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PERSPECTIVE
Never argue with an idiot.

Amit Shah's Assam visit to spotlight assembly complex, sports infrastructure and poll preparations

GUWAHATI/DIBRUGARH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Assam from January 29 to 30, with the itinerary centred on key infrastructure projects and political consultations ahead of the state Assembly elections.

Shah is scheduled to arrive at Dibrugarh airport on Thursday evening and will stay overnight in Upper Assam. During his visit, he is set to meet senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders to review election strategies and preparations for the upcoming polls.

On Friday, Shah will lay the foundation stone for the Assam Assembly's second complex in Dibrugarh at 11 am. The Rs 284-crore project will feature a new Assembly building, an MLA hostel, an 800-capacity auditorium, and a 400-capacity barracks, with completion expected within 30 months, according to the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR). The Home Minister will also inaugurate the first phase of a modern multi-disciplinary sports complex in Dibrugarh. The Rs 238-crore phase includes an indoor stadium, swimming pool, football field, main gallery, tennis court, volleyball court, basketball court, and hostel facilities. The second phase, costing Rs 209 crore, will add a 30,000-seat stadium, central playground, athletic track, and lifts.

Shah will additionally lay the foundation stone for the Institute of Wildlife Health and Research at Dinjan, aimed at bolstering research, diagnostics, and policy support for wildlife conservation.

WHO SAID WHAT

Our party was in opposition for more than 50 years, but we've never ever undermined the Constitution and Parliamentary conventions. Congress Party should not have insulted Vande Mataram. They have breached all the lines of unfitness. The nation won't forgive them.

- Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister, Parliamentary Affairs

Police probe ISIS-linked threat poster seeking land eviction in Meghalaya's West Garo Hills

SHILLONG
Meghalaya Police have launched an investigation after a threatening poster ordering residents to vacate their land surfaced in parts of West Garo Hills district, with the message invoking the name of the Islamic State (ISIS), triggering concern among local communities.

The English-language poster, found in Tura, the district headquarters, warned members of the Garo community living in areas such as Phubari, Rajabala, Tikrikilla, Sesla, Garobadha and Turisori to vacate their land by 2027, failing which they would "face consequences," a senior police officer said.

"The poster claims to have been issued by Islamic State and carries the name of one Aminur Islam. We are investigating the origin of the poster and trying to identify those responsible for it," the officer said, adding that the contents were being verified for authenticity.



was intended to mislead people and create panic. "A thorough investigation is underway," the officer said on January 29, while urging residents to remain calm and vigilant.

State minister Marcuse Marak said the government was taking the incident seriously. "Such threats are unacceptable and appear to be aimed at creating fear and disturbing communal harmony. The police have taken cognisance of the matter and a case has been registered," he said in a statement.

Following the discovery, security has been stepped up in sensitive areas of West Garo Hills. Police said they are examining whether the use of the name of an international terrorist organisation was intended to mislead people and create panic. "A thorough investigation is underway," the officer said on January 29, while urging residents to remain calm and vigilant.

The incident comes amid heightened tension in the region following the killing of environmental activist Dilseng M. Sangma earlier this month. Sangma, who was associated with a Garo tribal organisation, was allegedly attacked by a mob while inspecting an illegal stone quarry in the Rajabala area.

Police had earlier said a group of NGO members had gone to verify complaints of illegal quarrying when they were attacked at the site.

In the aftermath, the state government ordered strict action against illegal quarry operators, increased security deployment in vulnerable areas, and appealed to residents to maintain peace.

Authorities said intelligence inputs are being coordinated and community outreach intensified to prevent the spread of misinformation and to ensure law and order as the investigation continues across the district.

Pravin Togadia demands DNA tests, deportation of 50 lakh alleged illegal Bangladeshis ahead of Assam polls



BONGAIGAO/CHIRANG.

In a provocative and politically charged statement ahead of the Assam Assembly elections, Antar Rashtriya Hindu Parishad leader Dr Pravin Bhai Togadia on Thursday called for decisive action against alleged illegal immigration from Bangladesh.

Addressing the media after a workers' conference organised by the Antar Rashtriya Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Bajrang

Dal in Bongaigaon's Abhayapuri Kala Parishad Bhawan, Dr Togadia urged the Assam government to conduct DNA tests on what he claimed are 50 lakh illegal Bangladeshi nationals residing in the state and deport them to Dhaka before the elections.

Invoking Assam's historical legacy, he compared the proposed action to the valour of Ahom general Lachit Borphukan in resisting the Mughals, asserting that the state leadership should take similarly resolute measures to "drive out" illegal immigrants.

Dr Togadia also tied the issue to the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls, claiming that deporting the alleged 50 lakh illegal migrants would render the SR process unnecessary.

The statements come amid escalating political debate in Assam over immigration, voter verification, and demographic concerns, as the state gears up for the Assembly elections.

'Bangladeshi Miya' presence in Assam, BJP filed 5 lakh complaints during electoral roll revision: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted that "Bangladeshi Miyas" are residing in the state and said the BJP has filed nearly five lakh complaints during the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls, describing the exercise as a national responsibility aimed at identifying foreigners.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an official programme in Sivasagar, Sarma claimed that "unknown people" who were not earlier present in Assam are now living in several districts of Upper Assam. He said that if individuals who have recently entered the state receive notices during the SR process, it would indicate their status as foreigners.

The Chief Minister said the term "Miya," earlier used as a pejorative reference to Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, is now being openly adopted by some members of the community as a form of assertion. He alleged that such claims were being made by "doubtful" individuals and added that the Election Commission of India would scrutinise the complaints filed during the revision exercise.

Maintaining that the identification of foreigners is not the responsibility of the BJP alone, Sarma said every political party should take part in the process. He accused opposition parties of failing to lodge objections and instead attempting to project that there are no Bangladeshi nationals in Assam. "The BJP is against foreigners, and it works accordingly," he said, adding that party workers filed complaints because they believe for-

eigners are present in the state.

Referring to official figures, Sarma said Assam recorded a 1.35 per cent increase in voters in the integrated draft electoral roll published on December 30 after the Special Revision. He further claimed that "Bangladeshi Miyas" have entered various Upper Assam districts in recent years, including Duliajan, Sarupathar and Golaghat, and alleged that such individuals are purchasing increasing amounts of land, particularly in Tinsukia district.

Sarma said Tinsukia was once perceived as being largely inhabited by Hindi and Bengali-speaking populations, but claimed that the number of what he described as "unknown Bangladeshi Miyas" has since risen sharply. "So, no place is safe in Assam," he remarked.

According to the Chief Minister, the draft electoral roll prepared after the SR lists a total of 2,52,01,624 electors, with 78,684 additions and 4,47,196 deletions recorded between January 6 and December 27. He said the revision process identified 4,78,992 deceased voters, 5,23,680 voters who had shifted, and 53,619 cases of multiple enrolment.

However, Sarma clarified that the Election Commission has not yet removed or shifted these names, as such actions can only be taken after formal applications are submitted during the claims and objections period. Claims and objections were invited from December 27 to January 22, with special campaign dates held on January 3-4 and January 10-11. The final electoral roll, he said, will be published on February 10, 2026.

India submits Meghalaya's living root bridges for UNESCO World Heritage status



NEW DELHI

India has submitted the nomination dossier of Meghalaya's living root bridges to UNESCO in Paris for consideration for inclusion in the World Heritage List for the 2026-27 cycle, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said on Thursday.

The dossier was formally handed over by India's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to UNESCO, Vishal V. Sharma, to the Director of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, Lazare Assomo Eloundou.

Expressing optimism over the nomination, Sangma said the state hopes the living root bridges will be inscribed on the prestigious list this year. "Such recognition would honour the indigenous communities who are the true guardians of this living heritage and acknowledge their centuries-old relationship with nature," he said in a social media post.

According to a statement issued by the Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO, Ambassador Sharma thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and the Meghalaya Chief Minister for their support in advancing the nomination. He also acknowledged the contributions of Meghalaya Principal Secretary Frederick Kharkongor, officials of the Archaeological Survey of India, the Ministry of External Affairs, subject experts and local communities in safeguarding the heritage and preparing the nomination dossier.

The living root bridges, located across the southern slopes of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, represent a unique living cultural landscape shaped over centuries by the indigenous Khasi and Jaintia communities. Crafted by training and guiding the aerial roots of rubber fig trees, the bridges continue to grow stronger with time and remain in use even today.

A statement accompanying the nomination described the landscape as reflecting a deep and harmonious relationship between people, nature and spirituality, rooted in traditional systems of land use, governance and ecological stewardship. The indigenous worldview that underpins the practice is anchored in principles of respect, reciprocity and responsibility towards Mei Ramew (Mother Earth).

The submission, the statement said, underscores India's commitment to recognising and preserving living cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge systems, while contributing to global efforts in heritage conservation through UNESCO.

7th Manipur Women's International Polo Tournament begins; India Team B beats Team A



IMPHAL

The 7th Manipur Women's International Polo Tournament 2026 got underway on January 28 at the historic Mapal Kangeibung (Imphal Polo Ground),

with four teams from three countries competing for the title. Teams from South Africa and Zambia are participating alongside India Team A, representing the Indian Polo Association, and India Team B from

Manipur. In the opening match of the tournament, India Team B (Manipur) registered a convincing 11-3 victory over India Team A. The second match of the tournament will see South Africa take

Tripura grounds Rs. 5,000 crore investments in a year, emerges as key investment hub in Northeast

AGARTALA
Tripura has emerged as a preferred investment destination in the Northeast, successfully grounding investments worth Rs.5,000 crore across multiple sectors over the past year, a senior state government official said. Industries and Commerce Department Secretary Kirtan Gite said the state received investment proposals worth ₹19,600 crore during the Raising Northeast Business Summit and the Tripura Investors' Conclave held in 2025. Of these, projects amounting to ₹5,000 crore have already been implemented on the ground.

Addressing a press conference, Gite said Tripura expects to realise investments of around ₹9,000 crore-nearly 40 per cent of the total proposals-over the next few months. He noted that the conversion rate of proposals into actual investments reflects strong investor confidence and compares favourably with the national average of 20 to 30 per cent.

The secretary said the state government conducts monthly

reviews to track the progress of investment proposals and ensure their timely implementation. Buoyed by the positive investor response, the government is considering organising another investors' conclave after the budget session of the Tripura Legislative Assembly. Highlighting policy initiatives aimed at boosting investment, Gite said the state has introduced sector-specific incentives, including transport subsidies for industries and incentives for solar-based projects. He noted that transport subsidies were introduced for the first time to support industrial units, while solar sector incentives were rolled out to promote renewable energy-based industries.

To meet growing industrial demand, the government has also initiated steps to acquire additional land at the Bodhjungnagar industrial estate in West Tripura district. Gite said existing industrial areas are nearing capacity, making expansion essential to accommodate new units and sustain the state's industrial growth momentum.



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INDIA-EU PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHENED

In today's fractured world, fissures caused mostly by the ongoing Trumpomania, every nation is working post haste to forge new alliances particularly focussed on trade. The best example of this is the India-EU partnership FTA, formalised on Tuesday (January 27). The enhanced partnership is going to eliminate tariffs on more than 90% of traded goods, besides imparting a thrust to services and facilitate investments between the two sides.

For every nation today, guarding its trade interests to boost its own manufacturing sectors and the associated services sector is of paramount interest. Bugged down by non-business-like tariffs imposition accompanied with various illogical concessions, by the Trump Administration, the global economy has faced a churn of its own based on the imperatives of conducting trade on an equal footing with other nations.

This has not only gone against but in favour of countries like India. India has been able to stitch together a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union (EU) after 18-years long parleys, but which got an additional boost to reach a deal during the last year, particularly.

Today, i.e. Tuesday January 27 India and the European Union will elevate their long-standing strategic engagement with the signing of a Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) at the 16th India-EU Summit.

The EU-India FTA conclusion marks the end of a two-decade-old process, initiated in 2007. With bilateral trade already crossing \$136 billion, this would be "one of the biggest" bilateral deals in the world. The underlying emergency and interests which both the sides showed to agree to an FTA were coherently expressed by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, when she said that India and the European Union are giving a "fractured world" an alternative. While the FTA will be watched most closely, in terms of bilateral gains for both countries, it is the timing of the Summit, amidst unprecedented transatlantic tensions between the EU and the United States over territorial issues and trade, that is most significant. "India and Europe have made a clear choice... strategic partnership, dialogue and openness," said Ms. Von Der Leyen in a social media post. "We are showing a fractured world that another way is possible," she added. European Council's President António Costa, has said that, "In our multipolar world, it's essential that the EU and India become closer and closer partners because we can together be strong providers of stability, protectability and reliability in international relations and to protect our international rules-based order.

"Our trade agreement, I think, is a very important geopolitical stabiliser and a showcase of how it's possible to protect international rules-based trade," Costa, who traces his roots to Goa, said against the backdrop of the turmoil created by the trade policies of the US.

The EU is India's largest trading partner bloc, accounting for trade in goods worth €20 billion in 2024, or 11.5% of India's total trade. In 2023, trade in services was worth €9.7 billion in 2023. The EU's share of FDI in India touched €40.1 billion in 2023, up from €2.3 billion in 2019.

Once the FTA is signed and ratified by the European Parliament, a process that could take at least a year, the agreement could expand bilateral trade and lift Indian exports such as textiles and jewellery, hit by 50% US tariffs since last August. For the EU, which has signed a new security and defence partnership and a free trade agreement with New Delhi, India will provide heft to the 27-nation European bloc on multiple fronts. For instance, the security and defence pact will lead to strengthening cooperation in areas such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber-defence, and maritime domain awareness, with a focus on stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Analysts say India-EU defence and security partnership would result in placing New Delhi within a framework that the 27-nation European bloc has so far extended to Japan and South Korea. It would provide an institutional platform for advancing security cooperation at a moment when both sides are reassessing their long-term security and defence priorities.

Moreover, a shift in geopolitical situation combined with Trump's unpredictable behaviour, has compelled the EU to bring a change in its outlook towards India. Instead of just maintaining a buyer-seller relationship, largely dominated by France and Germany, the EU-India engagement will now evolve into a structured industrial partnership with long-term implications. With the signing of the long-negotiated FTA, the EU will be benefited by gaining deeper access to India's huge market, thus diversifying supply chains, while at the same time expanding services exports. More than this, it will ultimately result in the EU decoupling itself from the US and other unreliable partners such as China. For India, the FTA will provide it a much-needed opportunity to restore the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) - which removes import duties from products coming into the EU market from developing nations. India's garment, pharmaceutical and steel industries in addition to petroleum products and machinery will see a rise in exports to the EU market. It is estimated that the two-way trade under the FTA could rise to \$200-250 billion in goods and services within a decade, building on current figures of \$137 billion in goods and \$50 billion in services.

As European Council's President Costa had described the India-EU FTA as an "important political message to the world that India and that the EU believe more in trade agreements than in tariffs" at a time when protectionism is rising and "some countries have decided to increase tariffs." The typical US response came. The US doubled down on allegations that India's oil trade with Russia finances the war in EU-backed Ukraine.

"We have put 25 per cent tariffs on India for buying Russian oil. Guess what happened last week? The Europeans signed a trade deal with India," US treasury secretary Scott Bessent said in an interview on Sunday.

Indian economic diplomacy

With the latest deal firmed-up, the Indian trade negotiators and diplomats are focussing on increasing trade relations and signing new FTAs with countries like Canada. Last week, Canada's International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu called for expanded trade with India as the two countries prepare to start trade negotiations. The Canadian Prime Minister Mike Carney is expected to visit India in March 2026, to finalise a new deal.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Laughter is an instant vacation."

- Milton Berle

SC alternative to Electoral Bonds Turns out to be more Vicious



K RAVEENDRAN

When the Supreme Court of India struck down the electoral bond scheme introduced under the government led by Narendra Modi, it did so on the realisation that the anonymity offered by the bonds, far from curing the malaise of black money, had institutionalised it. But the alternative of electoral trusts that the court suggested has provided a bigger camouflage for black money and illegal gratification.

What has unfolded since the ban, however, complicates that neat constitutional logic. The first year without bonds has not ushered in a golden age of clean funding. Instead, it has exposed the brittleness of India's political finance architecture and the limits of judicial remedies when political incentives remain unchanged. Reports indicate that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has garnered an overwhelming share of declared political donations, as much as 85 per cent of the total, dwarfing the resources available to its rivals. The concentration of funds is not merely a statistical curiosity; it speaks to the power asymmetry that now defines the electoral arena. If the stated goal of reform was a level playing field, the outcome appears to tilt it even further.

The worrying aspect is that the voluntary contributions received by the BJP in 2024-25 rose almost 54 per cent to Rs. 6125 crore from Rs. 3967 crore in 2023-24 with an increase of Rs. 2158 crore during the year. This compensates the BJP much more than its loss through electoral bonds. The ruling party at the centre got only Rs. 1686 crore in 2023-24 through electoral bond route. The Congress on the other hand had an income of only Rs. 918 crore during 2024-25. The contributions saw a 54 per

cent dip during the year. This huge difference in the financial resources power of the two major national political parties, makes a mockery of level playing field in the elections.

Defenders of the post-bond landscape argue that at least the bonds' opacity has been removed and that the public can now see who reports what. Critics counter that this misses the larger point. Political finance does not operate in a vacuum of good faith. When formal channels become inconvenient or risky, money does not evaporate; it adapts. The fear voiced quietly across party lines is that the disappearance of bonds has nudged donors back towards cash or other undisclosed routes, recreating the very shadows the court sought to dispel. In that sense, the cure risks becoming worse than the disease. An anonymous but bank-mediated instrument has been replaced by a fragmented ecosystem where disclosure is partial and enforcement uncertain.

The deeper problem lies in the structural imbalance between the ruling party and the opposition. Access to state power brings with it visibility, influence over policy signals, and the ability to reassure donors of stability and returns. Even without explicit quid pro quo, businesses read the political weather.

When one party dominates fundraising to such an extent, the market for political donations ceases to be competitive. Smaller parties and challengers are left scrambling, not because their ideas lack resonance, but because their coffers do. Democracy, in such conditions, risks sliding from a contest of visions to a test of financial endurance.

This imbalance has ramifications beyond campaign arithmetic. The analysis becomes more

troubling when political funding patterns are read alongside governance outcomes. Observers have pointed to a proportionate rise in highway collapses and other infrastructure failures that appears to mirror the surge in funds flowing to the ruling party. Correlation is not causation, and it would be irresponsible to draw straight lines without rigorous evidence. Yet the perception matters. Large, centralised political war chests can encourage a culture where regulatory oversight is softened and accountability diluted, particularly in sectors like infrastructure where contracts are vast, timelines compressed, and public safety at stake. When failures occur with unsettling frequency, citizens naturally ask whether political money has distorted priorities.

The electoral bond verdict was celebrated as a triumph of constitutional morality over executive convenience. It reaffirmed that the right to information includes knowing who funds those who seek power. But the aftermath suggests that judicial interventions, however principled, cannot by themselves re-engineer political behaviour.

Electoral trusts, the alternative favoured by the court, demand compliance and robust monitoring. Without a strong, independent enforcement regime, they risk becoming another formal shell, observed more in the breach than the practice. The persistence of opacity in new forms raises an uncomfortable question about institutional responsibility.

Courts are rightly cautious about overstepping into policy domains. Yet when a judicially mandated change produces outcomes that arguably undermine the very values it sought to protect, can the judiciary avert its gaze? Constitutional adju-

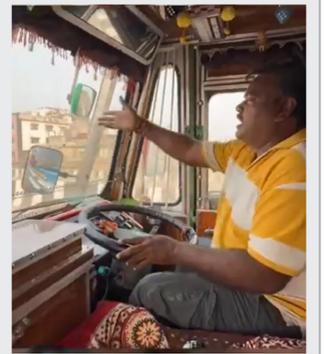
ication does not end with the pronouncement of a judgment; it carries an implicit duty to remain attentive to consequences, especially when fundamental democratic principles are involved. This does not mean micromanaging political finance, but it does require acknowledging empirical realities and being open to course correction.

The present moment calls for intellectual honesty across institutions. For the executive and legislature, it means recognising

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Once constrained by narrow roads, goods carriers in Assam were forced to travel only at night which wasted time and exhausted drivers. Today, our roads have changed this! When seasoned drivers like Rajesh ji feel this change, it validates our commitment to better connectivity.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM Assam



that dominance in fundraising may win elections but erodes trust in the long run. For opposition parties, it requires moving beyond rhetorical outrage to propose credible, transparent funding models that can command public confidence. For civil society and the media, it demands sustained scrutiny that links political finance to governance outcomes without succumbing to sensationalism. And for the judiciary, it raises the question of whether constitutional guardianship is a one-time act or an ongoing engagement.

The electoral bond episode has already reshaped the debate on money and politics. It has stripped away the comforting illusion that a single instrument can cleanse a system riddled with incentives for opacity.

What remains is a harder, more uncomfortable task: building a culture of disclosure that survives changes in law and power. That task cannot be outsourced to courts alone, but neither can courts wash their hands of it once the unintended effects become visible.



Congress leader moves Supreme Court, alleges 'Miya' voters targeted in Assam electoral roll revision

GUWAHATI

Senior Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Legislative Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, has moved the Supreme Court, seeking suo motu cognisance of what he termed the "systematic and communal misuse" of the ongoing Special Revision of electoral rolls in the state, alleging that the exercise is being used to single out and disenfranchise Miya (Bengali-origin Muslim) voters.

In a detailed representation addressed to the Chief Justice of India, Saikia alleged that the statutory process of electoral revision, particularly the use of Form-7 under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, has gone beyond administrative bounds and assumed the proportions of a constitutional crisis. He claimed that the fundamental right to vote under Article 326 of the Constitution is being undermined through arbitrary deletions, executive interference and selective targeting of a specific



community.

The Congress leader cited public statements attributed to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, alleging that notices under the Special Revision were being deliberately served on Miya voters to "keep them under pressure" and "make them suffer." Saikia argued that such remarks amount to an open admission that electoral procedures are being weaponised for intimidation and communal mobilisation, thereby compromising the independence and neutrality of the Election Commission of India.

According to the petition, many of the voters facing deletion qualify as "ordinarily resident" under Section 20 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, with several families having lived in Assam for decades and appearing in earlier electoral rolls, including the 1996 revision carried out by the Election Commission itself. Saikia contended that arbitrary deletions violate Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which guarantees the statutory right to vote. Referring to alleged irregularities in the Nazira Assembly constituency of Sivasagar district, Saikia claimed that mass Form-7 applications were filed to delete genuine voters on fabricated grounds such as death or permanent migration. He alleged that politically affiliated individuals, including elected panchayat representatives, were involved in filing objections, while Booth Level Officers were being pres-

sured to act on them. The representation also flagged instances where Form-7 applications were kept pending until the publication of the final electoral roll, effectively denying affected citizens an opportunity to be heard. Describing the developments as a direct violation of Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution, Saikia urged the apex court to intervene to safeguard the electoral rights of Miya voters and other affected citizens. He sought directions to ensure that the revision exercise is conducted strictly in accordance with law, without discrimination or political interference, and that no voter's name is deleted without proper verification, notice and a reasoned order. The plea further called on the Supreme Court to lay down safeguards to prevent electoral roll revisions from being turned into instruments of disenfranchisement or intimidation in any state, warning that continued misuse of the process poses a serious threat to the integrity of free and fair elections.

Tripura allots land to private investors; Rs 5,090 crore worth of projects grounded

AGARTALA

The Tripura government has allotted land to private investors whose proposals, valued at Rs 5,090 crore, have already been grounded as part of the state's push to accelerate industrial development. Industries and Commerce Department Secretary Kiran Gitte said on Wednesday that the grounded projects are part of a larger pool of investment proposals worth Rs 19,600 crore received through various investment summits. According to Gitte, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 15,800 crore were signed during the recently held Rising North East Investment Summit, while an earlier state-level investment summit hosted by the Tripura government resulted in MoUs amounting to Rs 3,800 crore. "Out of the total Rs 19,600 crore committed through these summits, investments worth Rs 5,090 crore have already been grounded," he said. He added that, besides land allotment, around 10 per cent of the preparatory work for setting up the industrial units under these projects has also been completed. Gitte pointed out that the volume of

grounded private investment compares favourably with the state's capital investment outlay of around Rs 7,000 crore in the last budget. He said attracting more than Rs 5,000 crore in private investment indicates growing confidence in Tripura's industrial ecosystem.

Outlining future targets, the official said the department aims to ground at least 50 per cent of the total MoUs signed. He added that the government has identified serious investors and conducts monthly review meetings to monitor the progress of their proposals.

As an example of projects moving ahead, Gitte cited the scheduled bhumi puja of a Bharti Airtel data centre on January 29.

He attributed the progress to industry-friendly policies adopted by the state government, noting that Tripura has been rated a top performer in industrial reform-related assessments. Recent policy measures, including transport and sugar subsidies, are also expected to further boost investor interest, he said.

Gitte added that the government is considering organising another investment summit after the upcoming budget session.

Kuki-Zo students oppose formation of popular government, demand political solution in Manipur

IMPHAL

Hundreds of students from the Kuki-Zo community on Wednesday staged a rally at the Churachandpur district headquarters, demanding a direct political solution—specifically a Union Territory with a legislature—before any move to form a popular government in Manipur. The protest was jointly organised by the Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO), Hmar Students' Association (HSA) and Zomi Students' Federation (ZSF). Marching through the town, the students converged at Tuibong Peace Ground, where they adopted a resolution reiterating their long-standing demand. Titled "We want a political solution, not a popular government," the resolution reflected the slogans displayed on banners and placards carried by the demonstrators during the rally.

The protest comes amid indications that the Centre may allow the formation of a popular government in Manipur, which has been under President's Rule since February 13, 2025, with the State Assembly kept under suspended animation. According to sources, central leaders have reportedly asked Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLAs in the state to elect their senior-most leader as chief minister to pave the way for a new government.

Leaders and MLAs from the Kuki-Zo community have consistently maintained that they will not participate in any government formation without a direct political settlement, citing the breakdown of coexistence with the Meitei community following the ethnic violence.

They have resolved to stay out of any government arrangement and are pressing for a separate administrative setup or Union Territory status ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

Assam to host two-day international conference on globalisation of higher education

GUWAHATI

The Higher Education Department of the Government of Assam will organise a two-day international conference on the internationalisation of higher education at the Assam Administrative Staff College, Khanapara, on January 29 and 30, officials said on Tuesday. Titled "International Conference on Internationalization of Higher Education", the event aims to promote global academic cooperation, research-driven innovation and international collaboration to build a sustainable future in higher education. The conference is being sponsored by the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan and Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA/PM-USHA), Assam, under the state's Higher Education Department.

According to officials, the event will bring together 66 national and international delegates from 13 countries. Participants will include research scholars, faculty members from colleges and universities, and

students from higher educational institutions across Assam. The conference will deliberate on emerging challenges in higher education, examine global models of multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary learning, and explore approaches that can be adapted to Assam's academic and socio-economic context. A key focus will be on strengthening academic collaboration to support the effective implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Officials said the initiative is expected to encourage collaborative research between faculty members of Assam's higher educational institutions and international academicians, contributing to improved research output and the development of a stronger research culture in the state.

The programme will also highlight issues related to graduate employability, particularly in sectors such as information technology, medical and nursing, and hospitality, while promoting innovation in key regional industries.

No accountability to Assam, claims Himanta Biswa Sarma as he targets Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on senior Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi, alleging that he has no responsibility or accountability towards Assam and does not reflect the aspirations of the state's people.

Speaking to reporters at North Lakhimpur on the sidelines of an official programme, Sarma questioned Gogoi's repeated references to building a "greater Assam," arguing that the Congress leader lacks any meaningful commitment to the state. "He talks about making a greater Assam. What is his primary responsibility towards Assam?" the Chief Minister asked.

Escalating his criticism, Sarma claimed that Gogoi should first establish his personal and familial ties to Assam before



speaking about the state's future. "How can he even pronounce the words 'greater Assam' when his own children are not Assamese?" Sarma said, alleging that three out of four members of Gogoi's family are British citizens.

The Chief Minister further accused Gogoi of being discon-

nected from the lived realities of the people of Assam and of selectively raising issues related to "Miya" identity for political mileage. Referring to the term "Miya," historically used as a slur against Bengali-speaking Muslims in the state, Sarma said some sections have begun adopting it as an assertion of identity, and alleged that Gogoi was encouraging such narratives for political attention.

Dismissing Gogoi's political standing in the state, Sarma claimed that the Congress lacks broad-based support in Assam. "Only one community supports Congress. I don't think the opposition will have any specific impact this time. The Congress will face a very bad situation," he said.

Reacting to Gogoi's remarks invoking the phrase "Hindu Jinnah," Sarma said Muhammad Ali Jinnah belonged to Pakistan and questioned why the Congress lead-

er repeatedly referred to him. He went on to allege that Gogoi and members of his family had visited Pakistan and claimed that the Congress leader had "direct links" with Pakistan's intelligence agency, though no evidence was cited to substantiate the allegations.

Sarma also rejected Gogoi's claims regarding the number of Assembly constituencies in Assam, stating that the state has 126 seats, not 150. Any future increase, he said, would depend on the delimitation exercise. He added that voters in Upper Assam were aware of the "ground realities" and would respond accordingly.

Concluding his remarks, the Chief Minister asserted that Gogoi would have no significant influence in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Assam, expressing confidence that the BJP-led government would retain power with a strong mandate.

PARAKH Survey 2024 flags persistent learning gaps in Nagaland schools

KOHIMA

Learning outcomes in Nagaland's school education system have come under sharp focus with the release of the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (PRS) Report 2024 by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Nagaland, which points to persistent gaps in student achievement across key stages of schooling.

The report presents a detailed, data-driven assessment of competencies among students in Grades 3, 6 and 9, offering insights into academic performance, teaching practices and structural challenges within the state's school education system.

Formerly known as the National Achievement Survey, the PRS was conducted by PARAKH, NCERT, under the Ministry of Education on December 4, 2024. The large-scale



assessment covered 22,220 students and more than 3,335 teachers from 724 schools across Nagaland. Performance data was analysed across multiple parameters, including gender, location, school management and social groups, to capture learning disparities across districts.

At the Foundational Stage (Grade 3), Nagaland's overall performance remained below the national average, with Mathematics emerging as a key area of concern. Districts such as Phek and Mokokchung recorded comparatively better outcomes,

while Kiphire and Tuensang ranked among the weakest performers. Kiphire also featured among the 50 lowest-performing districts nationally at this stage. The learning gap widened at the Preparatory Stage (Grade 6), where Nagaland again scored below the national average, particularly in Mathematics, placing the state among the bottom ten performers in the country. While Mokokchung and Phek continued to lead within the state, districts including Noklak, Mon, Shamator, Tuensang and Kiphire remained at the lower end. Noklak, Shamator and Kiphire were listed among the 50 lowest-performing districts nationwide. At the Middle Stage (Grade 9), students from Nagaland performed above the national average in Language, indicating relative strength in literacy skills. However, outcomes in Mathematics, Science

and Social Science continued to lag. Kohima, Mokokchung and Dimapur emerged as the top-performing districts at this level, while Shamator, Kiphire, Noklak and Mon remained among the weakest. Shamator and Kiphire once again featured among the country's 50 lowest-performing districts. Significantly, the report noted that no district from Nagaland figured among the top-performing districts at the national level in any of the assessed grades, highlighting persistent academic and systemic challenges. Despite the concerning findings, education officials described the PRS Report 2024 as a critical evidence base for reform. The data is expected to guide district- and state-level planning and enable targeted, data-driven interventions aimed at improving quality, equity and learning outcomes across Nagaland's school education system.

CAU Vice-Chancellor Dr Anupam Mishra Appointed Secretary General of IAUA



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

IMPHAL: Vice-Chancellor of Central Agricultural University (CAU), Imphal, Dr Anupam Mishra has been appointed as the Secretary General of the Indian Agricultural Universities Association (IAUA), New Delhi. The appointment is seen as a recognition of his long standing leadership and contribution to the field of agricultural education, research, and institutional development.

The Indian Agricultural Universities Association plays a key role in bringing together agricultural universities across the country. It works to promote academic cooperation, policy dialogue,

and sharing of best practices in teaching, research, and extension services. Dr Mishra's appointment to this important national position is expected to further strengthen coordination among agricultural universities and related institutions.

Congratulating Dr Mishra on the occasion, Central Agricultural University, Imphal, stated that the appointment reflects his vision, administrative ability, and deep understanding of the challenges faced by the agricultural education sector. The university expressed pride in his achievement and noted that his experience will be valuable in advancing the objectives of IAUA. CAU also expressed confidence that under Dr Mishra's guidance, the association will play a stronger role in addressing emerging issues in agriculture, promoting innovation, and supporting capacity building across universities. His new responsibility, the university added, will help enhance collaboration at the national level and contribute to the overall growth of agricultural education and research in the country. Dr Mishra has been associated with several academic and administrative initiatives aimed at strengthening higher education in agriculture. His appointment as Secretary General of IAUA is expected to add momentum to ongoing efforts to modernise curricula, encourage research partnerships, and respond effectively to the needs of farmers and the agricultural sector nationwide.

Nagaland-Japan Connect 2026 launched to open overseas jobs and skill pathways for Naga youth

KOHIMA

The Government of Nagaland on Tuesday launched Nagaland-Japan Connect 2026, a flagship initiative aimed at creating structured overseas employment opportunities, skill development programmes and long-term institutional partnerships with Japan, marking a significant step towards global workforce integration.

The programme, organised by the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN) at the Integrated Business Hub & Innovation Centre (IBHIC) in Dimapur, seeks to align Nagaland's human capital with international labour markets, particularly Japan's growing demand for skilled workers.

Senior state government officials, representatives from Japan's Kochi Prefecture, industry leaders, academic institutions and hundreds of aspiring youth participated in the launch, highlighting the scale and intent of the initiative.

Chairing the programme, I. Changsang, NCS, said Nagaland-Japan Connect is designed as a sustained platform rather than a one-time engagement. He said the initiative aims to systematically prepare Naga youth for global workplaces while building durable institutional relationships with Japan.



In his welcome address, Abu Metha, Advisor to the Chief Minister and Chairman of IDAN, said the initiative reflects Nagaland's evolving global outlook. He encouraged young people to seek international exposure, acquire global best practices and return to contribute to the state's development, assuring continued government support for overseas employment pathways.

Industries and Commerce Minister Hekani Jakhali, in her special address, underlined the urgency of expanding employment opportunities beyond domestic boundaries. With more than ten lakh job seekers in the state, she said sustainable livelihoods require global competitiveness. Describing the initiative as "a beginning, not an end," she said Japan's engagement with Nagaland reflects confidence in the

discipline and credibility of Naga youth.

Representing Kochi Prefecture, Kunitoshi Hojo highlighted Japan's demographic challenges and its increasing reliance on skilled foreign workers. He said the number of Naga workers in Kochi has grown from zero to 19 within two years, expressing confidence that the partnership would yield many more success stories.

On industry collaboration, Kaushik Choudhury said the partnership goes beyond labour mobility, positioning Nagaland as a hub of quality products, culture and innovation. He cited initiatives such as Nagaland coffee promotion, elderly living villages and cultural centres as examples of broader economic cooperation.

Dr. Pangersenla Walling of the Centre of Excellence for Foreign Languages, Nagaland University, emphasised the importance of language training in global employability. She said targeted, subsidised certificate programmes are being developed to make students job-ready, culturally adaptable and internationally competitive.

Delivering the keynote address, Deputy Chief Minister T. R. Zeliang described Nagaland-Japan Connect as a strategic economic intervention with long-term returns. He said investments in language skills, vocational training and global exposure would translate into employment, remittances and stronger institutional capacity for the state.

In his closing remarks, Industries and Commerce Secretary Kumar Ramnikant, IAS, said the platform has already begun delivering tangible employment outcomes.

He added that exposure to Japanese work culture-known for discipline, quality and productivity-would benefit local enterprises when youth return with international experience.

The inaugural session also saw the exchange of key memoranda of understanding to institutionalise cooperation in vocational training, internships, international placements and investment facilitation. Konnekt Asia was designated as Nagaland's official representative in Japan in partnership with IDAN, while NYK and IDAN signed an MoU to develop an integrated vocational training ecosystem combining language and industry-specific skills. Separate MoUs were signed with Corporation Kumagai Co., Ltd. and Hagumi Farm Co., Ltd. to offer one-year internships in advanced Japanese farming practices.

A technical session focused on preparing candidates for overseas employment, covering Japanese workplace culture, ethics, discipline and recruitment pathways. Japanese companies and cooperative associations made detailed presentations on job roles, working conditions and career prospects.

The event recorded over 450 student registrations and included direct interviews with Japanese employers across sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, electronics, hospitality and heavy machinery, positioning Nagaland-Japan Connect 2026 as a major step towards structured global engagement and long-term economic resilience for the state.

Quest!

Based on a study, parents underestimate a teen's happiness, but also overestimate the happiness of their younger children.

Hypocrisy-laden message to nation: Congress slams PM's remarks ahead of Budget session

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remarks on the Budget session, saying he delivers his "usual hypocrisy-laden message to the nation" before the beginning of each session and "today's performance is part of this series".

Congress general secretary in-charge Jairam Ramesh said, "He (PM) will not convene and chair all-party meetings to take the opposition into confidence on national issues." He will suddenly have Bills introduced at the last minute and bulldozed through Parliament without the necessary legislative

scrutiny, Ramesh claimed, adding that Modi would not sit in Parliament and respond to the concerns of opposition leaders, and will instead make election rally speeches in both Houses.

"Before the beginning of each session, he will give his usual hypocrisy-laden 'desh ke naam sandesh' with Parliament as his backdrop. Today's performance is part of this series," the senior Congress leader said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the free trade pact with the European Union is for an ambitious India and urged manufacturers to benefit from new markets opening for them. Modi also said that the

nation is coming out of long-term pending problems and working towards long-term solutions.

The time has come to find solutions and not create hurdles, he said, adding his government is not confined to just files but ensuring the last-mile delivery of welfare schemes to the people.

"Our priority is always human-centric while taking steps for all-round development of the country," he told reporters in Parliament House complex in his customary briefing at the beginning of the Budget session.

An India full of confidence has emerged as a ray of hope for the world, he added.

Ajit Pawar cremated with full state honours



MUMBAI

The last rites of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, killed in a plane crash, were held with full state honours on Thursday at Baramati. Ajit Pawar's sons, Parth and Jay lit his funeral pyre.

Union ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, former Union minister Sharad Pawar and BJP president Nitin Nabin attended the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief's funeral at the Vidya

Pratishthan ground at Baramati, Maharashtra.

Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnis and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde were also present, along with Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra.

Ajit Pawar's cousin Supriya Sule, Lok Sabha member from Baramati, and NCP working president and former Union minister Praful Patel were also present.

Earlier, hundreds of mourners gathered at the Pawar residence to pay their last respects to the senior Nationalist Congress Party leader,

who died in a plane crash.

Local residents, along with NCP workers, thronged the gates, chanting slogans in his memory.

"A leader like him will not be born again," said several mourners, lauding his contributions to the region's development.

Supporters raised slogans such as "Ajit Dada amar rahe" and "Ajit Dada parat ya" (Long live Ajit Dada; Ajit Dada, come back), echoing across his political stronghold.

At the residence, Ajit Pawar's

family, including his wife and Rajya Sabha MP Sunetra Pawar, his sons Parth and Jay, and his younger brother Shrinivas Pawar, received tributes from those assembled, who offered folded hands in respect.

Following the final darshan at his home, the mortal remains were taken to the sports ground of Vidya Pratishthan in Baramati, where the last rites will be performed with full state honours.

Pawar (66) and four others were killed on Wednesday morning when a chartered Learjet aircraft crashed near the table-top runway at Baramati airport, barely 200 metres from its edge. The aircraft had taken off from Mumbai and was attempting a second landing approach when the tragedy occurred.

The sudden demise of the veteran leader has sent shockwaves across Maharashtra's political landscape, leaving a vacuum in the BJP-led ruling coalition and casting uncertainty over the future of the NCP, which he headed.

According to eyewitnesses, Pawar's body was identified at the crash site by his wristwatch.

A video circulating on social media showed the wristwatch on a charred body at the site.

Those killed in the crash included Captain Sumit Kapoor, who had over 15,000 flying hours; co-pilot Captain Shambhavi Pathak with 1,500 hours of experience; personal security officer Vidip Jadhav; and flight attendant Pinky Mali.

The last rites will be performed with full state honours at the Vidya Pratishthan grounds on Thursday. The funeral procession will begin at 9 am, followed by cremation at 11 am.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, senior leaders from across the political spectrum, and thousands of citizens from across Maharashtra are expected to attend the funeral.



INTERNATIONAL

Bangladesh's ousted leader Hasina denounces the upcoming election from her exile in India



DHAKA

From her exile in India, Bangladesh's ousted leader Sheikh Hasina has slammed the country's upcoming election after her party was barred from the polls, remarks that could deepen tensions ahead of the pivotal vote next month.

Hasina, who was sentenced to death for her crackdown on a student uprising in 2024 that killed hundreds of people and led to the toppling of her 15-year rule, warned in an email to The Associated Press last week that without inclusive and free and fair elections, Bangladesh will face prolonged instability.

She also claimed that Bangladesh's interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus deliberately disenfranchised millions of her supporters by excluding her party — the former ruling Awami League — from the election.

"Each time political participation is denied to a significant portion of the population, it deepens resentment, delegitimizes institutions and creates the conditions for future instability," she wrote.

"A government born of exclusion cannot unite a divided nation," Hasina added.

Former Bangladesh Prime

Minister and Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina.

More than 127 million people in Bangladesh are eligible to vote in the Feb. 12 election, widely seen as the country's most consequential in decades and the first since Hasina's removal from power after the mass uprising.

Yunus' interim administration is overseeing the process, with voters also weighing a proposed constitutional referendum on sweeping political reforms. Campaigning started last week, with rallies in the capital, Dhaka, and elsewhere.

Yunus returned to Bangladesh and took over three days after Hasina fled to India on Aug. 5, 2024, following weeks of violent unrest. He has promised a free and fair election, but critics question whether the process will meet democratic standards and whether it will be genuinely inclusive after the ban on Hasina's Awami League.

There are also concerns over security and uncertainty surrounding the referendum, which could bring about major changes to the constitution.

Yunus' office said in a statement to the AP that security forces will ensure an orderly election and will not allow anyone to influence

the outcome through coercion or violence. International observers and human rights groups have been invited to monitor the process, the statement added.

The Election Commission says some 500 foreign observers, including from the European Union and the Commonwealth, are expected to watch the polls on Feb. 12.

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister and Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina.

Since Hasina's ouster, Bangladesh has faced a slew of political and security challenges.

Human rights and minority groups have accused the interim authorities of failing to protect civil and political rights. Hasina's party has alleged arbitrary arrests and deaths in custody of its members, claims that the government has denied.

Critics have also voiced alarm over the growing influence of Islamist groups and attacks on minorities, particularly Hindus.

There are also growing concerns over press freedoms under Yunus, with several journalists facing criminal charges and the offices of the country's two leading dailies coming under attack by angry protesters.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Tarique Rahman, 60, has emerged as the leading contender in the vote.

Rahman, the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia — Hasina's chief rival who died last month — returned home in December after more than 17 years in self-imposed exile. He has promised to work for the stability of this South Asian nation of 170 million people.

Rahman's main rival in the February vote is a coalition of 11 allied groups headed by an Islamist

party, the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Under Hasina, Jamaat-e-Islami was under severe pressure and barred from elections. Its top leaders faced executions or prison terms on war crimes charges related to Bangladesh's independence war against Pakistan 1971.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, or BNP, boycotted elections in 2014 and 2024. It took part in 2018 but later accused Hasina of rigging the polls.

Critics have long accused Hasina of presiding over an increasingly authoritarian system. She also faced criticism over suppression of dissent and of her political opponents, with security agencies under her government facing charges of enforced disappearances.

Still, Hasina has dismissed the Bangladesh court that sentenced her to death in absentia on charges of crimes against humanity over the uprising killings as a "kangaroo court."

International rights groups have raised concerns about the fairness of the trial.

In her email to the AP, Hasina said that to move forward, Bangladesh needs to break the cycle of political bans and boycotts. She contended that under her government, some elections were "not truly participatory because major political parties chose to boycott democratic processes."

"I recognize this was far from ideal," she said, adding that Bangladesh's political parties must now end that cycle. "Otherwise, there will be no redemption."

The country, she added, "needs a legitimate government" that would govern "with the genuine consent of the people."

"That is the best way for the nation to heal its wounds," she said.

Bangladesh: BNP accuses Jamaat of spreading 'fascist propaganda' ahead of elections



DHAKA

As political disputes continue to mount ahead of February 12 elections, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Wednesday accused the radical Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, of promoting "fascist propaganda," political hypocrisy, and deceptive narratives aimed at influencing voters in the upcoming polls, local media reported.

Addressing a press conference in Dhaka, BNP Election Steering Committee spokesperson and advisor to the party chairperson, Mahdi Amin, said Jamaat was attempting to mislead the public by branding BNP as a "world champion of corruption" — dismissing the allegations as "politically motivated" and far from reality.

He also added that Jamaat had raised no objections about corruption when it held ministerial posts and parliamentary seats during the BNP tenure between 2001 and 2006.

"Now, in the election field, they are continuing

the same old fascist propaganda, which is nothing but blatant political hypocrisy," Bangladesh's leading newspaper, The Dhaka Tribune, quoted Mahdi as saying.

Mahdi also claimed that Jamaat was exploiting religious sentiments to influence voters through promises of heaven, oaths on the Quran, and offering financial benefits.

Taking a dig at Jamaat, he further said that those accused of vote-buying lack credibility to lecture others on corruption, warning that such practices violate the electoral code and undermine the democratic process.

Mahdi urged the Election Commission to take tougher measures against efforts to influence the public mandate by spreading disinformation and promoting "fascist politics."

He affirmed that the BNP would pursue its political and constitutional struggle, while exposing Jamaat's campaigns.

Earlier this week, the BNP issued an indirect warn-

ing against Jamaat, urging voters not to "destroy the country" by casting their ballots for those it accused of collaborating with Pakistani occupation forces during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir made the remarks while addressing an election rally at the BD High School ground in Thakurgaon district's Sadar Upazila.

He is contesting from the Thakurgaon-1 constituency in the upcoming elections.

"Those who assisted the Pakistan Army even at the last moment are today asking for votes to govern the country. Don't ruin the nation by voting for them," Bangladesh's leading newspaper, The Daily Star, quoted Fakhrul as saying.

"We want to uphold the spirit of 1971 because our identity derives from that. Bangladesh was born due to Pakistan's exploitation and repression. We fought Pakistan and achieved independence," he added.

Bangladesh has been witnessing escalating political disputes ahead of the February 12 election.

The parties that earlier collaborated with the interim government's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus, to overthrow the democratically elected government of the Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, are now embroiled in an intense power struggle to win the upcoming election.

Imphal Peace Museum director Haobam Joyremba praises NEIR 2026, sheds light on Peace Museum



OUR CORRESPONDENT
IMPHAL

Imphal witnessed a deeply emotional and meaningful moment as the North East Integration Rally arrived in the city. The rally, which began its long journey from Kolkata, is travelling across all eight North Eastern states with one clear and powerful message — unity, understanding, and togetherness.

The rally was warmly received at the Imphal Peace Museum, a place that stands as a strong reminder of the value of peace, dialogue, and shared history. Surrounded by memories of the past, the gathering reflected the need to learn from history and move forward together with respect and empathy.

The Imphal Peace Museum, located at the foothills of the Red Hills (Maibam Lotpa Ching), is a living memory of the Battle of Imphal and other World War II battles fought in Manipur between March and July 1944. These battles, part of the Anglo-Japanese war, shaped the course of history in the region. In a poll conducted by the British National Army Museum, the Battle of Imphal and Kohima was named Britain's Greatest Battle, highlighting the global importance of this land and its past.

Haobam Joyremba, Director of the Imphal Peace Museum, while speaking at the ceremony, shed



Maturity is when you want peace more than revenge.

light on the museum. The museum is supported by the Nippon Foundation, in collabora-



tion with the 2nd World War Imphal Campaign Foundation, Manipur Tourism Forum, and the Government of Manipur. In 2019, the muse-

um won India's Best Design Award, adding to its national recognition.

Adding strength to the occasion was the association of CubeTen Technologies Pvt. Ltd. as the IT partner for the rally, along with the Imphal Peace Museum. This partnership reflects how technology, culture, and shared values can come together to support a greater cause. A special highlight of the day was the presence of A L Hek, a six-time MLA from Meghalaya.

His warmth, energy, and sincere belief in a united North East inspired everyone present.

His enthusiasm for integration and mutual respect resonated strongly with the spirit of the rally. While addressing the gathering, the speaker shared a simple yet powerful thought. Integration is not just about roads, borders, or projects. It is about people.

It is about respect, empathy, and understanding each other beyond our differences. In today's times, the idea of peace — in our daily lives and across state boundaries — is more important than ever.

The North East Integration Rally is more than just a journey across states. It is an effort to bring people closer, start meaningful conversations, and remind everyone that strength lies in unity.

As the rally moves forward to the next destinations, Imphal sends its warm wishes for a safe and meaningful journey ahead.

The arrival of the rally at the Imphal Peace Museum was not just an event. It was a moment of reflection, hope, and shared purpose — a reminder that peace and togetherness are paths we must walk together.

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Silchar MP Parimal Suklabaidya stresses importance of Barak Festival



OUR CORRESPONDENT SILCHAR

Gandhi Bhawan in Silchar wore a festive look as a cultural programme brought people together for an evening of thought, music, and quiet reflection. The hall was full. Faces were relaxed. There was a sense of calm in the air that is rare in busy daily life.

Silchar MP Parimal Suklabaidya attended the programme and spoke at length about the deeper meaning of such festivals. He praised the organisers and clearly acknowledged the vision behind the event. Speaking warmly, he mentioned Biswadeep Gupta and his entire team, saying they had been working very hard for a long time to make the festival meaningful and well-organised.

“These kinds of efforts deserve respect,” Suklabaidya said. He noted that organising a cultural festival is not easy. It needs patience, planning, and dedication. When people work with honesty and love for culture, the results are felt by everyone present.

The MP said that cultural festivals play a very important role in society. After long and tiring days filled with work, stress, and noise, such events refresh the mind. They give people peace and joy. They help individuals slow down, think, and reconnect with values that often get lost in daily rush.

According to him, programmes like this are a true blessing for society. They do not just entertain. They heal. They bring people closer.

They remind us of who we are and what we stand for. A major highlight of the evening was the presence of renowned scholar Prof. M.M. Goel. Suklabaidya heaped praise on Prof. Goel and said it was a pleasure to listen to him. He shared that Prof. Goel’s thoughts on the Bhagavad Gita were deep, clear, and inspiring.

Listening to the Gita, he said, is not only about religion. It is about life. It teaches balance, duty, and inner strength. Prof. Goel’s words made these ideas simple and relevant

for today’s world. Many in the audience listened in silence, visibly moved by the wisdom shared.

The programme at Gandhi Bhawan was more than just an event. It was a reminder of the power of culture and knowledge. It showed how art, thought, and community effort can come together to create peace and joy.

As the evening ended, one feeling remained strong among the audience. Such festivals are needed. Not once in a while, but again and again.



BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM





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



11 JAN
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 Trekking | Canyoneering | Sport Climbing | Disaster Management Technique | Water Sports
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11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations.
 Includes: MOCA, and D-governance as a platform for development, awareness, awareness, awareness, and awareness through participation through involvement of different youth organizations.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, climate and river. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Basin Planning & Geography, environment and health in the River Basin, 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 Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Workshop: Journalism, Photography, Editing & Content Creation, Sports, Games, Chess, Board Games.



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Musical Night 11 JAN



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10-12 JAN
E-Sports
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11 JAN
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