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18 Pharmacies in Hailakandi Issued Show-Cause Notices for Regulatory Violations

HAILAKANDI
The Assam health department has issued show-cause notices to 18 pharmacies in Hailakandi district for allegedly violating pharmacy regulations and failing to comply with mandatory reporting requirements, officials said on Tuesday.

According to sources, the pharmacies were found to have not uploaded required data-such as details of registered pharmacists-on the prescribed state government portal under the Assam Pharmacy Regulations, despite repeated instructions from the Drugs Controller. The notices were issued by the office of the Joint Director of Health Services to the following establishments: New Matri Medicos, Ramkrishna Medical Hall, Panacea Medicos, Rabindra Medical Hall, Hindustan Medical Store, Chakraborty Medical Store, Drugs Centre, Care Health, Arham Medical Hall, DMM Medical Hall, Bina Medical Hall, Radharaman Medical Hall, Lifecare Medicos, Laskar Medicos, Aryan Medical Store, Bharat Medical Hall, Aman Medical Hall and MN Pharma Care.

Confirming the action, Hailakandi Drugs Inspector Manash Borgohain said the show-cause notices were issued as a preliminary step against the pharmacies for not uploading mandatory data on the portal. He added that verification of records and compliance is currently underway across the district.

"There are around 280 pharmacies in Hailakandi district, of which only 208 have applied online for registration so far," Borgohain said. He added that although there is a provision for submitting monthly online reports, most pharmacies have failed to regularly update and submit these reports.

WHO SAID WHAT



Over the last few years, Assam has moved up a lot and we are making progress in all spheres from agriculture to entrepreneurship and industries to social welfare. If this growth momentum sustains for another 10 years, we will be amongst India's Top 5 States. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM Assam

Manipur Press Club Celebrates 51st Anniversary, Honours Journalists Amid Ongoing Conflict

IMPHAL

The Manipur Press Club on January 6 celebrated its 51st foundation day, marking over five decades of service to journalism in the state and paying tribute to journalists who continue to report under challenging circumstances.

The programme began with senior journalists offering floral tributes at the Memorial Pillar within the Press Club complex to honour departed members of the fraternity. During the event, veteran journalists who played key roles in establishing and sustaining the institution were felicitated for their contributions.

MLA Yumnam Khemchand, the chief guest, underscored the vital role of media in a democratic society, highlighting that the contribution of journalists assumes greater significance in a conflict-affected state like Manipur. "Journalists in Manipur have continued to discharge their duties with dedication and sacrifice. The



public must support and encourage them for the services they render under challenging circumstances," he said.

Speaking on the ongoing ethnic and political unrest in the state, Khemchand called for continued peace-building efforts by all sections of society. "Initiatives aimed at fostering peace should be encouraged rather than undermined, as people from all communities continue to bear the brunt of prolonged conflict," he added.

The event was attended by MLAs Kh Iboncha and Sapam Kunjakshor, Director of Information and Public Relations Ngamgom Uttam, as well as executive members of the All Manipur Working Journalists Union and the Editors' Guild of Manipur, among others.

The 51st anniversary celebration served as both a recognition of the Press Club's enduring role in Manipur's journalistic landscape and a reminder of the resilience of media professionals working amid ongoing unrest.

IMPHAL/NEW DELHI

The Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) on Monday blamed the Centre's alleged failure to restore order for the latest IED blast in the state, accusing the BJP-led government of deliberately prolonging the crisis under President's Rule.

MPCC president Keisham Meghachandra Singh launched a sharp attack on the Union government a day after a high-level meeting in New Delhi between Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Manipur's Director General of Police, Chief Secretary and Governor. Meghachandra said the meeting had failed to offer any credible roadmap for peace and normalcy in the violence-hit state.

Addressing the media, the Congress leader described the outcome of the Delhi meeting as "disappointing and unfavourable for peace", and linked it directly to a fresh incident of violence reported just hours later. According to him, an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded around 6 am on January



5 at Nganukon, injuring two local residents.

"The blast is a grim reminder that the situation on the ground

remains volatile. It clearly reflects the failure of the Centre's approach, even after such high-level deliberations," Meghachandra said, adding that repeated meetings in Delhi had done little to improve security or restore public confidence in Manipur.

Accusing the central government of lacking the political will to resolve the crisis, he alleged that New Delhi was "not genuinely interested in bringing peace and normalcy" to the state. The present situation, he claimed, was "entirely of the Centre's own making".

Meghachandra further alleged that the Union government was deliberately prolonging President's Rule in Manipur, even if it meant undermining constitutional norms and democratic institutions. "What we are witnessing is nothing but the murder of democracy in Manipur and a complete underestimation of the will of the people," he said.

Stating that the people of Manipur do not want "direct control from Delhi", the Congress leader warned that prolonged central

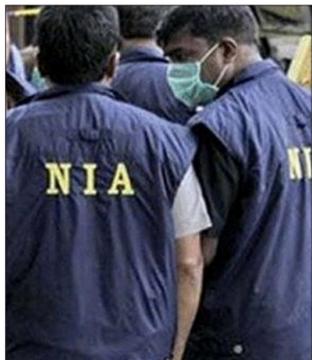
intervention without tangible improvement in law and order was deepening public distrust and political uncertainty across the state.

He also suggested that if both the Centre and the state administration were incapable of bringing the situation under control, dissolving the Manipur Legislative Assembly and holding fresh elections would be the most democratic course of action. "Let the people decide their future," he said.

Targeting the BJP, Meghachandra squarely blamed the ruling party for the continuing violence, describing it as the "architect of the present crisis". He accused the BJP of pursuing a "divide-and-rule" policy that had exacerbated ethnic tensions and destabilised the state.

Calling for an impartial and firm approach, the MPCC president said that if the Centre was serious about restoring peace, it must take unbiased and decisive measures on the ground instead of relying on prolonged central rule. "Without fairness and accountability, no amount of central control will bring peace to Manipur," he added.

NIA Takes Over Probe into Twin Blasts in Manipur's Bishnupur



IMPHAL

The investigation into the twin blasts that shook Manipur's Bishnupur district on January 5 has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), officials confirmed on Tuesday, as security agencies intensified efforts to trace those behind the attacks.

Two people were injured in the consecutive explosions at Ngaukon village under the Phougakchao police station area. The first blast, suspected to have been triggered by an improvised explosive device (IED), occurred around 5.45 am at an abandoned house. A second explosion followed nearly three hours later, at around 8.45 am, about 200 metres away, when local residents had gathered after learning about the earlier incident.

Confirming the transfer of the case,

Manipur Police said in a statement that the investigation has been formally forwarded to the NIA for further probe. The police said combing and search operations are underway in adjoining areas, while security has been strengthened to prevent any further escalation. Efforts are also being made to identify and apprehend those responsible for the blasts.

According to officials, the house where the first explosion occurred has remained abandoned since ethnic violence erupted in Manipur in May 2023. The owner and his family are currently residing in a relief camp, having fled the area amid the prolonged unrest.

The blasts have further heightened tensions in the state, which has been grappling with sustained violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands displaced since the ethnic clashes began nearly two years ago.

In response to the incident, several organisations, including the Indigenous People Organisation and the All Manipur Students' Union, have called for a 24-hour statewide shutdown beginning at midnight on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Meitei civil body Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has demanded an immediate, transparent and time-bound investigation into the blasts.

Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 2025, following the resignation of former Chief Minister N Biren Singh amid mounting criticism over his government's handling of the ethnic violence.

Assam Launches 'Mukhyamantri Nijut Babu Asoni' to Support Boys in Higher Education



GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Tuesday invited applications for the Mukhyamantri Nijut Babu Asoni, a new financial assistance scheme aimed at supporting boys from economically weaker families pursuing higher education in the state.

Introduced by the Higher Education Department, the scheme mirrors the Mukhyamantri Nijut Moina Asoni initiative for girls and seeks to address gender imbalance while tackling rising dropout rates among male students at the tertiary level.

Under the scheme, first-year undergraduate students enrolled in government and provincialised colleges will receive ₹1,000 per month, while first-year postgraduate students will be provided ₹2,000 per month. The incentive will be paid for a maximum of 10 months in an academic year and disbursed directly to beneficia-

ries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system.

Education Minister Ranoj Pegu shared the guidelines and application details on January 6, stating that the initiative aims to ensure gender-balanced support in higher education and enable economically vulnerable boys to continue their studies without financial stress.

According to the official order, the scheme will be implemented from the 2025-26 academic year and will be applicable to regular male students domiciled in Assam whose annual family income is below ₹4 lakh. Students enrolled in private institutions, self-financed courses, or distance education programmes will not be eligible.

The government said the initiative is designed to boost enrolment of boys from weaker sections, improve Assam's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), and reduce dropouts at critical under-

graduate and postgraduate entry stages, in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The guidelines also list several exclusions. Married undergraduate students are not eligible, nor are students availing benefits under the Dr Banikanta Kakati Merit Award. Postgraduate students receiving assistance under the Chief Minister's Jibon Prerana Scheme are also excluded.

Beneficiaries must maintain regular attendance, academic discipline, and adhere to institutional conduct rules, failing which the incentive may be withdrawn. The assistance will not be paid during summer vacations or during any academic break exceeding one month.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had announced the scheme on December 9 while distributing scooters to 11,250 Higher Secondary toppers under the Dr Banikanta Kakati Merit Award. He had stated that the incentive for boys would come into effect from January 1. The launch of Nijut Babu Asoni follows the success of Nijut Moina Asoni, which has already benefited over five lakh girl students, significantly reshaping Assam's higher education support framework. Recently, the government also rolled out the Prerana Scheme to assist students appearing for HSLC and CBSE Class 10 examinations, under which around 4.4 lakh students receive ₹300 per month for four months starting November 2025.

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TTP threatens PoK: India's national security options

On 24 December 2025, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) announced its organisational structure across Pakistan. The new structure will encompass Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), including Gilgit-Baltistan. Under the new plan, Pakistani armed forces are likely to face ambushes while their military bases are likely to be attacked.

The upgraded structure envisages establishing an Air Force unit under the supervision of an experienced drone technocrat. He is reported to be planning to deploy sophisticated portable drones with high-rate target precision. The targets would be Pakistan's key military bases, installations, military-run industries and other sensitive establishments.

The TTP has already formed a shadow government and the military leadership across Pakistan, with governors and commanders actively leading tactical insurgency plans. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the group has been using small drones for military operations targeting checkpoints, police, and law enforcement agencies.

The reports are that now, for the first time, it has declared Kashmir as a new "Vilayat," dividing Gilgit into two subdivisions, viz., Vilayat-e-Diamer and Vilayat-e-Darel. The presence of such extremist groups in PoK, which is legally part of the Indian Union, poses a serious security threat to India's security arrangement. TTP adheres to an anti-India jihadi ideology. Previously, it conducted operations in PoK, such as the attack on 28 August 2025 against a Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts check post in Hudur, Chilas and Diamer, in which two soldiers were killed, and one person was injured. Sources believe that TTP's new structure intends to strengthen its military presence in PoK.

In the context of current Afghan-Pakistan tensions, including continued TTP attacks and the October 14-15, 2025, Afghan-Pakistan war, it is evident that Pakistan's army, despite backing from China, Turkey, and several Arab countries, is embroiled in brutal insurgencies in Occupied Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to reliable sources, the Pakistani army is losing ground in a two-front war that further intensifies the looming collapse of its resistance capacity.

The escalating internal conflict will inevitably affect India's national security arrangement. During preparations for Operation Sindhoor 1.0 in response to the Pahaigan attack of 22 April 2025, fighters of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and associated groups intensified their field operations, ambushing Pakistani forces across Balochistan, which was a clear indication of the Baloch solidarity with India. Following the Indo-Pakistan War of May 2025, Pakistan labelled the Baloch struggle as "Fitnat-ul-Hindustan." (India-sponsored crisis), accusing India of abetting it. The world knows that the Baloch resistance is an indigenous resistance that is as old as the creation of Pakistan. It has existed independently ever since Pakistan's occupation in March 1948. History shows that whenever India supports liberation movements, new nations have emerged, such as the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971. India had supported the Bangladesh freedom movement despite the US moving its 7th fleet into the Bay of Bengal. Despite global opposition, today, India must adopt a more decisive stance toward the Baloch cause not only for moral reasons but also to safeguard its own strategic interests. Let us remember that Pakistan, after developing nascent camaraderie with President Trump, has permitted the US to explore and loot the Baloch mineral wealth. In this way, Punjab-dominated Pakistan has opened the floodgates for the general looting of its mineral wealth to the two most covetous superpowers, namely China and Russia.

In Pakistan-occupied Balochistan, a secular nationalist armed struggle has endured despite repeated Pakistani military oppressive campaigns. Simultaneously, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, TTP controls large swathes of territory, openly fighting the Pakistan Army and intending to impose Taliban-style Sharia law. I

The question is that in case of Pakistan's army collapsing against TTP, India may run the risk of religious extremists' expansion into PoK, which may end up in a fierce guerrilla war that would ultimately lead to intensely serious results for Indian national security. Pakistan's military, backed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Turkey, and China, continues its brutal suppression of Baloch nationalism, weaponising religious fanaticism, denying cultural rights, empowering feudal elites, and swindling Balochistan's natural resources for Punjab's benefit. Pakistan has dragged China and these countries into supporting its occupation of Balochistan, a campaign of repression, and fueling anti-China sentiment among the Baloch. Despite this, the Baloch struggle has evolved into a youth-led secular urban movement, with women playing no less a prominent role and leadership than their male co-fighters, shifting to figures such as Dr Mahrang Baloch, Bashir Zaib Baloch, Dr Allah Nazar and many more. The Baloch Liberation Army now operates as a structured force with elite units like the Majeed Brigade, Fateh Squad, and an intelligence wing, Zirab. For the younger generation, independence is not just an aspiration but is seen as inevitable and a national dream.

Pakistan, the hub of international terror, is fast slipping into political, economic, and security chaos. Intensification of resistance by BLA, BLF, and TTP directly points to the deepening of the domestic crisis. India, the closest neighbour, cannot remain without direct or indirect fallout of the breakup of Pakistan. Obviously, some key questions arise. Will the PoK's Sufi and Shia communities accept TTP's radical view of Sharia law? Will a victorious TTP abandon its hostility toward India? Is India prepared to counter these threats with clarity and resolve, and whether the secular Baloch nation should continue to suffer while India offers only a symbolic support? A nuclear-armed Pakistan under TTP control would be catastrophic for South Asia and global stability, while an independent secular Balochistan could stabilise the region and serve as a strategic ally for India.

Jaishankar's visit after Khaleda Zia



PROF. D. MUKHERJEE

The passing of Begum Khaleda Zia, former Prime Minister of Bangladesh and long-serving chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), on 30 December 2025 has reverberated across South Asia, drawing renewed attention to Bangladesh's political landscape. At 80, her death marked the end of an era defined by intense political rivalry, landmark elections, and enduring debates about the country's democratic path. Her state funeral in Dhaka was not only a moment of national mourning but also a platform for diplomatic engagement, highlighted by the visit of Dr. Subrahmanya Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister. He represented the Indian government and delivered a condolence letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Khaleda Zia's son and BNP acting chairman, Tarique Rahman, signalling the importance of India-Bangladesh relations and regional diplomacy. Khaleda Zia's political journey was closely tied to Bangladesh's democratic evolution. Following the assassination of her husband, former President Ziaur Rahman, she rose to become the country's first female prime minister, winning multiple elections in 1991, 1996, and 2001. Her tenure was defined by a long-standing rivalry with Sheikh Hasina, shaping the nation's political culture for decades. Her death prompted an outpouring of respect across social and political divides, with hundreds of thousands attending funeral prayers and delegations from across South Asia paying homage, reflecting her enduring influence in the region.

India's decision to send Dr. S. Jaishankar to Dhaka highlights the evolving and sometimes complex ties between the two neighbours. In a letter delivered to Tarique Rahman, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Khaleda Zia as a leader of "rare resolve and conviction" and recalled personal interactions with her, including his 2015 visit to Dhaka. Modi expressed India's heartfelt condolences and emphasized hopes for "new beginnings" in bilateral relations, signalling New Delhi's intent to overcome recent strains and foster cooperation. This diplomatic outreach comes amid significant political shifts in Bangladesh. In August 2024, mass protests demanding reform led to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina's long-standing government, and an interim administration was formed under Nobel laureate in Peace, Dr. Muhammad Yunus as Chief Adviser. He was tasked with overseeing governance and preparing for national elections. Political polarization has remained high, with ongoing debates about electoral fairness, party participation, and legitimacy. The general elections are scheduled for 12 February 2026, marking the first polls since Hasina's removal.

In this scenario, the BNP, led by Tarique Rahman, is set to play a pivotal role in Bangladesh's political future. After 17 years in self-exile, Rahman's return positions him as a key contender in the upcoming February 2026 elections, with the BNP poised

to potentially assume a central role in the next government. This resurgence marks a significant shift in the country's political dynamics, raising questions about the direction of domestic policy and the future of Bangladesh's foreign relations, particularly with neighbouring India. Historically, the BNP's relationship with New Delhi has been tense at times, especially when Dhaka's policies favoured other international partners.

Bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh have seen periods of cooperation and friction. During Sheikh Hasina's tenure, the partnership was robust, encompassing economic, security, and cultural collaboration, including progress on water sharing, energy, and infrastructure projects. However, the transition to an interim government under Dr. Muhammad Yunus has introduced diplomatic challenges, with issues like governance, minority rights, and policy divergence complicating relations. India's decision to send Dr. Jaishankar to Khaleda Zia's funeral reaffirmed New Delhi's respect for Bangladesh's evolving political landscape and commitment to sustained dialogue.

Dr. Jaishankar's brief but symbolically charged visit to Dhaka was welcomed by observers in both capitals as a potentially stabilizing act that could serve as a foundation for future cooperation. Upon his arrival, he met with Tarique Rahman and handed him the letter from Prime Minister Modi, expressing confidence that Khaleda Zia's vision and values could help guide the development of renewed partnership between India and Bangladesh. Beyond this meeting, Dr. Jaishankar's presence at the funeral brought together senior diplomats and representatives from neighbouring states, including Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, underscoring the regional significance of Bangladesh's political transition and the broad interest in maintaining constructive relations in South Asia.

The diplomatic engagement surrounding Khaleda Zia's passing carries significant geopolitical implications. Bangladesh's strategic location in South Asia, with extensive land and riverine borders with India, makes it central to regional connectivity and security considerations. Its internal stability influences not only bilateral ties but also the broader regional balance, affecting major powers like China and the United States. In recent years, China has expanded its economic and strategic footprint in Bangladesh through trade, infrastructure projects, and diplomatic initiatives, a development closely monitored by India. In response, New Delhi has aimed to balance its interests by fostering economic cooperation, promoting connectivity, and supporting shared security objectives, while respecting Dhaka's sovereign right to diversify international relations. In this context, Dr. Jaishankar's visit signals India's commitment to active engagement while acknowledging Bangladesh's evolving political realities. India's approach to Bangladesh also reflects its broader foreign policy philosophy, which

combines principled engagement with strategic restraint. Even in tense moments, India prioritizes dialogue over confrontation, a strategy occasionally criticized domestically for perceived caution. Advocates argue that careful, consistent engagement strengthens bilateral ties and supports democratic processes. In a politically fluid Bangladesh, India's measured outreach demonstrates respect for sovereign transitions and the need for regional stability without imposing external solutions.

The domestic debate over India's foreign policy is not unique to Bangladesh's context. Across South Asia, varied political climates, historical legacies, and competing external influences create a mosaic of opportunities and challenges. Within India, public discourse around foreign relations often reflects a tension between aspirations for assertive global leadership and recognition of the delicate diplomacy required in neighbouring states. The response to Khaleda Zia's death and India's role in the funeral ceremonies offers a microcosm of these broader debates. While some voices within India emphasize strategic caution, others argue for a more proactive posture to assert national interests. Yet in a region where historical grievances, economic ties, and cultural bonds are deeply intertwined, the value of respectful, sustained engagement cannot be discounted.

Internationally, India's outreach to Bangladesh in this period sends multiple signals. To partners such as the United States and European nations, it demonstrates India's capacity to act as a stabilizing force in South Asia, even amid political transitions. It underscores India's preference for diplomatic engagement over acrimony and positions New Delhi as an interlocutor willing to engage with diverse political configurations. At the same time, the gesture communicates to China and other external actors that India remains committed to maintaining strong relations with neighbouring states, even as strategic competition evolves in the Indo Pacific. By participating in key diplomatic rituals like Khaleda Zia's funeral and offering words of condolence and hope, India asserts its presence in the regional order while reaffirming the importance of respectful dialogue.

As Bangladesh prepares for its historic elections in 2026, the international community remains attentive to how the political landscape will shape future policies—both domestic and foreign. Jamaat e Islami and other parties have signalled openness to broader coalitions following the elections, indicating potential shifts in polity and governance that could influence alliances and diplomatic priorities. The BNP's reemergence as a major contender raises questions about policy continuity and the direction of Dhaka's engagement with external partners. In this context, India's diplomacy must remain adaptive, balancing support for democratic processes with respect for Bangladesh's sovereign choices.

Looking ahead, India has several

avenues to strengthen its relationship with Bangladesh. Beyond high level diplomatic gestures, sustained cooperation on economic development, connectivity projects, cultural exchanges, and people to people ties will be essential. Continued engagement with all political stakeholders in Bangladesh, coupled with support for inclusive, transparent electoral processes, could help stabilize relations and promote mutual trust. Additionally, leveraging regional forums that include Bangladesh—such as BIMSTEC and SAARC—can provide platforms for constructive dialogue and collaboration on shared

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Another SHOCKER from Bangladesh In a deeply disturbing development, the Bangladesh Election Commission has cancelled the nomination of prominent Hindu leader Gobind Chandra Pramanik from Gopalganj, the former parliamentary seat of Sheikh Hasina, ahead of the general elections. This is not an isolated incident. It reflects a pattern where minorities, particularly Hindus, are systematically pushed out of political representation. Let there be no illusion: this is exactly what awaits the Hindus of West Bengal if Mamata Banerjee were ever to return to power in 2026. Thankfully, that possibility, as things stand today, is ZERO. ~ Amit Malviya, Member National Executive, BJP

Key Hindu candidate barred from contesting B'desh polls

'Nomination Cancelled Amid BNP Pressure'
Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) has cancelled the nomination of prominent Hindu leader Gobind Chandra Pramanik from Gopalganj, a former parliamentary seat of Sheikh Hasina, ahead of the general elections. This move has sparked outrage among the Hindu community in Bangladesh and raised concerns about the political rights of minorities in the country. Pramanik, a well-known figure in the Hindu community, had been nominated by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to contest the upcoming elections. However, the BEC, under pressure from the ruling Bangladesh Awami League (AL), decided to cancel his nomination. This is not the first time a Hindu candidate has been barred from contesting in Bangladesh. In the past, several Hindu candidates have faced similar challenges, often due to alleged irregularities or pressure from the ruling party. The cancellation of Pramanik's nomination is seen as a clear attempt to marginalize the Hindu community in the political process. It reflects a broader trend of discrimination against minorities in Bangladesh, where the ruling party has often used its power to suppress dissent and maintain its grip on power. The Hindu community in Bangladesh has long been a vocal advocate for political rights and representation. They have often faced persecution and discrimination, particularly in the form of land grabbing and forced conversions. The current political situation in Bangladesh is highly volatile, with the upcoming elections expected to be a closely contested affair. The cancellation of Pramanik's nomination is a significant setback for the Hindu community and a clear signal that the ruling party is willing to use its power to suppress the voices of minorities. This move is likely to further alienate the Hindu community and fuel their demands for political rights and representation. The international community has also expressed concern over the cancellation of Pramanik's nomination, with several countries calling for a fair and transparent electoral process in Bangladesh. The situation in Bangladesh is a stark reminder of the challenges faced by minorities in the country and the need for a more inclusive and democratic political system.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Change. But start slowly. For direction is more important than speed." - Paulo Coelho

challenges ranging from climate change to trade facilitation.

The visit of Dr. S. Jaishankar to Dhaka following the death of Begum Khaleda Zia represents more than a diplomatic ceremonial duty; it reflects the evolving contours of India-Bangladesh relations at a historically significant moment. By carrying Prime Minister Modi's letter of condolence to Tarique Rahman, participating in state funeral rites, and engaging with regional counterparts, India reaffirmed its respect for Bangladesh's political institutions and its commitment to continued bilateral engagement. Amid a period of political in Bangladesh, multilateral interests in South Asia, and shifting global dynamics, this gesture exemplifies the careful diplomacy required to navigate complex relationships. As Bangladesh moves toward its next chapter, India's approach—rooted in respectful engagement, strategic patience, and a recognition of shared history—will likely shape the trajectory of one of South Asia's most important bilateral partnerships. This moment of reflection, respect, and renewal could catalyse a deeper understanding and cooperation between two of the region's most

Congress Alleges Irregularities in Assam Electoral Rolls, Urges EC to Halt Finalisation; CM Rejects Charge

GUWAHATI

The Congress on Tuesday flagged what it termed "serious irregularities" in the draft electoral rolls published after the Special Revision (SR) in Assam ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, seeking immediate intervention by the Election Commission of India (ECI) and a halt to the finalisation of the rolls. The ruling BJP, however, dismissed the allegations, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma urging the Opposition to follow established statutory procedures instead of making public accusations.

Congress MLA and Leader of Opposition in the Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, has written to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar alleging large-scale discrepancies in the draft rolls that, he claimed,

threaten the integrity and credibility of the electoral process. Saikia demanded that the finalisation of the electoral rolls be suspended until all reported anomalies are thoroughly verified and resolved.

In his letter, Saikia said media reports and feedback from the ground pointed to unauthorised and "unknown" voter entries, suggesting serious procedural lapses during the SR exercise. He alleged that non-Assamese speaking individuals had been included in the electoral rolls without proper verification and that, in some cases, voters had been added to households without the knowledge or consent of the residents concerned.

Citing specific instances, Saikia claimed that four non-Assamese individuals were enrolled at House Nos. 44 and 15 on Tayabulla Road in Guwahati without the family's aware-

ness. He also pointed to voter entries against a non-existent Household No. 00 in the Nazira constituency, describing such cases as indicative of systemic flaws in the revision process. "These practices often go unnoticed and create room for 'unknown' voters to cast ballots, undermining procedural norms and compromising the verifiability and credibility of the electoral rolls," Saikia alleged in his communication to the ECI.

Warning that such discrepancies pose a grave threat to democratic values, Saikia said they also jeopardise the constitutional rights and socio-cultural heritage of the people of Assam. He linked the issue to recent allegations by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi regarding vote manipulation, arguing that the Assam case exposed a wider and more troubling pattern. The Leader of Opposition

further noted that over 10 lakh names have reportedly been removed from the draft electoral rolls for various reasons during the SR exercise. However, he argued that the emergence of fresh discrepancies, despite such large-scale deletions, indicated that the credibility of the entire revision process had been compromised.

Saikia contended that the alleged malpractices violated Clause 6 of the Assam Accord and ran contrary to Supreme Court directives mandating strict adherence to constitutional safeguards. He urged the Election Commission to conduct a swift, transparent and comprehensive investigation into all reported irregularities and to make its findings public.

Among his key demands, Saikia called for the finalisation of the electoral rolls to be put on hold until all discrepancies are examined and un-

authorised entries removed. He also sought the introduction of a uniform addressing system and stronger verification mechanisms to prevent similar issues in future electoral exercises.

Reacting sharply to the Congress allegations, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma rejected the charges and said the Opposition was politicising a process governed by well-defined rules. He said the Election Commission has laid down clear procedures for raising objections and seeking corrections in the electoral rolls. "Anyone with genuine concerns can submit Forms 6, 7 and 8 for additions, deletions or corrections. Instead of crying foul in the media, the opposition should follow the set procedures if they have real issues," Sarma said. According to data released by the Election Commission, Assam

has recorded a 1.35 per cent increase in voters, with the integrated draft electoral roll published on December 30 showing a total of 2,52,01,624 electors. Between December 27 last year and January 6, there were 7,86,841 additions and 4,47,196 deletions.

During the SR process, the Commission identified 4,78,992 deceased electors, 5,23,680 voters who had shifted, and 53,619 cases of multiple entries. The ECI clarified that these names have not yet been deleted and will be processed only after formal applications are submitted during the ongoing claims and objections period. The claims and objections window is open from December 27 to January 22, with special campaign dates scheduled for January 3-4 and January 10-11. The final electoral roll is slated for publication on February 10.

Oil Pipeline Bursts Again in Dibrugarh's Tingkhong, Renewed Panic and Anger Among Residents

DIBRUGARH

Panic and anger gripped parts of Assam's Dibrugarh district on Tuesday morning after a crude oil pipeline operated by Oil India Limited (OIL) burst again at Shalmari Dighalia in the Tingkhong area, barely hours after a similar rupture at the same location the previous night.

According to local residents, fears triggered by the late-night pipeline blast on January 5 had not subsided when, at around 10 am on January 6, the pipeline ruptured once more, causing crude oil to gush out under high pressure. The fresh leakage sparked renewed panic among villagers, who feared the possibility of another major accident in the oil-producing region. Locals accused Oil India of negligence, alleging that the repair work carried out after the night-time incident was only a temporary fix. Residents claimed that while OIL officials had managed to stop the leakage following the first burst, crude oil began flowing again from the same ruptured point on Tuesday morning. After nearly an hour of efforts, OIL personnel reportedly managed to contain the leak for the second time. However, the repeated failure has intensified concerns over the safety of the pipeline and the adequacy of the company's response. The successive leakages have caused extensive damage in the area, with crude oil spreading across agricultural land and fish-rearing ponds in the Tingkhong region. Farmlands and water bodies have been coated with a thick layer of oil, while the pungent smell of crude oil has enveloped the locality, triggering widespread resentment among residents.

Congress Meeting Turns Violent in Sribhumi, Senior Party Leader Seriously Injured

SRIBHUMI

A Congress organisational meeting in Assam's Sribhumi district descended into violence on Monday evening after a senior party leader was allegedly attacked by another Congress worker at a restaurant in Nilambazar, triggering shock and unrest within party ranks.

Jillur Choudhury, a District Council member, sustained serious injuries in the incident and was initially rushed to Sribhumi Civil Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was later referred to Silchar Medical College and Hospital, where he is currently undergoing advanced treatment.

According to sources, the incident occurred following a Congress organisational meeting held earlier in the day at Nilambazar. The meeting was attended by All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretary Vikas Upadhyay, Sribhumi district observer Nasir Khan and several district-level office-bearers.

After the meeting, party leaders reportedly went to a nearby restaurant for tea, where an altercation

broke out between party members. During the confrontation, Shahanz Hussain, identified as a probable Congress candidate from North Karimganj, allegedly attacked Choudhury with a sharp weapon.

The sudden act of violence created panic at the spot, prompting immediate efforts to provide medical assistance to the injured leader. Doctors at Sribhumi Civil Hospital later referred him to Silchar Medical College and Hospital due to the severity of his injuries.

The motive behind the attack remains unclear, and authorities have not yet issued an official statement detailing the circumstances that led to the incident. Police are understood to be examining the matter.

The episode has sent shockwaves through Congress circles in Sribhumi district, highlighting concerns over internal discord within the party. Notably, this is the second incident of a violent altercation reported in the presence of Nasir Khan, who is currently serving as the Congress observer in charge of the district.

Akhil Gogoi Alleges BJP Plot to Manipulate Electoral Rolls in 60 Assam Seats

SIVASAGAR

Rajior Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi on Monday levelled explosive allegations against the BJP leadership in Assam, claiming that senior party functionaries were conspiring to manipulate the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls to secure victory in the 2026 Assembly elections.

Speaking during a live interaction on social media on January 5, Gogoi alleged that he had come across a video conference held on the evening of January 4, involving Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia, state ministers, MLAs and other senior party leaders. While the meeting was ostensibly convened to discuss preparations for a wall-writing campaign scheduled for January 5, Gogoi claimed the discussions went far beyond campaign strategy and focused instead on voter lists.

"I was shocked by what I heard. After listening to that video conference, I could not sleep the entire night," Gogoi said, assert-



ing that he had heard the alleged instructions "with my own ears". According to the Sivasagar

MLA, Dilip Saikia allegedly directed state minister Ashok Singhal to take charge of voter list "corrections" in as many as 60 Assembly constituencies. Gogoi claimed the objective was to delete the names of eligible voters from the electoral rolls in these seats.

He further alleged that during the same video conference, Saikia instructed BJP MLAs, district presidents and mandal presidents to submit booth-wise lists of voters who do not support the BJP by January 12. These names, Gogoi claimed, were to be targeted for deletion from the electoral rolls as part of the ongoing Special Revision exercise.

"Responsibility for these 60 constituencies was clearly assigned to Ashok Singhal to 'correct' the voter lists," Gogoi alleged, describing the purported instructions as an attempt to "engineer the Assam voter list according to the BJP's own convenience".

Termining the alleged move a direct assault on democracy, Gogoi

said such actions, if true, would amount to a serious subversion of the electoral process and a violation of citizens' constitutional right to vote.

Challenging the state's political leadership, Gogoi dared Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to make the January 4 video conference public if the allegations were false. "If there is nothing to hide, the video recording should be released," he said.

Taking his challenge further, the Rajior Dal leader said he was willing to undergo a narco-analysis test if proven wrong and demanded a judicial inquiry into the matter. "If what I am saying is false, let it be established. But if it is true, then this is a grave conspiracy against the people of Assam and their democratic rights," he said.

The BJP leadership has so far not issued any response to Gogoi's specific allegations regarding the video conference or the purported instructions related to voter list deletions.

Dr Gayatri Gogoi Honoured with Dr Badan Ch Kro Memorial Award for Humanitarian Service

DIBRUGARH

Dr Gayatri Gogoi, Professor at Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) and Adjunct Scientist with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has been conferred the Dr Badan Ch Kro Memorial Award in recognition of her dedicated humanitarian service, officials said on Monday.

The award was presented during the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Sadou Asom Mahila Somaroh held at Koliabor. Dr Gogoi was honoured for her longstanding contribution to cancer care, research and service to underprivileged sections of society in Assam.

The Dr Badan Ch Kro Memorial Award commemorates the legacy of Dr Badan Ch Kro, an alumnus of the 1963 batch of AMCH, who hailed from Karbi Anglong and retired as Director of Assam Health Services.



Dr Gogoi is widely known for her commitment to cancer treatment, research and palliative care, particularly through her association with the Pratishruti Cancer and Palliative Trust, which has been working extensively to support cancer patients across the state. She has received several national awards for

her distinguished contributions to cancer research.

Over the years, multiple research and implementation projects led by Dr Gogoi have been completed, while several others are currently underway, covering different aspects of cancer prevention, diagnosis and care.

Among her recent initiatives is the "Pratishruti Suchitra: Save from Breast Cancer" project, which focuses on early detection and prevention. The project is based on a breast cancer screening model for which Dr Gogoi has been granted a design patent, marking a significant step in community-based cancer screening efforts.

The award was presented by Dr Subarna Saikia in the presence of Manumoti Kurmi, President and Secretary of the organising committee, Geetanjali Das Kro, Dr Silpi Kro and members of the family sponsoring the award, along with a large gathering of attendees.

Expressing her gratitude, Dr Gogoi said the honour would not only inspire her to continue her work but also encourage others who are working tirelessly in the field of humanitarian service and public health.

Tripura Orders Closure of All Schools from January 6 to 10 Amid Severe Cold



AGARTALA

The Tripura government has announced the closure of all schools across the state from January 6 to January 10 in view of the prevailing extreme cold weather conditions. Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha made the announcement on social media on Sunday, stating that the decision applies to all government, government-aided and privately managed schools. "It has been decided to close all schools (Govt/Govt Aided & Privately managed) from 6th January to 10th January, 2026 due to extreme cold weather condition," the Chief Minister said in his post.

The decision comes amid a sharp drop in temperatures across Tripura, with the mercury dipping to around 8 degrees Celsius in several parts of the state, raising concerns over the health and safety of school-going children. Earlier, Dr Saha had said the state government was closely monitoring the weather situation and would take steps to ensure that students were not inconvenienced during the cold spell. "Our government does not want anyone to go to school facing problems. We will take a decision based on the situation," he had said, adding that the closure of schools, particularly for the primary section, was under consideration if temperatures continued to fall.

Education department officials said the situation remains under review and that further instructions, if required, would be issued depending on weather conditions in the coming days.

The temporary closure is aimed at safeguarding students during the severe cold, with authorities urging parents and schools to follow official advisories and updates.

Meghalaya HC upholds five-year blacklisting of Highway contractor over corruption findings

SHILLONG

The High Court of Meghalaya has dismissed writ petitions filed by the JV of M/s BSCPL Infrastructure Ltd and M/s C&C Constructions challenging its blacklisting by the Public Works Department (Roads), Government of Meghalaya, affirming the five-year debarment imposed on the contractor from participating in future tenders.

A Single Judge Bench of Justice H. S. Thangkhiew held that the impugned action was lawful, proportionate, and taken in the larger public interest, finding no violation of principles of natural justice or lack of authority on the part of the State.

The case arose from a major highway project involving two-laning works on NH-44E and the Nongstoin-Rongjeng-Tura road, awarded to the petitioner in 2011 at a bid value of Rs. 1,303.83 crore.

The project saw multiple revisions due



to additional works and price adjustments, raising the cost to over Rs. 2,400 crore. Disputes later surfaced between the parties regarding contractual claims, which were referred to arbitration.

During arbitration proceedings, the State scrutinised M/s BSCPL's ledger documents submitted by the contractor to support its claims. These records, according to the Government, disclosed repeated payments for costly gifts, liquor, hospitali-

ty, and other benefits allegedly extended to public officials, engineers and also the Dispute Resolution Board members, among others, which irrefutably substantiated M/s BSCPL's indulgence in outright and rampant corruption.

The PWD then issued a show-cause notice in September 2024, followed by an order dated December 3, 2024, debarring the contractor for five years on the grounds of corrupt and fraudulent practices.

The petitioner challenged the decision, contending that the action was mala fide, delayed, unrelated to the contract, and taken to prejudice ongoing arbitration proceedings.

The State alleged that the BSCPL-C&C JV has already received Rs. 2523 Crores as total payments apart from Rs. 94 Crores based on the Arbitral Tribunal's order due to admission of claims by the Engineer.

It was alleged that materials revealed the adoption of a systematic approach of extending illegal gratification on a regular basis to various officials, DRB members, and MoRTH officials, for which reimbursement was sought from the Arbitral Tribunal.

Rejecting the Writ Petition, the Court noted that the power to blacklist flows both

from contractual provisions, particularly Clause 59.2(h) of the General Conditions of Contract dealing with corrupt practices during execution and from the State's inherent right to choose with whom it will contract.

The Court observed that the show cause notice sufficiently detailed the allegations and that the petitioner had been afforded a fair opportunity to respond.

Significantly, the Court relied on findings recorded by the arbitral tribunal, which had examined the same ledgers and concluded that the FIR was registered on the materials that were available, which, prima facie, validated the allegations of illegal gratification. The Court held that these materials constituted credible and substantive evidence, not mere suspicion or hearsay.

On the question of proportionality, the Court ruled that a five-year debarment could not be termed excessive given the scale of the project, the magnitude of public funds involved, and the serious nature of the misconduct alleged. Emphasising that public interest must prevail over private commercial considerations, the Court found no grounds to interfere under Article 226 of the Constitution.

Quest!

Psychology says, sometimes silence is the most powerful scream and indication of something being terribly wrong.

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IRCTC scam case: Delhi HC asks CBI to reply to Tejashwi Yadav's plea against charge framing order



NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought response of the CBI on a plea by RJD leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav challenging an order framing charges against him in the alleged IRCTC scam case.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma issued notice to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tejashwi's petition and stay application, and listed the matter for further hearing on January 14, when his father Lalu Prasad Yadav's similar plea will also be heard.

On October 13, 2025, the trial court had framed charges against the accused persons - Lalu, his wife Rabri Devi, son Tejashwi Prasad Yadav and 11 others - in the case for the alleged offences of cheating,

criminal conspiracy under the Indian Penal Code and sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Tejashwi and Lalu, the former union railway minister, have approached the high court assailing the trial court's order, which stems from alleged irregularities in the grant of operational contracts of two Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) hotels to a private firm.

Besides Lalu Yadav, the court had framed charges against Pradeep Kumar Goel, Rakesh Sakena, Bhupendra Kumar Agarwal, Rakesh Kumar Gogia and Vinod Kumar Asthana under Section 13(2) read with Section 13(1)(d) (ii) and (iii) of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act.

Section 13 (2) deals with

the punishment for criminal misconduct by a public servant, and Section 13(1) (d)(ii) and (iii) with abuse of position by a public servant to obtain favours. The court had also directed that the charge be framed under IPC section 420 (cheating) against Lalu Prasad, Rabri Devi, Tejashwi, M/s LARA Projects LLP, Vijay Kochhar, Vinay Kochhar, Sarla Gupta, and Prem Chand Gupta.

"A common charge is directed to be framed against all (14) accused under section 120B (criminal conspiracy) IPC read with section 420 IPC and section 13(2) read with section 13(1)(d)(ii) and (iii) PC Act," the court had said.

The maximum punishment under the PC Act is 10 years, while for cheating is seven years.

Court grants time to Sonia Gandhi to file reply to revision in voter list complaint

NEW DELHI

The Rouse Avenue court on Tuesday granted time to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi to file a reply on a revision filed against her in the voter list matter. Senior counsel appeared for her and sought time to file a reply.

It is alleged by the complainant, Vikas Tripathi, that Sonia Gandhi's name was included in the voter list prior to her becoming an Indian Citizen. This complaint was rejected by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate.

Special Judge Vishal Gogne granted time to file a reply and listed the matter on February 7. Senior advocate R S Cheema appeared for Sonia Gandhi, sought time to file a reply, and stated that the record is very old. He required time to file the reply.

On December 9, the Sessions Court at Rouse Avenue on Tuesday issued notice to Sonia Gandhi while hearing a revision petition challenging the Magistrate's September order dismissing a complaint alleging her wrongful inclusion in the 1980-81 electoral rolls.

Senior Advocate Pavan Narang, appearing for the revisionist Vikas Tripathi, had argued that the matter warranted reconsideration as the material placed on record indicated serious irregularities in the manner Sonia Gandhi's name was entered into the electoral roll before she became an Indian citizen.

He had submitted that "certain documents must have been forged and falsified to get the name in the electoral roll of 1980," emphasising that her name was later deleted and then re-entered in 1983 on the basis of an application filed in January 1983, both instances, according to him, occurring before she acquired citizenship.

Narang argued that the



Representation of the People Act clearly permits only a citizen of India to be enrolled as a voter, and therefore, the entries raised questions requiring judicial examination.

He added that while the initial complaint relied upon an article containing clips of the electoral rolls, the revisionist has now obtained attested copies from the Election Commission, which have been placed on record to substantiate

the claim. After considering the submissions, Judge Gogne issued notice to both respondents, including Sonia Gandhi. The prosecutor accepted notice on behalf of the State. The Court also directed that the Trial Court Record (TCR) be summoned for a complete assessment of the issues raised in the revision. The revision petition stems from a complaint filed by advocate Vikas Tripathi, which the Magistrate

had rejected at the threshold, holding that it lacked legal foundation and relied solely on uncertified photocopies of electoral records from 1980. The Magistrate had also observed that questions of citizenship and electoral rolls fall exclusively within the jurisdiction of the Central Government and the Election Commission of India, and cannot be adjudicated through a criminal complaint.

INTERNATIONAL

'Nobody is going to run home': Venezuelan diaspora in wait-and-see mode after Maduro's capture

BOGOTA

"A new dawn for Venezuela" is how a top US diplomat described the future awaiting the Caribbean country after Saturday's capture of president Nicolas Maduro by US special forces in a raid on Caracas.

But for some of the eight million Venezuelans who fled the country over the past decade of economic ruin and repression, the joy at seeing Maduro hauled before a New York court on Monday was tempered by the knowledge that his henchmen remain at the helm.

News of Maduro's capture initially triggered scenes of jubilation among the diaspora. Several people choked up as they recalled the hardship they fled, and the family they left behind, over the course of his increasingly despotic rule. But while many said they dreamed about returning to their homeland, they made it clear they had no plans to pack their bags just yet.

Most cited the country's tattered economy as a reason to keep working abroad and sending home remittances. Some also spoke of their fear of Venezuela's security apparatus, pointing to the paramilitaries who roamed the streets of Caracas on Saturday to crack down on anyone rejoicing over Maduro's ouster.

"There has been no change of regime in Venezuela, there is no transition," said Ligia Bolivar, a Venezuelan sociologist and rights activist living in Colombia since 2019.

"In these circumstances nobody is going to run home," she told. Standing outside the Venezuelan consulate in Bogota, where he was waiting to renew his passport on Monday, Alejandro Solorzano, 35, echoed that view.

"Everything remains the same," he said, referring to US President Donald Trump's decision to work with Maduro's administration rather than the democratic opposition.

Demonstrators protest the weekend capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas



Maduro by US forces in Rio de Janeiro, Monday, Jan. 5, 2026.

Maduro's former deputy Delcy Rodriguez was sworn in as acting president on Monday, becoming the interim head of an administration that still includes hardline Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello and powerful Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez.

Cabello in particular is a figure of dread for many Venezuelans, after commanding a crackdown on post-election protests in 2024 in which some 2,400 people were arrested.

Many Venezuelans were particularly shocked by Trump's decision to sideline opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, from the transition.

The European Union on Monday

demanding that any transition include Machado and her replacement candidate in the 2024 elections Maduro is accused of stealing, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia.

Andrea, a 47-year-old immigration advisor living in Buenos Aires, argued, however, that Machado's hour had not yet come.

"Until Trump sees that the situation is under control, until he has all these criminals by the balls, he won't be able to put Maria Corina in charge. Because that would be throwing her to the wolves," she said.

Luis Peche, a political analyst who survived a gun attack in Bogota last year suspected of being a political hit, also argued in favor of a negotiated transition. "We have to see this as a process," Peche told AFP, referring to Venezuela's

transition.

"You still need part of the state apparatus to remain," he said.

Tamara Suju, a leading Venezuelan rights expert based in Spain, said that keeping the same tainted cast in charge was a necessary evil - in the short term.

"They are the ones with whom the Trump administration is negotiating the transition because there is no other way to do it," she told Spain's esRadio, predicting they would eventually be forced by Washington to fall on their swords.

Edwin Reyes, a 46-year-old window installer living in Colombia for the past eight years, said that once Venezuela was "completely free" he would consider a move back.

"We've waited so long, another four or five months won't hurt."

Hindu businessman shot dead, woman gang-raped in Bangladesh amid rising attacks on minorities



DHAKA

A Hindu businessman and acting newspaper editor, Rana Pratap Bairagi, was shot dead by unidentified assailants on Monday in the Keshabpur area of Jessore district in Bangladesh, authorities said.

Bairagi, 38, a resident of Arua village in Keshabpur, was the owner of an ice-making factory in Kopalija Bazar, Monirampur, and the acting editor of the newspaper Dainik BD Khabar, published from Narail, according to local media reports.

Police said the incident occurred around 5:45 pm when three men on a motorcycle lured Bairagi from his factory to an alley, where he was shot at close range. "He

was shot three times in the head and his throat was slit. He died instantly," Monirampur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md. Rajiullah Khan told the press.

The motive for the killing remains unclear, though police suggested that it may have been linked to an internal feud within the banned Purbo Banglar Communist Party, of which Bairagi was reportedly an active member. Four cases had previously been filed against him, the authorities added.

The killing comes amid a wave of violence targeting minority Hindus in Bangladesh. In recent weeks, incidents include the brutal killing of Khokon Chandra Das on January 3, the lynching of Amrit Mondal on December 24, and the mob

killing of Dipu Chandra Das on December 18.

In a separate case in Kaliganj, a 40-year-old Hindu widow was allegedly gang-raped, tied to a tree, and had her hair forcibly cut by two men following a dispute over property. Police have registered a case, and investigations are ongoing. Political observers say such attacks, including clandestine assaults and mob violence, reflect a growing crisis for minority communities in Bangladesh's shifting political landscape. India has repeatedly expressed concern over attacks on Hindus in the country.

According to the 2022 census, Hindus in Bangladesh number around 13.13 million, accounting for roughly 7.95% of the population.

North East Integration Rally 2026 Engages Students in Malda with Focus on Environment and Cultural Unity

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MALDA

The North East Integration Rally 2026 in Malda unfolded as a lively, student-centric programme, with inter-



Fake friends make you realize how lucky you are to have true friends.

active sessions and informal exchanges turning the event into a space for dialogue, curiosity, and awareness. Students of Tarbiyah Public School took an active role in discussions, engaging freely with organisers and guests in a relaxed setting. The atmosphere remained open and participatory throughout, moving beyond formal speeches to

genuine interaction. A community lunch later brought students, teachers, and visitors together, encouraging conversations outside the structured programme. The school's principal, along with a large number of students, remained present for the duration of the event. During interactions, students showed strong interest in environmental issues and assured

organisers that they would create and share videos on environmental awareness after the school reopens. Biswadeep Gupta and several others attended the programme, which aimed to promote cultural integration while motivating young participants to think critically about social and environmental responsibilities.

Meghalaya: A Soldier's Walk Through Clouds, Culture, and Courage



COL. (DR.) ASHWANI KUMAR, M-IN-D, VSM (RETD.)



A soldier learns early that some landscapes must be understood before they can be admired. Meghalaya is one such land. I encountered these hills not as a tourist, but in uniform trained to read terrain, observe weather, and rely on people whose lives are shaped as much by geography as by tradition. Here, clouds are not mere scenery but indicators, rain is not romance but reality, and the ground itself demands discipline. Over time, as duty turned into familiarity, the land revealed its deeper character, a place where natural beauty, resilient communities, and quiet patriotism coexist in rare harmony. Meghalaya does not announce itself, it teaches, patiently and profoundly, through its people, its culture, and its enduring bond with the nation.

A Plateau That Commands Without Provocation.

From a strategic perspective, Meghalaya occupies a critical position in India's eastern theatre. The Meghalaya Plateau rises sharply from the plains of Assam and Bangladesh, forming a natural elevated bastion. In military geography, height is not about domination it is about awareness. The southern escarpments provide commanding views and natural observation depth, offering strategic stability without aggressive posture.

For a soldier, this terrain teaches discipline. Movement is deliberate, logistics are demanding, and visibility is often limited by cloud, fog, and relentless rain. Weather here is not a background condition it is an active tactical factor. Heavy rainfall tests endurance, patience, and planning. The land itself becomes an instructor, allowing no shortcuts and no complacency.

Dense forests, broken ground, and extensive limestone cave systems such as Krem Chympe create a complex, three-dimensional environment. Navigation relies not merely on instruments but on instinct, experience, and most importantly local knowledge. Here, technology



assists, but trust sustains.

The People Who Know the Land.
The greatest strength of Meghalaya does not lie in its elevation alone, but in its people the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo communities whose lives are inseparable from the land they inhabit. Their social systems, particularly the matrilineal tradition, village councils (Dorbar Shnong), and the preservation of sacred groves, represent governance models rooted in consensus, continuity, and environmental balance.

In conversations with villagers elders, guides, farmers, shopkeepers, and youth it becomes evident that patriotism here is not expressed in slogans. It is lived quietly. People understand terrain better than any satellite image and weather better than any forecast. This deep-rooted awareness has long supported stability in the region.

Over decades, the Armed Forces have learned that security in Meghalaya is sustained not through force alone, but through partnership. Nation-building here is cooperative, patient, and enduring.

The Armed Forces and the Hills.

For the Indian Armed Forces, Meghalaya is both responsibility and classroom. Soldiers deployed here learn cultural sensitivity, restraint, and environmental respect. Border management along the Bangladesh frontier is less about confrontation and more about vigilance, coordination, and confidence-building.

Villages often serve as the first layer of awareness. Soldiers, in turn, act as protectors and facilitators supporting disaster response during floods and landslides, aiding infrastructure development in remote areas, conducting medical outreach, and helping improve connectivity. This civil-military harmony remains one of the Northeast's most understated strategic advantages.

Significantly, many young men and women from Meghalaya now serve in uniform across the Armed Forces and paramilitary units. They carry with them the resilience of the hills, an innate understanding of difficult terrain, and a discipline shaped by community life. Their service is a natural extension of their upbringing.

Water, Height, and the Rhythm of Life.
Meghalaya's scenic grandeur is not ornamental it is structural to life itself. Waterfalls such as Nohkalikai, Wei Sawdong, Dainthlen, and Krang Suri are not seasonal spectacles

alone; they are lifelines that sustain agriculture, settlements, and culture. Rivers carve paths through deep gorges, defining movement and habitation.

Sunrise points like Nongjrong offer sweeping views of cloud seas stretching to the horizon. For a soldier accustomed to observation posts, these heights provide not only visual dominance but perspective reminding one how small individual concerns appear against the scale of nature.

ty-led, environmentally conscious, and culturally respectful.

Destinations such as Dawki's crystal-clear waters, Mawlynnong's clean villages, Laitlum Canyons, Nongjrong's heights, and the West Khasi Hills offer experiences that encourage reflection rather than consumption. Homestays, guided treks, cave exploration, cultural immersion, and spiritual retreats provide sustainable avenues for economic growth.

For a nation increasingly urban and hurried, Meghalaya offers something rare stillness, balance, and perspective.

A Soldier's Reflection and the Larger National Narrative.

From a soldier's point of view, Meghalaya offers a lasting lesson, strength does not always announce itself. Sometimes it stands quietly rooted deep in hills, forests, and communities holding the line with dignity and patience.

The reflections in this article arise from personal visits and professional exposure across India's frontier regions. The intent is not romanticisation, but honest documentation of terrain that trains endurance, of people whose patriotism is lived rather than proclaimed, and of a culture that reinforces national unity through balance and restraint.

In this broader narrative of integration and understanding, initiatives such as the North East India Rally (NEIR) organised under the banner of KRC Times acquire significance.



The land encourages humility.

Living Heritage, Not Preserved Relics

Perhaps nowhere is Meghalaya's philosophy better expressed than in the Living Root Bridges of Nongriat. These structures are not built they are grown, shaped patiently over generations without harming nature. For anyone trained in logistics and engineering, they represent long-term thinking rarely seen in modern planning.

Cultural festivals such as Nongkrem, Wangala, and Behdeinkhlam blend faith, agriculture, and community into collective resilience. Music traditional rhythms alongside contemporary rock and blues flows naturally through the hills, making Meghalaya a cultural highland where tradition and modernity coexist without friction.

This is a society that evolves without abandoning its roots.

Tourism: Opportunity with Responsibility.

As Meghalaya becomes increasingly visible on the national and global tourism map, the challenge lies in balance. The future of tourism here cannot be extractive. It must be communi-

Such efforts help bridge perception gaps between the Northeast and the rest of the country by highlighting shared histories, collective responsibilities, and regional strengths. They reaffirm a simple truth: regions like Meghalaya are not margins of the map, but enduring pillars of the Indian Union.

To conclude, the Quiet pillars of the nation

Meghalaya stands as a reminder that nations are not held together by noise alone. They endure because of lands that teach patience, people who value harmony, and institutions that serve without spectacle.

In its clouds and waterfalls, in its villages and uniforms, Meghalaya continues to build India quietly, faithfully, and with remarkable grace.

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 Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.
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11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
 Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley to be discussed by stakeholders.
 Includes: KCCs, and D'governance and reform for better governance. Local Government and private sector synergy. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate change will influence on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competitive and certification. 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 Experts, Webinars, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Webinars: Journalism, Marketing, Design & Content Creation, Sports, Games, Analytics, Webinars.

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Barak Festival 2025



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BARAK FESTIVAL 2025
 PAINTING CARNIVAL
 NE CULTURAL FEST
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 BOOK CLUB | AWARDS & BOOK
 RAJYOG | RECORDS

Contact:
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info@krcfoundation.org

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

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

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10-12 JAN
E-Sports
 Full Blown! Don't miss! 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.



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

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10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #NoOneLeftBehind Campaign | Book Bank | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

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

Painting Carnival
 Water Colour and Oil and Saw Paper Campaign



Watch Out! Film Festival
www.krcfoundation.org



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