

Barak Festival
NE INDIA ADVENTURE SPORTS,
ART & CULTURE PROMOTION

Barak Valley, Assam | JAN-MAR 2025
www.krctimes.com
Phone: 8721 838313

KRC TIMES

STAY ENRICHED

North East Integration Rally
Peace | Progress | Prosperity
2026

Registrations
OPEN

www.northeastintegrationrally.in
+91 935 083 0085

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 680 | SILCHAR TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com , www.krctimes.com

Get all the latest and updated news of today in the evening. For subscribing to this e-paper contact at -8721838313

SUBSCRIBE
₹300 / year

WhatsApp payment details : 8721838313
info@krctimes.com

PERSPECTIVE

Actions speak louder than words. We can apologize over and over, but if our actions don't change, the words become meaningless.

Assam CM Vigilance raids DFO's residence in Guwahati

GUWAHATI
The Chief Minister's Vigilance Cell on Tuesday conducted a raid at the residence of a senior forest officer in Guwahati in connection with a disproportionate assets case, officials confirmed.

The search was carried out at the home of Kushal Kumar Deka, a Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), located at House No. 213 in Mathgharia. The operation follows the registration of Vigilance Case No. 01/2026, which alleges that Deka accumulated assets far exceeding his known sources of income.

Deka is currently posted at Aranya Bhawan in Panjabari. Investigators are examining his financial records and property documents to determine the extent of the alleged irregularities. Preliminary reports indicate that the officer owns land and other immovable properties in multiple locations, including Mathgharia, Panikhaiti, and other areas of Guwahati. Highly placed sources said several properties now under scrutiny were allegedly acquired during Deka's earlier postings, particularly in the Barak region, and are part of the ongoing investigation into his financial dealings.

Deka has previously served as a ranger in several districts across Assam, including Silchar, Nagaon, South Kamrup, Boko, the Barak region, and the Basistha Forest Division office in Guwahati. After being promoted to Divisional Forest Officer, he was posted in Sivasagar for nearly eight months before his current assignment at Aranya Bhawan. Vigilance officials said the search and verification process is ongoing, and further action will be determined based on the outcome of the probe. More details are expected as the investigation progresses.

WHO SAID WHAT



"Another major challenge is urban Naxalism. The scope of urban Naxalism is becoming international. If they tweet something positive about Modi even once or twice a year, or say something positive on TV, or write something positive in a newspaper, some journalists humiliate them so much that they are hounded and made unapproachable. They are silenced so that they can never speak again. This is the method of urban Naxalism."

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

At Davos, Assam CM pitches green energy and semiconductors, says state growth fuels entire Northeast

One rupee to Assam is one rupee to Northeast says CM Sarma at Davos

NEW DELHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma used the global platform of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos to position the state as a key driver of economic growth in the Northeast, with a strong push for green energy, semiconductors and tourism-led investments.

Speaking on the sidelines of the WEF meeting, Sarma said Assam must be seen as an integral part of the Northeast's collective economic future, arguing that development in the state inevitably benefits the entire region due to shared geography, talent pools and infrastructure linkages.

"Assam cannot be viewed in isolation. Whenever major investments come to Assam, they are meant for the whole of the Northeast," the Chief Minister said. Referring to the proposed Tata semiconductor project, he noted that while such facilities may



be geographically located in Assam, their economic impact would extend across all Northeastern states through employment, ancillary industries and supply chains.

Describing Guwahati as the gateway to the Northeast, Sarma said the city naturally attracts talent from across the region. He pointed out that the predominantly hilly terrain of

other Northeastern states limits the establishment of certain large-scale industries, while Assam's vast plains and land availability provide a conducive ecosystem for industrial growth. "Every rupee invested in Assam circulates across the wider regional economy," he added.

On the semiconductor sector, Sarma said Assam is witnessing growing interest from industry players following Tata's entry. He confirmed that meetings with leaders from the semiconductor industry are scheduled during his visit, adding that while no specific proposal is currently under consideration, such interactions are expected to accelerate momentum and ecosystem development in the state.

Turning to tourism, the Chief Minister said Assam has already received several investment offers for hotels and homestays. Although no new memorandum of understanding (MoUs) will be signed at Davos for the sector, he said

multiple MoUs are planned in Guwahati after his return, including proposals for five-star hotels in Guwahati city and the Kaziranga region.

Reflecting on the outcomes of the Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit held last year, Sarma said MoUs worth around Rs 5 lakh crore were signed, of which investments close to Rs 3 lakh crore have already been grounded. He said land acquisition and project execution are underway across sectors, with existing investors now expanding their plans. Among emerging proposals are projects to complement solar power initiatives with pumped storage projects (PSPs), indicating rising investor confidence in Assam.

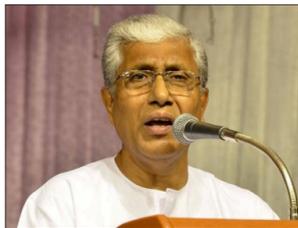
At Davos, Assam's focus is firmly on green and new energy, Sarma said, adding that MoUs worth nearly Rs 1 lakh crore are expected to be signed, primarily in pumped storage projects and innovative initiatives such as

converting bamboo into methanol. He described the latter as a unique opportunity aligned with the state's natural resources.

Calling Assam's participation at the World Economic Forum a milestone, Sarma said this is the first time the state is formally presenting itself at Davos. The objective, he said, is to signal that Assam has emerged as a competitive investment destination alongside traditional economic hubs in India.

Citing recent Reserve Bank of India data, the Chief Minister said Assam is officially the fastest-growing state in the country. He also referred to the International Monetary Fund's upward revision of India's growth forecast to over seven percent, adding that within this broader national growth story, the time is ripe for investors to look beyond conventional regions. "Assam is ready to offer a robust and competitive platform for investment," he said.

Jobs, food, healthcare outweigh Kokborok script debate: Manik Sarkar



AGARTALA

Former Tripura chief minister and veteran CPI(M) leader Manik Sarkar on Sunday said pressing socio-economic issues such as employment, food security, education and healthcare were being pushed to the sidelines amid the growing movement demanding recognition of the Kokborok language in Roman script. Sarkar was speaking at a discussion organised to mark the 48th Kokborok Language Day. He argued that while linguistic and cultural issues were important, they should not overshadow the everyday struggles faced by people in Tripura.

Referring to the upcoming elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), Sarkar said the council was nearing the end of its five-year term and that the polls were a constitutional necessity, not merely a local body election. "The Left Front had fought hard for the establishment of district council elections," he said.

The former chief minister questioned how the BJP-led state government and the Tipra Motha Party, which currently heads the TTAADC, planned to address several unresolved

issues, including the non-payment of pensions to retired district council employees.

"Even after the Tripura High Court directed that all dues be cleared with nine per cent interest, the payments have not been made," Sarkar alleged.

Highlighting what he described as worsening socio-economic conditions in the state, Sarkar said unemployment, poverty, malnutrition and the migration of youth in search of work had increased in recent years. He claimed that many young men and women were leaving Tripura for jobs that barely covered their living expenses. "Youth are forced to migrate for work that is often insufficient even for rent and food. Several have died while working outside the state, and their families struggle to bring back the bodies," he said. Sarkar also criticised the state government for its alleged failure to maintain basic infrastructure and public services, including electricity, roads, education, healthcare and irrigation. "Earlier, Tripura used to earn around Rs 70-80 crore every day by selling electricity to Bangladesh. Today, frequent power outages, disruptions in healthcare services and shortages of essential medical supplies in government hospitals have become common," he said. Reiterating his position, Sarkar said the core concerns of the people of Tripura remained jobs, food security, education and healthcare, not the debate over the Roman script for the Kokborok language.

He further accused the Tipra Motha Party of creating divisions within tribal communities and alleged that the BJP was fuelling communal tensions to divert attention from fundamental socio-economic issues.

Kokrajhar tense after brutal youth killing sparks arson, protests; 29 detained



KOKRAJHAR

Kokrajhar district in western Assam has been plunged into unrest following the brutal killing of a young man, triggering violent protests, arson, and disruption along key transport routes. The law-and-order situation remains volatile, prompting heightened security deployment as authorities work to restore calm. The death toll from the initial incident and subsequent violence has risen to two. The deceased has been identified as Sikhna Jwhlwao Bismit, whose killing triggered the unrest, and Sunil Murmu, who succumbed to injuries sustained during ensuing protests. Several others, including Yugraj Brahma and Prabhat Brahma, were also injured. The violence erupted after a road accident on January 19 at Gaurinagar, near the Karigaon Police Outpost, escalated into a clash between two groups. According to preliminary reports, an enraged mob beat Sikhna Jwhlwao Bismit to death. He was the son-in-law of Baronda Basumatary, a local road contractor. Protests spilled onto the Karigaon stretch of the National Highway, where residents staged road blockades, paralyzing traffic and disrupting daily life. Agitated crowds allegedly set fire to two temporary camps of the Birs Commando Force and vandalised multiple properties, including Sidu Kanhu Bhawan. Several shops were reportedly torched, heightening fears of further escalation.

FIR sought against Khurai MLA for alleged school demolition

IMPHAL

A formal complaint seeking the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) has been submitted at Porompat Police Station against Khurai MLA Leishangthem Susindro Meitei, alleging the illegal dismantling of an under-construction government school building and intimidation of workers at the site.

The complaint was lodged by Mayanglambam Khonikar Meitei, general secretary of the Friends Unions' Club (FUC), Khurai Heigrumakhong. It calls for the "immediate registration of an FIR and prompt legal action," alleging destruction of public property and criminal intimidation.

According to the complaint, the Education (Schools) Department of the Government of Manipur is currently constructing the Khurai Heigrumakhong Junior High School under the NESIDS (OTRI) scheme in EPC mode. The project is part of a broader initiative to strengthen school infrastructure and cater to students in the locality.

The complainant alleged that on January 18, 2026, at around 1.30 pm, the MLA, "without any lawful authority or order from the Government of Manipur," dismantled portions of the ongoing construction. The act has been described in the complaint as unlawful and amounting to "gundatism."

It is further alleged that the MLA threatened workers and engineers engaged at the site, creating fear and obstructing the execution of a government-funded project. The complaint claims that the ac-



tions demonstrated a "blatant disregard for the rule of law" and an abuse of authority by an elected representative.

Terming the alleged acts as serious cognisable offences, the complainant stated that the threats constituted criminal intimidation "made with the intent to cause alarm." The complaint also invoked provisions of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1964, asserting that the destruction of a government school building amounts to a direct violation of the law.

The alleged dismantling of the project, the complainant said, has resulted in loss to the public exchequer and warrants immediate investigation. It also highlighted the impact on children in the Khurai Heigrumakhong area, stating that the disruption of the school project has adversely affected their educational prospects and deprived them of their right to education.

The complainant has urged the police to register an FIR against the MLA under relevant legal provisions and to take necessary action in the matter.

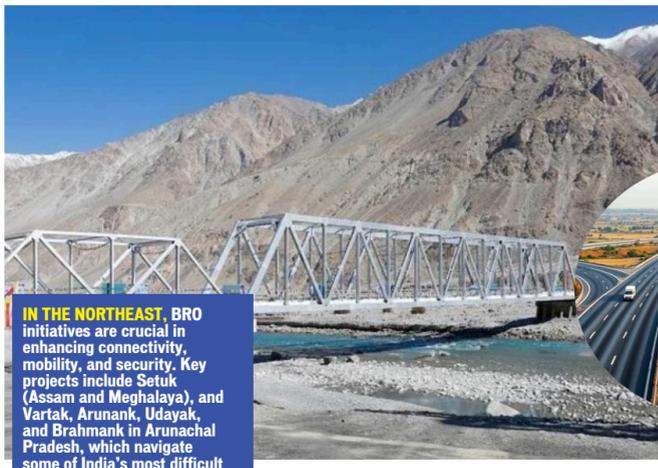
BRO sets Rs 17,900-cr target for 2025-26; Northeast remains strategic focus

NEW DELHI

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has announced its highest-ever planned expenditure for strategic infrastructure, with Rs 17,900 crore earmarked for 2025-26, reinforcing its focus on the Northeast and other border regions. The move follows an outlay of Rs 16,690 crore in 2024-25 for construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, tunnels, and airfields across challenging terrains nationwide.

Of the BRO's 18 active field projects, eight are located in the Northeast and eastern India, covering Assam, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. Nine projects operate in North-western India, while one functions in Bhutan.

In the Northeast, BRO initiatives are crucial in enhancing connectivity, mobility, and security. Key projects include Setuk (Assam and Meghalaya), and Vartak, Arunank, Udayak, and Brahman in Arunachal Pradesh, which navigate some of India's most difficult terrains. Critical infrastructure such as the Sisseri Bridge, Siyom Bridge, Sela Tunnel, and Nechipu Tunnel is linking remote villages near the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Projects like Swastik in Sikkim,



IN THE NORTHEAST, BRO initiatives are crucial in enhancing connectivity, mobility, and security. Key projects include Setuk (Assam and Meghalaya), and Vartak, Arunank, Udayak, and Brahman in Arunachal Pradesh, which navigate some of India's most difficult terrains. Critical infrastructure such as the Sisseri Bridge, Siyom Bridge, Sela Tunnel, and Nechipu Tunnel is linking remote villages near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Pushpak in Mizoram, and Sewak in Nagaland and Manipur are similarly focused on regional access and integration.

BRO's infrastructure development spans 11 states and three Union Territories and supports national initiatives such

as the Act East Policy and the Vibrant Villages Programme, aiming to bolster national security while promoting socio-economic growth in border areas.

Elsewhere, projects in Ladakh-including Himank, Beacon, and Vijayak-maintain vital routes like the Srinagar-Leh highway, Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi and Atal Tunnel, ensuring year-round connectivity. In the western sector, BRO works continue in Jammu, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand, with a focus on strategic mobility and pilgrimage access.

The Dantak project in Bhutan underscores BRO's international engagement, contributing to bilateral ties through road and bridge construction. Collectively, these initiatives highlight the BRO's expanding footprint in Assam and the Northeast, where infrastructure is increasingly viewed as essential for security, development, and regional integration.

North East Integration Rally
Peace | Progress | Prosperity
2026

INVITATION
You are cordially invited
to the Reception & Flag Off Ceremony of
North East Integration Rally 2026 — an initiative celebrating
unity, culture, and the vibrant spirit of Northeast India.

Organised by
Manipur Organising Committee

DATE January 20, 2026
TIME 9:00 AM
VENUE Sakemi, Imphal, Manipur, India
(Near Sakemi (SE) Branch, NH2
Koirangol, Imphal, Manipur, India
(8:30 AM)
Kangla Western Gate, Imphal, Manipur, India
(8:50 AM)
Kweikeithol, Imphal, Manipur, India
(9:10 AM)

RSVP KRC Foundation: 8721838313
www.northeastintegrationrally.in



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 680

India's Fastest-Growing Economy

India's position as the fastest-growing major economy in the world is no longer a fleeting headline-it is the outcome of a sustained policy trajectory, institutional reforms, and a clear development vision pursued over the past decade. PM Modi's assertion that democratic institutions have delivered "stability, speed, and scale" finds strong validation in macroeconomic data, global assessments, and on-ground transformation. At a time when much of the world is grappling with slow growth, debt stress, and geopolitical uncertainty, India's economic momentum stands out as a rare exception. The most striking feature of India's growth story is its resilience. The economy has weathered multiple global shocks-the pandemic, supply-chain disruptions, commodity price volatility, and tightening global financial conditions-yet has continued to expand at a pace unmatched by other major economies. The recent acceleration of GDP growth to over 8 percent reflects not a short-term rebound, but the cumulative impact of structural reforms and strong domestic fundamentals. India's emergence as the world's fourth-largest economy, overtaking Japan, underscores this transformation.

A key reason for this sustained growth is the Government's emphasis on macroeconomic stability, combined with long-term structural changes. Fiscal discipline, inflation management, and banking sector clean-up created a stable foundation. The resolution of stressed assets through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code restored confidence in the financial system and revived credit flow to productive sectors. At the same time, a massive push towards formalisation-through GST, digital payments and direct benefit transfers-has broadened the tax base, improved compliance and enhanced efficiency.

The Modi Government's development strategy has been anchored in strengthening domestic demand while integrating India more deeply into global value chains. Robust private consumption, supported by rising incomes, welfare delivery, and financial inclusion, has acted as a powerful growth engine. Simultaneously, public investment-especially in infrastructure-has played a catalytic role. Record spending on highways, railways, ports, airports, and logistics has reduced transaction costs, improved connectivity, and crowded in private investment. Manufacturing revival has been another central pillar. The "Make in India" initiative, supplemented by Production Linked Incentive schemes, has incentivised domestic production across sectors ranging from electronics and pharmaceuticals to automobiles and renewable energy. India's success in attracting global companies, including major technology manufacturers, signals growing confidence in its policy environment. This shift is not only generating employment but also enhancing export competitiveness and reducing import dependence.

Agriculture, often overlooked in growth narratives, has remained a stabilising force. Continued emphasis on foodgrain production, procurement, and rural welfare ensured food security and moderated inflation during global price shocks.

Rural demand, supported by infrastructure development and welfare schemes, has helped sustain consumption even during external downturns. The Government's approach has thus balanced growth with social stability. Another defining feature of India's growth under the present Government has been the use of technology as a development multiplier. The expansion of digital public infrastructure-Aadhaar, UPI, and digital governance platforms-has transformed service delivery, reduced leakages, and empowered citizens. India today operates the world's largest digital payment ecosystem, enabling seamless transactions across urban and rural areas alike. This digital backbone has improved productivity, formalised the economy, and created new opportunities for startups and innovation.

Global confidence in India's trajectory further reinforces the credibility of its growth story. Institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, OECD, and major credit rating agencies consistently project India as the fastest-growing major economy in the coming years.

Their assessments reflect confidence in India's policy continuity, demographic advantage, and domestic market strength. With a population of over 1.4 billion, growth in India carries immense significance-it must generate jobs, reduce poverty, and improve living standards on an unparalleled scale. Encouragingly, millions have been lifted out of poverty, demonstrating that growth has not been entirely exclusionary.

Looking ahead, the Government's focus on future-oriented sectors such as semiconductors, green energy, and advanced manufacturing signals long-term ambition. Investments in skill development aim to align India's vast workforce with the needs of a technology-driven economy. India's growth story under the present Government is thus not accidental. It is the result of sustained efforts, and India's status as the fastest-growing major economy will evolve from an achievement into a defining characteristic of its global rise.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"You can be everything. You can be the infinite amount of things that people are."

—Keshu

INDIA'S STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN 2026



B S DARA

For many years, India has spoken about strategic autonomy as the guiding idea of its foreign policy. At its core, it means preserving the freedom to make independent decisions without becoming subordinate to any single global power. In an earlier era, this approach was known as non-alignment. Today, however, the landscape is far more complex. India now engages simultaneously with multiple partners, each relationship influenced by its own interests, expectations, and constraints. Cooperation comes with conditions. Dialogue carries underlying tension. No partnership is without limits. By 2026, India's diplomatic environment has grown increasingly strained. Relationships that once appeared stable now require careful management. Old assumptions no longer hold. More than it being just a principle, strategic autonomy has become a necessity, inspired by external pressure, persistent disagreements, and growing regional instability.

India's relationship with the United States is not as smooth as it once appeared. Under Donald Trump, trade tensions increased. Tariffs were imposed on Indian goods. India lost certain trade privileges. These actions created friction and distrust. At the same time, Washington has repeatedly objected to India's continued purchase of Russian oil. Under American pressure, India though has signalled reducing its energy imports from Russia. This has led to visible discomfort in US-India ties. American officials expect India to align more closely with Western positions. India refuses to do so. From Delhi's perspective, energy security comes first. Cheap Russian oil

cooperation and political support continue. However, Israel's actions in Palestine have drawn strong criticism worldwide. Many countries describe it as continuous violence and humanitarian disaster. India's silence and support for Israel have damaged its image in parts of the Muslim world. Critics argue that this contradicts India's traditional support for Palestine. It also affects relations with Arab countries at the public level, even if governments remain pragmatic. This alignment tests India's diplomatic balance. While ties with Israel bring technology and defence benefits, they also create moral and political pressure. Strategic autonomy here means choosing interests over image, but the cost is rising.

The Gulf region remains important for India. Millions of Indians work there. Energy supplies are critical. India maintains good relations with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. At the same time, it keeps contact with Iran. This careful balance protects Indian workers and trade routes. Yet even here, competition between regional powers creates risks. India avoids taking sides. It focuses on economic ties and citizen welfare. This approach reduces exposure to regional conflicts. India's growing economy gives it confidence, but also responsibility. It needs foreign investment. It needs stable trade routes. Foreign policy must support growth. That is why India avoids sanctions regimes that damage its economy. It keeps doors open even when partners disagree.

Global institutions are losing influence. Wars continue without clear mediation. The UN appears weak. Rules are applied unevenly. Powerful states act unilaterally. In this climate, India

Relations are tense. Chinese troops have intruded into Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh. Border talks continue, but trust is low. Military deployments remain high on both sides. Trade continues, but security concerns dominate every discussion. India does not see China as just an economic competitor. It sees Beijing as a strategic rival. Yet India and China avoid open confrontation. Both strengthen defence readiness while keeping diplomatic channels open. Strategic autonomy here means preparation without provocation. India joins groups like the Quad, but avoids turning them into military alliances.

Relations with Pakistan are at their lowest point in years. After Operation Sindoor, political ties collapsed. Dialogue stopped. Sports relations were affected. Players refusing to shake hands became symbols of bitterness. Diplomatic contact is minimal. Accusations and counter accusations continue. This hostility impacts regional politics. South Asia remains unstable. India avoids engagement unless security concerns are addressed. Strategic autonomy in this context means refusing third party mediation. India insists on bilateral solutions, even when tensions rise.

Bangladesh has now emerged as another sensitive front. Sheikh Hasina has taken refuge in India. Dhaka is repeatedly asking for her extradition. This has created strain between the two neighbours. Trust has weakened. Political debate inside Bangladesh increasingly targets India. Recent events have added fuel to this tension. The removal of Bangladeshi cricketer Mustafiqur Rehman from the IPL franchise KKR sparked controversy.



helps control inflation and protect the economy. Accepting external pressure would mean compromising national interest. This disagreement shows the limits of the partnership.

Russia remains important for India. Defence equipment, energy supply, and diplomatic history still matter. Even as Western countries isolate Moscow, India continues engagement. This has drawn criticism, but Delhi stands firm. It avoids condemning Russia directly. It calls for dialogue and peaceful solutions in Ukraine. This position angers some partners but protects Indian interests. China remains India's biggest se-

curity concern. Relations are tense. Chinese troops have intruded into Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh. Border talks continue, but trust is low. Military deployments remain high on both sides. Trade continues, but security concerns dominate every discussion. India does not see China as just an economic competitor. It sees Beijing as a strategic rival. Yet India and China avoid open confrontation. Both strengthen defence readiness while keeping diplomatic channels open. Strategic autonomy here means preparation without provocation. India joins groups like the Quad, but avoids turning them into military alliances.

These incidents show how fragile relations have become. Even cultural and sporting ties are now affected by politics. Strategic autonomy means India cannot ignore regional sensitivities, but it also cannot compromise its legal and institutional decisions under pressure.

India's relationship with Israel is also under global scrutiny. India has openly aligned with Israel. Defence

cooperation and political support continue. However, Israel's actions in Palestine have drawn strong criticism worldwide. Many countries describe it as continuous violence and humanitarian disaster. India's silence and support for Israel have damaged its image in parts of the Muslim world. Critics argue that this contradicts India's traditional support for Palestine. It also affects relations with Arab countries at the public level, even if governments remain pragmatic. This alignment tests India's diplomatic balance. While ties with Israel bring technology and defence benefits, they also create moral and political pressure. Strategic autonomy here means choosing interests over image, but the cost is rising.

They want firm positions. But clarity in today's world often leads to entanglement.

Strategic autonomy protects India from being dragged into conflicts that do not serve its interests. Public opinion inside India also matters. National pride influences diplomacy. Social media intensifies reactions. Leaders must balance foreign policy with domestic expectations. Any decision is closely watched.

In 2026, India stands at the crossroads of global power rivalries. Pressure comes from every direction. The United States seeks economic and political alignment. China continues to challenge India's territorial sovereignty. Pakistan remains adversarial. Relations with Bangladesh are uneasy. Strategic closeness with Israel draws criticism from parts of the Global South. Long-standing ties with Russia invite disapproval from Western capitals. India cannot afford blind loyalty to any single bloc. Every relationship today is transactional, guided by interest rather than ideology. This approach carries costs. It frustrates partners. It creates diplomatic friction. Yet the alternative is far worse, strategic dependence and loss of agency.

India has chosen difficulty over submission. Looking ahead, the world will become more divided. Power will mat-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

"MGNREGA's aim was to take financial responsibility and provide minimum wage to the unemployed rural citizens. PM Narendra Modi does not want that; he wants to centralise power and hand it over to bureaucracy and leave the poor citizens to starve. The protection cover of the poor has been removed with the reformation of the act. Congress, thus, is conducting a nationwide MGNREGA Bachao campaign....PM wants the entire country's economy to be handed over to Ambani and Adani while we are trying to help the poor," he accused.

Rahul Gandhi



ter more than rules. In such a world, flexibility is strength. India's ability to talk to everyone while belonging to no one fully may be its greatest advantage. Strategic autonomy in 2026 is about staying independent without being neutral.

It allows India to protect its interests without surrendering its choices. In a divided global order, true independence is rare. India's determination to preserve it defines its global posture, and its long-term strength.

As an independent foreign affairs observer, I see India's strategic autonomy today as a test of restraint. Pressure is coming from all sides. Partners are uneasy.

Neighbours remain hostile. Global scrutiny is rising. In this climate, India must rely less on public statements and more on quiet diplomacy. Clear boundaries with China, controlled engagement with Bangladesh, and steady firmness with Pakistan will matter more than symbolism.

Trust would return only through conduct, not declarations. Foreign policy is a long game. Interests shift quickly. Alliances weaken under stress. In this moment, Ahmad Faraz's words feel painfully relevant:

"Tum takalluf ko bhi ikhlas samajhte ho 'Faraz', dost hota nahin har haath milane vaala."

At Davos, Assam entrepreneur amplifies NE's blue-collar workforce alongside state's growth pitch

DAVOS

As global business and political leaders convene at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2026 in Davos, an entrepreneur from Assam is drawing attention to an often-marginalised segment of India's economy—the blue-collar workforce and indigenous communities of the Northeast.

Drishti Medhi, co-founder of QuickGhy, is attending the WEF with the aim of expanding market access for India's blue-collar sector while ensuring that voices from Northeast India are represented in global discussions on trade, innovation and economic development.

QuickGhy focuses on upskilling, training and empowering blue-collar workers, equipping them with tools to access better employment and market opportunities.



Medhi said her engagement at Davos reflects a broader objective of positioning India as an emerging innovation hub, while simultaneously amplifying grassroots perspectives from indigenous communities that are often excluded from high-level policy and investment conversations.

Her presence at the global forum underscores a growing emphasis on inclusive development from the region, linking

technology-driven solutions with social impact and workforce empowerment.

Also representing India at Davos is Ishan Pratap Singh, a 22-year-old civic entrepreneur from New Delhi and founder of Cooperation17, a global social startup. Singh has been selected as one of 40 participants worldwide to attend the WEF meeting as a Global Shaper.

Through Cooperation17, Singh works to address civic dysfunction by building partnerships among citizens, institutions, businesses and governments. His organisation promotes cooperation around the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through civic engagement and direct implementation in both urban and rural communities around Delhi. At Davos, Singh is seeking to forge partnerships focused on dialogue, frontier

technologies and grassroots execution of development initiatives.

The participation of young entrepreneurs from India coincides with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's strong pitch for the state and the wider Northeast at the WEF. Addressing the forum on January 19, Sarma said Assam must be viewed as integral to the Northeast's collective economic future, arguing that growth in the state inevitably benefits the entire region due to shared geography, talent and infrastructure.

The Chief Minister highlighted growing interest in Assam's semiconductor sector following Tata's proposed project and said meetings with industry leaders are scheduled, even as no specific new proposal is currently under consideration.

One killed, four injured in violent clash in Assam's Kokrajhar; vehicle set ablaze

KOKRAJHAR

One person was killed and four others sustained serious injuries following a violent clash between two groups in Assam's Kokrajhar district on Monday evening, police said. The incident occurred around 7.30 pm at Gaurinagar in the Karigaon area, triggering panic and tension among local residents. The deceased has been identified as Sikhna Jhwilao Bismit, a resident of Bagaribari under Rupsi.

According to preliminary information, an altercation escalated rapidly into violence, resulting in the death of one person and serious injuries to others. Eyewitnesses said the situation deteriorated within a short span, with miscreants allegedly setting a Scorpio vehicle on fire during the clash.

The burning of the vehicle further aggravated tensions in the area, drawing large crowds and spreading fear among residents. Four people—Mahesh Murmu and Sunil Murmu of Karigaon, and Jugraj Brahma of Anthaigaon—were seriously injured in the incident. They were rushed

to Kokrajhar Medical College and Hospital, where they are undergoing treatment. Hospital sources said their condition is being closely monitored.

Preliminary reports suggest that the violence may have been triggered by a road accident, with the Scorpio vehicle allegedly hitting two individuals. Following the incident, tensions flared and the situation spiralled out of control. However, police said the exact sequence of events and the motive behind the clash are yet to be clearly established.

Police personnel reached the spot soon after receiving information and brought the situation under control. Security has been tightened in and around the area to prevent further escalation. Senior officials said an investigation has been launched to determine the cause of the violence and identify those responsible.

As of the time of filing this report, the situation in Gaurinagar remained tense but under control, with police maintaining a strong presence to ensure law and order.

Meghalaya man gets 13 years' rigorous imprisonment in East Jaintia Hills POCSO case

SHILLONG

A special POCSO court in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district has sentenced a man to a total of 13 years of rigorous imprisonment for offences involving a minor girl, bringing to a close a case that began with a missing child report in October 2024. According to the prosecution, a First Information Report (FIR) was lodged at Khliehriat Women Police Station on October 9, 2024, after a woman reported that her minor granddaughter had gone missing from their shop-cum-residence at Umpleng around 6.30 pm on October 7. The child was traced the following morning.

Following her recovery, police registered a case under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The investigation was carried out by the women police wing and was described by officials as detailed and methodical. A chargesheet was filed on January 2, 2025.

After completion of the trial, the court of Special Judge (POCSO) Smti B. Khriam found the accused, identified as Pynkloide alias Deibor Phyrngre, guilty of the charges.

The court sentenced him to three years of rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 5,000 under one count, and ten years of rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs 10,000 under Section 4(1) of the POCSO Act, amounting to a total of 13 years' imprisonment. The judgment was pronounced at Khliehriat. In a statement, the Superintendent of Police, East Jaintia Hills district, said the conviction reinforces the police department's commitment to pursuing crimes against children through to their logical conclusion and urged the public to promptly report such offences to ensure timely justice.

40 tribal students detained during Kokborok Day rally

AGARTALA

At least 40 tribal students were detained by police on Sunday after tensions erupted during a rally organised to mark Kokborok Day in Tripura's capital Agartala, officials said.

Kokborok Day is observed annually on January 19 to commemorate the recognition of Kokborok as a state language. The event is organised by the Department of Kokborok and Other Minority Languages.

According to police, the situation turned tense when a group of tribal students moved ahead of the official rally holding placards written in Roman script. The main procession was being led by senior BJP MLA Ram Pada Jamatia and former MLA Atul Debbarma.

Police intervened at Post Office Chowmuhani and detained the protesting students, who were later taken to the AD Nagar police lines.

"We have detained around 40 students for creating trouble during the Kokborok Day rally. They will be released later," Officer-in-Charge of AD Nagar police station

Rana Chatterjee told reporters.

Reacting to the incident, BJP MLA Ram Pada Jamatia said it was unfortunate that a group of youths attempted to disrupt what he described as a "colourful rally" organised to celebrate the 48th Kokborok Day.

"Police arrived in time and detained all those who tried to breach peace," he said.

Meanwhile, Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma expressed anguish over the detention of the youths, stating that they were protesting against the use of Bengali script on placards during the Kokborok Day programme.

"It looks bad to see placards written in Bengali script on Kokborok Day when we are demanding a different script. The youths who raised their voices against this were detained by the police," Debbarma said in a video message.

He added that while his party supports the growth of all languages in the state, any forceful imposition of a script could further aggravate the situation. "Our fight for rights will continue," he said.

CoTU dismisses harassment claims by Rajasthan school Wushu team

IMPHAL

The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) on Sunday rejected media reports alleging harassment and extortion of the Rajasthan School Wushu team during their return journey from Imphal after the 69th National School Games, terming the claims unverified and misleading.

In a statement issued on January 19, CoTU said no such incident has been reported to any police station, security control room or law enforcement agency in Manipur so far.

The organisation said that given the prevailing security situation in the state, any serious incident involving a school team would ordinarily lead to an immediate official response and documentation. However, it pointed out that no First Information Report (FIR), General Diary entry or formal complaint has been registered in connection with the alleged incident.

CoTU also noted that the team

authorities or parents have not provided basic details such as the exact location, time, route or police jurisdiction where the alleged incident took place, making verification difficult.

Expressing concern over reports that described the alleged perpetrators as "Kuki militants," CoTU said such characterisation has been made without supporting evidence. The committee questioned how the perpetrators could be identified in ethnic terms without citing specific indicators such as language, attire or other distinguishing features.

The organisation warned that the circulation of unverified allegations and ethnic labelling could fuel misunderstanding and tension at a sensitive time when Manipur is working towards stability and reconciliation. It urged the media to exercise caution and ensure thorough fact-checking before publishing reports on such issues.

Meanwhile, amid allegations

of mismanagement, security lapses and extortion levelled by members of the Rajasthan school Wushu team during the 69th National School Games in Imphal, the Director of Youth Affairs and Sports (YAS), Manipur, has denied receiving any complaint from the team during their stay in the state.

The Rajasthan contingent, comprising 52 players, participated in the national-level event, with the girls' team securing first place and the boys' team finishing second. After leaving Manipur, however, players and parents alleged that inadequate travel arrangements were made for their return journey, claiming that only 24 unconfirmed train tickets were provided, forcing several athletes to travel under distressing conditions.

Responding to the allegations, the Director of YAS said no grievances were brought to the department's notice while the team was in Manipur. "If the matter had been raised during their stay, it

could have been addressed immediately, and even an FIR could have been lodged in case of extortion," the director said.

He added that despite the absence of a formal complaint, an inquiry has been initiated and the police have been asked to verify the allegations. "An enquiry is underway, and police have been instructed to look into the claims," he said. Separately, Dr Mayengbam Veto Singh, in a letter to the Superintendent of Police, Imphal West, sought verification of information circulating on social media regarding alleged extortion during the team's travel. He urged police to take appropriate legal action, if warranted, in connection with a video clip purportedly showing money being taken during travel from Dimapur to Imphal.

The video is said to have been posted by members of the Rajasthan contingent who had participated in the 69th National School Games Championship at Khuman Lampak, Imphal.

Solar microgrids electrify remote tribal villages; Tripura agency wins national SKOCH honour

AGARTALA

Electricity has reached some of the most remote tribal habitations in the Northeast, transforming daily life for thousands of families and earning the Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA) national recognition at the 105th SKOCH Awards for 2025.

TREDA was conferred the Silver Medal at an award ceremony held in the national capital, where Sameer Kochhar, Chairman and Managing Director of the SKOCH Group, recognised the agency's efforts in delivering solar-powered microgrids to areas where conventional electricity infrastructure is either impractical or financially unviable.

Implemented under the Central government's PM-DEVINE scheme in partnership with the Tripura government, the project has brought electricity to 274 remote tribal vil-



lages. As part of the initiative, 274 solar microgrids ranging in capacity from 2 kW to 25 kW have been commissioned, creating a total installed capacity of 3 MW.

The project has benefited 9,762 households across 247 habitations at an estimated cost of Rs 81.02 crore, officials said.

Under the scheme, each ben-

eficiary household has been provided with four LED lights and a mobile charging point. In addition, solar-powered streetlights have been installed along village roads and in key public spaces, significantly improving visibility and safety after dark.

For communities that previously depended on kerosene lamps, the shift to clean energy has reduced health risks from indoor air pollution while improving overall living conditions. Officials noted that implementation posed major logistical challenges, as many of the villages are located 15 to 20 kilometres from the nearest motorable road, making grid extension nearly impossible.

Even in areas with limited grid access, frequent power outages—particularly during the monsoon and pre-monsoon months—often left villages without electricity for extended

periods. The availability of reliable solar power has already begun to reshape daily life. Children can now study after sunset, improving educational outcomes, while access to mobile charging and television has connected residents to information, government services and the outside world. Traditional livelihoods such as bamboo weaving and handloom work are now carried out in the evening hours, boosting productivity and household incomes. Local shops remain open after dark, strengthening village economies, while street lighting has improved safety and mobility at night.

Officials said the project demonstrates how decentralised renewable energy solutions can bridge long-standing development gaps and deliver sustainable infrastructure to some of India's most inaccessible regions.

AU 23RD CONVOCATION Anand Mahindra conferred D.Litt.

SILCHAR

The three-day 23rd convocation of Assam University commenced on January 19, with the institution conferring degrees, certificates and gold medals on students from a wide range of academic disciplines. On the opening day, the university awarded degrees at the D.Litt., PhD, MPhil and postgraduate levels, along with certificates and gold medals. Honorary Doctor of Literature (D.Litt.) degrees were conferred on Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Gopal Mahindra and Assam Police Inspector General Parthasarathi Mahanta, in recognition of their distinguished contributions in their respective fields.

The convocation ceremony was presided over by the Chancellor of Assam University and former Chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Arup Raha.

The chief guest for the occasion was Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Pro-Chancellor of the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, Belur Math. Addressing the graduating students, he spoke on the philosophy of "Sarvabhute Hite Ratah"—working for the welfare of all beings—and urged them to rise above narrow self-interest to embrace responsibility towards plants, animals and the

environment. Drawing attention to the concept of deep ecology, Swami Atmapriyanandaji said human beings were not meant to dominate nature, but to coexist as participants in a larger ecological system.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Rajive Mohan Pant, in his address, reminded graduates to recognise the role of society in shaping their journeys and advised them to uphold ethical values as they move forward in their professional and personal lives. Other dignitaries present on the dais included Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Shivasish Biswas, Registrar Pradosh Kiran Nath, Controller of Examinations Suprabir Duttaroy, and deans of various academic schools. Ahead of the formal proceedings, two music videos—"Vande Mataram" and Rabindranath Tagore's "Ekla Cholo Re"—were screened. The productions were jointly created by the Departments of Performing Arts and Mass Communication, with music direction by Dr Jagannath Barman and video direction by Prof Alfarid Hussain.

The convocation ceremony will continue until January 21. This year, a total of 13,666 candidates are being formally awarded degrees by the university.

DoNER secretary reviews PM-DeVINE, NEC projects in Nagaland; inspects power, health, livelihood initiatives

DIMAPUR

Angshuman Dey, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), on Monday reviewed the implementation of projects under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East (PM-DeVINE) and schemes funded by the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Nagaland.

According to an official statement, the review meeting focused on the utilisation of released funds, submission of fund demands and progress reports related to ongoing PM-DeVINE and NEC projects. Representatives of all concerned state departments attended the meeting and presented updated status reports on the projects under their respective jurisdictions.

As part of his visit, Dey also undertook field inspections of several key infrastructure and development projects being executed under the two schemes.

He inspected the construction of the 220/132 kV (2x100 MVA) and 132/33 kV (2x50 MVA) Tsitronge-Dimapur substation, a major power infrastructure project being implemented under the PM-DeVINE scheme. The project is aimed at strengthening power transmission and improving electricity reliability in the region.

Dey also reviewed the upgradation works of the radiation oncology depart-



ment at the Christian Institute of Health Sciences and Research (CIHSR), Dimapur, and assessed the progress of the healthcare project.

On Sunday, the DoNER official inspected PM-DeVINE and NEC-funded projects in Dimaapur district. During the visit, he travelled to Thiluxu village to review an NEC-supported value addition project in the coffee sector. The initia-

tive includes the procurement of coffee roasting machines and capacity-building through entrepreneurship training, with the objective of improving market access, strengthening local enterprises and enhancing income opportunities for coffee growers and entrepreneurs.

He further inspected the construction of a Common Facility Centre (CFC) Emporium for Handloom and Handi-

ACCORDING TO AN OFFICIAL statement, the review meeting focused on the utilisation of released funds, submission of fund demands and progress reports related to ongoing PM-DeVINE and NEC projects. Representatives of all concerned state departments attended the meeting and presented updated status reports on the projects under their respective jurisdictions.

craft at Agri Expo Nagaland, being implemented by the Nagaland Khadi and Village Industries Board. The visit also included an inspection of the state-of-the-art cane and bamboo technology facility at the Nagaland Bamboo Resource Centre, operated under the Nagaland Bamboo Development Agency (NBDA). Dey was accompanied by SD Meena, Director, MDoNER; Tamsunaro Aier, Development Commissioner, Nagaland; Hekato N, Additional Director, Department of Land Resources; Kasho Chishi, Chief Engineer (Transmission and Generation); Asangla Imti, Secretary, Power Department; Kuku Mero, State Mission Director, NBDA; Dr Tolto Metha, team member, NBDA; and other senior departmental officials.

Quest!

Get busy living or get busy dying.

“Court wants transparency”: TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee welcomes SC’s directions to ECI for Bengal SIR



NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Kalyan Banerjee on Monday welcomed the Supreme Court’s decision directing the Election Commission of India (ECI) to display the names of the electors falling under the ‘logical discrepancies’ category in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) drive in West Bengal.

Speaking to reporters outside the apex court, Banerjee, who is also a Senior Advocate, said the court wants transparency in the SIR exercise and will “interfere” if the process remains opaque.

He said, “The Supreme Court has directed the Election Commission to publish the list of ‘logical discrepancies’ at Gram Panchayat Bhavans and Block Offices. There should be transparency, and it should be published. Three days after publication of the list, the Election Commission will issue a notice of hearing, which must be completed within 10 days. The BLA-2 was not allowed to assist, but the SC said that they can take assistance from any person or lawyer.”

“At the time of the hearing, they have to note the documents that have been submitted before the election officer. We said that the hearing should take place in the Panchayat or Block area. The Supreme Court asked the Election Commission to accept the Admit Card. If they do not, we will inform the court at the next hearing. Court wants transparency; if something is not transparent, the court will interfere,” he added while discussing the decision by the three-judge bench led by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant.

Earlier today, a three-judge bench led by CJI Surya Kant issued directions to the ECI on various pleas alleging procedural illegality in the SIR exercise in West Bengal.

The apex court noted that the ECI has issued notices to certain persons described as falling under the ‘logical discrepancies’ category. Thus, with a view to enabling persons included in the category, the Court issued a direction to display the names of such persons at Gram Panchayat Bhavans, Block Offices, and Ward Offices.

The court asked the state government to provide adequate manpower to the ECI and the State Election Commission to entertain the documents and objections and to adhere to the hearing process for persons likely to be affected. In this regard, directions shall be issued by the ECI/State Government for the deployment of adequate personnel.

Persons likely to be affected shall be permitted to submit their documents before the authorised officers. The apex court instructed that an authority letter be issued in this regard. The bench instructed the persons in the category who have not submitted their claims and objections to do so within 10 days.

TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar called the decision a “big slap” over the “atrocities” committed by the poll body.

“This is a big slap on the atrocities that the ECI was committing on the people of West Bengal at the instructions of the BJP. We welcome the verdict of the Supreme Court and thank the court for its judgment,” she said.

The Electoral Roll Officers’ Network (ERONET) portal had flagged more than 1.2 crore names under the ‘logical discrepancy’ category, sparking a fresh row over the SIR exercise in the state. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had called it a “dubious” category.

The deadline to file claims and objections (new voter name additions via Form 6, deletions via Form 7, and corrections via Form 8) was extended from January 15 to January 19, giving voters extra time to submit their applications. Hearings on these claims and objections will continue up to February 7, 2026. The final electoral roll for West Bengal will be published on February 14, 2026.

India, UAE set USD 200 bn annual trade target by 2032

NEW DELHI

India and the United Arab Emirates today set a target of USD 200 billion in annual trade by 2032 and agreed to seal a strategic defence pact while boosting cooperation in energy, space and civil nuclear sectors with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan laying out a broad agenda to shore up ties.

Modi welcomed Al Nahyan at the Delhi airport with a hug and then they travelled together in the same vehicle to the Prime Minister’s residence, where they held talks in the restricted as well as delegation-level formats.

“This has been a short, but extremely substantive visit,” Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a media briefing after the UAE leader concluded his nearly three-and-a-half-hour visit that came amid increasing tensions in the Middle East and trade disruptions caused by Washington’s policy on tariffs.

The two sides decided to explore a partnership in advanced nuclear technologies, including development of large nuclear reactors and small modular reactors, as well as cooperation in advanced reactor systems and nuclear power plant operations, he said.

A long-term agreement for the supply of 0.5 million metric tonnes of LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) annually was concluded by the two sides.

The UAE is India’s second-largest supplier of LNG to India after Qatar.

Artificial Intelligence was identified as a priority area of cooperation and it was decided to collaborate on setting up a supercomputing cluster in India with the UAE partnership, Misri said, adding the Gulf nation will also look at investments for expanding data centre capacities in India.

The Foreign Secretary said the two sides also set a target of USD 200 billion in annual trade by 2032. The volume of two-way trade between the two sides was USD 84 billion in 2023-24.

The two sides also resolved to significantly expand their defence ties.

“A letter of intent was signed between the two sides to work towards concluding a framework agreement for a strategic defence partnership between India and the UAE,” Misri said.

Another letter of intent was also signed for joint work in developing



space infrastructure. Under this initiative, both sides will look to set up new launch complexes, satellite fabrication facilities, joint missions, space academy and training centres, the foreign secretary said.

A separate document was signed to facilitate the UAE’s participation in the development of a special investment region in Gujarat’s Dholera.

This initiative will look at the establishment of an international airport, a pilot training school, an MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) facility, a greenfield port, a smart urban township, as well as projects related to railway connectivity and energy infrastructure, Misri added.

The discussions between Modi and Al Nahyan focused on cooperation in several new and emerging areas, including new opportunities for civil nuclear cooperation in the light of the passage of the Shanti Act in India.

An agreement on food safety was also signed. It will provide for cooperation in the food sector and encourage food products and other agricultural exports from India to the UAE.

It will benefit the farmers of India and contribute to food security in the UAE, the foreign secretary said.

Both sides will also explore the possibility of setting up a “data embassy”,

Misri said.

This is a relatively new concept, but there will be work done to see how these can be set up under mutually recognised sovereignty agreements, he noted.

The foreign secretary said the situation in Yemen, Gaza and Iran was discussed at the talks but declined to elaborate.

“All of these issues were discussed between the leaders. I cannot get into the details at this stage, but yes, both leaders had the opportunity to share their views and opinions in detail on these issues,” he said.

Misri said Modi and Al Nahyan unequivocally condemned cross-border terrorism and held that the perpetrators, supporters and financiers of all acts of terrorism must be brought to justice.

The UAE President expressed his support for the success of India’s chairmanship of the BRICS grouping this year.

There has been a significant upswing in bilateral trade and people-to-people ties after New Delhi and Abu Dhabi inked an ambitious comprehensive economic partnership agreement in 2022.

The UAE President was seen off at the airport by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today gifted an ornate

wooden swing from his home state of Gujarat and a Pashmina shawl to visiting UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, officials said.

Modi welcomed Al Nahyan and his mother Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi at his Lok Kalyan Marg residence here.

The Prime Minister and Al Nahyan sat on the hand-carved wooden swing with traditional designs, showing skilled craftsmanship, placed against the backdrop of a wall adorned with marigold flowers at his residence.

A carved wooden swing is a quintessential part of many Gujarati family homes. “In Gujarati culture, the swing symbolises togetherness, conversation and bonding across generations. The gift also resonates deeply with the UAE’s declaration of 2026 as the Year of Family,” the officials said.

Modi also gifted Al Nahyan a Pashmina shawl from Kashmir in an ornate silver box made in Telangana, representing India’s rich tradition of handloom and handicraft.

Modi also gifted a Pashmina shawl in a silver box to Al Nahyan’s mother.

“She was also gifted Kashmiri saffron in an ornate silver box. Grown in the Kashmir valley, saffron is revered for its deep crimson strands and intense aroma,” the officials said.

INTERNATIONAL

Death toll in Spanish train collision rises to 40 as authorities fear more bodies could be found

ADAMUZ

Regional Spanish officials said Monday that at least 40 people are confirmed dead in a high-speed rail collision the previous night in the country’s south when the tail end of a train jumped the track, causing another train speeding past in the opposite direction to derail.

Juanma Moreno, the president of Andalusia, the southern Spanish region where the accident happened, confirmed the new death toll in an afternoon press conference. Efforts to recover the bodies from the two wrecked train cars continued, he added.

The impact tossed the second train’s lead carriages off the track, sending them plummeting down a 4-meter (13-foot) slope. Some bodies were found hundreds of meters (feet) from the crash site, Moreno said earlier in the day, describing the wreckage as a “mass of twisted metal” with bodies likely still to be found inside.

Authorities are also focusing on attending hundreds of distraught family members and have asked for them to provide DNA samples to help identify victims.

The crash took place Sunday at 7:45 p.m. when the tail end of a train carrying 289 passengers on the route from Malaga to the capital, Madrid, went off the rails. It slammed into an incoming train traveling from Madrid to Huelva, another southern Spanish city, according to rail operator Adif.

The head of the second train, which was carrying nearly 200 passengers, took the brunt of the impact, Spanish Transport Minister Oscar Puente said. That collision knocked its first two carriages off the track. Puente said that it appeared the largest number of the deaths occurred in



those carriages.

Authorities said all the survivors had been rescued in the early morning.

The accident shook a nation which leads Europe in high-speed train mileage and takes pride in a network that is considered at the cutting edge of rail transport.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez declared three days of national mourning for the victims of the crash.

“Today is a day of pain for all of Spain,” Sánchez said on a visit to Adamuz, a village near the accident site, where many locals helped emergency services handle the influx of distraught and hurt passengers overnight.

Moreno, the regional leader, said Monday morning that emergency services were still searching for bodies.

“Here at ground zero, when you look at this mass of twisted iron, you see the violence of the impact,” Moreno said. “The impact was so incredibly violent that we have found bodies hundreds of meters

away.”

Video released by the Civil Guard showed the worst-hit carriages shredded open, train seats cast on the gravel packing under the tracks. One carriage lay on its side, bent around a large concrete pillar, with debris scattered around the area.

Passengers reported climbing out of smashed windows, with some using emergency hammers to break the glass.

Andalusia’s regional emergency services said 41 people remained hospitalized, 12 of whom were in intensive care units. Another 81 passengers were discharged by late Monday afternoon, authorities said.

Train services Monday between Madrid and cities in Andalusia were canceled, causing large disruptions. Spanish airline Iberia added flights to Seville and another two to Malaga to help stranded travelers. Some bus companies also reinforced their services in the south.

Transport Minister Puente

early Monday said the cause of the crash was unknown.

He called it “a truly strange” incident because it happened on a flat stretch of track that had been renovated in May. He also said the train that jumped the track was less than 4 years old. That train belonged to the Italian-owned company Iryo, while the second train was part of Spain’s public train company, Renfe.

According to Puente, the back part of the first train derailed and crashed into the head of the other train. An investigation into the cause could take a month, he said.

The Spanish Union of Railway Drivers told The Associated Press that in August, it sent a letter asking Spain’s national railway operator to investigate flaws on train lines across the country and to reduce speeds at certain points until the tracks were fully repaired. Those recommendations were made for high-speed train lines, including the one where Sunday’s accident took place, the union said.

Álvaro Fernández, the president of Renfe, told Spanish public radio RNE that both trains were well under the speed limit of 250 kph (155 mph); one was going 205 kph (127 mph), the other 210 kph (130 mph). He also said that “human error could be ruled out.”

The incident “must be related to the moving equipment of Iryo or the infrastructure,” he said.

Iryo issued a statement on Monday saying that its train was manufactured in 2022 and passed its latest safety check on Jan. 15.

The Civil Guard opened an office in Cordoba, the nearest city to the crash, as well as Madrid, Malaga, Huelva and Seville for family members of the missing to seek help and leave DNA samples.

Gaza is ours: Israeli minister calls Trump peace board ‘raw deal’, seeks dissolution

TELAVIV

Israel has been asked to join U.S. President Donald Trump’s new Board of Peace that will supervise the next phase of the Gaza peace plan, an Israeli official said Monday, while France is holding off accepting for now.

It’s not known whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accepted the offer, said the Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing a behind-the-scenes diplomatic matter.

Russia, Belarus, Slovenia, Thailand and the European Union’s executive arm also were among the latest to receive invitations.

It’s unclear how many leaders have been asked to join the board, and the large number of invitations being sent out, including to countries that don’t get along, has raised questions about the board’s mandate and decision-making processes. Also unknown is Israel’s potential role on a board in charge of implementing the ceasefire agreement that directly involves them.

A Trump reference in the invitation letters saying that the body would “embark on a bold new approach to resolving global conflict” suggested it could act as a rival to the U.N. Security Council, the most powerful body of the global organization created in the wake of World War II.

France, though, does not plan to join the Board of Peace “at this stage” despite receiving an invitation, a French official close to President Emmanuel Macron said Monday. The issue is raising questions, particularly with regard to respect for the principles and structure of the United Nations, said the official, speaking anonymously in line with the French presidency’s customary practices.

Told late Monday that Macron was unlikely to join, Trump said, “Well, nobody wants him because he’s going to be out of office very soon.”

“I’ll put a 200% tariff on his wines and champagnes and he’ll join,” Trump told reporters in



Florida before a flight back to Washington. “But he doesn’t have to join.”

Israeli soldiers take up positions during an army raid in the West Bank city of Hebron Monday.

Morocco’s King Mohammed VI accepted a spot Monday, becoming the first Arab leader and at least the fifth world leader to join. Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Hungary and Argentina also have signed on.

Russian President Vladimir Putin received the invitation, and the Kremlin is now “studying the details” and will seek clarity of “all the nuances” in contacts with the U.S., said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. Trump confirmed Monday night that Putin had been invited.

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko is ready to take part, according to the country’s Foreign Ministry. The Thai Foreign Ministry said it was invited and reviewing the details.

European Commission spokesperson Olof Gill said that Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the commission, would be speaking to other EU leaders about Gaza. Gill didn’t say whether its invitation had been accepted, but that the commission wants “to contribute to a comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict.”

Israeli far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich on Monday dismissed the Board of Peace as a raw deal for Israel and called for its dissolution.

“It is time to explain to the president that his plan is bad for the State of Israel and to cancel it,” Smotrich said. “Gaza is ours, its future will affect our future more than anyone else’s. We will take responsibility for what happens there, impose military administration, and complete the mission.”

Smotrich, a hard-liner who opposed the Gaza ceasefire, even suggested that Israel renew a full-scale offensive on the territory to destroy Hamas if it doesn’t abide by a “short ultimatum for real disarmament and exile.”

Netanyahu said later on Monday that while there are differences with the U.S. about the composition of the advisory committee accompanying the next phase in Gaza, it would not harm his relationship with Trump.

“There will not be Turkish soldiers and Qatari soldiers in the (Gaza) Strip,” he said.

Israeli soldiers take up positions during an army raid in the West Bank city of Hebron Monday.

Trump names Rubio, Blair and others to Gaza ‘board of peace’ as Palestinian committee meets Netanyahu’s office earlier said the formation of an executive board that will work to carry out the vision of the Board of Peace wasn’t coordinated with the Israeli government and “is contrary to its policy” without clarifying its objections. Turkey, a key regional rival, is among those invited to join the committee.

HAM Radio Safety and the Future: Biswadeep Gupta's Strong Message at NEIR 2026 Flag-Off in Manipur



IMPHAL

Imphal saw more than just a rally on Sunday. The flag-off ceremony of the North East Integration Rally 2026 (NEIR) turned into a serious discussion on safety, responsibility, and the future of the Northeast.

At the River Barak flag-off event, Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee and CEO of KRC Foundations, addressed participants with clear and direct words. He praised the dedication of the rally members and personally handed over registration kits. He said the real strength of any movement lies in its people.



You can't help what you feel, but you can help how you behave

Speaking like a guide rather than a formal speaker, Gupta said success is never easy. Life is full

of hurdles. Obstacles are normal. What matters is sincerity and hard work. Without dedication, he said, no goal can last.

He stressed the need for proper documentation and technical planning for growth and development. A casual approach, he warned, leads nowhere. Action is stronger than words. Keeping work pending only slows progress.

Raising concern about the region's future, Gupta said KRC Foundations is not a small organisation. It employs around 5,000 people and works in many sectors, including adventure sports and disaster management. Its teams often operate in remote and difficult areas.

His tone grew serious while speaking about disasters. The Northeast falls under Seismic Zone 6, a high-risk earthquake zone. During disasters, communication systems fail first. Mobile towers collapse. Networks go silent. Panic spreads.

"We depend too much on smartphones," Gupta said. "When towers fall, phones become useless."

He said people then have no way to tell others they are safe or ask for help. This is where HAM Radio becomes vital.

Gupta explained that HAM Radio, or Amateur Radio, works even when all other systems fail. It needs no mobile network or recharge. It is legal, reliable, and works for a lifetime once licensed. He said pilots, astronauts, and disaster response teams rely on it. A live HAM Radio demonstration was held, which drew strong interest from participants.

He added that the Government of India conducts an examination to legally operate HAM Radio. To support this, KRC Foundations offers a 10-day training programme, both online and offline, in collaboration with Tripura HAM Radio.

Gupta issued a clear warning not to use HAM Radio illegally. Discipline and responsibility, he

said, are as important as technology.

Other speakers also highlighted that real connectivity is not only about devices. Human relationships, trust, and coordination matter most. They spoke about the role of National Highways in connecting the Northeast for trade, emergency response, and unity.

The NEIR 2026 flag-off thus became more than a formal event. It served as a reminder about preparedness, planning, and acting before disaster strikes. The message was simple. Progress needs planning. Safety needs knowledge. And when silence follows a disaster,

HAM Radio may be the only voice left. It was also announced that NEIR will collaborate with the Cosmos Festival in Manipur. Held annually at Naamai Zho in Senapati district, the festival celebrates blooming cosmos flowers, local culture, music, food, and eco-tourism.

SPACE FOR YOU ONLY

Rs. 150/- per day

PLACEMENT

Fresher, job seekers can register with KRC Placements. Send resume to - 5eforsuccess@gmail.com To source candidates, organisation can contact KRC Placements at info@krctimes.com For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/krctimesplacements Apply here: https://bit.ly/KRCPlacementForm

VOLUNTEERS REGISTERS @ NEIR 2026

We are looking for volunteers across NE & West Bengal Interested candidates (College students, youths) can register at https://northeastintegrationrally.in/Volunteer_Registration.aspx, send an email: neintegrationrally@gmail.com

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Business establishments, educational institutions, individual service providers etc. can enlist themselves or advertise their products or services at the most reasonable cost in InfoCom Diary. Send your details to InfoCom Solutions at: info@krctimes.com Submit Here: https://bit.ly/InfoComDiaryForm

STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP

Students can apply for a three-months internship with KRC Foundation. During the internship the student can get an opportunity to work on a live project. On successful completion the student is awarded a certificate. Apply to 5E for Success: 5eforsuccess@gmail.com For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/krctimesinternship or www.krctimes.com/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship

NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

Participate in NE India Writing Star Contest and get your writings published. Eligibility: From Class VI onwards. Each participant receives a digital participation certificate. Send articles at: info@krctimes.com For Details Visit: https://bit.ly/NEIndiaWritingStarContest www.krctimes.com/campaigns-csr/ne-india-writing-star-contest

CONNECT@ KRC TIMES



KRC TIMES

To engage with KRC TIMES, please use the following e-mails and WhatsApp Nos: For News: krctimes@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313 For Advertisement: info@krctimes.com / WP: 9330830083 For Subscription: krctimes@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313 Editor: biswadeep.gupta@gmail.com / WP: 8721838313

IMPHAL HOSTS NEIR 2026 SENDS MESSAGE OF PEACE AND UNITY



OUR CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL

Imphal hosted a major cultural and unity-focused event on January 20 with the arrival of the North East Integration Rally 2026. The rally, organised by KRC Foundation, brought together people around the core message of peace, progress, and prosperity, with strong stress on unity across the Northeast. The day began at 9 am with a reception and flag-off ceremony at Sekmai, near the SBI branch on NHS Koirengei Road. From there, the rally moved through important city points, including Kangla Western Gate and Kwakeithel. The route marked a symbolic journey through Imphal, drawing attention from locals along the way.

Later in the morning, the rally was received at the Imphal Peace Museum at Maibam Lotpa Ching in Bishnupur. The session, held from 10.30 am to 12 pm, focused on the theme "Where History Meets Harmony". It highlighted



shared history, cultural roots, and the idea of peaceful coexistence.

Imphal Peace Mission director Haobam Joyremba gave the welcome speech. He said the event sends a strong message of integration. He called it very important for the re-

gion. He said the rally is not about how far it travels, but about how it connects people. The North East is very diverse, and that makes the rally more meaningful.

Joyremba said integration does not mean everyone must be the same. It means respecting one another. It means having empathy and being ready to listen. He also spoke about the Imphal Peace Museum and how it began. The museum was founded in 2019, marking the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Imphal.

The reception ceremony of the rally was organised in collaboration with the Imphal Peace Museum and partner groups. In the afternoon, the celebrations continued with the NEIR Fest at Gandhi Memorial Hall on B.T. Road. Held from 3 pm to 6 pm, the fest featured cultural performances and community interaction. The event was organised with ATINGA and supported by goertrip.com.

Organisers said the rally aimed to build stronger bonds among the Northeastern states and promote peace through culture, dialogue, and public participation. The Imphal chapter of NEIR 2026 concluded with a clear message of unity and harmony for the region.

Biswadeep Gupta, managing director and CEO of The KRC Foundations, advocate Kh. Gajendra Singh, Prof. Dr. Sukumal Deb and others were present.



BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM



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



11 JAN
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.
 Includes: MOUs, and 20 general discussion topics for development, awareness, awareness, environment, and awareness programs.
 Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
 Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, climate and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Basin Planning & Geography, river flow and sedimentation in River Barak, Climate Change.



JAN'25
Online Global Fest
 All can participate online and send a video clip on Poems, Songs and Dance Performances, Bengali, English, Hindi & Manipuri. Last Date: 31st December 2024.



10 JAN
Media Conclave
 Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'.
 Media Conclave: Workshops, seminars, masterclasses, corporate HR, speakers, panel, speakers, members.

Barak Festival

Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion




CONTACT:
 WP: 0721300019
info@krcfoundation.org



PAINTING CARNIVAL
NE CULTURAL FEST
E-SPORTS
FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION
 BOOK CLUB | AWARDS | BOOK | NEW BARRACK | RECORDS

10-12 JAN
Science Studio
 Real a glimpse of Science to its new ways!
 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'

Barak Festival 2025

Band Night 10 JAN

Musical Night 11 JAN



CONTACT:
 WP: 0721300019
info@krcfoundation.org



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

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



5E SUCCESS
STUDENT INTERNSHIP
 Discover valuable experience and learn more about the industry.

- Outreach Executive
- Event Management
- Programme Coordinator

APPLY NOW | WP: 0721300019 | www.krcfoundation.org

10-12 JAN
Book Bank
 #ItsLike Campaign Book Bank | 100 books | 100000+ users | 100000+ books

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

Painting Carnival
 Water Colour and Oil and Saw Paper Campaign