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PERSPECTIVE
The grass isn't greener on the other side. It's greener where you water it.

Meghalaya CM vows strict action over coal mine blast

GUWAHATI



Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday said his government would take strict action against those responsible for the coal mine explosion in East Jaintia Hills district that claimed at least 18 lives on Thursday, reiterating that illegal mining will not be tolerated in the state.

Sangma said two Cabinet ministers have been deputed to the blast site to assess the situation on the ground. They have been directed to coordinate with local authorities, review rescue operations, oversee relief measures, and ensure law and order in the area.

The Chief Minister said police have been instructed to initiate stringent legal action against all individuals involved in the illegal mining activity that led to the tragedy. Announcing relief measures, Sangma said the Meghalaya government will provide ₹3 lakh as ex gratia to the families of each deceased worker.

Following the incident, the Assam government confirmed that three workers from the state were among those killed in the blast. Authorities in Assam and Meghalaya are coordinating closely to verify the identities of all victims and ensure timely assistance to affected families.

WHO SAID WHAT



The tripartite agreement signed between the Govt of India, Govt of Nagaland and ENPO is a giant step towards fulfilling Modi Ji's vision of an insurgency-free, discord-free and developed Northeast. ~ Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

PM Modi Terms Eastern Nagaland Pact 'Historic', Vows Development, Peace and Stability

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hailed the newly signed tripartite agreement on Eastern Nagaland as "historic", saying it would strengthen development, ensure long-term stability and open up new opportunities for people in the region.

The agreement, signed on February 5 by the Centre, the Nagaland government and the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO), aims to fast-track development in Eastern Nagaland while promoting peace, progress and inclusive growth in the North East, the Prime Minister said.

Calling it "a historic agreement indeed", Modi said the pact would enhance the development trajectory of Eastern Nagaland and "open new avenues of opportunity and prosperity for the people", underscoring the Centre's commitment to lasting peace and balanced growth in the region.

The agreement, signed in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, lays the foundation for the creation of the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA). The proposed authority will cover six eastern districts - Tuensang, Mon,



Kiphire, Longleng, Noklak and Shamator - and will be empowered to function across 46 subjects.

A key feature of the pact is adminis-

trative decentralisation. It provides for the establishment of a mini-secretariat for the FNTA, headed by senior state officials, along with a framework for sharing

MHA approves Rs.196.61 crore for police modernisation in Manipur



IMPHAL

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved Rs196.61 crore for the modernisation of policing in Manipur, with a focus on strengthening law and order in the violence-affected border state.

According to an official statement issued on Friday, the funds will be utilised to enhance security infrastructure, mobility, forensic capabilities, and smart policing initiatives. The allocation is aimed at significantly upgrading the operational efficiency and technological capacity of the Manipur Police.

As part of the modernisation drive, the Cyber Crime Helpline is now fully operational, a dedicated Cyber Forensic Division has been established, and CCTV surveillance

coverage has been expanded to 33 remote locations across the state.

Police infrastructure development has also seen notable progress. More than ₹54 crore has been sanctioned for the construction and renovation of police buildings, barracks, residential quarters, and peace camps. In addition, 16 major projects have been approved under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI). The state has also inaugurated a new Police Headquarters at Mantripukhri and a Police Museum in Imphal.

During the 2025-26 financial year, substantial investments were made to strengthen fire and emergency services. These included the procurement of modern rescue equipment, training of over 63,000 personnel and volunteers, and the conduct of more than 1,500 mock drills across the state.

The enhanced preparedness proved crucial during recent floods, when timely response by emergency services led to the rescue of over 1,000 people and animals, along with the delivery of essential relief services.

To meet the requirements of the new criminal laws, the Directorate of Forensic Sciences has been further strengthened with mobile forensic vans, advanced laboratory facilities, a DNA Analysis Wing, cyber forensic infrastructure, and additional manpower. As a result of these measures, authorities reported that 90 per cent of narcotics-related cases and 96 per cent of long-pending crime scene investigation cases have been disposed of, marking a significant improvement in the state's criminal justice delivery system.



ister Nemcha Kipgen, and legislators L.M. Khaute and Ngursanglur Sanate. The move was widely viewed by protesters as a betrayal of the community's aspirations. The agitation took a dramatic turn when two protesters allegedly attempted self-immolation as a form of protest. Police personnel intervened in time and prevented the incident from turning fatal, officials said.

By evening, the situation worsened, with sporadic scuffles reported around 6 pm despite the presence of a large number of security personnel in

the area. While authorities managed to avert major casualties, several protesters sustained injuries during the clashes, sources said.

As of the latest reports, the situation in Tuibong and surrounding areas remained tense, with security forces maintaining a strong presence and continuing efforts to restore complete control and prevent further violence. Earlier, sections of the Kuki community had reportedly warned Kuki MLAs against supporting the popular government if it was formed. Thursday's developments underscore the deepening political and social fault lines in Churachandpur, adding to concerns over stability in an already fragile security environment in the state.

Clashes between security forces and a mob in Manipur's Tuibong area continued for nearly nine hours, from around 6 pm on Thursday till approximately 3 am on Friday, prompting

authorities to impose a total shutdown in the affected areas. A protest against the swearing-in of Manipur's new Deputy Chief Ministers, Nemcha Kipgen and Losii Dikho, turned violent on Thursday as security forces clashed with a mob in Churachandpur district. The unrest reportedly began in the Tuibong Main Market area, where hundreds of young protesters attempted to push security forces back to their barracks. The clash erupted near the Tuibong Forest Gate area, where a mob allegedly began pelting stones at security personnel deployed in the region.

The intensity of the stone-pelting forced security forces to initially retreat from their positions. Later, security forces regrouped and began using teargas shells in an attempt to disperse the mob. While the shelling temporarily scattered the protesters, they later regrouped and launched repeated attacks on the forces, esca-

lating the confrontation. Throughout the night, teargas shelling continued intermittently as the mob regrouped several times after dispersal. At around 11:00 pm, security personnel resorted to a lathi charge to push back the mob. However, the situation remained volatile as the mob once again regrouped and resumed attacks on the forces. The youngsters' anger and resentment overflowed as they were taken to believe that three Kuki Zomi MLAs are joining the Manipur Government, with Nemcha having been sworn in as Deputy Chief Minister, and another two, LM Khaute and Ngursanglur, due to be sworn in.

Assam Rifles officials, including the Commander of the 27 Sectors, were deployed to calm the situation, but initial attempts yielded little success. Eventually, security forces temporarily retreated but maintained positions, while the protesters pressed forward.

Rehabilitation of Ethnic Violence Survivors to Be New Manipur Govt's First Focus: CM

IMPHAL

Newly sworn-in Manipur Chief Minister Y. Khenchand Singh on Wednesday said that rehabilitating people displaced by the state's prolonged ethnic violence would be the top priority of his government.

Addressing reporters a day after taking office, Singh said the government would soon prepare a comprehensive roadmap to ensure the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes across both hill and valley districts.

"Our first priority will be to address the problems faced by IDPs in the hills as well as the valley," the Chief Minister said. "The biggest challenge is that thousands of people are still unable to return to their homes. The government will formulate a clear roadmap very soon to facilitate their safe return."

Manipur has been grappling with sustained ethnic unrest for months, which has led to large-scale displacement and forced thousands of families to take shelter in relief camps across several districts. Many displaced residents continue to live in temporary facilities amid concerns over security, livelihood, and access to basic services.

Singh, who took oath as the Chief Minister on February 4, inherits the task of restoring stability and rebuilding trust in a state deeply affected by violence and displacement. Officials said the proposed rehabilitation plan is expected to focus on security arrangements, restoration of damaged homes, and measures to enable displaced families to resume normal life.

The Chief Minister reiterated that addressing humanitarian concerns arising from the conflict would remain central to the government's immediate agenda as it works towards lasting peace and normalcy in the state.

Fringe groups behind fresh Manipur violence, says Bimol Akoijam

IMPHAL

Congress MP A. Bimol Akoijam said the recent incidents of fresh violence in Manipur are being triggered by radical fringe elements opposed to a peaceful resolution of the ongoing crisis, asserting that the disturbances are not widespread but confined to specific pockets.

Reacting to the developments, Akoijam said such elements have been active since the outbreak of the conflict and continue to undermine efforts to restore normalcy in the state.

"There are radical elements who are against a peaceful resolution. This is how the violence started. It is not widespread violence but limited to certain pockets. These are fringe elements, and it is unfortunate," the Congress leader said.

Akoijam stressed that while grievances may exist among communities, they must be addressed through dialogue and constitutional mechanisms. "Their concerns should be addressed peacefully. Nobody should be allowed to take the law into their own hands," he said. Calling for a more sincere and transparent approach from the Centre, the Congress MP urged the Government of India to ensure that the Manipur government receives the institutional support required to function effectively amid the crisis.

Referring to the recent change in leadership in the state, Akoijam said the new Chief Minister must uphold constitutional values and protect the autonomy of democratic institutions. "The Government of India must be honest in its approach and ensure that the state



conditions has all the necessary conditions to function properly. The new Chief Minister should have the constitutional morality to defend the autonomy of the Constitution," he added.

Meanwhile, Manipur Minister Govindas Konthoujam said the situation in Churachandpur district remains sensitive but under control. "As of now, one cannot say the situation is completely normal, as there are some disturbances. However, the situation is under control," he said.

Konthoujam added that expressions of discontent were taking place without large-scale violence. "They are not happy, so they are expressing their discontent. No violent incident took place yesterday. Security arrangements are in place. Some people are peace-loving, and gradually things will improve," the minister said.

Manipur has continued to witness sporadic incidents of unrest even as security forces remain deployed in sensitive areas. Political leaders across parties have increasingly called for restraint, dialogue, and adherence to constitutional processes to achieve lasting peace in the state.

Six labourers from Assam's Cachar killed, five injured in Meghalaya illegal coal mine blast

SILCHAR

At least six labourers from Assam's Cachar district were killed and five others seriously injured in an explosion followed by a fire at an illegal coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district on February 5, triggering grief and outrage across the Barak Valley.

The victims had travelled from Cachar to Meghalaya in search of livelihood opportunities and were engaged in coal mining inside the unauthorised mine when the blast occurred.

Among the deceased were two brothers, Anwar Hussain and Dilwar Hussain, residents of Sarishakuri village in Cachar district, who had migrated to support their families. The other victims were identified as Purunjay Vaishnav, Nikunj Vaishnav, Faruk Ahmed, and Krishna Vaishnav, all from different parts of Cachar.

Five labourers from Cachar-Saidur Rahman, Ramchandra Vaishnav, Niman Uddin, Krishnadhan Vaishnav, and Bishnudan Vaishnav-sustained serious injuries in the blast and were

shifted to Silchar Medical College and Hospital for treatment. Hospital authorities said two of the injured remain in critical condition and are undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit.

The tragedy has devastated several villages in Cachar, with grieving families mourning the loss of their primary earners. Relatives of the victims said the men were forced to take up hazardous work due to a lack of employment opportunities in the Barak Valley, compelling many to migrate to coal mines in neighbouring states despite the known risks.

Following the incident, Katigora MLA Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha visited the homes of the deceased, conveyed condolences on behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and assured the families of government assistance and support.

The incident has once again drawn attention to the continued operation of illegal rat-hole coal mines in Meghalaya and the extreme dangers faced by migrant labourers, despite repeated warnings and official crackdowns.



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BANGLADESH AT A CROSSROADS

As Bangladesh moves towards its critical February 12 elections, the political atmosphere in Dhaka is increasingly overshadowed by anxieties about external influence particularly the growing visibility of Western diplomats and international NGOs in shaping the country's interim governance framework.

The Interim Administration led by Chief Adviser Professor Mohammed Yunus was expected to act as a neutral bridge toward democratic elections. Instead, across political, academic, and strategic circles, concerns are mounting that unelected advisers within the interim set-up are exercising authority far beyond their constitutional remit, allegedly under the influence of American and European diplomatic missions.

The unusually active engagement of the US Ambassador with senior interim advisers, military leadership, and leaders of political formations such as the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami has fuelled unease. While diplomatic engagement is neither unusual nor objectionable, critics argue that the intent and depth of this involvement raise legitimate questions. The concern is not dialogue-but direction.

Several Bangladeshi analysts and civil society voices believe Western powers may be inclined towards engineering a weak or fractured post-election political arrangement, possibly in the form of a coalition or so-called "national unity government." Such an outcome, they argue, would enable sustained external leverage over Dhaka's decision-making while facilitating the political mainstreaming of Islamist forces, particularly Jamaat-e-Islami-an outcome viewed with deep apprehension by large sections of Bangladeshi society.

European actors, though less overt, are widely perceived to be aligned with this approach. Professor Yunus is increasingly seen by critics as a preferred Western interlocutor, with speculation that a hung parliament could help preserve his post-election relevance. Whether fully accurate or not, these perceptions point to a serious trust deficit between the interim administration and the public.

Economic Anxiety Meets Political Uncertainty

These political concerns are now intersecting with a far more tangible threat: economic vulnerability, particularly in Bangladesh's garment sector-the backbone of its economy.

The recently concluded India-European Union Free Trade Agreement, expected to come into force in 2027, marks a turning point. Once implemented, Indian apparel exports will enjoy permanent duty-free access to the EU market, eliminating the existing 12 percent tariff. Bangladesh, by contrast, faces a far less certain future.

Bangladesh's duty-free access to the EU under its Least Developed Country (LDC) status will expire three years after its graduation later this year. Without securing GSP Plus status or negotiating a bilateral FTA with Brussels, Bangladeshi garment exports could face tariffs of around 12.5 percent from 2029-a potentially devastating blow.

The EU currently absorbs over 50 percent of Bangladesh's total readymade garment exports, worth nearly \$20 billion annually. India's structural advantages-its raw cotton base, scale, logistics depth, and state support-mean that price-sensitive segments once dominated by Bangladesh could steadily shift away.

Industry leaders and economists have described the India-EU deal as a wake-up call. With global oversupply, shrinking margins, and buyers already squeezing suppliers, Bangladesh's export model-heavily dependent on preferential access-is under unprecedented strain. Political instability and external overreach only compound investor anxiety.

A Changing Regional Equation,
From a regional perspective, overt or covert Western meddling risks destabilising not just Bangladesh but South Asia as a whole. Other external actors are already recalibrating their presence: Pakistan has reportedly regained access within segments of Bangladesh's security establishment; Turkey is expanding defence cooperation; China continues to deepen its footprint across infrastructure, industry, academia, and defence.

Notably, India is no longer at the centre of Bangladesh's public political discourse. Once criticised for over-identifying with a single political formation, New Delhi has adopted a markedly restrained posture since August 2024. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's foreign policy has grown firmer, clearer, and less interventionist-focused on strategic interests rather than political engineering.

India's stated position that it will work with any government elected through a free and fair democratic process has been quietly welcomed across party lines in Bangladesh. This sentiment was visible at the Indian High Commission's recent Republic Day reception in Dhaka, attended by a broad cross-section of political and social representatives.

"History shows that political transitions shaped by external pressure may serve short-term interests, but they invariably weaken sovereignty and destabilise regions."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"What is important is seldom urgent, and what is urgent is seldom important."

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

INDIA-EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP



HARSHA KAKAR

The India-EU free trade agreement has been dubbed as the 'mother of all deals,' by both India and the EU. A part of the agreement was the Security and Defence Partnership (SDP), inked by defence minister Rajnath Singh and his counterpart, EU High Representative, Kaja Kallas. India becomes the third nation in Asia, after Japan and South Korea, to have such an agreement with the EU. The defence agreement was one of the 13 outcomes flowing from the India-EU summit.

The SDP covers a dedicated security partnership aimed at strengthening defence manufacturing, supply chains as also joint engagement in the Indian Ocean. The EU will also post a liaison officer at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region in Gurugram. The centre already has liaison officers from 12 partner nations including the US and UK. Cooperation in the maritime domain would include joint exercises with an emphasis on anti-piracy operations as also securing critical sea lanes. Possibly later joint exercises involving other services would commence.

For Europe, banking on the US for its security is no longer an option. Trump's insults to the EU and its leaders have been increasing mainly because Europe is dependent on the US for its security as also defence equipment. It has to create capabilities for its own defence as also diversify its defence procurements if it seeks to remain relevant. For India, a nation with active borders with two nuclear powered adversaries, enhancing capabilities in defence with updated technology and funding has to be a continuous process. Hence, for both, the SDP is a win-win.

The agreement specifically mentions collaboration in maritime security, cyber and space, hybrid threats, counterterrorism, capacity building and defence industry cooperation. It also institutionalizes the India-EU annual Security and Defence Dialogue. The joint statement mentions that both sides will

consult each other on defence initiatives while exploring possibilities for collaboration.

In Oct last year, India and the US had signed a 10-year defence agreement to include technology sharing, maritime security and strategic industrial partnership, however, India remains hesitant on procuring from the US based on high costs, delays as also the changing global landscape, where Indo-US ties appear to be stalling. India too needs to diversify its procurements.

Kaja Kallas rightly stated, 'The signing of the Security and Defence Partnership is a milestone, and we can build on that. There is so much more we can work together in the multilateral fora, as well as bilaterally, to further develop defence cooperation.' Rajnath Singh in his response mentioned, 'India's defence industry can play a meaningful role in the EU's 'ReArm initiative', especially when the EU is seeking to rapidly diversify suppliers and de-risk dependencies.'

The ReArm initiative is aimed at creating a fund of upto 800 billion Euros for defence spending by 2030. It includes 150 billion Euros for joint procurement intending to enhance capabilities thereby reducing dependencies on the US. The EU would be spending around 3.5% of their GDP on defence by 2030. The Indo-EU annual security dialogue will oversee the implementation of the agreement and collaboration.

India's defence procurements from Europe have been on the increase in recent years, especially since New Delhi began reducing dependency on Russia, largely due to delays on account of the ongoing conflict, Israel's involvement in Gaza and the unpredictability of the US as a supplier. India has also been seeking technology from the west, which nations have been hesitant to share.

India has already procured 36 Rafale aircraft from France, 24 more are on order as also it is expected to sign an agreement for an additional 114 aircraft, including manufacturing within the country.

SAFRAN is partnering with DRDO/HAL to co-develop a new 120-140 KN high-thrust engine for the Advanced Medium Combat aircraft. India is also close to coming to an agreement to manufacture submarines in partnership with Germany and is already manufacturing C-295MW transport aircraft in an agreement with Spain. Currently the navy is procuring heavy weight torpedoes from Italy.

The EU has laid down a 2030 roadmap to cater for capabilities to counter threats emerging from its East (Russia) as also enhancing long range weapon system production and an air and drone shield. Indian industries including Bharat Dynamics, BEL, Garden Reach Shipbuilders, HAL, Larsen and Toubro, Tata Advanced Systems, and Mahindra Defence already have linkages with European industries and are well positioned to partner with EU companies including them investing in technology and capital. India can be a major partner of the EU in joint development and production.

Under SDP, Indian defence industry would also be eligible for funding under SAFE (Security Action for Europe) funds. SAFE is the platform under which loans are provided to member states to boost defence production and industrial capacity. This would benefit Aatmanirbhar Bharat. India is increasing FDI in defence to 74% which could benefit foreign investors.

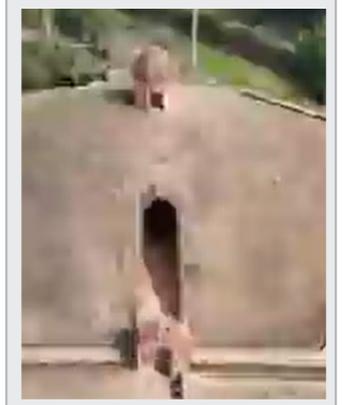
The EU depleted its ammunition and weapon stocks in supporting Ukraine in its ongoing conflict with Russia and needs immediate replenishment. Indian defence manufacturers produce everything from missiles, ammunition, drones, radars as also armoured vehicles. India is already exporting to a number of countries, including few in Europe. This would now be a formal process.

However, India would not desire that its products are utilized in the Russo-Ukraine conflict. Operation Sindoor displayed the capability of Indian manufactured equipment. An added factor is low-

er cost of production in India than in the west, with no compromise on quality. However, priority must remain on completing negotiations on Security of Information, which would form the basis of cooperation. Negotiations on this are expected to commence immediately.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Assam is at the precipice of an existential challenge. We are racing ahead of time to fortify icons which celebrate our timeless glory. Today in such a move, I unveiled the UNESCO plaque at the world heritage Moidam in Charaideo. This would have been impossible without the personal intervention of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji. The people of Assam will always be grateful to Adarniya Pradhan Mantri ji for his commitment towards Assam and its icons. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM



There could be a downside too. India's defence partnership with the EU implies India's proximity to NATO. While it would be a benefit, it could impact ties with Russia. Further, the EU would desire India move away from Russia, especially in defence collaboration, as Moscow is its main security concern. This is where India would need to balance its ties.

Stock prices of defence manufacturers have witnessed an upswing since the SDP was inked. Overall, the agreement would enhance capabilities as also technology levels of the Indian defence industry while providing EU with their defence requirements at competitive prices. The agreement is a win-win for both sides.

The author is Major General (Retd)

Thadou Inpi Manipur Calls on Deputy CM Nemcha Kipgen to Assert Thadou Identity, Distance Herself from Kuki Politics

IMPHAL

Thadou Inpi Manipur (TIM), the apex body of the Thadou community, on Thursday issued a strong statement urging newly appointed Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen to clearly assert her Thadou identity, disassociate herself from Kuki political organisations and separatist narratives, and uphold the territorial integrity of Manipur.

In a media release, TIM congratulated Kipgen on her appointment, describing it as a historic milestone as she becomes the first member of the Thadou tribe to hold the constitutional office of Deputy Chief Minister in the state.

However, the organisation expressed serious concern over what it described as her visible alignment with Kuki-centric narratives since May 3, 2023. TIM cautioned that such positioning risks leading legitimacy to what it

termed separatist and supremacist ideologies that threaten Manipur's unity.

The statement asserted that there is no constitutional recognition of "Kuki" as a tribe in Manipur, apart from the controversial Any Kuki Tribes (AKT) category, which recorded a population of 28,324 in the 2011 Census. It emphasised that Kipgen is a certified member of the Thadou tribe and was elected from the General (50-Kangpokpi) Assembly constituency, not from the AKT category.

"As a constitutional authority, she must immediately and unequivocally disassociate herself from Kuki organisations, social bodies and political movements that espouse separatism," TIM said, adding that any continued association would be incompatible with her role as Deputy Chief Minister.

Referring to the Suspension of Operations (SoO) Agreement, the organisation underlined that the pact explicitly



safeguard the territorial integrity of Manipur. Citing Kipgen's acknowledged personal association with the Kuki National Front (KNF), a United People's Front (UPF) constituent and

SoO signatory, TIM said this places an enhanced responsibility on her to uphold the agreement "in both letter and spirit".

The statement warned that any ac-

tion, rhetoric or political posture that promotes disunity, separatism or exclusivist politics would amount to a grave breach of public trust.

At the same time, TIM stressed that there should be no intimidation or obstruction of the Deputy Chief Minister's presence in Imphal. It said a Thadou-Meitei understanding has enabled Thadous to move freely and without fear across the valley, and cautioned against disturbing peace through misrepresentation or misidentification of identity.

"Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen's identity must be stated with clarity - she is Thadou, not Kuki, and not a representative of Kuki political ideology," the organisation said, calling on her to reject separatist agendas and embrace her distinct Thadou identity within a united, multi-ethnic Manipur.

TIM further said that, as Deputy Chief Minister, Kipgen is expected to

function from Imphal and discharge her constitutional responsibilities without ambiguity or parallel political loyalties.

The organisation urged her to commit to defending Thadou human rights, particularly against what it described as Kuki supremacist forces, and to strictly adhere to the SoO Agreement while rejecting any interpretation that advances demands for Separate Administration or Union Territory status.

Clarifying the scope of the SoO framework, TIM said the phrase "negotiated political settlement within the framework of the Constitution of India" must not be interpreted as permitting the fragmentation of Manipur, reiterating that the agreement mandates adherence to the Constitution, existing laws and the state's territorial integrity.

"Her office is constitutional. Her responsibility is public. Her accountability is non-negotiable," the statement concluded.

MNF, Congress Demand CBI Probe Into Rs.187.9-Crore Land Deal in Mizoram

AIZAWL

A political storm has erupted in Mizoram over an alleged ₹187.9-crore land acquisition deal, with both the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Congress demanding a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into what they claim were serious financial irregularities and procedural violations.

The controversy follows recent media reports on the acquisition process, which opposition parties allege was fast-tracked under the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government led by Chief Minister Lalduhuma by bypassing mandatory legal safeguards.

The Congress has filed a complaint directly with a central investigating agency in Aizawl, while the MNF submitted a detailed petition to Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena, who also serves as the state's Chief Vigilance Officer, seeking an independent inquiry into the transaction.

In its representation, the MNF alleged that the land deal, valued at ₹187.90 crore, was finalised under the present ZPM dispensation and involved grave financial and procedural lapses.

The party claimed that intermediaries benefited disproportionately, while actual landowners were either underpaid or excluded altogether.

According to the MNF, compensation amounting to nearly ₹187 crore was allegedly paid to two individuals who did not own land in the acquired area, while eight genuine landowners received no compensation. The opposition further accused the government of diluting protections under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

Meghalaya Police File Suo Motu FIR After 18 Killed in Illegal Coal Mine Blast in East Jaintia Hills

SHILLONG

Meghalaya Police have registered a suo motu FIR following a deadly explosion at an unauthorised coal mine in East Jaintia Hills district that claimed 18 lives, marking a significant legal move against persistent illegal mining activities in the region. The case has been registered at Khliehriat Police Station under multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, and the Explosives Substances Act, police officials said.

Authorities launched an investigation after receiving reports of the blast at Mynsyngat in the Thangsko area, which falls under the jurisdiction of Umpleng Police Outpost. Senior police officers rushed to the spot to verify the incident and coordinate emergency and rescue operations.

Rescue teams recovered all 18 bodies from the collapsed mine during operations that continued throughout the day. One injured

person was pulled out of the debris and initially taken to Sutnga Community Health Centre before being referred to a higher medical facility for advanced treatment.

Teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and the Special Rescue Team remain deployed at the site as recovery and safety operations continue in the difficult terrain. Superintendent of Police Vikash Kumar appealed to the public to share any information related to individuals involved in the illegal mining operation. He assured that the identity of informants would be kept confidential and said appropriate rewards would be offered for credible leads.

The incident has once again drawn attention to ongoing concerns over unregulated coal mining in Meghalaya's coal-bearing districts, where illegal extraction has continued despite repeated enforcement drives and regulatory measures.

UPPL to contest all Bodoland Assembly seats, open to alliances: Pramod Boro

KOKRAJHAR

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) president Pramod Boro on February 4 announced that his party will contest all Assembly seats in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) in the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, along with a few constituencies outside the region.

Boro said the decision was guided by strong public opinion in favour of the party expanding its electoral footprint. "People's opinion is clear that UPPL should contest the election. Therefore, we have decided to contest all seats in Bodoland and a few outside the region," he said while outlining the party's poll strategy.

The UPPL chief stated that the party remains open



to electoral alliances and is currently holding discussions with multiple political parties. "We are open for alliance and we will discuss it with other political

parties," Boro added.

Clarifying UPPL's current political positioning, Boro said the party continues to be in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Par-

ty (BJP) at both the state and national levels, at least until the Model Code of Conduct comes into force. He noted that talks are underway not only with the BJP but also with other parties to explore possible seat-sharing arrangements.

"At the same time, we are fully prepared to contest the elections on our own if the situation demands," Boro said, signalling UPPL's readiness to go solo if alliance negotiations fail to reach a consensus.

The UPPL emerged as a dominant political force in the Bodoland Territorial Region following the signing of the 2020 Bodo Peace Accord and currently leads the BTC administration. Boro's announcement indicates the party's intention to play a more assertive role in Assam's state-level politics ahead of the forthcoming Assembly polls.

Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Assam to be 'very extensive' after polls: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on February 4 said that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the state's electoral rolls will be conducted in a "very extensive and proper manner" after the conclusion of the upcoming Assembly elections, asserting that it will be far more comprehensive than the revision exercise currently underway.

Speaking to reporters following an official programme at Sonari, Sarma said Assam is presently undergoing a Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls, but a full-fledged SIR will be taken up at a later stage. "Here, the SIR will be very extensive and properly done. I had requested the Election Commission to conduct the SIR even now, but due to the non-publication of the NRC, they opted for a Special Revision. We welcome the SIR," the Chief



Minister said.

Sarma's remarks come amid the continued uncertainty surrounding the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam. The final NRC, published on August 31, 2019, excluded 19,06,657 individuals, while 3,11,21,004 names were included out

of a total of 3,30,27,661 applicants. However, the NRC has not yet been officially notified by the Registrar General of India, a factor the Chief Minister said influenced the Election Commission's decision to defer the SIR for now.

According to official figures,

the draft electoral roll prepared after the ongoing Special Revision shows a total of 2,52,01,624 electors, reflecting a 1.35 per cent increase compared to the previous final roll published in January 2025. Between January 6 and December 27 last year, the rolls recorded 7,86,841 additions and 4,47,196 deletions.

During the revision process, officials identified 4,78,992 deceased electors, 5,23,680 electors who had shifted their place of residence, and 53,619 instances of multiple enrolments. The Election Commission, however, clarified that these names have not yet been removed from the rolls. Any deletions or corrections will be carried out only after formal applications are submitted during the ongoing claims and objections period.

The final electoral roll for Assam is scheduled to be published on February 10, 2026.

Heritage Sites at Mayang Imphal: MHRC Directs Protective Steps After Prolonged Administrative Inaction

IMPHAL

A citizen representation seeking statutory protection of two historically significant heritage sites of Mayang Imphal—Sati Khongnang (Sapam Leikai) and Meikibi Khongnang (Konchak Maning Leikai)—has resulted in formal directions by the Manipur Human Rights Commission (MHRC) to the State Archaeology Department to initiate protective measures. The matter originated with a grievance filed on 21 August 2025 by Asem Roshan Singh, resident of Mayang Imphal, through the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), Ministry of Culture, Government of India, seeking preservation and statutory protection of the two heritage banyan trees of historical, cultural, and women's heritage significance.

Following the grievance, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Aizawl Circle, vide official communication dated 26 August 2025, forwarded the representation to the Superintendent, State Archaeology, Government of Manipur, for necessary action and submission of a report. Despite the official referral, no written inspection report or action-taken communication was conveyed for a considerable period. Although a field visit was subsequently scheduled by the State Archaeology Department, the said visit was postponed on the scheduled day a few hours prior, without assigning any

reason and without communicating a revised date. No further written outcome was thereafter communicated. In view of the prolonged inaction, a complaint was filed before the Manipur Human Rights Commission, which registered the matter as MHRC Complaint Case No. 54/14/15/2025. By an interim order dated 23 December 2025, the Hon'ble Acting Chairperson of the Commission took cognizance of the complaint, noted the cultural and heritage significance of the sites, acknowledged the prompt action of the Ministry of Culture and ASI, and issued notice to the Superintendent, State Archaeology, Government of Manipur, directing submission of a response. Subsequently, after examining the report placed before it, the Hon'ble Acting Chairperson of the Manipur Human Rights Commission, vide order dated 29 January 2026, observed that protection of heritage sites involves statutory procedures including physical survey, verification of historical and cultural value, and examination of land and revenue records. The Commission disposed of the complaint with a direction to the respondent authority to take necessary steps to protect the two historical sites within a period of three months and to submit a compliance report before the Commission.

The Commission's orders place the matter under official monitoring and constitute institutional recognition of the heritage value of Sati Khongnang and Meikibi Khongnang.

MoA Signed to Set Up Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority; Neiphiu Rio Calls It 'Victory for Entire Naga Society'

KOHIMA/NEW DELHI

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio described the signing of a historic Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to establish the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNNTA) as a defining moment in the state's political and developmental journey, calling it a "victory for the entire Naga society."

The MoA was signed in New Delhi on February 5 between the Government of India, the Government of Nagaland and the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO), paving the way for the creation of the FNNTA within the state. The agreement is aimed at promoting inclusive governance and addressing long-standing developmental aspirations of the eastern districts of Nagaland.

Addressing the gathering at the signing ceremony, Rio said the agreement reflected the state government's sustained commitment to equitable, inclusive and region-sensitive development. He termed the FNNTA a major step towards balanced regional growth while strengthening unity within Nagaland.

Quest!

Laughing for 15 minutes has the same health benefits as getting two extra hours of sleep.



"The MoA is the outcome of dialogue, mutual trust and a shared vision for the future," the Chief Minister said, adding that the initiative would ensure that development reaches the doorstep of every citizen

of the state. He emphasised that the agreement should be seen as a symbol of unity rather than division.

Rio expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home

Minister Amit Shah for their leadership and support in facilitating the agreement. He also thanked the Union Home Secretary, senior officials of the Union and state governments, and the Nagaland administrative team led by the Chief Secretary for their coordinated efforts in concluding the negotiations.

The Chief Minister placed special appreciation on the ENPO leadership, including its president, for what he described as constructive engagement throughout the process. He said the agreement addressed the long-standing concerns and aspirations of the people of Eastern Nagaland while strengthening overall development delivery across the state.

Congratulating the people of Eastern Nagaland, Rio said the MoA was not a victory for one region alone but a collective achievement for all Naga tribes. "All Naga tribes join you in celebration today," he said, acknowledging the perseverance and journey of the people of Eastern Nagaland in reaching the milestone.

Reaffirming his government's commitment, the Chief Minister assured full cooperation in ensuring that the objectives of the FNNTA are translated into tangible outcomes on the ground. He also expressed hope that the Government of India would continue to partner with Nagaland in its pursuit of comprehensive and sustainable development.

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‘Good friend in Washington nearing century but PM silent’: Congress as Trump repeats India-Pak claim



NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi after US President Donald Trump repeated his claim that he stopped the conflict between India and Pakistan last year, saying the PM's "good friend in Washington DC" is fast moving to the century mark of stating that he had intervened to halt Operation Sindoor and yet he maintains "complete silence".

The opposition party also lashed out at Modi over his address in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday when he replied to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address, saying he is a prisoner of his own pet hates and answered none of the serious questions raised by the Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge in the Upper House.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The PM revealed yet again last evening in the Rajya Sabha what a huge bundle of insecurities, what a perennial peddler of lies, what a storehouse of prejudices, and what a source of sheer bile and poison he is. One thing is clear. He can continue to proclaim that he is a great man.

But the more he does so, it becomes more and more obvious that he is not and can never be a good man."

"To say that his 97-minute speech was pathetic is to make an understatement. He is a prisoner of his own pet hates. He answered none of the serious questions raised by the LOP in the Rajya Sabha," Ramesh said on X.

Meanwhile "his good friend in Washington DC" is fast moving to the century mark of saying that he had intervened to halt Op Sindoor on May 10, 2025," he said. "And yet the Prime Minister maintains his complete silence on this issue - like he does on his infamous clean-chit to China on June 19, 2020 after over twenty jangams were martyred in Eastern Ladakh," Ramesh said. His remarks come after Trump repeated twice in a single day the claim that he stopped the war between India and Pakistan last year.

"In one year, I've ended eight raging wars, such as (the war between) Cambodia and Thailand, Kosovo and Serbia, Pakistan and India, Israel and Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan," Trump said at the National Prayer Breakfast on Thursday.

Later, in a post on Truth Social, Trump reiterated the

claim that he stopped a nuclear war from breaking out between India and Pakistan.

"The United States is the most powerful country in the world. I completely rebuilt its military in my first term, including new and many refurbished nuclear weapons. I also added Space Force and now, continue to rebuild our military at levels never seen before.

We are even adding battleships, which are 100 times more powerful than the ones that roamed the seas during World War II -- The Iowa, Missouri, Alabama, and others. I have stopped Nuclear Wars from breaking out across the world between Pakistan and India, Iran and Israel, and Russia and Ukraine," Trump posted.

The US President has claimed several times that he stopped the conflict between India and Pakistan.

He has been making the assertion repeatedly, on various platforms in the US and around the world, since May 10 last year when he announced on social media that India and Pakistan agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire after a "long night" of talks mediated by Washington.

Focus not only on marks but also on improving life: PM Modi to students

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday advised students not to waste time on the internet merely because data is cheap in the country and urged them to focus on honing their life and educational skills.

Education should not be a burden, and students should be fully involved in the learning process, as half-hearted education does not lead to success in life, he said while interacting with students during the ninth edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha 2026.

"Our goals should be within reach, but not easily attainable. Tame the mind first, then connect it, and then focus on the subjects you need to study. If you do this, you will always find the student successful," he told students from various parts of the country who had gathered at his residence.

Modi also cautioned students against wasting time on gaming purely for entertainment.

"You may be interested in gaming, but do not indulge in it just to pass time because data is cheap in India. Do not do it for fun. Those who indulge in gaming for money will only be ruined. We should not encourage gambling in the country. I have made a law against online gambling," he said.

However, the Prime Minister noted that gaming can be a skill, as it requires speed and alertness, and can be used for self-development.

He stressed that everyone has their own pattern or style of functioning.

"I have become Prime Minister, yet people still tell me to work in different ways. But everyone has their own pattern. Some people study better in the morning, some at night. Whatever suits you, believe in that. Also take advice, and if it benefits you, then incorporate it into your life," he said.



Modi said he himself had made changes to Pariksha Pe Charcha over the years but had not abandoned its original principles.

"When I started Pariksha Pe Charcha, there was a certain pattern. Gradually, I have been changing it. This time, it was held in different states as well. I changed my approach, but did not abandon the original pattern," he said.

The Prime Minister added that a teacher's effort should be to ensure that their pace is always one step ahead of the student's. He urged students to balance studies, rest, skills and hobbies, calling it the key to growth.

"There are two kinds of skills: life skills and professional skills. Both go hand in hand. Skill begins with

knowledge," he said.

Modi recalled that a leader once called him on his birthday and remarked, "You have completed 75 years; 25 still remain."

"But I do not count the past. I count what remains. So I say to you: do not dwell on the past. Focus on what lies ahead," he said.

Reiterating that education should not be a burden, Modi said students must be fully engaged, as half-hearted education does not lead to a successful life.

"That is why we should not focus only on marks, but on improving life. This goes beyond classrooms and examinations," he said.

The Prime Minister described the interaction as a wonderful discussion on approaching examinations

with confidence and positivity. At the outset, he welcomed students at his residence with an Assamese gamosa.

The ninth edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha was also screened at the Bal Yogi Auditorium in the Parliament premises.

Launched in 2018, Pariksha Pe Charcha began as a town-hall-style interaction with students before evolving into one of India's largest education engagement initiatives. Registrations rose from about 38.8 lakh in 2023 to 2.26 crore in 2024, before reaching 3.53 crore in 2025, a milestone that earned the programme a Guinness World Record.

The ninth edition surpassed the previous record, registering over 4.5 crore participants.

INTERNATIONAL

UK's Starmer didn't know Jeffrey Epstein. But the prime minister's job is under threat



LONDON

Keir Starmer never met Jeffrey Epstein. But the British prime minister's job is under threat because of the fallout from the late sex offender's global web of relationships.

Friendship with Epstein has already brought down a British royal - Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, formerly known as Prince Andrew - and U.K. ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson, fired by Starmer over his links to the financier.

Now new revelations have plunged Starmer's center-left government into turmoil.

The prime minister is facing mounting pressure from within his governing Labour Party over his decision in 2024 to appoint Mandelson, a veteran Labour politician, to the Washington role despite his ties to Epstein.

Just how close those ties were has been exposed in newly released documents that have dominated headlines

in the U.K.

Starmer apologized on Thursday to Epstein's victims, saying Mandelson had repeatedly lied and "portrayed Epstein as someone he barely knew."

"I am sorry, sorry for what was done to you, sorry that so many people with power failed you," Starmer said. "Sorry for having believed Mandelson's lies and appointed him."

Critics believe it's an error that could end Starmer's premiership.

"He is now essentially a boxer on the ropes," said Rob Ford, professor of political science at the University of Manchester. "His administration could fall over tomorrow, or it could stagger on for months or even years. (But) his authority is seriously shot."

Mandelson a risky appointment Starmer fired Mandelson, 72, in September after emails were published showing that he maintained a friendship with Epstein after the late financier's 2008 conviction for sex offenses involving a minor.

Epstein committed suicide in a jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on U.S. federal charges accusing him of sexually abusing dozens of girls.

Documents published last week by the U.S. Justice Department contain new revelations, including papers suggesting Mandelson shared sensitive government information with Epstein after the 2008 global financial crisis, and records of payments totaling \$75,000 in 2003 and 2004 from Epstein to accounts linked to Mandelson or his husband Reinaldo Avila da Silva.

There are also chatty, jokey messages pointing to a much closer relationship with Epstein than Mandelson had disclosed.

British police are investigating Mandelson over potential misconduct in public office. He is not accused of any sexual offenses and says he never witnessed any sexual wrongdoing.

Mandelson was chosen as ambassador because his trade expertise, contacts and mastery of the political

"dark arts" were considered assets in dealing with U.S. President Donald Trump's second administration.

Critics say Starmer was, at best, naive in not recognizing the risks involved. Aside from his association with Epstein, Mandelson twice had to resign from senior government posts because of scandals over money or ethics.

Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivers a speech at Horntye Park Sports Complex in St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, England, Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026.

UK will release files about Mandelson's ambassador appointment as anger mounts over Epstein ties

In the House of Commons on Wednesday, Starmer answered "Yes" when asked whether the vetting process in 2024 had revealed that Mandelson's friendship with Epstein continued after the latter's 2008 conviction.

The answer sent shock waves through the chamber. On Thursday Starmer said he had meant only that it had "been known publicly for some time that they knew each other."

The government plans to release files related to the vetting process that it hopes will exonerate Starmer and show Mandelson lied. But the government is not entirely in control of the process. Some documents are likely to be held back because of the police investigation. Others will be reviewed by Parliament's independent Intelligence and Security Committee for potential national security implications.

Labour lawmaker Paula Barker said the prime minister "has shown that his judgment is questionable."

"I think he has a very long way to go to rebuild trust and confidence with the public, and trust and confidence within our party," she told the BBC.

Bangladesh official admits ties with India witnessed 'setback' during Yunus-led interim regime



DHAKA

Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain Thursday admitted that ties with India witnessed a "setback" during the interim regime led by Muhammad Yunus, but hoped that the relations could be restored under an elected government following the general elections scheduled for next week.

"The relations faced some setbacks during the interim government, but they (ties) remained important," he told reporters at a media briefing a week ahead of the elections, the first since the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led government in a mass protest in August 2024.

Hossain, a former career diplomat who served as the deputy high commissioner in India as well, expressed optimism that the next elected government would be able to make the relationship smoother, finding some ways.

The Yunus-led interim government was installed after the ouster of Hasina's Awami League regime in a student-led violent protest - dubbed as the July Uprising - on August 5, 2024. Since then, the 78-year-old leader has been living in India. A special Bangladeshi

tribunal last year sentenced Hasina to death, accusing her of committing crimes against humanity through her efforts to brutally tame the protests, while Dhaka repeatedly demanded her extradition to face justice.

Asked if India continued to refuse to return her, would the next government be able to rebuild ties with New Delhi, Hossain said, "Don't be pessimists."

S. Jaishankar with Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain 'Surprised, shocked': Bangladesh raises concern over ex-PM Hasina's address in India

Bangladesh-India relations are said to have witnessed their lowest ebb in the past 18 months when Dhaka's ties with Pakistan saw a remarkable development through political, trade and defence engagements.

Hossain's comments came hours after youth and sports adviser Asif Nazrul thanked Islamabad for its decision to boycott the T20 World Cup match against India on February 15 to protest Bangladesh's removal from the tournament.

"Thank you, Pakistan," Nazrul said on a Facebook post sharing Sharif's remarks and

expressing his gratitude. Hossain acknowledged that bilateral progress stalled in several areas but called the situation "not a major crisis" and rather a "period without forward movement".

He said, "differing perceptions of national interests" between India and Bangladesh contributed to the slowdown as each side pursued its own priorities, which did not always synchronise.

Hossain, however, said the interim government advanced key negotiations, including trade talks with the United States and other partners, to ease the workload of the next elected government.

He said the interim government, which is expected to end its 18-month rule after the February 12 election, was "not leaving behind unresolved burdens" and instead pushed forward several important issues to ensure continuity.

He said Bangladesh has remained actively engaged in discussions, helping reduce tariffs from earlier levels of 25 to 37 per cent to 20 per cent, while tariffs for India and Pakistan stand at 18 per cent.

"Achieving such a reduction would complete a major task in advance for the next government," he added.

“Manipur’s Democratic Reset: The Tasks Before the New Chief Minister of Manipur”



COL (DR.) ASHWANI KUMAR, MID, VSM (RETD.)

The swearing-in of Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh as Chief Minister of Manipur marks a significant moment in the state’s return to structured democratic governance after a prolonged period of unrest, uncertainty, and administrative strain. His initial articulation of priorities, peace, development, and inclusive governance, sets the tone for what must now become a carefully sequenced road-map toward stability and reconciliation.

At a time when public confidence has been tested and communities have endured displacement and disruption, the formation of a new government offers both reassurance and responsibility. The immediate challenge before the Chief Minister is not only to administer but to heal, to restore trust in institutions, and to ensure that governance is seen as fair, responsive, and inclusive.

Restoring Administrative Confidence.

The first and most urgent task for the new government will be the restoration of administrative normalcy across the state. Relief and rehabilitation of displaced families, reopening of schools and markets, and revival of local economic activities must be prioritized. Governance must be visible at the district and grassroots levels, with clear lines of communication between the administration and the public.

Neutral and professional functioning of the civil administration and police will be essential. In conflict-affected environments, the perception of fairness can determine whether stability holds.

Transparent decision-making and regular public communication from the government can help rebuild confidence.

Peace as the Central Priority, Chief Minister Khemchand Singh has rightly placed peace at the center of his agenda. However, peace in Manipur must go beyond the absence of violence. It must involve the rebuilding of trust among communities, the creation of safe conditions for the return of displaced persons, and the reopening of civic and social spaces.

Structured dialogue mechanisms involving community leaders, civil society organizations, and representatives from different regions and ethnic groups will be essential. Peace committees at local levels and sustained engagement across divides can help transform a fragile calm into durable stability.

Development as a Stabilizing Force. The new Chief Minister has also emphasized development as a guiding priority. Economic revival and infrastructure restoration must accompany efforts at reconciliation. Support for small businesses, agriculture, and youth employment will be critical in preventing further alienation and restoring normal life.

Development initiatives must be visibly inclusive and regionally balanced. Equitable distribution of resources and opportunities can reinforce the message that governance is for all communities.

Justice and Accountability. A credible peace requires credible justice. Allegations of violence, displacement, and property loss must be addressed through transparent and time-bound mechanisms. Compensation frameworks, legal processes, and institutional accountability must be pursued without selectivity.

The rule of law must be seen to function



impartially. Justice delivered fairly and promptly can help rebuild confidence across communities and strengthen democratic legitimacy.

Inclusive Governance. The composition of the new government, with representation from different communities, reflects an acknowledgment of Manipur’s diversity. The challenge now will be to sustain that inclusivity in governance.

Continuous consultation with civil society, student groups, women’s organizations, and local leadership will be essential in ensuring that policy decisions reflect broad consensus rather than narrow interests.

Inclusive governance will also require sensitivity to historical grievances and regional concerns. A consultative approach can help prevent polarization and encourage cooperative problem-solving.

Partnership with the Centre.

The support of the Union Government will remain important for financial assistance, security coordination, and developmental initiatives. At the same time, the state government must be empowered to function with authority and accountability within the constitutional framework. Effective coordination between state and Centre will be key to long-term stability.

A Moment of Responsibility.

The people of Manipur have endured months of uncertainty and disruption. They now look to the new Chief Minister for reassurance, direction, and credible action. The emphasis on peace and development provides a necessary foundation, but the success of this democratic reset will depend on sustained governance, transparent institutions, and inclusive dialogue.

This is a moment of cautious hope. The restoration of an elected government has restarted the democratic process. The responsibility now lies in ensuring that this process leads to reconciliation, stability, and renewed public trust.

Manipur stands at a delicate but important turning point. If approached with balance, empathy, and firmness, the present moment can evolve into a genuine pathway toward peace and development. The expectations are high, and rightly so. The opportunity is equally significant.

About the Author.
Ashk Machhanvi is the pen name of Col (Dr.) Ashwani Kumar, MID, VSM (Retd.), a decorated Indian Army officer with extensive operational experience in sensitive regions of the country. Following his military service, he has remained engaged in strategic and political analysis, writing on governance,

national security, and conflict resolution.

Drawing upon field experience, academic grounding in political science, and years of public service, he offers a practitioner’s perspective on democratic processes, stability, and policy challenges, particularly in India’s border and conflict-affected states.

The views expressed are personal.

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The average person spends 45 to 62 minutes a day just waiting.

NEIR 2026 Rally Builds Bridges Across Northeast, Taking Education, Ideas & Hope to Every Community



N NEIR 2026 has slowly grown into a strong bridge between people of the Northeast. It is not just a rally. It is a moving space for talk, learning, and shared hope.

The journey began on January 4 from Kolkata. From there, the rally moved into the Northeast and passed through many key towns and cultural spots. Each stop had its own story. Each place added a new voice. The road itself became a classroom and a meeting ground.

The rally was led by Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee and CEO of KRC Foundation. Under his leadership, the team focused on three simple ideas. Connect people. Share knowledge. Inspire action. This clear aim helped the rally reach all kinds of communities, young and old.

One of the biggest strengths of NEIR 2026 was communication. The team spoke directly with local people. Not from a stage only, but face to face. They listened as much as they spoke. This helped build trust. It also helped break old gaps between regions, tribes, and social groups. At many places, the team met community leaders, teachers, social workers, and public figures. These meetings were not formal events only. They were open talks. People shared problems about jobs, education, and lack of exposure. The team replied with ideas, examples, and simple guidance.

Educational institutions were a major focus. Schools, colleges, and training centres welcomed the rally. Students gathered in large numbers. Many had ques-

tions about their future. Many felt unsure about jobs and skills. Speeches on employability, entrepreneurship, and education helped clear this fear.

The talks were simple and practical. Students were told about new skills, startups, and local business ideas. They were encouraged to look beyond government jobs. The message was clear. Opportunity can be created, not just waited for.

The rally also had a strong cultural side. Music, interaction, and shared stories made the events lively. Learning did not feel heavy. It felt human. This mix of education and entertainment helped messages stay longer in young minds.

NEIR 2026 also helped connect different Northeast states with each other. Often, people know little about neighbouring regions. Through this journey, stories, food, culture, and ideas travelled together. It created a feeling of one shared Northeast identity. Most importantly, the rally gave people a feeling of being seen and heard. Small towns felt important. Young voices felt valued. This emotional connect is where NEIR 2026 made its deepest impact. As the rally moved on, it left behind more than photos and speeches. It left confidence, links between institutions, and fresh thinking. NEIR 2026 proved that real change begins with conversation, travel, and honest effort.

In a region as diverse as the Northeast, this kind of movement matters. It reminds people that progress is possible when education, dialogue, and unity move together on the same road.



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10 JAN
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11 JAN
Adventure Sports
Trekking | Canyoneering | Sport Climbing | Disaster Management Technique | Water Sports



11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders. Includes NGOs, and Government officials, for better planning, awareness, and disaster management and preparedness programs. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
State leaders will deliberate on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Barak, Planning & Geography, environmental and sustainable 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 Awards, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome journalists, students, producers, media & corporate houses, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.

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11 JAN
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10 JAN
Media Conclave
Media Conclave, Media Awards, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome journalists, students, producers, media & corporate houses, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.



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10-12 JAN
E-Sports
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Barak Festival

Band Night | 10 JAN
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10-12 JAN
Book Bank
Anti-Book Campaign: Book Bank | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

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

Painting Carnival
Water Colour and Paint and Draw with Campaign

11 JAN
film festival
Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Mizoram. Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W & Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet Number



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

- Outreach Executive
- Event Management
- Programme Coordinator

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