

Steps to ensure free and fair polls



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Chief Election Commissioner V S Sampath reiterated zero tolerance to ensure sanctity of polls.

Addressing a press conference, chief election commissioner VS Sampath said that neutrality must be maintained by the polling staff.

“We will strictly monitor the implementation of the model code of conduct and expenditure rules by a candidate.

He said that pollings would take place from 7 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon in all polling booths having basic facilities.

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Shyntor Festival to return to Shyntorbulia in December



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NONGPOH, September 18, 2026 — The second edition of the Shyntor Festival will be held from December 10 to 12 at Shyntorbulia village in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district, with organisers seeking to use the three-day event to draw attention to the village's long-pending development needs.

The announcement was made at a press conference in Nongpoh on Friday by the Rongjeng Welfare Foundation (RWF) and the Dorbar Shnong of Shyntorbulia. The festival was first held in December 2025.

Located about 30 km from the Ri-Bhoi district headquarters at Nongpoh, Shyntorbulia falls under the Nongpoh constituency and has around 63 households with a population of more than 400. The village is situated at the confluence of the Umsha and Umsiang rivers, with a waterfall nearby, giving it considerable potential for tourism, according to the organisers.

However, the village continues to face basic infrastructure challenges. There is no proper paved road connecting Shyntorbulia with the outside world, while crossing the Umsha and Umsiang rivers becomes difficult during the monsoon. The existing vehicle bridge, built largely with wooden logs, is also considered unsafe when the rivers rise.

The village also requires improved education infrastructure, roads and footpaths and a reliable drinking water supply. Organisers said the festival is intended not only to showcase the village's cultural and natural attractions but also to generate sustained attention and support for these development needs.

The three-day festival will feature music, dance, sports, food and handicrafts, with live performances by local and international artists, DJ nights, a football tournament and other sporting activities. Traditional music and dance performances from the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia communities will also form part of the programme.

An art and craft market showcasing local weaving and traditional cooking will be among the attractions. Visitors will also be able to sample regional cuisine. Guests planning to stay overnight have been encouraged to bring their own tents.

Rongjeng Welfare Foundation Director Babul Gogoi, Event Production Lead Ranjan Bhattacharjee, Shyntorbulia Headman Rowel Maphniang and Secretary Slembor Laloo said the festival would also serve as a platform to bring the village's infrastructure concerns directly to the attention of the government.

"Last year's festival showed us what this village and this community can do. This year, we're building on that — more artists, more days, and more support behind it. But the festival was never the whole point," Babul Gogoi said.

He said the organisers wanted sustained attention towards a road that remains usable during the monsoon, a safer river crossing, functioning educational facilities and reliable drinking water, adding that the issues should not be "mentioned once and forgotten."

Shyntorbulia Headman Rowel Maphniang said the village was ready to welcome visitors from Meghalaya, other parts of India and abroad.

"Our village sits where two rivers meet, next to the waterfall. We are proud to open our home to visitors from Meghalaya, from across the country, and from around the world," Maphniang said.

The 2026 edition is being organised with support from the district administration, while India Tourism has confirmed support for the event, including promotion through its channels.

The Rongjeng Welfare Foundation is a Section 8 non-profit organisation working on development initiatives in Shyntorbulia and the wider Ri-Bhoi district, including education, health, infrastructure and community welfare.

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