the Northeast, one

BARAK FESTIVAL AND NEIR FEST CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF UNITY IN SILCHAR



OUR CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR
Silchar wore a festive look on January 22 as music filled the air and dance beats echoed through the Gandhi Bhawan auditorium. Smiles were everywhere as the Barak Festival and the NEIR Fest brought people together to celebrate unity, culture, and the living soul of Northeast India.

At Gandhi Bhawan in Silchar, the Barak Festival began on a warm and lively note. Nataraj Dance Academy set the mood with graceful dance numbers. Young dancers moved with rhythm and joy, their steps telling stories of tradition and pride. One item followed another as songs, dances, and group performances kept the audience engaged throughout the evening.

Parimal Purkayastha lent his voice to the programme with songs that touched the heart. Members of the Rupam Organisation also took the stage and added colour and energy to the event. Each performance felt deeply rooted in the region, yet spoke to everyone present.

Silchar MP Parimal Suklabaidya praised

the organisers and the vision behind the festival. He spoke warmly about Biswadeep Gupta and his team, saying they had been working very hard. Such efforts, he said, deserve respect. He added that cultural festivals refresh the mind and bring peace and joy after long and tiring days. According to him, such events are a true blessing for society.

The programme was organised by the KRC Foundation in collaboration with local institutions. The aim was to bring students, artistes, and citizens onto one common platform. Culture became the shared language, while music and dance acted as bridges between people from different backgrounds.

The cultural evening was graced by Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee and CEO of KRC Foundations. Social activist Bhaskar Das and several others were also present, adding strength to the occasion. While the stage belonged to the artistes, the spirit of the evening belonged to the people.

Students of Saraswati Vidyaniketan, Malugram, presented the inaugural song. Their voices were pure and full of hope, setting the tone for the programme. The audience listened in silence and responded with warm

applause. In his address, Prof. Madan Mohan Goel described the initiative as a noble one. He spoke on Gita-inspired Neconomics as a path for mindful progress and goodness in the Northeast. He is a researcher, guide, orator, prolific writer, and has experience in educational governance in universities under the state, central, and private sectors.

Dr Shelley Arjun also addressed the gathering and said that the North East Integration Rally is an eye-opener for all. She said nationalism lives within every person, but people need a space to express it. According to her, NEIR has provided that space and given people an avenue to feel united and proud. She reminded the audience that we are one, and later presented songs carrying messages of unity and love.

The North East Integration Rally 2026 is part of a larger journey that focuses on peace, cultural exchange, and people-to-people connections across the Northeast. The Barak Festival and NEIR Fest are important parts of this journey, highlighting local traditions and shared values while reminding people that diversity is strength.

Across the venues, the mood remained joy-

ful, thoughtful, and inclusive. People interacted freely, artistes shared stories, and students watched and learned. Culture flowed without barriers. The programme began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, followed by a collective rendition of Vande Mataram. Saraswati Vidyaniketan presented a group song. Silchar Sangeet Vidyalaya and Rupam Cultural Organisation gave joint performances, while Nataraj Guru Bipin Singh Manipuri Nartanasram and Dudhpati Dance Organisation presented dance items.

Solo dance was performed by Rupsa Karmakar. Solo songs were presented by Dr Shelley Arjun, Tanushree Biswas, Nilanjan Paul, Mangala Nath, Parimal Purkayastha, Manimita Goswami, and Dipshikha Debnath. The programme was compered by Jayashree Chakraborty, Abhijit Nag, and Bhaskar Das. Convener Bhaskar Das, member Biswajit Biswas, Shelley Arjun, and others were also present.

In a time of noise and rush, the Barak Festival and NEIR Fest offered a pause. More than entertainment, they carried a message of harmony, togetherness, and shared identity, showing that the Northeast truly beats with one heart.



BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM





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



11 JAN
Adventure Sports
 Trekking | Canyoneering | Sport Climbing | Disaster Management Technique | Water Sports
www.krcfoundation.org



11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations.
 Includes: MOCA, and D-governance and reform for rural upland, watershed, water conservation, and preservation programs. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate change will accelerate on Global Change, climate and river changing. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competitive and certification River Barak, Climate Change.



11 JAN
5E For Success Conclave
 The 4th 5E 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, School, Public Speaking (College). In the online event, all the students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.

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



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Awards, Workshops, and the Film, Talks and Conferences are part of the "Barak Festival 2025". Theme: "One for All, All for One".
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10-12 JAN
Science Studio
 Get a glimpse of Science to its new heights. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents.
Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.

10-12 JAN
E-Sports
 Full-Blown | Competitive | CASH-PRIZES | Trophy



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #NoOneLeftBehind | Book Bank | Donate | Buy | Sell

10-12 JAN
Book Club
 Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books

10-12 JAN
Painting Carnival
 Water Colour and Oil and Saw-Pow Campaign

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



11 JAN
film festival
 Award-Giving (Best movie) | Film from Mizoram
 Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W's
 Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet



Barak Festival 2025
Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion

Barak Festival 2025
PAINTING CARNIVAL
NE CULTURAL FEST
E-SPORTS
FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION
 BOOK BANK | AWARDS & GUEST | RAW SCIENCE | RECORDS LIVE

Barak Festival 2025
Band Night 10 JAN
Musical Night 11 JAN



Barak Festival 2025
STUDENT INTERNSHIP
 Discover valuable experience and learn more about the industry.

- Outreach Executive
- Event Management
- Programme Coordinator

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