

Barak Festival
NE INDIA ADVENTURE SPORTS,
ART & CULTURE PROMOTION

Barak Valley, Assam | JAN-MAR 2025
www.krctimes.com
Phone: 8721838313

North East Integration Rally
Peace | Progress | Prosperity
2026

Registrations
OPEN

www.northeastintegrationrally.in
+91 935 083 0085

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

SUBSCRIBE
₹300 / year

WhatsApp payment details : 8721838313
info@krctimes.com

PERSPECTIVE

When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on - Franklin D. Roosevelt

Centre Ready to Extend Full Support to Nagaland Farmers, Says MoS Ram Nath Thakur

DIMAPUR
Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ram Nath Thakur on Thursday said the Central Government stands ready to extend all possible assistance to farmers in Nagaland and ensure effective implementation of agricultural schemes in the state.

Addressing an official programme in Longleng attended by heads of departments and civil society organisations, Thakur said Nagaland continues to make progress through various initiatives of the Centre. He emphasised that the Prime Minister remains particularly concerned about farmers' welfare and is keen to ensure that they fully benefit from government schemes. The minister urged the agriculture and allied departments to furnish detailed data on the total area under cultivation in the state, including the number of hectares being farmed and the number of farmers engaged in agricultural activities.

He also enquired about the operational status of the Soil Testing Laboratory in Nagaland and whether its services are effectively reaching and benefiting the farming community. Highlighting the Centre's commitment to agricultural development, Thakur called upon farmers to avail themselves of all available government schemes. He further urged the state government to focus on addressing challenges faced by farmers and to prioritise agricultural growth.

Stressing the importance of accountability, the minister directed officials to ensure proper implementation of schemes and to make certain that benefits reach the grassroots level. He also underscored the need for periodic reviews to assess the effectiveness of centrally sponsored schemes in Nagaland.

WHO SAID WHAT



"10 years ago, a street vendor in Mumbai could not open a bank account. Today, the same vendor accepts payments on his phone." - Emmanuel Macron, French President

Manipur Media Fraternity Rallies Over Armed Attack on Senior Editor; Memorandum Submitted to CM

IMPHAL

Journalists across Manipur on Friday staged coordinated protests condemning the recent armed assault on senior editor Khoirom Loyalakpa and demanded the immediate arrest of those responsible, along with stronger safety measures for media professionals in the State.

The demonstrations were jointly organised by the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) and the Editors' Guild of Manipur (EGM). Senior editors, reporters and video journalists from multiple media houses participated, holding placards and raising slogans denouncing attacks on the press.

A joint memorandum was submitted to Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, urging swift legal action and institutional safeguards to ensure the safety of journalists.

In the memorandum, the media bodies expressed "profound concern and deep anguish" over what they described as a disturbing

pattern of assaults on working journalists in Manipur. They noted that Loyalakpa and other media practitioners had allegedly faced threats and intimidation in the past, warning that such incidents endanger individual lives and erode democratic values and freedom of expression.

The organisations called for:

- Immediate and time-bound registration of an FIR against the perpetrators;
- A swift, impartial and transparent investigation;
- Implementation of concrete safety protocols for journalists across Manipur; and
- Periodic engagement between the government and journalists' associations to address security concerns.

They also appealed to the State government to uphold the right to life, liberty and freedom of the press.

Addressing the gathering, AMWJU Vice President S. Sonia strongly condemned the attack, describing it as a life-threatening



assault on the editor of Naharolgi Thoudang. "It is a very unfortunate incident, and such acts must not happen in the future,"

she said, adding that attacks on journalists strike at the heart of democracy and free speech.

Senior journalist Wahengbam Tiken said the protest was meant to send a clear message that the media fraternity would not be silenced through threats or violence.

"We strongly oppose intimidation and abuse directed at media persons. The government must ensure that journalists can discharge their duties without fear or pressure," he said.

A delegation of AMWJU members also visited Loyalakpa at his residence to express solidarity and assess his condition.

Meanwhile, police confirmed that an FIR bearing No. 45(02)2026 PRT-PS has been registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, along with Section 25(1-B) of the Arms Act, 1959. The sections invoked pertain to allegations of wrongful restraint, assault, attempt to commit an offence, damage to property, and

illegal use of firearms.

According to police officials, investigations are underway to identify and apprehend the accused.

Recounting the incident, Loyalakpa alleged that unidentified miscreants opened fire at his vehicle on the night of February 18, shattering its windowpanes before dragging him out and assaulting him.

He said the attackers struck him with the butt of a firearm, leaving him with a fractured jaw. The assailants reportedly fled amid the commotion.

The injured editor is currently undergoing treatment at the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal. Hospital sources said his condition is stable.

Sources indicated that this was not the first time Loyalakpa had been targeted, as he had reportedly faced similar attacks in the past. The motive behind the latest assault remains unclear as the investigation continues.

PM Modi to Launch Rs.22,000-Crore Guwahati-Silchar Expressway on March 14

'ZERO INFILTRATION' CALL AS AMIT SHAH LAUNCHES VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME-II

SILCHAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Assam's Barak Valley on March 14 to inaugurate the 22,000-crore Guwahati-Silchar expressway, a flagship infrastructure project expected to significantly cut travel time between the two cities. The announcement was made by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme in Silchar.

According to the Chief Minister, the high-speed corridor will reduce travel time between Guwahati and Silchar from more than eight hours to approximately four-and-a-half hours, providing a major boost to connectivity between the Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley.

Sarma said the tendering process for the expressway has been completed and necessary clearances have been secured. "Wildlife board clearance has been obtained, and land acquisition has also progressed well. Construction of roads will begin soon," he stated.

The project is being seen as a transformative initiative for southern Assam,



with expectations that it will enhance trade, logistics and passenger movement across the region. During his visit, the Prime Minister is also slated to inaugurate the long-awaited Silchar flyover, a key urban infrastructure project aimed at easing traffic congestion in the town. The flyover has been under construction for several years and is expected to improve intra-city mobility once operational. In another significant development, Sarma disclosed that the proposed greenfield airport in Silchar has received environmental clearance. The next step, he said, would be obtaining approval from the State Cabinet. The Prime Minister's visit comes ahead of the upcoming Assam

Assembly elections, due in a few months. Sarma indicated that the announcement of BJP candidates for the polls is likely to take place after Modi's Barak Valley tour.

The expressway, flyover inauguration and progress on the proposed airport are being projected as part of a broader infrastructure push in southern Assam, with the State government highlighting connectivity and development as key priorities in the run-up to the elections.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday launched the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP-II) from Nathanpur in Cachar district, asserting that India's border habitations would be transformed into the "first and finest villages" of the country.

Addressing a large public gathering in Barak Valley, Shah described the initiative as a strategic national mission aimed at accelerating development in border areas while strengthening national security. "Border villages are no longer India's last villages; they are India's first villages. From this sacred land, we begin a journey to make them number one in connect-

ity, education, healthcare, employment and overall development," he said. The second phase of the programme will cover nearly 2,000 villages across more than 330 strategically significant border blocks in 17 states and Union Territories adjoining Pakistan and Bangladesh, with an estimated outlay of around 77,000 crore. In Assam, 140 villages across 26 blocks in nine border districts - including Cachar, Sribhumi, Dhubri, South Salmara, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur and Udalguri - are set to benefit under the initiative. Shah outlined the broad scope of the project, stating that it would ensure all-weather roads, uninterrupted electricity, mobile connectivity, piped drinking water, enhanced healthcare outreach, improved educational infrastructure and livelihood opportunities in border areas. "Our aim is clear - zero migration from border villages, zero infiltration into the country and zero disparity between border and mainland regions. People living in these areas should feel secure and proud, and never think of leaving their homes," he said.

The Home Minister stressed that development in frontier regions was intrinsically linked to national security. He maintained that economic empowerment and improved infrastructure would make border communities more resilient against infiltration as well as recurring natural disasters such as floods.

Shah also said that the present government had taken decisive measures to seal infiltration routes and reclaim encroached land in Assam. "Under the leadership of the Chief Minister, lakhs of bighas of encroached land have been freed. Security and development go hand in hand. A secure Assam means a secure India," he remarked. Referring to Assam's chronic flood problem, Shah endorsed the state government's roadmap to make Assam flood-free within five years. He said the Brahmaputra river would be scientifically managed through reservoirs, modern embankments and irrigation networks. "The water that once caused destruction will now irrigate farmers' fields, fill reservoirs and promote tourism and economic growth."

2,670 Single-Teacher Primary Schools Still Operational in Assam; Over 13,000 Institutions Without Permanent Headmasters

GUWAHATI

Assam continues to grapple with significant staffing and infrastructure gaps in its school education system, with 2,670 primary schools functioning with a single teacher and more than 13,000 schools operating without permanent headmasters, the Assembly was informed on Thursday.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Akhil Gogoi, Education Minister Dr Ranoj Pegu said that while no government primary school in 2025-26 is functioning without a teacher, 2,670 schools across the State continue to operate with only one teacher handling all classes.

On teacher deployment, the minister informed the House that 4,041 five-class primary schools have five or more teachers, excluding headmasters. In addition, 1,733 six-class schools have six or more teachers, indicating that staffing levels vary widely across institutions.

The data placed before the Assembly also highlighted considerable infrastructure deficiencies. Only 5,083 five-class schools have five or more classrooms, suggesting that a substantial number lack adequate teaching space. Among six-class schools, just 1,530 have the required number of classrooms, while as many as 21,839 schools do not meet the prescribed classroom norms, underscoring space constraints in many institutions.

Leadership vacancies remain a pressing concern. The House was informed that 13,614 primary schools and 3,402 upper primary schools are currently functioning without permanent headmasters.

Subject teacher shortages persist across higher levels as well. Upper primary schools have 4,805 vacant posts, including assistant, Hindi and science teachers. High schools account for 7,396 vacancies in science, mathematics, arts and Hindi, while higher secondary schools report 242 vacant posts in science, mathematics, English and Hindi.

In the Sixth Schedule districts, 713 posts remain vacant in high schools and 76 in higher secondary schools, further reflecting staffing challenges in autonomous areas.

The Assembly was also told that the total number of government primary, upper primary, high and higher secondary schools in Assam has declined over the years due to the State government's policy of school mergers. According to UDISE+ data, the number of such institutions fell from 52,228 in 2016-17 to 44,300 in 2024-25.

While the government maintained that no primary school is currently without a teacher, the figures presented in the House point to continuing concerns over staffing adequacy, institutional leadership and infrastructure availability across Assam's school education system.

Meghalaya Budget Session Likely to Be Adjourned After Sudden Demise of Shillong MP Ricky A J Syngkon

SHILLONG

The budget session of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, scheduled to commence on Friday with the presentation of the state budget, is likely to be postponed following the sudden demise of Shillong Member of Parliament Ricky A J Syngkon.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Thursday indicated that the proceedings may be adjourned as a mark of respect to the departed leader. The decision was discussed with Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, who also holds the parliamentary affairs portfolio.

A meeting of the Business Advisory Committee, chaired by the Assembly Speaker, is expected to be convened to formalise the decision and announce revised dates for the session.

Syngkon collapsed while playing futsal on the outskirts of Shillong on Thursday evening. He was rushed to a private hospital, where doctors declared him dead at around 8:45 pm.

Speaking to reporters, Sangma said the government was considering postponing the session, including the budget presentation, as a tribute to the late MP. "We have discussed with the Deputy Chief Minister and in-charge of Parliamentary Affairs, Prestone Tynsong. It would be appropriate to adjourn the proceedings as a mark of respect to the departed soul," he said.

A visibly shaken Sangma recalled his recent interaction with Syngkon in New Delhi, where they had discussed development plans for Meghalaya. "I had met Syngkon about two weeks back in Delhi. That was the last meeting and conversation I had with him," he said.

Supreme Court Refuses to Entertain Plea Seeking Intensive Electoral Roll Revision in Poll-Bound Assam



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of India on Thursday declined to entertain a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking directions to the Election Commission to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound Assam.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took note of submissions made on behalf of the poll panel that the final electoral rolls for Assam had already been prepared and published, rendering the petition infructuous.

The PIL, filed by Mrinal Kumar Choudhary, had challenged the Election Commission's decision to undertake a standard Special Revision (SR) in Assam instead of a more rigorous SIR exercise, similar to those conducted in certain other states.

During the hearing, senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, appearing for the petitioner, argued that an intensive revision was necessary to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the electoral rolls in the state.

However, senior advocate D. S.

Naidu, representing the Election Commission of India, informed the bench that the final electoral roll for Assam had already been published on February 10. "Nothing survives now," the CJI observed, indicating that the court would not intervene at this stage.

The bench underscored the sensitivity of matters relating to electoral rolls and citizenship, observing that under the existing legislative and judicial framework, the Election Commission does not have the authority to arbitrarily declare individuals as foreigners. Such determinations, the court noted, are governed by statutory cut-off dates and adjudicated by specialised tribunals. "You have to be very sensitive and careful," the Chief Justice told Hansaria.

The petition had sought quashing of a memo dated November 17, 2025, issued by the poll panel directing a Special Revision rather than a Special Intensive Revision in Assam. It also requested that an SIR be conducted on the same parameters as the one carried out in Bihar in June 2025, ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections. Additionally, the plea sought exclusion of Aadhaar as a valid document for inclusion in electoral rolls.

Following the completion of the Special Revision exercise, data released by the Chief Electoral Officer indicated that the total number of voters in Assam had decreased by approximately 2.43 lakh.

The ruling comes amid heightened political activity in the state as parties gear up for the forthcoming Assembly elections.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 708

DEGREES OF DESTRUCTION

Terrorism is commonly linked to grim realities such as grinding poverty, widespread illiteracy, and deep-seated social exclusion. Yet, a growing array of compelling cases from diverse nations powerfully dismantles this oversimplified narrative. Among the most chilling and thought-provoking recent developments is the shocking involvement of highly trained medical professionals from Al-Falah University in a sinister terrorist conspiracy. This alarming episode compels us to confront a stark, politically impartial question that demands serious reflection: why do remarkably accomplished individuals armed with prestigious advanced degrees and holding positions of genuine respect and authority occasionally gravitate toward ruthless violence?

The root cause transcends simplistic explanations centered on rigid ideology or the mere possession of education. Instead, it emerges from a complex, often toxic interplay between soaring personal ambitions, fragile senses of identity, flawed institutional frameworks, and elusive opportunities for fulfillment. Higher education ignites powerful aspirations and elevates expectations to new heights. Professional qualifications—especially in demanding fields like medicine—hold the tantalizing promise of elevated social status, financial security, enduring stability, and widespread admiration. When these grand expectations slam into harsh barriers such as stagnant career advancement, bureaucratic inefficiencies, systemic corruption, or unexpected personal reversals, the ensuing disillusionment can prove far more devastating and rage-inducing than for those who never dared to dream so ambitiously. Extensive research into pathways of radicalization consistently underscores a crucial insight: it is perceived relative deprivation—the bitter sting of falling short compared to one's rightful expectations—rather than absolute destitution, that frequently fuels extremist leanings. A highly educated professional who feels systematically obstructed is far more inclined to reinterpret personal failures and frustrations as profound systemic injustices demanding drastic redress.

Moreover, academic achievement rarely quenches the deep human yearning for genuine belonging, purpose, and community. Universities masterfully equip students with cutting-edge skills and technical expertise, yet they often struggle to nurture meaningful social bonds, emotional resilience, or a profound sense of existential meaning. Young professionals—relocated far from family roots, cultural anchors, or familiar support networks—can descend into profound isolation and alienation. In these vulnerable moments, highly cohesive ideological circles—whether rooted in radical religious interpretations, fervent political visions, or other absolutist worldviews—step in to provide irresistible allure: unshakable certainty, unbreakable solidarity, and an electrifying sense of transcendent purpose. What begins as private anguish transforms into a galvanizing collective crusade.

Perhaps most disturbingly, advanced education sharpens intellectual precision and analytical prowess without invariably instilling corresponding ethical restraint or moral caution. The formidable tools honed through rigorous study—mastery of sophisticated argumentation, capacity for abstract reasoning, systems-level thinking, and logical dissection—can be wielded either to dismantle justifications for violence or, conversely, to construct chillingly persuasive rationales for it. Extremist networks excel at crafting elegant, internally coherent narratives that recast brutality as morally imperative, defensively necessary, or even redemptively heroic. An intellectually gifted recruit, far from being hindered by ignorance, may possess the very cognitive sophistication needed to fully embrace and operationalize such seductive logic—channeling raw moral fury into meticulously planned, cold-blooded action. This phenomenon reflects not a deficit of knowledge, but the calculated perversion of formidable intellect.

From the perspective of terrorist organizations themselves, educated professionals represent extraordinarily high-value assets. Like any sophisticated, high-stakes enterprise, extremist groups require seamless logistics, sophisticated financial orchestration, cutting-edge technical capabilities, and credible public legitimacy. Physicians, engineers, scientists, and academics deliver these scarce resources in abundance. Their participation radiates an aura of gravitas, competence, and professionalism—reassuring wavering recruits, inspiring donors, and projecting an image of unstoppable seriousness. This recurring pattern of “white-collar” involvement extends far beyond South Asia; it has been starkly evident across Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere, where radical factions deliberately prioritize the recruitment of skilled professionals.

Institutional safeguards and oversight play a pivotal—yet often neglected—role. Academic institutions and professional regulatory bodies are not, and should not be expected to function as, full-fledged security apparatuses. Nevertheless, pervasive lapses in governance—such as inadequate background vetting, superficial hiring protocols, absent psychological support systems, and minimal proactive mentoring—create dangerous blind spots and fertile ground for undetected radicalization. When universities fixate narrowly on churning out credentials while side-lining holistic ethical training, civic education, student mental health, and character development, subtle early warning signs of ideological drift can easily slip through the cracks. This represents less a deliberate failure of malice than a profound shortfall in institutional design and foresight. The wider political and social landscape provides the final, critical layer of context. In environments where citizens genuinely believe that legitimate mechanisms for voicing grievances, seeking justice, participating meaningfully in governance, or driving peaceful reform have become hopelessly ineffective or corrupted, despair can breed radical conclusions. A subset may tragically conclude—however erroneously—that extraordinary, violent measures represent the sole remaining path to agency and change. Paradoxically, higher education can intensify this dangerous perception: it teaches individuals precisely how just, functional systems are supposed to operate, thereby magnifying outrage when reality falls disastrously short.

The profound lesson emerging from the Al-Falah University case is emphatically not that education inherently breeds terrorism or extremism. Quite the reverse: robust, widespread education remains one of the most potent, enduring bulwarks against violence and radical ideologies over the long term. Yet education, standing alone, is undeniably incomplete and insufficient. True protection demands that intellectual mastery be deliberately intertwined with rigorous ethical cultivation, compassionate professional mentorship, robust mental health support, and verifiable, merit-based pathways for meaningful advancement and societal contribution.

Institutions entrusted with shaping tomorrow's doctors, engineers, scientists, and civic leaders must rise above the narrow role of mere credential factories. They should boldly embrace their higher calling as vibrant civic fortresses—places that not only transmit knowledge but actively forge responsible, grounded, and connected citizens equipped to navigate disappointment without descending into destruction.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“The past has no power over the present moment.”
Eckhart Tolle

Rise of Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh, Its Impact on India



ASAD MIRZA

The much-anticipated election results from Bangladesh are out. The BNP has secured 209 seats, while the Jamaat-e-Islami won 68, as the Election Commission disclosed the unofficial election results for 297 constituencies. But the scale of the win surprised some observers, given expectations of a tighter race and wins by Jamaat-e-Islami.

The keenly watched elections in Bangladesh were important, not just for the country but for the region as a whole. At the centre of this was the anticipated performance of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). The Islamist party had gained prominence after aligning itself with protestors' demands during the 2024 uprising that ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Her Awami League, which ruled for 15 years, has since been barred from political activities.

Jamaat-e-Islami led an alliance into the polls that included the National Citizen Party (NCP), formed by youth activists who were instrumental in toppling Hasina. Though defeated, Jamaat-e-Islami secured its highest-ever tally of 70 seats, positioning itself as what analysts describe as a “very robust opposition” capable of influencing future parliamentary debate.

Yet, despite Jamaat-e-Islami projecting itself as a vehicle for change, voters ultimately placed their trust in the Bangladesh National Party (BNP)—a party rooted in Bangladesh's political establishment.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, has a very strong organisational structure, which is better than that of the BNP and is just next to that of the erstwhile Awami League.

While India, which has historical ties with Bangladesh

and its people, will engage with whoever wins the election, a Jamaat win is bound to involve very different calculations for New Delhi. Historically, Jamaat has been seen to be pro-Pakistan, with several of its leaders executed after being tried by the International Crimes Tribunal for 1971 war crimes.

The BNP and JI had been alliance partners and ran Bangladesh from 2001 to 2006 with the BNP's Khaleda Zia as the prime minister. Elections held in 2008 under a caretaker government saw the Awami League come to power, and Hasina ruled until she was forced out in 2024.

The Jamaat-e-Islami has been rooting for reforms in Bangladesh's electoral processes before general elections were conducted. Perhaps it sensed a shift in voter sentiment, with crucial BNP voters like moderate Islamists, a section of freedom fighter families and the business class moving away from the Khaleda Zia-led party.

The Jamaat was barred from elections in 2014 and a full ban on it was imposed by the Hasina regime on August 1, 2024, as it was battling for survival.

People not following Bangladesh's politics might have discounted the Jamaat-e-Islami in favour of the BNP. There are reasons to do so. The Jamaat secured just 4.28% of the votes in the 2008 election, the last free and fair poll Bangladesh witnessed. The maximum vote share it saw was 6.03% in 1970.

Cause of Concern for India

However, there is a new political reality to be considered in Bangladesh. The last phase of the Hasina government, especially after 2021, saw a rise in anti-India sentiments and of pro-Pakistan elements. Moreover, fundamentalists and Islamist extremists have been given a free run in the Yunus-led

caretaker set-up.

The last BNP-Jamaat government (2001-2006) was a security nightmare for India. Anti-India terrorists and jihadi elements used Bangladeshi soil for anti-India activities. Then home minister Lutfozzaman Babar was arrested by the military-backed caretaker government in 2007, and sentenced to 10 years in jail for possession of illegal firearms.

Jamaat-e-Islami's Legacy

The Jamaat-e-Islami, which is erroneously described as a Deobandi Islamist party, is not in any manner related to the venerable Darul Uloom, Deoband of India and thus cannot be described as a Deobandi organisation.

In fact, Jamaat-e-Islami of Bangladesh owes its origins and philosophical leanings to the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan, which was founded by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi.

Maulana Abul Ala Maududi (25 September 1903 – 22 September 1979) was a prominent Islamic scholar, theologian, political philosopher, and activist from British India, later based in Pakistan. He founded the Jamaat-e-Islami, in 1941, which sought to promote an Islamic state governed by Sharia law.

Maududi studied Islamic theology at various Islamic institutions in Hyderabad and became deeply engaged with modern philosophy and Western thought, which shaped his critique of modernity. He spent years in prison under various regimes for his political activities and writings, including a death sentence (later commuted) for criticising the Ahmadiyya community.

Maududi played a significant role in shaping political Islam in South Asia. He opposed the partition of India but later focused on making Pakistan an Islamic state. His ideals about establishing a true

Islamic state, found some resonance among his followers in Pakistan and more so in Bangladesh.

While Jamaat-e-Islami-Pakistan and Jamaat-e-Islami-Bangladesh share a foundational ideology and historical lineage, they differ significantly in their political integration, state relations, and engagement with violence.

The JI in Pakistan operates as a mainstream political player within a Muslim-majority state, whereas JI in Bangladesh has been marginalised, banned, and branded a terrorist entity due to its wartime collaboration and alleged links to extremism. Their paths reflect the divergent political and historical journeys of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Today marks a deeply personal milestone for me. As the 15th Assam Legislative Assembly concluded its session, I paused to reflect on completing 25 years as an MLA, from 2001 to now serving as Assam's Chief Minister. While roles have evolved over time, my commitment to Jan Sewa has remained unwavering. These two-and-a-half decades have been a journey of service, resilience, and an abiding love for Aai Asom. In my early years, I had the opportunity to serve on key committees, advocating rural development and reforms in education. In 2006, when I took oath as a Minister, I began understanding the nuts and bolts of governance; balancing fiscal responsibility while expanding schools, rolling out scholarships for meritorious students, and laying foundations for financial inclusion. In 2021, with the blessings of the people, I assumed office as Chief Minister with a vision for a stronger, more decisive Assam. I have endeavoured to serve with the same zeal and dedication that guided me in 2001. From a young MLA speaking in these hallowed halls to leading the state today, the trust and affection of the people have been my greatest strength. As I look to the future, my resolve to serve my motherland remains as firm as ever. Here's to the next 25 years of progress, peace, and prosperity. Jai Hind. Jai Aai Axom 🇮🇳

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM



In contrast, Jamaat-e-Islami-India, is the largest party of educated Muslims, and does not advocate these ideals. Though it follows and endorses the religious teachings of Maulana Maududi, it does not subscribe to most of his political philosophy. This might be due to the Indian syncretical values and cultural ethos. Thus, it would be prudent not to club the Indian JI with JI of Bangladesh.

Impact of JI's Win on India

With Jamaat-e-Islami, being a major partner of the new government that took over in Bangladesh on February 17, India needs to be cautious of its neighbouring country's domestic, foreign and defence policies. With its track record of rousing anti-India sentiments in Bangladesh, India would need to counter this threat in a pragmatic manner, by engaging with moderate elements of the ruling BNP and its leader Tarique Rehman, who has given a positive signal to engage proactively with India by inviting PM Modi to his swearing-in ceremony in Dhaka.



Meghalaya High Court Upholds Five-Year Blacklisting of Infrastructure Firm Over 'Bribery' Ledger Entries

SILLONG

The Meghalaya High Court has upheld the blacklisting of a Hyderabad-based infrastructure company from participating in government contracts in the state for five years, ruling that ledger entries detailing cash payments and gift purchases for public officials constituted sufficient grounds for debarment.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice W Diengdoh dismissed an appeal filed by M/s BSCPL Infrastructure Ltd on February 19. The bench affirmed both the December 3, 2024 blacklisting order issued by the Public Works Department (PWD) and a prior Single Judge ruling that had declined relief to the company.

Project Background and Escalating Costs

The controversy traces back to a February 2011 contract worth Rs 1,303.83 crore awarded to a joint venture between

BSCPL and C&C Construction for the two-laning of the Shillong-Nongstoin and Nongstoin-Rongjeng-Tura stretches of National Highway 44.

Originally scheduled for completion by March 2014, the project experienced significant delays and was ultimately completed in December 2017 at a revised cost of Rs 2,406.46 crore - nearly double the initial estimate.

Subsequent disputes between the contractor and the PWD led to prolonged arbitration proceedings. In May 2019, the joint venture submitted a voluminous statement of claims exceeding 9,500 pages across 16 volumes before the arbitral tribunal.

Ledger Entries Spark Controversy

Embedded within those documents was a "business promotion account" ledger, recording a series of cash and cheque payments made between 2014 and 2017. The entries included:

" Cash payments for gift items for government officials

" Purchase of whisky bottles allegedly for officials

" An HP laptop for a PWD junior engineer

" Samsung mobile phones and tablets presented as Christmas gifts

" Titan watches gifted to local administrators

" Monthly cash payments to a police station

" A Rs 4 lakh contribution to a Police Officers' Wives Association

" A Rs 5 lakh cheque to Nongkhnum We Care Society, noted as issued "as per instructions of Higher Management"

The state government said these entries were formally examined only in September 2024, following cross-examination of company witnesses in the arbitration proceedings.

A complaint was lodged at Sardar Po-

lice Station in East Khasi Hills on September 3, 2024. FIR No. 286(9) of 2024 was subsequently registered under provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act. A show cause notice was issued on September 16, culminating in the blacklisting order on December 3, 2024.

Company's Defence Rejected

Represented by senior counsel Mr Jethmalani, BSCPL argued that the blacklisting was legally flawed and motivated by mala fide intent. The company contended that the show cause notice lacked critical particulars, including identification of specific officials allegedly bribed, proof of reciprocal benefit, and any evidence of quid pro quo.

The firm maintained that the ledger entries reflected routine business expenditures and goodwill gestures rather than corrupt inducements. It also questioned the timing of the action, arguing

that the state had waited five years after the documents were submitted in arbitration before initiating proceedings - allegedly to derail the arbitration process and deny the company its dues.

The court, however, found the explanations unconvincing. It noted that the ledger entries had neither been denied nor satisfactorily clarified, and characterised the company's defence as an afterthought.

On the issue of delay, the bench observed that arbitration proceedings had been stayed for significant periods and that cross-examination of witnesses commenced only in July 2022. The complaint was filed soon after those proceedings concluded, which the court held did not constitute unreasonable delay.

Contractual Clauses and State's Inherent Power

The bench relied on Clause 37 of the contract, dealing with corrupt or fraudu-

lent practices, and Clause 59.2(h), which defines "corrupt practice" as the offering or giving of anything of value to influence a public official in procurement or contract execution.

Significantly, the court held that even in the absence of explicit contractual provisions, the PWD retained inherent authority to debar contractors engaged in corrupt conduct in order to safeguard public interest.

Citing Supreme Court precedent, the bench reiterated that blacklisting carries civil consequences and necessitates procedural fairness. At the same time, it emphasised that the state is obligated to prioritise public interest over private contractual disputes.

The court refrained from commenting on the merits of the ongoing arbitration proceedings or the criminal case, both of which remain pending before separate forums.

'When Every Manipuri Is Happy, Manipur Will Be Happy': Nishikanta

IMPHAL

Amid ongoing efforts to restore normalcy in strife-hit Manipur, MLA Sapam Nishikanta on Thursday lauded Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh for what he described as "sincere and determined efforts" to bring lasting peace and stability to the state.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a benefit distribution programme at the Alternative Housing Complex in Langol, Nishikanta said the Chief Minister's approach to addressing the ongoing crisis has been focused and inclusive. He noted that Khemchand has consistently emphasised the need for unity among the 36 communities residing in Manipur and highlighted their shared responsibility in safeguarding the state's integrity.

The MLA also addressed discussions surrounding a proposed Cabinet meeting in Senapati district, dismissing any controversy over the choice of venue. "Senapati is also a part of Manipur. Why shouldn't a Cabinet meeting be held there?" he said, asserting that governance must extend to every district without exception.

Clarifying logistical concerns, Nishikanta stated that ministers travelling to Senapati for the Cabinet meeting would pass through Kangpokpi district, and stressed that administrative processes should not be derailed by speculation or misinformation.

Emphasising reconciliation and social cohesion, the MLA underscored that peace can only be achieved through collective harmony and mutual trust among communities. "When every Manipuri is happy, Manipur will be happy," he remarked, calling on all sections of society to work together towards rebuilding stability in the state.

Bhupen Borah Alleges Gaurav Gogoi Scuttled Opposition Alliance Over CM Ambitions



GUWAHATI

Former Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bhupen Kumar Borah has alleged that Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi was responsible for derailing a proposed opposition alliance in Assam due to personal political ambitions.

Speaking to the media on Thursday, Borah claimed that opposition parties had planned to formally announce the formation

of an alliance during the recent visit of senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to the state. However, the announcement did not materialise as anticipated.

"The plan was that when Priyanka Gandhi would come, all alliance partners would announce the formation. The alliance will still happen now," Borah said, suggesting that discussions among opposition parties are continuing despite the setback.

Borah further alleged that Gogoi withdrew support for the arrangement over concerns that he might not secure the Chief Minister's post if an alliance government were to be formed. The remarks point to possible internal differences within the state Congress unit over leadership aspirations and alliance strategy ahead of upcoming political developments in Assam.

There has been no immediate response from Gogoi regarding Borah's allegations.

Manipur: 'True Gender Equality Yet to Be Fully Realised,' Say MSCW Speakers at Sensitisation Programme

IMPHAL

Asserting that genuine gender equality remains a work in progress, speakers at a sensitisation programme organised by the Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW) on Thursday called for collective action to bridge persistent disparities between men and women.

The one-day awareness programme on "Gender Sensitisation" was held at the auditorium of Akashvani Imphal, in collaboration with the commission.

Addressing the gathering, W. Phajatombi Devi, MCS, Member Secretary of MSCW and Additional Director (IPR), Manipur, said that despite constitutional guarantees and claims of equal rights, substantive equality has not yet been achieved in practice.

She observed that gender-based disparities continue to manifest

across various spheres of life and emphasised that men must acknowledge the roles, contributions, and responsibilities of women.

"Recognition must translate into action if we are to achieve real equality," she said, urging staff of Akashvani Imphal to actively support public awareness initiatives.

Konjengbam Sonikumar Singh, Assistant Director (News), Regional News Unit, Akashvani Imphal, underlined that gender equality must begin within families. "It starts with how female members are treated at home and must extend to workplaces and society at large," he said, advocating greater awareness among men.

He also noted that the condition of the transgender community in Manipur is comparatively better than in several other states in terms of treatment, reduced discrimination, and recognition of

rights. Singh commended MSCW for regularly organising such programmes to keep gender issues in public focus.

Nongthombam Roma, Programme Executive and Chairperson of the Women Cell-Internal Committee at Akashvani Imphal, echoed the view that equality begins at home. She expressed concern that women in leadership positions are often denied due recognition and stressed the importance of women being fully aware of their rights and entitlements.

Highlighting the need for collaborative efforts, she said gender equality can only be realised when men actively support and empower women. Speaking on the sidelines, Thumlip Tiningpham Monsang, Chairperson of MSCW, stressed that empowerment must start at the grassroots level. She urged individuals to empower themselves

in order to empower others and reiterated the commission's commitment to addressing issues affecting women across the state.

Monsang appealed to the public to work collectively in advancing women's rights and building a more equitable society.

During the technical session, Lourenbam Dayabati Devi, former member of MSCW, delivered a talk on "Gender Equity Versus Gender Equality, Gender Role at Home & Workplaces," while advocate B. Supriya Devi spoke on "Men as Allies: Engaging Men in Women's Empowerment."

The programme was attended by SK Sophia Moyon, Member, MSCW; Thokchom Jogendrajit, Assistant Director (News), Regional News Unit, Akashvani Imphal; T. Chuongsin Koireng, former member of MSCW; and staff members of Akashvani Imphal.

Thousands, Including Former AASU Leaders, Join BJP at Dibrugarh Induction Programme

DIBRUGARH

In a significant political development in Upper Assam, thousands of people - including several former leaders and members of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) - formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at a large induction programme held in Dibrugarh on Wednesday.

The event was organised under the leadership of Shankar Jyoti Baruah and witnessed enthusiastic participation from supporters and new entrants from across the district.

Senior party leaders described the mass joining as a major boost to the BJP's grassroots base in Dibrugarh ahead of upcoming organisational and electoral activities.

According to party sources, the new entrants include youth, women, and representatives from various



localities who expressed confidence in the BJP's policies and develop-

ment agenda in Assam.

The induction ceremony was

attended by BJP state president Dilip Saikia, Cabinet Ministers Bimal Borah and Jayanta Malla Baruah, Lahowal MLA Binod Hazarika, Duliaganj MLA Teros Gowala, and BJP General Secretary Rituparna Baruah, among other district-level functionaries.

Addressing the gathering, party leaders said the steady influx of supporters reflects growing public trust in the BJP's governance model and its commitment to development in the state.

They emphasised that the party remains focused on strengthening both-level organisation and expanding outreach across all sections of society.

The programme concluded with newly inducted members taking a pledge to work towards the party's organisational objectives and contribute to the overall development of Dibrugarh district.

Cachar Declared No-Fly Zone Ahead of Amit Shah's Visit; Drone Violations to Attract Legal Action

SILCHAR

In a major security measure ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Cachar district on February 19 and 20, the district administration has declared the entire district a no-fly zone for all Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) and drones.

The decision follows an official communication from the Deputy Superintendent of Police (Security & Intelligence), Cachar DEF, Assam Police, and a comprehensive security review conducted in view of the high-profile VVIP visit.

Acting on the inputs, Cachar District Magistrate Aayush Garg imposed the ban to ensure aerial security during the scheduled programmes. According to the order, operation of all private and commercial drones within Cachar district limits will remain strictly prohibited during the specified period.

"No exemptions will be granted unless prior written permission is obtained from the competent authority following stringent security clearance," the notification stated.

The administration has warned that any violation of the order will invite strict legal action under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Shah is scheduled to arrive

in Silchar on Thursday night for a three-day visit. On Friday, he will visit the Border Security Force's Natunpur border outpost along the India-Bangladesh border to review the prevailing security situation.

He will also launch the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP-II) at Natunpur, an initiative aimed at strengthening border infrastructure and improving livelihoods in frontier areas.

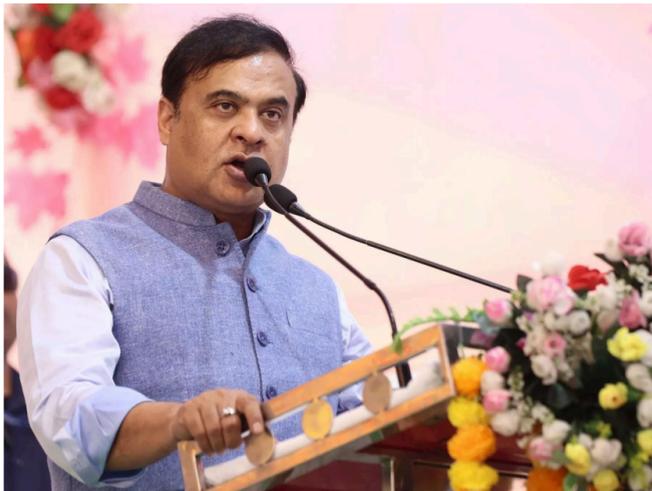
Later in the day, Shah is set to address a BJP rally in Silchar, formally launching the party's election campaign in the Barak Valley. From there, he will travel to Agartala in Tripura before returning to Assam in the evening.

On Saturday, the Union Home Minister will attend the Central Reserve Police Force's annual day parade at the Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex in Guwahati. Officials said the parade is being held in the Northeast for the first time.

He is also scheduled to lay the foundation stone for the new campus of the 10th Assam Police Battalion at Kasutoli in Sonapur, near Guwahati.

Since December 29, this marks Shah's third visit to Assam, where the BJP is aiming to retain power for a third consecutive term. The 126-member Assam Legislative Assembly is expected to go to polls in March-April.

Slogans Alone Cannot Safeguard Community Without Strong Work Culture: Himanta Biswa Sarma



TEZPUR

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that slogans by themselves cannot guarantee the progress or protection of any community, stressing the need to cultivate

Quest!

Having friends from other cultures makes you more creative, a study found.

a robust work culture and greater economic participation among the youth.

Addressing a public programme in Tezpur, Sarma observed that while slogans had played a significant role during earlier socio-political movements, sustainable development requires active engagement in productive sectors such as business, entrepreneurship, and skilled trades.

He urged Assamese youth to broaden their presence across economic activities, including construction, trade, and other

growth-oriented sectors, underscoring that long-term empowerment depends on building a strong work ethic and self-reliance.

Referring to recent political developments, the Chief Minister declined to accept an open debate challenge on Hindutva issued in Guwahati by Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi. Sarma did not elaborate further on his decision.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the government's land reclamation drive, stating that approximately 1.5 lakh bighas of encroached land have been cleared so far. He added that the state plans to free an additional 5 lakh bighas in the coming period as part of its ongoing efforts to address encroachment.

Assamese Community May Become 'Almost' Minority in 2027 Census: CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday claimed in the Assembly that the Assamese community could become "almost" a minority in the 2027 Census, describing the present phase as a "very dark time" in the state's political and demographic journey.

Speaking during the Motion of Thanks on the Governor's Address, Sarma told the House, "During the 2027 Census, the Assamese community will become almost a minority," though he did not provide statistical projections or detailed data to substantiate the assertion.

The Chief Minister said the BJP-led government was attempting to preserve what he metaphorically described as a "lamp" offering reassurance amid changing de-

mographic realities. "Today, people from Dhubri as well as Majuli call me and say I am safe and secured". We are marching towards (being a) minority, but just one lamp is giving light and courage," he said.

Sarma has previously raised concerns over demographic trends in Assam. On earlier occasions, he had stated that if existing growth patterns continue, the Muslim population in the state could come close to parity with the Hindu population by 2041.

According to Census 2011 data, Assam's total population stood at 3.12 crore. Of this, 1.07 crore were Muslims, accounting for 34.22 per cent of the population, while Hindus numbered 1.92 crore.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has frequently highlighted demographic changes in Assam, pointing out that the number of Muslim-majority districts rose from six in 2001 to nine in 2011. Although the 2021 Census was not conducted, BJP leaders have claimed that at least 11 districts currently have a Muslim-majority population.

In 2001, when Assam had 23 districts, Muslims formed a majority in six districts - Dhubri (74.29 per cent), Goalpara (53.71 per cent), Barpeta (59.37 per cent), Nagaon (51 per cent), Karimganj (52.3 per cent) and Hailakandi (57.63 per cent).

By 2011, after the number of districts increased to 27, nine were recorded as Muslim-majority districts: Dhubri (79.67 per cent), Goalpara (57.52 per cent), Barpeta (70.74 per cent), Morigaon (52.56 per cent), Nagaon (55.36 per cent), Karimganj (56.36 per cent), Hailakandi (60.31 per cent), Bongaigaon (50.22 per cent) and Darrang (64.34 per cent).

Register

@

KRC

PLACEMENTS

APPLY NOW

Send your resume for a free profiling session at

e-mail: seforsuccess@gmail.com

Registration FREE

A division of KRC Foundation

"Connecting the unconnected"

for more information schedule an online appointment

‘Cultural insensitivity’: Mamata Banerjee slams PM Modi over ‘Swami’ prefix for Ramakrishna Paramahansa



KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for using the word ‘Swami’ as a prefix in a social media post on Ramakrishna Paramahansa’s birth anniversary, alleging that the PM displayed “cultural insensitivity to great figures” of the state.

A few months ago, the Prime Minister faced strong criticism from Trinamool Congress after he referred to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, who penned the national song, as “Bankim da”, while he was delivering a speech on Vande Mataram in the Parliament on 8 December last year.

The Bengal CM today said Modi used the prefix ‘Swami’ in the message while Ramakrishna Paramahansa is widely known as ‘Thakur’, Mamata said on X

post. “Shocked again! Yet again, our Prime Minister aggressively displays his cultural insensitivity to the great figures of Bengal. Today is the janmatithi of Yugavata (God’s incarnation in our age) Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. While trying to hail the great saint on this occasion, our PM added an unprecedented and improper prefix to the great saint’s name, “Swami”,” she wrote.

While trying to hail the great saint on this occasion, our PM added an unprecedented and improper prefix to the great saint’s name, “Swami”!

“As is well known, Sri Ramakrishna was widely revered as Thakur (literally, God). While his ascetic disciples constituted the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission after their Master’s demise, and those monks were then called “Swami” as per Indian traditions, the Master, the

Acharya, himself continued to be referred to as Thakur. The prefix “Swami” was meant for his disciples in the Ramakrishna Order, but the holy trinity of the Order remained Thakur-Ma-Swamiji. Thakur is Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ma is Ma Sarada, and Swamiji is Swami Vivekananda. I urge the Prime Minister kindly not to discover new prefixes and suffixes for the great Renaissance figures of Bengal who shaped modern India,” she wrote.

Trinamool Congress MPs tore into Modi’s speech on ‘Vande Mataram’, which, the Bengal ruling party leaders said, was “disrespectful to the literary icon” and “culturally insensitive”.

The Modi government, according to TMC leaders, held a discussion on ‘Vande Mataram’ in the hopes of reaping some dividends for the BJP ahead of the 2026 West Bengal assembly elections.

AI’s global journey has major role for ‘Aspirational India’: PM Modi

AI SUMMIT: FRANCE’S MACRON VOWS TO ‘SHAPE THE RULES’ WITH ALLIES, HAILS INDIA’S DIGITAL PUSH, UPI

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday noted that the scope for unethical behaviour is limitless in artificial intelligence, and put forward suggestions for ethical use of AI which include respecting data sovereignty and making transparent safety rules.

Addressing the Leaders’ Plenary session at the India AI Impact Summit, Modi also said artificial intelligence’s global journey has a major role for ‘Aspirational India’.

India is the land of Lord Buddha who had said right action comes from the right understanding and that is why it is very essential that everyone come together to create a roadmap that shows the right impact of AI, he said.

“And the right impact comes only when we take the right decisions at the right time, with the right intention,” he said in presence of world leaders at the Bharat Mandapam here.

The prime minister said in AI, the scope for unethical behaviour is limitless and

therefore, all must expand the framework of ethical behaviour and norms for AI.

“AI companies carry a very significant responsibility,” he said.

Modi said for the ethical use of AI, he has three suggestions. The first is respecting data sovereignty, everyone should create a clear data framework for AI training.

AI platforms must also keep their safety rules very clear and transparent, he said, adding AI also requires clear human values.

“Technology may be powerful, but direction will always be determined by human beings,” he said.

Highlighting efficiency of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), the prime minister said in difficult circumstances, India ensured through UPI that people could make payments easily and UPI has played a major role in bridging the digital divide.

“In recent years, we have built a vibrant digital public infrastructure because for us technology is not a tool



of power, but a medium of service,” he said.

Modi said UPI has also played a very significant role in bridging the digital divide in India.

“Over the past few years, India has built a vibrant digital public infrastructure. We are also sharing it with the world. Because for us, technology is not a means of power, but a medium of service,” he said.

French President Emmanuel Macron told a global AI summit in India on Thursday he was determined to ensure safe oversight of the fast-advancing technology.

“The message I have come to convey is what is that we are determined to continue to shape the rules of the game, and to do with our allies such as India,” Macron said in New Delhi.

“Europe is not blindly focused on regulation – Europe is a space for innovation and investment, but it is

a safe space.”

The French President also applauded India for playing a key role in democratizing Digital Public Infrastructure. “Ten years ago, a street vendor cannot open a bank account in Mumbai but today he can accept payments online. No address, no papers, no access and today the same vendor accepts payments on his phone India has built something no other country has built, a digital identity for 1.4 billion people,” Macron said.

“India built something that no other country in the world has built. A digital identity for 1.4 billion people. A payment system that now processes 20 billion transactions every month. A health infrastructure that has issued 500 million digital health IDs. Here are the results. They call it the India Stack Open Interoperable Sovereign. That is what this summit is about. We are clearly at the beginning of a

huge acceleration, and you perfectly described it during your interventions,” he added.

The French President highlighted that Artificial Intelligence has a key role to play in becoming an enabler for humanity to innovate faster.

“Last year when France and India co-hosted the AI Action Summit in Paris, we set a global guiding principle for technologies that would transform our societies and our economies. We say that Artificial Intelligence will be an enabler for our humanity to innovate faster, to disrupt healthcare, energy, mobility, agriculture, and public services for the good of mankind. Both of us, we do believe in this revolution. AI has become a major field of strategic competition, and big tech got even bigger,” he said.

Macron praised India’s use of technology to ensure citizen good and said that the future of AI will be for those who combine technology with humanity.

“AI, GPU, chips are now directly translated in geopolitical and macroeconomic terms. Some time for the best, some time for the worst, I have to say. One year ago, we demonstrated something else... India made a deliberate sovereign choice, SML, small language models. Task-specific, designed to run on a smartphone, India built the first government-funded AI and deployed 38,000 GPUs at the cheapest rates to every startup in the country,” he said.

“I started with a story about a street vendor in Mumbai. Ten years ago, the world told India that 1.4 billion people could not be brought into the digital economy. India proved them wrong. Today, some say AI is a game only the biggest can play... India, France, Europe, together with our partners, those who believe in our approach, companies, governments, investors, might have a different way... The future of AI will be built by those who combine innovation and responsibility, technology with humanity, and India and France will help to shape this future together,” he added.

INTERNATIONAL

UK’s former Prince Andrew arrested in Epstein-linked misconduct probe

LONDON

Britain’s former prince Andrew was Thursday arrested on suspicion of misconduct during his time as a trade envoy, as UK police investigations into allegations emerging from the Jeffrey Epstein files gathered pace.

Unprecedented in Britain’s modern era, the arrest was a new blow for the ousted royal, who was marking his 66th birthday on Thursday.

Andrew was last year stripped of all his titles, having been forced out of his former home by his brother King Charles III.

As part of the investigation into Andrew, “we have today (19/2) arrested a man in his sixties from Norfolk on suspicion of misconduct in public office,” Thames Valley police said in a statement, without naming the suspect, as is common practice in the UK.

Several UK media reported a fleet of unmarked cars, believed to be police vehicles, were seen arriving early Thursday at the Sandringham estate in eastern England where Andrew now resides.

New revelations last week appeared to show Andrew sent convicted US sex offender Epstein, potentially confidential documents during his time as a UK trade envoy.

In a November 2010 email seen by AFP, Andrew appeared to share with Epstein reports on Vietnam, Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Singapore following an official visit to Asia.

The ex-royal, now known as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, also reportedly sent the American financier details of the trip – on which he was accompanied by Epstein’s business associates – along with investment opportunities months later.

The former prince was eventually stripped of his titles after one of Epstein’s victims alleged she had been trafficked to have sex with him.



He has previously denied any wrongdoing in his associations with Epstein.

Charles has voiced “concern” over his brother’s actions and last week issued an unprecedented statement noting Buckingham Palace was “ready to support” the police in their inquiries.

Official guidance stipulates trade envoys have a duty of confidentiality over sensitive, commercial or political information related to their official visits, the BBC has said.

Andrew, whose ties to Epstein have caused a spectacular years-long fall from grace, served as a British trade envoy for

a decade from 2001.

At least nine separate UK police forces have confirmed they are assessing reports which appear to link the former prince to Epstein.

Police in Surrey, southeastern England, said Wednesday they had become “aware” of a redacted report alleging “human trafficking and sexual assaults on a minor” between 1994 and 1996 in the village of Virginia Water.

The report emerged in the latest tranche of millions of files released by the US justice department from the investigation into Epstein, who died in

prison in 2019.

“After reviewing our systems using the limited information available to us, we found no evidence of these allegations being reported to Surrey Police,” its statement read.

“We therefore encourage anyone with information in relation to these allegations to report this to us.”

The statement did not name any individuals involved.

But it comes as high-profile figures, including former UK prime minister Gordon Brown, have urged police to probe dozens of flights dating back decades arriving at UK airports and tied to Epstein.

Writing in the New Statesman magazine last week, Brown said he had been “told privately that the investigations related to the former Prince Andrew did not properly check vital evidence of flights”.

“I have asked the police to look at this as part of the new inquiry,” he stated, adding it appeared “the authorities never knew what was happening”.

London’s Metropolitan police has also launched an investigation into the relationship between the UK’s former ambassador to Washington, Peter Mandelson, and the disgraced financier.

After the arrest, King Charles said that the law must take its course in the investigation of his brother.

In his statement, Charles reiterated that he would cooperate with the investigation of the former prince.

“Let me state clearly: the law must take its course,” the king said. “As this process continues, it would not be right for me to comment further on this matter.” The statement, signed Charles R., also sought to distance the royal family from Mountbatten-Windsor.

“My family and I will continue in our duty and service to you all,” he said.

Former South Korean President Yoon receives life sentence for imposing martial law



SEOUL

Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was sentenced to life in prison for his brief imposition of martial law in a dramatic culmination to the country’s biggest political crisis in decades.

Yoon fell from office after an ill-advised attempt to overcome an opposition-controlled legislature by declaring martial law and sending troops to surround the legislature on Dec. 3, 2024.

Judge Jee Kui-youn said he found Yoon guilty of rebellion for mobilising military and police forces in an illegal attempt to seize the liberal-led National Assembly, arrest politicians and establish unchecked power for a “considerable” time.

A special prosecutor had demanded the death penalty for Yoon, saying his actions posed a threat to the country’s democracy and deserved the most serious punishment available, but most analysts expect a life sentence since the poorly-planned power grab did not result in casualties.

South Korea has not executed a death row inmate since 1997, in what is widely seen as a de facto moratorium on capital punishment amid calls for its abolition.

As Yoon arrived in court, hundreds of police officers watched closely as Yoon supporters rallied outside a judicial complex, their cries rising as the prison bus transporting him drove past. Yoon’s critics gathered nearby, demanding the death penalty.

The court also convicted and sentenced several former military and police officials involved in enforcing Yoon’s martial law decree, including ex-Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun, who received a 30-year jail term for his central role in planning the measure and mobilising the military. Yoon, a staunch conservative, has defended his martial law decree as necessary to stop liberals, whom he described as “anti-state” forces, from obstructing his agenda with their legislative majority.

The decree lasted about six hours before being lifted

after a quorum of lawmakers managed to break through a military blockade and unanimously voted to lift the measure.

Yoon was suspended from office on Dec. 14, 2024, after being impeached by lawmakers and was formally removed by the Constitutional Court in April 2025. He has been under arrest since last July while facing multiple criminal trials, with the rebellion charge carrying the most severe punishment.

Last month, Yoon was sentenced to five years in prison for resisting arrest, fabricating the martial law proclamation and sidestepping a legally mandated full Cabinet meeting before declaring the measure. The Seoul Central Court has also convicted two of Yoon’s Cabinet members in other cases. That includes Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who received a 23-year prison sentence for attempting to legitimize the decree by forcing it through a Cabinet Council meeting, falsifying records and lying under oath. Han has appealed the verdict.

Will the Mystery of 'Snipers' and 7.62 mm Bullets Used During July Riots Be Unravelling?



The unresolved questions surrounding the alleged use of sniper rifles and 7.62 mm ammunition during Bangladesh's July-August 2024 unrest continue to cast a long shadow over the country's political transition, even as a new government led by Tarique Rahman settles into office.

Analysts argue that until the origins of the weapons and ammunition are fully disclosed - and accountability fixed - concerns over constitutional governance and national sovereignty will persist.

Unanswered Questions from the July-August Unrest

The 2024 unrest, triggered by protests framed around the slogan "Quota or merit? Merit, merit," escalated into widespread violence. Allegations subsequently surfaced that sniper rifles and 7.62 mm rounds - typically associated with military use - were deployed during the riots.

Former Home Affairs Adviser of the interim administration, Brigadier General (Retd.) Sakhawat Hossain, repeatedly called for a transparent inquiry into how such weaponry came into civilian hands. However, critics claim efforts to investigate the matter have stalled.

Questions have also been raised about the circumstances under which senior security officials, including former DGFI Director General Major General (Retd.) Hamidul Haque and the Prime Minister's Military Secretary Major General (Retd.) Kabir, left the country during the turmoil.

Continuity from the Interim Regime?

Political observers note that the new government appears reluctant to revisit decisions taken under the interim administration headed by Muhammad Yunus.

Soon after assuming office, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, who also holds the Local Government and Cooperatives portfolio, indicated that no white paper would be published on the interim government's actions.

In his national address, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman referred to the "fragile economic challenges" inherited from what he described as a "subservient and fascist" previous regime. Notably, however, he did not criticise the interim administration.

The composition of the new cabinet has further

former Attorney General Asaduzzaman now serves as Law Minister. Nasimul Ghani, previously Home Secretary, has been made Cabinet Secretary.

Critics argue these appointments suggest the new government may validate ordinances and notifications issued under the interim administration, granting retrospective legal cover to its decisions.

Constitutional Concerns

The central debate now revolves around constitutional governance and accountability.

On August 5, 2024, the military allegedly played a decisive role in regime change. Three days later, an interim government was formed. Although a political government has

Legal experts and civil society actors are asking whether citizens will be able to seek judicial remedy for alleged violations of fundamental rights during the transition period. So far, no explicit assurances have been offered.

Despite promises of establishing the rule of law, journalists and political detainees arrested under controversial charges during the unrest reportedly remain in custody.

Promotions and Institutional Decisions

In the final days before the election, the outgoing administration granted retrospective promotions and benefits to 143 former military officers, many described as having anti-Awami leanings. Among them were Abdullah Aman Azmi, son of convicted war criminal Ghulam Azam, and Hasinur Rahman, associated with past extrajudicial operations.

These promotions were reportedly recommended by a committee of former officers convened under Khalilur Rahman. The new government has not reversed those decisions.

Observers believe such continuity reflects a delicate balancing act between political authority and military influence, with external geopolitical considerations also playing a role.

The International Crimes Tribunal Debate

Another contentious issue is the status of the International Crimes Tribunal, originally established to prosecute 1971 war crimes. The tribunal's mandate has

ties will continue. Reports that serving military officers have been summoned to appear before the tribunal have reportedly caused unease within sections of the armed forces.

The government's stance on this tribunal is seen as a potential flashpoint between civilian authority and military sentiment.

Political Calculus and Future Direction

The broader political landscape remains fluid. In the Dhaka-17 constituency election, Tarique Rahman won by a relatively narrow margin. In cantonment polling centres, a candidate from Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami reportedly performed strongly, highlighting shifting dynamics within segments of the electorate.

Some analysts suggest that Jamaat-e-Islami remains a significant force waiting in the wings, capable of influencing future alignments.

The key question now is whether the government will initiate a full and independent probe into the events of July-August 2024 - including the alleged use of military-grade ammunition - or prioritise political stability and institutional continuity.

For many citizens, the issue transcends partisan politics. It concerns whether constitutional rights can be meaningfully safeguarded in times of upheaval, and whether allegations of unconstitutional conduct will be investigated impartially.

As Bangladesh navigates this transition, the unresolved mystery of the "snipers" and the 7.62



fuelled perceptions of continuity. Former National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman has been appointed Foreign Minister, while

since taken office, questions remain about the military's influence and its continued presence in public life.

since been expanded to try additional cases.

Law Minister Mohammad Asaduzzaman has indicated that its activi-

mm bullets continues to symbolise broader anxieties about accountability, sovereignty and the rule of law.

SPACE FOR YOU ONLY

Rs. 150/- per day

PLACEMENT

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

VOLUNTEERS REGISTERS @ NEIR 2026

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

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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

STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP

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

NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

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

CONNECT@ KRC TIMES



KRC TIMES

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

Brain VISION
KRC Shaping Careers For a Successful Tomorrow
"Forgive yourself for not knowing earlier what only time could teach."