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PERSPECTIVE
"The greatest remedy for anger is delay" ~ Seneca

HOLIDAY NOTICE
KRC TIMES will remain closed on 26th January 2026 on account of Republic Day. Regular work will resume on 28th January 2026. We wish our readers/advertisers Happy Republic Day.

No controversy over special revision of voter rolls, Hindus and Assamese Muslims not served notices: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on January 24 said there was no controversy surrounding the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls in the state, asserting that neither Hindus nor Assamese Muslims have been served notices during the exercise. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a government programme in Nalbari district, Sarma claimed that notices issued during the voter revision drive were limited to Bengali-speaking Muslims, commonly referred to as 'Miyas'. He alleged that the exercise was intended to keep this section "under pressure". "There is no controversy over SR. Which Hindu has got notice? Which Assamese Muslim has got notice? Notices have been served to Miyas and such people, else they will walk over our heads," the Chief Minister said. The term 'Miya' is often used to describe Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam and is considered pejorative by many. A section of the community has, in recent years, sought to reclaim the term as an assertion of identity. Some groups in the state identify sections of the community as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Opposition parties, including the Congress, have alleged that the Special Revision exercise, being carried out ahead of the Assembly elections, is aimed at harassing genuine citizens, particularly minorities. They have accused the BJP of misusing Form 7 of the Representation of the People Act to target bona fide voters.

WHO SAID WHAT

"Rahul Gandhi is a cowardly leader. He said he would go to Ayodhya to have darshan of Lord Ram. He hasn't gone yet. Why didn't Rahul Gandhi go? He should have gone, shouldn't he?"

Tej Pratap Yadav
Jan Shakti Janata Dal chief

Assam's classical heritage finds pride of place at Rashtrapati Bhavan as 'Granth Kutir' opens to public

GUWAHATI
Assam marked a major cultural milestone on January 23 with the classical heritage of the Assamese language receiving prominent recognition at Granth Kutir, a newly inaugurated manuscript and book repository at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The archive was formally inaugurated by President of India Droupadi Murmu and showcases rare manuscripts and books from 11 Indian languages that have been accorded classical status, including Assamese. The initiative highlights India's rich literary and intellectual traditions while underscoring the growing national emphasis on preserving classical languages.

The inclusion of Assamese manuscripts comes a little over a year after the Government of India conferred classical language status on Assamese on October 3, 2024. Granth Kutir houses nearly 2,300 books and around 50 manuscripts representing Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali. Several of these manuscripts are handwritten on traditional materials such as palm leaves, bark, cloth and handmade paper.

Conceived as a dedicated space for preserving India's intellectual heritage,



Granth Kutir covers a wide range of subjects including epics, philosophy, linguistics, science, governance, history and devotional literature. The repository also features the Constitution of India rendered in classical languages. Ancient works that underpin the classical status of these languages such as the Charyapadas, shared by Assamese, Bengali and Odia traditions form a key part of the collection.

The project has been developed through collaboration between central and state governments, universities, research institutions, cultural organisations and individual donors. It has received institutional support from the

Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, while the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts is providing technical expertise in conservation, documentation, management and display of manuscripts. Addressing the gathering, President Murmu said India's classical languages form the bedrock of the nation's culture and have guided global knowledge systems for centuries, including science, Ayurveda, yoga, mathematics, astronomy and literature. She noted that the wisdom preserved in these languages continues to remain relevant and has played a vital role in shaping modern Indian languages.

Emphasising that preservation of

DoNER Minister Scindia inaugurates, lays foundation for Rs 950 crore projects during Tripura visit

AGARTALA

Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya Scindia on Sunday said projects worth Rs 950 crore were inaugurated or had their foundation stones laid during his three-day visit to Tripura, underscoring the Centre's focus on infrastructure, tourism and connectivity in the state. Speaking to reporters after laying the foundation stone for the Rs 40 crore Matabari Tourism Circuit at Narikelunja, Scindia said the ambitious project would link and develop five major tourist destinations across Tripura. These include the Mata Tripura Sundari temple, Neemahal and Ujjayanta palaces, Sepahjala Wildlife Sanctuary, the rock-cut caves of Chabimura, and the 48 islands of Dumbur Lake. "All these locations will be developed as world-class tourism destinations with an investment of Rs 450 crore," the minister said, adding that the project is expected to significantly boost tourism and generate employment.

The minister also visited the under-construction maternal and child healthcare centre at GB Pant Hospital and inspected the new building of the Agartala Government Dental College. The two healthcare projects, with investments of Rs 192 crore and Rs 210 crore respectively, are scheduled for completion by June 2027. According to Scindia, the projects launched during his



were inaugurated or had their foundation stones laid on the first day of the visit. These included road connectivity works and solar microgrid projects aimed at supplying 750 units of power to around 450 remote villages.

The minister also visited the under-construction maternal and child healthcare centre at GB Pant Hospital and inspected the new building of the Agartala Government Dental College. The two healthcare projects, with investments of Rs 192 crore and Rs 210 crore respectively, are scheduled for completion by June 2027. According to Scindia, the projects launched during his

visit reflect the Centre's sustained commitment to Tripura under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Tripura Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury, who accompanied Scindia, said in a social media post that the Matabari Tourism Circuit project includes beautification and upgrade works at Neemahal, Sepahjala, Udaipur, Chabimura and Dumbur. Planned infrastructure includes log huts, multipurpose parking facilities, cafeterias and other amenities aimed at strengthening tourism infrastructure and boosting local employment opportunities.

Meghalaya BJP urges BSF to fully seal Indo-Bangladesh border amid security concerns



SHILLONG

The Meghalaya unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has called on the Border Security Force (BSF) to intensify surveillance and fully seal the Indo-Bangladesh border in the state, citing growing security concerns linked to developments in the neighbouring country.

Addressing the media, BJP spokesperson Mariahom Kharkrang urged both the state and central governments to take serious note of the evolving political situation in Bangladesh, which he described as unfavourable to India and potentially destabilising for the Northeast region.

Kharkrang alleged that certain elements across the border were attempting to undermine India's security, warning that the Northeast could once again become vulnerable if strict border controls were not enforced.

"Given the current geopolitical situation, decisive action is required. We cannot afford a return to the days when Bangladesh was

used as a safe haven by militant groups to rest, regroup and set up camps," he said.

Stressing the urgency of the issue, the BJP leader said sealing the border was now more critical than ever and appealed to the BSF to ensure foolproof security along the international boundary. He also called for close coordination between the BSF and the Meghalaya Police to prevent illegal crossings.

Kharkrang's remarks come amid recent claims circulating on social media, including videos posted by vloggers, allegedly showing individuals crossing the border without significant resistance.

"If these reports are accurate, they pose a serious threat to national security. The BSF and state police must immediately investigate and take necessary action," he added.

The BJP said strengthening border security was essential to safeguarding national interests and maintaining stability in the sensitive border state.

PM Modi likely to inaugurate Northeast's first highway-based emergency landing strip at Moran

GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to inaugurate the Northeast's first highway-based emergency landing strip on the Dibrugarh-Moran stretch of National Highway 127, with preparations in full swing ahead of his proposed visit on February 14. According to officials, there is strong anticipation that the Prime Minister's aircraft may land directly on the 30metre-wide runway developed along the highway, marking a historic moment for the region. While vehicular traffic is currently allowed on the stretch, the designated runway has been kept clear and operationally ready for aircraft operations. As part of preparedness measures, central dividers along the stretch have been removed, fencing has been installed on both sides to prevent the entry of people and animals, and temporary roadside shops have been cleared to ensure safety during flight operations. Officials said these steps have significantly increased the likelihood of an aircraft landing on the highway during the Prime Minister's visit. Reacting to the development, senior BJP leader from Dibrugarh, Parag Dutta, said the proposed landing would fulfil a long-cherished aspiration of the region. "Through a live video by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, we came to know that on February 14, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will land his aircraft on this highway. This is a dream we have had for years, and the people are eagerly waiting. Such an initiative will create history," Dutta said. Chah Janagosthi Morcha district general secretary, Dibrugarh, Shyamal Bhumij, also welcomed the Prime Minister's proposed visit. "What was once only a dream—an emergency aircraft landing on a national highway—will become a reality on February 14," he said, extending greetings on behalf of the organisation.

AIUDF chief Ajmal urges Muslims not to back BJP, attacks Congress over 'double game'

GUWAHATI

All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Maulana Badruddin Ajmal on Sunday mounted a sharp attack on both the BJP and the Congress, calling on Muslim voters to stay away from the ruling party and accusing the Opposition Congress of misleading minority communities ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections.

Addressing party supporters, Ajmal claimed that the BJP and the Congress were tacitly dividing electoral territory for political convenience, at the expense of minority voters. "The BJP is quietly leaving minority-dominated areas for the Congress, while the Congress is leaving majority areas for the BJP. This understanding is being carried out at the cost of minority voters," he alleged.

Taking aim at Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the AIUDF chief said repeated targeting of the Muslim community would not alter political realities on the ground. "By merely shouting slogans, no jungle gets cleared. The Chief Minister can keep shouting 'miya, miya', but that will not stop people from moving forward," Ajmal said, alleging that such rhetoric only fuels fear and marginalisation.

Issuing a strong appeal to Muslim voters, Ajmal said supporting the BJP amounted to betraying community interests. "No Muslim voter should vote for the BJP. If anyone does so, it is a disgrace to the community," he said.

He also criticised what he described as political intimidation of

minorities. "Are Muslims so scared that someone shouts 'miya' and they quietly submit? That mindset itself is humiliating," Ajmal remarked.

Predicting a shift in Assam's political landscape, the AIUDF leader claimed that minority communities would play a decisive role in the state's future governance. "In 2026, political power in Assam will change hands. No matter how much the Chief Minister shouts, the momentum of the miya community will not stop," he said, adding that Dispur would eventually reflect this change.

Ajmal also targeted the Congress, accusing it of playing a "double game" with minority voters. Referring to Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi and Rajgor Dal chief Akhil Gogoi, he alleged that their political focus in Upper Assam was largely limited to Muslim-dominated constituencies. "Whether it is the Congress or Rajgor Dal, their attention is centred on the minority population," he said. He further claimed that the Congress was avoiding its traditional strongholds and misleading Muslim voters. "Congress is not even going to places like Titabor, where Tarun Gogoi once had a strong presence. Minority voters are being taken for a ride and made fools by every party," Ajmal alleged. Urging Muslims to reassess their political choices, the AIUDF chief said blind faith in parties that do not genuinely represent minority interests would weaken their collective voice in the long run.

Defeating BJP has been turned into a 'jihad' for Miya community: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on January 24 mounted a sharp attack on the Congress and Rajgor Dal leader Akhil Gogoi, alleging that the interests of indigenous Assamese people would be sidelined if either Gogoi or the Congress were to come to power in the state.

Addressing the media, Sarma claimed that recent statements made by Akhil Gogoi while interacting with members of the Miya community were politically dangerous. He alleged that Gogoi had suggested he would become the Home Minister if the Congress returned to power and would ensure that no eviction drives were conducted against people from the Miya community, while offering them protection.

"The way Akhil Gogoi is speaking, one can assume that if he or the Congress comes to power, Assam will turn into a 'Miya state', and there will be no work or protection for the Assamese people," the Chief Minister said.

Sarma also targeted the Congress over its ticket distribution process ahead of the Assembly elections.

Referring to the last day of nominations, he alleged that the Congress headquarters at Rajiv Bhawan was "flooded" with people from minority-dominated areas. He claimed that of nearly 700 aspirants who sought Congress tickets, around 600 belonged to the Miya community.

The Chief Minister further alleged that members of the Miya community had contributed 750,000 each to the Congress, either to seek party tickets or to fund efforts aimed at defeating the BJP in the upcoming polls.

Taking a jibe at the Congress, Sarma said that even a Hindu Congress worker had remarked that visiting Rajiv Bhawan now felt like "going to a mosque," which he cited as evidence of what he described as the party's changing character.

"For the Miya community, defeating the BJP has been turned into a kind of jihad," Sarma said, accusing the Congress of indulging in appeasement politics ahead of the elections.

The remarks come amid escalating political rhetoric in Assam, as parties step up their campaigns in the run-up to the Assembly elections.



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BUDGET 2026 MUST TRUMP- PROOF INDIA'S ECONOMY

There is a new term for volatile uncertainty in the post-Davos world. It is spelt TRUMP. Economic security matters—more so when whims are weaponised, super imperialism arrives dressed in past and imagined grievances and a US president levies tariffs because his claim of brokering peace is not validated. The rules-based world order—always a cartel of the West—a convenient, useful fiction in the best of times, stands exposed. Even this very flawed model is, to paraphrase Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, facing a rupture.

Context matters for politics and economic policy. Next Sunday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the 2026 Budget in one of the most challenging global and domestic settings. It is true that India is likely to end the year with 7.4 percent GDP growth.

However, there is no disputing the distress in employment-intensive sectors and sustainability following the advent of artificial intelligence-enabled commerce.

The data illustrates the fault lines. The rupee has fallen from 86 per dollar to over 91.95 in a year. Net foreign direct investment is down. Sell-off by foreign institutional investors—Rs 29,000 crore this month—pushes the rupee down and the falling rupee triggers further sell-off. Private consumption is verily K-shaped.

IT services is the largest formal employer and consumption accelerator. India's top five IT companies added just 17 net employees in the first nine months of 2025-26. Home sales are down 14 percent in major metros. Houses priced below Rs 75 lakh, which constituted 60 percent of sales, are now at 32 percent, while those priced above Rs 40 crore jumped 66 percent in 2025.

India must find answers for its economic security within its potential. Budget 2026 must Trump-proof India's economy by eliminating friction, enhancing entrepreneurship and improving income generation for propelling consumption among 140 crore people. Here are a few observations and exploration of possibilities for ramping up investment, employment and growth.

REVIVE THE RUPEE: The decline in the rupee is both a cause and consequence of events. The circumstance calls for steps beyond foreign-currency non-resident account band-aids and policies for export promotion and import substitution.

Restoration of value demands the creation of investment opportunities to draw in dollars. Blend the intent for privatisation with the need for FDI. India should invite global bids for public sector assets—government holdings in banks, in state-owned airports, in oil retailers. It should also create plug-and-play sites using idle space in sick PSUs like HAL in Pune or MTNL for data and capability centres to capitalise on the AI rush.

INDIA INVESTMENT SUMMIT: Davos 2025 featured surreal theatre—seven Indian chief ministers flew to Switzerland so Indian companies could meet them to discuss investing in India.

Instead, why not invite investors to India? To start with, the CMs could share their experience—what investors want. CMs can be invited to showcase what they can offer and add Niti Aayog's much-promised Investor Friendliness Index. The crux is, instead of every state holding their own event—like Kinetic Karnataka or Magnetic Maharashtra—why not host an India Investment Summit for opportunities across India?

BUILD NEW CITIES: Urbanisation is an acknowledged multiplier of growth. Indian cities will host nearly 90 crore people by 2050. We need more cities, homes and better living spaces. Yet India, as per the World Bank, spends less than 1 percent of its GDP on urban infrastructure. PSUs possess over 18 lakh acres of land. Hawking them piecemeal has not worked as the National Land Monetisation Corporation, created in 2022, has struggled. Instead, bundle PSU land with adjacent ordnance, railway and defence parcels to create integrated townships—not the next Mumbai or Chennai, but smaller ones hosting less than 10 lakh people. These could also be senior retirement homes. Open them for global bids to drive investment, jobs, consumption and growth.

CREATE INDRA: India needs a platform—India Development Research Agency—to host technologies to meet challenges old and new. Institutions such as DRDO, ISRO, NCL, ICAR and others designed solutions, but struggled to monetise them. ISRO can map soil moisture and help predict yields. DRDO has expertise in phase-change materials that can trim cooling costs. The National Chemical Laboratory has looked at biodegradable polymers. The 2024 Budget initiated the creation of a Rs 1-lakh-crore Research, Development & Innovation Fund and a Rs 1-lakh-crore Urban Challenge Fund was proposed in 2025. The ideas are still on the runway. Why not create INDRA, à la the US's DARPA, to create an ecosystem to foster solutions and monetise them on a fee-royalty basis to solve India's problems.

REGULATORY REFORMS: Every square mile of India is governed by states, who control standards and permits in critical areas. Budget 2025 promised regulatory reforms—both at the Centre and the states. The government informed parliament that two high-level committees were working on such reforms. What is the approach? For instance, a power project needs 116 approvals. Must this be so? Why not do a flow chart of permissions? Is the system being interrogated? It will be useful to have an interim report and a deadline for the final report. India, unlike other middle powers, is not fully tethered to blocs defined by identity or ideology. Yet, it is haunted by a lack of capacity to translate ideas into outcomes, and its politics frequently waits for a crisis before acting. Budget 2026 presents an opportunity to break this pattern. It can empower the economy, unleash the scale of its domestic market and entrepreneurial potential, and address structural fault lines. This Budget can Trump-proof the economy.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“There are so many great things in life; why dwell on negativity?” —Zendaya

PSLV Glitches not Linked, will be Fixed; India's First-time Success Record Strong



What is the roadmap for the SHANTI Act?

The process of making rules to the Act has begun but we are taking time given that this is going to change the entire format of our nuclear energy-related activity—opening up to private and non-government sectors and agencies. The new framework is going to be more accommodating while not compromising on the essential safeguards. We have to take into consideration the expectations of stakeholders who are going to partner with us. It has to be carried forward diligently to target the expected outcomes. I don't think it will be fair to tie initiatives of this scale down to a tight time frame. Still, we might come out with the rules not later than 2-3 months or so.

How has the private sector responded to the SHANTI Act?

There is good response from the private sector and from foreign collaborators. When the US Secretary of State was holding parleys with our Minister of External Affairs recently, he talked more about the SHANTI Act than about anything else.

Expanding nuclear power is now essential as India shifts to clean energy, cuts oil imports, ensures round-the-clock supply...

Will we see changes in the FDI format for nuclear power?

We are working on that but I think, we will be guided by the framework which already exists.

We cannot have something totally different from what is in place after due deliberation. But if some specificity is to be infused, we will do that.

Nuclear power is more costly than solar and thermal power and foreign technologies even more so. Who is going to buy such expensive power?

I agree that it is expensive. Initially, the quantum of generation is lesser. As we upscale, the cost is going to come down. To pursue this is no longer a choice for many reasons. The world is moving to clean energy, we can't be left behind. When we talk of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, geopolitically, we have to seek our own source. Currently, we depend on petroleum fuel which is largely imported.

Even countries which export petroleum are moving out of that sector because they are foreseeing a virtual closure of their business happening through that sector. For certain tasks you have to bring in nuclear energy because it is a 24x7 uninterrupted source of energy which is not always the case with renewable energy. All decisions are motivated by these facts. Currently, light water reactors are costly—almost double of PHWR—because most of the equipment is from other

activities and factors that the government should not have to handle.

ISRO's PSLV-linked failures have raised questions. Are the failure reasons similar for the May 2025 and January 2026 cases? What about future launches?

Will be wrong to conclude that the same lapse has happened. What seems to be the issue is the same as last year's. That has been fixed and something else came up. We are looking into that. We already have an SOP in place. We have a failure redressal committee which is already working on it. We don't take it as a failure because the number of first-time successes that India has had, on an average, would be higher than possibly the US—whether it's Mangalyaan or Chandrayaan. But, we will plug the lapses.

Regarding new PSLV launches, no, not yet. We have to fix the issues.

Do you think this incident has hit India's credibility as a cost efficient, non-service provider of small satellite launches?

No, I think some sections of the media have made it out to be like that. We still have so many foreign satellites waiting to launch from that.

Some new countries are showing interest.

Gaganyaan un-crewed mission was to happen in early 2026 ahead of the human space flight of 2027. Is it on track?

It has to happen ahead of the actual human flight but I'm not sure whether it'll happen in the beginning of 2026. It might go over to the second half, or the third or last quarter. It was delayed for many reasons. It was planned for the 75th year of Independence. But, in voyages, this can happen because there can be so many imponderables.

The other launches planned for the calendar also began to happen. If I miss this Wednesday, I can't be picking up next Wednesday because like marriages, it is decided in heaven. We have to keep in mind the configuration, the position of Atomic Energy, Space, S&T, PMO and Personnel Training, Jitendra Singh discusses at the ET Roundtable India's nuclear ambitions in the SHANTI Bill era.

Says ISRO's recent PSLV incidents and future launches will be planned after issues are 'fixed'. Excerpts:

India's space technology model for ease of living, from Gati Shakti to telemedicine to Swamitva, deserves more attention the planets and the universal setup. Before the human mission, we have several different components and test flights. So, sending up a human being is important but safe return is more important, which will involve a whole of government approach involving many entities. So, we are doing it cautiously.

ON GLOBAL INTEREST

The US Secretary of State talked more about the SHANTI Act than anything else. That was flattering to hear.

Are we not losing pace on several fronts keeping both sovereign needs and fast-growing technology and data centre requirements?

Certainly, we have to move

on with a reasonable pace and many amendments made in the last 5-6 years is motivated by that sense. Most of the time, when we talk about space we keep talking about satellites, rockets, humans in space, because that sounds very romantic. What India should boast of is the role model we created for other countries and use of space technology for ease of living—from Gati Shakti to telemedicine to Swamitva.

That is something which gets underreported. MANNED, UNMANNED MISSIONS

The uncrewed Gaganyaan mission could be delayed beyond

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

“AI, Space, Nuclear Energy, Semiconductors, Mobility, Green Hydrogen, Biotechnology, you name it, and you'll find one Indian start-up or the other working in that sector. I salute all my young friends who are associated with one start-up or the other, or want to start one of their own.”

Highlighting India's rapid economic progress, PM Modi urged industry and start-ups to place a strong emphasis on quality. He said the era of compromising on standards was over and India must now be known globally for top-quality products. “Be it our textiles, technology, electronics or even packaging, the connotation of an Indian product should become 'top quality'. Let us make excellence our benchmark,” he said, reiterating his vision of “Zero Defect, Zero Effect”.

The Prime Minister also noted that India has emerged as the world's third-largest start-up ecosystem. Marking the 10th anniversary of the Start-up India initiative, he said the ecosystem has grown from fewer than 500 start-ups in 2016 to over 2 lakh recognised entities today, driven largely by innovation and the risk-taking spirit of the youth.

During the programme, PM Modi announced that the India AI Impact Summit will be held next month, bringing together global technology experts. He said the summit would showcase India's progress and achievements in artificial intelligence on the world stage.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



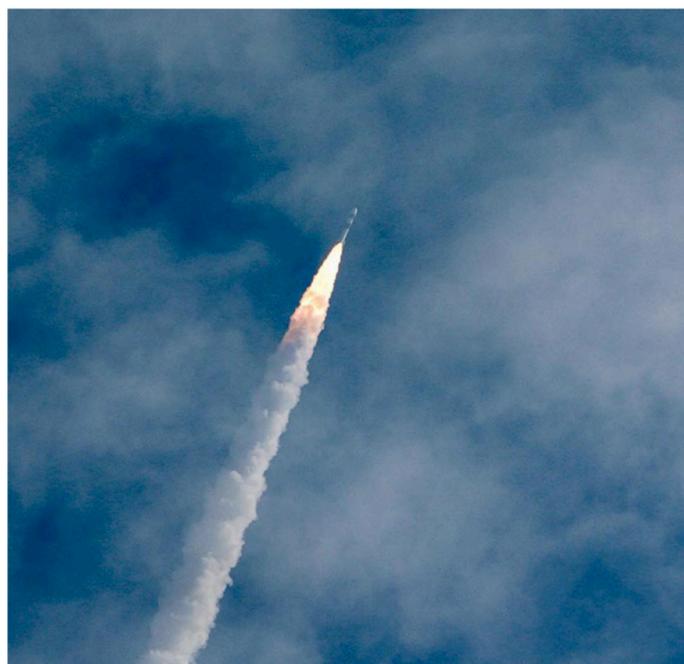
early 2026. Sending up a human being is important, but safe return is more important.

In the National Quantum Mission, in the first cohort, only eight startups were given funding. Only three of them have got going. Also, what is the progress on the ₹1 lakh crore RDI fund launched last year to boost startups?

To be honest even the private sector has been taken by surprise. They never thought that we would suddenly open up the nuclear sector or the space sector or we would be launching the National Quantum Mission. We are among the 4-5 countries in the world, which have an exclusive dedicated National Quantum Mission. On RDI, I think the first lot will take off by this month end which could be 4,000-5,000 crore.

What about expanding lateral entry and the Opposition's demand for reservations in it?

More than 40 officials entered the government through lateral entry. The government is open to suggestions on how reservation can be implemented in lateral entry in a feasible manner.



Tripura agar industry eyes Rs 2,000 crore turnover as Centre pushes GI tag, boosts export quota: Scindia

AGARTALA

Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya Scindia on January 24 said the Centre is moving to secure a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for Tripura agar and has substantially expanded export quotas to unlock the full potential of the agarwood industry, which he said could generate a turnover of ₹2,000 crore.

The minister was speaking after laying the foundation stone of an Agarwood Cluster Processing Centre at Kadamtala in North Tripura district. The project is being funded under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) scheme and is aimed at strengthening processing and value addition in the sector.

Scindia said the government is also working to digitally integrate permissions required under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other regulatory frameworks. This,



he said, would enable agar farmers to directly access international markets without intermediaries, ensuring better price realisation and a stronger value chain.

Highlighting policy support extended to the sector, the Union Minister said export quotas for agar products have been increased sixfold. Agar chip exports have been enhanced from 25,000 kg to 1.5 lakh kg, while agar oil exports have risen from 1,500 kg to 7,500 kg. He

added that two central agar processing centres are being developed—one in Golaghat district of Assam and another in North Tripura.

From cultivation and processing to marketing and branding, the Centre is working to comprehensively strengthen the agar value chain, Scindia said. He noted that an agar-based project worth ₹80 crore has already been taken up in North Tripura district as part of this broader strategy. Referring to other development initiatives in the state, the minister said he inaugurated and laid foundation stones for several projects on Friday, including road infrastructure, solar power plants and health facilities. He also inspected two major projects in Agartala—the ₹152-crore Government Dental College and the ₹200-crore Child and Maternity Hospital.

Scindia said he would later travel to Dumbur in Gomati district to inaugurate the Matabari Circuit project worth ₹290 crore, describing it as a new tourism circuit jointly conceptualised

by Chief Minister Manik Saha and the DoNER Ministry.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and with the support of the Tripura government, concerted steps are being taken to boost the agar industry in Tripura and Assam, the minister said. He noted that the initiatives align with the Centre's 'Vocal for Local' and 'One District, One Product' vision, with agar emerging as a key product in the Fulbari area of North Tripura.

Expressing optimism about future growth, Scindia said nearly 90 per cent of the country's estimated 15,000 crore agar trees are located in the North East, and Tripura's share is expected to increase by around 50 per cent over the next four years. He added that buyer-seller meets are being organised to connect Tripura's agar industry with global markets, citing recent interactions with buyers from Qatar and more such engagements planned in the coming months.

BJP-AGP seat-sharing talks in final stage, announcement soon: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on January 24 said that seat-sharing discussions between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its key ally, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), are nearly finalised, signalling that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is close to firming up its electoral strategy for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections.

Speaking to reporters, Sarma said a formal announcement on the seat-sharing arrangement would be made in the coming days. He added that once the process is completed, all NDA partners would collectively seek the mandate of the people of Assam.

The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the BJP-led alliance would secure a fresh mandate on the strength of its governance record and development initiatives implemented across the state over the past years.

Providing clarity on the ongoing ne-

gotiations with the AGP, Sarma said the talks have reached an advanced stage and are almost complete. He noted that the formal declaration would follow discussions between the two parties and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"The day Amit Shah calls both parties, the seat-sharing arrangement will be officially announced," Sarma said, underscoring the role of the central leadership in finalising alliance decisions.

The BJP-led NDA has been projecting cohesion among its partners while also working to consolidate support among regional forces to further strengthen its electoral prospects.

With the seat-sharing formula nearing completion, political focus is expected to shift towards campaign planning, candidate selection and joint outreach programmes across the state. The BJP, aiming for a third consecutive term in Assam, has consistently highlighted development, stability and strong governance as its key poll themes.

Gauhati High Court cancels bail of IAS officer Talo Potom, orders immediate arrest

GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court's Itanagar Bench revoked the bail of IAS officer Talo Potom, who is accused in a high-profile abetment to suicide case, and directed his immediate arrest.

Justice Yarenjungla Longkumer noted that the trial court had failed to properly consider key evidence and legal procedures when granting bail to Potom in November 2025, describing the earlier decision as "perverse" and legally flawed.

The case relates to the suicide of Gomchu Yekar in October 2025 at his rented residence in Lekhi village. Yekar's father, Tagom Yekar, had petitioned the High Court seeking cancellation of Potom's bail, alleging that the officer had subjected his son to mental harassment, sexual exploitation, and corruption-related pressure, claims reportedly referenced in Yekar's suicide notes.

During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel highlighted that Potom had been released on bail just seven days after his arrest, while the investigation was still at an early stage. Forensic analysis of deleted WhatsApp chats and voice messages was reportedly ongoing at the time.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) confirmed that the suicide notes were in the deceased's handwriting and noted that custodial interrogation had not been possible earlier due to law and order concerns.

The High Court criticized the lower court for conducting what it called a "mini trial" at the bail stage and for making assumptions about the victim's mental health without supporting evidence. "The offence shocked society and involved a person of influence. Releasing him during the early stages could disrupt the probe," the court stated.

While quashing the November 2025 bail order, the bench clarified that Potom may apply for fresh bail before the trial court if appropriate, but the immediate order requires his arrest to facilitate the ongoing investigation.

All Cachar Hills Tribes Headmen Association holds organisational elections at Digli Singpungji

SILCHAR

The All Cachar Hills Tribes Headmen Association on Saturday conducted its organisational elections at Digli Singpungji in Assam's Cachar district, witnessing wide participation from members of hill tribes and indigenous communities.

From early morning, the election venue saw a lively atmosphere as voters turned up in large numbers to take part in the democratic process. Representatives of various hill tribes, members of indigenous communities and office-bearers of the association were present, lending significance to the exercise. Local residents said the 2026 organisational election goes beyond an internal reshuffle and is being seen as a crucial step in shaping future leadership for the hill communities of Cachar

district. There is growing expectation that the association will play a more proactive role in safeguarding the rights of hill people and addressing key public interest issues, including social development, education and healthcare.

Community members also viewed the election as an effort to strengthen the organisation by building new leadership and improving its structure and effectiveness. Many believe the process reflects a collective call for unity, greater awareness and stronger representation of hill tribes in the district.

Overall, the elections at Digli Singpungji were seen as a significant marker of unity, political consciousness and the future direction of the hill tribal and indigenous communities of Cachar district.

Imphal road works halted over safety lapses, PWD issues ultimatum to contractors

IMPHAL

The Public Works Department (PWD) on January 24 ordered a temporary suspension of ongoing cement concrete (rigid pavement) road construction works in Imphal city after receiving multiple complaints over public safety lapses.

Chief Engineer of the PWD, Chongtham Bishwachandra, said construction under the Manipur Urban Road, Drainage and Asset Management Improvement Project (MURDAMIP) has been halted for at least one week, or until contractors strictly comply with prescribed safety norms.

Addressing a press conference, Bishwachandra said the decision was taken in response to widespread public grievances, particularly the absence of adequate safety measures at construction sites. The MURDAMIP project is being implemented with loan assistance from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), routed through the Department



of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance. "Manipur is among the first northeastern states to undertake large-scale rigid pavement projects simultaneously across the city. However, we are receiving complaints mainly related to safety. If a project endangers lives instead of facilitating public movement, it is better to stop it," the chief engineer said.

He warned contractors to put proper safety arrangements in place within a week, failing which further action would be taken.

Contractors have been directed to install adequate safety and information signage, generate public awareness and coordinate with local residents by providing prior intimation before commencing construction activities.

Apart from safety concerns, Bishwachandra said the public has raised issues such as uneven road levels, dust pollution, the absence of temporary paver roads and an increased risk of accidents. To address these grievances, the department has instituted a

three-tier grievance redress mechanism, with complaints to be handled first by executive engineers at project sites, then by the project director, and finally at the state level under the administrative secretary if required.

The project covers a total road length of 547.281 km for improvement and construction, along with road asset management and a preliminary hydrology study of the Imphal Basin. The total project cost stands at ₹3,647.23 crore, of which ₹2,896.02 crore is being financed through an AIIB loan.

The works are being executed through four Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract packages, all of which have been awarded and are currently under implementation. Bishwachandra said the project has a construction period of three years and a defect liability period of five years, and urged contractors to immediately comply with safety directives so that work can resume and be completed on schedule.

18th Rozgar Mela held in Dimapur, 366 youths receive appointment letters

DIMAPUR

The 18th tranche of the Rozgar Mela, organised by the Assam Rifles, was held at the Assam Rifles Training Centre and School in Dimapur on January 24, marking a significant push towards youth employment in the region.

The event was organised for newly selected candidates appointed to various Central Government organisations, with 366 youths receiving their appointment letters during the programme.

Union Minister of State for Rural Development Kamesh Paswan attended the event as the chief guest. He was accompanied by Commissioner and Secretary, Rural Development, Thavaseelan K. IAS, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, district administration and other dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering,



Paswan congratulated the newly appointed candidates and said the appointment letters symbolised not just employment, but also the trust and responsibility entrusted to the youth by the nation. He urged them to uphold integrity, discipline and a strong commitment to public service in their respective roles.

Highlighting the participation of youths in the Assam Rifles, CRPF, ITBP, SSB and other Central Armed Police Forces, the minister underlined their critical role in safeguarding

national unity, security and peace. He also expressed satisfaction over the selection of a large number of women candidates, describing it as a reflection of the government's focus on women-led development.

The minister said the government remains committed to youth empowerment and rural development, referring to initiatives such as VB-GRAMG, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, self-help groups and skill development programmes aimed at promoting self-reliance. He added that

the North-East has emerged as a key driver of national development, with notable improvements in connectivity and infrastructure, particularly in Nagaland.

Reiterating the Centre's resolve to ensure that no youth is deprived of opportunities, Paswan said an empowered youth population is essential for strengthening democracy and accelerating national progress. He expressed confidence that the dedication and integrity of the newly appointed candidates would contribute to building a secure and self-reliant India.

The event was connected live with the national Rozgar Mela programme, during which Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed appointees across the country. The Rozgar Mela was held simultaneously at 45 locations nationwide, with around 61,000 appointment letters distributed across India.

Zubeen Garg's family seeks PM's intervention, calls for special court and fast-tracked trial

GUWAHATI

The family of late Assamese cultural icon Zubeen Garg has approached the Prime Minister of India, seeking urgent intervention to ensure a focused, time-bound and transparent trial in connection with his death in Singapore.

In a detailed memorandum submitted on January 24, the family urged the Centre to constitute a Special Court in India, fast-track the trial in Assam and ensure that none of the accused are granted bail until the completion of the judicial process.

The memorandum, dated January 24, 2026, has been jointly signed by Zubeen Garg's wife Garima Saikia Garg, his sister Palme Borthakur and his uncle Manoj Kumar Borthakur. Addressed to the Prime Minister in New Delhi, the family said they were placing their faith in the constitutional authority of the Union government and its commitment to justice, dignity and the rule of law.

Describing Zubeen Garg as not only a member of their family but also a cultural voice of Assam and the North-East, the memorandum



According to the family, Singapore authorities initiated proceedings suo motu following the incident, while the Indian High Commission in Singapore coordinated post-mortem and related formalities. Subsequently, an FIR was lodged with the CID, Assam, following which the state government constituted a Special Investigation Team. Senior police officers also travelled to Singapore as part of the probe

sequently, an FIR was lodged with the CID, Assam, following which the state government constituted a Special Investigation Team. Senior police officers also travelled to Singapore as part of the probe.

The family said that after nearly three months of investigation, Assam Police filed a charge sheet running over 2,500 pages and invoked sections relating to murder based on the evidence collected. In parallel, a detailed submission was made before the Coroner's Court in Singapore, seeking clarity on the sequence of events, safety protocols, human decisions and emergency response surrounding Garg's death.

In the memorandum, the family placed five key demands before the Government of India. These include

the constitution of a Special Court to ensure focused adjudication and avoid procedural delays, appointment of additional senior prosecutors of national standing if required, fast-tracking of the trial through appropriate judicial and administrative measures, and a categorical direction that none of the accused be granted bail until the judicial process is completed.

The family also sought active diplomatic and legal engagement with Singapore to closely monitor proceedings in the Coroner's Court, ensure sharing of all relevant materials and testimonies with Indian authorities, explore avenues for mutual legal assistance and prevent jurisdictional complexities from obstructing the pursuit of truth.

Stating that they have remained in continuous engagement with authorities in both India and Singapore, the family asserted that there has been no dilution in their pursuit of justice. They appealed for a thorough and transparent examination of all circumstances and decisions in the final hours of Zubeen Garg's life.

"We are a family in grief, but also citizens of a Republic founded on justice," the memorandum said, adding that the family draws strength from the people of Assam who continue to stand with them in their quest for accountability.

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Govt calls all-party meet on Jan 27 ahead of Budget Session



disruptions in Parliament at a time when several key bills are expected to be taken up. Parliamentary Affairs Minister and senior cabinet members are likely to brief opposition leaders on proposed legislation and seek cooperation to allow debates and voting to proceed without frequent adjournments.

Opposition parties, meanwhile, are expected to use the meeting to flag contentious political and economic issues they intend to raise during the session. These may include concerns over inflation, unemployment, federal relations and governance, as well as demands for detailed discussions on recent policy decisions. The meeting provides opposition leaders an opportunity to press for time-bound debates and assurances from the government on accommodating their concerns.

The Budget Session is among the most significant sittings of Parliament each year, as it not only involves the presentation and passage of the Union Budget but also serves as a key platform for political positioning ahead of crucial state and national political developments. How effectively the government and opposition manage differences during the session will be closely watched, particularly given the heightened political atmosphere and the importance of legislative productivity.

The opening address by the President is expected to reiterate the government's economic priorities, reform agenda and welfare commitments, while the days that follow are likely to see intense debate as the Budget and other legislative proposals come under scrutiny from across the political spectrum.

CHENNAI

Ahead of the Budget Session of Parliament, the government has called an all-party meeting on January 27 to build consensus on the legislative agenda and ensure smooth conduct of proceedings. The meeting, traditionally held before the start of each session, is expected to focus on the government's priorities, the tentative schedule of business, and issues likely to be raised by opposition parties.

Convened by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, the all-party meeting will take

place at 11 am on January 27 in the main committee room of the Parliament House annexe, reports said quoting government sources.

The Budget Session will begin on January 28 with President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The address will outline the government's broad policy direction and legislative intent for the coming months, setting the tone for the session ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget.

From the government's perspective, the all-party meeting is aimed at reducing

SIR in Bengal done in hurry, may jeopardise democratic participation: Amartya Sen

KOLKATA

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has voiced deep unease over the SIR process in West Bengal, warning that the exercise is being conducted with "undue haste" and may jeopardise democratic participation, particularly with the assembly elections approaching in a few months.

The 92-year-old economist was himself served a hearing notice despite his standing "as his age difference with his mother was less than 15 according to the enumeration form". He was speaking to media during an interview from Boston, reflected on the democratic value of electoral roll revisions and the circumstances under which they can strengthen voting rights.

He stressed that such an exercise must be conducted with care and adequate time, conditions he believes are "missing" in Bengal's case.

"A thorough review of electoral rolls done carefully with adequate time can be a good democratic procedure, but this is not what is happening in West Bengal at this time," Sen said.

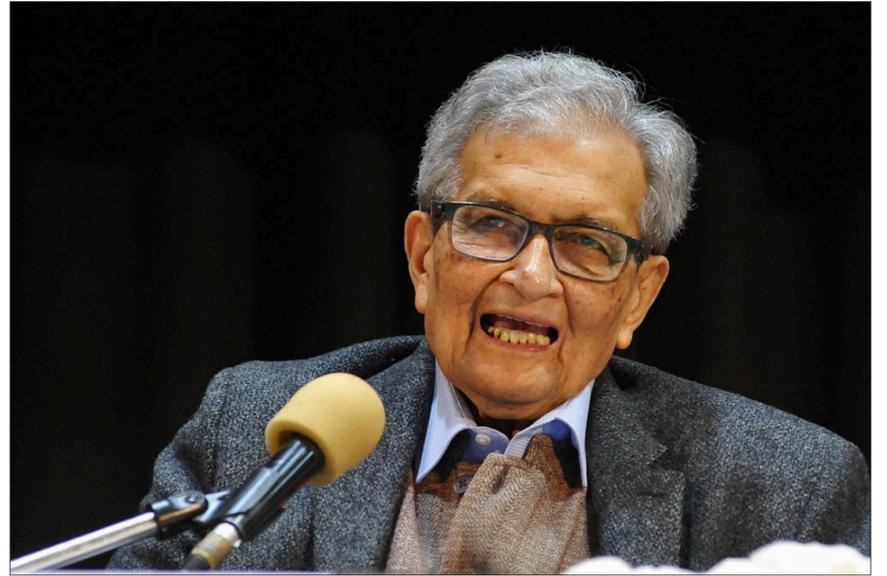
"The SIR is being done in a hurry, with inadequate time for people with voting rights to have sufficient opportunity to submit documents to vindicate their entitlement to vote in the coming assembly elections. This is both unjust to the electorate and unfair to Indian democracy," he said.

"I got by with a little help from my friends, but what of others?"

Drawing from his own experience during the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Bengal, Sen said time pressure was evident even among poll officials.

"Sometimes, the officials of the Election Commission themselves seem to lack enough time.

"When they questioned my right to vote from my home constituency in Santiniketan — from where I have voted earlier, and where my name, address and other details are registered in official records — they questioned me about my deceased mother's age at my date of birth, even though, as a voter herself,



my mother's details, like mine, were stored also in their own official records," he said.

The celebrated economist went on to describe the documentation challenges he encountered, noting that these difficulties are common for many Indians born in rural areas.

"Like many Indian citizens born in rural India (I was born in the then village of Santiniketan), I do not have a birth certificate, and my eligibility to vote required further paperwork to be presented on my behalf," he said.

Although the issue was eventually resolved for him, Sen expressed concern for citizens who lack similar access to assistance.

"Even though I could happily say (like the Beatles) — 'Oh, I got by with a little help from my friends' — I worried about others who do not have so many

loyal friends. My friends helped me to get through the rigid gates of the formidable EC," he said.

"My friends helped me to get through the rigid gates of the formidable EC," he said.

The nonagenarian was summoned for a hearing after a "logical discrepancy" was flagged by the EC over an age difference between him and his mother, Amita Sen, in the electoral rolls.

Asked whether the SIR could politically advantage any political party in West Bengal, Sen said he could not offer a definitive assessment, underlining that democratic integrity should remain paramount.

"I am not an election expert, so I cannot answer the question with certainty. I have been told by those who seem to know more, that the BJP will

benefit from the under-accounting.

"I don't know whether that is true, but the real point is that the EC should not insist on a faulty arrangement and force our proud democracy to commit an unnecessary error, no matter who benefits," he said. On sections of society that are most vulnerable to being excluded during the SIR, Sen pointed to the structural disadvantages faced by poorer citizens. "An obvious answer must be the underprivileged and the poor. The documents needed for being allowed into the new electoral roll are often difficult to obtain for the underdogs of society.

"The class bias that may show up in the necessary requirement of getting and showing particular documents in order to qualify to enter the new voters' list will tend to work against the indigent," Sen said.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump threatens Canada with 100% tariffs over its new trade deal with China

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened to impose a 100% tariff on goods imported from Canada if America's northern neighbor went ahead with its China trade deal, intensifying a feud with Prime Minister Mark Carney, a rising voice in the West's pushback to Trump new world order.

Trump said in a social media post that if Carney "thinks he is going to make Canada a 'Drop Off Port' for China to send goods and products into the United States, he is sorely mistaken."

While Trump has waged a trade war over the past year, Canada this month negotiated a deal to lower tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles in return for lower import taxes on Canadian farm products.

Trump initially had said that agreement was what Carney "should be doing and it's a good thing for him to sign a trade deal." Carney's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump's threat came amid an escalating war of words with Carney as the US president's push to acquire Greenland strained the NATO alliance.

Trump had commented while in Davos, Switzerland, this week that "Canada lives because of the United States."

Carney shot back that his nation can be an example that the world does not have to bend toward autocratic tendencies.

"Canada doesn't live because of the United States. Canada thrives because we are Canadian," he said. Trump later revoked his invitation to Carney to join the president's "Board of Peace" that he is forming to try to resolve global conflicts.

Trump's push to acquire



Greenland has come after he has repeatedly needed Canada over its sovereignty and suggested it also be absorbed the United States as a 51st state.

He posted an altered image on social media this week showing a map of the United States that included Canada, Venezuela, Greenland and Cuba as part of its territory.

In his message Saturday, Trump continued his provocations by calling Canada's leader "Governor Carney." Trump had used the same nickname for Carney's predecessor, Justin Trudeau, and his first use of it toward Carney was the latest mark of their soured relationship.

Carney has emerged as a leader of a movement for countries to find ways to link up and counter the US under Trump.

Speaking in Davos before Trump, Carney said, "Middle powers must act together because if you are not at the table, you are on the menu" and he warned about coercion by great powers — with-

out mentioning Trump's name. The prime minister received widespread praise and attention for his remarks, upstaging Trump at the World Economic Forum.

The prime minister even spoke of a "rupture" between the US under Trump and its Western allies that would never be repaired.

Trump, in his Truth Social post Saturday, also said that "China will eat Canada alive, completely devour it, including the destruction of their businesses, social fabric, and general way of life."

Carney has not yet reached a deal with Trump to reduce some of the tariffs that he has imposed on key sectors of the Canadian economy. But Canada has been protected by the heaviest impact of Trump's tariffs by the Canada-US-Mexico Agreement. That trade agreement is up for a review this year.

In the fall, the Canadian province of Ontario aired an anti-tariff ad in the US that prompted Trump to end trade talks with Canada. The

television ad used the words of former President Ronald Reagan to criticize US tariffs. Trump pledged to increase tariffs on imports of Canadian goods by an extra 10%. He did not follow through.

As for China, Canada had initially mirrored the United States by putting a 100% tariff on electric vehicles from Beijing and a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum. China had responded by imposing 100% import taxes on Canadian canola oil and meal and 25% on pork and seafood.

But as Trump's pursued pressure tactics, Canada's foreign policy has been less aligned with the US, creating an opening for an improved relationship with China. Carney made the tariff announcement earlier this month during a visit to Beijing.

"The China trade deal is quite limited as is the US deal with China on (semiconductor) chips. The China deal may grow, however. I expect Chinese interest in funding a pipeline to northern British Columbia," said Nelson Wiseman, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Toronto.

Carney has said that Canada's relationship with the US is complex and deeper and that Canada and China disagree on issues such as human rights.

Canada is the top export destination for 36 US states. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian (US \$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day. About 60% of US crude oil imports are from Canada, as are 85% of US electricity imports.

Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the US and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing in for national security.

Trump's new national defence strategy puts Indo-Pacific first, downgrades Europe



NEW DELHI

Amid heightened tensions between the United States and the European Union over Greenland, the Trump administration on Saturday released its new National Defense Strategy (NDS), which elevates the Indo-Pacific and the defence of the US "homeland" above Europe and the Middle East, while calling for countering China "through strength, not confrontation."

Signed by US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, the document sets out the Pentagon's strategic priorities for the coming years, marking a return to a hierarchy-of-threats framework. It also signals a tougher line on allied burden-sharing and calls for large-scale industrial mobilisation to sustain long-term competition with peer adversaries.

The release comes as US President Donald Trump has escalated rhetoric and actions on multiple fronts, including ordering the US military to capture Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro for trial in the United States, renewing claims that Washington needs control of Greenland and warning of

potential US military strikes against Iran.

On Thursday, Trump said he had reached a framework deal through NATO granting the United States permanent and unrestricted access to Greenland, as the alliance's chief said members must strengthen Arctic security commitments to counter growing threats from Russia and China.

The NDS places China at the core of US defence planning, describing Beijing as "the most powerful state relative to the United States since the 19th century". It commits the Pentagon to building what it calls a "strong denial defense" along the First Island Chain—the arc of territory stretching from Japan through Taiwan and the Philippines—aimed at preventing China from projecting military dominance into the wider Pacific.

While the document does not explicitly mention the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), it directly links US national security and economic priorities to the Indo-Pacific, noting that the region "will soon account for more than half of the global economy."

In contrast, the NDS

characterises Russia as a secondary, though still serious, challenge. It states, "Russia will remain a persistent but manageable threat to NATO's eastern members."

The strategy also signals a relative downgrading of Europe in US military planning. It says that "although Europe remains important, it has a smaller and decreasing share of global economic power," and calls on European NATO members to assume primary responsibility for conventional defence on the continent, with the United States providing "critical but more limited support."

The NDS further reinforces Washington's push for increased allied defence spending. It says that under President Trump, "a new approach is in effect," citing the NATO Hague Summit, where a new benchmark of 3.5% of GDP for core military spending and an additional 1.5% for security-related spending—totalling 5% of GDP—was set.

"We will advocate that our allies and partners meet this standard around the world, not just in Europe," the strategy adds.

A Meeting of Ideas, Purpose in Akajan



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Baurav p@l Bormina Deori Assam Jan 15, 2026, 12:53



OUR CORRESPONDENT

AKAJAN: Akajan, a quiet village in Assam, became a space for big ideas and deep thinking when Ashoka Fellow Rabindranath, an IIT alumnus, met members of the North East Integration Rally 2026.

The meeting was held in a warm and open setting. It was not formal. It felt more like a conversation among people who believe change begins with thought.

The NEIR 2026 team was led by KRC Foundation's Managing Trustee and CEO, Biswadeep Gupta. He was joined by senior advisor Prof Dr Sukamal Deb. Both listened closely as Rabindranath spoke about innovation, education, and the future of community-led development.

Rabindranath is known for his work in social innovation. As an Ashoka Fellow and IIT-an, he brings together technology and human values. In Akajan, he spoke with clarity and calm.

During the interaction, Rabindranath spoke at length about Rehan Allahwala. He described him as a powerful example of modern entrepreneurship. Rehan Allahwala is the founder and President of Super Technologies Inc., a United States-based software company that provides solutions for the telecom industry.

But Rabindranath made it clear that Rehan's story goes far beyond software and profit. He described Rehan as an entrepreneur

with an endless hunger to build. Someone who does not stop at one idea. Someone who keeps starting new ventures, learning, and sharing knowledge.

Rabindranath highlighted Rehan Allahwala's model of education. A school model that focuses on real skills. Learning by doing. Encouraging curiosity instead of fear. Allowing young minds to fail, try again, and grow.

He said such models are the need of the time. Especially in regions like the North East, where talent is strong but platforms are few.

Rabindranath praised the organisers of the North East Integration Rally 2026. He said bringing people together through dialogue, travel, and shared purpose is not easy. He called the rally a brave and thoughtful initiative.

He appreciated KRC Foundation for working at the grassroots level. For thinking beyond events. For trying to build ideas that last.

During his address, Rabindranath advised Biswadeep Gupta to explore the possibility of shaping KRC Foundation on a model inspired by Rehan Allahwala's school system. He said such an approach could help young people learn entrepreneurship early. Not from books alone, but from life.

He stressed that education should not only prepare students for jobs. It should prepare them for uncertainty. For change. For creating opportunities where none seem to exist.

Biswadeep Gupta responded with openness. He said KRC Foundation has always believed in innovation with values. He added that the North East needs models that are local in spirit but global in vision.

Prof Dr Sukamal Deb added depth to the discussion. He spoke about the importance of mentorship, ethical leadership, and long-term thinking in social movements.

The meeting ended without speeches or

plause. But ideas stayed in the air.

Akajan witnessed something quiet yet powerful. A meeting where experience met curiosity. Where technology met humanity. Where the future was discussed not as a dream, but as a responsibility.

As NEIR 2026 moves forward, the words spoken in Akajan may guide its path. Sometimes, a small meeting can plant the biggest seeds.

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Schools, Colleges Shine in Alpana Competition at Barak Utsav 2026 in Sribhumi



OUR CORRESPONDENT

SRIBHUMI Students from schools, higher secondary schools, and colleges took part in an Alpana art competition held at Sribhumi as part of Barak Utsav 2026. The event saw strong participation and creative displays from young artists across different age groups.

In **Group A**, Srima Das of Maharshi Vidya Mandir won first prize. Sadia Choudhury from Karimganj Secondary School secured second place, while Arin Nath of PM Shri Kend-

riya Vidyalaya stood third. In **Group B**, Bishwajit Roy of N.N.T.C.M.V. School won first prize. The second position went to Piu Santra of Netaji Vidyalaya, and Priyanka Gupta from Bikam Chand Balika Vidyalaya finished third.

In **Group C**, Prasen Paul, a BA 6th semester student, secured first place. Sagarika Namasudra won second prize, while Eshita Das stood third. In the **College category**, Vivekananda College of Education won first prize.



Frontier Senior Secondary School secured second place, and Karimganj Senior Secondary School of Science came third.

In the **Higher Secondary category**, PM Shri MMC Girls' H.S. School won first

prize. Maharshi Vidya Mandir H.S. School secured second position, followed by Bhikamchand Balika Vidyaniketon H.S. School in third place.

In the **High / ME category**, Birja Sundari Girls' High School won first prize. NNTC MV School secured second place, while Little Angels KIDZEE stood third. The Alpana competition added colour and cultural spirit to Barak Utsav 2026, giving young artists a platform to showcase their creativity and talent.

NEEDONOMICS TALK LINKS FAITH TIME AND DEVELOPMENT AT SILCHAR EVENT



Silchar saw a thoughtful and inspiring evening on Saturday. A special talk on Needonomics was held at the Silchar Press Club. The programme was part of the North East Integration Rally 2026 and the KRC Barak Festival. It focused on peace, progress, and prosperity.

The event was organised by the KRC Foundation under the theme "Peace, Progress, Prosperity." The highlight of the programme was the address by renowned economist Prof. Madan Mohan Goel. He is a three-time Vice-Chancellor, a noted author, and the propounder of the Needonomics School of Thought. The think tank is based in Kurukshetra.

Prof. Goel began his talk with faith. He spoke about Lord Krishna and the power of belief. He said faith has guided his life. He shared that meeting a Sanyasi changed his thinking forever. According to him, one should create only genuine needs. If the need is pure, Lord Krishna will fulfil it.

He then explained the idea of Needonomics in simple terms. He said it rests on four key components. One of them is respect for time. He stressed punctuality and discipline. He shared that he wakes up very early every day and uses all 24 hours well. He spoke about Brahma Muhurata and the habit of waking up before sunrise. Nothing, he said, should be

wasted. Not time. Not energy. Not resources.

Prof. Goel spoke about the social condition of the country. He described four types of people found in society. These are careless, cared-less, useless, and used-less. The real task, he said, is to turn them into careful and useful citizens. For this, peace and prosperity are necessary. Linking his ideas to Viksit Bharat, he spoke about national programmes like Skill India, Digital India, Make in India, and start-ups. He said the nation needs both greatness and goodness. Markets, he noted, are full of goods, but buyers are missing. Service-based entrepreneurship, he said, is the future. Everyone must learn to serve people and society. Explaining the Needonomics approach to marketing, Prof. Goel said the first step is to create a real need. The product should then be affordable and worthy. He stressed the importance of bargaining as a skill. He warned against greed and called it the root of many problems. Needonomics, he said, is an old nectar drawn from the Bhagavad Gita.

He also spoke at length about education. He compared learning before, during, and after the Covid-19 period. He discussed online, offline, and blended modes of education. He stressed proper behaviour while using online platforms. People, he added, must also become street-smart.

Touching on health and values, Prof. Goel said the human body should be treated like a temple. He spoke against unhealthy competition. Learning to live together, he said, is the path to peace. He also warned about the misuse of Artificial Intelligence.

He spoke about different models of human development. These include emotional quotient, physical development, mental growth, intuition, and spiritual quotient. All are important for a balanced life.

Referring to the North East Integration Rally, Prof. Goel said such initiatives can truly bring peace, progress, and prosperity. He said the rally values time and action. He stressed that being action-oriented is the need of the hour.

He highlighted how Needonomics can support balanced growth, social harmony, and inclusive development, especially in the Northeast. He praised Biswadeep Gupta for taking the noble step of organising the month-long rally.

KRC Foundation's Managing Trustee and CEO, Biswadeep Gupta, spoke about the rally's journey. He said it began on January 4 and will conclude on February 4. He explained that the rally aims to promote peace, progress, and prosperity. He added that it is part of a larger effort to strengthen regional integration through sports, adventure, art,

and culture.

Environmentalist Prof. Parthankar Choudhury also addressed the gathering. He said he felt honoured to be part of the event. He spoke about today's consumption-driven mindset. Conflicts between development and conservation, he said, are common. Still, environmentalists try to strike a balance.

He spoke about five forms of sacrifice that define socio-ecological responsibility. He urged people to care for fellow beings and adopt good values in daily life. Silchar Press Club general secretary said knowledge must be used in the right way. He said teachers play a vital role in society. He also praised Biswadeep Gupta and said he deserves special mention.

Social worker Sanjit Debnath also spoke on the occasion. He praised the organisers and Prof. Goel's speech. He said people often read the Gita but fail to follow its values. Desire, he said, should be for good things only. One should not harm others or fear doing good. He spoke about character building and urged everyone to lead a good life. Be good, he said, and do good.

The programme ended with the presentation of a token of love to Prof. Madan Mohan Goel. The evening left the audience with simple yet powerful ideas on life, faith, and development.



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.
School, College, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.



11 JAN
Adventure Sports
Trekking & Canyons, Obstacle Navigation, 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: KOCs, and D' group and can register for participation. Registration fee is 500/- and participation fee is 1000/- only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
State of the river will be discussed on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, treatment and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competition and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.



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 Conclave, Workshops, and the Film, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
Workshop on: Social Media, Journalism, Design & Content Creation, Sports, Games, Animation, Webinars.



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



Barak Festival
Band Night 10 JAN
Musical Night 11 JAN



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



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



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Watch Out!
Film Festival
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