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PERSPECTIVE

No matter how strong of a person you are, there's always someone who can make you weak.

Manipur Clampdown: Militants Held, Poppy Fields Torched

IMPHAL
Security forces intensified coordinated operations across Manipur on January 8 and 9, resulting in the destruction of large tracts of illicit poppy cultivation, the arrest of multiple insurgent cadres and extortionists, and the recovery of a significant cache of arms, ammunition and explosives from several districts of the state.

On January 9, a joint team comprising security forces, forest department officials and an executive magistrate destroyed around 40 acres of illegal poppy plantations in the Ngatan Hill Range under Senapati police station in Senapati district. During the operation, 11 makeshift huts were demolished, along with fertilizers, salt, irrigation pipes, spray pumps and other materials used for poppy cultivation.

As part of sustained intelligence-based combing and search operations aimed at curbing extortion and militant activities, Manipur Police and security forces arrested several active cadres of banned outfits.

On January 8, an active cadre of Kangleipak Communist Party (Noyon), identified as Nandeibam Rosen Meitei (36) of Yumnang Patlou Mamang Leikai in Imphal East district, was arrested from Kongpal Chingangbam Leikai. A mobile phone was recovered from his possession.

On the same day, an alleged extortionist and active cadre of PREPAK (PRO), Thoudam Nanaobi alias Ishingchaoba alias Naobicha (50) of Uripok Yambem Leikai in Imphal West district, was arrested from the Lamboikhongnangkhang area under Lamphel police station. A mobile phone was also seized.

WHO SAID WHAT



Mamata Banerjee wants to turn Bengal into Bangladesh, wants to handover Bengal to infiltrators... To remove the fear from Bengal's Hindus and save Bengal, Mamata Banerjee will have to be removed.

Giriraj Singh
Union Minister

Fuel Crisis Hits Manipur Valley After Pump Shutdown; Petrol Sold Up to Rs 200 a Litre

IMPHAL
An acute fuel crisis has gripped Manipur's valley districts following an indefinite shutdown of petrol pumps, triggering widespread black marketing across Imphal where petrol is being sold openly in bottles at prices ranging from Rs 120 to Rs 200 per litre.

The shutdown was enforced by the Manipur Petroleum Dealers Fraternity, which announced the closure of all fuel outlets in the valley and its peripheral areas from January 10, citing grave security threats to petrol pump owners and staff.

The decision followed a bomb explosion at a Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) retail outlet, Elidas Fuel Station, on Moirang Kumbi Road on January 8 at around 8:10 pm. In a representation addressed to Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, the fraternity expressed "grave concern" over what it described as the second serious threat to petroleum outlets within a short span.

The dealers recalled that another fuel outlet had been targeted earlier on December 6, 2025, and said that despite informing the authorities, threats to petroleum dealers had continued unabated.



ed. "This is the second instance where a life-threatening attack has taken place within a short period. Though certain steps were initiated earlier, dealers continue to face severe security risks," the fraternity said, adding that it was not in a position to conduct business under the prevailing conditions.

The petroleum dealers placed three key demands before the government: enhanced security at all petrol pumps and for dealers and staff to prevent incidents such as bomb blasts; full government accountability in the event of future attacks, including kidnapping, with com-

ensation for infrastructure damage and monetary relief if any dealer or staff member is injured or killed; and compensation for the damage caused to Elidas Fuel Station.

"Hence, we have unanimously resolved to close all petrol pumps indefinitely in the valley and its peripherals starting January 10, 2026, until the above demands are met," the representation stated.

The immediate fallout of the shutdown has been severe. Panic buying began soon after the announcement, with long queues forming outside fuel outlets

ITLF Reiterates Kuki-Zo MLAs Will Stay Out of Manipur Government Formation, Presses UT Demand

IMPHAL

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF), an apex body representing tribal communities in Manipur, on Saturday reiterated that the ten MLAs from the Kuki-Zo community will not participate in the formation of the state government, reaffirming their long-standing demand for a separate administrative arrangement.

In a joint statement, ITLF Chairman Letpu Haokip and General Secretary Thangsuolien Sinate said the organisation's position remained unchanged, stressing that Kuki-Zo legislators would continue to stay away from any government formation process until their core political demands are addressed.

"Any deviation shall be viewed as a betrayal of the collective will and sacrifices of the Kuki-Zo people," the statement said. The leaders recalled that following the outbreak of ethnic violence in Manipur in May 2023, and what they described as the failure of the state government to protect the Kuki-Zo community, all ten MLAs from the community had sought a separate



administration from the Union of India. "This position stands firm," the ITLF asserted.

Of the ten Kuki-Zo legislators in the Manipur Assembly, seven belong to the Bharatiya Janata Party, while the remaining three represent

smaller regional parties. The ITLF said its stand was unanimously endorsed at a meeting held on Friday, which backed a resolution earlier adopted by the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) governing council that the community "cannot and shall not"

join the formation of the Manipur government under the prevailing circumstances.

The joint statement detailed what it described as widespread atrocities against the Kuki-Zo people since the violence began, alleging that members of the community were subjected to killings, public humiliation, and forced displacement from Meitei-dominated areas of the Imphal Valley. It claimed that thousands of houses and places of worship were burnt or desecrated, and that more than 40,000 people remain internally displaced, having lost homes, land, and livelihoods.

"The violent separation and forced displacement of the Kuki-Zo people from Meitei-dominated areas have irreversibly broken trust and coexistence," the ITLF said. "Under such conditions, continuing within the present Manipur administrative framework is untenable. Hence, the demand for a separate administration is a constitutional and political necessity."

The apex tribal body said the Kuki-Zo people have formally placed before the Centre their demand for a Union Territory with a legislature.

"After seeking this political solution, there is no logic in joining the Manipur government," the statement added.

Earlier this week, the Kuki-Zo Council, another apex body of the community, had also announced that it would not participate in the formation of the state government under any circumstances. In a separate joint statement, KZC Chairman Henlianthang Thanglet and General Secretary Thangzang said the decision followed a comprehensive assessment of the political, social, and security situation in Manipur and reflected the collective will of the Kuki-Zo people.

The KZC further warned that if any individual chose to take part in the formation of the Manipur government, it would be solely a personal decision, for which the council would not be held accountable.

The demand for a separate administration or Union Territory with a legislature, however, has been repeatedly rejected by the Central government, the BJP, and several Meitei civil society groups, keeping the political impasse in Manipur unresolved.

Gogoi's Alleged Pakistan Links to Be Made Public by January-End: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said details of state Congress president and Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi's alleged links with Pakistan would be made public before the end of January. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a government programme at Goreswar, Sarma said documents related to the allegations were being finalised. "Our officers are working on it. Before February-well before the end of January-everything will be revealed," he said.

The Chief Minister also targeted Gogoi over the British citizenship of his wife and children, claiming the people of Assam would not accept such a person in the state's "bor ghor" (revered place), an apparent reference to the chief minister's office. The BJP leadership, including Sarma, has repeatedly accused Gogoi, alleging that his wife, Elizabeth Colburn, has links with Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI. Sarma said the disclosure of documents had been delayed following the death of cultural icon Zubeen Garg in September. Asked whether the issue would impact Gogoi's prospects in the Assembly elections expected in March-April, Sarma said the matter went beyond electoral

politics. "Pakistan is our enemy country. The question is not about contesting elections, but whether someone can have links with that country," he said, also questioning why Gogoi's children's citizenship status had not been changed.

Later, addressing a press conference after a Cabinet meeting in Guwahati, Sarma said the state government had initially planned to make the information public in September but deferred the move after Garg's death on September 19.

The state government had constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the alleged interference of Pakistani national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh—who is claimed to have links with Gogoi's wife in India's internal affairs. The SIT submitted its report to Sarma, who holds the Home portfolio, on September 10. Sarma said a clarification under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) from the Union Home Ministry was awaited, but added that the findings would be made public even if the clarification did not arrive. "It is a big conspiracy. What we have is only the beginning," he claimed.

Gogoi has denied the allegations, describing them as "ridiculous, baseless and nonsense," and accused the Chief Minister of behaving like an "IT cell troll" without facts.

PM Modi's Assam Visit to Bring Three New Train Services

GUWAHATI

Assam is set to witness a major boost to connectivity and infrastructure during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed two-day visit beginning January 17, with the launch of three new train services and the foundation stone laying of a Rs 6,957-crore elevated corridor through Kaziranga National Park.

Briefing the media after a Cabinet meeting in Guwahati on Friday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the council of ministers discussed the Prime Minister's visit and itinerary "at length", describing it as a blend of cultural celebration and landmark infrastructure initiatives.

According to Sarma, the Prime Minister is expected to arrive in Guwahati on the evening of January 17 and attend a mega Bagurumba dance performance at Sarusajai Stadium, featuring between 8,000 and 10,000 artistes. Modi will stay overnight at State Guest House No. 1 before travelling to Kaliabor in Nagaon district the following day to address a public rally at Mouchanda field.

A central highlight of the visit will be the foundation-laying ceremony for a 34.5-km elevated corridor from Kaliabor to Bokakhat, cutting across the Kaziranga landscape. Sarma said the Union Cabinet has approved an outlay of Rs 6,957 crore for the project, calling it the biggest infrastructure investment in Assam to date.

Land acquisition for the corridor has already been completed by the state government, while the tendering process by the National Highways Author-



ity of India (NHAI) is in its final stages, the Chief Minister said. Once completed, the elevated road is expected to significantly reduce wildlife fatalities caused by vehicular movement, especially during the annual floods when animals cross highways in search of higher ground.

The corridor is also expected to dramatically improve travel time between Guwahati and Upper Assam. "At present, it takes around one hour and 15 minutes to cross the Kaziranga stretch due to speed restrictions. With the elevated corridor, this distance can be covered in just 20 minutes," Sarma said. He added that the existing road through the national park will continue to remain open, giving commuters a choice of routes.

On the connectivity front, Sarma said the Prime Minister will flag off two new train services from Kaliabor - one con-

necting Dibrugarh and Gomti, and another between Guwahati and Rohtak. In addition, Modi will also flag off the first Vande Bharat sleeper train between Kolkata and Guwahati from a neighbouring state on January 17. "Effectively, Assam will be getting three new train services in two days," the Chief Minister said.

Apart from infrastructure announcements, the Cabinet also cleared several administrative decisions. Sarma said one bigha of land in Guwahati has been allotted to the Bodo Sahitya Sabha for a multi-purpose project. The Cabinet also approved land allotments for several beneficiaries under Mission Basundhara 2.0.

The visit, Sarma said, underlines the Centre's focus on accelerating infrastructure development, cultural outreach and connectivity in Assam and the wider Northeast.

Manipur Government Launches 24/7 Helpline, Urges Public to Report Extortion

IMPHAL

The Manipur government on Friday called on citizens to actively report extortion activities, announcing a 24/7 toll-free helpline as part of its efforts to combat the rising threat to law and order.

N. Ashok Kumar, Commissioner cum Secretary of the Home Department, said in an official notification that the state has set up an Anti-Extortion Cell (AEC) under the Home Department to tackle extortion-related crimes effectively. "These activities pose a significant threat to the law and order situation," the notification stated.

The integrated AEC brings together personnel from the state police, central armed police forces (CAPFs), and the Assam Rifles/Indian Army, enabling a coordinated response across Manipur. The unit is tasked with taking prompt and effective action against extortionists, working closely with

local police stations and security agencies.

Through the new helpline, citizens can report extortion threats received via calls, messages, letters, or any other mode. The government urged everyone, including government employees, to report incidents without delay and fully cooperate with authorities.

Highlighting past enforcement, the notification noted that over 370 individuals involved in extortion and criminal intimidation cases were arrested in 2024. The state government reiterated its strong commitment to maintaining public safety and called for continued collaboration from the community to curb extortion and related crimes.

The launch of the helpline marks a significant step in Manipur's efforts to strengthen law enforcement mechanisms and ensure rapid response to extortion threats, reflecting the administration's proactive approach toward citizen security.



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india set to face challenges

With the onset of the new year, it must be admitted that the trends appear quite encouraging. The pacts with Oman and New Zealand in December can be said to be favourable for India and specially in a critical geopolitical situation with a 50 percent tariff imposed by the US still hanging over the country. India has steadily overcome the problem and has moved ahead, overtaking Japan as the world's fourth largest economy with GDP valued at \$4.18 trillion and is steadily on track to replace Germany by 2030 as the third largest economy.

The trade deals are no doubt encouraging and, according to Prime Minister Modi, these "will create many new opportunities for growth, innovation and employment for our youth". Moreover, experts feel that the new year augurs well as 2025 witnessed pushed through one of the most expansive reform agendas in recent years, overhauling tax laws, labour rules, business regulations as the government sought to improve governance and reduce compliance costs to attract investment and position the economy for long term growth.

Significantly, the Indian economy grew at 8.2 percent in the July-Sept. quarter as a strong comeback in the manufacturing sector and robust services activity helped it clock the fastest pace of expansion in six quarters. With the Reserve Bank of India cutting repo rates by 26 basis points, resulting in softening of home loan rates, the trend is obviously quite encouraging and augurs well for the economy, more so in such geopolitical conditions, which are not so favourable. According to Modi, "it reflects the impact of pro-growth policies and reforms. It also reflects the hard work and enterprise of our people".

Added to this is the recent report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which called for structural reforms to support India's economic development and encouraged the government to build human capital, boost female labour force participation, maintain its public investment momentum and strengthen the business environment. The IMF board noted that deeper trade integration would strengthen India's competitiveness and attract more foreign investment while greater focus on R&D and innovation would support productivity-led growth. Advancing the green transition, supported by expanded access to concessional financing was also highlighted towards moving to resilient growth.

The very fact that the report acknowledged India's strong economic performance and resilience which benefited from sound macroeconomic policies and reforms are indicative of a positive trend in the economy. The recent spurt in growth may be attributed to the result of push factors right from the Union budget's tax cuts that were followed by the goods and service tax reforms and the impact of these may also be felt in the third quarter as well. Thus, an annual growth rate of over 7 percent has been projected by the RBI for the current fiscal. However, what is of concern is the weakening of the rupee with merchandise imports outpacing exports and FDI slowing amid global uncertainty.

It goes without saying that India has to emerge as a strong manufacturing hub with low wage possibilities. While there is much talk of the hire and fire policy being implemented as also keeping a check on wages of workers to compete with competitors like Bangladesh, Vietnam and even China, it needs to be pointed out that depriving workers in the unorganized sector cannot be a solution. On the other hand, the use of low-cost technology solutions may be inducted to meet quality parameters which find global acceptance. At the same time, the present labour reforms are in the right spirit and may not deprive workers.

Analysing the economic situation, it can be said to be quite encouraging with the government eager to make investments in various specialised areas, keeping in view the need for import substitution. The special focus on indigenous defence production will boost the economy in the coming few years as experts feel that India may become a mid-sized exporter in the next three years or so. Already the country has made considerable progress in shipbuilding and manufacture of small aircraft and helicopters. According to the central government, the country's indigenous defence production hit a record Rs 127,434 crore in 2023-24, a 174 per cent surge from Rs 46,429 crore in 2014-15. India is on track to achieve a target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore in defence production in the current fiscal year.

However, what is needed is additional efforts by the private sector to boost manufacture through modernisation and expansion of existing units, which, to an extent, has already started. The fund raising by companies and the induction of technology and the much talked about AI may go into manufacturing of large products to make them globally acceptable as per international standards. The Tier-II and Tier-III should be the new engines of growth where, in most cities, infrastructure has vastly improved. In these cities, private sector is already quite active and there needs to be a further boost to manufacturing.

In the new year, areas of concern are the weakening rupee, continued flight of foreign portfolio investors etc. Certain things need to be given priority, the most important being the green transition. While the power sector is under the active consideration of the government, controlling emissions in the transport sector must be seriously considered. Also, efforts would have to be made to increase female participation in the labour force, as rightly pointed out by the IMF. The very recent opening of nuclear power to private investors offers a big opportunity to big corporate houses to plan something in this direction.

Meanwhile, the Centre is expected to give a thrust to capital expenditure in the forthcoming budget, hoping that a multiplier effect along with higher consumption demand will boost investment and economic activity. The focus will be on Railways, which may get a higher budgetary allocation of around Rs 2.7 lakh crore in the next fiscal, considering the increased number of projects against Rs 2.5 lakh crore allocated in the current financial year. Laying new tracks and procurement of modern coaches will obviously get priority in the increased

CAN AI SHAPE INDIA'S NEXT LEAP IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT?



DR. RAHUL KUNDAL

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) reshapes industries and social systems, India stands at a critical juncture. Recognised as a future AI powerhouse and lauded for its human development progress, the country now faces an essential question: Will AI serve as an engine of inclusive growth, or will it widen the gaps we've struggled to narrow?

The Human Development Report (HDR) 2025 highlights the urgency of this dilemma. It calls for a revived interest on human agency and inclusion, urging policymakers to balance technological progress with fair planning. For India, which has made notable strides in health, education, and poverty reduction, this is more than an academic question. It's about how we build a future where rather than replacing human potential, AI strengthens it.

India ranks 130th out of 193 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), an improvement from 133rd the previous year. Life expectancy has risen from 58.6 years in 1990 to 72 today. Average years of schooling and per capita income have also grown significantly. According to NITI Aayog, over 248 million people exited multidimensional poverty between 2013-14 and 2022-23. These gains reflect decades of economic expansion and social investments—from Ayushman Bharat to Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. But in a world shaped by automation, digital exclusion, and rising inequality, such progress remains fragile.

On the technology front, India is gaining momentum. The Stanford AI Index 2025 ranks India 4th globally for AI development, which is remarkable for a lower-middle-income country. For the first time, 20% of India's AI researchers are staying in-country, a sign of growing domestic capacity. AI is already transforming sectors—from predictive crop advisory services in regional languages to AI-enabled diagnostics in healthcare. If scaled equitably, such technologies could become game-changers for India's development story.

That said, progress is not evenly distributed. India's AI ambition clashes with the reality of stark digital divides, between urban and rural, rich and poor, male and female. Reliable internet access and basic digital literacy are far from universal. The same HDR notes that India's HDI value drops by 30.7%, when adjusted for inequality, which is among the steepest

declines in Asia. Female labour force participation and political representation remain dismally low. Unless built inclusively, AI may end up serving the few, not the many.

The threat of job displacement looms especially large in India's vast informal sector, which employs over 90% of the workforce. AI may create new kinds of employment, but it will also render some traditional roles obsolete, often the very jobs that keep vulnerable communities afloat. Layered onto this is a host of ethical dilemmas, including algorithmic bias, opaque decision-making, and data privacy violations. Operating in a regulatory vacuum, we risk building systems that replicate and reinforce existing inequalities, only at machine speed.

There is an urgent need to place people at the centre of AI policy. India needs an AI strategy that prioritises ethics, fairness, and the well-being of its people, ensuring that technology serves development, not the other way around. This means designing systems that are transparent, just, and accountable. Digital access must become a basic right, as it has in Finland and Estonia. Investing in equitable digital infrastructure beyond urban tech hubs is non-negotiable. Public-private partnerships can play a key role, but they must be guided by public interest, not profit alone.

Upskilling the workforce is also urgent. From the codebase to the clinic, everyone needs

to learn how to work with AI, without losing sight of what makes us human. The National Education Policy 2020 and the Skill India Mission must evolve to meet this moment. At the same time, we need a regulatory framework with real power to enforce accountability. Privacy laws, algorithmic assessments, and ethical AI guidelines must move from discussion papers to binding regulations. Still under development, the Digital India Act could be a watershed, if it remains anchored in democratic values.

AI offers India a powerful lever for development, but it is no silver bullet. If handed over entirely to the market and allowed to run unchecked, it could deepen structural divides and outsource exclusion to machines. But when harnessed intentionally, it can unlock breakthroughs.

Take Telangana's use of AI-powered crop forecasting, which supports small farmers with predictive insights. It highlights what's possible when technology doesn't just scale, but includes.

However, such gains remain scattered. Without a deliberate public policy push, they risk becoming exceptions rather than the norm.

India stands at a decisive moment. The question is no longer whether to embrace AI, but whether we will shape it or be shaped by it. The real danger is not that machines will outsmart us, but that we may trade away our values in pursuit of efficien-

cy. As AI ethicist Timmit Gebru warns, "The problem is not the technology itself, but the values of those who design and deploy it."

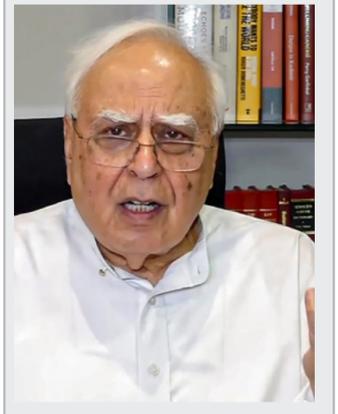
India's AI journey must be grounded in justice, not just innovation. To build a Viksit Bharat, India must balance speed with inclusion and choose the harder path of equitable integration, where AI isn't used to bypass inclusion, but becomes a tool to deepen it. Why does this matter? Because in the age of intelligent machines, what counts

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

"Only Supreme Court can rein in ED. Every opposition state, every significant opposition leader is targeted. What is happening in West Bengal is truly disturbing! That too in the midst of an impending election."

"Federalism is at ED's mercy!"

Kapil Sibal



most is not how smart our tools are, but how fair our societies remain.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded.

Maya Angelou

Assam CM distributes appointment letters to 4,369 candidates, Govt appointments cross 1.50 lakh

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Friday distributed appointment letters to 4,369 candidates selected for Grade IV posts through the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE).

With this, the total number of government appointments made during the tenure of the present state government has reached 1,50,033, thereby surpassing the commitment made during the 2021 Assembly elections.

It may be mentioned that after initiating the recruitment process through ADRE, the state government for the first time had distributed appointment letters to 24,787 selected candidates on May 10, 2023. Of these, 11,048 candidates selected by the State-Level Recruitment Commission were appointed to Grade III posts, while 13,739 candidates were appointed to Grade IV posts.

In the second phase, the process to

fill Grade IV posts during 2023-24 was undertaken, culminating in the distribution of appointment letters to 4,369 candidates today.

Addressing the gathering at a programme held at the Jyoti-Bishnu International Cultural Centre at Khanapara in Guwahati, Chief Minister Sarma said the recruitment process initiated through ADRE was extremely complex and that maintaining transparency and public trust throughout was a major challenge.

"Earlier, each department conducted its own recruitment examinations, often resulting in two or three examinations being held on the same day, causing serious inconvenience to candidates. With nearly 200-300 examinations being conducted annually, effective monitoring was difficult, leading to allegations of corruption at various levels. Consequently, recruitment processes were frequently stalled due to court

interventions, resulting in acute shortages of officers and staff in government departments," the Chief Minister said.

Referring to the government's commitment to provide one lakh government jobs on the basis of transparency, the Chief Minister said no previous government in Assam had appointed more than 15,000-16,000 youth during a five-year term. To address this, the present government constituted separate recruitment boards for doctors and engineers and introduced a unified examination system for appointments across departments.

"New legislation was enacted, and two commissions were constituted for recruitment to Grade III and Grade IV posts. Despite multiple challenges, the recruitment process conducted in the first year was completed successfully, he said, adding that even internet connectivity had to be suspended during examinations to ensure fairness and

transparency. The credibility of the recruitment process was reflected in the receipt of 13,79,132 applications for Grade III and Grade IV posts under ADRE. While many states conduct examinations over multiple days with different question papers, Assam conducted the examination in a single day at multiple centres, including private educational institutions," he said.

He informed that examination centres were set up in 28 districts and 9,12,717 candidates appeared in the examination held on October 27, 2024. The results were declared on March 7 last year.

He further stated that oral examinations were conducted from June 17 to July 7, following which board members submitted the marks awarded to candidates on a daily basis to eliminate any scope for irregularities.

"After the final results were declared on October 15, appointment let-

ters were distributed to 4,369 candidates today. The entire process was completed in a fully transparent and error-free manner, with no court cases filed. Recruitment based purely on merit and transparency has renewed faith among the youth, encouraging them to focus on studies," the Chief Minister said.

Calling upon the newly appointed candidates to serve with dedication, Sarma urged them to ensure that poor and needy citizens visiting government offices receive timely solutions to their problems.

He also announced that the 'Swagata Satirtha' portal will be reopened on February 1 to facilitate mutual transfers among government employees seeking postings at preferred locations.

He said around 10,000 government employees benefited from this facility last year.

The Chief Minister said the newly appointed candidates themselves are

living examples of transparent and merit-based recruitment in Assam and urged them to carry this message of change to future generations.

He added that, alongside government recruitment, the state government is placing equal emphasis on promoting entrepreneurship so that Assam's youth can find employment within the state and contribute to its development.

He also urged the new appointees to withdraw their family members' names from the Orunodoi scheme if they are currently beneficiaries, so that another deserving family can benefit.

Emphasising respect for parents, Sarma said the appointees' success was due to their parents' blessings. He encouraged them to present their parents with a gift from their first month's salary, to regularly save a small amount, and to donate it to a place of worship annually so that society benefits from their success.

Tripura CPI(M) Slams DGP's Crime Reduction Claim, Alleges Law and Order Breakdown

AGARTALA

Senior CPI(M) leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Tripura Assembly, Jitendra Chaudhury, on January 9 rejected Director General of Police Anurag Dhanekar's claim that overall crime in the state declined by 8.33 per cent in 2025, alleging that the official statistics do not reflect the ground reality and mask a worsening law and order situation.

Addressing reporters, Chaudhury accused the DGP of presenting a "scripted chart" to please the political leadership while overlooking incidents that, he said, expose serious policing failures. He cited an alleged attack on a CPI(M) rally near the police headquarters on December 24, claiming that when party leaders approached the West Agartala police station to lodge a complaint, the officer in charge attempted to avoid registering the case.

The CPI(M) leader also referred to a recent incident in which miscreants allegedly entered the MLA hostel at Khejurgan in Agartala and issued death threats to a sitting legislator. He further alleged that police authorities routinely express their inability to provide security for opposition rallies, a claim he said directly contradicts the police narrative of declining crime. "Despite such serious incidents, the DGP was compelled to claim an 8.33 per cent fall in the overall crime graph," Chaudhury said, questioning the credibility and transparency of the data released by the police.

At the same time, Chaudhury welcomed a recent Tripura High Court order directing the state government to grant regular pay scales to employees recruited on fixed pay against permanent vacant posts. Recalling that the Left Front government had introduced a guideline in 2000 requiring such employees to work on fixed pay for five years, he noted that the CPI(M)-led coalition lost power to the BJP in the 2018 Assembly elections.

Assam Police Honour Officers for Child Protection Efforts Under Sishu Mitra Programme

GUWAHATI

Assam Police on Thursday recognised officers across ranks for their exemplary work in handling cases involving children, presenting the Sishu Mitra Awards 2025 at a ceremony held at the Assam Police Institute in Ulubari. The awards celebrate personnel who have demonstrated dedication, sensitivity, and accountability in safeguarding children's rights. The awards acknowledged officers ranging from Inspectors General of Police to Sub-Inspectors who handled cases involving child victims with care and professionalism. Senior police officials emphasised that the initiative aims to ensure justice for children through empathetic investigation and strict adherence to child protection laws. Addressing the ceremony, the Director General of Police highlighted the state leadership's "clear vision for

safeguarding children against all forms of violence" and noted that the Sishu Mitra Programme has enabled the police to build capacity in handling child-related cases sensitively and effectively. "Sustained efforts have been made to strengthen the skills of police personnel so that they can deliver justice to children in a manner that is both empathetic and efficient," he said. Now in its third edition, the awards aim to "acknowledge and inspire police officers who continue to demonstrate exceptional dedication in securing justice for children." The programme focuses on training and institutional support, ensuring that officers across Assam are equipped to address cases of abuse, exploitation, and other vulnerabilities faced by children. It is implemented by Assam Police with technical support from UNICEF and the UTAH Child Rights Organisation.

Assam Cabinet Appoints Five-Member Prosecution Team in Zubeen Garg Death Case

GUWAHATI

The Assam Cabinet on Friday approved the formation of a special five-member panel of lawyers to strengthen the prosecution in the high-profile death case of popular singer Zubeen Garg.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the move aims to ensure a robust legal response in the ongoing trial. Senior Gauhati High Court advocate Ziaul Kamar has been appointed as Special Public Prosecutor, with Brojendra Mohan Choudhury serving as Additional Special Public Prosecutor. The team is further supported by Assistant Special Public Prosecutors Kishore Datta, Pranjal Dutta, and Bikash Jamar.

The decision followed a request from Garg's wife, Garima, who had urged the state government to constitute a prosecution team matching the defence in strength and expertise.

The Cabinet also endorsed the establishment of the Zubeen Garg Trust, initiated by the family to



preserve the late singer's artistic legacy. To support the effort, the government announced one-time financial assistance of Rs 5 crore, which will help fund initiatives such as a museum dedicated to Garg's life and work, as well as promote cultural and youth-focused programmes in his memory.

Garg, aged 52, passed away on September 19 last year during a

yacht event in Singapore organised by the Assam Association, where he had travelled to participate in a cultural programme. Following his death, the Assam government formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the CID to probe the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Separate cases were also registered regarding alleged financial irregularities involving Garg's

manager, Siddharth Sharma, and the festival organiser, Shyamkanu Mahanta. Individuals arrested in connection with the murder include Mahanta, Sharma, Garg's bandmates Shekharjyoti Goswami and Amrit Prabha Mahanta, his cousin and Assam Police DSP Sandipan Garg, and two others present in Singapore at the time. Additionally, two of Garg's bodyguards, Nandeswar Bora and Paresw Baishya, were taken into custody over allegations of fund misuse.

The SIT submitted a charge-sheet last month naming seven individuals in the case. The trial is currently underway at the Kamrup (Metro) District and Sessions Court, with the next hearing scheduled for January 17.

The appointment of the special prosecution team marks a significant step in expediting legal proceedings and ensuring a fair trial, following Garima Garg's appeal for swift and effective action in her late husband's case.

PAPPM Condemns Divisive Statements, Reaffirms Manipur's Unity and Constitutional Status

KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: The People's Alliance for Peace and Progress in Manipur (PAPPM) has strongly condemned what it described as inflammatory, misleading, and unconstitutional statements issued by the self-styled Kuki History and Identity Protection Committee and the Kuki Human Rights Council, warning that such narratives threaten peace and social harmony in the state.

In a statement issued by PAPPM spokesperson M. Bobby Singh, the organisation said the recent press notes were based on falsehoods and appeared to be a deliberate attempt to reignite tensions at a time when people in Manipur are struggling to restore normalcy.

PAPPM asserted that Manipur is an integral and indivisible part of the Republic of India and remains a single, unified administrative and territorial entity. It categorically rejected any

claim or narrative suggesting the existence of a political or territorial entity called Kukiland, stating that there is no legal, political, or constitutional basis for such assertions.

The organisation also dismissed claims of a so-called Kuki-Meitei boundary buffer zone, calling them

create boundaries or zones of separation.

PAPPM described the statements made by the two organisations as provocative and accused them of consciously inciting discord. It alleged that the press notes openly endorsed violence, vilified communities and

fabricated and without any grounding in law or fact. In this context, PAPPM referred to an official clarification issued by Manipur Police on May 21, 2024, which stated that no buffer zone exists anywhere in the state. According to the police clarification, security forces have been deployed only in fringe, vulnerable, and sensitive areas as a temporary preventive measure to deter violence and restrict the movement of miscreants, not to

elect representatives, and distorted historical facts, posing a serious threat to public order, social harmony, and national unity. The organisation said such actions could attract stringent provisions of Indian law related to sedition, promotion of enmity between groups, and acts prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India.

The alliance also expressed concern over opposition by groups aligned with what it termed separatist Kuki

politics to the lawful identification and deportation of illegal immigrants from Manipur. PAPPM maintained that indigenous and law-abiding residents of the state, including those under the broader Kuki umbrella, largely support such lawful measures. It further claimed that unchecked illegal immigration, allegedly linked to organised drug trafficking networks and poppy cultivation, has contributed significantly to instability and the erosion of the rule of law in Manipur.

Calling for firm action, PAPPM urged both the state and central governments to act decisively against individuals or organisations issuing provocative, misleading, or secessionist statements aimed at disrupting peace and fracturing Manipur's social fabric.

The organisation reiterated its commitment to peace, constitutional governance, and the unity and integrity of Manipur and the Republic of India.

SHGs Strengthening Rural Economy in Tripura: Agriculture Minister

AGARTALA

Tripura Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Saturday highlighted the crucial role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in strengthening the state's rural economy, while also underlining the importance of preserving traditional culture and food habits for health and well-being.

Speaking at the Pithe Puli Utsav held at Kathalia Higher Secondary School in Dhanpur, Sepahijala district, the minister said globalization has significantly altered traditional eating practices, often at the cost of health.

He noted that winter delicacies such as pithe, mua, nadu, murir mua and chirar mua, once commonly prepared at home, are increasingly being replaced by street food.

"Our mothers traditionally prepared healthy Bengali delicacies during this season. Today, these are being replaced by fast and street food, leading to rising stomach-related ailments. Preserving our culinary traditions is essential for safeguarding our health. I am not discouraging other foods, but our culture has inherent value," Nath said.

Describing the Pithe Puli Utsav as more than a food festival, the minister said it rep-

resents culture, tradition and self-reliance, reflecting the spirit of community participation and local livelihoods.

Highlighting government initiatives to promote self-reliance, Nath said Tripura currently has 54,627 SHGs with around 4.89 lakh members. He noted that before 2018, only 3,506 SHGs received a revolving fund of Rs 4.26 crore, whereas the present government has extended Rs 75 crore to 36,530 SHGs.

He further said that bank credit to SHGs has seen a sharp rise, expanding from 900 groups with loans worth Rs 4 crore earlier to over one lakh SHGs with loans totalling Rs 1,896 crore. "More than one lakh women have become financially independent as Lakhpati Didis. This demonstrates our commitment to self-reliance," the minister said.

Nath added that empowering women through SHGs contributes directly to broader state and national development and aligns with the vision of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat. Quoting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said modernization must progress alongside the preservation of culture and tradition, asserting that SHGs are now playing a decisive role in strengthening Tripura's rural economy.

NEC Releases Rs 4.89 Crore for Development Projects in Mizoram, Disburses Rs 76.78 Crore Across Northeast

SHILLONG

The North Eastern Council (NEC) has released Rs 4.89 crore for a series of development projects in Mizoram during December 2025, reaffirming its continued support for infrastructure development, livelihood generation and cultural initiatives in the state.

The allocation to Mizoram is part of a larger disbursement of Rs 76.78 crore made by the NEC across all Northeastern states, as well as to regional and other implementing agencies, during the same period.

According to an NEC statement issued on Friday, the funds released for Mizoram will support projects focused on capacity building, cultural preservation and governance enhancement. Key initiatives include the establishment of a fish farmer training centre at Lengpui, the setting up of a Mizo cultural heritage centre at Kawlri in Serchhip district to safeguard the state's historical and natural heritage, and projects aimed at enhancing state revenue through the use of information technology for monitoring mineral exploitation and resource mapping.

In addition to state-specific allocations, the NEC disbursed Rs 26.47 crore



to regional and other agencies across the Northeast in December. These funds will support a range of region-wide initiatives implemented by universities, research institutions, specialised corporations and cultural organisations operating in different parts of the region.

The NEC said the latest funding reflects its sustained commitment to advancing development in the Northeast, with emphasis on infrastructure, livelihoods, cultural promotion, research and innovation. The December disbursements underscore the council's role in promoting balanced and inclusive growth across the Northeastern states.

SHGs strengthening rural economy in Tripura: Agriculture minister Tripura Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath emphasized

the importance of preserving culture and tradition for health and well-being, while highlighting the pivotal role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in strengthening the rural economy. SHGs strengthening rural economy in Tripura: Agriculture minister Tanmoy Chakraborty Tanmoy Chakraborty Jan 10, 2026, Updated Jan 10, 2026, 8:57 AM IST Follow us: Google News Tripura Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath emphasized the importance of preserving culture and tradition for health and well-being, while highlighting the pivotal role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in strengthening the rural economy. Speaking at the Pithe Puli Utsav held at Kathalia HS School in Dhanpur, Sepahijala district, the Minister noted that globalization has altered traditional eating habits. "In

this season, our mothers traditionally prepared healthy Bengali delicacies like pithe, mua, nadu, murir mua, and chirar mua. Today, these are often replaced by street food, which contributes to rising stomach-related ailments. Preserving our culinary traditions is essential for safeguarding our health.

I am not discouraging other foods, but our culture has inherent value," he said. The Minister described the Pithe Puli Utsav as more than a food festival, calling it a reflection of culture, tradition, and self-reliance. Citing government initiatives, he said, "Tripura has 54,627 SHGs with 4.89 lakh members. Before 2018, around 3,506 groups received a revolving fund of Rs 4.26 crore. Our government, however, has provided Rs 75 crore to 36,530 groups. Similarly, bank loans for SHGs have expanded from 900 groups worth Rs 4 crore to over 1 lakh groups totaling Rs 1,896 crore. Over 1 lakh women have become financially independent as 'Lakhpati Didis.' This demonstrates our commitment to self-reliance." He added that empowering women through SHGs contributes to broader state and national development, supporting the vision of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat. "As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, modernization must go hand in hand with preserving culture and tradition. Unlike previous governments, which overlooked such initiatives, our SHGs are actively strengthening the rural economy," the Minister stated.

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“India will develop at pace set by PM Modi, even on autopilot”: NSA Ajit Doval

NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval on Friday said that India will become a developed nation at the pace set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, even if it runs on autopilot.

Speaking at the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue in the national capital, he urged the youth to strengthen their decision-making skills, saying strong and timely decisions are key to leading the country in all fields.

“I’ve forgotten my youth, and your youth has changed so much that I’m not even aware of many things. But one thing is very common in both: when I was young, and now, I’ve observed that it always stays with you... That is your decision-making ability... India will definitely develop. India, at the pace and speed that PM Modi has set. Even if it runs on autopilot, it will still be developed,” Doval said.

“But the question is: who will lead this developed India? How capable will they be? The greatest strength of a leader is making the right decisions. They make decisions on time and implement those decisions with complete faith and conviction. So if you want to become a leader of developed India, in any field, science, technology, security, you will have to make decisions, and you will have to develop this decision-making ability from now on,” he said.

Doval said that a nation’s willpower is its true strength, and wars are fought to break an opponent’s morale, not for violence.

He praised India’s leadership for guiding the country toward rapid progress over the past decade through strong



commitment, hard work, and dedication.

“You can increase your willpower. That same willpower becomes national power. Why do we fight wars? We’re not psychopaths who get great satisfaction or pleasure from seeing enemy corpses, dead bodies, and severed limbs. That’s not why wars are fought. Wars are fought to break a country’s morale, so that it will surrender according to our wishes and accept our terms, allowing us to achieve what we want... The will of the nation is what wars are fought for,” he said.

“Even today, look at all the wars and conflicts that are happening; some countries want to impose their will on others, and for that, they are using force. If you are so powerful that no one can oppose you, then you will

always remain independent. But if you have everything but without that morale, all your weapons and resources will be useless, and for that, you need leadership. Today, we are very fortunate to have such leadership in the country. A leadership that, in 10 years, has taken the country from where it was to where it is now, putting it on the path to rapid progress. Their commitment, their hard work, and their total dedication are an inspiration for all of us,” Doval said. Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2.0 commenced today (Saturday) and will continue till January 12, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

The first edition of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue was held in January 2025 at the same venue.

NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra on Friday alleged that the Enforcement Directorate was “committing robbery” at the I-PAC office, where all of the TMC’s data related to elections was present, and justified West Bengal Mamata Banerjee’s actions to protect that data.

Moitra questioned the timing of the ED’s raid at the I-PAC office in connection with a “seven-year-old” alleged coal scam, and said that they were aware that TMC election information is available at that office.

“ED is not carrying out the investigation, but is illegally stealing. The ED is not taking any action because if there was a seven-year-old coal scam, it suddenly woke up, a month before the Bengal elections, and they remembered the idea of taking action, and where did they go to take action? I-PAC is not a hidden organisation. Everyone in India knows that I-PAC is an election strategist, an election consultant,” she said.

“They’ve been working with the Trinamool Congress not just from today, but for the last seven or eight years, and all our services, all our candidate lists, all our election information is with I-PAC because that’s what they do. They raided their office. We would say it wasn’t a raid; the ED committed a robbery, and they were taking all our information, and it’s our duty, it’s our party’s duty to protect that information, and that’s where Mamata Banerjee, the lioness, went. Only Mamata Banerjee can stop them like this,” she added.

Earlier today, TMC MPs, including Moitra staged a protest outside the Home Ministry in New Delhi, raising slogans against Amit Shah, alleging “misuse” of the probe agency. Delhi Police later detained the TMC MPs and took them to Parliament Street police station.

Moitra said, “This morning, eight



of us MPs came, and we were protesting outside the Home Ministry. We were peacefully protesting, and you saw how they picked us up, dragged us, and brought us here.”

Meanwhile, in a writ petition filed before the Calcutta High Court, the Enforcement Directorate accused the West Bengal Police, allegedly acting in collusion with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, of obstructing its officials and failing to discharge their public duty in “flagrant and blatant disregard to law” during an ongoing search operation in Kolkata carried out on January 8. In the 28-page petition, the ED said the state police prevented its officers from carrying out their official duties under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

The agency alleged that the situation escalated after the Chief

Minister on Thursday entered the residential premises of Prateek Jain, director of political consultancy firm I-PAC, during an ED search and took away what the agency described as “key evidence”, including physical documents and electronic devices.

Banerjee, however, questioned the legality of the raid, alleging that the central agency had seized party-related materials, including hard disks, candidate lists and strategic documents, and accused Amit Shah of misusing central agencies.

“Is it the duty of the ED, Amit Shah, to collect the party’s hard disk, candidate list? The nasty, naughty Home Minister who cannot protect the country is taking away all my party documents,” Banerjee said while speaking to reporters. “At 6:00 am, they arrived and seized the party’s data, laptops, strategies, and mobile phones. Their forensic experts transferred all the data. I believe this is a crime,” she said.



INTERNATIONAL

Trump repeats stopping India-Pak conflict claim, says he deserves Nobel; Obama ‘did nothing to earn it’



WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has once again claimed that he stopped a conflict between India and Pakistan, saying “no one in history is more deserving” of the Nobel Peace Prize than him, while sharply criticising former president Barack Obama for receiving the award despite having “done nothing”.

Trump made the remarks during a meeting at the White House on Friday with oil and gas executives, where discussions focused on plans related to Venezuelan oil reserves. During the interaction, he reiterated his claim that

eight jets were shot down during the India-Pakistan conflict in May last year, without clarifying which side suffered the losses.

“Look whether people like Trump or don’t like Trump, I settled eight wars, big ones,” Trump said, adding that some of these conflicts had lasted between 25 and 36 years. Referring to India and Pakistan, he said the two countries were “just getting ready to start” a war, during which “already eight jets were shot out of the air”.

The US president also said Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who visited Washington last year, had cred-

ited him with saving millions of lives by stopping the conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

This was the second time in as many days that Trump publicly claimed credit for halting the India-Pakistan standoff. He has repeatedly made this assertion since May 10 last year, when he announced on social media that India and Pakistan had agreed to a “full and immediate” ceasefire after a “long night” of talks he said were mediated by Washington.

India has consistently rejected claims of third-party mediation. New Delhi has maintained that the under-

standing to end hostilities was reached bilaterally after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict.

Trump said that since returning to office, he had stopped eight wars within eight months of his second term, arguing that a Nobel Peace Prize should be awarded for “every war you stopped”. He again rebuked Obama for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize shortly after assuming office in 2009, saying Obama “had no idea why” he got the award and “didn’t do anything”.

“I can’t think of anybody in history that should get the Nobel Prize more than me,” Trump said, adding that Obama was a “bad president”.

Trump further claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin had told him he had been trying unsuccessfully for 10 years to stop two wars. “He couldn’t believe it,” Trump said, adding that he personally had “saved tens of millions of lives”.

Trump was also asked about Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who dedicated her Nobel Peace Prize last year to him and has said she wanted to give the honour to him. Trump said Machado would be visiting Washington next week to “pay her regards”, adding that Norway was “very embarrassed” for not awarding him the prize when the Oslo-based Nobel committee did not honour him last year.

“But I’m honoured that she’s coming here. I look forward to meeting her,” Trump said.

A day earlier, in an interview with Fox News, Trump again claimed that he had stopped a war between India and Pakistan, describing the two nuclear powers as “ready to go at it big”.

Tarique Rahman appointed as chairman of Bangladesh Nationalist Party



DHAKA

Bangladesh’s Tarique Rahman on Friday was appointed as the chairman of the BNP, days after the demise of his mother and party chairperson Khaleda Zia following a prolonged illness.

The Standing Committee of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) approved the appointment of Rahman as the Chairman of the party in a meeting on Friday, local media reported.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir confirmed the appointment to the media after the meeting,

Dhaka Tribune reported.

Rahman, who returned to Bangladesh on December 25 after 17 years of self-exile in London, was appointed the chairman after the post of BNP chairman was left vacant following the death of party chairperson and his mother, Khaleda Zia.

The three-time Bangladesh prime minister and BNP patriarch died on December 30 following a prolonged illness.

A meeting of the National Standing Committee was convened to address the vacancy, as per the party constitution, the report added.

BNP media cell said that with this appoint-

ment, Rahman officially took over the responsibilities of the party’s top leadership position, state-owned Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha reported.

Rahman, 60, has emerged as a leading contender for prime minister-ship in the polls.

In 2002 Rahman was made BNP’s Senior Joint Secretary General and became Senior Vice Chairman in 2009.

BNP emerged as the forerunner to capture power in the February polls, as former prime minister Hasina’s Awami League party has been barred from contesting the election.

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aminations related to HAM Radio, encouraging greater awareness and participation.

All the speakers praised the organisers for their efforts in bringing together diverse voices and perspectives under the NEIR Fest 2026 platform, calling the initiative timely and significant for the region.

Alemoon Nessa, proprietor of A N Spice Industries in

OUR CORRESPONDENT

The North East Integration Rally 2026 (NEIR Fest) was formally launched on January 9 with an interaction programme involving the BTR Happiness Mission Team at Cygnett Park Meghna, Chapaguri, Assam. The event also focused on the preservation of Bodo culture and heritage.

The rally was flagged off on January 9, marking the beginning of a region wide initiative aimed at strengthening unity and people to people connections across the Northeast.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by Kh. Gajendra Singh, Ramcharan Das, Biswadeep Gupta, Rajneesh Roy, Rajib Saha, and Madhab Chetri. Introducing the concept of the North East Integration Rally 2026, Biswadeep Gupta spoke about the need for dialogue, cultural understanding, and sustained engagement among the states of the region.

Musician and social worker Uttam Boro added a cultural note to the programme with a rendition



of Zubeen Garg's popular song Mayabini, which was warmly received by the audience.

Speaking on the occasion, Kh. Gajendra Singh referred to the turbulent period Manipur went through, particularly in 2023. He said there is no inherent conflict between the Kuki and Meitei communities and attributed the unrest to external forces. He stressed that strong connectivity among all northeastern states is essential to prevent such forces from cre-

ating disturbances. Prof. Dr. Sukamal Deb highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship in development. He said natural resources alone cannot drive growth and emphasised that human intervention, innovation, and enterprise are necessary to convert resources into meaningful progress.

Rajib Saha spoke on HAM Radio communication, explaining its relevance, especially during emergencies. He also spoke about online and offline classes and ex-

Bongaigaon, Assam, and a national awardee for promoting entrepreneurship and generating employment, was felicitated at the event.

Sanjeev Baishya of Fine Line Communication, Guwahati, was also present at the event.

Earlier, Kokrajhar Lok Sabha MP Joyanta Basumatary received the NEIR team at the venue and extended his best wishes for its grand success. The NEIR team felicitated him.

Kangla: Memory, Power, the Living Heart of Imphal Kangla is not just a fort. It is where Manipur remembers itself.

Rising quietly in the middle of Imphal, on the western bank of the Imphal River, Kangla carries the weight of centuries. Once spread across both sides of the river, today it survives in fragments, scarred but standing. Ruins, gates, moats, groves, and open grounds tell a story that no single monument can contain.

The name itself explains its importance. Kangla, from old Meitei, means the prominent part of dry land. In a flood-prone valley, this was power, safety, and permanence. It is no coincidence that the Meitei rulers chose it as their seat of authority.

For nearly eighteen centuries, from 33 CE until 1891, Kangla was the administrative and symbolic centre of the Ningthouja dynasty. Decisions that shaped Manipur's political, cultural, and spiritual life were taken here. The rise and fall of kings, wars, alliances, rituals, and reforms all passed through these grounds. Kangla was the capital of pre-modern Manipur, but more than that, it was the axis around which the kingdom revolved.

That history is why Kangla is revered. For the people of Manipur, especially the Meiteis, it is sacred ground. It evokes sovereignty, identity, and a time before colonial rule disrupted the region's political autonomy. Even today, Kangla is spoken of with a reverence usually reserved for temples or ancestral homes. It is a reminder of independence, dignity, and continuity.

This layered significance is now part of a larger conversation. Kangla is being proposed for recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with discussions already underway in the Indian Parliament. Such a designation would acknowledge not only its architectural and historical value, but also its cultural depth. Kangla is not frozen in the past. It is a living site, still shaping how people understand Manipur.

Beyond history and symbolism, Kangla breathes. Often called the Lungs of Imphal, the fort complex is heavily forested, offering rare green cover in the heart of a growing city. The dense vegetation moderates temperature, improves air quality, and provides ecological balance in an increasingly congested urban space. This role has become even more critical as Imphal expands and green spaces shrink.

That makes recent concerns about deforestation inside Kangla especially sensitive. Developmental construction over the past few years has led to minor but significant loss of tree cover. For many residents, this felt like a violation, not just of the environment, but of a shared heritage. Kangla's value lies as much in its trees as in its ruins.

In response, several efforts have been made to restore and strengthen its ecological character.

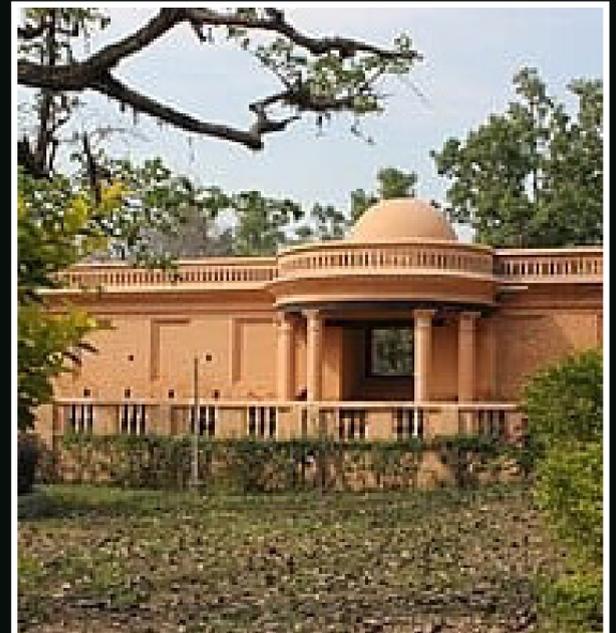
In 2009, the Kangla Herbal Garden was established by the Kangla Fort Board. The idea was simple but powerful: reintroduce medicinal plants traditionally used in the region and preserve indigenous botanical knowledge. The North East Institute of Science and Technology, Jorhat, through its Lamphel sub-branch, took responsibility for developing the garden.

A year later, the Manipur government provided financial support, contributing 6.16 lakh towards the project. Around 131 plant varieties were introduced, including about 20 medicinal species. The garden now nurtures plants deeply rooted in local culture and healing practices: heigru, kihori, agar, neem, tera, singairei, and leihao among them. Spread across 3.5 acres, the herbal garden quietly reinforces the idea that Kangla's future lies in conservation, not concrete.

This approach continued in later years.

In June 2019, under the Green Manipur Mission, around 700 indigenous fruit-bearing saplings were planted in Nura Heikol, the Women's Fruit Garden. Earlier known as the Biodiversity Park, the space was reimagined as a living orchard, celebrating both ecology and community. The choice of fruit-bearing trees was deliberate. These were species familiar to local diets and traditions, reinforcing a relationship between land and people.

A few months later, in September 2019, another symbolic act took place. On its 20th foundation day, The Sangai Ex-



press, one of Manipur's leading newspapers, planted around 120 trees inside Kangla. The species included mayokfa, agar, uningthou, teak, chahui, and samba.

It was a reminder that institutions too have a role in protecting shared heritage.

Kangla also houses Engellei Leikol, earlier known as the Rock Garden, located in its southern part. Less talked about, this garden adds another layer to the fort's evolving landscape, blending natural features with curated spaces for reflection and leisure.

The planting efforts did not stop there. In May 2022, the Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development planted around 50 fruit-bearing plants inside Kangla, continuing the emphasis on sustainability and indigenous species.

Looking ahead, the Kangla Fort Board has announced an ambitious plan to plant 10,000 fruit-bearing saplings within the complex. Led by Chief Minister Nongthombam

Biren, the initiative signals an official recognition that Kangla's survival depends on ecological care as much as historical preservation.

What makes Kangla unique is this convergence. It is at once a royal seat, a sacred site, a forest, a botanical reserve, and a public space. Few places carry so many roles without losing coherence.

Walk through Kangla today and you feel it. The silence is not empty. It is layered with memory. Trees stand where kings once walked. Gardens grow where armies once assembled. The ruins do not ask for nostalgia. They ask for responsibility.

Kangla does not belong only to history books or government files. It belongs to the people who see it as the heart of Imphal and the soul of Manipur. Preserving it is not about restoring the past. It is about allowing history, culture, and nature to coexist, breathing together, in the middle of a changing city.



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 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'.
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12 JAN

River-Climate Conclave

JAN'25

Online Global Fest

10 JAN

Media Conclave

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FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION BOOK CLUB | WORKSHOPS | LOCAL RAW MARKET | CONFERENCES

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

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

10 JAN
Band Night
 Musical Night | 10 JAN

10-12 JAN

E-Sports

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Spind up your best photos!

11 JAN

film festival

Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Mizoram Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W's Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet

Barak Festival

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10-12 JAN

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