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**PERSPECTIVE**  
It's ok and "I'm fine" are the two most common lies spoken in the world.

**Three houses torched in Litan Sareikhong**

**IMPHAL**  
Three more houses were set ablaze at Litan Sareikhong village on February 12, intensifying tension in the area despite the deployment of additional security personnel by state authorities to contain the unrest.

According to local sources, the arson was followed by reported gunfire from the opposite side of the village. No injuries have been reported so far, but the incident has heightened safety concerns among residents.

In the aftermath of the attack, women from Tangkhul villages staged a protest condemning the continuing violence in the region. The protesters questioned the effectiveness of the heavy presence of Central security forces and demanded their immediate withdrawal from Litan Sareikhong.

The protesting women alleged that "despite the heavy security presence, villagers continue to face repeated attacks involving sophisticated weapons." They further claimed that suspected armed militants launched an assault on the village on February 12 that lasted for nearly two hours.

During the protest, the women also accused Central security personnel of shielding the armed assailants. They alleged that militants dressed in combat attire were seen moving freely in Mongkot Chepu village with sophisticated weapons, while Tangkhul residents of Litan Sareikhong were allegedly prevented from returning to their homes and were asked to vacate the area.

Sources indicated that frequent gun attacks by suspected armed militants targeting members of the Tangkhul Naga community have continued despite the deployment of security forces in the area.

Authorities have not yet issued an official statement on the latest allegations.

**WHO SAID WHAT**



I convey my warm congratulations to Mr. Tarique Rahman on leading BNP to a decisive victory in the Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh. This victory shows the trust of the people of Bangladesh in your leadership. India will continue to stand in support of a democratic, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh. I look forward to working with you to strengthen our multifaceted relations and advance our common development goals.

- Narendra Modi, PM India

## Nagaland adhoc teachers to move hunger strike to Education Directorate, step up regularisation demand

**KOHIMA**

Escalating their long-pending demand for service regularisation, the All Nagaland Adhoc Teachers Group (ANATG)-2015 Batch on Thursday announced that it will shift the venue of its ongoing agitation and hunger strike to the Directorate of School Education (DoSE) premises from Friday.

The move is aimed at intensifying pressure on the state government to resolve the issue affecting 1,166 teachers appointed on an adhoc basis prior to 2015.

The teachers' body said the decision follows what it described as the government's failure to provide a concrete timeline or firm policy commitment on regularisation, despite repeated representations and earlier assurances.

The group has been staging protests since February 4, demanding regularisation of adhoc teachers appointed before 2015. ANATG-2015 officials stated that relocating the protest site to the DoSE premises would allow them to directly engage with the department responsible for school administration and teacher management, and seek immediate administrative intervention.

The hunger strike, which began on



Thursday as part of the agitation programme, will also be shifted to the Education Directorate complex, marking what the group termed a significant escalation of its "democratic movement for justice."

Reiterating its core demand, ANATG-2015 said prolonged delays in regularisation have resulted in professional uncertainty, financial strain and social hardship for hundreds of teachers and their families. The group maintained that the issue goes beyond employment and concerns dignity, fairness and policy accountability.

"Repeated assurances without tangible outcomes have left us with no option but to intensify our democratic agitation," representatives of the group said, urging the School Education Department and the Directorate of School Education to initiate meaningful dialogue and take urgent steps toward a resolution. They warned that the agitation would continue to escalate if their demands remain unaddressed.

Meanwhile, the School Education Department cited measures already undertaken in response to earlier protests. Following a representation in 2021 and

**MORAN**

An ordinary stretch of national highway in Moran has been transformed into a fully functional Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Assam on February 14, drawing widespread attention and excitement across Upper Assam.

What typically serves as a busy corridor for trucks, buses and daily commuters was cleared, secured and meticulously prepared to host fighter jets and military transport aircraft. As part of a high-intensity defence drill, aircraft successfully executed take-offs and landings on the highway strip, demonstrating the operational readiness of the Indian Air Force to convert civilian infrastructure into emergency airbases at short notice.

Residents gathered along designated viewing points to witness the rare spectacle. As jets descended and touched down on the asphalt, the roar of engines reverberated across the area, with many locals describing the moment as "unforgettable." Children perched on their parents' shoulders while others



captured the event on mobile phones. Speaking to reporters at the site, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Prime Minister would travel from New Delhi to the Chabua Air Force Station and then

board a C-130 transport aircraft to land directly on the newly prepared airstrip at Moran before proceeding to Guwahati. Around 16 IAF aircraft are expected to participate in a 30-minute aerial exercise. According to Sarma, advanced fighter platforms including the Dassault Rafale and the Sukhoi Su-30MKI will take part in the demonstration, with several jets also scheduled to land on the highway strip. He described it as the first such elaborate exercise on an Emergency Landing Facility in the region.

Security has been tightened across the Moran sector, with vehicular movement regulated and access points sealed to facilitate the operation. Officials said the drill is designed to test rapid deployment capability, logistical preparedness and coordination between defence forces and civil administration.

The successful execution of take-offs and landings on a public highway underscores India's focus on developing dual-use infrastructure capable of serving both civilian and strategic needs. Calling the event "very rare," the Chief Minister said students from schools, colleges and universities in Dibrugarh and Charaideo districts have been invited to witness the demonstration. He expressed hope that the exercise would inspire young people to consider careers in the Indian Air Force. Sarma clarified that only the aircraft landing demonstration will be held at Moran and that no public meeting or speech is scheduled at the venue. Nonetheless, for residents, the transformation of their familiar highway into a temporary airbase represents a striking blend of development, defence preparedness and national pride in the heart of Upper Assam.

## Nitin Gadkari sanctions Rs.747 crore for 26 road, bridge projects in Assam under CRIF, Setu Bandhan

**GUWAHATI**

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has approved projects worth ₹747.72 crore for the construction and upgradation of 26 road and bridge works across Assam, in a move aimed at strengthening connectivity and accelerating economic activity in the state.

The sanctioned projects fall under two key central schemes - the Central Road Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) and Setu Bandhan.

Of the total allocation, ₹677.98 crore has been earmarked for 10 road development projects under the CRIF scheme, while ₹129.74 crore has been cleared for bridge construction works under the Setu Bandhan programme, which focuses on eliminating critical gaps in connectivity by building and upgrading bridges.

Officials said the projects are expected to significantly improve regional connectivity, enhance transportation efficiency and reduce travel time across several districts. The improved road and bridge infrastructure is also likely to facilitate smoother movement of goods and passengers, providing a boost to trade and local economies.

According to the Ministry, the initiative is part of the Centre's broader push to upgrade road networks in the Northeast and ensure better integration of remote and rural areas with major urban and commercial hubs. The enhanced connectivity is projected to support socio-economic growth by improving access to markets, healthcare, education and administrative services.

Gadkari noted that the approved

projects would contribute substantially to Assam's infrastructure expansion and help bridge connectivity gaps between interior regions and growth centres.

The announcement comes amid a broader infrastructure drive in the state.

On February 12, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated and laid foundation stones for multiple development projects during his visit to Majuli district.

During the programme, the Chief Minister formally inaugurated the Majuli-Jorhat connecting highway, a key road link expected to ease travel to and from the river island. He also launched several infrastructure facilities, including the academic building and girls' hostel of Majuli Cultural University, an integrated office complex housing the offices of the Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police and District Transport Officer, a Government Model Degree College, the Dakshinpat Satra Museum and the Jyoti Bishnu Cultural Complex.

The projects in Majuli, collectively valued at over ₹2,200 crore, are aimed at strengthening public infrastructure and improving service delivery in the river island district, one of Assam's most geographically unique regions.

With the latest approvals under CRIF and Setu Bandhan, both the Centre and the state government appear to be intensifying efforts to expand Assam's road and bridge network, positioning infrastructure development as a key driver of economic growth and regional integration.

## EC full bench to visit Assam from Feb 16 to review poll preparedness

**NEW DELHI**

The full bench of the Election Commission of India (EC), led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, will visit Assam from February 16 to 18 to review preparedness for the upcoming Assembly elections, officials said on Thursday.

Kumar will be accompanied by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi during the three-day visit.

On February 17, the Commission is scheduled to meet leaders of recognised political parties, representatives of poll-related Central and State regulatory authorities, district election officers and Superintendents of Police.

The Chief Election Commissioner will also hold separate meetings in Guwahati with the Assam Chief Secretary, Home Secretary, Director General of Police, Chief Electoral Officer, police nodal officer and other senior state officials to assess logistical, administrative and security arrangements.

The EC team is likely to address mediapersons on the final day of their visit, February 18.

Elections to the 126-member Assam Legislative Assembly are expected to be held in March-April, and the visit is aimed at ensuring that all arrangements are in place for the smooth conduct of the polls.

## Centre approves UPSC Mains centre in Imphal, Meitei Mayek script for Manipuri paper



**IMPHAL**

The Union Government has approved the setting up of a Civil Services (Mains) Examination Centre of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) in Imphal from 2026 onwards.

The announcement was made by Rajya Sabha MP Leishemba Sanajaoba in a Facebook post on Thursday. He expressed gratitude to the Government of India, particularly Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for responding to concerns raised regarding candidates from Manipur.

Sanajaoba recalled that he first highlighted the demand for a UPSC (Mains) Examination Centre in Imphal through a Special Mention in the Rajya Sabha on March 22, 2021. He later wrote to the Prime Minister on August 10, 2022, urging sympathetic consideration for aspirants who faced difficulties travelling to distant examination centres outside the state.

The MP also addressed long-standing concerns of can-

didates opting for Manipuri language and literature as their optional subject. He noted that such candidates had earlier been required to write answers in the Bengali script, which many were not familiar with.

Following a Special Mention raised on February 8, 2023, the Centre approved the use of the Meitei Mayek script in the Civil Services Examination for the Manipuri optional paper.

During the 2026 Budget Session, Sanajaoba further urged authorities to ensure that question papers for the Manipuri optional subject are printed in Meitei Mayek alongside the Bengali script, pointing out that many students are proficient only in Meitei Mayek.

Describing the developments as a significant step, the MP conveyed appreciation to the Centre on behalf of the people of Manipur, particularly Civil Services aspirants, saying the decision addresses long-pending concerns of candidates in the state.

## Nepal embassy issues advisory after Meghalaya coal mine explosion kills nine nationals

**GUWAHATI**

The Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi on Friday urged its citizens to exercise caution before taking up overseas employment, following the deaths of nine Nepali nationals in a coal mine explosion in Meghalaya.

A total of 31 people were killed in the February 5 blast at an allegedly illegal rat-hole coal mine in Thangskai, East Jaintia Hills district. Several of the victims were migrant workers, including nine from Nepal. Seven other Nepali nationals were injured and are receiving treatment at a local hospital.

Expressing "deepest condolences to the bereaved families," the embassy prayed for the eternal peace of the deceased and a speedy recovery for those injured.

"The embassy is in continuous contact with the Ministry of External Affairs, local authorities, and the police to coordinate on medical treatment, other essential services, and compensation

for the families of the deceased and injured," the statement said. Families seeking assistance have been asked to contact the mission through a dedicated helpline.

Highlighting safety concerns, the embassy noted that the mine was allegedly operating illegally, which complicates access to rescue services, compensation, and other support in the event of accidents at unauthorised workplaces. "Before taking up any employment, citizens are strongly advised to obtain complete information about the employer, salary, and facilities, and to complete all necessary formalities," the embassy said. It also cautioned against accepting work offers from strangers or intermediaries without proper documentation. The incident has renewed attention on safety standards and regulatory oversight in Meghalaya's coal mining sector, particularly the ongoing practice of banned rat-hole mining in remote areas.



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## BANGLADESH AFTER THE POLL

**B**angladesh's election is not only a contest for power, but a measure of whether political legitimacy has been translated into durable institutions capable of managing competition without instability.

With voting completed, Bangladesh enters a phase that is more consequential than polling day itself. Elections resolve representation; they do not automatically resolve institutional fragility. The period immediately following a vote is often the clearest indicator of whether political authority has been translated into durable governance structures.

Recent developments in Bangladesh can be examined through a public policy lens rather than a political one. The central question is not who governs, but whether administrative systems are capable of managing competition without generating instability. When transitions occur in compressed time frames, institutional consolidation becomes more important than electoral arithmetic.

Muhammad Yunus assumed leadership at a moment of disruption. His international credibility and prior experience in institution-building generated expectations that transitional uncertainty could be managed through administrative clarity. In an early March 2025 interview with BBC News, he emphasised continuity in foreign relations and the importance of restraint. The policy implication of such messaging was straightforward: reduce volatility, restore predictability, and allow institutions to function.

The challenge since then has not been rhetorical inconsistency but institutional pacing. When public expectations rise faster than procedural reinforcement, uncertainty fills the gap. Street mobilisation, sharper political language and heightened sensitivity around identity issues are often symptoms of administrative lag rather than ideological rupture.

From a governance standpoint, the post-election period now becomes a measurable test across four domains.

First, electoral administration. Credibility depends on transparent tabulation of results, timely publication of data, structured redress of complaints and visible neutrality in enforcement. The operational details – ballot custody, incident reporting, and clearly defined timelines for dispute resolution, matter more than margins of victory. Confidence increases when process is predictable.

Second, law enforcement neutrality. Post-election environments are sensitive to rumour and retaliatory mobilisation. Clear policing protocols, publicly communicated guidelines and documented responses to incidents reduce escalation. When enforcement appears even-handed, the political system stabilises regardless of electoral outcome.

Third, judicial responsiveness. Transitional elections frequently generate litigation. Courts that dispose of petitions efficiently and transparently strengthen institutional trust. Delays or opacity weaken it. Administrative justice is not peripheral; it is central to post-election legitimacy.

Fourth, minority protection. Safeguarding vulnerable communities is not only a normative obligation but an institutional signal. If complaint mechanisms function and responses are documented, the state demonstrates procedural authority. Where security assurances rely solely on political statements rather than routine enforcement, institutional credibility remains incomplete.

A common interpretation is that volatility in Bangladesh is primarily political. That reading overlooks a broader governance pattern observed globally: instability intensifies when historically sensitive narratives re-enter administrative debate without accompanying procedural clarity. When policy discussions draw upon memory rather than rule-based criteria, institutional neutrality can appear uncertain. This is not unique to Bangladesh; it is a recognised risk in transitional systems.

External references also tend to increase during such phases. India, as a structural neighbour linked by geography, trade and history, inevitably becomes part of public discussion. However, long-term stability depends less on external positioning and more on internal administrative consistency. Durable systems are built on process rather than projection.

The legacy of 1971 remains foundational in Bangladesh's political memory. The suffering inflicted by Pakistan and the intervention that concluded the conflict are part of historical record. From a public policy perspective, the operational question is whether contemporary governance relies on structured procedure rather than selective invocation of history. Institutional consolidation requires forward-facing administrative design.

This brings attention to a recurring formulation in transitional contexts: "I have a plan." Such declarations are common after disruption. In policy terms, the statement invites evaluation against measurable commitments.

A credible plan in the present context would include defined timelines for closure of electoral audits; transparent frameworks for cross-party consultation; published enforcement protocols for maintaining order; judicial case-disposal targets; and periodic public reporting on institutional performance indicators. Without measurable benchmarks, plans remain aspirational. With benchmarks, they become instruments of governance.

The post-election window is therefore a management exercise rather than a symbolic one. Administrative clarity reduces incentives for mobilisation. Predictable enforcement lowers risk perception. Transparent adjudication diminishes rumour. These are cumulative stabilisers.

Bangladesh now stands in this administrative interval. If the coming weeks are marked by procedural discipline, institutional communication and measurable implementation, the election will represent not merely a political event but a step toward systemic consolidation. If ambiguity persists, authority may once again outpace the institutions meant to contain it.

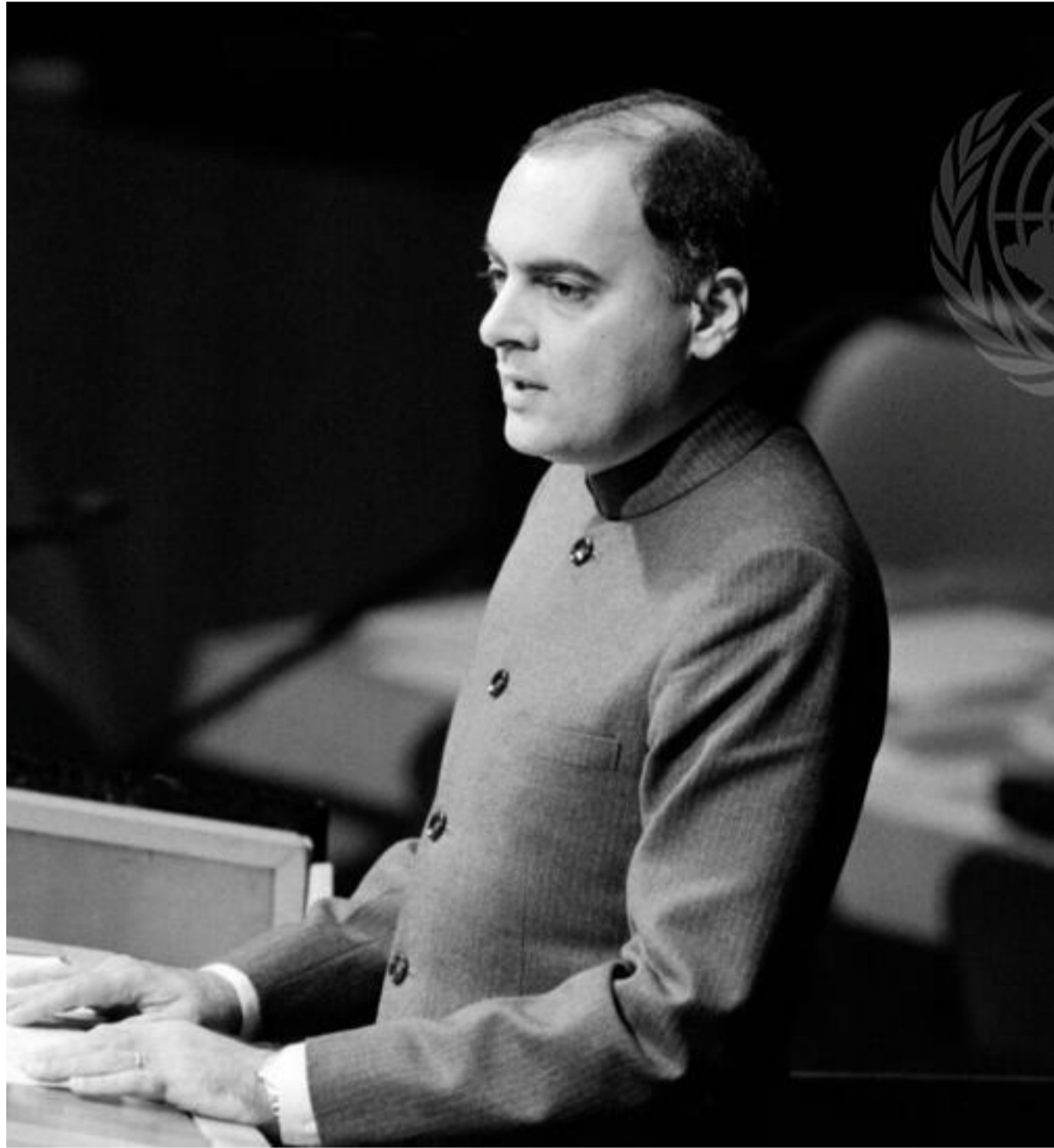
Public policy, at its core, is about sequencing. Reform energy must be followed by procedural embedding. Leadership must be followed by system design. Elections must be followed by institutional reinforcement.

The ballots have been counted. What remains is the harder task of proving that administrative systems, not political momentum, will define the next phase. Ballots choose leaders; only institutions secure the system.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

Save your energy: don't entertain toxic people. - Akin Olokun

# DISSOLUTION OF THE DREAM OF DISARMAMENT



SHASHI THAROOR

For decades, the hallowed halls of the United Nations in New York and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva were the spiritual homes of a specific kind of Indian idealism. From the moral high ground of the Nehruvian era to the detailed pragmatism of the late 1980s, India was the world's most persistent advocate of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The peak of this ambition was perhaps June 1988, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi stood before the UN General Assembly to propose a 'New Action Plan' for universal, non-discriminatory and time-bound nuclear disarmament. It was a bold, three-stage roadmap to eliminate the world's most terrifying weapons by 2010. Indian diplomats, many of whom built storied careers on their mastery of these intricate multilateral negotiations, argued that disarmament was not just a moral imperative but a developmental one. The logic was clear: every rupee or dollar not spent on a nuclear warhead was a resource freed for schools, hospitals and infrastructure. Today, as we navigate the mid-2020s, that dream has not just been deferred; it has collapsed. The 'global zero' we once championed has been replaced by a 'global me too'—a lethal scramble for more deadly, more precise and more unpredictable nuclear arsenals. For India, the collapse of this dream is not merely a diplomatic setback; it is a seismic shift in our national security calculus. Disarmament can simply no longer be a priority when the need for re-armament grows apace.

India's 'tough neighbourhood' has morphed into a theatre of permanent instability. To our north, China's nuclear expansion is no longer a secret. Beijing is rapidly modernising its triad, building hundreds of new missile silos and moving away from its historical 'minimum deterrence' posture.

To our west, Pakistan's nuclear rhetoric has grown increasingly reckless. Islamabad's frequent nuclear sabre-rattling and its focus on tactical (short-range) battlefield nuclear weapons have lowered the threshold for potential use, turning the subcontinent into a hair-trigger zone. The collusion between the two, evident during Operation Sindoor, has ominous portents for India. Beyond our immediate rivals, the periphery is fraying. Nepal and Bangladesh face internal political upheavals that create vacuums for external influence; Afghanistan under the Taliban remains a black hole of uncertainty; and the return of a more transactional, America First posture under the Trump administration has introduced a layer of unpredictability in our most important strategic partnership. In an era where the US seems less committed to its traditional security guarantees even to its NATO allies and the Quad summit has been indefinitely postponed, India realises it is as alone as it has ever been. The Indian disarmament dream feels like a relic of a gentler age.

The global architecture designed to prevent nuclear catastrophe is in ruins. The world is witnessing a troubling resurgence of armed conflict and political instability, bringing the spectre of nuclear tension back to the forefront of international concern. While the decades following 1945 were frequently marked by bitter great-power rivalries and localised wars, the current era feels fundamentally more precarious. For the first time in 80 years, these escalations are occurring without the constraints that once provided a semblance of order.

The core of the danger lies in the systemic collapse of the post-World War 2 framework. The United Nations' norms and institutional mechanisms have been almost entirely hollowed out. We are navigating a period of high-stakes friction, with-

out the traditional safety-nets or established pathways for de-escalation that historically prevented regional crises from spiralling into catastrophe. The last decade has also seen the systematic dismantling of arms control treaties. From the death of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty to Russia's suspension of the New START and its withdrawal from the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, the guardrails are gone.

Simultaneously, the peaceful use of nuclear energy—once the promised reward for non-proliferation—has become a flashpoint for conflict. The ongoing crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear programme illustrates how thin the line has become between civilian technology and weaponisation. For India, which fought hard for a civil nuclear exception in the Indo-US Nuclear Deal of 2008, the tightening of global technology controls and the erosion of the International Atomic Energy Agency's oversight authority create a more restrictive and suspicious global environment, with attendant risks for all.

Perhaps most alarming is the interaction between nuclear weapons and emerging technologies. We are entering an era of 'techno-nuclear' risk. Artificial intelligence is being integrated into command-and-control systems, potentially shortening decision-making windows to mere seconds and increasing the risk of accidental escalation through algorithmic error.

Pakistan's announced development of hypersonic missiles, which can bypass existing defence systems, and the vulnerability of nuclear communication networks to cyber-attacks, have made the old rules of deterrence obsolete. The convergence of AI, cyber-warfare and space-based sensors means that a state's nuclear second-strike capability—the very foundation of stability—can now be tracked

and targeted. When everything is visible, everything is vulnerable; and when everything is vulnerable, the pressure to 'use them or lose them' becomes overwhelming.

For the Indian strategic community, the lesson is sombre. The diplomats who once specialised in drafting disarmament conventions must now specialise in managing escalation.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**With an unwavering resolve to serve the people of India and guided by the sacred spirit of Nagrikdevo Bhava, Seva Teerth is humbly dedicated to the nation.**

**May Seva Teerth always stand as a radiant symbol of duty, compassion, commitment to the principle of India First. May it inspire generations to walk the path of selfless service and tireless dedication to the welfare of all.**

~ Narendra Modi, PM



tion ladders. The resources we hoped to divert to development are increasingly being swallowed by the necessity of a credible, survivable deterrent.

India cannot afford to be the last romantic in a world of ruthless realists. While we must maintain our long-term commitment to a world without nuclear weapons as a moral North Star, our immediate policies must reflect the grim reality of the 2020s. This means accelerating our own modernisation, hardening our command structures against cyber threats, and engaging in cold-eyed alignments to balance a rising China.

The disarmament dream died not because it was wrong, but because the world's major powers lacked the courage to follow Rajiv Gandhi's roadmap when the window for universal nuclear disarmament was open. Now that window has slammed shut. In this new age of nuclear anarchy, India's priority must shift from chasing a universal peace that others have abandoned to ensuring our own survival in a world that has never been more dangerous.

# Union Cabinet likely to clear Rs.18,600-crore Brahmaputra road-rail tunnel linking Gohpur and Numaligarh

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet is expected to take up for approval an ambitious ₹18,600-crore road-cum-rail tunnel project beneath the Brahmaputra River, a move that could significantly transform connectivity in poll-bound Assam.

According to official sources, the proposal is likely to be considered at one of the final Cabinet meetings chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at South Block before operations shift to the new Secretariat complex.

If approved, the project would mark a major milestone in India's transport infrastructure expansion, particularly in the Northeast. The proposed tunnel is designed as a twin-tube underwater structure that will accommodate both vehicular traffic and railway lines - the first



such integrated tunnel system in the country. The strategic corridor will connect Gohpur on the north bank

of the river with Numaligarh on the south bank, sharply cutting travel time between the two points from nearly four hours at present to an estimated 30-35 minutes. Officials said the reduction in travel duration is expected to ease civilian movement, improve trade logistics and enhance regional mobility.

Beyond civilian advantages, the project carries considerable strategic significance. Assam's proximity to international borders and the narrow Siliguri Corridor - often referred to as the "Chicken's Neck" - has long made connectivity infrastructure in the region a matter of national security. Faster movement of troops, equipment and supplies during emergencies is understood to be a key consideration behind the tunnel proposal.

Government sources indicated that the initiative forms part of the

Centre's broader push over the past decade to strengthen road, rail and bridge networks across the Northeast. Large-scale infrastructure projects have been prioritised to integrate the region more closely with the rest of the country while also supporting economic growth and defence preparedness.

If the Cabinet gives its nod, the Brahmaputra underwater tunnel would rank among the largest transport infrastructure undertakings of its kind in India, both in scale and cost. The timing of the expected clearance is politically significant, with Assam heading to Assembly elections. Observers note that such a high-value infrastructure commitment could serve as a major developmental boost, potentially reshaping connectivity, commerce and strategic mobility in the region for decades.

## NPP Recalls Its Roots as Daniel Langthasa Joins Party in Maibang



KRC TIMES NEWS DESK

MAIBANG: A strong sense of history marked the induction of Daniel Langthasa into the National People's Party at Maibang on Thursday, as party Vice President Hemochandra Singh spoke about the movement's long journey and its founding vision. Addressing party workers and local supporters at the joining programme, Singh reflected on the early days of the NPP and paid tribute to its founder, the late P. A. Sangma. He said Sangma had dreamed of bringing together the many voices of the Northeast under one political platform. Singh recalled how the idea was not just about politics, but about identity, dignity, and unity for the region. He said Sangma believed the Northeast needed a common voice that could speak with strength at the national level, without losing its cultural roots. "The foundation was laid with a clear goal," Singh noted. "To unite the Northeast and ensure its concerns were heard with respect and seriousness." Welcoming Daniel Langthasa into the party fold, Singh expressed hope that his experience and local connection would help strengthen the NPP's presence in the hill areas. He said the party continues to grow because of people who believe in its core values and regional vision. Langthasa, in his brief remarks, said he was inspired by the ideals on which the party was built. He added that he looked forward to working for the development of the people of Maibang and the wider region. Party workers described the induction as an important step in expanding the NPP's grassroots reach in Dima Hasao and reaffirming its commitment to regional unity. The programme was attended by local leaders, supporters, and community members, who said the occasion was not only about a new joining but also about remembering the path shown by Sangma and carrying it forward.

## Tensions escalate in Churachandpur as women protesters storm MLA's residence; tear gas fired

IMPHAL

Security forces fired tear gas shells to disperse protesters in Churachandpur district of Manipur on Thursday after tribal women attempted to storm the official residence of BJP MLA L M Khaute. Personnel from the Assam Rifles, Manipur Police, and the Rapid Action Force intervened to stop the protesters around 11:00 am, leading to stone-pelting and clashes between demonstrators and security forces.

The protest was organised by the Vaiphei Women's Association, Churachandpur. Festoons and placards carried by the demonstrators read, "LM Khaute sold out" and "Our voices unheard." Protesters raised slogans demanding that Khaute step down and reiterated their demand for a Separate Administration. Slogans such as "We don't want a popular government" and "Don't play

with our blood" were also heard.

The agitation intensified after Kuki-Zo MLAs, including Nemcha Kipgen, L M Khaute and Ngursangur Sanate, participated virtually in the Manipur Assembly session from New Delhi. Their remote attendance drew criticism from sections of the tribal community.

Nemcha Kipgen, a prominent Kuki leader, was recently inducted as Deputy Chief Minister in the government led by Yumnam Khemchand, which was sworn in on February 4, 2026.

The Kuki-Zo community has been pressing for a separate administration in the form of a Union Territory with a legislature under Article 239A of the Constitution. The demand gained momentum following the outbreak of ethnic violence in May 2023, with supporters citing concerns over security, land rights and rehabilitation in the hill districts.

## Gaurav Gogoi challenges Assam CM to 'fight politically, not in courtroom'



GUWAHATI

Congress MP and Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, accusing him of attempting to stifle Opposition voices through legal measures instead of engaging in political debate.

Reacting to reported legal steps initiated against him, Gogoi questioned the Chief Minister's approach to democratic accountability. "Is he not a politician? Does he not trust the people's court?" the Congress leader asked, suggesting that political differences should be settled in the public domain rather than through litigation.

Gogoi alleged that the ruling establishment was seeking to curb dissent by dragging political opponents into court. "You may stop two or three individuals, but the people of Assam know everything," he said, asserting that public awareness ultimately outweighs legal manoeuvring.

Issuing a direct challenge, the Congress MP said he preferred a political contest over a legal confrontation. "If he has the courage as a politician, he should fight us politically and from the front. I want to fight on the streets, not in the courtroom," he stated.

Referring to allegations raised against him in recent political exchanges, including insinuations about foreign links, Gogoi said he had refrained from initiating counter-legal action. "We too can file cases and make counter-allegations, but I don't want to go down that path. I believe in the conscience of the people," he added.

Describing the Chief Minister as "afraid" and "intimidated by Opposition voices," Gogoi maintained that public sentiment was on his side. "The people of Assam know what is true," he said.

There was no immediate response from the Chief Minister's office on Gogoi's remarks.

## Manipur CM Yumnam Khemchand launches Interceptor Vehicles, Heli Service Portal



IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand on Thursday launched

a fleet of Interceptor Vehicles and unveiled the Manipur Heli Service Portal during the grand finale of the 37th National Road Safety Month

at the City Convention Centre in Imphal. The National Road Safety Month was observed nationwide under the theme "Sadak Suraksha, Jeevan Raksha."

Sharing the update on social media platform X, the Chief Minister said the initiatives aim to strengthen road safety enforcement and improve connectivity across the state.

Speaking at the event, Manipur Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel said the Interceptor Vehicles would significantly enhance traffic regulation and enforcement. He explained that the mobile, high-tech units are equipped to detect violations such as speeding, lane cutting and riding without helmets.

The vehicles are fitted with laser and radar technology along with automated camera systems, enabling instant detection and gener-

ation of e-challans. Officials said the technology would act as a strong deterrent against traffic violations and improve overall law enforcement efficiency.

Dr Goel also highlighted the launch of the Manipur Heli Service Portal, which is modelled on the Heli Sewa platform. The portal will facilitate round-the-clock online booking and real-time tracking of helicopter schedules.

The initiative is expected to improve accessibility for residents in remote and far-flung areas, reducing travel time and enhancing connectivity through faster and more direct air links.

Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, and Cabinet Minister Khuraijam Loken Singh were also present at the function, along with senior government officials.

## Rajdhani Express begins scheduled halt at Sivasagar Town after CM's intervention



SIVASAGAR

The long-pending demand for a stoppage of the Rajdhani Express at Sivasagar Town railway station has been fulfilled, with the Dibrugarh-New Delhi service officially commencing its scheduled halt in the historic Upper Assam town from Thursday.

The development follows intervention by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who took up the matter with railway authorities after local journalists, on February 4, urged the government to facilitate a stoppage to benefit passengers from the region.

Beginning Thursday, the Dibrugarh-New Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express halted at Sivasagar Town railway station at 9:20 pm, enabling passengers to board and

alight. The train was formally flagged off from the station, marking the start of regular stoppage services. Officials said the new halt is expected to significantly enhance rail connectivity for residents of Sivasagar and adjoining districts, reducing the need to travel to other stations to access the premier long-distance service to the national capital.

Local residents welcomed the move, describing it as a long-awaited relief that would ease travel, particularly for students, business travellers and families journeying to New Delhi.

The introduction of the Rajdhani stoppage is being seen as a boost to passenger convenience in Upper Assam, strengthening the region's direct rail linkage with the country's capital.

## Himanta Biswa Sarma launches Rs. 2,218-crore development projects in Majuli, distributes seed capital to 31,952 women

MAJULI

In a sweeping development push for Assam's river island district, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday inaugurated and laid foundation stones for projects worth ₹2,218 crore in Majuli, alongside distributing seed capital assistance to 31,952 women entrepreneurs.

Addressing a public gathering, the Chief Minister said Majuli was witnessing an unprecedented scale of infrastructure expansion aimed at transforming its administrative, educational and cultural landscape. He asserted that the initiatives would significantly strengthen public service delivery and create new opportunities for the island's residents.

Among the key projects inaugurated were the academic building and girls' hostel of Majuli Cultural University, constructed at a cost of ₹51 crore. The three-storey academic block has a seating capacity of 1,880 students and houses the offices of the Vice Chancellor and Registrar, along with staff rooms and related facilities. The four-storey girls' hostel can accommodate 178 students.

Quest!

In China, it is acceptable to walk into an IKEA store to relax and take a nap.



Administrative infrastructure was bolstered with the inauguration of the Integrated District Commissioner's Office at Garamur, built at ₹24.83 crore. The District Transport Officer's Office between Garmur and Kamalabari was completed at ₹3.57 crore.

A Government Model Degree College, developed over 30 bighas at a cost of ₹33.17

crore, was also inaugurated. The campus includes three academic blocks, a girls' hostel, faculty quarters, residences for Grade III and IV staff, and official quarters for the Principal and Warden.

Cultural infrastructure received a parallel boost with the inauguration of the ₹3.64 crore Dakshinpat Satra Museum, equipped with audio-visual rooms, exhibition halls, a

strong room and study areas. At Garamur, a three-storey office for the Senior Superintendent of Police and the Jyoti Bishnu Cultural Complex auditorium were constructed at ₹4.20 crore and ₹1.25 crore, respectively.

Connectivity projects formed a major component of the development drive. The state government upgraded the road from Balichapori in Majuli to Bongaonmara in Lakhimpur and completed two bridges over the Lohit and Subansiri rivers. The 702.30-metre bridge over the Lohit River at Selekghat was formally inaugurated on Thursday.

The Chief Minister also launched the reconstruction of the Majuli-Jorhat bridge project, which had remained stalled since September 2024, stating that renewed efforts would ensure timely completion.

In a significant outreach to grassroots entrepreneurs, Sarma distributed ₹10,000 each as seed capital to 31,952 women beneficiaries. He said the financial support marked the beginning of a broader initiative aimed at enabling women to achieve "Lakhpati" status, underlining the government's focus on women-led economic empowerment.

The combined infrastructure and welfare initiatives are expected to enhance governance, improve connectivity and create livelihood opportunities in Majuli, reinforcing the state's emphasis on balanced regional development.

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## Jyotiraditya Scindia accuses Rahul Gandhi of “maligning” India’s image

GWALIOR

Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday accused Leader of Opposition (LoP) Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi of constantly “maligning the nation’s reputation on every platform,” stating that it will neither benefit Congress nor him.

He said India was making significant progress under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership.

“The public has already given them a befitting reply many times. The nation is making significant progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Neither the party nor the leader will benefit if he continues to malign the nation’s image on every platform,” Scindia told. His remarks come after

farmers”. The Congress leader asserted that he would not “step back even an inch” even if a Privilege Motion was filed against him.

In a video shared on Gandhi’s official X handle, he criticised the India-US trade deal, alleging it compromises India’s energy security, data, and farmers’ future. He claimed the deal favours American farmers, who rely on mechanisation and government subsidies, while Indian farmers struggle with small landholdings and limited mechanisation.

He made several allegations against the PM. “Narendra Modi has sold out the country, sold out the farmers. You can file a case against me, abuse me and do whatever you have to. Bring a Privilege Motion against me. It doesn’t matter.

added. Referring to the India-US Interim Trade Agreement, he alleged that it undermines Indian farmers’ interests by opening the domestic market to US agribusinesses.

“By striking a deal with the US, he has sold out cotton farmers, soya farmers, apple farmers and fruit farmers. For years, people from foreign countries have been trying to capture the agri-market of India. Narendra Modi ji has opened the gates for them. This is a truth that he and I both know,” Gandhi alleged.

Gandhi claimed that the reason for the agreement is “Because there is a chokehold around his (PM Modi) neck. Donald Trump has the reins of Narendra Modi in his hands.”

Earlier, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said that BJP mem-

# ‘Bring a privilege motion, I will fight for farmers,’ says Rahul Gandhi as BJP seeks to cancel his LS membership



NEW DELHI

Stepping up his attack on the Modi government, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said he would not be deterred by any FIR, criminal case or privilege motion and asserted that he would continue to fight for farmers’ rights.

In a video post on X, Gandhi reiterated his opposition to the India US trade deal, claiming it would severely impact Indian farmers. He alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had “opened the doors” of India’s agri-

culture market to foreign players at the cost of domestic producers.

“I have spoken the truth in Parliament. If you do not like the truth, that is a different matter.

The country understands the truth. Do whatever you want to do. Let an FIR be filed, let a case be registered or bring a privilege motion. I and the entire party stand with farmers,” Gandhi said.

He said any trade agreement that threatens farmers’ livelihoods or weakens the country’s food security is anti farmer. Gandhi also claimed that corn, soybean, cotton and fruit growers

would be the first to suffer, alleging that the government would eventually open the entire farm sector to foreign interests and corporate allies.

Gandhi’s remarks came after BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said on Thursday that he had submitted a substantive motion seeking the cancellation of Gandhi’s membership of Parliament and a lifetime ban on contesting elections. Dubey alleged in his notice that Gandhi had colluded with anti India elements and foreign organisations during his overseas visits.

Dubey clarified that no privilege motion has been moved in the matter.

“It is a widely acclaimed fact that neither any citizen of our country nor any public representative/ high officials does anything which lowers the dignity of our Armed Forces.

There is, thus, a tacit understanding amongst all the Members of Parliament, irrespective of Party affiliations, not to drag the Armed Forces and/ or its functionaries for scoring transient political mileage.

However, these ethical mores are not applicable to Shri Rahul Gandhi which is evident from his speech delivered in Lok Sabha on 11 February, 2026, wherein he has cunningly dragged the name of former Chief of Army Staff, General Manoj Mukund Naravane....” Dubey said. He said that the “need of the hour is to conduct an urgent, structured inquiry to examine all his “unethical conduct” in the capacity of being a Member of Parliament and the Leader of Opposition with a view to ensuring his immediate expulsion from Lok Sabha.”

The development follows Gandhi’s sharp attack on the

Union government on Wednesday over the India US interim trade deal, in which he accused Prime Minister Modi of having “sold the nation” by undermining farmers’ interests, hurting the textile sector and compromising India’s energy security. Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju had earlier said the government would move a privilege motion against Gandhi for allegedly misleading the House, though sources later said the government was unlikely to proceed with it. Gandhi further alleged that American farmers, operating large mechanised farms with heavy subsidies, would out-compete Indian farmers, most of whom have small landholdings and struggle to secure a remunerative Minimum Support Price.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026. However, former Lok Sabha Secretary General P.D.T. Achary has questioned the procedural basis of the move, noting that Dubey has not cited the specific rule under which the motion was submitted. Achary said that if a Member of Parliament is alleged to have committed contempt of the House, the correct procedure is to submit a notice of contempt, which is then examined by the Privileges Committee.

Achary also clarified that while the House has the power to expel a member, it does not have the authority to disqualify an MP. Disqualification, he said, can take place only under the Anti-Defection Law or the Representation of the People Act.

The admissibility of the motion will be examined under parliamentary procedures before any further action is taken.



Rahul Gandhi strongly criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that he has a “chokehold around his neck” and has “sold the country and

I have spoken the truth in Parliament.”

“It is a different matter if you do not like it. The country can understand the truth,” he

bers in the Lok Sabha would move a privilege notice against Rahul Gandhi for “misleading the House and making baseless statements”.

# INTERNATIONAL

## BNP Claims Victory In Bangladesh’s Election, Set To Return To Power After 20 Years

DHAKA

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Friday claimed victory in the crucial general elections, marred by sporadic incidents of violence, to elect a new government to replace the interim administration, which took charge after the fall of the Awami League regime in August 2024. “The Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP is set to form the government after victory in the majority of seats,” BNP’s media cell posted on X.

The Election Commission (EC) is yet to make a formal announcement.

According to multiple media reports, EC is expected to declare BNP the winner in the general elections with tallies in pre-dawn hours on Friday, suggesting it got majority seats in parliament.

Different media tallies suggested BNP received more than 151 seats in the 300-seat parliament on Thursday’s daylong voting, fair enough to form the next government, ending the 18-month rule of Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.

According to an EC spokesperson, the results in several seats are still being processed and are likely to be announced in a few hours.

The election is seen as a direct contest between the BNP and its former ally Jamaat-e-Islami, in the absence of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina’s now debarred Awami League.

The voting for the 13th parliamentary elections was held along with a referendum on the implementation of a complex 84-point reform package, known as the July National Charter.

BNP was in power last time between 2001 and 2006 when Jamaat was its crucial partner, with two of its leaders serving as ministers.

Jamaat has raised allegations of “abnormal delays” and “result tampering,” warning that it would launch a tough movement if the public mandate



were “snatched away”.

Speaking to reporters at the Election Commission building early morning, Jamaat’s assistant secretary general Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair alleged that returning officers were intentionally delaying results to favour a “particular party.” The BNP had earlier announced that if it wins the election, then its chairman and former premier Khaleida Zia’s son, Tarique Rahman, would be the next prime minister of Bangladesh.

If the party wins, Rahman will be Bangladesh’s first male prime minister in 35 years.

“We are confident of forming the government by winning more than two-thirds of seats,” BNP’s central election steering committee spokesman Mahdi

Amin told a media briefing in the early hours of Friday.

Rahman, who returned to Bangladesh in December last year after over 17 years in self-exile, asked party leaders and activists to offer special prayers across the country after midday ‘Juma’ prayers instead of holding victory rallies.

The EC was yet to announce the voter turnout figure. It dismissed allegations of manipulation regarding voters’ appearances in polling centres.

“There were debates over turnout percentages in past elections as well. Please don’t question it now,” Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasur Uddin told a reporter on Thursday evening.

He said variations were natural as results from several thousand polling centres arrived at different times.

EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed on Thursday said 47.91 per cent of voters had cast ballots by 2 pm on Thursday at 36,031 of the 42,651 polling centres.

More than 2,000 candidates, including a number of independents, were in the fray for 299 of the 300 parliamentary constituencies that went to the polls. Polling for one seat was postponed due to the death of a candidate.

The Election Commission made elaborate security arrangements for the elections, deploying nearly 1 million security personnel — the largest-ever in the country’s electoral history.

## Trump’s EPA revokes scientific finding that underpinned US fight against climate change

WASHINGTON

The Trump administration on Thursday revoked a scientific finding that long has been the central basis for U.S. action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change, the most aggressive move by the Republican president to roll back climate regulations.

The rule finalised by the Environmental Protection Agency rescinds a 2009 government declaration known as the endangerment finding that determined that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases threaten public health and welfare. The Obama-era finding is the legal underpinning of nearly all climate regulations under the Clean Air Act for motor vehicles, power plants and other pollution sources that are heating the planet.

The repeal eliminates all greenhouse gas emissions standards for cars and trucks and could unleash a broader undoing of climate regulations on stationary sources such as power plants and oil and gas facilities, experts say. Legal challenges are near certain.

President Donald Trump called the move “the single largest deregulatory action in American history, by far,” while EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin called the endangerment finding “the Holy Grail of federal regulatory overreach.”

Trump called the endangerment finding “one of the greatest scams in history,” claiming falsely that it “had no basis in fact” or law. “On the contrary, over the generations, fossil fuels have saved millions of lives and lifted billions of people out of poverty all over the world,” Trump said at a White House ceremony, although scientists across the globe agree that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are driving catastrophic heat waves and storms, droughts and sea level rise.

Environmental groups described the move as the single biggest attack in U.S. history against federal authority to address climate change. Evidence backing up the endan-

germent finding has only grown stronger in the 17 years since it was approved, they said.

“This action will only lead to more climate pollution, and that will lead to higher costs and real harms for American families,” said Fred Krupp, president of Environmental Defense Fund, adding that the consequences would be felt on Americans’ health, property values, water supply and more.

The EPA also said it will propose a two-year delay to a Biden-era rule restricting greenhouse gas emissions by cars and light trucks. And the agency will end incentives for automakers who install automatic start-stop ignition systems in their vehicles. The device is intended to reduce emissions, but Zeldin said “everyone hates” it.

Zeldin, a former Republican congressman who was tapped by Trump to lead EPA last year, has criticized his predecessors in Democratic administrations, saying that in the name of tackling climate change, they were “willing to bankrupt the country.” The endangerment finding “led to trillions of dollars in regulations that strangled entire sectors of the United States economy, including the American auto industry,” Zeldin said. “The Obama and Biden administrations used it to steamroll into existence a left-wing wish list of costly climate policies, electric vehicle mandates and other requirements that assaulted consumer choice and affordability.” The endangerment finding and the regulations based on it “didn’t just regulate emissions, it regulated and targeted the American dream. And now the endangerment finding is hereby eliminated,” Zeldin said.

The Supreme Court ruled in a 2007 case that planet-warming greenhouse gases, caused by the burning of oil and other fossil fuels, are air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

Since the high court’s decision, in a case known as Massachusetts v. EPA, courts have uniformly rejected legal challenges to the endangerment finding, including a 2023 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for

the District of Columbia Circuit.

The endangerment finding is widely considered the legal foundation that underpins a series of regulations intended to protect against threats made increasingly severe by climate change. That includes deadly floods, extreme heat waves, catastrophic wildfires and other natural disasters in the United States and around the world.

Gina McCarthy, a former EPA administrator who served as White House climate adviser in the Biden administration, called the Trump administration’s actions reckless. “This EPA would rather spend its time in court working for the fossil fuel industry than protecting us from pollution and the escalating impacts of climate change,” she said.

Former President Barack Obama said on X that repeal of the endangerment finding will make Americans “less safe, less healthy and less able to fight climate change — all so the fossil fuel industry can make even more money.”

Dr. Lisa Patel, a pediatrician and executive director of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, said Trump’s action “prioritizes the profits of big oil and gas companies and polluters over clean air and water” and children’s health.

“As a result of this repeal, I’m going to see more sick kids come into the Emergency Department having asthma attacks and more babies born prematurely,” she said in a statement. “My colleagues will see more heart attacks and cancer in their patients.”

David Doniger, a climate expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said Trump and Zeldin are trying to use repeal of the finding as a “kill shot” that would allow the administration to make nearly all climate regulations invalid. The repeal could erase current limits on greenhouse gas pollution from cars, factories, power plants and other sources and could hinder future administrations from imposing rules to address global warming.

## China is expanding its state-run propaganda with 16 new Tibetan-language radio programmes



**T**his World Radio Day, 13 February 2026, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) warns that China's state-owned broadcaster China National Radio (CNR) has rapidly expanded its Tibetan-language programming, pushing government propaganda deeper into Tibetan communities. RSF is outraged that the regime's narrative is moving to fill the void left by the suspension of Tibetan-language services at the international broadcasters Radio Free Asia (RFA) and Voice of America (VOA). RSF urges the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), which oversees RFA and VOA, to restore this essential programming, and calls on the international community to support independent Tibetan media outlets.

In under a year, CNR expanded its Tibetan-language programming from one programme to seventeen, according to the new winter season broadcast schedule of the High Frequency Coordination Conference (HFCC), an international non-governmental organisation that coordinates the use of shortwave frequencies among broadcasters worldwide. This dramatic scale-up comes alongside the suspension of the Tibetan services of RFA and VOA as the administration of US President Donald Trump attempts to dismantle USAGM media.

Without RFA and VOA, there is currently almost no counter-voice capable of challenging the Chinese regime's propaganda in Tibet, which glorifies the Communist Party, promotes "ethnic unity," and attributes any dissent to "hostile external forces."

"The expansion of radio programming in Tibet by Chinese state media is a new, key part of Beijing's strategy to promote a new world order in the information space by flooding it with propaganda. As predicted, China has jumped on the opportunity to fill the information void now that VOA and RFA broadcasting is absent from Tibet — and Kari Lake, Trump's pick to lead USAGM, refuses to restore Tibetan programming. Democracies must act swiftly and provide independent Tibetan media with the funding and support they desperately need. In particular, Kari Lake and USAGM should prioritise the relaunch of Tibetan programming before audiences are left with no source of information other than the state's narrative."

Aleksandra Bielakowska  
RSF Asia-Pacific Advocacy Manager



Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.

CNR's increase in Tibetan-language programming is part of Beijing's plan to ensure "the leader's [Xi Jinping's] thoughts to penetrate the hearts of people of different ethnicities like a shower of honey," as Shen Haixiong, Deputy Head of the Publicity Department of the Chinese Communist Party and Head of the China Media Group, stated during the 75th-anniversary celebration of state-run Chinese Tibetan Radio in May 2025.

Tibet: an information black hole  
In the Tibet Autonomous Region, more than in any other part of China, the regime closely monitors and represses anyone attempting to disseminate information from independent sources — especially news on the widespread human rights abuses against the Tibetan minority. Foreign journalists are routinely denied access to the region. The halt of RFA and VOA services has deprived millions of people of access to reliable information. Their Tibetan services documented human rights abuses and cultural persecution, and highlighted the resilience of the Tibetan people. Their radio programmes served as a lifeline that allowed listeners in Tibet to bypass Beijing's extreme crackdown on trustworthy information.

"With the current suspension of VOA and RFA Tibetan services, and the expansion of Chinese state-media coverage, Tibetans inside Tibet say they are 'missing their morning breakfast'" said Kalsang Jigme, founder of the independent media Tibet Radio, and a former reporter for VOA's Tibetan service. Former deputy director of RFA Tibetan services Palden Gyal told RSF: "The recent suspension of these services has allowed the Chinese Government, through the expansion of its own media outlets, to intensify efforts to promote its policies and ideology to win the hearts of Tibetans — something it has been unable to achieve in the past. In any information war, if one side is not present, the other side has free rein."

Beyond radio broadcasts, the Chinese authorities have tightened control over access to television in Tibet's Ngari prefecture, where private satellite reception equipment has been banned. In Coqen County, more than 3,500 government-installed satellite television sets have already been set up in 17 villages, restricting rural and nomadic households' access to external broadcasts. According to an official statement, the regime planned to install these satellites in all 74 county-level administrative divisions across the Tibet Autonomous Region by the end of 2025. Whether the project was carried out as planned is hard to verify precisely due to the regime's crackdown on journalism.

The wider war on journalism  
Since leader Xi Jinping came to power in early 2012, the Chinese

Communist Party has drastically tightened its control over the media. Over the last decade, the Chinese regime has massively invested in developing media capable of reaching an international public: The state-owned television network CGTN

broadcasts TV programmes in more than 160 countries, and its online news services are available in 43 languages. The ongoing legal and political uncertainty surrounding the future of USAGM-funded broadcasters has allowed the expansion of

Chinese state media to continue unabated.

China is the world's biggest jailer of journalists, with 123 currently detained, and ranks 178th out of 180 countries and territories in the 2025 RSF World Press Freedom Index.

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# NEIR RALLY 2026: A JOURNEY TO LISTEN, LEARN, LINK THE NORTHEAST



## RAJKUMMAR

In a time when noise often drowns meaning, the NEIR Rally 2026 chose a quieter path. It set out to listen. To sit down. To talk. And to bring people closer.

The Northeast India Relations Rally, or NEIR Rally, is a month long outreach that began on January 4 in Kolkata. It is led by Biswadeep Gupta, Managing Trustee and CEO of KRC Foundations. His idea was simple but bold. Travel. Meet people. Reach out to nearly 200 communities of the Northeast. Build bridges where gaps still remain.

This is not a political yatra. Nor a festival on wheels. It is a soulful attempt to unite, connect and communicate.

### A Rally with a Purpose

The Northeast is home to many tribes, languages and belief systems. Each state carries its own rhythm. Even within one state, cultures shift every few miles. For years, many of these communities have felt distant from the so called mainstream. Some feel unheard. Some feel misunderstood.

The NEIR Rally wants to change that.

The team moves from place to place, holding talks and open discussions. Elders, youth leaders, artists, thinkers and local voices are invited. They sit together. They speak freely. There is no script forced on them. The focus is on dialogue.

Biswadeep Gupta says the aim is not to preach. It is to understand. According to him, real unity does not come from slogans. It grows from respect.

### Culture at the Centre

Along with discussions, the rally hosts cultural events. Music, dance and storytelling form a big part of the journey. In many towns, evenings turn into vibrant gatherings where traditional drums echo and folk songs rise into the night air.

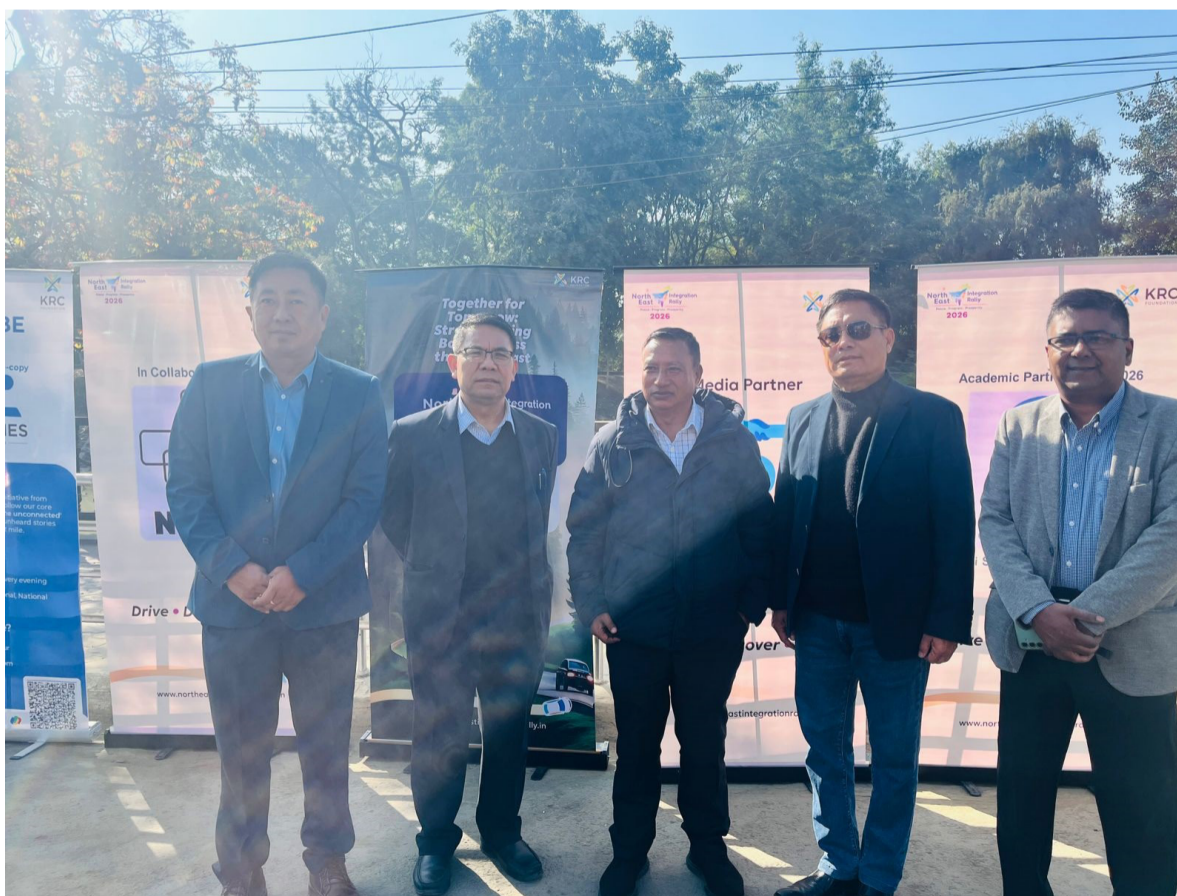
Culture becomes the bridge.

When communities see their art valued, they feel seen. When one tribe watches another perform, curiosity replaces distance. Food is shared. Stories are exchanged. Young people connect over common dreams.

The rally understands that identity is not a barrier. It is a strength.

### Beginning from Kolkata

The choice of Kolkata as the starting point carries meaning. For decades, the city has been



a gateway between the Northeast and the rest of India. Many students and workers from the region have lived there. It holds memories, both warm and difficult.

Launching the rally from Kolkata was a symbolic gesture. It marked a step from the mainland toward the hills and valleys of the Northeast. It signaled a desire to strengthen ties, not just within the region, but beyond it.

From there, the rally has been charting its course through different states, meeting communities on their own soil.

### Youth at the Heart

One striking feature of the NEIR Rally 2026 is its focus on young people. In almost every stop, special sessions are held for students

and young leaders. They are asked what they want for their future. What worries them. What gives them hope.

Many speak about jobs, education and migration. Some talk about preserving language and land. Others raise concerns about drugs, climate change and loss of culture.

The rally does not promise instant answers. But it creates a space where youth feel heard. And that, in itself, matters.

### Beyond Symbolism

Skeptics may ask what a rally can really change. Can conversations reshape ground realities?

The organizers believe change starts with contact. When communities meet face to face, mistrust can soften. When leaders hear directly from the people, policies may become more grounded. When stories travel, stereotypes break.

KRC Foundations plans to compile insights from the month long journey. The findings may help shape future programs and partnerships. There is talk of community networks that will stay connected even after the rally ends.

In that sense, the NEIR Rally is not just an event. It is the beginning of a longer process.

### A Region of Many Voices

The Northeast is often spoken of as one block. But it is not one story. It is many stories woven together. From the tea gardens of Assam to the hills of Nagaland. From the valleys of Manipur to the rivers of Arunachal. Each place carries pride and pain.

By attempting to reach nearly 200 communities, the NEIR Rally 2026 acknowledges this diversity. It does not try to flatten it. Instead, it celebrates it.

Unity here does not mean sameness. It means standing together while staying different.

### The Road Ahead

As the month long journey moves forward, its true impact will unfold over time. The real test will be whether connections built during these meetings continue. Whether networks grow stronger. Whether trust deepens.

But even now, one thing is clear. In an age of quick statements and online debates, the NEIR Rally 2026 chose the harder route. It chose to travel. To sit across from strangers. To ask questions. To listen without rushing.

Led by Biswadeep Gupta and supported by KRC Foundations, this initiative reminds us that unity is not declared. It is built. Slowly. Patiently. One conversation at a time.



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**Adventure Sports**  
Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, 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 Governmental institution for remedial plan, awareness, water conservation, and environmental programs. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



**10 JAN**  
**Barak Festival: Peace Progress & Prosperity**

**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.



**BROADCAST PARTNER**



**REGISTER HERE**

Contact: [info@krcfoundation.org](mailto:info@krcfoundation.org)  
WP: 0721300019

**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, Training & Geography competitive and certification River Barak, Climate Change.

**11 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
All Media related to Barak Valley.

**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'. Welcome your news channels, journalists, media & corporate houses, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.

**11 JAN**  
**5E For Success Conclave**  
The 4th 5E For Success Conclave is going to be held on the theme: 'From School to Campus to Corporate'. Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.



**CONCLAVE**  
**'From School to Campus to Corporate'**



**BARAK FESTIVAL 2025**  
**PAINTING CARNIVAL**  
**NE CULTURAL FEST**  
**E-SPORTS**  
**FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION**  
BOOK CLUB | AWARDS & GUEST | RAMP WALK | RECORDS LIVE

**10-12 JAN**  
**Science Studio**  
Use a glimpse of Science to arts through digital. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents. Raw science 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**  
**Band Night** 10 JAN  
**Musical Night** 11 JAN

**10-12 JAN**  
**E-Sports**  
Full Blown! Don't miss! CASH PRIZES | Trophy



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



Contact: [info@krcfoundation.org](mailto:info@krcfoundation.org)  
WP: 0721300019

**10-12 JAN**  
**Book Bank**  
Anti-illiteracy Campaign Book Bank at all levels | House | School

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

**Painting Carnival**  
Water Colour painting and Draw-Paint Campaign



**Watch Out!**  
**Film Festival**

**5E SUCCESS**  
**STUDENT INTERNSHIP**  
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- Outreach Executive
- Event Management
- Programme Coordinator

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