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PERSPECTIVE

90% of people will fake laugh when they don't understand what someone said to them.

HOLIDAY NOTICE

KRC TIMES will remain closed on 14th January 2026 on account of Makar Sankranti. Regular work will resume on 15th January 2026.

— Editor

Assam Police undergoes major reshuffle; IPS and APS officers transferred to key postings

GUWAHATI

The Assam government on January 13 announced a major reshuffle in the state police administration, transferring and posting several IPS and APS officers across key field and battalion-level positions. The orders, issued by the Home and Political Department "in the interest of public service," were signed by Commissioner and Secretary Biswajit Pegu.

Under the notification, IPS officer Nishant Saurabh (RR-2020), Additional Superintendent of Police (Security) to the Chief Minister, Assam, has been allowed to hold charge in the rank of SSP/Commandant/DCP/AIGP and posted as Deputy Commissioner of Police (Border), Guwahati Police Commissionerate, while remaining attached to the Chief Minister's security.

IPS officer Anchal Chauhan (RR-2020), Additional Superintendent of Police (Law), Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, Assam, has been transferred and posted as Commandant of the 28th Assam Police Battalion at Howly in Barpeta district. IPS officer Yangchen Doma Bhutia (RR-2020), Additional Superintendent of Police (HQ), Nagaon, has been posted as Assistant Inspector General of Police (AP), Assam, with additional charge of Assistant Inspector General of Police (Sports), Assam, both based in Ulubari, Guwahati.

WHO SAID WHAT

"In Operation Sindoor, China supported Pakistan. Our brave soldiers were martyred in Galwan. China is sitting there having encroached in Ladakh. It is settling villages in Arunachal. And here, hugs are being exchanged,"

Supriya Shrinete
Congress leader

Army Chief: Manipur stable, Northeast shielded from Myanmar spillover



NEW DELHI

General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), said on Tuesday that the security situation in Manipur and the broader Northeast improved markedly in 2025 due to neutral, transparent, and decisive actions by security forces, complemented by proactive government initiatives.

Speaking at the Indian Army's annual press conference ahead of the 78th

Army Day, Gen. Dwivedi highlighted measures taken to shield the northeastern region from the turbulence in neighbouring Myanmar. "In response to turbulence in Myanmar, a comprehensive multi-agency security grid comprising the Assam Rifles, Army, and the Ministry of Home Affairs is working to insulate the Northeast from spillover effects," he said.

The Army Chief noted that several developments contributed to stability in

Manipur last year, including the peaceful conduct of the Durand Cup football tournament, the resumption of cultural festivals, and the renewal of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki insurgent groups in September 2025. "These have been key markers of stability," he added.

He further observed that the successful completion of phase two elections in Myanmar opens the door for stronger and more effective India-Myanmar engagement, enhancing cross-border coordination on security and development matters. Gen. Dwivedi also stated that the northern and northwestern borders remain stable and under firm control, while urging continued vigilance. Turning to Jammu and Kashmir, he noted a positive shift in 2025, with the "theme of terrorism to tourism gradually taking shape." Security forces eliminated 31 terrorists last year, 65% of whom were of Pakistani origin, including those involved in the Pahalgam terror attack.

The Army Chief's remarks underscore ongoing efforts to maintain security, foster regional stability, and strengthen bilateral cooperation with Myanmar, while highlighting tangible improvements in the internal situation of the Northeast and other sensitive regions.

COCOMI, IDPs Raise Resettlement and Security Concerns with Manipur Governor

IMPHAL

Representatives of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) met Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Lok Bhavan here on Monday to seek urgent attention to resettlement, rehabilitation and security concerns arising from the prolonged unrest in the state.

During the meeting, the delegation highlighted the difficulties faced by thousands of displaced families, particularly uncertainties over resettlement, rehabilitation and personal safety. They also raised broader issues linked to the prevailing situation in areas along the Valley-Hill district interface, stressing the need for coordinated administrative action and strengthened security measures.

Governor Bhalla listened to the concerns raised by the delegation and said the state administration has already initiated



steps towards the resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced families. He reiterated the government's commitment to ensuring a safe, phased and dignified return of IDPs to their respective areas, keeping ground realities in view.

The Governor also said sustained efforts are being made to restore normalcy in the state, address humanitarian needs and maintain peace and security in sensitive regions.

Chief Secretary and the Commissioner (Home) were present at the meeting, underscoring the administration's continued engagement with stakeholders on the evolving situation in Manipur.

NEIR to Take Part in Parakram Diwas Observance at Moirang



MOIRANG

Moirang will mark the 129th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with a major cultural programme on January 23, as the North East Integration Rally 2026 joins the Parakram Diwas observance at the historic I.N.A. Auditorium.

The programme is being organised by the North East Zonal Cultural Centre under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, with the I.N.A. War Museum cum Library, Moirang, serving as co-organiser. The event brings together institutions and initiatives closely linked to Netaji's legacy, with NEIR 2026 participating as a supporting partner.

A 10-vehicle convoy of the NE Integration Rally will arrive in Moirang from Imphal to take part in the programme, symbolising Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's enduring connection with the region and the ideals of national unity. Col. Shanti Singh (Retd.), member of the NEIR organising committee, will represent the rally and address the gathering.

The event is scheduled to begin at 9 am and will feature floral tributes to Netaji, followed by addresses from invited dignitaries. The Chief Guest is expected to be the Hon'ble Governor of Manipur and Nagaland and Chairman of NEZCC, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, IAS (Retd.), with consent awaited. The programme will be presided over by Moirang MLA Thongam Shanti Singh, Chairman of the I.N.A. Martyrs' Memorial Complex. Senior officials from the Manipur Art and Culture Department will also attend.

A series of cultural performances depicting the life, ideals, and patriotism of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose will form the core of the programme. These include traditional Pung, Thang-ta martial art, and Jagoi dance performances by local cultural groups from Moirang.

Organisers said the participation of NEIR 2026 adds a wider regional dimension to the Parakram Diwas observance, linking Moirang's historic role in India's freedom struggle with a contemporary movement aimed at integration and collective remembrance. Students, academicians, cultural practitioners, and media representatives are expected to attend the programme, which will conclude with an interaction session.

Assam to seek Centre's action to protect Hindus in Bangladesh: CM Sarma



SRIBHUMI

Amid rising unrest in neighbouring Bangladesh, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday expressed deep concern over a spate of violent attacks targeting the country's Hindu minority, and said both the Centre and the state are closely monitoring the situation to prevent any spillover into Assam.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of a seed capital distribution programme in Sribhumi district, which shares a long international boundary with Bangladesh, Sarma described the safety of Hindus across the border as a matter of "moral concern" for

India. "It is deeply worrying that the Hindu community is facing frequent attacks in Bangladesh. It is our moral responsibility to stand with the minority population there and ensure they are not subjected to violence or intimidation. The Central government has taken cognisance of the situation, and Assam has also been put on high alert," the Chief Minister said.

Acknowledging that developments across the border are already affecting Assam, particularly districts adjoining Bangladesh, Sarma said security measures had been intensified in sensitive border areas to prevent any fallout within the state.

He added that the Assam government would formally urge the Union government to take appropriate diplomatic and administrative steps to ensure the safety and security of the Hindu community in Bangladesh. "Foreign affairs are handled by the Central government, but we can and will request that the safety of Hindu citizens in Bangladesh be prioritised. The recent incidents are highly condemnable and cannot be ignored," Sarma said.

The Chief Minister also warned against viewing the situation in Bangladesh in isolation, stressing the need for constant vigilance as reports of mob violence and targeted attacks against minority communities appear to be increasing. "At this moment, we must remain cautious and continuously track developments across the border. At the same time, it is important to extend moral support and reassurance to the Hindu society in Bangladesh," he added.

According to Bangladesh's 2022 census, Hindus number approximately 13.13 million, accounting for nearly eight per cent of the country's population.

The Assam government's move underscores growing concerns about regional stability and cross-border humanitarian issues, particularly in areas bordering Bangladesh.

Governor Bhalla spotlights Manipur's growth, stability, and potential at 2026 North-East Seminar

IMPHAL

Discussions on Manipur's future, resilience, and development took centre stage at the 2026 North-East Seminar held at the City Convention Centre in Imphal on January 13. The seminar, themed "Resurgent Manipur: Framework for Stability & Sustained Growth," brought together experts, security officials, and students to explore strategies for lasting peace and prosperity in the state.

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla presided over the event, highlighting the state's rich cultural heritage, strategic location, and the combined efforts of government, security forces, and civil society in promoting stability. He emphasised that reconciliation, social cohesion, robust governance, and strengthened border management are critical to sustaining growth in Manipur.

Governor Bhalla also underscored the state's economic potential in agriculture, horticulture, handloom, handicrafts,



eco-tourism, and sports. He lauded the entrepreneurial spirit of the people and the international achievements of Manipuri athletes, calling for greater investment in education, skill development, connectivity, and youth empowerment to unlock

Manipur's full potential.

The seminar featured three plenary sessions. The first, "Manipur at Crossroads," chaired by Lt Gen CA Krishnan, examined the state's security challenges, governance complexities, and the impact of regional geopolitical dynamics.

Anthropologist Rami N. Desai, Senior Fellow at the India Foundation, presented "External Dynamics as a Catalyst for Internal Turmoil in Manipur," analysing the effects of cross-border influences, illegal immigration, narcotics networks, and demographic pressures on internal stability.

The event saw participation from Security Advisor Kuldip Singh, DG Assam Rifles Vikas Lakhera, IGAR (South) Maj. Gen. Ravroop Singh, Vice-Chancellor of Manipur University Prof. N. Lokendra Singh, senior Assam Rifles officers, and students, who engaged in discussions on the pathways for development, peace, and long-term resilience in the state.

NEZCC

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Greenland, Genghis Khan and the return of might

“We will do something with Greenland—either the nice way or the difficult way.”

You have to hand it to Donald Trump: he doesn't beat about the bush. No pun intended. There is no ambiguity, no diplomatic lacework, no UN-friendly euphemism. The world and its uncle have been alerted well in advance about the next flashpoint. This time, there will be no late-night 'abduction'. No tinpot to run away with the silver spoon. It will all be done in broad daylight, helpfully. Trump does not appreciate the idea of having China and Russia as neighbours. So he will simply annex Greenland—preferably without bullets. Mr Trump, after all, is anti-war.

Don't forget how, with both Zelenskyy and Putin, he preferred the repertoire of emotional manipulation to 'bombing for peace', like his predecessors. Only scolding, cajoling, threatening to dump, showing red eyes, shaking hands. Gaza was more complicated. But anyone can see all he wants, really, is to wage peace, build a few Trump Towers, and walk into a Levantine beach sunset clutching a Nobel Prize and a Piña Colada. Beijing, Moscow did not sign on to the script. Nor Tehran. Their bad.

When Genghis Khan went on his conquests, flattening gumbads across Eurasia, there was no Monroe doctrine. He was not "creating strategic depth" or "securing trade corridors"—those phrases would come centuries later to justify similar behaviour, in better English. Like the chariot-riding Yamnaya four thousand years before him, the gentle Khan was just extending his DDA flat balcony across the Steppe to create some living room for his horses.

There were no Brookings think-tankers dissecting his invasions, no white papers papery over the extermination of those who stood in the way: men, women, children, blades of grass. Oil had not yet been discovered, but trade routes existed to be looted, then controlled, then weaponised.

Those centuries, which in our innocent hindsight we call medieval, did not speak the language of geopolitics. Revisionist historians indeed accuse Genghis and his progeny of having invented modern diplomacy, but even they agree that Pax Mongoliana, as a rules-based order, was entirely one-sided. No United Nations to bother with, not even a wimpish, dysfunctional one. No Geneva Convention to invoke or violate. No lip service to norms of civil or military conduct. It was brutally simple: might is right, so please get out of the way.

Some would say we are back to basics. The past is rehearsing itself for a comeback tour. Resource mobilisation—who gets what, from where, in which currency—is once again a koshier excuse for brute force. Land, sea routes, oil, the Arctic, rare earths, silver, uranium—all up for grabs. Through contracts? Maybe, as long as they are of the sort American pioneers signed with the First Nations.

Beijing must not try this. It cannot have its Belt and Road running up all the way up to Caracas! With a pit-stop in Tehran at that. Venezuelan oil, it can forget. Iranian? Up next. How about Taiwan? Xi must not go tilting at windmill exports. What does Xi think about this? We don't know, he doesn't speak much. But it's the Gunfight at the Not OK Corral, and he may spring from the shadows like a shaolin monk with a rare-earth magnetic sword. Japan and India would do well to relearn their ninjutsus and payattus. It's a free-for-all out there.

If Greenland is sentimental about sovereignty, culture or identity, it can take a walk in the snow. Denmark may wax nostalgic about the boat that carried Danes to icy Greenland 500 years ago, but as Italy's Giorgia Meloni put it with clinical candour: "We have to be merciless." Anyway, as a wise old prospector said, recalling the tone of early and late conquistadors, right up to the Right Honourable Arthur Balfour on Palestine: "There are only some Eskimos there."

A variation of that could be used for Bengal, except for the inconvenient fact that there are too many Bengalis. A 'process' is setting that right. If identity politics looms as a problem, identity cards can be a cure. Mamata Banerjee may be out on a long march to defend Bengal's right to recalibration—not even letting poor Enforcement Directorate to run off with the Purloined Letter. Bengali maachh does come with a lot of thorns!

But forget all that noise, it's basically a miniature version of the global war over resources that's playing out there. What magic would a 'double-engine P C Sorcar' pull off if installed in Writers' Building? Suwendu Adhikari, Delhi's local Dada in Kolkata, once outlined his vision to this writer. Eyes rolled over in mishty delight as he went over a full Bijoli Grill menu of "development"—sea routes, ports, airports, coal, iron ore, china clay, silica sand, what not! Bengal is political rare earth. They want exclusive rights. Only the hilsa can migrate freely.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“It does not matter how slowly you go, as long as you do not stop.”

—Confucius

CRITICAL TIME FOR CONGRESS IN 2026



DR SATWANT SINGH RISSAM

The Congress party faces significant political challenges in 2026, as it struggles to transform its gains from the 2024 and 2025 elections into a revival plan. After performing better than expected in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and some state elections, the party now confronts a tough landscape dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and powerful regional players. Key state assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry, combined with crucial Rajya Sabha vacancies in 2026, will put immense pressure on Congress. A major turning point is the party's planned "MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan" (Save MGNREGA Campaign), protesting the BJP's Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G Bill), which replaces the UPA-era Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Without bold reforms, Congress risks further decline in a polarized political environment. At the national level, Congress faces persistent leadership uncertainties and organizational weaknesses that erode public trust. For instance, questions still linger about Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi's roles and the high command's ability to project a united, decisive front against Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Many voters and analysts doubt whether Congress can offer a credible alternative government in 2029, given its history of internal factional-

ism. Additionally, the party's agenda remains unclear, focusing more on criticizing BJP policies-like the MGNREGA name change. Instead of bringing more youth leaders on top positions in the party, Congress often resorts to mere anti-BJP rhetoric.

Moreover, years of electoral setbacks have hollowed out Congress's grassroots machinery. Weak booth-level cadres in key states mean the party would again struggle to convert anti-incumbency sentiment into actual votes and seats. In 2024, it managed a vote share increase partly through alliances within the INDIA bloc, but sustaining this requires massive investment in young local leadership, membership drives, and digital outreach. Without refreshing its organizational base, recent successes could prove momentary, leaving Congress vulnerable to the BJP's superior election machinery and resource mobilization. Building cadre depth requires cultural change; empowering state units and holding veteran leaders accountable could help rebuild worker-level loyalty within the party.

Alliance dynamics within the INDIA bloc present another major dilemma because of mistrust and competing ambitions. Regional parties like Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and others fear that a resurgent Congress will encroach on their voter bases. As a result, negotiations over seat-sharing for polls often turn controversial, with allies demanding unequal considerations. The BJP exploits these

cracks by branding Congress a "parasite" that weakens opposition unity, encouraging regional leaders to go solo or realign. For example, in Bihar's recent elections, Nitish Kumar highlighted how fragile these partnerships are.

The INDIA coalition members disagree on many issues and small details. Creating a national program is tough because of different opinions among alliance partners, which is even visible in J&K politics. This makes it hard to reach an agreement. In states like West Bengal and Kerala, Congress faces competition from groups like the TMC and the Left, who also fight against the BJP. This creates a problem: working together nationally against Modi means making many compromises that weaken Congress's unique identity. To move forward, the Congress party needs to focus on practical talks on issues that affect the whole country. State elections in 2026 will intensify this, testing Congress's survival instincts rather than focusing only on total victory prospects.

In Assam and Puducherry, the BJP-led NDA holds strong advantages, backed by welfare schemes and Hindu vote consolidation.

MGNREGA protests can not impact the BJP if the campaign is not made strategic. In West Bengal, the party faces TMC's machinery on one side and BJP's rising Hindutva wave on the other, forcing tough choices on targeting Mamata or Narendra Modi. Tamil Nadu's DMK and Kerala's contest between Left and Congress allies complicates matters further in Southern

India. These polls are existential battles for Congress, where failure could signal irrelevance, prompting defections and ally desertions. Yet, opportunities exist amid widespread discontent over economic slowdowns and governance lapses that could boost opposition turnout if Congress invests in targeting swing voters through social media and door-to-door canvassing tied to the campaign.

The Rajya Sabha elections present a key moment, with about 75 seats becoming vacant in 2026. These indirect elections might change how

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

“What Mamata Banerjee has done during the ED raids is very shameful... Not only has Mamata Banerjee committed a crime, but the police and administrative officers who accompanied her are also equally responsible. If she claims she went there as a party leader and not the CM, then why did all the officers accompany her? Everyone should be chargesheeted,”

Dilip Ghosh
BJP leader



the Congress party operates in the upper house, especially when it comes to passing new laws and making changes. If Congress performs badly, its influence in the upper house will likely decrease. On the other hand, the party needs to carefully shape its message to show it supports secularism, social justice, and national pride.

The idea that Congress is "anti-Hindu" still lingers, which could push away upper castes and undecided voters. Instead of just criticizing Modi, the party should focus on positive ideas like Nyay Patra 2.0, which aims to create jobs and support young people. In short, 2026 is a time for Congress to completely refresh itself: it needs clear leadership, a new way of working, strong partnerships, and a clear set of ideas. If Congress gets this right, it could become a real rival to Modi by 2029 and once again be a major player in India's lively democracy.



Assam CM Sarma distributes appointment letters to 296 candidates from Tea Tribes and Adivasi communities

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday distributed appointment letters to 296 candidates belonging to the Tea Tribes and Adivasi communities, selected for reserved posts through the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE), at a ceremony held at the GMCH Auditorium in Guwahati.

The newly appointed candidates have been inducted into various departments of the Assam Government. Of the total appointees, 130 candidates have been recruited to Grade-IV posts, while 166 candidates have been appointed to Grade-III posts. With these appointments, the total number of government jobs provided by the present State Government has reached 1,56,679.

It may be recalled that apart from today's distribution of appointment letters through ADRE, the State Government had earlier appointed candidates from the Tea Tribes and Adivasi communities to teacher posts on November 12, to various posts under the Assam Police and other directorates of the Home Department on December 8 and to technical and non-technical posts in the Health



Department on December 24, in 2025.

Addressing the gathering, CM Sarma stated that Assam has emerged as a pioneer in the country by successfully implementing the concept of a common examination to fill vacancies across multiple government departments.

He said that despite the many challenges involved in conducting examinations without irregularities and issuing appointment letters without legal hurdles, the entire process was completed with full transparency.

The Chief Minister noted that in recognition of the 200-year contribution of the tea community to Assam's tea industry, the State Government decided last year to introduce a three per cent reservation for eligible youth from the Adivasi and Tea communities in all Grade-III and Grade-IV State Government posts.

He stated that, notwithstanding initial apprehensions, the government has successfully implemented this policy. CM Sarma further recalled that during the last Assembly election campaign, the government had committed to providing one lakh government jobs, a target which has since been exceeded with 1,56,679 appointments to date.

He disclosed that under the three per cent reservation quota, nearly 1,000 candidates from the Adivasi and Tea communities have been appointed so far this year. Emphasising that such a large number of appointments would not have been possible without the reservation policy, the Chief Minister described this mass recruitment as a phenomenon capable of triggering far-reaching social change.

He said that the government had organised a separate ceremony for these appointments to underline this message.

derline this message.

The Chief Minister also announced that the three per cent reservation for the Adivasi and Tea communities will be extended beyond Grade-III and Grade-IV posts to include Grade-I and Grade-II positions in the State Government. This, he said, would pave the way for members of the community to serve in senior roles such as Magistrates, Police Officers, and College and University Professors, thereby ushering in a major socio-economic transformation.

He added that this policy would also encourage a competitive academic environment among students from tea garden areas.

Highlighting other welfare initiatives, Sarma said that 30 MBBS seats in Assam's medical colleges were already reserved for tea tribe students. Recently, the government has announced one additional reserved seat for the community in each medical college, adding 14 more seats.

He further informed that 44 hostels are being constructed across the State for Tea Tribe and Adivasi students, while financial assistance is being extended to youth through the Shahid Dayal Das Panika Self-Employment Scheme.

He also referred to the historic decision taken in the recent session of the Assam Legislative Assembly to grant land rights to residents of tea garden "lines".

Addressing the newly appointed candidates, the Chief Minister urged them to remain rooted in their identity and take pride in their community and family background.

He called upon them to serve the people of tea garden areas with dedication and compassion and to remain committed to their families and society throughout their service.

He also exhorted them to set new standards of work culture by delivering quality public service, especially to the poor and vulnerable, while remaining sensitive to the hardships faced by the people.

The programme was attended by the Minister for Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare etc. Rupesh Gowala; Members of Parliament Rameswar Teli and Kamakhya Prasad Tasa; MLAs Sanjay Kishan and Rupjyoti Kurmi; former APSC Member Bhagirath Karan; Additional Chief Secretary J. B. Ekka; along with representatives of various social organisations and other dignitaries.

Centre waives Rs 5.23 crore payment for Assam Rifles infrastructure vacated in Mizoram

AIZAWL

The Centre has waived the Rs 5.23 crore that the Mizoram government was required to pay as depreciated cost for buildings and infrastructure vacated by the Assam Rifles in Aizawl, Chief Minister Lalduthoma said on Tuesday.

The chief minister said he had written to Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai in May last year, seeking a waiver of the amount stipulated under the agreement for the relocation of Assam Rifles bases from the state capital. Depreciated cost refers to the reduced value of assets after accounting for wear and tear over time.

In a social media post, Lalduthoma said the Union minister, in his response, informed him that the Mizoram government would not be required to pay the depreciated cost. He welcomed the decision, describing it as a positive development for the state and an acceptance of Mizoram's request by the Centre. Under the Memorandum of Agreement signed between the Mizoram government and the Assam Rifles, the state was initially required to pay Rs 5.23 crore for the buildings and other infrastructure vacated by the paramilitary force in Aizawl.

The relocation of Assam Rifles bases was formally marked in March last year when Union Home Minister Amit Shah attended a function in Aizawl. The bases were shifted to a designated camp at Zokhawsang, about 15 km east of the state capital. Officials said the relocation was carried out in phases beginning in April 2025.

The demand for shifting the Assam Rifles installations from Aizawl had arisen in view of the city's difficult terrain and increasing congestion. The force previously maintained major bases at Zodin Square (Lammual) and Khatla, besides a DIG residence at Tuikhuahlang, a commandant's bungalow and a church at Tuikual near Zodin, along with associated land parcels and a war memorial.

Tipra Motha MLA urges inclusion of Kokborok Day in 48th Kokborok Sal-2026 celebrations

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha MLA Ranjit Debbarma has urged Tripura Higher Education Minister Kishore Barman to intervene and ensure that January 19, the official recognised Kokborok Day, is included in the proposed schedule of the 48th Kokborok Sal-2026 celebrations.

In a letter to the minister, Debbarma said the state government has planned to observe Kokborok Sal-2026 from January 9 to January 17, excluding January 19, which is traditionally and officially marked every year as Kokborok Day. The omission, he said, has caused widespread dissatisfaction among Kokborok-speaking tribal communities across the state.

Expressing strong objection, the Tipra Motha legislator said the exclusion of January 19 has deeply hurt the sentiments of indigenous people. "Every year Kokborok Day is observed on January 19. It is surprising and unacceptable that the most historically significant day has been ignored this

year," Debbarma said.

Questioning the rationale behind the proposed schedule, he asked on what basis a seven-day programme was finalised while leaving out the actual Kokborok Day. He stressed that Kokborok is not merely a language but a core marker of identity, emotion and cultural heritage for Tripura's indigenous population.

Warning that the continued exclusion of Kokborok Day could further deepen grievances among tribal communities, Debbarma demanded that January 19 be included in the official programme. He said such a move would demonstrate respect for the Kokborok language and help address longstanding cultural concerns.

The MLA appealed to the Higher Education Minister to reconsider the decision and ensure the inclusion of Kokborok Day in the celebration schedule in the interest of cultural dignity and social harmony in Tripura.

Minority students' body seeks NRC-linked electoral rolls, urges EC intervention in Assam revision

GUWAHATI

The All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) has urged the Election Commission of India (EC) to ensure that the names of persons included in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) are reflected in the final voters' list in Assam.

The organisation also demanded that voters whose names were excluded from the NRC should not be removed from the electoral rolls until they have exhausted all legal remedies available to them.

In a memorandum submitted to the EC, AAMSU pointed out that Assam is the only state in the country where the NRC exercise was carried out. It argued that excluding NRC-included persons from the final electoral rolls would defeat the very purpose of the NRC process. The students' body noted that although the NRC was published in 2019, excluding 19,06,657 people, it has not been officially notified by the Registrar General of India and therefore does not have statutory validity.

The memorandum, signed by



AAMSU president Intiaz Hussain and general secretary Minnatul Islam, also flagged alleged anomalies and discrepancies in the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections. The organisation urged the EC to closely examine these issues to prevent the disenfranchisement of genuine voters.

AAMSU further alleged that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other ruling party leaders have made public statements regarding the deletion of names of people evicted from land, which the organisation said is not per-

missible under law. It also claimed that certain officials were preventing genuine applicants, particularly those affected by land evictions, from submitting Form 8, which is used for corrections and changes in electoral rolls, including change of residence.

The students' body appealed to the EC to restrain the Chief Minister and BJP leaders from influencing the Special Revision process through public statements or other actions. It also sought directions to election officials to stop rejecting bulk objections without giving individuals a proper hearing and without subjecting them

to harassment.

Calling for the free and fair conduct of the Special Revision, AAMSU asked the EC to issue clear and uniform instructions to all officials involved in the exercise, stressing that electoral integrity must be ensured while safeguarding the voting rights of eligible citizens.

According to official data, the Special Revision of Assam's draft electoral rolls has recorded a total electorate of 25,51,09,754, excluding doubtful voters. As part of the exercise, 10,56,291 names have been deleted due to deaths, change of residence and multiple registrations. The revision aims to produce an error-free electoral roll by enrolling eligible voters, correcting clerical errors, removing deceased voters, updating shifts in residence and eliminating duplicate entries.

Following the publication of the Integrated Draft Roll on December 27, the claims and objections process is currently underway. The final voters' list is scheduled to be published on February 10.

Manipur child rights panel seeks police help to enable minors to attend mother's last rites

IMPHAL

The Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MCPCR) has urged the authorities to take necessary steps to facilitate the participation of two minor children in the last rites and related death rituals of their mother, late Khaidem Ongbi Chaoba Devi.

In an order issued on Tuesday, the Commission said it had received a representation from the relatives of the deceased and the convenor of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) formed in connection with her alleged unnatural death. The plea sought official facilitation to ensure that the minor children are able to attend the funeral and associated religious ceremonies.

The last rites of Chaoba Devi are scheduled to be held on January 13 at her parental family's crematorium



at Iram Siphai under Wangoi Police Station, in accordance with customary religious practices.

Clarifying its position, the MCPCR said its direction is purely facilitative in nature and does not relate to custody issues or express any opinion on matters currently under investigation.

The Commission emphasised that attending the last rites and death-related rituals of a deceased parent is an inalienable right of the children.

Exercising powers under Section 13 of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, the MCPCR directed the concerned police authorities to make adequate security and facilitation arrangements to ensure that the minor children can safely attend and participate in the funeral, Asti Sanchay (Mangani Leihun) and Shradha (Lama Thouram) rituals without any obstruction.

Khaidem Ongbi Chaoba Devi was found dead on December 27 near her residence at Thiyam Leishangkong under Wangoi Police Station, a day after she was reported missing on the night of December 26. The incident triggered widespread suspicion among family members and locals, who allegedly damaged the house

and property of the deceased's husband, prompting police to use tear gas to control the situation.

So far, Manipur Police have arrested four suspects in connection with the case. The deceased's husband and mother-in-law have been remanded to judicial custody, while two other prime suspects - Moirangthem Dhanajit (28) of Langathel Bazar, currently staying at Nongpok Keithelmaibi Awang Leikai, and Kananbala Devi alias Dhaneshwori (41) of Yairipok Wangkhem in Thoubal district - have also been arrested.

Meanwhile, the Joint Action Committee and family members, who had initially declined to claim the body while demanding a thorough and impartial investigation, later decided to proceed with the last rites after the legal process in the case began.

Centre actively considering Tiprasa Accord implementation, says Pradyot Debbarma ahead of ADC polls

AGARTALA

Tipra Motha Party (TMP) founder Pradyot Kishore Debbarma on Monday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are actively considering the implementation of the Tiprasa Accord to safeguard the rights of Tripura's indigenous communities, even as opposition to the move persists within sections of the BJP's state leadership.

Addressing the media at Kamalpur in Dhalai district, Debbarma said the Centre appeared committed to honouring the accord, while "a few BJP leaders in Agartala seem opposed to its implementation." The Tiprasa Accord was signed in March 2024 between the TMP, the Centre and the Tripura government, with the stated objective of ensuring the overall development and protection of indigenous people.

Tripura has a sizeable indigenous population of nearly 15 lakh people belonging to more than 40 tribes and sub-tribes, out of a total population of around 40 lakh, making tribal rights a central political issue in the



state.

Expressing confidence ahead of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD) elections, scheduled for March, Debbarma said his party was well placed to secure a decisive victory. "We are 110 per cent sure of winning the ADC elec-

tions. I have been working continuously for the 'Tiprasa people for the past five years," he said.

Recalling the formation of the TTAACD under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in 1982, the TMP chief said then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had backed the

move despite resistance from sections of the Congress leadership in the state. "Indira Gandhi overruled the state leadership and ensured that Tripura's tribal areas were brought under the Sixth Schedule. The TTAACD was constituted on January 15, 1982," he said.

Clarifying his party's political position, Debbarma said the TMP was not opposed to any community. "We are not against anyone. Our only objective is to secure the rights of the Tiprasa people. I entered politics to protect the rights of future generations," he added. Responding to remarks by Chief Minister Manik Saha that the regional party should behave like a "junior brother" within the BJP-led alliance, Debbarma said there was no hierarchy in politics. "I do not have an elder brother, only an elder sister. In politics, there is no big brother or younger brother - everyone is equal," he said. The Chief Minister had made the comment during a party programme at Baijalbari in Khowai district on December 23, amid reported tensions between the BJP and TMP following alleged attacks on BJP workers.

With the ADC elections drawing closer, Debbarma's remarks highlight the growing political churn within the ruling alliance and have once again brought the future of the Tiprasa Accord and indigenous rights into sharp focus in Tripura.

Art Competition in Hailakandi to Promote NE Integration Rally

Art Competition
Promoting NorthEast Integration Rally

In Collaboration with: **Ankashree Fine Arts Institutions**

Supported by: **Rotary Club of Hailakandi**

North East Integration Rally 2026
Peace | Progress | Prosperity

Venue: Gurusthanam Play School, Mission Road, Hailakandi, Assam
Time: 3:00 pm Registration Time 2:30 pm
Date: 18 January 2026
Group: A Class V-VII Group B Class VIII to X
Theme: Global Warming
Contact No: 9401929722/8876714029

Entry Free

OUR CORRESPONDENT

HAILAKANDI: Hailakandi will host an art competition on January 18 aimed at promoting the North East Integration Rally 2026, with a focus on environmental awareness and youth participation.

The competition is being organised by RC Foundation in collaboration with AF Ankashree Fine Arts Institutions, with support from the Rotary Club of Hailakandi and the North East Integration Rally. The event will be held at Gurusthanam Play School on Mission Road, Hailakandi.

Open to school students, the competition has been divided into two categories. Group A will include students from Class V to

VII, while Group B will comprise students from Class VIII to X. The theme for the competition is Global Warming, encouraging participants to express their understanding of climate change through art.

Registration will begin at 2.30 pm, followed by the competition at 3 pm. Organisers said the event is intended to use creative expression as a way to spread the message of peace, progress, and prosperity, the core values of the North East Integration Rally 2026.

Participation in the competition is free of cost. Students, parents, and schools interested in taking part have been asked to contact the organisers at 9401929722 or 8876714029 for further details.

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Union Budget will be presented on Feb 1: Speaker



NEW DELHI

The Union Budget will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, which is a Sunday. Answering queries during a press conference today on Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said that the union budget will be presented at 11 am on February 1 in the House.

The budget session of Parliament will commence on January 28 with address by President Droupadi Murmu to the joint sitting of the two Houses.

The 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth, being hosted by Parliament of India will be the largest CSPOC in terms of participation.

Om Birla said that the conference will be held from January 14 to 16 will discuss shared parliamentary values, democratic governance and institutional cooperation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the conference on January 15 in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, Parliament House Complex. Speaker Om Birla is the Chairperson of this

Conference.

The Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth being hosted by India will have the largest participation, Birla said.

In a post on X later, he said the conference will be attended by 61 Speakers and Presiding Officers from Commonwealth countries and semi-autonomous parliaments, including the Presidents of the IPU and the CPA.

"In this regard, it will be the largest CSPOC conference in the history of the forum," he said.

He said that the objective of CSPOC is to uphold and strengthen impartiality in the parliaments of Commonwealth nations, and to empower parliamentary democracy and institutions. India has earlier successfully hosted this conference in 1971, 1986, and 2010.

"This conference will undoubtedly showcase India's technological progress and its commitment to global parliamentary cooperation on the world stage," he said.

He said that work related to the conference has been done online and paper has not been used.

He said an app has been developed to enable all aspects of conference coordination,

facilitation and information dissemination. A web-based event management system has been developed.

Answering queries, he said there will be no participation from Pakistan and Bangladesh does not have a Speaker at present with general elections scheduled to take place next month.

The Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth (CSPOC) was created in 1969 as an initiative of then Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, Lucien Lamoureaux.

Since its inception, Canada has provided CSPOC with a secretariat to support its activities.

CSPOC brings together Speakers and Presiding Officers of 53 national parliaments of sovereign states of the Commonwealth.

CSPOC is an independent group with no formal affiliation with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Commonwealth Secretariat or the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM). However, its membership is the same as that of CPA.

The conference aims to maintain, foster, and encourage impartiality and fairness on the part of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments.

It also seeks to promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms and develop parliamentary institutions.

CSPOC operates on a two-year cycle, holding a conference of the full membership every two years, usually early in January, and a meeting of the Standing Committee at the same time the intervening year.

"India is experiencing remarkable growth in Orange Economy": PM Modi

NEW DELHI

Noting that India's youth are at the forefront of nation-building with their innovative ideas, energy and purpose, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday that the country is experiencing remarkable growth in the Orange Economy, rooted in culture, content and creativity.

Addressing the concluding session of Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2026 here, he stated that the strength and capabilities of young Indians will shape India's strength, and their success will elevate the country to new heights. Congratulating participants of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, the Prime Minister underscored the critical role of youth leadership in achieving the vision of a developed India.

The Prime Minister emphasized that the period leading up to 2047, when India marks 100 years of independence, is a decisive phase for both the nation and its youth.

The Prime Minister noted that the event coincides with the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. "Remembering Swami Vivekananda, we celebrate National Youth Day every year on 12 January. Inspired by his ideals, 12 January has been chosen for the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue. The life of Swami Vivekananda is a great guiding light for all of us," PM Modi emphasised.

Expressing satisfaction over the rapid growth of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, PM Modi described it as a powerful platform enabling direct youth participation in shaping India's development agenda.

"The association of crores of young people with this initiative, more than 5 million registrations, over 3 million youths participating in the Viksit Bharat Challenge, and sharing their ideas for the nation's development, such large-scale engagement of youth power is unprecedented," he noted.

Appreciating the quality of inputs, the Prime Minister particularly lauded the thoughtful ideas presented on key themes such as Women-Led Development and Youth Participation in Democracy. The Prime Minister also underlined the creativity and innovative spirit of India's Gen Z and congratulated all young participants and members of the Mera Yuva Bharat organization for the successful conduct of the dialogue.



The Prime Minister recalled the ten year period before 2014, describing it as an era of policy paralysis, excessive red tape, and limited opportunities for youth. He alleged that young people then faced cumbersome procedures for jobs, exams, and starting businesses, with delays in decision-making and poor implementation of policies. He emphasized that what seems abnormal today was routine a decade ago, highlighting how governance reforms have since changed the experience of India's youth.

The Prime Minister cited the startup ecosystem as an example of change, noting that despite global growth in startup culture over decades, India had very limited focus on startups before 2014. "Until 2014, there were fewer than 500 registered startups in the country. In the absence of a startup culture, government intervention dominated every sector. Our youth talent, their capabilities, did not get the opportunity to fulfill their dreams," he remarked.

The Prime Minister emphasized his trust in the capabilities of India's youth, stating that this confidence led to a new development approach focused on empowering young innovators. He highlighted key reforms and initiatives such as Startup India, Digital India, Ease of Doing Business, and simplification of tax and compliance, which accelerated India's startup revolution by opening previously government-dominated sectors to entrepreneurship.

"Until five-six years ago, the responsibility of advancing the space sector rested solely with ISRO. We opened the space sector to private enterprise, created supporting frameworks and institutions."

He noted that opening it to private participation has led to the emergence of over 300 startups. He highlighted achievements by Skyroot Aerospace and Agnikul Cosmos as evidence of how youth-led innovation is transforming India into a global leader in emerging technologies.

He also noted major reforms in the defence sector. "Today, more than 1,000 defence startups are operating in India. One young person is building drones, another is developing anti-drone systems, someone is creating AI-powered cameras, while others are working in robotics," he said.

The Prime Minister highlighted the impact of the Digital India initiative in nurturing a new generation of creators and driving the growth of India's Orange Economy, centred on culture, content, and creativity. "India is witnessing unprecedented growth in the 'Orange Economy', that is, culture, content, and creativity. India is emerging as a major global hub in areas such as media, film, gaming, music, digital content, and VR-XR," he noted.

"The 'World Audio-Visual and Entertainment Summit' (WAVES) has become a major launch pad for young creators. In other words, no matter the sector, the doors of limitless opportunities are opening in India today," he added.

He urged youth to pursue their ideas boldly, assuring them of the government's continued support.

The Prime Minister stated that the reform agenda initiated over the last decade has accelerated, with youth at its core. He highlighted next-generation GST reforms and tax relief up to Rs 12

lakh as measures that simplify processes and increase savings for young professionals and entrepreneurs. Emphasizing the growing demand for energy driven by AI and advanced manufacturing, he noted that reforms in civil nuclear energy, the SHANTI Act, aim to ensure an assured power supply, generate large-scale employment, and create positive spillover effects across the economy.

The Prime Minister highlighted global workforce shortages and emphasized India's strategy to prepare its youth for international opportunities. "Our effort is to ensure that India's youth are prepared for the opportunities emerging across the world. Therefore, continuous reforms are being carried out in sectors related to skill development," he underlined.

He reiterated that after the new National Education Policy, regulations related to higher education are now being reformed. "Foreign universities are also opening their campuses in India. Recently, the PM SETU Programme was launched with investments worth thousands of crores of rupees. Under this, thousands of ITIs will be upgraded so that youth can be trained in line with the current and future needs of industry."

The Prime Minister stressed that self-confidence is essential for a country to be self-reliant and developed. Referring to Macaulay's colonial-era education policies, he noted that they instilled a sense of inferiority among Indians toward their own heritage, products, and capabilities. He called upon India's youth to resolve collectively to overcome this mindset.

"In ten years, it will mark 200 years since Macaulay's audacious policies, and therefore, every young person in the country must resolve to free India from this mentality."

The Prime Minister highlighted the importance of being open to global knowledge while valuing India's own heritage, quoting the Vedic phrase "Aano Bhadrah Kratavo Yantu Vishvatah", that is, let auspicious, beneficial, and excellent thoughts come to us from all directions. "You must learn from the best practices around the world, but never let the tendency to undervalue your own heritage and ideas dominate," he stated.

PM Modi cited Swami Vivekananda who embraced global ideas but challenged misconceptions about India, inspiring a vision for a better nation.

INTERNATIONAL

How NATO works at a time when Trump is threatening to seize Greenland

BRUSSELS

US President Donald Trump's repeated threats to seize control of Greenland are straining relations with its allies in NATO and have sparked a warning that doing so by force could spell the end of the world's biggest security alliance.

Tensions have routinely spiked among some of NATO's members over the decades, notably between neighbors Greece and Turkey. But it would set a dangerous precedent should its most powerful country, the United States, annex the territory of another ally.

"One way or the other, we're going to have Greenland," Trump reaffirmed on Sunday. The White House has not ruled out the use of military force. Trump said he wants to prevent Russia or China from taking over and that making a deal would be "easier."

Greenland is a semi-autonomous island that is part of the Danish realm. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that "if the United States chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, then everything stops... including our NATO."

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed by 12 nations in 1949 to counter the security threat posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. NATO's deterrence works through a strong American troop presence in Europe, with US nuclear weapons stationed there.

Its ranks have grown since the founding Washington Treaty was signed to 32 countries after Sweden joined in 2024, worried by an increasingly aggressive Russia. Indeed, NATO officially considers its biggest threats to be Russia and international terrorism.

NATO's doors are open to any European country that wants to join and can meet the requirements and obligations. Importantly, NATO takes its decisions by consensus, so every member has a veto. The Trump administration has vetoed Ukraine's application.

NATO is built on the principle that an attack on any one of its ranks must be considered an attack on them all — the collective security guarantee



enshrined in Article 5 of the treaty. The organization's credibility depends on adversaries believing that all 32 allies will make good on that pledge.

It's a political commitment and not a legal obligation that can be enforced by any court. The only time it has ever been activated was in 2001, to support the United States in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

Trump said last year that he is committed to the Article 5 pledge, but he has also fueled doubt about whether he would defend allies who don't spend enough on defense. However, his repeated threats against Greenland take things to a new level.

Article 5 would be moot in any US-Denmark fight as there would be no unanimity to activate it. Besides diplomacy, NATO has no obvious way of dealing with open conflict among its members. Senior US and Danish officials were due to hold talks on Wednesday.

Should things get worse, Denmark could trigger Article 4 of the treaty for

official consultations if it feels that its sovereignty or territorial integrity is threatened. Article 4 talks do not automatically lead to any action.

A US attack is almost certain to divide NATO. This happened when the United States led an attack on Iraq in 2003, with Britain and Spain backing while France and Germany led a group of others vehemently opposed.

The United States is NATO's most powerful member. In real terms, it spends much more on defense than any other ally and far outweighs its partners in terms of military muscle. Washington has traditionally driven the agenda but has stepped back under Trump.

NATO is weaker without US leadership, troops, equipment or other military assets. It's almost inconceivable that any ally would go to war with it, let alone hope to win.

Day-to-day work at the alliance's Brussels headquarters is led by former Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte. As NATO's top civilian official, he

chairs meetings of ambassadors in the North Atlantic Council most weeks. He chairs other "NACs" at ministerial level and summits of heads of state and government. Rutte runs NATO HQ, encourages consensus and speaks on behalf of all 32 members.

One of his main tasks is to ensure that the United States remains committed to NATO. As a result, he does not criticize Trump, and on Monday he sidestepped questions about Greenland and any NATO tensions over the island.

"All allies agree on the importance of the Arctic and Arctic security because we know that with sea lanes opening up there is a risk that the Russians and the Chinese will be more active," Rutte told reporters.

Asked whether NATO was in crisis over Greenland, Rutte said: "No, not at all."

NATO's military headquarters is based nearby in Mons, Belgium. It is always run by a top American officer. The current supreme allied commander, or SACEUR, is Air Force Lt. Gen.

NARA

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung met with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Tuesday for a summit in western Japan as the two leaders aim to improve the sometimes-strained relationship as Tokyo faces a deepening row with China.

The meeting could deliver a political win as Takaichi is seeking to shore up her power. A few months after taking office, she enjoys strong approval ratings but her party has a majority in only one of two houses of parliament. There's growing speculation that she may be planning a snap election in hopes of gaining more seats.

Summit will be held in a city known for deer and ancient architecture

Takaichi is hosting Lee in her hometown, Nara, an ancient capital known for its deer and centuries-old Buddhist temples.

On Wednesday, she will take Lee on a tour of Horyu Temple, which includes buildings from the late 7th or early 8th century. They're some of the world's oldest surviving wooden architecture and illustrate Japan's adoption of Buddhism via the Korean Peninsula. Lee will also meet with South Korean residents in Japan before returning home in the afternoon.

Japan's cultural, religious and political ties to the Korean Peninsula are ancient, but in modern times their relationship has been repeatedly disrupted by disputes stemming from Japan's brutal colonial rule of Korea from 1910-1945.

Takaichi was in Nara on Monday to prepare and posted on X: "I hope to further push forward Japan's relations with South Korea in the forward-looking way as we meet in the ancient capital of Nara with more than 1,300 years of history and longstanding cultural exchanges between Japan and the Korean Peninsula."

The Japanese prime minister faces intensifying trade and political tension with China



over a remark about Taiwan that angered Beijing days after she took office. Takaichi said that potential Chinese military action against Taiwan, the island democracy Beijing claims as its own, could justify Japanese intervention.

Trade, relations with China and alliances with the US are on the table

Tuesday's meeting will focus on trade and the challenges of China and North Korea, as well as efforts to deepen trust between the two countries.

Japan and South Korea, both key US allies, must also figure out how to deal with President Donald Trump's unpredictable diplomacy, and both countries are under US pressure to increase defense spending.

Lee was in Beijing last week for talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping as China steps up economic and political pressure against Japan and seeks to cozy up to Seoul. During the visit, the South Korean leader told reporters that relations with Japan are as important as those with China but that South Korea's ability to broker reconciliation between its neighbors is limited.

Lee, in an interview Monday with Japan's NHK television, noted his interest in gaining Japanese backing for South Korea's participation in the 12-member Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. He said that would involve South

Korea lifting a ban on imports from Fukushima and nearby Japanese prefectures affected by the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and may take time because of health concerns among South Koreans.

Lee also said his country wants to cooperate with Japan on security under a trilateral framework that includes the US, but "what's really important is the issue of deep mutual trust."

Leaders have set aside differences to cooperate on mutual challenges

Relations between Seoul and Tokyo have begun improving in recent years in the face of shared challenges such as growing China-US competition and North Korea's advancing nuclear program.

There were early concerns about Takaichi's ability to work with Lee, fed by her reputation as a security hawk and an assumption by some that the left-wing South Korean leader would tilt toward North Korea and China. But so far, both leaders have sought to set aside their differences.

While the two leaders are expected to avoid discussing their historical disputes, media reports say they may discuss possible humanitarian cooperation in the ongoing effort to recover remains from a former undersea mining site in western Japan where 180 workers, mostly Korean forced laborers, were killed in a 1942 accident.

NEIR 2026 Takes Shape as a Living Movement, Not Just a Rally



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OUR CORRESPONDENT

The ceremony (NEIR 2026) at Mystique Mayong felt less like a formal launch and more like the opening chapter of a long, unfolding conversation. North Eastern Integration Rally 2026, or NEIR 2026, was presented not as a one-time journey on wheels but as a year-long process of ideas, culture, and community engagement.



Organising committee member and advisor Kh. Gajendra Singh, advocate, set the tone early. NEIR 2026, he said,

is more than a rally. Over the next 360 days, it will evolve in 360 degrees. His words framed the initiative as something organic, capable of growth and reinvention. He described it as a noble initiative and a revolutionary thought, rooted in social responsibility rather than spectacle. Speaking on the vision of KRC Foundations, he stressed that the rally is meant to inspire participation, not just attendance. That idea was echoed by NEIR 2026 PRO Sanjeev Baishya, who called the rally a brilliant thought. For him, its strength lies in its clarity of purpose. It is ambitious, yes, but grounded in a simple belief that dialogue and cultural exchange still matter in a fractured time.

Senior journalist Nibir Deka pushed the conversation further by

placing NEIR 2026 firmly outside the political frame. This, he said, is a socio-cultural movement, sans politics. His intervention drew a clear line between power and people, arguing that integration works best when it grows from shared stories, music, and lived experiences rather than slogans.

Music, fittingly, became a language of its own during the programme. Songs by Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg were performed, drawing quiet attention to the cultural spine of the Northeast. The performances were not ornamental. They reminded the audience that integration has always been carried forward by art long before it became a talking point.

One of the more unexpected but compelling segments focused on HAM

Radio. A detailed roadmap was laid out, linking communication technology with disaster response, education, and community networking. It was a reminder that integration today also depends on how well regions can stay connected, especially in moments of crisis.

NEIR 2026 advisor Prof. Dr. Sukamal Deb spoke about the rally's deeper promise. According to him, the journey will help integrate diverse communities by creating spaces for interaction that are respectful and sustained. Integration, he suggested, is not about erasing differences but learning how to live with them intelligently.

KRC Foundations' Biswadeep Gupta brought the focus back to the road ahead. He assured that the month-long rally, flagged off on January 4 in Kolkata and set to conclude on February 4 in Guwahati, will not mark an end but a beginning. Activities and events, he said, will continue almost every week. With visible confidence, he added that the next 22 days of the rally would be a rocking phase, packed with engagement and outreach.

Guwahati-based social media team member Gaurav Gautam (social media team is Visual Poets) also shared his perspective, highlighting how digital platforms can amplify the rally's message among younger audiences. His remarks pointed to a hybrid future where ground movements and online conversations feed into each other. Adding academic and cultural depth to the programme, Prof. Robin Gogoi of ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute praised the organisers and called NEIR 2026 a landmark rally. He spoke about several languishing arts and crafts of the region, urging renewed attention and institutional support. His reflections were not limited to words. He also performed songs, blending scholarship with performance in a way that captured the spirit of the evening.

By the time the ceremony concluded, NEIR 2026 had clearly positioned itself as something larger than a route map from Kolkata to Guwahati. What emerged instead was the outline of a living movement, one that plans to stay active, adaptive, and culturally rooted long after the rally vehicles reach their final destination.

NEIR 2026 in Tezpur: Rally Calls for Peace, Connection, a Shared Future for the Northeast



OUR CORRESPONDENT

TEZPUR

Tezpur became a pause point in a larger journey when the North Eastern Integration Rally 2026 unfolded its activities in the town, carrying with it an idea that goes beyond geography. The rally, anchored by KRC Foundations, is positioning itself not as a one time event but as a sustained movement aimed at connection, peace, and shared responsibility across the Northeast.

Addressing the gathering, NEIR 2026 advisor Prof. Dr. Sukamal Deb framed the rally's core philosophy in simple but expansive terms. The world, he said, is never too large if there is a genuine intention to remain connected. That intent, according to him,



noble initiative rooted in human connection. For him, the essence of NEIR lies in reaching people where they are, listening to them, and building relationships that last beyond events and speeches. Reflecting on the journey of the rally so far, he said this was only the beginning of a larger revolutionary thought. A movement, in his words, that seeks to move forward together, not as fragmented groups but as one extended family.

Biswadeep Gupta,



founder and CEO of KRC Foundations, reinforced this collective spirit. He called upon people from all walks of life to become part of the rally as it travels through different corners of the Northeast. His message was direct. Participation is not limited to organisers or speakers. The rally draws strength from ordinary citizens who believe in unity, dialogue, and shared purpose. Adding a corporate perspective, Biswajit Saikia spoke about the untapped potential of the Northeast. He said the region deserves to be where it truly belongs, on par with the rest of the country in opportunity and growth.

There is no shortage of talent or resources, he noted. What is needed is coordinated effort, vision, and sustained engagement. According to him, initiatives like NEIR can act as catalysts by aligning social intent with economic possibility.

What emerged from the Tezpur programme was a consistent thread. The rally is not positioning itself as a solution provider with ready made answers. Instead, it is creating a platform where conversations about peace, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and regional identity can intersect. The emphasis on connection, whether between communities, regions, or ideas, runs through every speech and interaction.

As NEIR 2026 continues its journey across the Northeast, the Tezpur chapter stands as a reflection of its larger ambition. To remind people that progress is not measured only in roads or buildings, but in trust, dialogue, and the willingness to move forward together.

is what gives the rally its revolutionary character. For Dr. Deb, NEIR 2026 is not about symbolic travel alone. It is about restoring peace and tranquility in a region that has seen its share of disruptions and unrest.

He acknowledged that the Northeast is changing. Infrastructure is improving, opportunities are emerging, and conversations are shifting. But he was clear that change remains incomplete. The region has lived through long

phases of disturbance, and without peace, development remains fragile. Peace, he argued, is not an abstract idea. It is the foundation on which progress and prosperity are built.

Dr. Deb used the platform to connect the rally's vision with broader global concerns, particularly sustainability and sustainable development goals. He stressed that development without sustainability only postpones crises. In this context, he spoke at length about the role of en-

trepreneurs, urging them to see themselves not merely as profit seekers but as custodians of social and environmental responsibility. Entrepreneurship, he said, must align with the long term well being of communities. He also openly praised Biswadeep Gupta for translating vision into action and for giving the rally a structure that blends idealism with execution.

NEIR organising committee member and advocate Kh. Gajendra Singh described the rally as a



BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM





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



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



11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders.
Industry, NGOs, and Government can register for this important awareness & awareness program and present their proposals. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM



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, Journalists, and the Public. Talks and Conferences are part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
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10 JAN
5E For Success Conclave
The 4th 5E For Success Conclave is going to be held at the theme: 'From School to Campus to Corporate'.
Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.
Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & College Extension, School, Public Speaking (College) & online event where students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.



BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM



10-12 JAN
Science Studio
Use a glimpse of Science to see how things work!
Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents
Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.



10-12 JAN
E-Sports
FIFA Football | DOTA 2 | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



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



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



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
Anti-Book Campaign Book Bank Drive | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

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

10-12 JAN
Painting Carnival
Water Colour and Oil and Sawdust Painting