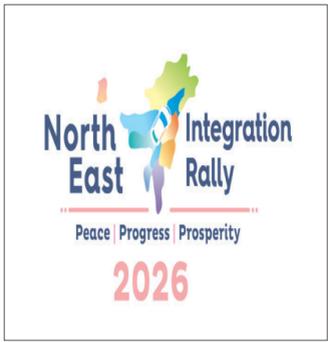




# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED



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### PERSPECTIVE

**@assampolice has issued Look Out Notices against Shyam Kanu Mahanta and Siddharth Sharma. They will not be able to exit India via any airport, sea port or land border. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma**

### Female convicts only 6% of Tripura's prison population

**AGARTALA**  
Female convicts make up only 6.29 per cent of Tripura's total prison population, the state government informed the Assembly during its recently concluded session.

Replying to an unstarred question by CPI(M) MLA Nirmal Biswas, the Minister in-charge of jails said that as of September 15, 2025, there were 35 female convicts across the state's 12 functional jails.

Of these, 27 are serving rigorous imprisonment, while eight are undergoing simple imprisonment.

The total number of convicted prisoners in Tripura stands at 556, indicating that women constitute a small fraction. The overall prison population is 1,622, highlighting that the majority are under-trial prisoners.

Tripura currently has 13 jails, though the Sabroom sub-jail remains non-functional. The Central Correctional Home in Bishalgarh houses the largest number of inmates, with 756 prisoners, while Amarpur sub-jail has the fewest. Among the six sub-jails with less than 100 inmates, Sonamura sub-jail accommodates the most at 124 prisoners, with the remaining five facilities having slightly over 100 each.

On a separate query by Congress MLA Gopal Chandra Roy regarding staff strength, the minister revealed that 438 sanctioned posts remain vacant across the state's jails. Recruitment processes are underway for 249 male and 14 female prison guards, along with 16 senior computer assistants, while the Tripura Public Service Commission is tasked with hiring four pharmacists for correctional facilities.

### WHO SAID WHAT

**On this World Tourism Day, let us celebrate Manipur, a land of natural beauty, vibrant culture, and resilient people. Tourism is not just about travel, it's about connection. Let us promote our rich heritage, support local communities, and protect our environment for future generations. Together, we can make Manipur a shining example of sustainable and inclusive tourism. - N. Biren Singh, Former CM, Manipur**

## Don't vote for us in 2026 if we can't give justice to Zubeen: Himanta Biswa Sarma

**GUWAHATI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on September 27 made an emotional yet firm appeal to the people of the state, assuring that justice will be delivered in the case of singer Zubeen Garg's mysterious death in Singapore.

Speaking during a live interaction, the Chief Minister said, "The day I will fail to give justice to Zubeen, the public can punish me. If we cannot give justice to Zubeen, why would people vote for us in 2026? That is a fact we must all accept."

Sarma recalled that six years ago he had warned that certain individuals around Zubeen were misleading and misguiding him.

Expressing his deep personal bond with the late singer, the Chief Minister said he considered Zubeen a "national treasure" on the same pedestal as cultural icons Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, and Bhupen Hazarika. He also remembered how Zubeen had composed a music video of songs written by his late father, Kailash Nath Sharma, which had received widespread ap-



preciation.

Highlighting his personal admiration for Zubeen, Sarma said, "I have never considered myself any less of a fan of Zubeen Garg. In fact, Himanta Biswa Sarma is a fan of Zubeen Garg." He recalled his efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic to facilitate Zubeen's treatment by creating a green corridor from Dibrugarh to Mumbai.

On the ongoing investigation, the Chief Minister confirmed that a Look

Out Notice has been issued against Siddharth Sharma and Shyamkanu Mahanta. He also revealed that eight Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) based in Singapore, believed to have links to the case, have been directed to appear before the CID office in Assam for questioning.

Issuing a stern warning, Sarma said, "We want Shyamkanu Mahanta and Siddharth Sharma in Assam on the 6th of October. By doing Facebook Lives and sending out a few letters, you will not be able to escape the people. If you are innocent, then go and make it clear in the court of law. Do not try and play with the patience of the people."

The state government has already banned Shyamkanu Mahanta and organisations associated with him from holding any cultural or public events in Assam. Sarma assured that the law would take its own course and that the people of Assam would see justice delivered in Zubeen's case.

Zubeen Garg, one of Assam's most beloved cultural icons, passed away earlier this month in Singapore, triggering widespread grief and demands for a thorough probe.

## Zubeen Garg's biography to be part of school curriculum across 14 languages

**GUWAHATI**

In a historic decision honouring Assam's legendary singer Zubeen Garg, the Assam Vidyaloi Siksha Parisad has announced that the biography of the late music icon will be included in the school curriculum. The declaration was made at Garg's residence in Kahilipara, marking a significant step in introducing students to the life and legacy of one of Assam's greatest cultural ambassadors.

The biography will feature in the Modern Indian Languages (MIL) syllabus across 14 major Indian languages, enabling young learners from Assam and across the country to engage with Garg's extraordinary journey, his artistic contributions, and his enduring philosophy of humanity.

Meanwhile, Gauhati University has also paid tribute to the artist by deciding to rename its Centre for Performing Arts and Culture after him. The decision, formally confirmed on September 26, 2025, seeks to celebrate Garg's lasting impact on Assam's cultural identity.

As part of this initiative, the university will install a statue of Zubeen Garg at the centre's



entrance, ensuring his presence continues to inspire students and visiting artists. A coffee table book chronicling his musical journey and achievements will also be published.

To further honour his memory, Gauhati University will introduce a new category titled "Zubeen's Songs" in its inter-college youth festival. The move aims to encourage emerging talent to perform his timeless music and carry forward his artistic spirit.

## Nearly 100 vehicles stranded on NH-102 as Manipur drivers launch strike



**IMPHAL**

Nearly 100 vehicles, including goods-laden trucks and LPG tankers, remain stranded along National Highway 102, connecting Manipur and Nagaland, as drivers continue an indefinite strike for the second consecutive day on Saturday.

The protest, organised by the Manipur Drivers' Association (MDA), comes in response to the alleged assault of truck driver Ashepri David by personnel of the Sapermeina police

station. The MDA is demanding immediate action and suspension of the officers involved.

According to reports, the incident took place around 7:30 am on Friday near the Sapermeina police check gate.

Ashepri David, a resident of Tungjoy village in Senapati, was returning from Imphal after loading goods when he was reportedly beaten by three police personnel in front of the Officer-in-Charge over a dispute regarding an entry fee. The OC allegedly did not intervene.

MDA General Secretary Sanjoy Kshetrimayum condemned the police action, stating that no dialogue with the government would take place until the personnel are suspended. He also appealed to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police to step in, highlighting concerns over alleged routine extortion at police check posts, with loaded trucks being asked for Rs 200 and empty ones Rs 50.

The Senapati District Truck Owners' Association (SDTOA) and Senapati District Truck Drivers Union (SDTDU) alleged that the driver was kicked and punched before being taken into police custody, prompting widespread outrage among drivers in the region.

## Himanta links Zubeen tragedy to BTC polls results, SIT report on Gaurav Gogoi to be discussed on Oct 4

**GUWAHATI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that the BJP's performance in the recent elections was impacted by the state government's decision to prioritise the tragic death of singer Zubeen Garg over political campaigning.

"Had the unfortunate incident with our beloved Zubeen Garg not occurred, the scenario might have been very different. We refrained from any election-related outreach during the last three days to prioritise the matter over politics. Otherwise, we would have secured victory in at least 10 to 11 seats," Sarma said.

Himanta Biswa Sarma also said that the NDA will form the next council in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) despite the BJP facing a "big setback" after it had to cancel its campaign three days before the September 22 polls due to the death of singer Zubeen Garg.

The BJP, which contested the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls independently for the first time, had to cancel its campaign three days before the polls



due to Garg's death, the CM said on the sidelines of a programme here. "The cancellation of the campaign three days before the polls was a big setback. This may adversely impact our performance, but I am not worried as an NDA partner will form the council," Sarma claimed.

The Chief Minister also launched a scathing attack on the Congress, reiterating that the leader the party is backing is "nothing but a Pakistani agent." He added that once the Spe-

cial Investigation Team (SIT) report on Congress leader and MP Gaurav Gogoi is tabled later this month, "everyone will clearly understand who Congress has chosen as their leader."

Sarma said the SIT report will be discussed in the state cabinet on October 4, after which further steps will be taken. "The people have already realized that this person is a traitor to our nation. That is why they managed to secure only 100-200 votes," he asserted.

## Meghalaya, ex-militants revisit 2014 peace pact: 11 years on, key commitments still pending

**SHILLONG**

The Meghalaya government on September 26 held a high-level review meeting with former leaders of the disbanded Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC) and its breakaway faction ANVC-B to assess the implementation of the tripartite peace accord signed in 2014 with the state and central governments.

Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong chaired the meeting, which was attended by the chief secretary, the DGP, and senior officials from key departments.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Tynsong said that significant progress had been made in implementing the accord. "We had a detailed discussion on the peace agreement signed in 2014. I must say around 50 to 60 per cent of the commitments have already been fulfilled," he said.



According to him, while several provisions have been completed and some are under various stages of implementation, a few remain pending due to legal and constitutional

hurdles. "There are certain issues that we cannot take a final decision on until the 125th Amendment to the Constitution is passed by both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Those points

were not discussed in detail today," he noted.

The 125th Amendment Bill seeks to expand financial, executive, and administrative powers of tribal autonomous councils functioning under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

During the meeting, progress in development works in the Garo Hills region, including road projects, forest conservation, and initiatives under the Arts and Culture Department such as libraries, auditoriums, and cultural centres, came up for review.

On rehabilitation, Tynsong said the surrender and resettlement packages for members of both ANVC and ANVC-B have already been delivered. "That part of the agreement is more or less complete," he stated.

Responding to logistical concerns raised by the former ANVC leaders, the government has agreed to

appoint a dedicated nodal officer to improve coordination. "They requested us to appoint a nodal officer to coordinate with various departments, as it's difficult for them to travel from Garo Hills to Shillong frequently. We have decided that one officer will be appointed under the supervision of the development commissioner," Tynsong said.

He added that the officer would serve as the key link between the ANVC groups, the state government, district councils, and relevant departments.

Describing the talks as "very constructive," the deputy chief minister reaffirmed the state government's commitment to implementing the accord in full. "We will closely monitor the remaining issues and ensure that the provisions of the peace accord are fully complied with," he said.

## CID summons Nishita Goswami, Shekhar Goswami and Amritprabha in connection with Zubeen Garg death probe



**GUWAHATI**

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has intensified its probe into the untimely death of Assam's music legend Zubeen Garg, summoning actress Nishita Goswami and singer Amritprabha Mahanta and musician Shekhar Goswami for questioning at its headquarters in Guwahati at 11 am today, September 27.

Reports confirmed that the three have been called in to provide crucial details regarding the circumstances sur-

rounding Zubeen's trip to Singapore and the tragic incident that followed.

Nishita Goswami, notably, had also travelled to Singapore to participate in the North East India Festival (NEIF), the same cultural event Zubeen attended before his sudden demise. Meanwhile, Shekhar Goswami—earlier detained and later released by Assam Police—has been directed to appear once again for further interrogation.

The festival was organised by cultural entrepreneur Shyamkanu Mahanta, whose role has come under heavy scrutiny following the tragedy. Growing public outrage has fueled allegations that Zubeen was not adequately cared for during the Singapore trip. Fans and well-wishers across Assam allege that cultural organisers, including Mahanta and Zubeen's manager Siddharth Sharma, placed profit above the singer's health and well-being.

In response to widespread anger, the Assam government has already barred Mahanta from organising cultural programmes in the state.



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## DEALING WITH SENSITIVE LADAKH

**A** day after violence in Ladakh, the government dispatched a special envoy to the region, while a team of six negotiators including three each from Leh and Kargil flew to Delhi for talks. Thupstan Chhewang, the Chairman of the Leh Apex Body (LAB), stated, 'An official of the Centre has come and the signal we are getting is that they are ready to start the talks immediately.' The government intent is to send a message that violence will not stall talks as Wangchuk had desired and the government is serious in addressing genuine demands of the people.

Sonam Wangchuk, the face behind the protests in Ladakh, had in July this year edged out Chhewang from the Chairmanship of the LAB, in a similar manner as Kejriwal edged out Anna Hazare, after exploiting his hunger protests to form his own political party as against the wishes of an apolitical Hazare. Chhewang, similarly apolitical as Hazare, had mentioned that his reason for resigning was to stay away from 'electoral politics and partisan affiliations.'

Simultaneously, the government is acting against Wangchuk and others behind the protests. The cause of protests is claimed to be delay in grant of statehood and the sixth schedule, which are subjects already under discussion in ongoing talks between the centre, LAB and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA). Most other issues have already been addressed. Simultaneously, there was no violence in Kargil, except a silent bandh to support Leh protests.

Both the LAB and KDA were once adversaries but have now joined hands to discuss aspects pertaining to Ladakh. This itself is an indicator that these subjects merit attention. The government by engaging with both parties is sending the message that it does not favour one versus the other. It will also keep Sonam Wangchuk away from being the person who pushed the centre into accepting the demands.

The government, in retaliation to the violence has begun cracking down on foreign funding and those who instigated the violence. As a first step it has cancelled the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence for Wangchuk's Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh. Another Wangchuk establishment, the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh, is facing a CBI enquiry for alleged FCRA irregularities. The message being given by the government is that it suspects foreign funding was behind the protests.

Instigating violence is a means of displaying power and this is exactly what Wangchuk has been doing, aiming to project a larger-than-life image of himself. Further, display of power shifts media attention away from investigations into corruption within institutions established by Wangchuk. Politically, as is the norm, opposition parties, including those in J and K displayed solidarity with the protestors and blamed the government for not acting.

Ladakh has always been a peaceful region and there have been no protests for over 70 years despite J and K governments ignoring development in the region. Ladakhi soldiers have earned repute for their courage in various operations in the region. The people of the region have always stood by India in all conflicts. For Ladakh to implode there has to be a major cause or its people instigated. Speeches by Wangchuk and a few of his close allies have been provocative and threatening the Indian government.

The sensitivity of Ladakh is well known. It is a region which borders two major adversaries, both of whom would willingly support violence. The impact on national security is immense. Security forces and local residents have a close understanding. They have assisted one another whenever the need arises. Hence, the government jumped in to discuss their grievances.

New Delhi cannot accept terms and conditions as demanded by Wangchuk blindly. The demands, including statehood and inclusion into the sixth schedule will have to be modified to meet conditions prevailing in Ladakh as also those of governance. Hence the need for dialogue.

The sixth schedule was designed for North Eastern states. It cannot be implemented for Ladakh in its current form. The government, constructing roads and other infrastructure for defence, needs to control environmental clearances rather than being held hostage to power of tribal bodies.

Similarly, unless J and K is given statehood, Ladakh cannot be granted. Also, there are other options as currently with J and K. Rushing is never a solution. This is well known to those behind the protests. It appears the aim is to blame and pressurize the government into acting while giving credit to Wangchuk.

At the same time the government must understand that it needs to meet aspirations of people of the region. It cannot continue talks for eternity. It must ignore those who seek a greater role in dialogue by displaying their power to instigate violence, like Sonam Wangchuk and interact with saner voices such as Chhewang. It is a welcome step that members of both LAB and KDA have moved to Delhi for talks as also that the government has sent interlocutors to the region.

While acting against the instigators and those involved in violent protests, the innocent must not be prosecuted as it would only add to anger. Investigating foreign hands in funding institutions in sensitive Ladakh needs to be done. The region needs peace and stability as its economy depends on tourism which is the first to suffer when violence breaks out. Ladakhis are our people and must be treated as such.

It is hoped that the violence which erupted remains a one-off incident and peace prevails in the future. Members of the KDA and LAB must send out a message of patience as also of the government's intent in finding a solution.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

I am convinced that the only people worthy of consideration in this world are the unusual ones. For the common folk are like the leaves of a tree, and live and die unnoticed. - L. Frank Baum

# TRUMP'S VISA FEE HIKE BRAIN DRAIN AND INDIA'S TALENT IMPERATIVE



PROF D MUKHERJEE

In September 2025, the Trump administration introduced a \$100,000 annual H-1B fee per worker, a major increase over previous costs of a few thousand dollars. Indians, who constitute the largest H-1B group—78% of 265,777 visas in FY2023 and over 70% in recent years—have relied on this program to migrate as engineers, IT specialists, scientists, and healthcare workers. The H-1B system has supported U.S. innovation, wages, and Indian remittances and knowledge transfer. The new fee may deter or block many prospective migrants and their employers, potentially altering established migration flows.

Trump's policy under 'Make America Great Again' aims to protect U.S. workers by limiting reliance on foreign talent through higher visa fees and stricter regulations, sometimes using points-based caps. Critics argue this could weaken U.S. competitiveness in tech, AI, and biotech, which rely on global expertise. Despite this, the U.S. continues to attract ambitious Indians and others with higher wages, advanced labs, strong infrastructure, career prestige, and opportunities for research, entrepreneurship, global networks, and permanent residency. In contrast, home countries often face funding shortages, bureaucratic delays, and weak innovation systems. This drives steady migration, reinforced by earlier migrants' success and remittances. India, for example, loses highly trained professionals in medicine and engineering, weakening healthcare, universities, and innovation while deepening urban-rural inequalities.

For the U.S., brain drain is a strategic gain—foreign-trained talent drives innovation, patents, and global market leadership, strengthening its techno-economic power. India, by contrast, must curb outflow by improving domestic conditions: better infrastructure, labs, funding, and competitive pay to retain professionals. Cutting bureaucracy, offering tax breaks, grants, and fellowships can attract returnees, while valuing international experience boosts collaboration. Long-term, India should build world-class universities and foster entrepreneurship through strong IP rights, venture capital, and incubators, enabling talent to thrive and scale ventures at home.

Talent retention in India requires transparent governance, merit-based growth, and improved healthcare and education. The diaspora should be leveraged for investment, research, and technology transfer. The U.S. visa fee hike, introducing a \$100,000 annual H-1B employer fee, highlights the risk of brain drain but also presents an opportunity for India to strengthen domestic education, infrastructure, and innovation systems. India, the largest H-1B source, accounted for 71% of approvals in FY2024, with 2.9 million Indians living in the U.S. by 2023, many earning median H-1B salaries of \$118,000—far above Indian pay scales. With the right policies, outflow can become 'brain gain' through return migration, remittances, and education spillovers, as studies show emigration can boost domestic human capital. Global lessons, like Burkina Faso's reforms under Captain Traoré, demonstrate that focused governance and investment in local capacity can counter talent loss. Managing migration requires shared responsibility between sending

and receiving nations.

Of roughly 3,86,000 H-1B approvals in a recent year, about 2,74,000 went to Indians, whose median \$1,18,000 salaries generate an estimated \$32.4 billion annually for the U.S. economy. For India, this means a loss of productivity and about \$3.1 billion in public educational investment, given the ~\$11,400 cost of training each graduate. Still, migration yields gains: India received \$125-135 billion in remittances in 2023-24, much from the U.S., supporting consumption, small investments, and technology and knowledge transfers through diaspora ties.

Remittances soften losses but cannot replace the drain of doctors, professors, innovators, and entrepreneurs whose absence weakens India's long-term growth, while the U.S. gains patents, research strength, and competitiveness funded partly by Indian investment. To respond, India must act quickly. Raising R&D spending from under 1% of GDP to 2-3% within a decade, securing academic jobs with fair pay, and incentivizing return migration through tax-free start-up grants or fast-track research posts can help. Building incubators in Tier-2/3 cities, reforming student loans, and expanding scholarships would reduce financial pressure to emigrate. Strategic diaspora engagement via venture capital, fellowships, and partnerships can further boost innovation. Sector-specific steps, like competitive medical residencies and better university pay, are also vital to retain talent.

These measures will not end brain drain immediately but can signal that India values her talent, turning the challenge into renewal through short-term incentives and long-term reform. The Burkina Faso case under Captain Ibrahim Traoré illustrates the importance of economic sovereignty: efforts like domestic gold refineries aim to retain value and reduce dependency, though his rule faces criticism for authoritarianism and instability. For India, the lesson is not the governance model but the principle—investing in industries, infrastructure, and human capital to create opportunities that reduce migration pressures.

Policies to curb brain drain must rest on accountability and democratic institutions; otherwise, autonomy efforts risk undermining stability. For India, the lesson is not to mirror Burkina Faso but to build self-reliance through strong institutions. The U.S. visa fee hike underscores America's reliance on foreign talent and India's dependence on remittances. India's best strategy is not to block migration but to make staying or returning equally attractive—through greater R&D and education investment, incentives for circular migration, stronger startup financing, and improved public services.

In terms of cost-benefit analysis, in FY2024, approximately 2,74,000 Indians received H-1B approvals, each earning a median salary of \$1,18,000, contributing around \$32.4 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Training an Indian engineering graduate costs about \$11,400, so educating these 2,74,000 professionals represents a \$3.1 billion annual investment effectively flowing abroad. India, however, benefits from remittances, which totalled \$125-135 billion in 2023-24, with roughly \$30-34 billion coming from the U.S., partially offsetting the loss. While dollar-for-dollar the flows are roughly balanced,

India suffers long-term costs in domestic innovation and human capital, whereas the U.S. gains sustained advantages in patents, startups, and intellectual property leadership.

Financially, remittances from India's diaspora—around \$125-130 billion in 2023-24, with \$30-34 billion from the U.S.—offset much of the economic outflow from 2,74,000 skilled professionals migrating to the U.S., each earning a median \$1,18,000, contributing over \$32 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Yet the structural impact on India is far deeper: the loss of engineers, scientists, doctors, and researchers erodes domestic innovation, knowledge transfer, and institutional capacity. While remittances provide macroeconomic support, they cannot replace the multiplier effect of talent in labs, universities, hospitals, and startups. The U.S. gains both immediate wages and long-term advantages in patents, AI, biotech, and entrepreneurship. The recent \$100,000 annual H-1B fee underscores the urgency for India to retain and leverage her human capital through better research funding, education infrastructure, and incentives for return migration.

India must adopt a multi-pronged strategy to retain and leverage talent. R&D spending should rise to 2.5-3% of GDP from 0.7%, with competitive salaries, secure tenure, and well-funded labs to attract top researchers. Incentives like tax exemptions, return fellowships, and diaspora engagement can encourage mid-career professionals to reinvest skills domestically. A strong startup ecosystem, expanded quality education in Tier-2/3 cities, and targeted support for healthcare and universities are essential. Skilled migration is a global challenge, requiring South-South collaboration for circular migration and fair talent-sharing frameworks. Lessons from Burkina Faso emphasize economic sovereignty: India should assert control over strategic resources, including human capital, to maximize internal value creation and long-term development.

Addressing India's talent outflow requires investment, incentives, and systemic reform. R&D spending should rise to 2.5-3% of GDP, paired with competitive research careers, secure tenure, and well-funded labs to strengthen academic and technological infrastructure. Return and circular migration incentives—tax exemptions, fellowships, and recognition of international experience—can bring professionals back with knowledge, networks, and capital. Expanding startups, protecting IP, reducing regulatory friction, and scaling high-quality education to Tier-2/3 cities, alongside diaspora engagement programs like 'India Connect,' further retain and leverage talent. Sector-specific measures for doctors, researchers, and academics are critical to maintain domestic capacity. Globally, India should engage in South-South collaborations and assert economic sovereignty, ensuring talent contributes to domestic growth. The goal is not just to stem brain drain but foster brain circulation, transforming the challenge into a strategic advantage and positioning India as a hub for ambition, innovation, and opportunity.

The U.S. visa fee hike exposes India's structural vulnerability: over \$3 billion in annual education subsidies and \$32+ billion in wages flow to the U.S., highlighting how India's human capital fuels foreign growth. Other emerging economies like Nigeria, the Philippines, and Bangladesh

## TRANSPOTTING IN BHARAT'S HINTERLAND

MADHAVAN NARAYANAN

"Not all those who wander are lost"—this line from a J.R.R. Tolkien poem deserves an Indian derivative. Not all those who travel are tourists. We know of family travellers traversing cities, pilgrim-packed into buses, and business jet-setters claiming extra legroom. But it's time to look beyond and appreciate a hinterland revolution in motion, thanks to the Indian Railways.

There was a time when second-class train travel was a fancied—and often only—option among India's urban middle-class citizens. Shyam Benegal captured the sentiment evocatively in Yatra, a 15-episode fiction series for Doordarshan in 1986, in an era when both TV viewers and train travellers had no choice beyond what the government offered. Although India's chequered history of luxury trains dates back to 1934, when the 'ice-cooled' Peshawar Express (later renamed Frontier Mail) was launched, the real journey began in 1969 with the fully air-conditioned Rajdhani Express that connected Howrah with New Delhi. Luxurious train travel gained momentum with the shorter Shatabdi Express routes launched in 1988.

More recently, we have seen the rise of the Vande Bharat Express, some of them with a 'vistadome' variant enabling panoramic views from the seat. The high-speed Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train is an

emerging showpiece, while city metro systems are springing forth across the country. Air-conditioned chair cars have increased comfort, but lowered the romance of rugged travel in which co-passengers used to become friends, at least grudgingly during the journey.

These thoughts flooded in as I mulled over a reverse swing in India's glorious railway system that has almost gone unnoticed, when I saw a government ad about the Prime Minister flagging off two Amrit Bharat Express trains before the Bihar elections. These trains deserve attention partly for bringing back the romance of second-class travel, but with some frills added to suggest a hint of extra comfort.

Their speed, design and choice of routes offer a mix of simplicity and luxury to migrant workers seeking fortunes in other parts of the country. For these passengers from West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha, the states that beckon are Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Punjab, where employment opportunities are more abundant. The Amrit Bharat Express officially recognises this by connecting dots on the map that confirm paths of migration connecting high-growth zones with laggard ones.

A humble-yet-superfast passport to prosperity. These trains were commercially launched on New Year's Day 2024. Typically intended to cover journeys of 800 km or more, the Amrit Bharat Express, as the name sug-

gests, is heavenly nectar for seekers. A 4,000-km sleeper coach journey on it may cost as low as ₹1,500, enabling migrants to reach workplaces and travel back home for festivals at a fraction of a month's salary. With promised speeds of 110-130 km per hour, the train can be a catalytic boon featuring LED lights, CCTVs, and access for the disabled. It is socially symbolic of how this revolution has gone largely unnoticed that the Wikipedia page for the Amrit Bharat Express offers bare minimum of information compared to its Vande Bharat counterpart, which links the train's story to railway history going back decades and lists its more than 75 routes.

Official data reveals a lot more about the Amrit Bharat Express's revolutionary character. The government said a few weeks ago that 14 of the 100 approved Amrit Bharat trains are operational and as many as 17,000 non-AC coaches are planned to be inducted into the railways over the next five years, the lion's share of which will go to seat Amrit Bharat passengers.

The total number of passengers travelling by general and unreserved coaches across India more than doubled from 275 crore in 2021-22, when the Covid pandemic was in its last throes, to 651 crore in 2024-25, a two-year surge partly powered up by the Amrit Bharat Express. Overall occupancy during the past two years has been near-full, indicating a strong supply-demand match.

face similar pressures, losing talent critical for innovation, healthcare, and education. Regional collaboration and fair migration policies can help retain talent. Lessons from Burkina Faso emphasize economic sovereignty: nations must invest in domestic capacity rather than exporting skilled professionals.

For India, the solution lies in robust investment in education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, alongside brain circulation programs that allow professionals to return and contribute. With sustained reforms, India can transform brain drain into brain gain within a decade, emerging as a global talent hub while preserving strategic, economic, and intellectual sovereignty. This is the high time for India to look beyond myopic optics and curb brain drain if not stopped totally to Make Indian Great Again (MIGA).

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**The expansion of the Golden Triangle into India's Northeast is an undeniable reality, yet one that both the Government of India and much of the national media refuse to even acknowledge. Why this silence? Why this reluctance to confront a menace that threatens the very fabric of Indigenous societies? Is it because profiteering interests are at play? Or has the State compromised with poppy-growing communities and their armed narco-terror groups, the very groups it has entered into so-called "Suspension of Operation" agreements with? One must ask: is this arrangement in fact suspending operations against opium cultivation and the narcotics trade, rather than against insurgency? This raises a deeper and more troubling question: Has the Government of India compromised the security and survival of Indigenous peoples of the Northeast in exchange for short-term political bargains and access to Myanmar's rich minerals and rare earth resources? The global community cannot remain indifferent. It must press the Government of India to answer these questions honestly, and to take transparent, rights-based measures to dismantle the narco-economy that is devastating Indigenous lands and lives. ~ Khurajam Athouba, Indigenous People's Rights Activist**



The train's destinations tell their own story. The first Amrit Bharat train was between East Delhi's Anand Vihar terminal and Darbhanga in Bihar. Earlier this month, he flagged off one connecting Joghani on Bihar-Nepal border with Erode near the bustling textile town of Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu, and Saharsa with Chheharta in Amritsar, close to Punjab's wheatfields that routinely employ Bihari migrants.

Malda in West Bengal and Gomti Nagar in Uttar Pradesh are among the other destinations otherwise dominated by Bihar's Gaya, Motihari and Sitamarhi. Mumbai, Bengaluru, Erode, Amritsar, and suburban Delhi stand at the other end, indicating the pattern of jobs-driven migration. Intermediate stations like Nagpur complete the picture.

The routes remind me of migrant Siberian cranes seeking agreeable winter habitats in India.

In terms of rail networks, India ranks fourth in the world after the US, China, and Russia. But in passenger travel, India understandably and undeniably holds the top spot. The Amrit Bharat Express may not match the famous 9,289-km trans-Siberian train route, captured in Doctor Zhivago, Boris Pasternak's novel made into an Oscar-winning film by David Lean. But as an enabler of the world's most populous nation's demographic transition, Amrit Bharat is the kind of travel that would fascinate historians of the future.

# Cachar teacher found dead under mysterious circumstances after exposing alleged corruption

SILCHAR

Assam is shaken by the suspicious death of Arindam Kundu, in-charge Head Teacher of 937 No. Ujan Nagar L.P. School in Cachar district. According to a detailed memorandum submitted by the All Assam Primary Teachers Association (AAPTA), Kundu died under mysterious circumstances after exposing widespread corruption and administrative abuse within the local education department.

Kundu, a resident of Dhubri, had come to Cachar for his job. Sources describe him as a very honest and calm individual who performed his duties diligently. He was found dead nearly railway tracks on September 18 and was later sent for postmortem at Silchar Medical College and Hospital after being discovered by locals.

Kundu allegedly faced relen-

less mental pressure from higher authorities, who reportedly forced him to comply with questionable decisions regarding vendor selections and administrative procedures. Two days before his death, Kundu posted videos and went live on Facebook, publicly describing the systematic harassment and corruption he endured. In the live video, he specifically named Assam government official Jayanti Paul as one who allegedly forced him to become Head Teacher, and also mentioned Nirmalya Debnath and Sarmistha Sarkar in connection with alleged corruption. He accused CRCC officials of awarding tenders to their close vendors and claimed that all the corruption was carried out while keeping him at the forefront. India Today NE has exclusively accessed this video from a source. Shockingly, just a day before his death, his mobile phone went missing, and



all incriminating videos as well as his Facebook Live were deleted, raising suspicions of deliberate evidence tampering. The postmortem report is still pending at the time of filing this report. While talking to media, SSP Cachar Numal Mahatta said that the case is under investigation with the Railway Police (GRP) and that further details are awaited.

Family members and colleagues confirmed Kundu was a responsible son and the only child of his parents. They strongly reject the possibility of suicide, citing his responsible nature and the absence of prior warning signs. More alarmingly, reports indicate multiple cut marks were found on his body, especially on his back and head, suggesting possible physical assault prior to death. The victim's scooter and personal documents, including his driving license, were also reported miss-

ing, adding to the mystery surrounding his death.

Kundu was allegedly actively opposing a "powerful nexus" operating within his educational block. In light of these allegations and suspicious circumstances, the AAPTA has urged the District Commissioner and police authorities to conduct a high-level administrative and magisterial inquiry. The association notes that the case may fall under "abetment to suicide" if treated as suicide due to documented mental pressure. Alternatively, family suspicions and physical evidence may point to homicide.

The untimely death of Arindam Kundu, who had exposed alleged corruption, has sparked outrage and grief across Assam. Teachers' associations, family members, and the wider public are demanding swift and transparent justice.

## Former Haflong MLA applauds Hagrama Mohilary for sweeping victory in BTR polls 2025

HAFLONG

Former North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) MLA and former Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Haflong, Samarjit Haflongbar, has extended warm congratulations to the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) for their sweeping victory in the 5th Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections. In a congratulatory letter, Haflongbar hailed the victory as a testament to the collective will of the Bodoland people to safeguard the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, which guarantees special autonomy to tribal regions. He emphasized that the resounding mandate reflected the people's determination to preserve their identity, self-governance, and rights.

The BPF, led by Hagrama Mohilary, secured 28 out of 40 seats, leaving the opposition with only 12 seats, far short of their aspiration to control the Tribal Council. Haflongbar highlighted that this outcome not only marks a milestone for Bodoland but also sends a powerful message to other Sixth Schedule areas such as the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. He noted that the victory demonstrates how unity and persistence can counter external pressures and divisive interventions by certain local groups. Praising the leadership of Hagrama Mohilary and his colleagues, Haflongbar said their efforts represent more than political success—they embody a commitment to the overall development and welfare of the Bodoland people.



GUWAHATI

India entered a new era in its digital journey as Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) officially launched its government-owned "Swadeshi 4G Network" across the country. The landmark initiative aims to strengthen network connectivity nationwide while promoting indigenous technology, promising users faster and more reliable 4G services.

## BSNL officially launches Swadeshi 4G network nationwide, Assam CM joins inauguration from Kalakshetra



The grand inaugural ceremony took place at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati, beginning with a heartfelt tribute to Assam's legendary singer, the late Zubeen Garg. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is scheduled to attend the event, with his arrival set for 9:15 AM.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally inaugurated the network virtually, marking the rollout of India's first fully indigenous 4G system. The launch event witnessed the presence of Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Assam's IT Minister Keshab Mahanta, and several other distinguished dignitaries.

The "Swadeshi 4G Network" is expected to bridge connectivity gaps across urban and rural regions, contributing to the government's vision of a self-reliant digital India.

## Nagaland inks four-party MoU to boost jute and natural fibre farming, targets 8 districts

KOHIMA

In a bid to make Nagaland a hub for eco-friendly fibres, a four-party Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Friday between the National Jute Board (NJB), Jute Corporation of India Limited (JCI), ICAR-Central Research Institute for Jute and Allied Fibres (ICAR-CRIJAF), and the state Agriculture Department.

The MoU, valid from 2025-26 to 2030-31, will promote large-scale jute cultivation in Nagaland and pilot new-age fibres like flax, ramie, and sisal. Officials said the initiative will provide farmers with sustainable cash crop alternatives, better incomes, and help reduce dependence on plastics and timber.

"This is not about cost but about farmer support. Seeds, machinery, and training will be provided, with our target to



cover 7-8 districts by 2026," said Shahshi Bhushan Singh, Secretary & CEO of NJB. He added that with proper market link-

ages, jute will become a major cash crop in the state. Nagaland has around 3,000 hectares of land suitable for

jute, of which 350 hectares are already under cultivation. With JCI's procurement support, prices have surged from ₹25-30 per kg paid by middlemen earlier to ₹56.40 per kg in 2024, giving farmers direct benefits. Currently, cultivation is underway in Peren, Chümoukedima, Dimapur, Niuland, Wokha, and parts of Mon and Mokochung districts. Farmers will begin sowing in February 2026, after training and awareness programmes start this November. Deputy officials highlighted that jute, being biodegradable and renewable, has the potential to open new industrial applications and value-added fibre production, in line with the Union Budget 2025-26 push for natural fibres.

"This agreement marks a significant step towards positioning Nagaland as a jute-growing hub," Singh said.

## Gauhati University to honour Zubeen Garg by renaming Performing Arts Centre

GUWAHATI

In a heartfelt tribute to late singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg, Gauhati University has announced that its Centre for Performing Arts and Culture will be renamed after the legendary artiste. The university authorities confirmed the decision on Friday, stating that the move is part of four proposals accepted to immortalize the singer's unparalleled contributions to music and culture.

As part of the tribute, a statue of Zubeen Garg will be installed in front of the centre, serving as a symbol of inspiration for generations to come. The univer-



sity also plans to publish a coffee table book featuring biographical narratives and creative highlights of Garg's artistic journey.

To further inspire young talents, the varsity will introduce a new competition category titled "Zubeen's Songs" in its inter-college youth festival, enabling budding singers to perform and keep his music alive.

Zubeen Garg, revered as the voice of Assam and a youth icon, tragically passed away on September 19 in Singapore. His demise has left an irreparable void in the state's cultural landscape, prompting a wave of tributes from across Assam and beyond.

## Zoologists begin study on rodent outbreak in Mizoram amid fears of scrub typhus spread

AIZAWL

Teams of zoologists from Pachhunga University College (PUC) have begun studying the ongoing rodent outbreak in Mizoram, which has already affected hundreds of jhum farmers across several districts.

Led by Prof. Lalramliana, two teams from the Zoology Department set out on Thursday, followed by another on Friday, to examine the affected areas and identify the rodent species involved. The teams will also assess whether the rodents are potential carriers of scrub typhus, a disease known to spread widely in Mizoram through rat populations.

According to PUC experts and international researchers, rodents are vectors for several diseases, and scrub typhus remains a major concern. The outbreak has been reported from 45 villages in Mamit district, two in Lunglei, and one in Saitual, impacting more than 800 jhum farmers who primarily grow rice and soybeans. So far, around 158 hec-

tares of farmland out of 2,500 hectares under cultivation have been damaged.

State Agriculture Department deputy director (Plant Protection) Lalrindiki attributed the infestation to the flowering of bambusa tulda—locally known as "Thingtam"—which occurs in cycles of 46-48 years and is expected again in 2025. Mamit district, bordering Tripura and Bangladesh, has been the worst hit, with 769 farmers from 45 villages suffering losses.

The agriculture department has supplied rodenticides free of cost to affected farmers and dispatched teams to train villagers on their proper use. Awareness campaigns on mass poisoning of rodents are also underway, with officials closely monitoring the situation.

Mizoram last witnessed a major rodent attack in 2022, affecting nine districts. Earlier, in 2007, the flowering of Melocanna baccifera caused famine-like conditions, though timely central aid and state preparedness prevented loss of life.

## Meghalaya unveils pavilion, launches 'Collectives' Organic' at World Food India 2025

SHILLONG

Union Minister of Food Processing Industries Chirag Paswan and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday inaugurated the Meghalaya Pavilion at World Food India (WFI) 2025, showcasing the state's agricultural strength, organic produce, and growing export potential.

The pavilion highlights Meghalaya's innovative farming techniques, grassroots value chains, and expanding export infrastructure, positioning the state as a serious player in both domestic and international food markets.

Union Minister Paswan praised Meghalaya's strides in organic farming, particularly citing Lakadong turmeric's global reputation. "Megha-



laya's organic Lakadong turmeric has gained worldwide recognition, reflecting the state's growing influence in the organic market," he said, assuring the Centre's continued support.

Chief Minister Sangma, while encouraging farmers and rural entrepreneurs to seize new opportunities, stressed the importance of local initiative. "We facilitate, but the transformation depends on your hard work," he remarked.

At WFI 2025, Meghalaya launched its new organic brand "Meghalaya

Collectives' Organic" to promote premium produce such as Lakadong turmeric, Khasi mandarin, Sohiong (blackberry), and Kew pineapple. The state also signed four key MoUs through its marketing platform MEG-NOLIA with Lulu Group Retail, The Staple Kaka, Plantrich Agri Tech Pvt Ltd, and Treta Agro Pvt Ltd, aimed at boosting market access in both Indian and Gulf markets.

Meghalaya's Organic Mission 2024-28 targets certification of one lakh hectares by 2028, with a budget of Rs 250 crore. Currently, 24,000 hec-

tares have been certified, benefiting 40,000 farmers. The state's unique Community Public Private Partnership (CPPP) model is central to this progress, fostering partnerships between farmers, communities, and private investors.

Further strengthening its agri-infrastructure, Meghalaya has already launched eight PRIME Hubs, attracting Rs 220 crore in investment, supporting 15,000 farmers, and creating over 1,500 jobs. By 2031-32, the state plans to expand to 55 hubs with Rs 550 crore in investment, expected to benefit 3.4 lakh farmers and generate 11,000 jobs.

Since 2022, Meghalaya has been steadily exporting organic produce such as pineapples, mandarins, and ginger to the Middle East. In early 2025, the state shipped 15 metric tonnes of organic ginger and 20 metric tonnes of GI-tagged Khasi mandarins to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, positioning its products as premium offerings in the global market.

Quest!

The odds of a coin flip are not 50-50, but actually 51-49. It will most likely land facing the same direction as it started.

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## Ladakh administration defends Sonam Wangchuk's transfer to Jodhpur jail as curfew enters fourth day

### SRINAGAR

The Ladakh administration has defended its decision to shift climate activist Sonam Wangchuk — arrested under the National Security Act (NSA) on Friday — to Jodhpur jail in Rajasthan, claiming that the move was “indulging in activities prejudicial to security of the State” and that keeping him in Leh was “not advisable in the larger public interest.”

Two days after violence in Leh over demands for statehood and Sixth Schedule inclusion left four dead and 80 injured, Leh police detained Wangchuk near his residence under the National Security Act, 1980, which allows detention for up to 12 months without trial. The Ramon Magsaysay awardee was later moved to Jodhpur central jail.

Following his arrest, authorities suspended mobile internet services in Leh, where curfew remains in place for a fourth straight day.

“There was no untoward incident reported from anywhere in Ladakh during the past 24 hours. The restrictions are in place to maintain law and order,” an official said. The official said the patrolling and checking by police and paramilitary forces in the sensitive areas have been intensified, while raids are also underway to nab the absconding rioters, including a councillor who allegedly instigated the violence.

Defending the transfer, the Ladakh administration claimed it had “taken a considered deci-

sion based on specific inputs” to detain Wangchuk under the NSA and move him to Jodhpur. It alleged that “time and again it was observed that Sonam Wangchuk has been indulging in activities prejudicial to the security of the State and detrimental to maintenance of peace and public order and services essential to the community.”

(L) People protest the arrest of activist Sonam Wangchuk. (R) Wangchuk is transferred to the Jodhpur Central Jail in Rajasthan.

Government mistaken if it feels arresting Wangchuk will restore peace in Ladakh: Congress

The administration further claimed that despite communication from the government about the High-Powered Committee (HPC) meeting and offers of prior consultations, Wangchuk “with his ulterior motive” continued his hunger strike.

“His series of provocative speeches, references to Nepal agitations, Arab Spring etc. and misleading videos resulted in the violent protests of 24.09.2025 in Leh where institutions, buildings and vehicles were burnt down and, in the aftermath, Police personnel were attacked leading to the unfortunate death of four (4) individuals,” it claimed.

It further said the episode could have been avoided had Wangchuk called off his hunger strike once dialogue with the government had resumed.

“It is important to restore normalcy in the peace loving Leh

Town of Ladakh. To ensure this, it is also important to prevent Sonam Wangchuk from further acting in a manner prejudicial to maintenance of public order. In the backdrop of his provocative speeches and videos, for the larger public interest, it was not advisable to keep him in Leh district,” it added.

After Wednesday's violence in Leh, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) blamed Wangchuk's speeches for triggering the unrest.

“It is clear that the mob was incited by Sonam Wangchuk through his provocative statements. Incidentally, amidst these violent developments, he broke his fast and left for his village in an ambulance without making serious efforts to control the situation,” the MHA claimed.

The ministry alleged that Wangchuk's references to the ‘Arab Spring’ and Nepal's ‘Gen Z protests’ fuelled mob anger that led to the torching of the local BJP office in Leh and several government vehicles.

A day later, the MHA cancelled the FCRA licence of Wangchuk's NGO, the Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), citing alleged violations including foreign fund transfers from Sweden. The CBI is also probing alleged FCRA violations linked to the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL), whose land allotment was recently revoked by the administration.

## ‘Absurd theatrics’: India hits back at Sharif at UN, says Pakistan ‘pleaded’ for ceasefire during Op Sindoor

### UNITED NATION

India dismissed Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's remarks at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) as “absurd theatrics”, recalling that Islamabad had “pleaded” for a ceasefire during Operation Sindoor and reiterating that no third party has a role in disputes between the two countries.

The response came from First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Petal Gahlot on Friday after Sharif, in his address to the General Debate of the 80th session of the UNGA, credited US President Donald Trump with averting a war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

“This Assembly witnessed absurd theatrics in the morning from the Prime Minister of Pakistan, who once again glorified terrorism that is so central to their foreign policy,” Gahlot said, delivering India's Right of Reply. Reaffirming India's longstanding position, Gahlot stressed that all outstanding issues with Pakistan must be resolved bilaterally, leaving “no room for any third party.”

“India and Pakistan have long agreed that any outstanding issue between them will be addressed bilaterally. There is no room for any third party in that regard. This is our longstanding national position,” she said.

She accused Islamabad of shielding terrorists and peddling “ludicrous narratives” to obscure its role as a hub of terrorism.

Gahlot also rejected Sharif's account of the May conflict, noting that Pakistan's threats ended only after Indian forces struck multiple Pakistani airbases on 10 May.

“The Prime Minister of Pakistan advanced a bizarre account of the recent conflict with India. The record on this matter is clear. Till 9 May,

Pakistan was threatening more attacks on India. But on 10 May, its military pleaded with us directly for a cessation to the fighting. The intervening event was the destruction caused to multiple Pakistani airbases by Indian forces. The pictures of that damage are, of course, publicly accessible. If destroyed runways and burnt-out hangers look like victory, as the Prime Minister claimed, Pakistan is welcome to enjoy it,” she said.

First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Petal Gahlot delivers right of reply at the UN General Assembly, Sept. 27, 2025.

The Indian envoy further pointed to Pakistan's actions at the UN Security Council on April 25, when it blocked efforts to hold ‘The Resistance Front’ — a Pakistan-backed militant group — responsible for the April 22 massacre of 26 tourists in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

“This Assembly witnessed absurd theatrics in the morning from the Prime Minister of Pakistan, who once again glorified terrorism that is so central to their foreign policy. However, no degree of drama and no level of lies can conceal the facts. This is the very same Pakistan which, at the UN Security Council on April 25, 2025, shielded ‘The Resistance Front’, a Pakistani-sponsored terror outfit, from the responsibility of carrying out the barbaric massacre of tourists in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir,” she stated.

Highlighting Pakistan's history of duplicity, Gahlot recalled its decade-long sheltering of Osama bin Laden while presenting itself as a partner in the global war on terror. She added that Pakistani ministers had acknowledged running militant camps for decades.

She also accused senior Pakistani military and civilian officials of glo-

rifying militants and paying homage to “notorious terrorists” killed during Indian strikes on Bahawalpur and Muridke in Operation Sindoor.

“A country long steeped in the tradition of deploying and exporting terrorism has no shame in advancing the most ludicrous narratives to that end. Let us recall that it sheltered Osama bin Laden for a decade, even while pretending to partner in the war against terrorism. Its Ministers have just recently acknowledged that they have been operating terrorist camps for decades. It should come as no surprise that once again, this duplicity continues, this time at the level of its Prime Minister,” she said.

“A picture speaks a thousand words and we saw many pictures of terrorists slain in Bahawalpur and Muridke terror complexes by Indian forces during Operation Sindoor. When senior Pakistani military and civilian officials publicly glorify and pay homage to such notorious terrorists, can there be any doubt about the proclivities of this regime?” she added.

India's response underscored its zero-tolerance approach to terrorism, with Gahlot saying: “The truth is that as in the past, Pakistan is responsible for a terrorist attack on innocent civilians in India. We have exercised the right to defend our people against such actions and have brought the organisers and perpetrators to justice.”

She demanded Pakistan shut down all militant camps and hand over wanted terrorists, warning that India would hold both militants and their sponsors accountable without yielding to “nuclear blackmail.”

Gahlot also questioned the sincerity of Sharif's call for peace, criticising Pakistan's “hate, bigotry, and intolerance” and urging its leadership to reflect on its own political discourse.

“The truth is that, as in the past, Pakistan is responsible for a terrorist attack on innocent civilians in India. We have exercised the right to defend our people against such actions and have brought the organisers and perpetrators to justice. The Pakistani Prime Minister has spoken about wanting peace with India. If he is indeed sincere, the pathway is clear. Pakistan must immediately shut down all terrorist camps and hand over to us terrorists wanted in India. It is also ironic that a country which wallows in hate, bigotry and intolerance should preach to this Assembly on matters of faith. The political and public discourse of Pakistan reflects its true nature. Clearly, a look by them at the mirror is long overdue,” she said.

In his address, Sharif said Pakistan was ready for a “composite, comprehensive and result-oriented” dialogue with India on all outstanding issues, while criticising New Delhi over the situation in Kashmir.

Sharif also praised Trump, saying his “efforts for peace helped avert a war in South Asia.”

“In recognition of President Trump's wonderful and outstanding contribution to promote peace in our part of the world, Pakistan nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. This is the least we could do... I think he truly is a man of peace,” he said.

India launched Operation Sindoor on 7 May, targeting militant infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the 22 April Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians.

New Delhi has consistently maintained that the cessation of hostilities with Pakistan was reached following direct talks between the Directors General of Military Operations of the two countries.

## INTERNATIONAL

## UN Security Council rejects Russia, China's last-ditch effort to delay sanctions on Iran

### UNITED NATIONS

The UN Security Council on Friday rejected a last-ditch effort to delay reimposing sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, a decision that the country's president immediately called “unfair, unjust and illegal.” The decision on the “snapback sanctions” came a day before the deadline and after Western countries claimed weeks of meetings failed to result in a concrete agreement.

The resolution put forth by Russia and China — Iran's most powerful and closest allies on the 15-member council — failed to garner support from the nine countries required to halt the series of UN sanctions from taking effect Saturday, as outlined in Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. The vote was 4-9 with two abstentions.

“We had hoped that European colleagues and the US would think twice, and they would opt for the path of diplomacy and dialogue instead of their clumsy blackmail, which merely results in escalation of the situation in the region,” Dmitry Polyanskiy, the deputy Russian ambassador to the UN, said during the meeting.

Shortly after the vote, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian spoke at a meeting with journalists and Iran experts on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, a day before the deadline for the sanctions to kick in. Pezeshkian said that despite previous threats, Iran won't withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty like North Korea, which abandoned the treaty in 2003 and then built atomic weapons.

Barring an eleventh-hour deal, the reinstatement of sanctions — triggered by Britain, France and

Germany — will once again freeze Iranian assets abroad, halt arms deals with Tehran and penalize any development of Iran's ballistic missile program, among other measures. That will further squeeze the country's reeling economy.

The move is expected to heighten already magnified tensions between Iran and the West. But despite previous threats to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Pezeshkian said in an interview with a group of reporters that the country had no intention to do so right now. North Korea, which abandoned the treaty in 2003, went on to build atomic weapons.

Four countries — China, Russia, Pakistan and Algeria — once again supported giving Iran more time to negotiate with the European countries, known as the E3, and the United States, which unilaterally withdrew from the accord with world powers in 2018 during Trump's first administration.

“The US has betrayed diplomacy, but it is the E3 which have buried it,” Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said after the vote. “This sordid mess did not come about overnight. Both the E3 and the US have consistently misrepresented Iran's peaceful nuclear program.”

The European leaders triggered the so-called “snapback” mechanism last month after accusing Tehran of failing to comply with the conditions of the accord and when weeks of high-level negotiations failed to reach a diplomatic resolution.

Since the 30-day clock began, Araghchi, has been meeting with his French, British and German counterparts to strike a last-minute deal, leading up to this week's UN General

Assembly gathering.

But Pezeshkian painted a different image of how the meetings transpired, saying that it was the Europeans and Americans who refused to make a deal during the high-level week. In a sprawling interview on the sidelines of the UN, the president said that one night this week, members of the US delegation were supposed to meet with their Iranian and European counterparts but did not show.

“Every time we spoke with the Europeans, we've reached conclusions and agreements, but then at the end of the day the American side did not accept,” he said. As for direct US-Iran talks, one night this week “our foreign minister and European foreign ministers were supposed to sit together and reach an agreement, but the Americans never showed up,” he said. “What are we supposed to do?”

Pezeshkian added that when the Americans did show during the six weeks of negotiations earlier this year, it was hard to rely on their word and that President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, had flip-flopped on issues that were previously agreed upon.

“The distrust at this moment between us and the US is so large,” Pezeshkian said, answering a question about what it would take for Iran to come back to the negotiating table.

But even before Araghchi and Pezeshkian arrived in New York on Tuesday for the annual gathering, remarks from Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, that peace talks with the United States represent “a sheer dead end” constrained any eleven-hour diplomatic efforts from taking place.

European nations have said they would be willing to extend the deal-

line if Iran complies with a series of conditions. Those include resumption of direct negotiations with the US over its nuclear program, allowing UN nuclear inspectors access to its nuclear sites, and accounts for the more than 400 kilograms (880 pounds) of highly enriched uranium the UN watchdog says it has. Of all the nations in the world that don't have nuclear weapons programs, Iran is the only nation in the world that enriches uranium up to 60% — a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels.

Earlier this month, the UN nuclear watchdog and Iran signed an agreement mediated by Egypt to pave the way for resuming cooperation, including on ways of relaunching inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities. However, Iran has threatened to terminate that agreement and cut all cooperation with the IAEA should UN sanctions be reimposed.

Iran has been wary of giving full access to inspectors following the 12-day war with Israel in June that saw both the Israelis and the Americans bomb Iranian nuclear sites, throwing into question the status of Tehran's stockpile of uranium enriched nearly to weapons-grade levels.

But a diplomat close to the IAEA confirmed on Friday that inspectors are currently in Iran where they are inspecting a second undamaged site, and will not leave the country ahead of the expected reimposition of sanctions this weekend. IAEA inspectors earlier watched a fuel replacement at the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant on Aug. 27 and 28.

The Europeans have said this action alone is not enough to halt the sanctions from coming into place Saturday.

## Netanyahu says Israel ‘must finish the job’ against Hamas in Gaza, dozens of delegates walk out

### UNITED NATIONS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the U.N. General Assembly on Friday that Israel “must finish the job” against Hamas in Gaza, giving a defiant U.N. speech despite growing international isolation over his refusal to end the devastating war in Gaza.

He spoke after dozens of delegates from multiple nations walked out of the U.N. General Assembly hall en masse Friday as he prepared to speak.

As the Israeli leader spoke, unintelligible shouts echoed around the hall. Applause rang out in other quarters as he spoke. The U.S. delegation, which has backed Netanyahu in his campaign against Hamas, stayed put. The few world powers in attendance, the United States and the United Kingdom, did not send their most senior officials or even their UN ambassador to their section. Instead, it was filled out with more junior, low-level diplomats.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds up a map while speaking at the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Friday, Sept. 26, 2025, at U.N. headquarters.

Who recognises the State of Palestine, who doesn't, and why does it matter?”

“Anti-semitism dies hard. In fact, it doesn't die at all,” Netanyahu said. Netanyahu routinely accuses his critics of antisemitism. As he has often in the past, Netanyahu held up a visual aid — a map of the region titled “THE CURSE.” He marked it up with a large marker. He ascended the podium wearing a special hostess pin with a QR code that leads to a site about Oct. 7 that was established specially for international public diplomacy needs. The members of the Prime Minister's delegation, ministers and those accompanying him are also wearing identical pins.

Netanyahu also frequently praised President Donald

Trump, his chief ally in his political and military approach in the region.

In an “unprecedented operation,” the Israeli army will take over the mobile phones of Gaza residents and Hamas operatives and his speech will be broadcast live through the mobile devices.”

Netanyahu faces international isolation, accusations of war crimes and growing pressure to end a conflict he has continued to escalate. Friday's speech was his chance to push back on the international community's biggest platform.

Netanyahu's annual speech to the U.N. General Assembly is always closely watched, often protested, reliably emphatic and sometimes a venue for dramatic allegations. But this time, the stakes are higher than ever for the Israeli leader.

In recent days, Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and others announced their recognition of an independent Palestinian state.

The European Union is considering tariffs and sanctions on Israel. The assembly this month passed a nonbinding resolution urging Israel to commit to an independent Palestinian nation, which Netanyahu has said is a non-starter. The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant accusing Netanyahu of crimes against humanity, which he denies. And the U.N.'s highest court is weighing South Africa's allegation that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, which it vehemently refutes. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds up a map while speaking at the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Friday, Sept. 26, 2025, at U.N. headquarters.

Against that backdrop, Netanyahu sounded resolute Thursday as he boarded a plane in Israel to head for the U.N.'s annual meeting of top-level leaders in New York.

“I will tell our truth,” Netanyahu said. “I will con-

demn those leaders who, instead of condemning the murderers, rapists and burners of children, want to give them a state in the heart of Israel.”

At a special session of the assembly this week, nation after nation expressed horror at the 2023 attack by Hamas militants that killed about 1,200 people in Israel, saw 251 taken hostage and triggered the war. Many of the representatives went on to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and influx of aid.

Israel's sweeping offensive has killed more than 65,000 Palestinians in Gaza and displaced 90 percent of its population, with an increasing number now starving.

While more than 150 countries now recognize a Palestinian state, the United States has not, providing Israel with vociferous support. But President Donald Trump pointedly signaled Thursday there are limits, telling reporters in Washington that he wouldn't let Israel annex the occupied West Bank.

Israel hasn't announced such a move, but several leading members in Netanyahu's government have advocated doing so. And officials recently approved a controversial settlement project that would effectively cut the West Bank in two, a move that critics say could doom chances for a Palestinian state.

Trump and Netanyahu are scheduled to meet during his visit. Back in the Mideast, in addition to the phone takeover, Israel said Friday it would broadcast Netanyahu's speech from southern Israel into Gaza, carrying his remarks across the border to Palestinians in the besieged enclave. His office “instructed civilian groups in cooperation with the army to place loudspeakers on trucks on the Israeli side of the border,” it said in a statement, noting that the broadcasts would be arranged so they would not endanger soldiers.

## Governor of Sikkim urged the government to establish more KVKs in the state

### ICAR-ATARI, ZONE VI CONDUCTS ANNUAL ZONAL WORKSHOP 2025 AT SIKKIM



**BISWADEEP GUPTA**  
GANGTOK

ICAR-Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute (ATARI), Zone VI, Guwahati, organized a two-day Annual Zonal Workshop 2025, in collaboration with the Central Agricultural University (CAU), Imphal, on the 25th and 26th of September 2025, at Sikkim. In addition, the inauguration of the Administrative Building, Boys' Hostel and Girls' Hostel of College of Horticulture, Birmiook, took place during the occasion. The workshop primarily focused on major issues and relevant technologies in agriculture and allied sectors of the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim; besides reviewing and recommending suitable technologies for relevant zones based on On-Farm Trials (OFT) and Front-Line Demonstrations (FLDs). Chief Guest, Om Prakash Mathur, Governor of Sikkim, inaugurated the workshop and appealed to all the scientists to further work on the value addition of crops, especially large cardamom. He urged the government to establish more KVKs in the state and highlighted the importance of drones in the agricultural scenario of the Eastern States.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Govt of India, graced the occasion via virtual mode and addressed the importance of agriculture in Sikkim while giving importance to natural and organic farming. He also highlighted PM Modi's vision of agriculture in the North-Eastern states of India. Also present via virtual mode were Dr. Mangi Lal Jat, Secretary (DARE) and Director General (DG), ICAR and Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General (DDG), ICAR. Puran Kumar Gurung,

Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, and Fisheries Development Department, Govt of Sikkim, emphasised the importance of establishing 2 new KVKs in Sikkim. Chairman, Shri Bhagirath Choudhary, Hon'ble Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, addressed the significance of the agriculture sector being an important source of income and livelihood generation. Also, he spoke on the strengthening of FPOs and FPCs for the development of agriculture in Sikkim.

Earlier, during the inaugural session, Dr. Anupam Mishra, Vice Chancellor, CAU, Imphal, delivered the welcome address and gave a brief on the agriculture scenario of Sikkim. Dr. G. Kadirvel, Director of ICAR, ATARI, Zone VI, spoke on new initiatives and the growth of KVKs in the region.

The workshop served as a platform for technology exchange, innovation, and effective dissemination of agricultural technologies aimed at enhancing farmers' incomes through sustainable farming practices.

Significant highlights of the workshop included an Exhibition which showcased technologies, innovations, and flagship products from different institutes and the release of several publications by different KVKs under ICAR ATARI, Zone VI.

During the course of the workshop, eminent scientists reviewed, provided insights, and gave recommendations on issues and technologies relevant for the respective states in the sectors of Agriculture, Horticulture, Field Crops and Natural Resource Management, Livestock and Fisheries, and Farm Machinery and Secondary Agriculture.

Distinguished dignitaries in attendance included B.S. Panth, MLA, Temi Naphing constituency, Dr. Manoranjan Neog, DEE, AAU, Dr. H.C Bhattacharya, Former DEE, AAU, Directors from different ICAR Institutes, KVK heads, scientists, senior scientists and officials from ICAR ATARI, Zone VI.

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I. M. GunadhonSingha, S/o. Purnachand B Singha, R/o. House No. 33, New Link Road, ADC Colony, Rongpur Part-IV, Silchar Pin Code - 788009, Cachar, Assam have changed his name to GunadhonSingha for all future purposes.

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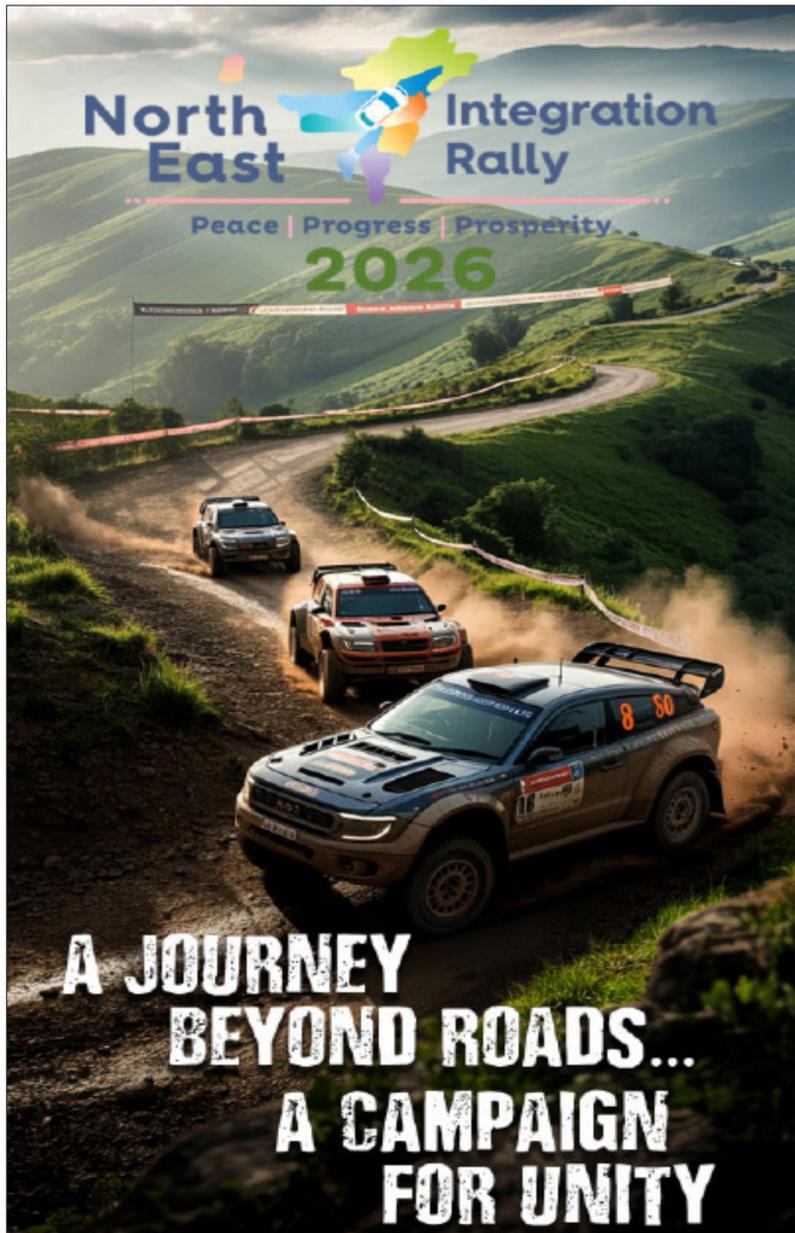
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**10 JAN**  
**NE Cultural Fest**  
Any Form of Art and Cultural showcase can be showcased here. The Top performances will be invited to perform in the Main Event. Schools, Colleges, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.



**11 JAN**  
**Adventure Sports**  
Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.



**11 JAN**  
**Barak Valley Conclave**  
Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders. Includes NGOs and Governmental institution for their participation. Awards to be given to the presenters. Openable. Participation through invitation only. Different awards are provided.



**12 JAN**  
**River-Climate Conclave**  
State of the river will be discussed on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, treatment and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competition and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.



**JAN'25**  
**Online Global Fest**  
All can participate online and send a video clip on Poems, Songs and Dance Performances, Bengali, English, Hindi & Manipuri. Last Date: 31st December 2024.



**10 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Media Conclave: Workshops, Seminars, and Conferences for journalists, print, broadcast, and digital.



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**DEC'24-JAN'25**  
**Photography**  
Online Photography Contest: River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Culture. Real-Time Photography Contest of 'Barak Festival 2025'.

**10 JAN**  
**Band Night**  
**Musical Night**



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**10-12 JAN**  
**E-Sports**  
Full-Blown Competitive | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



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

**10-12 JAN**  
**Book Bank**  
Anti-ill Campaign Book Bank at Silchar, Assam | Online

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

**Painting Carnival**  
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