



A Day with Paatikar in Barak Valley: A Reminiscence on Sheetal Paati Glory

Nanaji, dedicated his life to the nation's upliftment: MP CM



When Boong Rang at BAFTA, the Northeast Was Heard

A Rare Political Convergence in Tripura Sends Strong Message of Clean and Accountable Governance

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Table of Contents

Sunday Special
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A Day with Paatikar in Barak Valley: A Reminiscence on Sheetal Paati Glory

05-10



The 18th International Guwahati Film Festival concludes

34-35

"Siliguri Corridor and India's Eastern Security"

14-17

When Boong Rang at BAFTA, the Northeast Was Heard

11-13



Nanaji, dedicated his life to the nation's upliftment: MP CM

19-23



When Holi was not just a festival, it was a feeling of belongingness

45-47

A Rare Political Convergence in Tripura Sends Strong Message of Clean and Accountable Governance

31-34

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"Siliguri Corridor and India's
Eastern Security"

Science beyond Gender,
Development beyond Divides:
Needonomics Vision for Viksit
Bharat on National Science Day
2026

KRC TIMES From the Editor



Time to Prepare for Long Wars

If we close our eyes and think for a moment about the world order, we can visualise how the geopolitics shaping up and the chaos around us. We are observing multiple wars at a given point in time, and it is imperative to understand how these wars would eventually hamper us.

It seems we have accepted the Ukraine-Russia War in our psyche, and it no longer bothers us even though thousands are dying. Afghanistan and Pakistan are suddenly at war. Nobody realises that just after the Indian Prime Minister leaves Israel, Iran is attacked as if it is another day in the World order.

The sitting duck is the United Nations, which keeps on the call Peace, but who cares and who is listening?

What is concerning to world citizens is when we are going to stop? When is this animal instinct in Human Being going to end? It seems it is going to take centuries for us to evolve.

India has to walk a cautious road ahead so as not to be dragged into any form of war, as it will be detrimental to our growth chart. We need to understand that we are a young country and we have sufficient numbers of problems than to play the big bully.

Given the critical situation the world order is in, we have to understand that the economy is going to take a hit with the evolving situation, and we are looking into a catastrophic situation from which we have to protect ourselves.

We can ensure ourselves if we do not let the false notion of being an emerging power in the world. Let us be a Power of Peace and not vote for any form of War.

Let us deal with the employment issues of our country; the call for Viksit Bharat will go south if we enter any form of conflict with anyone at this juncture. Yes, we have to stay alert for any form of misadventure by any country and we are quite capable of protecting ourselves.

But equally true is the enemy within. We as a country cannot get divided on political, social or religious basis at this time when we are observing the 'hatred' the world is in. This is the time that will test our century-old culture, and we need to stay united.

Better we concentrate on Climate Change, Pollutions, Infrastructure development, education, spirituality and pray to our God that we are not part of this world that talks about War and War all the time.

Stay Enriched.

Biswadeep Gupta

Editor-in-Chief



Scan to Connect

Correspondence

READER'S FEEDBACK

It's a highly informative newspaper, covering both regional, national and international news. It gives a complete update of all aspects of news worthy report. 👍

L. Dorendro Singh, Imphal, Manipur

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Reader's Feedback

Article by Pradip Dutta Roy very informative

~ A Reader from Kolkata

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PERSPECTIVE

There is only one person you spend your whole life with, and that is you. If you aren't ok with you, there is a problem.

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The gist of NEIR-26 published in this issue of KRC Times is an excellent way of information placing for the readers.

My all good wishes for this movement

Prof (Dr.) Robin Bordoloi, Assam Downtown University

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A Day with Paatikar in Barak Valley: A Reminiscence on Sheetal Paati Glory



Prof (Dr) Sukamal Deb,
Advisor, NEIR
(sukamal05@gmail.com)

The design has intrigued and fascinated me. All crafts are a product of design. Design Thinking has solved problems that people or society have never confronted. The approach has, over time, evolved the local problem-solving activity

In one of the coolest dawns of 2024 on Jan 10, I got down at Badarpur rail junction from Dibrugarh Agartala Express to meet the Paatikar (Cool mat artisans) of Barak Valley, Assam. My destination was Ratanpur, Rahimpur, Baleswar and more villages under the Kaliganj area.

I reached Chargola by road, recalling the famous Chargola exodus in 1921. One of the country's earliest organised labour movements originated in the Chargola Valley tea belt of Karimganj sub-division at the southern fringe of Assam, in northeast India. I am to walk down the bank of the Kachua Rivulet, bifurcated from the Singla River that originates from Mizoram, to reach my destination, a cluster of artisans' villages where Hindus and Muslims have lived for generations in brotherhoods of unparalleled cohesion. I read that on May 3, 2021, Badarpur College organised a seminar, Revisiting Chargola Exodus, in its centenary year 1921 - 2021; interestingly, the exodus was initiated by an illiterate woman.

These pictures here from the field were captured by Subudh

Ffew pictures of the visit, write many stories of struggles and inspirations





The Kaliganj area of Sribhumi (erstwhile Karimganj), a district in Barak Valley, has its early history hazy and obscure; it was famous for Shital Paati, the smooth and flexible mats made by plaiting an indigenous reed. Thousands of artisans, mostly women, were associated with this traditional cottage industry. The artisans are known as Paatkar, belonging to the Hindu and Muslim communities. Shital Paati means cool mat. The mat is thin, smooth, pliable, and made by plaiting an indigenous reed locally known as Murtha (*Maranta Dichotoma*), a locally grown lemon-coloured reed with waxy leaves. It is a long-stemmed, knotless plant that grows abundantly in marshy areas. Sheetal Paati is traditionally made by men and women in a wide variety of patterns and sizes to supplement the income from agriculture; they are pliable and easy to fold and store, used as a floor spread for sleeping and eating meals on and as prayer mats in shrines. They are popular in summer as mattresses as they are Sheetal or cool to the touch. The stem of Murtha is cut near the ground and skinned. The outer is made into strips of about 3 mm and wetted before interlacing and plaiting them obliquely. To finish the mat, the cut ends are returned into the weave diagonally. Motifs are woven by changing the interlacement pattern and introducing dyed reed strips. The strip size and density of the weave determine the pliability of the mat. The mats were originally made in Bangladesh and are now being made in the villages. This has global recognition and market, but is languishing rapidly.

The Sheetal Paati weaving is one of the potential enterprises for sustainable livelihood generation. The study revealed that many farmers were engaged in this enterprise to improve their socioeconomic status. Before independence, Barak Valley was a part of Surma Valley. When Sylhet and Cachar, two Bengali-speaking districts of the Bengal Presidency, were separated and combined to form Assam in 1874, the Surma Valley administrative division was created. Until Sylhet's secession to East Pakistan in 1947, the Cachar district remained a part of Surma Valley. After Sylhet, the Cachar district became the lone Bengali stronghold in Assam. In the late twentieth century, Barak Valley became the name of the Cachar district, including remnants of the erstwhile Sylhet. Historically, Barak Valley has been partitioned twice, once in 1874 when it was severed from Bengal and again in 1947 when Sylhet voted to secede. In post-independent Assam, Barak Valley turned into an alien land. Subsequent actions of the leadership have significantly impacted the socio-political life and strengthened the sense of isolation of the Valley that struggled to preserve her identity despite going through a serious existential crisis, with a multi-dimensional poverty level at around 46 per cent, lower than Hailakandi, around 51 per cent, another Barak Valley district, the sickness or to the extreme demise of many crafts and fall of economy can't be seen parted from this reality.



We will not go further here, unravelling the intricate socio-economic and political processes that relegated Sribhumi district to one of the most backward districts from the most important national and international centres of trade and commerce during a pre-independent era, when Sheetal Paati remained one of the supreme crafts of the Valley.

Sheetal Paati making involves a series of steps from the plantation: weeding, stem cutting & peeling, boiling, colouring, weaving and finishing. Reeds are cultivated in March - April. Once the plants grow, they usually survive for around 20 years; a mature stem with proper care ensures good quality mat. Each reed stem is split into several pieces and three slices: outer, middle and inner. The outer part is used to make mota or thick Paati, the middle is woven into bokar Paati, and the inner part is split into strips for other uses, not for Paati making. The split strips, called betis, are then woven to make the mat. Betis are soaked in a mixture of hot water and rice starch for 3 to 4 days; the stuffs are boiled until they turn white. These strips are dried in the sun. The method results in a better cooling effect; weaving starts from a corner and proceeds until the completion of the mat.

Shital Paati production is a household industry where men traditionally collect reeds and prepare them for the mats while the women weave them. It is a laborious process. The mat owes its name to providing a cool surface to sit or sleep on. Hence, it is very popular in the hot and humid weather conditions of the North East, where it is mainly used in traditional households for sleeping or as prayer mats. The artisans of Shital Paati have no alternative source of income; their socio-economic conditions are miserable, and most do not know any other trade except this. The literacy rate of the Paatikar community residing in the Kaliganj area is 20 per cent. No high school is in the area, and the State Government has yet to take any special steps to uplift the community. Sheetal Paati has many patterns and sizes that are easy to fold and store. It had global recognition in the pre-independence era and the market. But this is entering a dark oblivion, like many other languishing crafts of the North East. Of late, the Anant National University, Ahmedabad, India's first DesignX university, has embarked upon documenting these languishing crafts. The university works on the Indian Designs and Innovative Crafts, dedicated to this, inter alia.

UNESCO has recognised the traditional art of Sheetal Paati weaving of Sylhet, the neighbouring district of Sribhumi in Bangladesh and included it in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



The Valley people believe that the existence of Sheetal Paati weaving traces its origin back to ancient times, used for sitting in meditation by the sages. These cool mats, a rural craft, evolved conventional uses. Technological advances may have brought alternate similar products, but this in no way reduces its importance, utility or craftsmanship.



The cooling function of these mats during summer is one of its unique properties. If you are looking for something to beautify your space with a traditional vibe, these mats can be a good choice, and they're an alternative to traditional bedding. Its natural texture, excellent motifs and vibrant colours witness the creativity of village artisans. Quality is recognised through their smoothness, glossiness and texture. The smoother or finer the texture, the better the quality. It is said that the best kinds are the ones that are so smooth that even a snake can't glide over them. The colours used are not made of any chemical composition; excellent beauty is achieved by using the organic extracts from tamarind seeds, leaves, hibiscus flowers, mango tree barks and other natural sources.

Village Ratanpur has 600 families with around 3000 people. They belong to the OBC, Minority OBC and SC communities. All these families practise Sheetal Paati craft; they cultivate Murtha, one bigha of marshy land (1338 sq. m.), and produce Murtha of Rs. 20000, with which one can make Sheetal Paati worth Rs. 34000. Sales take place on two weekly market days when all their products get sold to the middlemen. Ismail Ahmed (44), a Sheetal paati artisan, shared many interesting facts. Ismail's family has 7 members, 4 of whom make Sheetal Paati earn Rs. 9000 a month.

Still, the raw materials, Murtha, cost Rs. 3000. Thus, artisans earn just Rs. 6000, each less than Rs. 2000 a month, yet they cling to this profession for generations. When asked if they love this work, there were mixed responses; some said that it is their compulsion in the absence of an alternate livelihood, yet others said it's their identity, putting me to ponder. Nazima (15), a class IX student, while demonstrating her weaving skills, said if she works regularly, she can weave one mat in ten days, but she has to go to school within walking distance; while staring at Ismail, her father, she dreams of being a doctor. Ismail said only a few in the village did their BA; one works with the Ajmal Foundation in Dubai. The next villages are Baleswar and Karimpur, where all families practice this craft and tell similar stories.

During my visit to Nandapur, a village of 200 families and 1000 population, 150 families are from the SC (Namasudra) community. They all work on Bamboo crafts; women are more hard-working. Through this craft, Shipra (38), class II, earns Rs. 2000, Vishnu (42) and his wife Anjana (37) earn Rs. 7000, Aparna (32), class II, earn Rs.3000, Shibu (51) and his wife Bappi (43) earn Rs.6000, Sandipa (31), class III, earns Rs.4000, Sandhya (33), earns Rs.4000 PM and Sankari (38), earns Rs. 4000 a month. They make Tukri (round Baskets), Runga (fishing apparatus) and bamboo mats. Similar is the story of Barbari, another nearby village.

The entire Barak Valley was famous for bamboo crafts, but it is becoming languishing day by day. There is a need to promote and innovate these traditional crafts. As I walked from house to house, I discovered no roads to reach their dwellings; if it had been the rainy season, reaching them would have been difficult. I wondered how the school children move out in the monsoon. The village has just one LP school, no post office, and no bank. They have electricity while the water supply project is operational, and hardly anyone is in Government jobs. The village Nathupur has 65 families, 270 population, all Hindu, belonging to the SC community, all are cane artisans. Sudip (45), class II, has been working for 15 years on round canes, and his wife, Swapna (Bhattacharjee), class XII, is from Tripura. The couple works on various cane species like Raidang (Golla), Lezai, and Pani Lezai, earning Rs. 12000 to 13000 monthly. Dipak (35), class X of the nearby house, is an entrepreneur who has set up a cane furniture-making unit, giving employment to 45 village artisans. I couldn't meet as he was in Guwahati participating in a craft exhibition there. He owns a pucca house and appears to be in good financial standing. Rupak, his brother, is studying for a BA.



Though UNESCO has declared West Bengal's Shital Pati cane craft as an intangible heritage, its practitioners struggle for survival. In 2017, Shital Pati from Cooch Behar was named an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage', and Ghughumari, Barokodali and Nakkati-Pushnadanga villages were identified as important centres of production. However, craftspersons are unhappy due to a lack of income. Now, the Government has resumed efforts to revive the craft.

Next, I reached Nasir Ali (70) at Jotai village, a family of 18 members, all females, weaving Sheetal Paati. Sofia (30) has been weaving Sheetal Paati for 15 years. They have done it for generations; she weaves 4 Paati of size 7 x 5 sq. ft. a month, each costing 1700, which includes raw materials of Rs. 400 for each; Faruk (36), her husband, a dumb, splits Murtha with exceptional accuracy. The couple has 2 children, a boy and a girl. Khalida (25), class VII, has worked on this craft since she married into this family. She, mother of 3 children, is a brilliant weaver who earns Rs. 3000 pm from this. Her husband works in a shop. Nasir Ali's son is a truck driver who earns a little more. NGO activist Subudh (42) extended help to facilitate the study. In a run-down bike hired by a neighbour, he reached the Chargola Bridge over the Kachua, where I disembarked from the car to receive me. His family offered me rice and fish curry for lunch, which was of great help.

There is an urgency to transform Rural India, the invisible, suppressed hinterland. All our endeavours should be a powerful means towards this. We need to work towards powering income generation, facilitating the rise of positive energy and investing in innovation, all at the bottom of the pyramid, for they live without abundant, affordable energy; there is no modern agriculture, no efficient transportation, no way of linking villages and cities, their crafts and indomitable skills are not known to the larger world. For decades, the strategy around their development has not replicated the change for the people living in poverty. Rural households and businesses have to unlock incredible growth; innovators and entrepreneurs like Deepak inspire us; we need to break down the barriers, build decentralised, renewable infrastructure, and facilitate the Nano and micro-enterprises. For these are the crafts, once lost, their identity is also lost.

When Boong Rang at BAFTA, the Northeast Was Heard

Sunzu Bachaspatimayum



For years, the Northeast has lived in the margins of India's cinematic imagination — rich in stories, sparse in screens. Then a small Manipuri film walked onto the stage of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and changed the pitch of the conversation.

Boong, a children's film spoken in the quiet cadences of Manipur, won the BAFTA award in the Children and Family category — the first Indian film to do so. That fact alone is historic. But its deeper meaning lies elsewhere. When Boong triumphed in London, it was not only Manipur that stepped into the light. It was the entire Northeast.

For too long, this region has entered national headlines through violence, blockade, insurgency, or electoral arithmetic. Since May 2023, Manipur in particular has endured ethnic ruptures that have fractured neighbourhoods and displaced thousands. Trust has withered. Roads that once carried trade now carry tension. In that climate, a film born in collaboration between communities now estranged carries weight beyond cinema.

Written and directed by Lakshmi Priya Devi, Boong follows a boy searching for his missing father, hoping to restore joy to his mother. The child actor Gugun Kipgen, a Kuki boy playing a Meitei character, embodies in art what society has struggled to sustain in life: shared humanity. The film was shot in Moreh, a border town that soon after filming descended into flames. What the camera preserved may now be an archive of a world already altered.



This is not sentimental symbolism. It is evidence. The Northeast has always possessed storytellers of rare discipline. What it has lacked is sustained national attention and structural support.

Those who imagine this BAFTA as an isolated miracle forget history. In 1981, *Imagi Ningthem*, directed by Aribam Syam Sharma, won the Grand Prix at the Festival des 3 Continents in Nantes — the first Indian film to achieve that distinction. A decade later, *Ishanou* entered the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival, and its restored version returned to Cannes Classics in 2023. These were not accidents. They were signals — early bells that rang before the country was ready to listen.

Beyond Manipur, the wider Northeast has steadily asserted its cinematic voice. Assamese cinema found global resonance with Rima Das's *Village Rockstars*. Khasi, Mizo, and Naga filmmakers have been crafting stories rooted in oral traditions and borderland realities. What unites these movements is not budget or glamour but authenticity — stories anchored in soil, language, and memory.

Yet let us not romanticize resilience. The Northeast operates within a limited institutional scaffolding that sustains other industries. Film schools remain underfunded. Production grants are sporadic. Distribution networks are fragile. Exhibition infrastructure is thin. Many filmmakers here still work with borrowed equipment and borrowed time.

And yet they persist.

In the early 2000s, when insurgency and economic blockades crippled theatrical exhibition in Manipur, filmmakers adapted by producing dozens of low-budget video features annually — sometimes 50 to 60 films a year. It was an act of cultural survival. Today, digital production continues, though on leaner numbers. Recognition at national platforms followed only after sustained advocacy forced policy to acknowledge regional realities.

This is why Boong matters beyond the applause in London. It affirms that children in the hills and valleys of the Northeast can see their landscapes reflected back with dignity. It tells young filmmakers in Guwahati, Kohima, Aizawl, Shillong, Agartala, and Imphal that global stages are not forbidden ground. It reminds policymakers in Delhi that cultural capital does not flow from Mumbai alone.

Plainly speaking, talent is abundant. Discipline is ingrained. What is scarce is infrastructure and a consistent policy vision. If governments treat cinema as mere entertainment, they squander a strategic cultural asset. In a region long misrepresented, film becomes testimony. It preserves dialects. It documents memory. It builds empathy where politics often builds walls.

The BAFTA trophy is not an ornament for a cabinet. It is a summons.

A summons to invest in film institutes across the Northeast.

A summons to create regional production funds with continuity.

A summons to build post-production facilities and archives.

A summons to encourage co-productions that respect linguistic identity rather than dilute it.

Around the world, from Iran to South Korea, modest national cinemas rose to prominence through deliberate state support combined with fierce local authorship. The Northeast stands at a similar threshold. The question is whether institutions will match the courage of its storytellers.

When Boong rang at BAFTA, it was more than a bell. It was a bridge — from the hills to the world stage. The echo now belongs to all of Northeast India. Whether that echo grows into a sustained chorus depends on what we build at home.

History has knocked before. This time, we would be foolish not to open the door.

"Siliguri Corridor and India's Eastern Security"

A Narrow Neck Holding a Nation Together

The Siliguri Corridor, India's most fragile strategic passage, is a mere 20–25 kilometres wide at its narrowest, yet it binds the nation's heartland to over 45 million citizens in the Northeast. Flanked by Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and China, this corridor is not just a geographical anomaly, it is a strategic pressure point. Any disruption, whether through political instability in the neighborhood, hostile posturing, or sub-conventional threats, risks severing India's only land link to eight states. In military terms, it is a classic choke point; in national terms, it is an existential artery. No other democracy carries such demographic, economic, and security dependence on so narrow a strip of land and no responsible state can afford ambiguity in securing it.

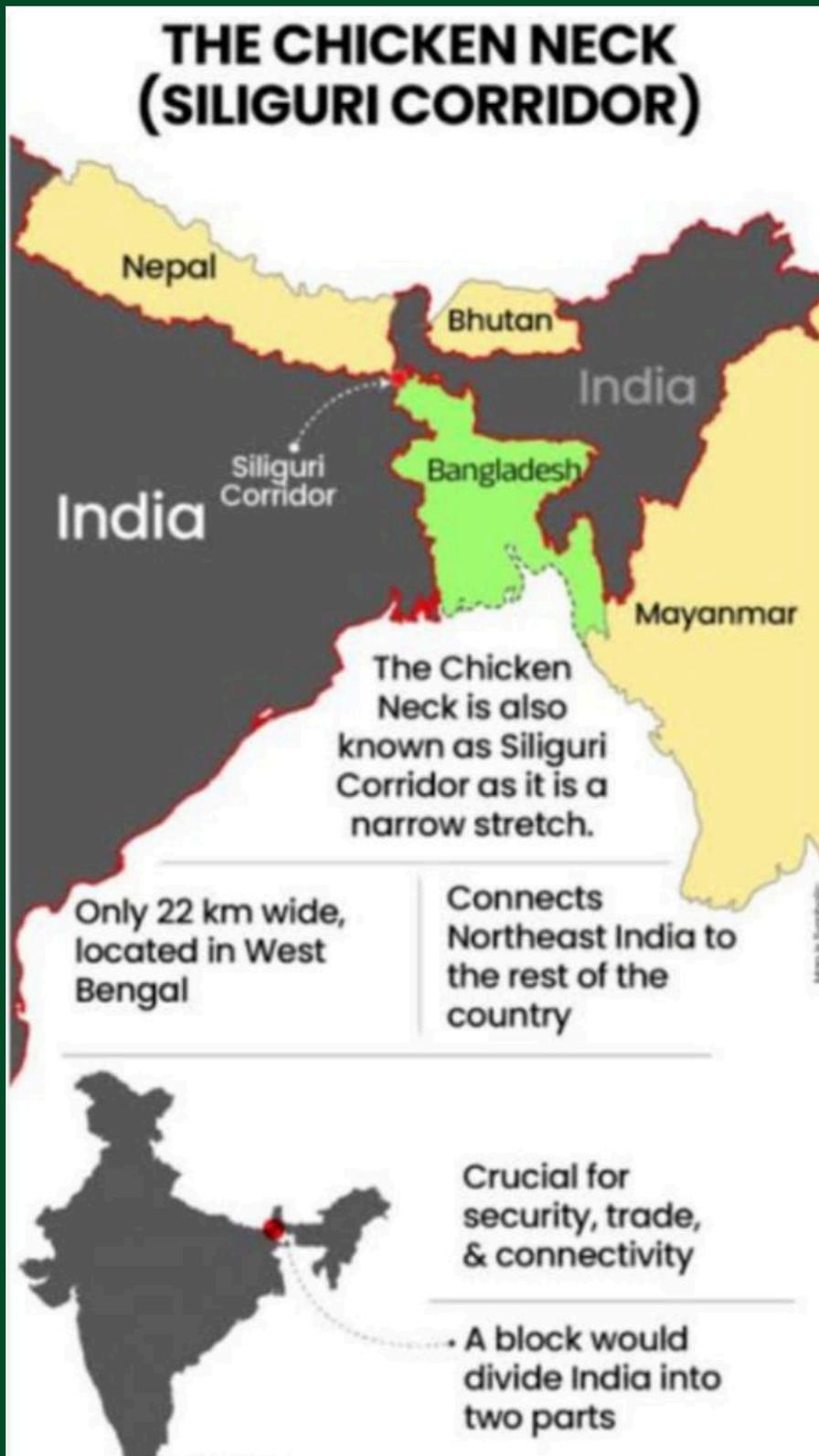


Col (Dr.) Ashwani Kumar,
M-in-D, VSM (Retd)

Strategic Importance of the Siliguri Corridor.

Geopolitical Vulnerability

The corridor is flanked by Nepal to the west, Bangladesh to the south, Bhutan to the north, and China (Tibet Autonomous Region) further north. This geographical compression makes it uniquely vulnerable to:



(i) Coordinated pressure by adversarial forces.

(ii) Proxy instability and political unrest in the neighboring regions.

(iii) Infrastructure or demographic manipulation.

Military and Logistical Lifeline.

Over 90% of military supplies to the Northeast pass through this corridor. Any disruption physical or political can isolate:-

- (i) Critical Army formations.
- (ii) Air force forward bases.
- (iii) Border management forces across Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland.
- (iv) Economic and Civil Connectivity.

Beyond military considerations, the corridor sustains:-

- (i) National highways and railways
- (ii) Oil pipelines and power transmission
- (iii) Trade routes connecting India to ASEAN via the Act East policy.

Bangladesh: Present Unrest and Strategic Ramifications in India.

The current internal churn in Bangladesh, marked by political uncertainty, street mobilization, and external influence, has direct implications for India's eastern security calculus.

Risk of Strategic Drift.

A weakened or destabilized Bangladesh creates space for the followings:

- (i) Increased influence of China through infrastructure, ports, and debt diplomacy.
- (ii) Resurgence of anti-India radical elements.
- (iii) Revival of illegal infiltration, arms smuggling, and narcotics routes.

Pressure on the Siliguri Axis.

Any hostile posture or prolonged instability south of the corridor increases India's exposure to:

- (i) Dual-front strategic pressure, China in the north, instability in the south.
- (ii) Demographic imbalance in border districts.

Intelligence and sub-conventional threats.

India's Strategic Stand.

Land, Leverage, and Long-term security.

India's position must remain firm, pragmatic, and strategically assertive, guided by long-term national interest rather than short-term optics.

No Territorial Concessions, Only Strategic Corrections.

India does not require land expansion for security, but it must:

Seek strategic depth through access agreements

Secure permanent transit and buffer assurances.

Ensure border rationalization where historical anomalies exist.

Diplomatic Leverage, Not Opportunism.

Any engagement with Bangladesh must emphasize:

Stability, sovereignty, and mutual security. Clear red lines on infiltration and anti-India activities.

Economic cooperation linked with security guarantees.

Countering External Influence. India must prevent the corridor from becoming vulnerable to proxy leverage by extra-regional powers, particularly China, by: Strengthening bilateral intelligence cooperation. Investing in people-centric development along border districts. Expanding soft power and cultural linkages. Futuristic Deployment and Superiority in the Northeast.

India's approach to the Northeast must shift from reactive defense to proactive dominance. Multi-Modal Connectivity Beyond Siliguri. Accelerated development of alternate routes through:

- (i) Bangladesh transit corridors.
- (ii) Inland waterways.
- (iii) Enhanced airlift capability.
- (iv) Reducing sole dependence on the Siliguri bottleneck.
- (v) Forward Military Posture.

Integrated Theatre Command approach. Rapid-reaction forces positioned east of the corridor. Enhanced ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) grid. Civil-Military Fusion.

Border infrastructure as dual-use assets. Local population as stakeholders in national security. Northeast as a strategic hub, not a peripheral region.

Author's Note

The author has served extensively across India's eastern and northeastern states in uniform, witnessing firsthand the delicate interplay of geography, culture, security, and geopolitics. With operational exposure in border management, while serving the Bureau of Police Research and Development (MHA) where he dealt with Border Management, counter-insurgency, and strategic planning, and as a student of history, the author views the Siliguri Corridor not merely as a strip of land, but as a civilizational artery whose security defines India's eastern destiny. To conclude, the Siliguri Corridor is not just a geographic vulnerability, it is a strategic test of India's resolve, foresight, and capacity to shape its neighborhood. The evolving situation in Bangladesh reinforces a timeless lesson, nations that fail to secure their lifelines invite strategic coercion.

India must therefore pursue a calibrated blend of diplomacy, deterrence, development, and decisive preparedness. A secure Siliguri Corridor, a stable Bangladesh, and a confident Northeast together form the cornerstone of India's rise as a comprehensive power in Asia. In strategy, geography is destiny but only for those who fail to act.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this article are personal and based on the professional experience and independent analysis of author. They do not represent the official position of any government, service, or institution. The accompanying map/graphic is for illustrative and strategic analysis purposes only and does not depict official boundary demarcations or governmental positions.

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Nanaji, dedicated his life to the nation's upliftment: MP CM

Biswadeep Gupta

A rich tribute with five separate conferences and symposia is being organised on February 25, 26, and 27, on the 16th death anniversary of Bharat Ratna Nanaji Deshmukh, marking 16 years since his death.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav

Speaking from Bhopal via virtual medium, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said, " On his 16th death anniversary, I pay my respects to the revered Nanaji, who dedicated his life to the nation's upliftment. Nanaji shaped thousands of people in various fields, achieving very progressive work in each area. Nanaji contributed significantly to the development of Chitrakoot. He did a great deal of work in the rural areas, promoting agriculture, education, research, employment, health, and self-reliance. On behalf of the Madhya Pradesh government, I salute all his works and congratulate the organizing committee for this important socially beneficial event."

Moderating the inaugural session, Amitabh Vashisht, CEO of Deendayal Research Institute, highlighted the three-day program.

Dr. Rajendra Singh Negi, Head of the Agricultural Science Center, Chitrakoot, presented the program outline. Prof. Alok Choubey, Vice Chancellor of Gramodaya University, said in his address that while education is available in big cities, spirituality and values are lacking. However, after the arrival of the national sage Nanaji Deshmukh, Chitrakoot has become a place where all three—spirituality, values, and education—are found.





Ashok Jatav, President of the District Panchayat, Chitrakoot, said, "I didn't have the opportunity to work with Nanaji, but the results of his work are before us today. I have closely observed the organisation's social work, and each of Nanaji's actions is giving direction to society today."

Neemuch MLA Madhav Maru said that the way Nanaji has established his work in the dacoit-affected area and brought about a change in the hearts of the people and created a huge laboratory for social reconstruction, is exemplary for the country and the world.

Mahant Varun Prapannacharya said that when Nanaji came to Chitrakoot, he first focused on education and agriculture here, due to which the path of development has been paved in Chitrakoot today.

Mahant Ram Lakhan Das Maharaj said that education, culture, and spiritual practice fulfill a person's life. Chitrakoot has become a place where all-around development of the individual is taking place.

Dr. Ramnarayan Tripathi of Gayatri Shaktipeeth said that Chitrakoot was a pilgrimage site for Mother Sati. When Lord Ram arrived, it became a pilgrimage site for Lord Ram. When Nanaji arrived, it also became a national and royal pilgrimage site. Innovations in education, health, and agriculture are inspiring people across the country.

Manjusha Chaudhary, Director of the Tulsi Research Institute, said, "I didn't see Nanaji, but I have seen Abhay Mahajan and his work as a guru would mould his disciple. The farmers who nurtured us with their food are sitting in the front row here today; this is truly Gramodaya." At the end of the inaugural session, Abhay Mahajan, National Organisation Secretary of the Deendayal Research Institute, expressed his gratitude.



On this occasion, reports of various seminars held in the last three days were presented by the seminar coordinators Dr. Manoj Tripathi, Dr. Rajendra Singh Negi, Dr. Naveen Sharma, Dr. Deepesh Mishra, Dr. Pankaj Sharma, Anil Singh. The seminar was conducted by CEO Amitabh Vashisht. The welcome address was given by Principal Secretary of Deendayal Research Institute Nikhil Mundle. He said that Nanaji has done many successful experiments for overall development. Along with Chitrakoot, other parts of the country are also getting the benefit of the programs run with the initiative, hard work and participation of the villagers. Nanaji was in favor of social reconstruction according to the times by incorporating traditional knowledge and modern knowledge.

Vice Chancellor Prof. A.D.N. Vajpayee, in his address, said that Nanaji's personality was all-inclusive. After serving as Vice Chancellor of APS University, Rewa, in 2003, under the guidance of revered Nanaji, I also assumed the charge of Vice Chancellor of Gramodaya University and had the opportunity to observe Nanaji's rural development experiments closely.

Rewa Commissioner BS Jamod said that Nanaji, abandoning material glamour, established his laboratory in a backward region like Chitrakoot and demonstrated the use of holistic development through various projects for the upliftment of the suffering and neglected. I offer my respects to such a divine personality on his death anniversary.

Introducing Swavalamban Abhiyan 2.0 at the tribute ceremony, Vasant Pandit, Treasurer of the Deendayal Research Institute, explained that while Nanaji launched the Swavalamban Abhiyan in the villages of Chitrakoot on January 26, 2002, with five key focus areas: education, health, agriculture, employment, and the vision of a green, dispute-free village, an effort is now underway to launch Swavalamban Abhiyan 2.0, "SHINE," based on modernity. Starting from Gramodaya, Sarvodaya, and progressing toward Abhyudaya, the effort is to create a model that is measurable, sustainable, and replicable, where happiness and fulfillment are integrated into individual and community goals. This will be measured through the SHINE: Sustainability and Happiness Index for a New Era, which will help create a framework for self-reliant village development.



This model will aspire to embody the principles of ‘regenerative economics.’ This shift resonates deeply with the Integral Humanism of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya. By rooting village-level planning in Integral Humanism and aligning it with regenerative economic principles, the model seeks to prototype a practical, measurable, and replicable alternative to dominant global development models.

This model, in partnership with Jan Abhiyan Parishad Madhya Pradesh, Rajya Anand Sansthan Madhya Pradesh, NITI Aayog and Centre for Complexity Economics, Applied Spirituality and Public Policy, Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, Sonipat, is proposed to be conducted in 108 revenue villages of the Chitrakoot project area, and will begin with a baseline survey, which will measure all social, economic and spiritual indicators and also collect data on consumption, waste and social harmony.

During the tribute ceremony, the Swavalamban Abhiyan 2.0 pledge was read out to everyone by Rajguru Swami Shri Prapannacharya Ji Maharaj of Acharya Ashram Chitrakoot: "All of us villagers pledge to make our village self-reliant through mutual cooperation. We will eradicate poverty, unemployment, disease, and illiteracy from our village. Every family in our village will live a life filled with happiness, prosperity, and spirituality. We will adopt a sustainable lifestyle that protects nature, conserves resources, and brings prosperity to all, blending indigenous traditions and modern knowledge. No dispute in our village will go to court; we will resolve both old and new disputes through mutual understanding. Our village will remain clean, beautiful, and full of trees and plants. Together, we will present our village as an exemplary example of self-reliance and prosperity."



In his blessings, Rajguru Swami Shri Prapannacharya Ji Maharaj said that a sage always has a vision of the times. Nanaji was certainly a wise man of the times. Just as Maharishi Valmiki had suggested the path to Chitrakoot to Lord Shri Ram, "I reside in Chitrakoot mountain, I will serve you in every way." Similarly, the sages here invited Nanaji and paved the way for Chitrakoot's development in various areas.



Expressing his gratitude at the end of the program, Uttam Banerjee, Senior Vice President of the Deendayal Research Institute, said that it is heartening that the work initiated by Nanaji through public initiative and hard work is now being carried out by the public. The collective participation of thousands of people in the tribute program demonstrates it as a great Kumbh of social consciousness. The tribute meeting concluded with the mantra "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Kalyan".





Bharat Ko Jano & Border Area Programme and Madhya Dakshini Festival 2026 to be held in Namsai

North East Zone Cultural Centre (NEZCC), Dimapur and South Central Zone Cultural Centre (SCZCC), Nagpur, under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with the District Administration, Namsai and the Department of Art & Culture, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, will organize the “Bharat Ko Jano & Border Area Programme and Madhya Dakshini Festival 2026” tomorrow, 2nd March 2026, at 5:00 PM onwards at the Namsai Multipurpose Cultural Hall, Arunachal Pradesh.

The festival will be hosted by Dr. Prashanna Gogoi, Director, NEZCC, Dimapur and recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, whose distinguished contribution to Northeastern performing arts has been widely recognised at the international level.

The programme will commence with the Lighting of the Ceremonial Lamp and a welcome address by Chow Milingta Namchoom, District Art & Culture Officer (DACO), Namsai. The festival will be graced by Sujana Namchoom, Zila Parishad Chairperson, Namsai, as the Chief Guest, along with C.R. Khampa, Deputy Commissioner, Namsai, Prof. Ajeya Jha, Vice-Chancellor, Arunachal University of Studies and other distinguished dignitaries.

A key highlight of the evening will be the choreographic cultural presentation “Kala Sangini” – a confluence of dance traditions of South-Central India with live music, curated by Smt. Astha M. Karlekar, Director, SCZCC, Nagpur. The presentation will feature folk, traditional & tribal art forms from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh performed by acclaimed cultural troupes. The festival will also showcase the rich indigenous cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh through performances by the Tai Khamti, Singpho and Adi tribes.

India's Political Scenario: Issues that matter

This week in Indian politics has been marked by a mix of international diplomatic tensions, domestic party realignments, economic policy responses, and preparations for upcoming state elections. Key events revolved around Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign engagements, opposition critiques, and internal shifts within major parties like the Congress and BJP. Below is a structured summary of the major developments, drawing from recent news and social discussions.

Here are the key issues currently rocking India:

International Relations and Geopolitical Tensions

India-Pakistan Escalations Post-Modi's Israel Visit: PM Modi's recent visit to Israel has heightened tensions with Pakistan, with reports of skyrocketing border concerns and defense updates. This has fueled discussions on national security and India's strategic alliances in the Middle East.



Social media highlighted Iran's strikes on US bases and the Shia-Sunni faultlines, with some users linking it to India's position amid US-Israel-Iran hostilities.

Rahul Gandhi urged the government to prioritize the safety of Indian citizens in the Middle East amid escalating US-Israel-Iran conflicts.

US Tariffs and Trade Implications: *Following the US Supreme Court's ruling on tariffs, President Trump raised the global tariff rate to 15% but affirmed no changes to the India-US trade deal. India's Commerce Ministry is studying these developments, noting potential impacts on sectors despite the court's partial rollback*

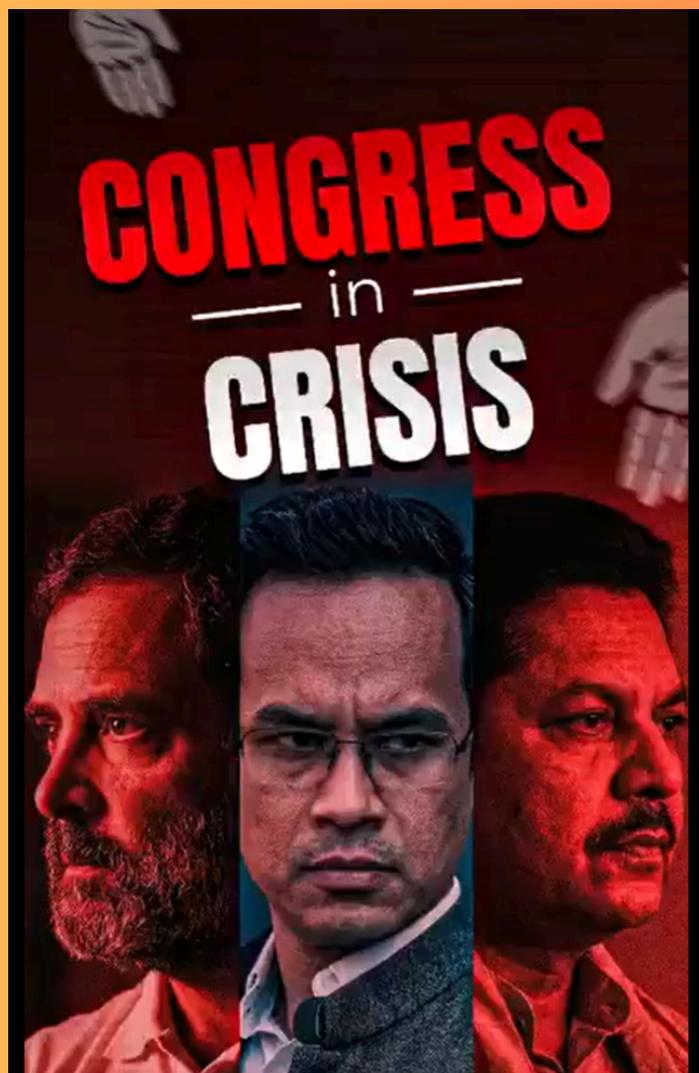
Diplomatic Engagements: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Brazilian President Lula da Silva in Delhi, signaling ongoing bilateral ties amid global events.



Domestic Party Dynamics and Defections

Congress Internal Challenges: The Indian National Congress faced significant infighting, with former Assam chief Bhupen Kumar Borah resigning and joining the BJP on February 22, citing leadership issues. This defection is part of a broader trend rattling the party across states like Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, raising questions about unity ahead of elections.

In response, the Congress announced Kisan Chaupals starting February 24 in Bhopal to focus on farmers' issues.



NCP and Health Updates: NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar was briefly hospitalised in Pune for mild dehydration but recovered quickly.



Samajwadi Party and Security Concerns:

Akhilesh Yadav accused the BJP government of "playing" with his security after the withdrawal of his National Security Guard (NSG) cover, demanding an explanation.

He also made a satirical remark in Lucknow: "Bring 100 MLAs and become CM for a week," highlighting alliance fluidity.

Budget and Equity Critiques:

The Economic and Political Weekly critiqued the 2026-27 Railway Budget for rising investments amid stagnating utilization. Editorials also addressed divisive acts in Assam affecting citizenship and rising female workforce participation since 2017-18.

Voter List Purges:

Nearly 8% of voters were removed from final electoral lists in nine states and UTs during the second phase of the Special Summary Revision (SSR), sparking concerns over inclusivity.

Election Preparations and State-Level Politics

Assam and NDA Alliances: Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma confirmed a seat-sharing deal among NDA allies for upcoming polls, amid Borah's defection boosting BJP's position.

Tamil Nadu and West Bengal Outlook: Discussions on social platforms predict DMK retaining power in Tamil Nadu's 2026 assembly elections, with ADMK facing challenges and actor Vijay potentially winning his seat. In West Bengal, speculation suggests a peaceful shift if Mamata Banerjee's TMC loses ground. BJP has ramped up campaigns, including ED charges against ministers and NIA arrests in TN.

Delhi and AAP Developments: Arvind Kejriwal received a "clean chit" in a case, seen by some as a boost for AAP ahead of potential 2026 contests, though critics view it as part of broader political maneuvers against opposition figures.

Economic and Social Policy Highlights

AI Summit and Protests: PM Modi pitched India as a global AI hub at the AI Impact Summit, but the event saw disruptions like a shirtless protest, drawing mixed reactions.



Broader Social and Media Discourse

Online conversations reflected polarized views: Criticism of Congress as "Muslim League Maoist Congress," praise for Modi's anti-opposition speeches, and concerns over Sikh involvement in Canadian politics spilling into Indian discourse. Some users predicted a one-sided 2026 victory for the INDIA alliance in key states, while others foresaw BJP setbacks from recent controversies like the Robotic Dog episode and Kejriwal's discharge.

Overall, the week underscored India's balancing act in global affairs amid domestic turbulence, with the BJP consolidating alliances and the opposition grappling with defections and policy critiques. As elections approach in states like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Punjab, these dynamics could shape the national landscape. For real-time updates, monitoring official sources is recommended.



Other Issues:

BJP faced backlash over perceived "Muslim appeasement," UGC equity regulations, and Budget 2026 criticisms. Social media amplified debates on religious politics, with comments on "ghettoisation" under Amrit Kaal and anti-India narratives.



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A Rare Political Convergence in Tripura Sends Strong Message of Clean and Accountable Governance



Jayanta Debnath

With the objective of further strengthening democratic values, a special seminar and workshop was organized by the Tripura Legislative Assembly on 27 February at Pragya Bhavan in Agartala. The one-day programme, titled “Responsibility and Accountability of Public Representatives to All Sections of People,” was perhaps organized for the first time in India.

Notably, despite being a large-scale event, there was no excessive publicity, banners, or flex displays as seen in many other government programmes. The event was conducted with restraint and dignity. Organized in accordance with the guidelines of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the workshop saw participation from representatives of almost all political parties in Tripura, an uncommon example in the recent political context of the country.

The programme was inaugurated by the Governor of Tripura, Indra Sena Nallu Reddy. The Chief Minister, Dr. Manik Saha, attended as the Chief Guest, while the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Harivansh Narayan Singh, was present as Special Guest and keynote speaker. Members of the Council of Ministers, MLAs, and elected representatives from municipal bodies, Zilla Parishads, and Nagar Panchayats were also in attendance.

In their speeches, the Governor, the Chief Minister, and the Deputy Chairman unanimously emphasized that democracy becomes strong only when public representatives discharge their duties with transparency, integrity, and accountability.

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In their speeches, the Governor, the Chief Minister, and the Deputy Chairman unanimously emphasized that democracy becomes strong only when public representatives discharge their duties with transparency, integrity, and accountability.

Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha stated, “Accountability to the people is one of the fundamental pillars of democracy. The foremost duty of public representatives is to listen to the people and treat them with humility and respect. Genuine public connection is built through a smiling face and courteous behavior.”

He further mentioned that if the current leadership wishes to be remembered with respect by the next generation, dedication and responsibility must be adopted as guiding principles. He called for collective efforts beyond party lines to build “One Tripura, Best Tripura” and a “New Tripura.”

Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Harivansh Narayan Singh, stressed adherence to the Constitution, preservation of parliamentary traditions, and the maintenance of transparency in public life. He opined that such initiatives should be organized regularly in every state of the country, as they would further strengthen India’s parliamentary democracy.

The programme was organized through the sincere initiative of Deputy Speaker who is also the acting speaker of Tripura Legislative Assembly, Ramprasad Paul, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ratanlal Nath, and Chief Whip Kalyani Roy, under the guidance of the CPA India Region. Most participating representatives described the programme as timely and commendable, emphasizing that such self-review workshops involving representatives from the Assembly to the Panchayat level should be organized at least once a year.

Among those who addressed the gathering were BJP MP Rajib Bhattacharjee, Kriti Singh Debbarma, Minister Ratanlal Nath, Animesh Debbarma, Congress MLA Gopal Roy and CPIM Dipankar Sen, along with representatives from various political parties. Although unable to attend in person, MP Biplab Deb delivered a brief address via video conference from Kolkata and wished the programme success.

The written speech of Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury (CPIM) was read out by CPI(M) MLA Sudip Sarkar. In his message, Chaudhury thanked and congratulated Deputy Speaker Ramprasad Paul and his team for organizing the workshop and requested that such programmes be held annually on a broader scale.

Not only the Governor, Chief Minister, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, and Leader of the Opposition, but all speakers at the event expressed appreciation to the Deputy Speaker Ram Prasad Paul and the organizing team for hosting such an initiative.

Member of Parliament from Silchar, Assam, Parimal Suklabaidya said that the active and constructive role of public representatives is essential in building “Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.” He expressed the view that the workshop organized by Tripura Legislative Assembly’s Acting Speaker Ramprasad Paul to remind public representatives of their duties and responsibilities is highly timely and appropriate.

Since the political change in Tripura in 2018, the state has witnessed periods of political tension, clashes, and instability. There have been instances of conflict between ruling and opposition parties, and even among alliance partners. In that context, bringing representatives of all parties onto one platform to discuss responsibility and accountability undoubtedly conveyed a positive message.

Senior opposition leader, former Pradesh Congress President, and Banamalipur MLA Gopal Chandra Roy also praised the workshop. However, he expressed concern over the reduction in Assembly sitting days and the limited opportunities for the opposition to raise public-interest issues.

He stated that constructive criticism should be accepted positively, as the opposition speaks not for personal interest but in the interest of the public.

Another significant aspect of the programme was the participation of representatives from Congress, CPI(M), BJP, Tipra Motha, and IPFT in a joint luncheon. Despite political differences, this display of cordiality was seen by many as rare and hopeful.

Following the event, the Chief Minister and several other public representatives shared messages on social media praising the workshop. Citizens also responded. Some supported the initiative, stating that building a “New Tripura” requires collective effort from all parties. Others expressed concerns about unemployment, corruption, the spread of drug abuse, and the future of the youth.

Overall, this one-day seminar and workshop was not merely a formal event; rather, it was a platform for introspection, reaffirmation of responsibility, and a significant step toward making democracy more people-centric.

Participants expressed hope that such initiatives would continue in the future to build a transparent, accountable, and inclusive democratic system. Although there may remain doubts and differing opinions about how sincerely representatives of various political ideologies will act in practice, it is undeniable that this first-of-its-kind workshop in Tripura stands as a significant milestone in the state’s democratic journey.

**Author: Jayanta Debnath,
Senior Journalist and Editor of
Tripurainfo.com**





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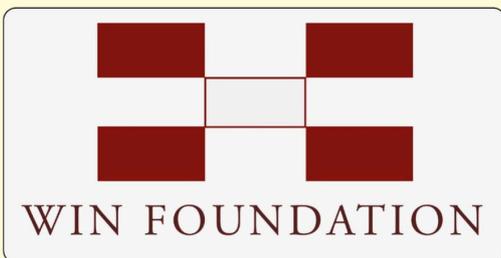
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Meghalaya Hands Over 66 Acres Near Umiam Lake for Taj Resort Project

KRC TIMES News Desk

Shillong: The Meghalaya government has transferred 66 acres of land near Umiam Lake in Ri-Bhoi district to Indian Hotels Company Limited, a part of the Tata Group, for building a luxury Taj Resort and Spa.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma told the Legislative Assembly that the move is part of the state's plan to expand tourism and attract high value domestic and international visitors. The proposed resort site is about 17 km from Shillong and close to Shillong Airport (Umroi Airport).



Tourism Minister Timothy D. Shira said the agreement will bring steady income to the state through lease rent and revenue sharing. The earnings are expected to begin at around ₹4.47 crore per year and grow over time.

The government will keep nearby land for parks and public use. Officials believe the project will help improve tourism facilities, bring new investment in hospitality, and create jobs in the region.

Two Leading Bangladeshi Newspapers Burn Before Everyone's Eyes

Sangram Datta

Shortly after midnight in Dhaka, smoke rose where newsrooms once glowed. Mobs moved with purpose. At Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, they forced their way into The Daily Star, smashing glass, tearing down posters, and setting fires that climbed from floor to floor.

Across the city, at Karwan Bazar, Prothom Alo—Bangladesh's most influential Bangla daily—was ransacked in parallel. Furniture was dragged into piles and burned. Computers and cameras disappeared. Fire safety systems were destroyed. Journalists and staff were trapped for hours as flames and smoke filled stairwells.



By dawn, two of the country's most important newspapers were silent. Neither could publish in print that day—an unprecedented rupture in their histories. For Bangladesh's press, it was not merely an attack on buildings. It was a message.



The violence followed news of the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, a July uprising frontliner and election aspirant, who died in Singapore a week after being shot in Dhaka.

Outside the newsrooms, protesters accused the papers of complicity in his killing—claims both outlets deny. Slogans echoed through the night.

Fire service vehicles were blocked. Police and soldiers struggled to clear paths. Rescue came only near morning.

Inside The Daily Star, at least 28 journalists and staff fled upward, sealing themselves on the roof as smoke thickened below.

“I can’t breathe anymore,” one investigative reporter wrote online in the early hours. At Prothom Alo, firefighters who finally reached the scene were attacked and forced to retreat before returning under armed protection. Two firefighters were later hospitalized. Several employees were injured while trying to escape.

By daylight, Karwan Bazar stood charred. Floors were gutted. Newsrooms reduced to ash. Across Dhaka and beyond, the night’s violence spilled outward—attacks on cultural institutions, party offices, and minority communities.

In Mymensingh, a Hindu man was killed by a mob over allegations of blasphemy. The pattern was familiar. The scale was not. Officials condemned the assaults. Editors received calls of sympathy. Promises of support were made. No arrests were announced that day. For Bangladesh, the night fit a longer story.

Since independence in 1971, the country's press has lived between promise and peril. Early hopes dimmed under state control; in 1975, a one-party system shuttered nearly all newspapers. The following years brought censorship and fear, softened only by the persistence of reporters who learned to survive by caution and courage.

The return of electoral politics in the 1990s revived journalism's public role. The Daily Star and later Prothom Alo helped normalize investigative reporting. Yet violence never disappeared. In 2004, Manik Saha, a correspondent for The Daily Star and BBC Bangla, was killed by a bomb in Khulna. That same year, another editor was murdered in the same city. Rural reporters were beaten for exposing corruption. Many cases stalled; some never began.

The 2012 murders of television journalists Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi—found dead in their Dhaka apartment—became a national wound. Marches filled the streets. Officials pledged swift justice. More than a decade later, the case remains unresolved. The lesson, for many journalists, was stark: even prominence offers no protection.

Over time, pressure also took legal form. The Digital Security Act, enacted in 2018, empowered arrests over online speech and reporting. Dozens of journalists were sued. Some were detained. Editors faced cases for stories on prices, corruption, and governance. The law's chill was felt far beyond courtrooms.

The profession itself grew divided. Some journalists aligned openly with political power, receiving protection and perks. Others—especially outside Dhaka—worked alone, facing threats, fabricated cases, and violence. Solidarity frayed. Impunity deepened.



Among those targeted were regional reporters whose names rarely reached national headlines. In Srimangal, Rasendra Datta Chowdhury, a correspondent for the daily Sangbad, was attacked repeatedly from the 1970s onward and subjected to years of harassment and land-grabbing attempts linked to local political interests.

His son, Sangram Datta, himself a local journalist, was later repeatedly assaulted between 1991 and 2002 for reporting on terrorism, corruption, and criminal networks, and at one point faced an attempt to have him jailed through the misuse of administrative power. He survived only through collective resistance by fellow journalists.

What happened in Dhaka that night compressed these decades into hours. The mobs did not distinguish between English and Bangla, between editors and interns, between archives and canteens. They destroyed fire extinguishers before lighting fires. They searched desks. They blocked rescue. The intent was not protest alone; it was erasure.

Yet even amid the ruins, the press endured. By morning, journalists returned to burned floors to salvage what they could. Editors spoke publicly, refusing to accept the accusations hurled at their papers. Colleagues from across political and professional lines arrived to urge calm. Cultural institutions vowed to rebuild. Firefighters went back to work.

Bangladesh's constitution promises freedom of expression. Its history tests that promise repeatedly. The night the press burned was not an aberration but an escalation—mob power added to political pressure, digital incitement amplifying street violence.

The question now is whether the country will treat it as a turning point. Accountability would require arrests and trials that do not fade with headlines; laws that protect reporting rather than punish it; and a renewed solidarity within journalism itself. Without that, the silence of that morning—the first missed print runs in decades—risks becoming a precedent.

As smoke cleared from Dhaka's newsrooms, the city woke to an absence. Newspapers would publish again. Buildings would be repaired. What remains uncertain is whether the space for independent journalism will be rebuilt with the same urgency as the walls.

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Tripura Launches State Innovation Mission, Opens First Startup Hub T-NEST in Agartala



Agartala: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has launched the Tripura State Innovation Mission (SIM) and opened the state's first major incubation and innovation hub, T-NEST, in Agartala.

The launch took place in the presence of key national and state leaders including NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery and Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh.

T-NEST, created under Startup Tripura, aims to support new businesses in their early stages. The hub will offer co-working space, meeting rooms, an auditorium, fast internet, and mentoring support. It is expected to help startups grow in priority sectors.





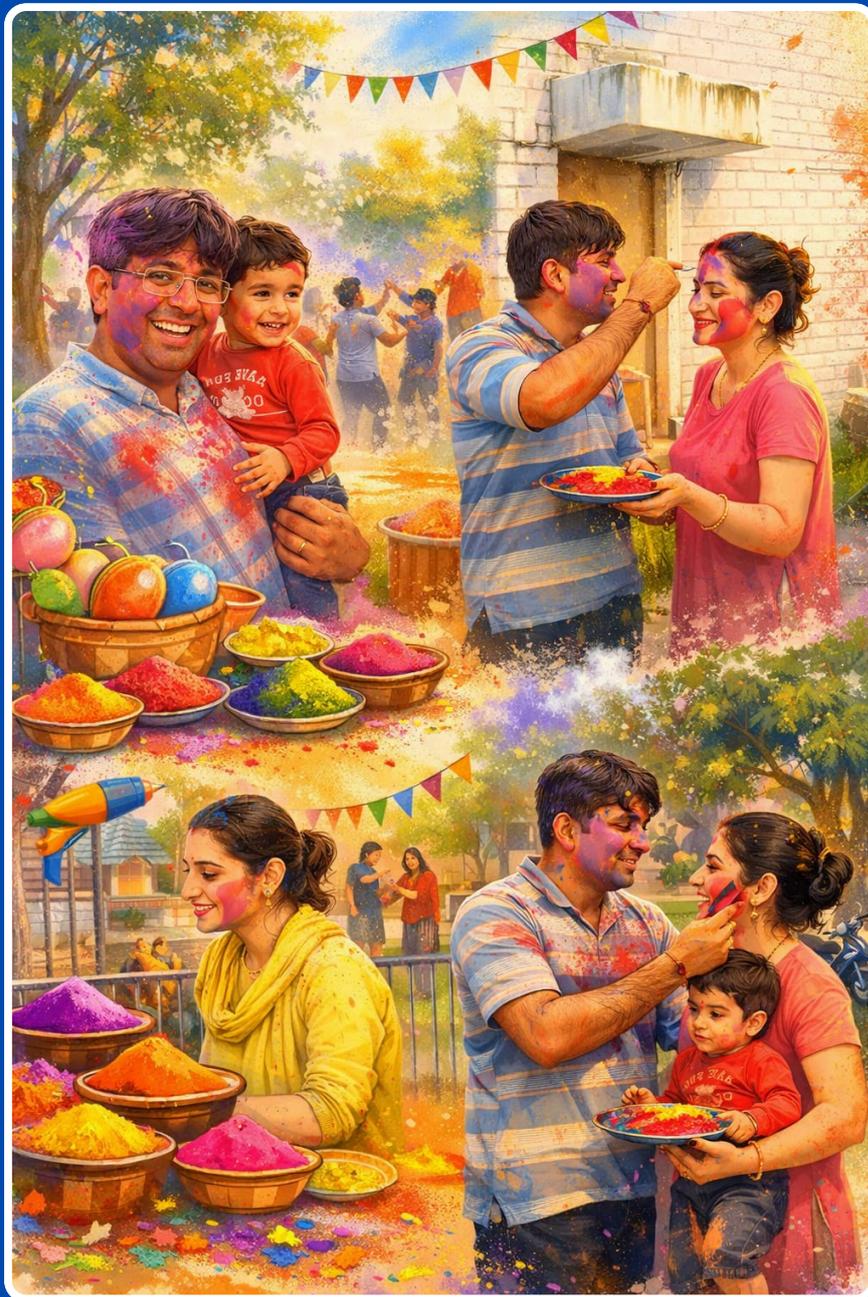
At the event, an MoU was signed between the Directorate of Information Technology, Government of Tripura and T-Hub. T-Hub will act as the Knowledge Partner under the New Tripura Start-Up Policy introduced in 2025.

The programme also showcased innovation from the grassroots. Around 25 local startups and 16 student teams from eight technical institutes displayed their products and ideas.

Officials said the move marks a big step towards building a strong startup culture in the state.

Fading colors, fraying relationships

(When Holi was not just a festival, it was a feeling of belongingness)



Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

Holi was once not just a celebration of colors, but of relationships. As soon as Falgun arrived, songs would echo through neighborhoods, children would play with colors in groups, and adults would embrace generously.

Today, that same Holi has been reduced to formal messages and limited boundaries. Technology and changing social conditions have increased convenience, but a sense of belonging has been left behind. Traditions, folk songs, and collective joy are gradually becoming part of memories.

Holi has been a festival in Indian society that wasn't limited to colors alone. It was an opportunity to bridge the distance between people, wash away years of bitterness, and infuse new freshness into relationships.

With the arrival of the month of Phalgun, a unique spirit permeated the atmosphere. The scent of gulal (coloured powder) wafting through the air, the laughter of children in the streets, and the melody of folk songs emanating from every home transformed life into a celebration.

But today's Holi looks quite different from the Holi of the past. Over time, society has changed, technology has advanced, and conveniences have arrived—but somewhere amidst these changes, the warmth of relationships has cooled.

The colors are still there, but they no longer reach hearts. There was a time when Holi wasn't just a one-day celebration. Preparations began as early as Vasant Panchami. Phaag would resonate in temples, the beats of dhap and chang would resonate in the chaupals, and groups of singers would emerge from villages and neighborhoods. This togetherness was the soul of Holi.

Children used to gather in groups in neighborhoods to collect Holi donations. Even if someone refused, they wouldn't mind—they would move on, smiling and making others laugh. Applying color wasn't a crime, but a way to show affection.

Even if someone scolded them, it was simply forgotten, considering it part of the fun of Holi. Today, those same children are confined to mobile screens, and neighborhoods have become devoid of communication.

The most beautiful aspect of Holi was that social distinctions blurred on that day. Rich and poor, young and old, friends and foes—all seemed painted in the same hue. Even enemies embraced. “Don't mind, it's Holi” wasn't just a sentence, but a social consensus that this day should be lived with open hearts.

Today, that phrase has become a joke. People are more concerned with protecting their boundaries than with colors. The fear of something untoward happening or a dispute arising has taken away the spontaneity of Holi. Earlier, delicacies were prepared in every home

The aroma of gujiyas, dahi-vadas, malpuas, and thandai would permeate the entire neighborhood. Neighbors' daughters-in-law and daughters were also considered members of their own family. Guests were welcomed with open arms. Today, celebrations are confined to the four walls of the home. A formal "Holi Mubarak" or "Happy Holi" has replaced the warmth of relationships.

Growing insecurity and distrust in society have also changed family behavior. In the past, girls would stay late at night with friends and relatives during Holi. Amid laughter, fun, and music, time would slip by without anyone realizing it. Today, those same things become a source of worry. Relationships are shrouded in suspicion.

Traditions are also slowly disappearing. Once upon a time, natural dyes were made at home from Tesu and Palash flowers. Women would mix the colors while singing folk songs, and children would wait eagerly. Little girls would make Valudiyas from cow dung and adorn them with garlands.

These were not just rituals, but symbols of collective labor and creativity. Today, commercially purchased chemical dyes have replaced those traditions. Convenience has increased, but emotional connection has diminished. Folk songs are now limited to a few cultural events. The tunes of Phaag and Rasiya, which once echoed throughout the month of Phalgun, are now rare.

The peace that followed Holi was once comforting. The pause that followed the splashes of water and the sounds of laughter brought fulfillment, not fatigue.

Today, the celebrations end within a few hours, and society returns to its own closed worlds.

In recent years, social tensions and divisions have further limited celebrations like Holi. Many families avoid leaving their homes on this day, even though the original purpose of festivals is to unite people and lift them away from fear and negativity.

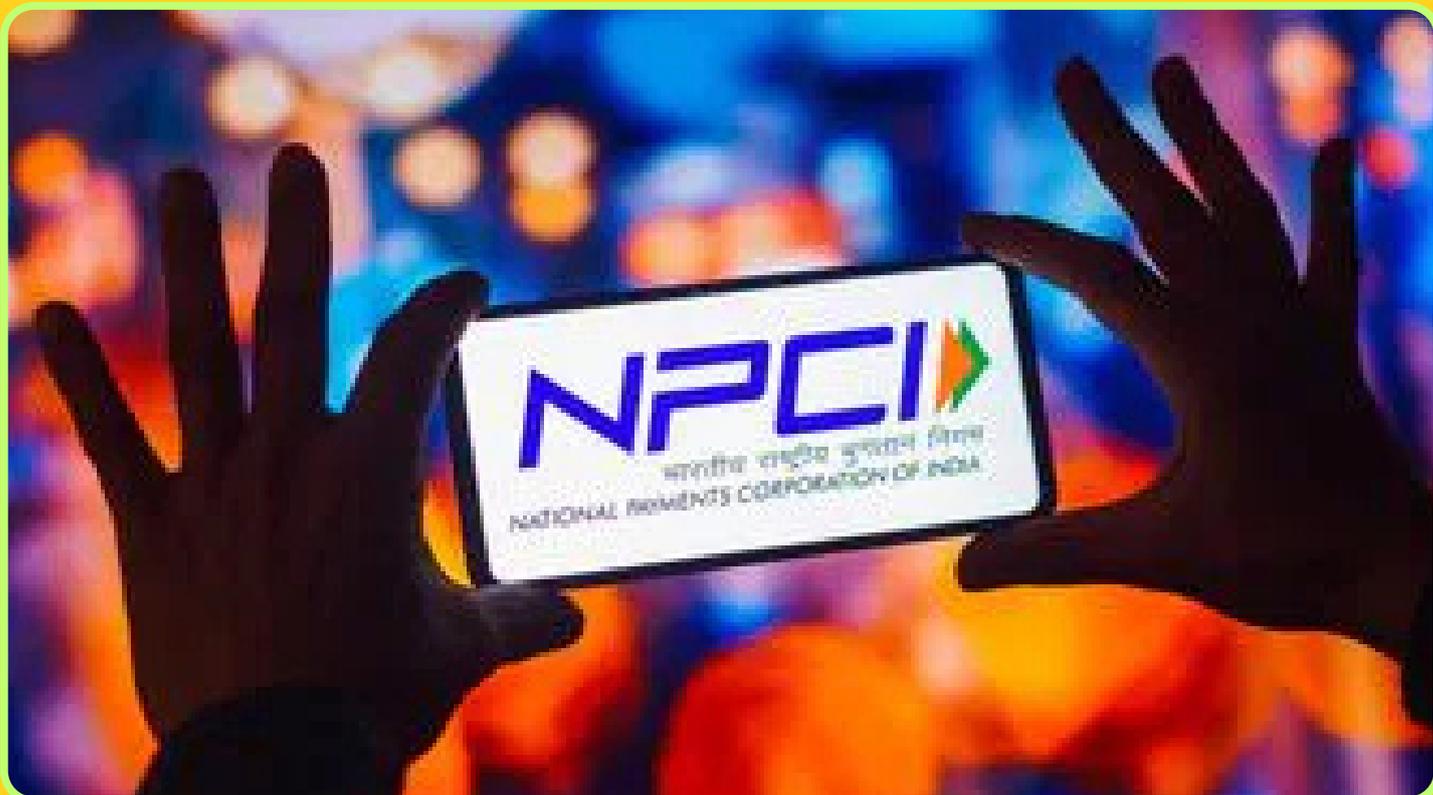
Holi isn't just a festival of colors; it's a festival of forgiveness, a festival of reconciliation. It reminds us that being human means not just living for ourselves, but also laughing and connecting with others.

Today, we need to revisit Holi in its original meaning. Away from the noise and formalities, devote time to relationships. Let children play in the neighborhoods, give adults opportunities to meet each other, and don't let traditions become mere memories. Festivals give us hope. They break loneliness and provide a brief respite from the tedium of life. If we reduce them to mere rituals, society will become even more desolate. The colors of Holi will only deepen when there is a sense of belonging in our hearts. Otherwise, the colors will be washed off our hands, but the dust on relationships will only grow thicker.

Perhaps it is time to stop and think—
Can we bring back that Holi again?
Where relationships blossomed before colors?



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NPCI Promotes Digital Payments Safety Awareness for Senior Citizens

Digital payments have positively changed everyday life for senior citizens. It has brought convenience by making payment easy for buying groceries, pharmacy purchases or travel bookings. It supports independence by allowing senior citizens to pay on their own without asking family members, especially for small daily needs. It also provides safety and control, as there is less need to carry cash, the risk of loss or theft is lower, and every payment is recorded in transaction history. As digital payments become more common, fraudsters have increased attempts to trick users using social engineering. Common frauds targeting senior citizens are given below:

- **Digital Arrest:** Fraudsters pose as law enforcement agents and threaten arrest over fake charges and pressurise victims into paying or sharing personal information. It is important to remember that real government and law enforcement agencies will never ask for money or investigate cases through phone or video calls
- **Investment Fraud:** Scammers often trick senior citizens by impersonating as financial experts. They use fake endorsements from reputed organisations promising extraordinary returns. Once these fraudsters receive the money, they disappear. If an investment sounds too good to be true, it is likely a scam
- **Phishing/Vishing Scams:** These scams involve emails, texts or calls that impersonate trusted entities like banks or government agencies to trick senior citizens into revealing login details, OTPs or other sensitive information
- **Tech Support Scams:** Scammers call, claiming to be from a tech company saying that there is a virus in the computer. They then trick senior citizens into downloading file(s)/Apps that gives them remote access to steal data or route messages without their knowledge
- **Refund and Payment Link Fraud:** In such frauds, senior citizens click a link to receive a refund or rebate for an online purchase, which instead leads to a fake page that steals their login or payment data

Simple rules to protect yourself

- Never share sensitive details such as UPI PIN, OTP, passwords, bank account details, or login credentials. Anyone who asks for these is committing fraud
- Do not click unknown links or install apps shared by callers or strangers posing as people of authority. Screen sharing or remote access apps are commonly used to steal data and control your phone
- If an investment sounds too good to be true, it is likely a scam. Check SEBI, RBI, or official regulatory websites for registered firms before investing. Look for HTTPS in the web address, check official domain names, and avoid clicking on unsolicited links
- Pause when urgency is created. Messages saying your account will be blocked today, your KYC will expire, your SIM will stop, or your pension will be paused are designed to rush you. Real institutions will allow time to verify
- If you receive unexpected calls or messages about legal issues, you must take a moment to verify. Stay calm. Real government and law enforcement agencies will never ask for money or investigate cases through phone or video calls, and neither will they press you for time

If you suspect fraud, immediately report to the national cybercrime helpline by dialing 1930 or through the Department of Telecommunication (<https://sancharsaathi.gov.in/sfc/>). You should also report the case to your bank. Always save messages, take screenshots, and document interactions.

Also, do not hesitate to get help from your family members or trusted neighbours before acting on instructions from unknown callers. Digital payments are a strong and safe system. With awareness and calm verification, senior citizens can use them confidently every day.

North East India Tourism Confederation to Host National Tourism Convention & FAM Tour in March 2026

Guwahati : The North East India Tourism Confederation (NEITC) has announced that it will organise the National Tourism Convention & Familiarisation (FAM) Tour from March 13 to March 18, 2026, with the aim of promoting the North East as a premier and unified tourism destination.

The event is being planned as a major initiative to showcase the region’s rich cultural heritage, breathtaking natural landscapes, and vast potential for adventure tourism. A key highlight of the convention will be the participation of official representatives, tourism stakeholders, and industry partners from all eight states of North East India, ensuring comprehensive regional representation



The convention will bring together tour operators, travel agencies, media professionals, influencers, and tourism stakeholders from across the country on a common platform. Participants will be given the opportunity to experience the destination first-hand through curated tours across multiple locations in the region.

According to NEITC, the event will help foster stronger B2B partnerships, encourage community-based and sustainable tourism initiatives, and enhance national visibility for the North Eastern region as a cohesive tourism brand. Speaking on the initiative, E.B. Blah, President, NEITC, stated that the convention is expected to create meaningful collaborations and long-term opportunities for tourism stakeholders. He emphasised that the North East holds immense untapped potential and that such platforms are crucial for integrating the region more effectively with the national tourism circuit.

Tsering Wange, Convention Chairman, NEITC, added “The National Tourism Convention & FAM Tour is designed to present the North East as a single, integrated tourism destination. Through this event, we aim to bring together key stakeholders from across India to experience the region first-hand, build strong industry partnerships, and highlight the immense tourism potential of our states. We are confident that this initiative will create new opportunities for collaboration and position the North East more prominently on the national tourism map.”

The six-day programme will include interactive sessions, networking meets, destination showcases, and field visits designed to highlight the diversity and uniqueness of tourism experiences across the North East. With active involvement from all eight states—Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim—the convention aims to project a collective vision for tourism growth in the region. NEITC has invited tourism professionals, travel writers, digital influencers, and industry representatives from across India to participate in this landmark event.

Moi Eti Nixhasor (Koduwa the Nightbird) Soars with Top Honour at the Accolade Global Film Competition

Guwahati : Assamese film *Moi Eti Nixhasor* (Koduwa, the Nightbird) has reached a new cinematic milestone by winning the prestigious Award of Excellence Special Mention at the Accolade Global Film Competition. This rare distinction places the film among the top 10 entries in the entire competition, a feat reserved for projects that set the highest standards for artistry and technical brilliance.

Biswadeep Gupta

Directed by award-winning filmmaker Bidyut Kotoky, based on a true story by one of the most celebrated authors of Assam, Anuradha Sarma Pujaree and produced by National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and Red River & Blue Hills, the film is a poignant exploration of resilience and moral ambiguity.

It follows the story of Koduwa, a cunning village thief who navigates social unrest and prejudice with wit and heart.



The Award of Excellence Special Mention is a significant achievement within the Accolade Global Film Competition, which Movie Maker Magazine has named one of the "Top 25 Festivals worth the Entry Fee". By receiving this honour, Moi Eti Nixhasor (Koduwa the Nightbird) joins an elite rank of past winners. The competition attracts entries from industry powerhouses and icons like Ridley Scott, Ron Howard, Dave Bossert & Malcolm Clarke, making this win a testament to the film's international calibre.

“Our festivals receive thousands of submissions. You can be justifiably proud of winning top Accolade honours that have honoured previous filmmakers with exceptional talent, including Oscar, Emmy and BAFTA winners. The judging standards are high and winning means the craft and creativity exhibited by your film is exceptional and stands above other productions,” says Rick Prickett, Director of Accolade Global Film Competition, in an email.

"We are deeply honoured by this recognition from such a prestigious global platform," said director Bidyut Kotoky .“This award belongs to the entire creative team that brought Koduwa’s world to life”. Although based in a remote village of Assam and in the not-so-distant past, this story reminds us time and again of the social and political challenges we all face in nearly every country in the time we are living in today. And this recognition just reinforces my belief that human emotions speak the same language, without showing any respect towards the man-made boundaries. I’m confident that once we release our film in Assam a few months down the line, Assamese people will shower similar love toward “Moi Eti Nixhasor”.

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Science beyond Gender, Development beyond Divides: Needonomics Vision for Viksit Bharat on National Science Day 2026

Prof. Madan Mohan Goel Propounder Needonomics & Former Vice-Chancellor (Thrice)

On the occasion of National Science Day 2026, as India reflects on the theme “Women in Science: Catalysing Viksit Bharat,” Needonomics School of Thought (NST)- a Kurukshetra based think tank offers a deeper synthesis—where science transcends gender, development rises above divides, and empowerment is anchored not merely in policy but in consciousness.

1. Science and Spirituality: Complementary Forces

Science explores the external universe; spirituality explores the internal universe. Science measures, tests, and verifies. Spirituality reflects, refines, and purifies. When harmonized, they produce holistic progress—material advancement guided by ethical wisdom. The eternal message of Gita, the heart of Krishan reminds us that the Atman (soul) is beyond birth, death, and physical identity. If the soul is gender neutral, then the essence of human capability is also gender neutral. Modern science similarly affirms that intellectual potential is not biologically confined to gender. Thus, both science and spirituality converge on a profound truth: capacity has no gender.

2 .SHE Model: Spiritual Foundation of Inclusive Development

The Needonomics School of Thought proposes the SHE Model, a symbolic and philosophical framework:

- S – Science with Sensitivity
- H – Humanity with Harmony
- E – Empowerment with Ethics

SHE and HE are not in competition but in complementarity. Empowerment is not about replacing dominance; it is about restoring balance. True development does not divide—it integrates. When development moves beyond gender binaries and social divides, it becomes civilizational rather than sectional.

3. Women in Science: Catalysts of Viksit Bharat

A Viksit Bharat requires optimal utilization of its human capital. No nation can aspire for developed status by underutilizing half its population. From laboratories to leadership, from innovation ecosystems to policy think tanks, women's participation is not optional—it is essential. India's journey has been illuminated by pioneering women scientists who broke barriers and expanded possibilities. Their achievements demonstrate that opportunity, when combined with character and competence, transforms society.

The theme calls for five essential shifts:

- Access – Equal opportunities in STEM education
- Recognition – Valuing contributions without bias
- Resources – Adequate infrastructure and funding
- Representation – Leadership roles in scientific institutions
- Respect – A cultural shift toward dignity and inclusion

Development beyond divides means creating ecosystems where merit flourishes irrespective of gender.

4 .Gender Budgeting: From Allocation to Transformation

Gender budgeting must evolve from symbolic allocation to structural transformation.

In the Needonomics framework, budgeting is not merely financial—it is ethical. Resources must align with genuine needs rather than competitive greed. When gender budgeting supports:

- Skill development
- Research grants for women scientists
- Work–life balance mechanisms
- Entrepreneurship incubation

—it becomes an instrument of national productivity.

Empowerment must translate into measurable participation in research output, patents, startups, policymaking, and technological leadership. Only then does budgeting mature into development.

5. Science with Conscience: Needonomics Mandate

Needonomics advocates: “Confine to needs and share the rest.” Applied to science, this principle ensures innovation serves humanity. Applied to gender inclusion, it ensures opportunity serves equity. Spiritual grounding prevents empowerment from breeding rivalry; instead, it nurtures responsibility. When women scientists contribute to artificial intelligence, space research, healthcare, climate science, and sustainable development, they are not merely advancing careers—they are shaping civilizational progress.

Science without spirituality may create power without purpose. Spirituality without science may create vision without implementation. Together, they create sustainable and inclusive development.

6. Soul-Centric Development for Viksit Bharat

To conclude, on National Science Day 2026, the Needonomics message is clear: soul is gender neutral, capability is universal, opportunity must be inclusive and empowerment must be ethical.

When science moves beyond gender and development rises beyond divides, India advances toward becoming a truly Viksit Bharat—balanced, value-driven, and sustainable.

In this spirit, women in science are not merely participants; they are catalysts of integrated national development rooted in conscience and consciousness.



**Prof. Madan Mohan Goel
Propounder Needonomics &
Former Vice-Chancellor**

Welfare with Dignity, Not Dependency: UP Governance model of Inclusive Empowerment



**Dr Alok Kumar Dwivedi,
Assistant Professor, KSAS-
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Welfare that Respects People, Not Just Supports Them

For long, the welfare system in India has been perceived as a means of free distribution or appeasement. The Uttar Pradesh governance model under Yogi Adityanath has attempted to shift this paradigm. The emphasis has been on the delivery of benefits in a respectful and transparent manner, so that poor families are empowered and not dependent. The welfare programs pertaining to housing, toilets, health, ration, and women empowerment are being implemented through systems and not through middlemen.

Technology Bringing Honesty in Welfare Delivery

The Family ID platform is integrating Aadhaar, Digi Locker, and departmental databases to facilitate easy access to close to 98 social welfare schemes for more than 15 crore citizens. The application of AI in social welfare is enhancing pension, scholarship, and family benefit schemes monitoring by detecting real beneficiaries and minimizing errors. In the health sector, electronic health records and AI-based health platforms under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission are enhancing disease surveillance, maternal, and child health tracking, as well as telemedicine services.

Moreover, changes in the Public Distribution System (PDS), such as the setting up of e-POS machines in over 80,000 fair price shops and the cancellation of approximately 30 lakh fake ration cards, have greatly reduced leakages and fraud, ensuring that beneficiaries receive benefits directly and safely.

The most notable shift has been the adoption of technology. Through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), funds are transferred to bank accounts of beneficiaries. This has greatly reduced corruption and leakages. Reports indicate that DBT-based delivery is helping Uttar Pradesh save nearly ₹10,000 crore annually, with about 9.1 crore people receiving benefits across 200+ schemes, showing the scale and efficiency of digital welfare governance

Fiscal Discipline + Welfare = Sustainable Model

The main point of the fiscal discipline + welfare model is that a government does not have to make a trade-off between fiscal discipline and social protection. Rather, through efficiency gains, minimizing leakages, and precise targeting of beneficiaries, the government can enhance welfare without placing the economy under unsustainable fiscal stress. This model moves the emphasis from indiscriminate subsidy growth to precision-driven social protection, where every rupee of expenditure translates into social impact.

One of the key support structures of this model is Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and digital governance. In India, DBT has been instrumental in minimizing leakages and making subsidies more rational.

Government-related reports show that DBT has achieved cumulative savings of approximately Rs.3.48 lakh crore through the elimination of fraud, duplication, and middlemen in the delivery of welfare. Estimates of earlier periods also showed savings of more than Rs.2.23 lakh crore through the elimination of fake or duplicate beneficiaries in central government schemes. This shows how technology-enabled welfare can strengthen public finance and improve welfare delivery at the same time.

From an operational point of view, DBT provides direct benefit transfers to beneficiaries through bank accounts that are Aadhaar and mobile number linked (the JAM model). In recent years, the magnitude of DBT itself indicates its significance, as more than ₹7 lakh crores were transferred in a single year, and the total transferred has crossed tens of lakh crores since its implementation.

In Uttar Pradesh, this strategy is also apparent through DBT-based implementation in agriculture, education, and procurement, such as direct transfer of seed subsidy to farmers, scholarship to lakhs of students, and direct procurement payments to farmers, which ensures faster payments and less corruption. The overall strategy is that as leakages decrease, governments save money, which can then be invested in infrastructure, health, and development. In the long run, this generates a cycle where better targeting leads to savings, savings lead to investment, investment leads to growth, and growth leads to revenue, making welfare financially sustainable rather than a fiscal burden.

From Political Favour to Citizen Right

The development of welfare governance in India is part of a larger shift from patronage-driven distribution systems to more organized, rights-based frameworks for service delivery.

Traditionally, the distribution of welfare benefits in some parts of India was, at times, channeled through local power networks or political affiliations.

Although this was sometimes useful for last-mile delivery through social connections, it also presented the possibility of exclusion, duplication, and leakages. By contrast, the modern welfare governance framework is increasingly organized around the idea of welfare as a right of citizenship, based on identity verification systems, digital databases, and direct benefit transfer (DBT) systems.

The development of digital infrastructure in India, especially in the form of Aadhaar identity verification systems, Jan Dhan financial inclusion initiatives, and mobile connectivity, has dramatically changed the welfare delivery infrastructure paradigm.

The DBT system allows welfare benefits such as subsidies, pensions, and scholarships to be credited directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries, minimizing the need for middlemen. Research and official statistics have shown that there have been major savings through DBT systems by eliminating the problem of ghost beneficiaries and minimizing administrative inefficiencies.

Another important change is the development of beneficiary databases and real-time monitoring systems. These systems enable governments to monitor scheme performance, beneficiary inclusion, and fund use in real time. The administrative accountability framework improves with the shift from a relationship-based to a data-driven approach to welfare. Moreover, the portability of benefits, such as "One Nation One Ration Card," has further reinforced the rights-based approach by ensuring that benefits are tied to citizenship, not location or political affiliation.

This shift also has sociological undertones. With the shift from a favor-based to a right-based system, the relationship between citizens and the state shifts from one of dependence to one of institutional trust. Citizens gain the right to demand services on the basis of eligibility criteria, not personal relationships. This is consistent with the principles of equality and social justice enshrined in the country's constitution, as it ensures equal access to state resources.

On the whole, the transition from being a matter of political favor to a matter of citizen right marks a structural shift in the governance philosophy, which seeks to integrate the efficiency of technology with the accountability of democracy. It marks the gradual transition of the Indian welfare state into a welfare architecture where entitlement is based on clear eligibility criteria and is ensured by technological safeguards.

UP Model Is Being Discussed Nationally

People of Uttar Pradesh have noticed the social situation, Law and order situation, and BIMARU label as being on the back seat of development but now Uttar Pradesh is setting an example of its own development, UP Model in whole of India.

The UP model demonstrates how the welfare, infrastructure, and investment can be integrated into one development system. The thought is that when people are provided with housing, health, and food security, they are able to contribute to economic development in terms of employment, entrepreneurship, and skill development.

This is the Larger Governance Message, and its philosophy is simple, “Welfare should give security, Governance should give dignity, and Development should give opportunity.” In this manner, the welfare approach seeks to shift from politics of dependency to development of capability.

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