

FRONTIER



INSIGHTS

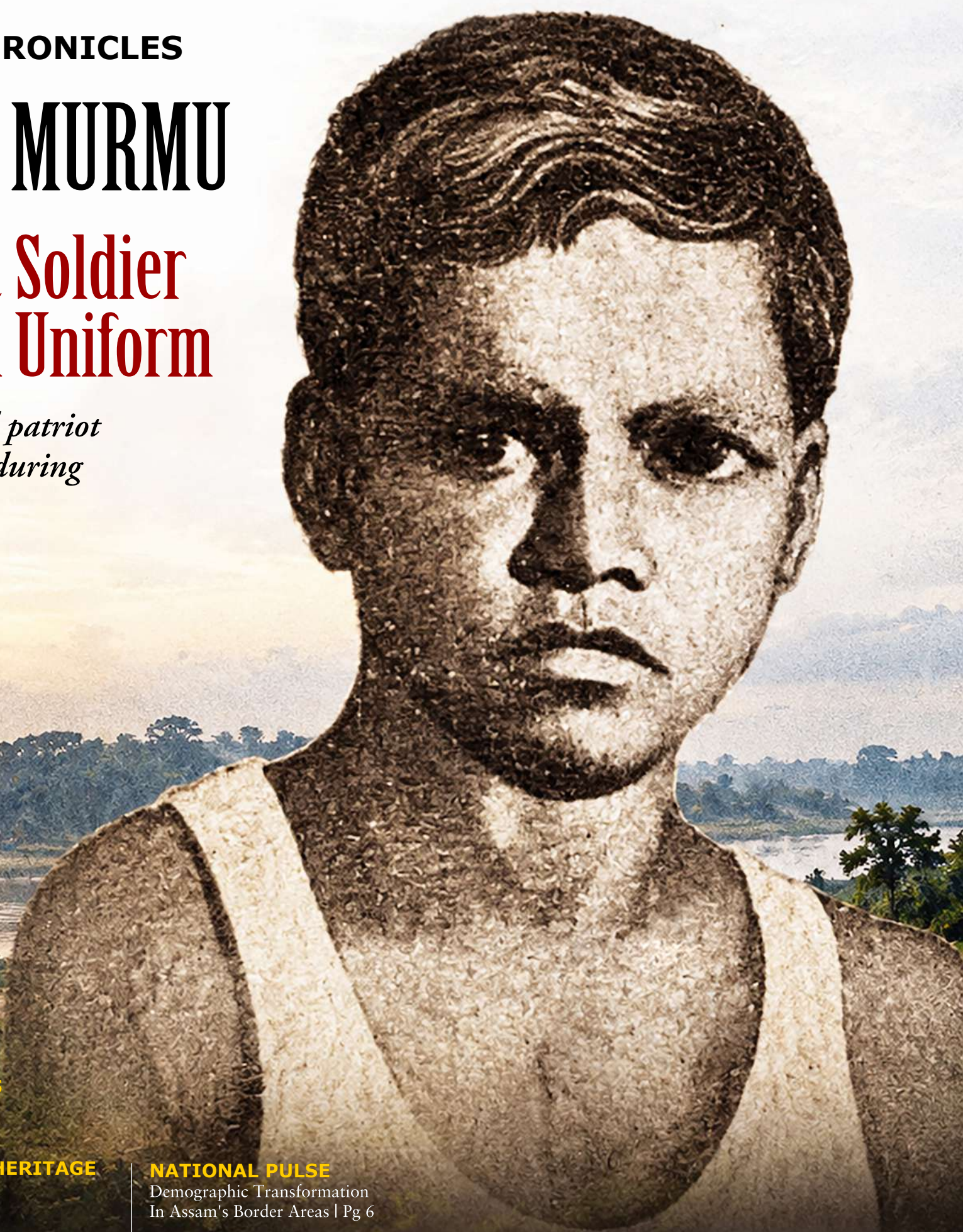
VOICES FROM THE BORDERS, VIGILANCE FOR THE NATION

FRONTIER CHRONICLES

CHURKA MURMU

The Great Soldier Without A Uniform

*The young Santal patriot
who gave his life during
the 1971 war*



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FRONTIER CHRONICLES

CHURKA MURMU: The Great Soldier Without a Uniform

The story of a young 20-year-old Santal patriot who gave his life for the Motherland

By Sadhan Kumar Paul

History does not remember only those who fight in uniform. Sometimes, in the darkest moments of a nation's history, an ordinary young man rises above the ordinary to perform an extraordinary duty. Churka Murmu of Chakram village in South Dinajpur, West Bengal, was one such young patriot. He wore no military uniform, carried no official rank and belonged to no armed force. Yet, at a crucial moment in 1971, his courage and sense of duty placed him beside India's border defenders.

Churka Murmu was born on 2 July 1951 in Chakram, near Balurghat, then part of the undivided West Dinajpur district. He belonged to a poor Santal family. His father, Khela Murmu, and mother, Sumi Hansda, struggled to provide education for their son. After completing his primary education, Churka joined the local Jaychandlal Pragati Vidyachakra school. Those who knew him remembered him as a quiet, simple and disciplined boy who was also interested in social service.

During his student years, Churka came into contact with Swayamsevaks and became associated with a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) shakha in his village. According to accounts of his life, the shakha became one of the influences through which he developed a strong sense of discipline, social responsibility and patriotism.

1971 WAR INVOLVEMENT

It was 1971 when the Bangladesh Liberation War had created enormous tension along India's eastern frontier. The border areas of West Bengal became vulnerable to infiltration and armed attacks. On 18 August 1971, Pakistani forces reportedly entered the area near Chakram disguised as members of the Mukti Bahini and opened fire in the direction of the BSF position at Chakramprasad. Panic spread rapidly among the villagers. People began leaving their homes in fear. But Churka did not run away.

Although he was only about twenty years old and still a student, he understood that the BSF camp needed to be warned. He therefore went forward and conveyed information about the Pakistani presence to the border guards. At the time, the BSF contingent in the area was very small, and the soldiers faced an extremely difficult situation. The soldiers also needed assistance in moving ammunition. Churka, along with two companions, volunteered to help. This was the moment when a student became, in spirit, a soldier.

THE LAST ACT OF DUTY

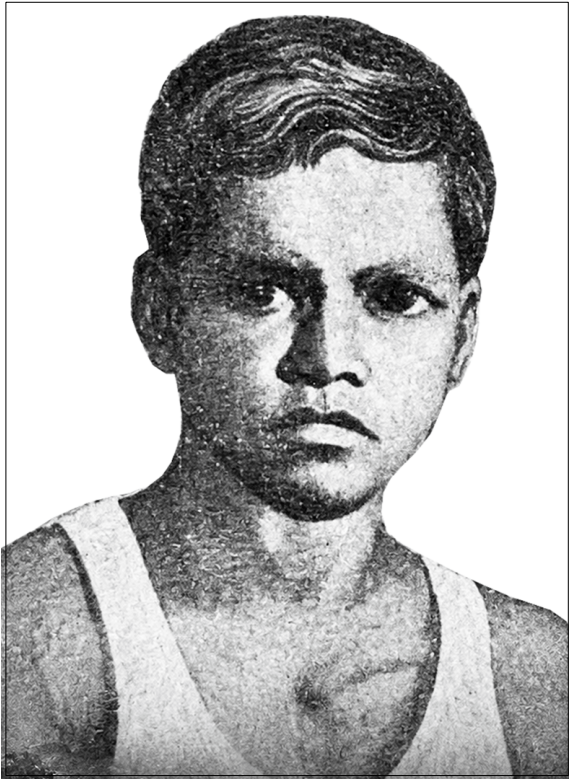
The young men helped the BSF personnel move the ammunition while coming under threat of enemy fire. Eventually, the Pakistani troops surrounded the area. The BSF

personnel were forced to surrender, while Churka's companions managed to escape. Churka had another choice: he too could have fled. But he chose not to. He understood that if the ammunition fell into enemy hands, it could be used against Indian soldiers. According to accounts of the incident, Churka therefore attempted to move the ammunition boxes away from the reach of the Pakistani forces and into a nearby pond and field area. One account describes him crawling through the field to prevent the ammunition from being captured. While attempting to dispose of the final ammunition box, Churka was detected by the Pakistani troops and was fatally shot. He was only twenty years old. His life ended there, but his duty did not.

The ammunition was kept out of enemy hands, and Churka Murmu became one of the many largely unremembered young Indians whose courage formed part of the human story behind the events of 1971. India ultimately prevailed in the war, and Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation. Churka's sacrifice belongs to that larger history—but his story also belongs particularly to the soil of South Dinajpur, to the people of Chakram, and to the generations of young Indians who can learn from his example.

A SOLDIER WITHOUT A UNIFORM

What makes Churka's story remarkable is not merely the circumstances of his death. It is the decision he made before death. He had no military obligation to remain there. He was not a commissioned soldier. He was a village student. Yet when his country faced danger, he did not ask, "Is this my responsibility?" He simply acted. That is why the title "The Great Soldier Without a Uniform" is so appropriate for him. His story also reminds us that patriotism is not measured only by words. It expresses itself through responsibility, courage, self-discipline and the willingness to put the larger national interest above personal safety.



Churka Murmu (1951–1971)

A MEMORY KEPT ALIVE

Today, a memorial associated with Churka Murmu stands in Chakram, and his memory continues to be honoured locally. The Churka Murmu Smriti Samiti has reportedly observed Churka Murmu Atma Balidan Divas every year since 1982, organising programmes including kabaddi and archery competitions and encouraging students through scholarships.

More than five decades have passed since that August morning of 1971. Generations have grown up who never saw the war and never knew the young man who walked into danger from a small village near Balurghat. But nations are built not only by famous names. They are also built by the courage of people whose names may remain outside the pages of mainstream history. Churka Murmu was one of them. He was born in poverty, lived simply, studied in a village school and died without a uniform. Yet when the integrity and security of the Motherland were threatened, he stood beside India's defenders.

His life gives us a timeless message: A soldier is not defined only by the uniform he wears. A true soldier is defined by the courage with which he serves the Motherland. And Churka Murmu served his Motherland with the greatest offering a young patriot could make—his life.



The Churka Murmu memorial at Chakramprasad village, South Dinajpur, West Bengal, close to the Bangladesh border.



FRONTIER CULTURE & HERITAGE

Balpakram: Where Spirits And Sacred Legends Meet

In Balpakram, forests, cliffs and gorges carry generations of sacred memory—from the Garo belief in a resting place for the departed to local traditions linking the landscape with Hanuman, Sanjeevani and the Ramayana.

By Digros Shira



Balpakram's cliffs and gorges have shaped both the physical and spiritual geography of the Garo Hills.

There are landscapes that are remembered for their beauty, and there are landscapes that become sacred through the stories, rituals and beliefs associated with them. Balpakram National Park, in Meghalaya's South Garo Hills, belongs to the latter. Known traditionally as the “Land of Spirits” and the “Land of Perpetual Winds,” Balpakram is revered in Garo tradition as a resting place for the spirits of the departed. Its forests, cliffs, pools, caves and immense gorges form a landscape in which the physical and spiritual worlds are closely connected. This sacred character is rooted in the traditional Garo faith known as Songsarek, in which land, nature, cultivation, healing, rituals and deities are closely interconnected. Around Balpakram, this relationship is particularly tangible: generations of oral tradition have attached spiritual meanings to actual rocks, pools, hillocks and gorges.

UNESCO's documentation of the Garo Hills Conservation Area records nearly 50 locations associated with specific myths. Alongside this Garo sacred geography, local tradition also associates parts of Balpakram with the Ramayana, Hanuman's search for the life-saving Sanjeevani herb, and places bearing the names Mahadeo and Kailash.

THE LAND OF THE DEPARTED

For the Garo people, Balpakram is traditionally connected with the journey of the dead. According to Garo belief, the spirits of the deceased travel through Balpakram before proceeding towards the spiritual world. The plateau and its gorges are therefore not merely geographical features but part of a spiritual geography inherited through generations of oral tradition. Government tourism material likewise records the belief that the spirits of the dead dwell temporarily in Balpakram before embarking on their final journey.

At Chidimak, the Black Pool, the spirits are traditionally believed to wash and cleanse themselves before entering the realm of the dead. At Boldak Matchu Karam, a distinctive Boldak tree is associated with funeral traditions and the animals sacrificed for the dead.

Memang Anti Cha'ram, known as the “Marketplace of the Spirits,” carries another dimension of this belief: the spiritual world is imagined through familiar forms of human society. These sites transform the landscape into a map of the passage between life, death and the spiritual world.

SACRED GEOGRAPHY IN STONE

Balpakram's sacred geography is also preserved through stories of legendary figures. Mebit-Mebang, the Oracle Rock, is traditionally associated with the interpretation of stones for signs concerning the prospects of a harvest. Goera Rong Jaleng, the Rock Ledge of Goera, is associated with Goera, traditionally connected with thunder and lightning.

The legendary brothers Dikki and Bandi are remembered through several locations. At Dikkini Ring, or Dikki's Canoe, a flat rock resembling an overturned canoe is associated with the story of Dikki making a canoe at night. According to tradition, the canoe was turned to stone before he could complete it.

At Rongsaljong Agal, a rock formation and water-filled basin are associated with Shore, the wife of Bandi. What matters here is not simply the number of legends associated with Balpakram. It is the way landscape itself becomes a vessel for cultural memory. A rock, pool or hillock becomes a point through which a story, a belief or a ritual practice can be remembered across generations.

HANUMAN AND THE LOCAL RAMAYANA TRADITION

A local Ramayana tradition connects Balpakram with Hanuman's search for the life-saving herb required to save Lakshmana. During the great war between Rama and Ravana, Lakshmana was grievously wounded. Hanuman was sent to obtain the medicinal herb that could save his life. When he could not identify the required herb, the Ramayana tradition tells of him carrying the mountain itself. The episode has long carried a powerful spiritual meaning: Hanuman's extraordinary act is an expression of devotion, service and unwavering duty towards Rama and Lakshmana.

A Meghalaya government tourism development document records the local belief that Hanuman obtained the life-saving herb for Lakshman at Balpakram. The significance lies not only in the identification of a particular place with the Ramayana episode, but in what the story brings into the landscape: the image of Hanuman crossing immense distances and carrying a mountain in the service of another life.

MAHADEO, KAILASH AND THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

The Hindu associations of Balpakram extend beyond the Ramayana. The park contains the dramatic Mahadeo Gorge, which government tourism material describes as more than 600 metres deep. Nearby, the distinctive bullock-hump-shaped Chitmang Peak, rising to about 1,023 metres, is also known as Kailash. The names themselves carry religious resonance. Mahadeo is a revered name of Shiva, while Kailash evokes the sacred mountain traditionally associated with Shiva.

ALIVING SACRED LANDSCAPE

Balpakram covers roughly 220 square kilometres, encompassing forests, grasslands, cliffs, caves, streams and deep valleys. Its natural formations are part of an important ecological landscape, but their significance cannot be understood through ecology alone.

Ganchi Soram, located with Balpakram National Park, which is associated with cremation and ancestral remembrance, continued to have public significance in modern Meghalaya: UNESCO records that the state's first Chief Minister, Captain Williamson Sangma, visited the site in 1972 to give thanks and pay respects to ancestors.

It is a living sacred landscape, where the natural world has become a repository of spiritual memory. To preserve Balpakram, therefore, is to preserve not only its forests, wildlife and geological formations, but also the stories through which generations have understood, remembered and revered the land.



VALOUR & SERVICE – PARAM VIR CHAKRA SERIES

MAJOR RAMA RAGHOBHA RANE: The First Living Param Vir Chakra Recipient

By Pragyan Jyoti Nath

Under enemy fire, despite being wounded, Second Lieutenant Rama Raghoba Rane repeatedly cleared mines, roadblocks and damaged stretches of the Naushera–Rajauri road, enabling Indian armour to advance towards Rajauri and Chingas in April 1948. His gallantry earned him the Param Vir Chakra—and made him the first living recipient of India's highest wartime gallantry award.



MAJOR RAMA RAGHOBHA RANE

Born: 26 June 1918

Birthplace: Chendia, Karwar, Karnataka

Rank during action: Second Lieutenant

Corps: Corps of Engineers

Unit: 37th Assault Field Company

Operation: Naushera–Rajauri Advance

Action: 8–11 April 1948

Award: Param Vir Chakra

Retired: Major, 1968

Rama Raghoba Rane was born on 26 June 1918 at Chendia in the Karwar district of present-day Karnataka. He joined the British Indian Army in 1940 and served with the engineers during the Second World War, including in Burma. On 15 December 1947, soon after Independence, he was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers.

By early 1948, the war in Jammu and Kashmir had turned the movement of troops and armour into a battle of its own. Following the recapture of Jhangar on 18 March, Indian forces planned an advance from Naushera towards Rajauri. The historic route passed through Chingas, along the old Mughal road to Kashmir.

On 8 April, 4 Dogra began its advance and captured the strongly held Barwali Ridge, around eleven kilometres north of Naushera. But beyond the ridge, the road was increasingly blocked by mines, felled trees, damaged culverts and other obstacles. The advancing armour could go no further. Attached to 4 Dogra was Rane's section of the 37th Assault Field Company. As his men began clearing a minefield, enemy mortar fire struck them. Two sappers were killed and five men, including Rane, were wounded. Despite his wounds, he reorganised his men and continued the work. By evening, the minefield had been cleared sufficiently for the tanks to move forward. But the road remained unsafe and heavily obstructed.

Rane and his men continued working into the night, constructing a diversion around a

destroyed section of road. By approximately 2200 hours, the route had been made usable.

On 9 April, Rane's party resumed clearing the road. The diversion was completed by the afternoon, allowing the leading armoured elements to proceed. But the advance repeatedly encountered new obstacles. A roadblock of felled pine trees had to be cleared. Culverts had been damaged. Mines remained a constant threat. Each time the column stopped, Rane and his men went forward.

By the evening of 9 April, another major obstacle had forced the column to halt for the night. At 0445 hours on 10 April, Rane resumed the work. Under heavy enemy fire, his party cleared the roadblock by approximately 0630 hours. Later that morning, another damaged stretch of road, extending for roughly a thousand yards, had to be made passable.

Rane was by then wounded and exhausted but continued directing the work. By around 1030 hours, the road had been cleared sufficiently for the advance to continue. The armoured column eventually used the Tawi riverbed to reach Chingas at approximately 1400 hours. Rane, however, continued working on the main road so that the administrative and supporting columns could follow. He and his men worked until about 2100 hours.

The next morning, 11 April, the work resumed at 0600 hours. By 1100 hours, the road to Chingas had been opened. Rane continued ahead with the advancing force, ensuring that the route remained usable for those following behind.

Over four days, his work had turned a blocked mountain route into a functioning line of advance.



President Dr Rajendra Prasad presents the Param Vir Chakra to Major Rama Raghoba Rane, the first living recipient of India's highest wartime gallantry award.

THE FIRST LIVING PVC RECIPIENT

Rane's gallantry was extraordinary not because he held a position alone, but because he repeatedly placed himself and his men in danger to perform a task upon which the entire advance depended. He worked through enemy mortar fire, mines, demolished roads and repeated roadblocks, continuing even after being wounded. His technical skill as an engineer became a battlefield capability: every obstacle he removed allowed another part of the force to move forward.

For his actions during the Rajauri operations, he was awarded the Param Vir Chakra. Rama Raghoba Rane became the first living recipient of the Param Vir Chakra, giving the newly independent Indian Army one of its earliest living holders of its highest wartime gallantry distinction. The National War Memorial records him as a Param Vir Chakra awardee for the action of 8 April 1948.

Rane continued his military career for two decades, eventually retiring as a Major in 1968. His legacy has since been preserved in memorials and official commemorations, including his bust at the Param Yodha Sthal.

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FRONTIER WATCH

When The Fence Meets The Frontier: Killapara's Appeal From The Dalu Border

At Meghalaya's Dalu–Killapara frontier, a proposed border-fencing alignment has raised questions over settled habitation, religious sites, livelihoods and a memorial to the 1971 war.

By Tapan Dalu

Along Meghalaya's western frontier with Bangladesh, the international boundary does not pass through an empty landscape. At Dalu and Killapara in West Garo Hills, homes, farms, places of worship, public institutions and memories of the 1971 war exist alongside the infrastructure of border security. That landscape has now become the focus of a renewed appeal over the proposed alignment of border fencing.

The issue was formally placed before the Union government in a memorandum dated 7 May 2026, submitted by the Seemanta Chetana Mancha, Purvottar Dalu Sector Committee, to the Union Home Minister. The memorandum covers the stretch between Border Posts 1112 and 1117, on the Dalu–Killapara side opposite Nakugaon and asks that the proposed fencing be reviewed after the situation on the ground is examined.

The central concern is straightforward: if the fence is constructed approximately 150 yards inside the international boundary, what happens to the people and institutions that already occupy that space?

A BORDER THROUGH A LIVING LANDSCAPE

The Dalu–Killapara frontier is shaped in part by the Bugai, or Bhogai, river, which forms a natural geographical divide between India and Bangladesh. Government records relating to the Dalu Land Customs Station also identify the Bhogai River as a defining feature of the area.

A Meghalaya government baseline survey records Dalu Killapara with 366 households and a population of 1,157, with agriculture among the livelihood activities recorded in the village. Research on the Killapara–Nakugaon borderland has also described the area as comparatively peaceful while noting longstanding social, cultural and familial connections across the international boundary. Such connections reflect a landscape in which communities existed long before the present international boundary divided the region.

The result is a frontier where the security line does not exist in isolation. It intersects an inhabited landscape whose economic and social life has developed around the river, the border and the institutions of the settlement.

WHAT LIES ALONG THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT?

According to the memorandum, the area around the proposed alignment includes Samshan Kali Temple and the adjoining

Hindu cremation ground, the Gopal Temple, the Killapara Government Lower Primary School, and a war memorial associated with the 1971 conflict.

The submission gives historical dates for these institutions, stating that the Samshan Kali shrine dates to 1887, the Gopal Temple to 1928, and the school to 1925. The memorandum also states that approximately 400 families have lived along the riverbank since 1928, describing them primarily as cultivators, fishermen and daily-wage workers. If the fencing alignment passes inland of the international boundary as described in the submission, residents argue that it could affect both settled habitation and livelihoods.

A GRIEVANCE THAT GOES BACK YEARS

The present appeal is not the first time the issue has been raised. According to the memorandum, residents of Killapara and Jhaluapara have been raising objections concerning the fencing since 2008. On 26 October 2010, the Deputy Commissioner, Tura, convened a meeting at which officials associated with the National Buildings Construction Corporation were asked to explain the proposed fencing arrangements.

The memorandum also refers to another meeting, held on 6 January 2015 and chaired by the Deputy Commissioner. According to the submission, the NBCC project manager stated that surveys had been carried out along the banks of the Bhugai/Bugai and Bakla rivers and that fencing would be undertaken without affecting Killapara and Jhaluapara. The petitioners state that the villagers' grievances and the NBCC statement were recorded at the Deputy Commissioner's office. Whether those earlier discussions remain applicable to the present fencing plan is now one of the questions requiring clarification.

THE 150-YARD QUESTION

The idea of placing border fencing at a distance inward from the international boundary is not new in India's border-management system. Government and parliamentary records have documented fencing arrangements at a prescribed setback, while also recording situations in which terrain, settlements, rivers and other local conditions have required different solutions.

In Karimganj, Assam, for instance, authorities announced a single-fence arrangement closer to the international boundary in a densely populated section rather than placing the fence at the usual setback. The example illustrates that fencing arrangements can be adapted to local



*Samshan Kali Temple, Killapara:
An old place of worship and cremation along
the Dalu–Killapara frontier*

conditions where a uniform alignment creates difficulties. The memorandum cites Sibbari in South Garo Hills as another local example where, according to the petitioners, single-line fencing was completed while existing households were spared.

The issue at Killapara is about where and how the security infrastructure can be aligned in a landscape where habitation, religious sites, public facilities and livelihoods already occupy the proposed corridor.

A FRONTIER WITH A MEMORY OF WAR

Killapara also carries a direct connection with India's military history. On 25 May 1971, Pakistani forces attempted to overrun the Killapara BSF post during the Bangladesh Liberation War. Contemporary reporting from the site records that the post stood close to the international boundary, with the Bugai River nearby, and describes repeated attempts to overrun the position. The defence was led by Assistant Commandant Baljit Singh Tyagi and a small BSF contingent. A war memorial now marks that episode at Killapara. The frontier is not merely a line of contemporary security infrastructure. It is also a place associated with a formative episode in the history of the Bangladesh Liberation War and with the personnel who defended the border in 1971.

WHAT THE NEW MEMORANDUM SEEKS

The memorandum's principal request is that the authorities examine the ground reality and review the fencing decision before the affected area is permanently altered. It asks, in effect, that the existing habitation, religious sites, school, war memorial, riverine geography and the record of earlier administrative discussions be considered together before the final alignment is implemented.

The question now before the authorities is therefore one of alignment as much as infrastructure. Border fencing serves a clear security purpose, but in populated frontier regions its physical placement can also determine how communities access homes, fields, institutions and places of worship. At Killapara, the eventual outcome will depend on the actual fencing alignment, land records, ground survey and technical requirements of the project, as well as the authorities' assessment of the concerns raised by residents and the organisations representing them.

NATIONAL PULSE

Demographic Transformation In Assam's Border Areas

Population composition, linguistic change and what the Census can—and cannot—tell us about Assam's frontier districts

By Prof. Dilip Chandra Nath

Assam's demographic landscape has changed substantially over the decades. Population growth has been accompanied by shifts in religious composition, language, settlement patterns and the distribution of communities across districts. Nowhere is the question more sensitive than in areas adjoining the state's international borders, where demographic change intersects with migration, historical settlement and questions of identity.

Yet the numbers require careful reading. Census data can describe changes in population composition; they cannot, by themselves, establish why those changes occurred or identify particular groups as migrants. An earlier study by Nath and Nath examined Assam's religious and linguistic composition using Census data from 1951 to 2001. The 2011 Census provides a further point of comparison and reveals considerable variation within the state.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE CHANGE

One of the clearest long-term changes has been in the religious composition of Assam's population. According to Nath and Nath (2012), Hindus accounted for approximately **72.1 per cent** of Assam's population in 1951 and **64.9 per cent** in 2001. The 2011 Census recorded the Hindu share at approximately **61.47 per cent**. Over the same period, the Muslim share increased from approximately **24.9 per cent in 1951 to 30.9 per cent in 2001 and 34.22 per cent in 2011**. The Christian share also increased, from around **2.0 per cent in 1951 to 3.74 per cent in 2011**.

Year	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)	Christian (%)
1951	72.1	24.9	2.0
2001	64.9	30.9	3.7
2011	61.47	34.22	3.74

*Selected religious population shares in Assam, 1951–2011.
Source: Nath and Nath (2012) and Census of India 2011.*

The Hindu share therefore fell by approximately 10.6 percentage points between 1951 and 2011, while the shares of Muslims and Christians increased. These figures describe a change in population composition, but do not establish its causes. Fertility, mortality, age structure, differential population growth, historical settlement and migration can all influence population composition. Census percentages alone cannot separate these factors.

ASTATE OF MANYDEMOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPES

State-level figures can conceal substantial differences between districts. Districts differ in historical settlement patterns, geography, urbanisation, economic structure, ethnic composition and proximity to international borders. This is especially relevant in the border areas. Communities along Assam's borders have developed within landscapes shaped by rivers, agricultural settlement, trade routes and movements of people that predate the present administrative boundaries. Changes in one district can therefore have a very different demographic meaning from changes in another. For a frontier state, the district is consequently an important unit of analysis. State-wide averages provide the broad picture, but can conceal concentrations and local patterns more relevant to planning and border-area policy.

LANGUAGE TELLSANOTHER PART OF THE STORY

Religious composition is only one dimension of demographic change. Language provides another. Nath and Nath reported that the Assamese-speaking share of the population declined from approximately **69.3 per cent in 1951 to 60.8 per cent in 2001**, while the Bengali-speaking share increased from around **21.2 per cent to 27.5 per cent**.

Mother tongue	2001 (%)	2011 (%)
Assamese	48.80	48.38
Bengali	27.54	28.92
Hindi	5.89	6.73
Bodo	4.86	4.53

*Selected mother-tongue shares in Assam, 2001 and 2011.
Source: Census of India, C-16 mother-tongue tables.*

The Census's mother-tongue classification provides a more recent comparison for 2001 and 2011:

The figures also demonstrate why demographic statistics need to be read within their classification framework. The absolute number of speakers can increase even when their percentage share declines. The source material, for example, reports Assamese speakers increasing from approximately 13.01 million in 2001 to 15.10 million in 2011, while Bengali speakers increased from approximately 7.34 million to 9.02 million. A percentage share therefore indicates relative composition, not necessarily whether a language community is growing or shrinking in absolute terms. Nor does mother tongue necessarily correspond to the language used at home, in education, at work or in public life. Assam's linguistic landscape is considerably more complex than any single Census category can capture.

THE BORDER QUESTION

This complexity becomes particularly important when demographic change is examined in Assam's border areas. The state's international borders with Bangladesh and Bhutan run through populated landscapes with long histories of settlement, agriculture, trade and cultural interaction. In some areas, demographic change has become closely associated in public debate with cross-border migration. But demographic statistics must not be used as a substitute for migration evidence. A rise in the population of a particular religious or linguistic community does not by itself establish the arrival of migrants. Similarly, population growth rates cannot distinguish between undocumented migration and natural increase without additional evidence. Fertility, mortality, age structure and settlement patterns must also be considered.

This is one of the central difficulties in interpreting Assam's demographic transformation: the Census records who lives in a population; it does not automatically explain how that population came to have its present composition. Future analysis should therefore combine Census data with birth and death statistics, migration records, land and settlement data, household surveys and district-level administrative information.

READING THE CENSUS WITH CARE

The 2011 Census remains the latest completed Indian Census dataset used in this analysis. It provides an important benchmark, but cannot by itself describe demographic developments after 2011.

There are also limitations in comparing historical datasets. Religious classifications and mother-tongue classifications follow their respective Census frameworks, while some district-level figures may be derived from secondary reporting of Census tables. Such differences need to be acknowledged rather than treated as perfectly comparable measurements. Most importantly, demographic correlation should not be mistaken for demographic causation. A changing religious share does not identify the cause of the change. A changing linguistic share does not establish migration. Population growth in a border district does not, without further evidence, establish cross-border movement.

These distinctions are particularly important in Assam because demographic questions are closely connected with identity, citizenship and migration. The more consequential the question, the more carefully the evidence needs to be handled.

THE FRONTIER DEMOGRAPHIC PICTURE

Assam's demographic transformation is clear in the Census record. Between 1951 and 2011, the relative shares of its major religious communities changed significantly. The frontier dimension adds another layer: border districts have their own histories of settlement, mobility and interaction, and state-level averages cannot adequately describe them.

The available Census evidence therefore provides a starting point rather than a final explanation. The next stage of demographic analysis should be more granular: district by district, border area by border area, while keeping the distinction between observed population change and explanations for that change firmly in view. The Census tells us that Assam has changed. Understanding precisely where, how and why requires evidence beyond population percentages alone.

(The Author is Professor Emeritus and Honorary Advisor in the Royal School of Applied & Pure Sciences, The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati and Former Vice-Chancellor, Assam University)



POLICY FRONTIER

First Land Border District Superintendents' Police Conference

By Shri Pradeep Kumar, IPS (Retd.)



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with the Union Home Secretary, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Ministers of State for Home Affairs and other senior officials at the Land Border Districts' Superintendents of Police Conference-2026.

In the national interest, 9 July 2026 was a memorable day. On this date, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, organised a conference of Superintendents of Police of international land-border districts of India. This was the first conference of its kind in independent India.

The purpose of calling such a meeting is many-fold. The most important aspects can briefly be stated as:

- ♦ Cross-border terrorism and organised crime
- ♦ Border security and national security
- ♦ Narcotic drugs and illicit arms inflow
- ♦ Financial crimes and the flow of money through money laundering
- ♦ Demographic changes in bordering areas
- ♦ Infiltration and border-area development

In modern times, wars are no longer limited to armed struggles between countries. Countries are not only using sophisticated weapons but are also engaged in psychological warfare and proxy warfare, while using technology to collect information and damage the economy of an adversary.

The times when one country could win a war and merge another country into itself are largely over. Even powerful countries have not always succeeded in achieving their objectives and have been forced to withdraw. For example, the USA sent troops to Vietnam in 1965 and withdrew in 1973 after suffering tremendous losses of manpower and prestige. The then USSR intervened in Afghanistan in 1979 and was forced to withdraw after a decade. The USA was also forced to withdraw from Afghanistan after an armed struggle with local groups lasting about two decades, from 2001 to 2021.

In modern times, outright victory through continuous armed struggle is becoming increasingly difficult. Recent conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, demonstrate the complexity and prolonged nature of modern warfare. What our country is facing today includes proxy warfare from Pakistan. Our

neighbour sends militants across the border, trains misguided youth and pushes illicit drugs into India.

Similarly, our Northeast is facing the entry of illegal arms and narcotic substances from the East and infiltration from the West. The amount of narcotic substances pushed into the Northeastern States is huge, despite large seizures, and it is badly affecting the youth of the region. The inflow of illegal arms and ammunition has kept the Northeastern States disturbed since independence. In controlling militancy in this area, the security forces have lost many brave soldiers. The continued disturbances in Manipur are also partly attributed to the inflow of illegal arms from across the international border. In such a situation, a conference of SPs of land-border districts is very important.

The Hon'ble Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation addressed the **Land Border Districts' Superintendents of Police Conference-2026** in New Delhi in the presence of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Shri Nityanand Rai, the Union Home Secretary, the Director of Intelligence Bureau, Directors General of Police of the border States and other senior officers, including those of the CAPFs. In his address, he emphasised the need to institutionalise a comprehensive approach to border security. The salient points of his address may be briefly summarised as:

1. Developing the most modern, smart and secure border system.
2. Creating a prosperous border region and a vigilant society.
3. Establishing a strong quadrangular security grid involving border-guarding forces, State and district administrations, stakeholders of the Government of India, and local citizens.
4. Identifying problems and finding their resolutions.
5. Formulating appropriate policy measures.
6. Making border security impenetrable by adopting a proactive approach.
7. Fencing the 1,610-km-long Indo-Myanmar border.

8. Ensuring the earliest possible communication from the grassroots level to the highest level regarding demographic changes.

Benefits of Direct Interaction with SPs of Border Districts

- ♦ Identification of emerging threats
- ♦ Better coordination between the Centre and the States
- ♦ Strengthening the Centre-field feedback mechanism
- ♦ Bringing ground realities into policy formulation
- ♦ Direct exposure of field officers to national-level priorities and policies
- ♦ Identification of policy gaps

In one line, the feedback loop may be represented as: **National Policy → Field Implementation → Ground-Level Experience → Feedback from the Field → Policy Refinement**

The real value of such a meeting lies in creating a two-way policy dialogue. The Government of India gets a consolidated understanding of what is happening on the ground across different international border districts. The SPs gain a direct understanding of national priorities.

This makes the interaction particularly valuable for developing practical, evidence-based and locally responsive border-security policies, rather than depending solely on information flowing through administrative layers.

The first Land Border Districts' SPs Conference is therefore an important step towards strengthening India's national security. Its significance lies not merely in bringing together senior police officers from border districts, but in creating a mechanism through which ground realities can directly contribute to national policy and policy priorities can be translated more effectively into action on the ground.



GLOBAL FRONTIER

BRICS Summit Pushes For Permanent Indian Presence In UNSC

By Nava Thakuria



Leaders of the BRICS member nations join hands outside Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi during the 18th BRICS Summit.

As the largest democracy on Earth hosted the 18th BRICS Leaders' Summit in New Delhi on 12-13 September 2026, under the theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability', the world media covered the event with enthusiasm, where a series of discussions took place focusing an aim to resolve many pertinent global challenges. The visiting leaders including United Nations secretary-general António Guterres, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Malaysian Premier Anwar Ibrahim, UAE crown prince Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan with others discussed a host of global issues concerning various conflicts, trades, AI, cooperation and food securities in developing countries. The participating heads of governments & states also unanimously adopted the New Delhi Declaration 2026. While reaffirming commitment to stronger multilateralism and deeper cooperation among BRICS countries, the declaration emphasized on avoiding while standing against anyone, but taking everyone onboard.

Initially began the journey in 2001 as a Global South powerhouse comprising only Brazil, Russia, India and China, the BRIC (later BRICS) expanded its territories with the inclusion of South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia (altogether 11 major emerging economies). The multilateral forum also has 10 partner nations including Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, Uganda and Uzbekistan. The Delhi summit, virtually presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, expressed

concern over growing tensions in West Asia and called for dialogue, diplomacy and conflict prevention so that the civilian casualties can be reduced. One of the major outcomes included a consensus on comprehensive reforms in the United Nations precisely the UN Security Council with an aim to make the institution more democratic, representative, effective and efficient. Increasing the representation of developing countries in the UNSC membership so that it can adequately respond to prevailing global challenges and support the legitimate aspirations of emerging and developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America, was also insisted. In the presence of UNSC permanent members (China and Russia), the BRICS also agreed that both Brazil and India should play a greater role in the UN including its Security Council.

Ahead of the two-day summit, Modi met with UNSG Guterres, where both the leaders discussed various issues covering global conflicts, sustainable development, human-centric technology, renewable energy, food security, etc. Guterres congratulated India for the BRICS chairship and admitted that the UNSC needs multilateral reform to reflect the contemporary realities on Earth. To mark two decades of the BRICS, two commemorative postage stamps were also released by the member country leaders.

The declaration expressed strong condemnation of any act of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed. The brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam of Jammu & Kashmir on 22 April 2025 (where 26 people were killed and many injured) also got space in the declaration. The leaders agreed that terrorism should not be associated with any religion,

nationality, civilization or ethnic group, and all those involved in terrorist activities must be held accountable and brought to justice in accordance with relevant national and international laws.

The leaders reaffirmed support for Palestine's full membership of the UN citing a two-state solution where sovereign Palestinian can have East Jerusalem as its capital. They opposed forced displacement of Palestinians and condemned violations of international humanitarian law, including attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Highlighting on universal health coverage, tuberculosis research, pandemic preparedness and early-warning systems, the participants endorsed initiatives on healthy lifestyles and mental wellbeing. On technology, they highlighted artificial intelligence (AI), digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity and cooperation on research and innovation. Describing AI as a significant potential tool for economic growth and sustainable development, the leaders stressed on safety, security, inclusiveness and reliability. Climate change also featured prominently, where they called for a stronger international action on climate finance, adaptation and sustainable development.

Expressing concern over the situation with illicit drug production, trafficking and abuse worldwide, the leaders identified it as a serious threat to public security, health safety and well-being of humankind that undermines the sustainable development of different countries. They also welcomed the Guwahati declaration issued by the BRICS heads of anti-drug agencies that facilitates operational and technical cooperation among those responsible agencies. The declaration also covered transport, tourism, anti-corruption efforts, digital connectivity and many other areas of BRICS cooperation.

The declaration also extended full support to Beijing for the 2027 BRICS chairship and 19th summit in China. Bangladesh, neither a member nor partner country, was invited to the BRICS summit as the current chair of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), but Prime Minister Tarique Rahman preferred to reject the opportunity, reasons best known to Dhaka only. Political observers believe it as a lost opportunity for Bangladesh in general and Rahman in particular, because his participation would have helped the poverty-stricken county to highlight many relevant issues in the Global South forum that represents 50% of the world population, 40% of global GDP and over 30% of international trade. On the contrary, the current chair of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Nepal was not invited for the summit, but unlike Dhaka's outburst, Kathmandu remains silent.



SEEMA KARYA

Glimpse of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar activities during September 2026

ACT EAST POLICY: REPORT ON THE BRAINSTORMING SESSION

By Pallavi Das



Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar (SCMP) convened a brainstorming session in Guwahati on 2 September 2026 to develop a practical roadmap for the Northeast under India's Act East Policy. The session brought together senior former military and police officials, government and public representatives, professionals, media and civil-society participants.

The discussion began with the Northeast's strategic geography and its historical and civilisational links with Myanmar and Southeast Asia. Participants noted that the region's security environment, connectivity and economic development are closely interconnected. **Dr. Partha Pratim Das**, Consultant, Assam Tourism, and Former and Founder General Secretary, SCMP, emphasised that the Northeast should use the present period to strengthen its infrastructure, human resources, productive capacity and economic preparedness rather than wait for conditions across the border to normalise.

A central outcome of the session was the 4C framework — Connectivity, Commerce, Capacity Building and Cultural Linkages. Connectivity includes road, rail, air, inland waterways, digital networks and last-mile infrastructure; Commerce covers agriculture, processing, logistics, MSMEs, branding and market access; Capacity Building focuses on skills, AI, languages, education, employment and entrepreneurship; while Cultural

Linkages encompass people-to-people engagement, youth, sports and historical relationships.

Discussions under these areas highlighted the need to align skill development with actual employment through greater industry participation in curricula, internships and placements. Foreign-language training, including Japanese, was discussed as a potential avenue for overseas employment when combined with technical skills. Youth mentoring, university and ITI partnerships, international exposure and sports exchanges were also identified as important areas.

Participants examined opportunities in agriculture and border economies, including value addition and improved marketing of products such as pineapples, oranges, mushrooms and seasonal vegetables. Greater linkages between Northeast enterprises and ASEAN counterparts were explored. Connectivity initiatives including the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and Moreh-Tamu link were discussed alongside tourism, healthcare, medical education, disaster preparedness and flood resilience.

The session was chaired by **Lt Gen (Retd.) Rana Pratap Kalita**, former GOC-in-C, Eastern Army. **Dr. Numal Momin**, former Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative

Assembly, participated in the discussion. The programme was coordinated by **Shri Pradeep Kumar, IPS (Retd.)**, former ADGP, Assam, and **Pallav Bhatt, IPS (Retd.)**, former ADGP. **Kaushik Deka**, Act East Policy Affairs Department, Government of Assam, also participated. **Shri Pradeepan**, National Co-Convener, Seema Jagran Manch, and **Sanjay Aditya Singh**, Executive Member, SCMP were among the key SCMP representatives.

For implementation, Lt Gen (Retd.) Rana Pratap Kalita proposed consideration of a dedicated **Special Purpose Vehicle for Act East**, bringing relevant government agencies, security and border-management bodies, infrastructure institutions and economic stakeholders within a coordinated framework.

The session also identified potential areas for SCMP engagement, including research and knowledge-building, youth and skills, MSME-to-MSME linkages, cultural and people-to-people engagement and grassroots sports. A proposed **"100 MSMEs to 100 MSMEs"** pilot was one concrete initiative discussed. The session concluded with emphasis on translating the discussion into defined actions, responsibilities, timelines and measurable outcomes, with regular review. The objective is to strengthen the Northeast not merely as a transit corridor, but as an active economic, cultural and human bridge between India and Southeast Asia.

2ND ANNUAL MEGHALAYA STATE CONVENTION OF SEEMANTA CHETANA MANCHA PURVOTTAR

By Benton Hajong

The **2nd Annual Meghalaya State Convention of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar**, was held on 5th and 6th September 2026 at Ramakrishna Mission Secondary School, Rudub, Ranikor, South West Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya. The convention brought together

organisational representatives, community leaders, social organisations and members of the public to discuss issues concerning border communities and reinforce the organisation's objectives of unity, development, security and social responsibility.

The inaugural session was graced by **Shri Pius Marwein, Hon'ble MLA of Ranikor**, as Chief Guest, along with distinguished dignitaries, representatives of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar and members of the public. Welcoming the Chief Guest,



dignitaries, delegates and participants, **Shri David Ch. Marak, President, SCMP Meghalaya**, outlined the organisation's objectives and activities, with particular emphasis on creating awareness among people living in border areas and strengthening their sense of unity, responsibility and participation in the development and security of the region.

Shri Gopalakrishnan, National Chief Patron, spoke on the opportunities and challenges faced by communities living along the Bangladesh–India border. He emphasised the importance of awareness, unity and development in strengthening border communities and enabling them to respond effectively to the challenges of

living in frontier areas. Chief Guest **Shri Pius Marwein, Hon'ble MLA**, appreciated the initiative of holding the convention in a border area and expressed support for efforts aimed at strengthening community unity, promoting development and addressing the concerns of people living along the frontier. **Shri Benedict Marak, President, Achik Hajong of All Border Association of Khasi Hills**, extended his support to the activities of SCMP and stressed the importance of cooperation and unity among border communities. **Shri Brallin P. Marwein, In-charge of Maharam Syiemship, Balat to Ranikor**, highlighted the importance of border safety and security, social unity and development in frontier areas.

The convention also featured cultural presentations representing the rich traditions of indigenous communities of the region. The performances added a cultural dimension to the proceedings while highlighting the diversity and shared social bonds of the participating communities. Miss Nirnaya Hajong served as the anchor for the inaugural session, while Shri Suronjon Hajong delivered the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to the Chief Guest, dignitaries, speakers, performers, organisers, volunteers and members of the public. The two-day convention concluded with a renewed emphasis on unity, border security, social harmony and the development and welfare of communities living in the frontier areas of Meghalaya.

OBSERVING WORLD OZONE DAY 2026 AT GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

By Dr Rituparna Bora



Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar, Guwahati Mahanagar, in collaboration with the Department of Bioengineering and Technology, Gauhati University, organised an awareness seminar on “**Indigenous Knowledge from Border Communities and Environmental Conservation for a Sustainable Future**” at Gauhati University on the occasion of World Ozone Day 2026.

The programme brought together academicians, environmental experts, practitioners and students to examine the relevance of indigenous and community-based knowledge to environmental conservation, particularly in the ecologically sensitive border regions of Northeast India. Discussions highlighted traditional approaches to sustainable farming, forest and

wetland conservation, responsible resource use and waste management. A major feature was a panel discussion on the same theme, with **Dr. Eeshankur Saikia**, Professor, Department of Applied Science, Gauhati University; **Er. Nazmeen Rahman**, Assistant Executive Engineer, Assam Pollution Control Board; **Dr. Partha Pratim Das**, Consultant, Assam Tourism Development Corporation; and **Prof. Dhruba Pratim Sarma**, Head, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University.

The discussion examined the relationship between indigenous knowledge, community participation, environmental governance and sustainable development. Dr. Saikia highlighted traditional ecological practices across Northeast India, including sacred

groves and nature worship among Khasi, Jaintia, Dimasa, Bodo and Rabha communities; Community Conserved Areas managed through village institutions in Nagaland; and sustainable Jhum and agroforestry practices. Other examples included Nagaland's Zabo (Ruza) farming system, integrating forested catchments, water harvesting, livestock, paddy and fisheries; Mizoram's bamboo-based livelihoods and circular use of resources; and traditional flood-adaptation practices among the Mishing communities and people of Majuli, including chang ghar, mixed farming, food storage and wetland-based livelihoods. The importance of oral traditions, customary laws, rituals and village institutions in transmitting ecological knowledge was also discussed.



The programme began with a welcome address by **Prof. Subhash Medhi**, Head, Department of Bioengineering and Technology, Gauhati University. **Prof. Utpal Sarma**, Registrar, Gauhati University, delivered the inaugural address, highlighting growing environmental challenges and the need for awareness, preparedness and collective action, including in relation to floods affecting Assam and neighbouring

regions. The keynote address by **Ms. Navaneeta Nath**, Executive, Assam Pollution Control Board, focused on responsible resource use, environmental awareness and the role of the Pollution Control Board.

Shri Pradeepan, All India Co-Coordinator, Seema Jagran Manch, and **Shri Bipul Nath**, President, SCMP, Guwahati Mahanagar,

attended the programme along with academicians, practitioners and students. **Dr. Rituparna Borah** delivered the vote of thanks.

The programme concluded by emphasising that documenting indigenous knowledge and involving local communities can complement contemporary scientific approaches to environmental conservation and sustainable development.

FRONTIER TUITION CENTRES TAKE ROOT ALONG THE INDIA–MYANMAR FRONTIER

(An Educational Support for Students of Indo-Myanmar Frontier)

By **V.S. Sankar**



Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar has launched Frontier Tuition Centres (FTC) in villages along the Indo–Myanmar frontier, bringing basic educational support and developmental opportunities closer to children living in some of the country's most remote border settlements. As part of the pilot initiative, 12 centres are currently functioning in 12 villages of Tirap district, Arunachal Pradesh.

The initiative has been conceived to address the limited availability of educational infrastructure in remote frontier areas. The approximately 1,600 kilometre Indo–Myanmar border passes through rugged and difficult terrain, where many villages continue to face challenges relating to road connectivity, electricity, internet access and other essential infrastructure. In such circumstances, the FTCs seek to provide children with accessible and continuous educational support within their own communities. The programme is based on the principle that education, values and awareness can contribute significantly to the development and resilience of frontier communities. Along with academic assistance, the centres encourage discipline, confidence, personality development, civic awareness and a sense of responsibility towards society and the nation.

Community-Based Learning

The FTCs are designed as low-cost, community-based learning centres rather than formal schools. Depending on local conditions, they operate from community halls, government school buildings or Assam

Rifles civic-action facilities. Local youth volunteers form the backbone of the initiative, with support and guidance from retired teachers and other experienced community members.

The centres generally function six days a week, combining school-syllabus support with additional learning and developmental activities. Special attention is given to English and mathematics, along with spoken English, personality development and physical exercise. Dedicated sessions also focus on civic and cultural awareness, sports and community service.

The initiative extends beyond classroom learning. Students are provided with exposure to various opportunities, helping them understand educational and career pathways beyond their immediate surroundings. The program also seeks to identify talented students, particularly from economically disadvantaged frontier families, and encourage them to pursue higher education and professional opportunities.

Education and Frontier Resilience

The FTC initiative recognises that educational deprivation and geographical isolation can contribute to school dropouts and restrict opportunities for young people. By creating accessible learning spaces within villages, the centres aim to keep children connected with education while nurturing their aspirations and confidence.

The programme also has a wider community objective. Sustained educational

engagement, awareness and constructive activities can strengthen the social resilience of frontier communities and help reduce the vulnerability of young people to drug abuse, trafficking, smuggling and insurgent recruitment. Thus, the FTC model views education not merely as academic support, but as an important component of community development, empowerment and frontier resilience.

Expanding Across the India–Myanmar Frontier

Following the pilot initiative in Tirap district, plans are underway to expand the FTC network to other villages along the India–Myanmar border. The programme is envisaged to extend across the four-frontier states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, with locations being identified for establishing additional centres. Each centre is being provided with essential learning materials and basic infrastructure, including solar lighting where required. The emphasis remains on developing simple, sustainable and locally managed learning spaces that can function effectively even in areas with limited infrastructure.

For children living in India's remote frontier villages, the Frontier Tuition Centres represent an effort to bring education, opportunity and aspiration closer to home. By strengthening learning at the grassroots level, the initiative seeks to contribute to a more educated, confident and resilient generation in the communities along the India–Myanmar frontier.



FRONTIER AFFAIRS

Monthly digest of important developments relating to India's frontiers and security

India–China Hold First Corps Commander-Level Meeting in Eastern Sector

India and China held their first Corps Commander-level meeting in the eastern sector on September 6–7, with talks taking place at Vacha on the Indian side and Damai on the Chinese side. The meeting represents a significant continuation of military-level engagement along the Arunachal Pradesh sector following efforts to maintain stability along the Line of Actual Control. The two sides have continued using established diplomatic and military mechanisms to manage differences and maintain peace and tranquillity in border areas. The military engagement was followed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit on September 12, where the two leaders reviewed bilateral relations and the boundary question. Together, the developments indicate that India–China engagement is proceeding simultaneously through military, diplomatic and political channels.

China–Pakistan Boundary Mechanism Draws India's Objection

Pakistan and China operationalised a Boundary Joint Commission at their inaugural meeting in Islamabad on September 16, discussing border management, joint surveys, trade flows and people-to-people connectivity. India objected to the mechanism, reiterating that it does not recognise the 1963 China–Pakistan Boundary Agreement and maintains that Pakistan cannot enter arrangements concerning Indian territory under its occupation. The development adds another layer to the territorial and strategic questions surrounding the India–China–Pakistan frontier.

Nepal Turns to India for Power After Flood Damage

Severe flooding in Nepal affected infrastructure and electricity generation capacity. Following damage to hydropower infrastructure, India approved electricity exports to Nepal for 18 hours a day from September 13 to December 31, 2026. Up to 600 MW can be supplied through the Muzaffarpur–Dhalkebar 400-kV line and another 54 MW through the Tanakpur–Mahendranagar line. The arrangement adds an important energy dimension to the India–Nepal frontier relationship and demonstrates the strategic value of cross-border power infrastructure during emergencies.

India–Bhutan Partnership Expands Beyond Hydropower

External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar visited Bhutan from September 16–18 and reviewed bilateral cooperation with the country's leadership. India handed over 54 electric vehicles, launched UPI for Bhutanese using the system in India and inaugurated the 65-bed Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital in Mongar. India also

transferred 43 Jersey cows to Bhutan's National Cattle Breeding Centre. The developments illustrate the broadening of India–Bhutan cooperation into healthcare, digital payments, mobility and agriculture alongside established energy and connectivity links.

Major Methamphetamine Haul Intercepted in the Northeast

The Northeast's vulnerability to transnational narcotics trafficking was highlighted by one of the region's largest recent methamphetamine seizures. On September 15, DRI, assisted by Assam Rifles, intercepted four suspected trucks in coordinated operations across Assam and Tripura. More than 231 kg of suspected methamphetamine tablets were seized and three people arrested. The seizures followed the 76-kg recovery reported in Assam and Mizoram in August, indicating continued attempts to move narcotics through commercial transport and reinforcing the importance of intelligence-led enforcement along the Northeast's Myanmar-linked frontier.

Myanmar Route Emerges Again in Northeast Smuggling Crackdown

A separate DRI crackdown has highlighted the wider scale of cross-border smuggling along the India–Myanmar frontier. On September 23–24, DRI, with Customs, Assam Rifles and Mizoram Police, seized 1,25,680 kg of foreign-origin areca nuts and 25,440 kg of poppy seeds from premises near Champhai, about 20 km from the Myanmar border. Another 16,257 kg of foreign-origin poppy seeds was seized near Lailapur, Assam. The combined seizures were valued at about ₹20.31 crore and four people were arrested. DRI said preliminary investigation indicated that the goods had been smuggled from Myanmar.

Cross-Border Gold Smuggling Networks Hit Along Bangladesh Route

The India–Bangladesh frontier has remained a major focus of operations against organised gold smuggling. In September, DRI and BSF recovered around 12 kg of foreign-origin gold valued at approximately ₹17 crore in several operations linked to the Bangladesh route. Separately, DRI reported around 21 kg of foreign-origin gold worth more than ₹61 crore seized across seven operations. The cases illustrate how cross-border gold networks can combine border infiltration with road, rail and other transport channels to move contraband deeper into India.

India–Sri Lanka Defence Partnership Deepens Across Land and Sea

India and Sri Lanka expanded defence cooperation through both institutional exchanges and maritime activity in September. During Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit, the two sides advanced cooperation involving defence education and training, NCC linkages, infrastructure assistance and maritime security. The 13th

edition of SLINEX-26 followed at Visakhapatnam from September 17–21, with Indian and Sri Lankan naval ships conducting harbour and sea-phase activities. The combination of bilateral defence cooperation and naval interoperability reinforces the maritime-security dimension of India's relationship with its southern neighbour.

Colombo Security Conclave Tests Joint Maritime Response

The Colombo Security Conclave conducted a three-day Table Top Exercise at Visakhapatnam from September 9–11 focused on coordinated responses to illicit maritime activity. Participants worked through scenarios involving maritime terrorism, narcotics smuggling, human trafficking and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. They also reviewed Standard Operating Procedures and information-sharing mechanisms intended to strengthen Maritime Domain Awareness. The exercise illustrates an effort to develop regional maritime cooperation beyond bilateral naval drills, particularly through information sharing and coordinated responses to non-traditional security threats.

India Expands Maritime and Defence Engagement Across the Indo-Pacific

India's maritime engagement in the Indo-Pacific broadened through naval and coast-guard activities in September. INS Sahyadri and Kulish participated in the ADMM-Plus Maritime Security Joint Cooperation Activity at Subic Bay, while Indian Coast Guard ship Shaunak departed Chennai on September 25 for Perth as part of the first QUAD-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission. Six officers from India, Japan, Australia and the United States embarked on Shaunak for shipboard activities and professional exchanges. The developments add operational and coast-guard dimensions to India's expanding engagement with Indo-Pacific partners.

India and Japan Deepen Air Defence Cooperation

The Indian Air Force and Japan Air Self-Defense Force conducted Exercise Veer Guardian 2026 in September, strengthening bilateral air-combat cooperation and operational interoperability. The exercise at Jodhpur involved Indian and Japanese fighter aircraft and advanced flying and air-combat activities. Veer Guardian complements the two countries' wider maritime, technological and strategic cooperation, while providing both air forces an opportunity to exchange operational practices and develop familiarity with procedures in a complex security environment.

India–France Maritime Partnership Moves Into Its 24th Varuna

Indian Navy's INS Trishul arrived at Toulon, France, on September 24 for the 24th edition of the bilateral maritime exercise Varuna.



The exercise provides a recurring platform for operational cooperation between the Indian and French navies, including coordinated maritime activity, communications and tactical interaction. France's maritime presence in the Indian Ocean and its wider Indo-Pacific role give the partnership direct relevance to India's maritime-security interests. Varuna remains an important component of India's sustained defence engagement with a European Indo-Pacific partner.

India Sets a Ten-Year Defence Diplomacy Roadmap as Acquisition Accelerates

India's new ten-year RAKSHA defence-diplomacy framework seeks to structure strategic partnerships, capacity building, exercises, training and wider international defence cooperation. Alongside the roadmap, the Defence Acquisition Council accorded Acceptance of Necessity to proposals worth about ₹1.10 lakh crore. On September 23, the Ministry of Defence also signed an ₹810.79-crore contract with Bharat Dynamics Limited for 160 indigenous Satellite Smart Anti-Airfield Weapons for the IAF. The developments link India's external defence partnerships with a parallel push for domestic capability and procurement.

India Reviews Civil-Military Preparedness for an Expanding Security Environment

The five-day CORE 2026 programme, held from September 14–18, brought senior officers from the three Services together with officials from the Ministries of Defence, External Affairs and Home Affairs. Discussions covered contemporary conflicts, modern warfare, non-kinetic security, defence production and emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, robotics and quantum computing. Strategic communication, cognitive warfare and counter-disinformation were also examined. The programme reflects the widening scope of national-security planning beyond conventional military operations and the increasing emphasis on jointness and civil-military understanding.

India Adapts Training for a New Era of Multi-Domain Warfare

India's September exercise calendar increasingly reflected the changing character of warfare. Yudh Abhyas 2026 with the United States focused on high-altitude and joint operational training, while IAF's Dronathon examined unmanned systems and associated technologies under realistic conditions. The launch of multinational Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026 at Jodhpur on September 26 added a broader air-power component. Running until October 12, Tarang Shakti brings India together with seven participating foreign air forces—Australia, the United States, France, Germany, the UAE, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh—for advanced joint training and operational exchange.

India–Mongolia Exercise Brings Mountain Warfare and Counter-Drone Training to the Fore

The 18th edition of Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT began at Pithoragarh on

September 21 and runs until October 3, with 45 personnel from each side. The India–Mongolia exercise focuses on counter-insurgency operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain under a UN mandate. Training includes special heliborne operations, cyber-security activities and the employment of drones and counter-drone systems. Conducted in a Himalayan training environment, the exercise adds a distinct mountain-warfare dimension to India's growing network of defence cooperation.

India–Kazakhstan Exercise Tests Joint Counter-Terrorism and Drone Operations

A 60-member Indian Armed Forces contingent departed for Oskemen, Kazakhstan, on September 28 for the ninth KAZIND exercise, running from September 28 to October 11. The exercise focuses on joint counter-terrorism operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain under a UN mandate. Training includes joint planning, air mobility and integrated employment of unmanned aerial systems and counter-UAS capabilities. KAZIND adds a Central Asian dimension to India's military engagement while providing another setting for Indian forces to practise joint operations in varied terrain.

India Begins Building Next Generation Missile Vessels

The Indian Navy's next-generation missile-vessel programme moved forward with the keel laying of the first vessel at Cochin Shipyard in September, following steel cutting for the second vessel. The programme is intended to provide compact, heavily armed surface combatants equipped with modern weapons and sensors. The vessels are being built with a substantial indigenous component and form part of the Navy's broader effort to expand locally designed and constructed combat capacity. The programme also underlines the continuing importance of shipbuilding to India's maritime-security and defence-industrial objectives.

India–Russia Defence Ties Receive Fresh Military-Level Push

Chief of Army Staff General Dhiraj Seth's September 16–18 visit to Russia included discussions on military-to-military cooperation, professional military education and training, contemporary military developments, defence industry and procurement. The visit also included interaction with Russian military institutions. As India diversifies defence partnerships and expands indigenous production, the continuing military relationship with Russia remains an important component of India's broader defence-equipment and strategic-engagement landscape.

India and Vietnam Deepen Maritime and Defence Cooperation

India and Vietnam continued to expand defence cooperation in September through discussions between their defence establishments covering technology sharing, defence-industrial cooperation and maritime security. The two sides also reviewed cooperation through ASEAN-led

mechanisms and the ADMM-Plus framework. Vietnam's position along critical South China Sea sea lanes gives maritime cooperation particular relevance to India's wider Act East and Indo-Pacific engagement. The relationship adds another Southeast Asian dimension to India's growing network of defence partnerships and maritime-security interactions.

India–Bangladesh Relations: A Difficult Reset Takes Shape

India–Bangladesh relations continued to undergo adjustment in September, with the two sides managing security, political and economic concerns alongside the longstanding importance of their shared frontier. Border management, cross-border crime, trade and connectivity remain areas where practical cooperation is important. Recent enforcement operations involving gold and other contraband have also highlighted the continuing security dimension of the frontier. The relationship remains significant not only for bilateral ties but also for the stability and connectivity of India's Northeast, where Bangladesh provides India's most extensive land and transit interface with the Bay of Bengal.

India–South Korea Deepen Defence-Industry and Logistics Cooperation

India and South Korea held their 10th Joint Committee Meeting on Defence Industries and Logistics Cooperation in New Delhi on September 29. The two sides reviewed defence-industrial cooperation and discussed greater engagement in defence production and logistics, with major companies including L&T, BEML, Hanwha Aerospace, Korea Aerospace Industries and Hanwha Systems represented.

Indian Coast Guard Intercepts ₹3,000 Crore Maritime Narcotics Consignment

On September 25, the Indian Coast Guard, in coordination with Gujarat ATS, intercepted an Iranian dhow in the Arabian Sea west of Lakshadweep following intelligence-led sea-air surveillance and tracking. Around 526 kg of narcotics, including heroin and methamphetamine, valued at over ₹3,000 crore, were seized and five Pakistani nationals apprehended. The operation highlights the growing importance of maritime surveillance in disrupting transnational narcotics networks operating through India's wider maritime approaches.

Senior LeT Commander Neutralised in Jammu & Kashmir

Security forces neutralised senior Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Musa alias Asif Fauji in an intelligence-led joint operation at Gurwatkalan in Budgam district on September 30. The Ministry of Home Affairs said Musa was the fourth senior LeT commander operating in Jammu & Kashmir since 2022 to be neutralised. The operation was part of the continuing Operation Sheruwalli and involved coordination between the Jammu & Kashmir Police, Army and Central Armed Police Forces.



The Frontier We Are Building

On a map, a frontier is a thin line. Somebody drew it carefully, and it looks tidy and final. Go and stand in a border village early in the morning, though, and you will struggle to find it. What you see is a paddy field that somebody's grandfather cleared, the road the children walk to school, a river the families have fished for generations, a namghar or a small shrine, a weekly market. Nobody there thinks of the place as the end of Bharat. For them, this is where Bharat starts.

The Frontier Insights was started on that idea. Too often the border is discussed as if it were a matter for soldiers and strategists alone. It is just as much the business of the farmer, the trader, the schoolteacher, and the young graduate in Tawang or Moreh who is trying to decide whether to stay or to leave. We want to write about Bharat's frontiers in terms those people would recognise.

A lot has changed on the frontier in a short time. Drones and sensors now watch stretches of border that foot patrols could never cover properly. The world around us is far less settled than it was even five years ago. The change I notice most, though, is in what people living near the border expect. Safety still comes first for them. But they also ask about roads, jobs, a decent school, a hospital with a doctor in it, and some reason to believe their children can build a life at home instead of in Delhi or Bengaluru. I don't think security and development can be kept in two separate files any more. A border area that stays poor will not stay secure for long, and money poured into a frontier that nobody is watching is money wasted. The Northeast shows this better than

anywhere else. Almost all of the region's boundary is an international border, shared with five countries, and the whole region is joined to the rest of India by the Siliguri corridor, roughly twenty kilometres wide at its narrowest.

For decades the Northeast was called India's "far corner". We have always disliked that phrase. Look at the map from Guwahati rather than from Delhi and the region sits at the front, facing Myanmar, Bangladesh and the markets of Southeast Asia beyond them. That is the logic of the Act East Policy. Highways, rail lines and airports are part of it, and they matter. But trade only grows when people have skills to offer and partners they trust across the border. This is why the Government's 4Cs approach (Connectivity, Commerce, Capacity Building and Cultural Linkages) makes sense to me. The real test is whether it shows up in the life of an ordinary family in Mizoram or Meghalaya, and not just in a policy document.

We should also remember the people who held this frontier together long before any of today's plans existed. Soldiers, of course, but also village headmen, police constables, teachers posted to schools were reached by walking one full day from the nearest town, and farmers who refused to move out of frontier villages and most of them were never properly thanked by our countryman or my government. We at Frontier Insights will keep telling their stories in our pages day after day, month after month, because our Bharat Citizens ought to know who carried it through the hard years.

Some subjects are harder to write about. Demographic change in the border districts is one

of them. It is a real concern and people feel strongly about it. Heritage belongs in this conversation too. Take Balpakram in the South Garo Hills of Meghalaya. Visitors come to see the canyon and the cliffs, but for the Garo people it is also a place of their fond memory and belief, bound up with how they understand their land and their ancestors.

Our pages of October issue has look further out: the Indo-Pacific, India's relations with the major powers, defence cooperation, new technology. These may seem a long way from a village in the Garo Hills. They are not. How India manages its own borders shapes how seriously the rest of the world takes it.

That is what we are trying to do at The Frontier Insights. We report the frontier stories, but we also want to make room for argument, ask the awkward questions, and publish voices from the region that rarely reach a national audience. Above all, we want our readers to see the Northeast and our other frontiers as places of real opportunity, and not only as problem areas.

*The Bharat we are building will be judged by how well it guards its borders, and just as much by how well it treats the people who live along them. A frontier should be where development begins, not where it stops. **Bharat Mata Ki Jai***

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FRONTIER INSIGHTS



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