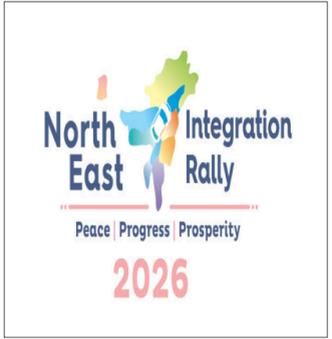




KRC TIMES

STAY-ENRICHED



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 578 | SILCHAR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2025. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

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PERSPECTIVE
Take care of the people who take care of you.

Assam declares three days of state mourning after Zubeen Garg's death

GUWAHATI
The Assam government has announced three days of state mourning, from September 20 to 22, in the wake of the untimely demise of renowned singer Zubeen Garg. In an official statement, the government expressed deep sorrow over the loss of the singer, calling him an "eminent artist" whose contributions to Assamese music, cinema, and culture left a lasting impact. "The Government of Assam expresses deep shock and sorrow at the passing of Shri Zubeen Garg, eminent singer, filmmaker and cultural icon. State mourning has been declared from 20th to 22nd September," the statement read.

As a mark of respect, all official entertainment events, dinners, and ceremonial functions have been cancelled during the mourning period. Events under the Seva Saptah initiative that involve ceremonial components or benefit distributions have also been postponed. However, essential service-oriented activities will continue as planned. These include health camps, Nikshay Mitra support initiatives for tuberculosis patients, and plantation drives, which are part of ongoing public welfare programmes. "During this period, there will be no official entertainment, dinners, or ceremonial functions. Seva Saptah programmes that involve ceremonial events or distribution of benefits are postponed as a mark of respect. Service-oriented activities such as health camps, Nikshay Mitra support for TB patients, and plantation drives will continue," the statement added.

WHO SAID WHAT



Shocked by the sudden demise of popular singer Zubeen Garg. He will be remembered for his rich contribution to music. His renditions were very popular among people across all walks of life. Condolences to his family and admirers.
Om Shanti.
~ Narendra Modi, PM India

Public Outrage in Manipur Over Assam Rifles Ambush; Search Operation Intensifies

IMPHAL

Locals of Nambol in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Saturday morning staged protests against the killing of two Assam Rifles personnel in an ambush in the area the previous day.

Search operations are being conducted in the area for the attackers and the vehicle used by them, police said.

The locals, wearing traditional mourning attire, raised slogans and held placards condemning the attack and for "creating fear and panic among the public", at a sit-in just 1 km from the ambush spot.

Later, women took out a protest rally denouncing the attack, and criticised the opening of fire in public places.

Two jawans of the Assam Rifles were killed and five others were injured when a group of armed men ambushed a vehicle of the paramilitary force in Nambol Sabal Leikai area on Friday evening, officials said, adding no group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.



An uneasy calm prevailed in the state capital Imphal, and Bishnupur district on Saturday morning, with the identity of the perpetrators yet to be known.

One of the protesters, S Bungo, said, "What exactly did

the armed men want to achieve through this barbaric and unprovoked attack? It would be extremely wrong on the part of the armed men to see the restraint shown by the uniformed personnel as weakness.

"They should realise that both security agencies and government officials have been tremendously considerate of the public emotions throughout the ethnic conflict. That should not be seen as a weakness."

Prominent Churachandpur-based organisation Kuki Zo Council also condemned the attack on the paramilitary forces. The council emphasised that the attack occurred at a place in Imphal Valley where AFSPA was not in force. The attack took place when Assam Rifles personnel were travelling towards Bishnupur district from Imphal on Friday evening.

"The column was ambushed by unidentified terrorists on the highway in the denotified area of Manipur. In the ensuing action, two personnel of Assam Rifles were martyred and

five were injured, who have since been evacuated to RIMS and are currently stable.

Search operations are ongoing to apprehend the terrorists involved in the incident," a defence statement said.

The deceased persons were identified as Naib Subedar Shyam Gurung and Rifleman Ranjit Singh Kashyap.

Injured personnel N Nongthon told reporters, "The assailants, numbering around four to five, suddenly opened fire at us. We did not immediately retaliate as it would have led to injuries to the public, as it was not an isolated area."

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla condemned the attack on security forces. "The governor expressed profound grief and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of the martyred soldiers, acknowledging their unwavering courage and dedication in protecting the nation," a Raj Bhavan statement said.

Bhalla prayed for the speedy recovery of those who sustained injuries in the ambush.

Manipur to Host Grand Sangai Festival, Showcases Polo as Cultural Identity



IMPHAL

The state government is gearing up for a larger and more widely promoted 12th edition of the Sangai Festival, with a focus on showcasing Manipur's culture and resilience, following a series of high-level meetings chaired by the Governor at Raj Bhavan on September 19.

Officials reviewed festival plans, including programs, committee structures, and national and international promotional strategies. The tourism department presented a detailed roadmap to ensure this year's festival draws greater attention while highlighting Manipur's traditions and spirit.

The meetings also addressed strategies to strengthen Polo as a distinctive feature of the state. Discussions included demographic profiling, conservation and breeding of ponies, promotion of Sagol Kangjei, and support mechanisms for pony owners to sustain the sport's cultural and economic relevance.

Challenges at the Government Polytechnic in Takyelpat, including manpower shortages and infrastructure gaps, were also examined. Senior officials explored measures to improve educational and administrative outcomes.

The day concluded with a Governor-in-Council session, reviewing departmental initiatives and measures to enhance governance efficiency across the state.

Zubeen Garg Death Case: CID Steps In, Consolidates FIRs Against Mahanta, Sarma

GUWAHATI

In a major development following the tragic demise of Assam's beloved singer Zubeen Garg in Singapore, multiple FIRs have been filed against Syamkanu Mahanta, Chief Organiser of the North East India Festival, and Sidhartha Sarma, the singer's manager.

The FIRs, lodged across different police stations in the state, have now been ordered to be transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for a consolidated probe.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, addressing the matter, said, "Multiple FIRs have been filed against Syamkanu Mahanta and Sidhartha Sarma in connection with the unfortunate and untimely demise of our beloved Zubeen Garg. I have directed DGP Assam Police to transfer all the FIRs to the CID and to register a consolidated case for a thorough investigation."

The development comes amidst a storm of grief and anger in Assam, where Zubeen was not just a musical icon but also a voice of the people. His sudden death during a yacht outing in Singapore has raised serious questions over the circumstances leading to the tragedy.

Earlier, Mahanta had stated



that Zubeen had gone for the yacht trip with members of the local Assamese community, claiming that the festival organisers had no prior knowledge of the visit.

Public outrage intensified after these revelations, with many demanding accountability from those who were responsible for Zubeen's safety. Social media has since been flooded with appeals for justice, with fans and well-wishers holding Mahanta and Sarma morally accountable.

The CID will now piece together the FIRs, statements, and evidence to conduct a unified investigation into possible lapses

that may have contributed to the tragedy. Police sources said that the scope of the probe will include the circumstances of the yacht outing, safety measures, and the responsibilities of the individuals accompanying Zubeen.

As Assam continues to mourn, the demand for truth and justice grows louder. Thousands of fans have gathered outside Zubeen's Guwahati residence since the news broke, paying homage to the voice that defined generations.

For them, the investigation is not just about fixing accountability—it is about honouring Zubeen Garg's memory with the truth.

Union Minister Bats for Global Recognition of Northeastern Films at Guwahati Festival



GUWAHATI
The three-day SOUL Do-

cu-Fiction Film Festival 2025 opened in Guwahati on September 19, spotlight-

ing Assam's rich cultural heritage and the diversity of communities across the

northeast. The festival, running from September 19 to 21 at Jyoti Chitraban Film Studio in Kahilipara, aims to connect filmmakers, storytellers, and media professionals from across the region. Union Minister L Murugan, speaking at the launch, described the event as the first of its kind in Assam, designed to bring together creative talent from the northeast.

"People from the media and entertainment sector, as well as renowned filmmakers, have gathered for the event. The theme focuses on the story of the land and its culture," Murugan said.

Over 1,500 participants are expected, with nearly 100 films set to be screened over the three days. The festival will also feature an award ceremony recognising outstanding contributions in docu-fiction film-

making.

Organised by Seemanta Chetana Manchana Purvotkar, the festival celebrates the connection between people and the land they inhabit. The organisers said SOUL provides a platform for narratives rooted in the traditions, rituals, and stories of Northeast India, reflecting unity in diversity across communities, religions, and borders.

Murugan also highlighted the role of the entertainment and media industry in promoting northeastern cinema on the global stage. He added that the festival coincides with the nation's 'Seva Pakhwada' celebrations from September 17 to October 2, during which various blood and medical camps are being organised, and 75 songs dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday have been released by media professionals.

Civil society groups call strike on Oct 13

AGARTALA

The Tiprasa tribal society groups on Saturday called a dawn to dusk strike on October 13 next putting forth a seven-point charter of demands.

The announcement was made by rebel-turned-MLA Ranjit Debarma during a press conference. He was flanked by top leaders of the various civil society groups.

Stating that this protest is going to be completely apolitical, Debarma said, "This movement is sponsored by the civil society groups. It has no links with any political party. As a society we put forth these seven point charter of demands which the government should look into."

The first demand of the civil society groups is to detect and deport all illegal immigrants from Tripura.

According to Debarma, the Ministry of Home Affairs had asked all the states to launch an operation to detect and deport illegal immigrants. The instruction failed to gain any traction for reasons best known to the administration, the Tipra Motha MLA claimed, adding that the neighbouring Assam strictly followed the directions of the MHA, Government

of India and detected and deported a large number of illegal migrants from the state.

The second demand is also related to the first demand which advocates for setting up of detention camps to keep the illegal immigrants there. Apart from that, they demanded introduction of Inner Line Permit (ILP) in sixth schedule areas to prevent infiltration and posting of officials from Indian army and other paramilitary forces in the STF (Special Task Force) formed to tackle illegal infiltration. Right now, only Tripura Police officials are posted in the task force. The civil societies also demanded speedy implementation of the tripartite Tiprasa Accord which is being seen as a tool of development for the tribal communities of the state. "For the last 18 months, we had been waiting for the implementation of the accord. For the interest of our society, the accord should be implemented as early as possible," said Debarma.

The last two demands include: official approval for use of Roman Script for Kokborok and fake ST certificates must be revoked through verification.



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WELCOME TO THE NEW WORLD DISORDER

India is cautiously evaluating Donald Trump's birthday greetings to his friend Narendra Modi after weeks of accusing India of protectionism. Was it premature for PM Modi to project a united front with Xi and Putin at Tianjin, since, in the long term, the US and India are natural partners? Or was the show of unity in China just as natural, since Indian industry needs China's inputs to grow, China needs India's markets, and both need Russian oil?

There are no clear answers visible in the new world disorder. The only certainty is that the system is disorderly, that its anchors have come unstuck, and that all things that rely on a common understanding and shared mechanisms will change—from trade and security to the environment and public health.

Trade is directly affected—it's become the art of the deal. The US had chafed at rules-based multilateral forums for years, and Trump has provided the derring-do to turn back to unilateralism and bilateralism, which help powerful nations to prevail. Since 2019, Washington has been blocking appointments to the appellate body of the World Trade Organization, making its processes unenforceable. In order to send a case into limbo, a member nation only has to raise an appeal. Besides, bilateral tariff threats exceed the caps set in the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs and bilateral deals bypass the system of most favoured nations, undermining the authority of the WTO.

The US had lost interest in the UN long ago, and now it is little better than an observer of global issues, alerting the world with a resolution when evil is afoot. Its critics seem to have forgotten the grave dangers which faced the human race when it was created at the end of the Second World War. And they seem to have shrugged off the horrors of the First World War, out of which its predecessor, the League of Nations, was born.

Now, without the need for a time machine, perhaps we'll get to experience what international affairs were like before multilateral and inter-governmental forums were established—nations operating unilaterally and bilaterally, ganging up and deciding matters by brute force, or by force of arms.

The age of globalisation also seems to be over, though the tariff wars allegedly promote the free movement of goods, services and intellectual property. But the age of protectionism seems to be returning, in lockstep with the rise of nationalism. At present India, which has been historically reluctant to open up to market forces, is being challenged by tariffs to roll back protectionism. But the challenger, the US, is itself turning protectionist, withdrawing from a world which, it fears, has been ripping it off. The outsourcing of business processes is going to be less popular because national security now comes before margins.

For the same reason, the US is jettisoning climate concerns and fiercely embracing fossil fuels. This will seriously damage the global compact painstakingly developed by three decades of advocacy, in which nations have advanced from climate change denial to partnership for abatement. However, the compact has always been stressed because prosperous nations that industrialised early and polluted more do not want to pay more than the rest, the victims of climate change, while those nations believe that the polluter must pay. Now, it could unravel.

Under the stewardship of the WHO, which had anchored the global health system, the world has rid itself of ancient scourges like smallpox, leprosy and polio. It was possible because nations cooperated to follow global protocols like the oral polio vaccine programme. But now, scepticism in the US about vaccines—and science-based interventions in general—is undermining the unity of purpose upon which disease eradication depends. The containment of communicable diseases—and even rapidly communicated modern lifestyles—depends on globally consistent action. If polio is not rigidly controlled in the US, the effects will be felt in Africa and Asia.

The threat of nuclear warfare is back after decades. The India-Pakistan conflict earlier this year escalated and ended swiftly—to general relief, because persistent bad blood between the two nuclear powers in South Asia makes the region an ever-ticking flashpoint. But like many recent conflicts, including the missile duels in West Asia, it was from a distance—rendering violence abstract, which may make the use of nuclear weapons more acceptable. The present nuclear arms regime, presided over by the US, remains patent only until first use. After that, it'll be a free-for-all tournament.

As the US furls up its security umbrella, nations from Europe to Japan are again committing themselves to defence, and will form new blocs of military power. In our region, Pakistan has entered into a pact with Saudi Arabia, under which an attack on one will be seen as an attack on both. The US is revoking the sanctions waiver on Chabahar port. Nato nations are investing more in defence. And amazingly, Japan, the only victim of nuclear war, which had kept N-weapons at arm's length, is doing an about-face.

In so many areas, change will be the only constant. But nations at the wavefront of change—the US, India, Russia, and China—are led by individuals nearing the end of their careers. Perhaps there will be stability after their political heirs establish a new normal—if systems of election and selection can retain the public trust till that time.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Necessity is cruel, but it is the only test of inward strength. Every fool may live according to his own likings.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

MIG-21: HOW IT CHANGED INDIA'S COLD WAR CHOICES



DR KUMAR

The MiG-21 not only earned its reputation by shooting down advanced US-built fighters, such as Pakistan's F-104 in 1971 and an F-16 in 2019, but its very entry into the Indian Air Force marked a watershed moment, fundamentally altering the course of India's military strategy and aerial capabilities. It was the moment when Washington's dominance over India's military supply lines began to weaken, and Moscow emerged as the mainstay of India's defence requirements.

The background lay in Washington's strategic decision to arm Pakistan as part of its broader Cold War plans. In February 1954, the United States agreed in principle to provide military assistance to Pakistan, and by May that year, the two countries formally signed a Mutual Defence Agreement. Subsequently, Pakistan became a member of US-led alliances, SEATO in 1954 and CENTO in 1955, which ensured continuous American military aid under the framework of these security pacts. This opened the door for Pakistan to receive advanced aircraft like the F-86 Sabre and, eventually, the supersonic F-104 Star fighter, along with B-57 Canberras. These aircraft were supplied on extremely favourable terms, if not free, as part of security assistance. Dennis Kux, in The United States and Pakistan, has pointed out how American policymakers viewed Pakistan as a reliable partner for containing the Soviet Union, even though this directly tilted the military balance in South Asia.

For India, the experience was starkly different. To modernise the IAF, New Delhi had to spend hard currency on costly imports from Britain, France, and Canada. Aircraft like the Hawker Hunter, Dassault Mystère, and the English Electric Canberra were acquired, but every purchase strained India's limited foreign exchange reserves. By 1957, defence spending had climbed to 2.5 percent of GDP for the first time, triggering alarm at the Reserve Bank of India and among Western lenders.

It was in this environment that Prime Minister Nehru brought in V.K. Krishna Menon as Defence Minister in 1957. Menon was widely regarded as one of Nehru's closest and most controversial lieutenants, with a reputation

for being anti-Western. Instead of relying on continued imports, India's defence policy in this era prioritised the strategic necessity of building domestic capability. The guiding principle became the transfer of technology and developing local production as the foundation for defence procurement, ensuring long-term national security could rest on self-reliance rather than dependence on foreign suppliers, thereby saving the depleting foreign exchange. This approach shaped major negotiations and policy decisions in the late 1950s and beyond.

The demand for supersonic fighters brought these issues to the forefront. Pakistan's induction of the F-104 Star fighter, one of the most advanced jets of its time, compelled India to seek a counter. Delhi requested the same platform from Washington, but the request was rejected. As historian Tanvi Madan observes in Fateful Triangle, Washington's calculus was shaped by its strategic embrace of Pakistan and its reluctance to dilute that by arming India in the same way. Similarly, India explored the possibility of acquiring the British Lightning, but London refused to part with production rights or permit licensed manufacture in India.

The Western reluctance created an opening for the Soviet Union. By the late 1950s, Moscow was keen to deepen relations with New Delhi, partly to offset American influence in South Asia. Unlike Britain or the United States, the Soviets were willing to go beyond simple sales. They offered the MiG-21, one of the most advanced fighters in their arsenal, along with a package for licensed production in India. This was extraordinary at the time, as even China, which had a closer ideological relationship with Moscow, had not been given such access to the MiG-21.

Negotiations unfolded against the backdrop of India's fragile economy. The "Aid India Consortium", comprising the US, Britain, Canada, Germany, Japan, and the World Bank, had been assembled to assist India with its balance of payments. Nehru, therefore, was compelled to maintain a delicate balance: strengthening India's defences without collapsing its economic programme. His December 1956 visit to Washington, accompanied by experts from the Planning Commission, underscored this tension. As declassified US records show,

American policymakers saw India's economic trajectory as a test case for whether democracy could deliver progress in Asia against the Communist model in China. Yet, they were unwilling to separate economic aid from political alignment in foreign policy.

Krishna Menon's negotiations with Moscow culminated in a breakthrough. In August 1962, India signed an agreement with the Soviet Union for the supply of MiG-21s, beginning with 12 aircraft manufactured in the USSR, followed by licensed production at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. According to S.N. Singh's analysis, this was the first time the Soviets had offered such a comprehensive transfer of technology for a frontline combat aircraft. Graham's study of Soviet-Indian relations noted that the Kremlin viewed this as a strategic investment, ensuring that India's defence industrial base would become tied to Soviet systems for the foreseeable future. The first Indian-built MiG-21s began rolling out by the late 1960s, marking the start of what would become one of the most numerous fighter fleets in the IAF's history.

The implications of the MiG-21 deal went far beyond the aircraft itself. Thomas, in his work on Indian defence policy, has argued that this agreement symbolised the beginning of India's structural dependence on Soviet arms. In the years that followed, Moscow became the principal supplier of not only fighters, but also transport aircraft, tanks, artillery, and naval systems, including submarines. By the early 1970s, when India and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, the defence relationship had become one of the central pillars of their bilateral ties.

Nehru's position, however, remained nuanced. He did not see the MiG-21 agreement as an ideological shift into the Soviet camp. His objective was to maintain balance, to avoid dependence on a single bloc while safeguarding India's strategic autonomy. Yet, as Tanvi Madan has observed, balance was difficult to maintain in practice when one power—Washington—was committed to arming Pakistan, while the other—Moscow—was ready to underwrite India's defence-industrial ambitions. In effect, choices made in Washington narrowed India's options, while Soviet flexibility expanded them.

The MiG-21 thus became far more than just another acquisition. It represented the convergence of defence, diplomacy, and industrial policy at a moment when India faced both economic stress and external threats. It was the first major step toward building an indigenous aerospace industry, while also binding India's armed forces to Soviet supply chains for decades to come. Later controversies about the aircraft's safety record, or its eventual obsolescence, do not diminish the historical significance of its induction in 1962.

Looking back, the MiG-21 deal can be seen as a watershed. It was the point where India's pursuit of self-reliance collided with Cold War geopolitics, producing an outcome that reshaped the country's strategic orientation. It showed that defence procurement was not merely a technical or financial decision, but one embedded in the larger architecture of international relations. For India, the MiG-21 was both a symbol of aspiration, for technological independence, and a marker of dependence, anchoring New Delhi ever more deeply to Moscow's defence complex.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Multiple FIRs have been filed against Shri Syamkanu Mahanta and Shri Sidharth Sarma in connection with the unfortunate and untimely demise of our beloved Zubeen Garg. I have directed the @DGPAssamPolice to transfer all the FIRs to the CID and to register a consolidated case for a thorough investigation. @assampolice

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM



'BLUE ECONOMY IS OUR FRONTIER OF GREEN GROWTH'

DR JITENDRA SINGH

For a nation as vast and diverse as ours, the journey to becoming a developed country, "Viksit Bharat" by 2047, requires us to look at every resource and every available opportunity. And our greatest untapped resource lies in the vast blue ocean that surrounds our country.

Blue Economy is our new frontier for growth, a pathway to prosperity, sustainability, and national strength. It is a powerful concept that includes everything from traditional activities such as fisheries, ports, and shipping to cutting-edge new fields such as marine biotechnology, eco-tourism, renewable ocean energy, and deep-sea exploration.

Earth sciences ministry defines Blue Economy as "comprising the entire system of ocean resources and man-made economic infrastructure in marine, maritime and onshore coastal zones within India's legal jurisdiction, aiding the production of goods and services with clear linkages to economic growth, environmental sustainability and national security". With a revised coastline stretching now over 11,098km and a vast Exclusive Economic Zone spanning 2.4 sq mn km, India is exceptionally well-placed to build a \$100bn growth engine through a sustainable use of ocean resources creating jobs,

supporting coastal communities, protecting marine ecosystems, and strengthening our global maritime presence.

We are now in Blue Economy 2.0, focusing not just on traditional sectors but also the emerging, high-potential areas that will define our future. For example, the Deep Ocean Mission is helping our scientists explore the deep sea using the Matsya 6000 submersible, aiming to find strategic resources and create new technologies for the future. The Sagarmala Programme is modernising our ports to make our trade more efficient and our businesses more competitive. For our coastal communities, the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana is a flagship scheme to bring a "blue revolution" to our fisheries sector.

But our vision goes far beyond this. It empowers people and protects our planet. It includes creation of new opportunities for women's empowerment, by encouraging them to lead in sustainable fields like seaweed farming and eco-friendly tourism, providing them new income streams and a greater voice in their communities. It includes investments in our youth, offering them training and skills for new Blue Economy jobs, from marine engineering to data analytics. We are nurturing a new generation of blue-

collar innovators and entrepreneurs.

To support innovation, GOI acts as a catalyst for private investment and innovative startups, which form the Blue Economy core. We create a business-friendly environment where young, energetic companies can develop solutions in areas like smart fishing, green port logistics, and marine biotechnology. Our focus on tech and startups is a key part of our plan to build a self-reliant India, which not only consumes but also creates. We are encouraging clean and green activities, such as sustainable fish farming and the restoration of mangroves and coral reefs, which act as natural barriers against climate change and rising sea levels. In places like Lakshadweep, India's first ocean thermal energy plant is demonstrating how innovation can provide both clean electricity and drinking water. Our Harit Sagar Guidelines are a clear commitment to making our ports green, aiming for zero carbon emissions and the use of clean fuels.

India is also taking a leadership role in global ocean governance. During our G20 presidency, we launched the Chennai High-Level Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy, setting a global framework for responsible ocean development. We are strengthening partnerships with

other developed countries and multilateral agencies for science-based decision-making in the interest of oceans and people.

We have also signed the historic Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction agreement, reaffirming our commitment to protecting marine biodiversity on a global scale. Most recently, India participated in the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, where we launched the SAHAV Portal, a pioneering digital platform to enhance coordination, knowledge sharing, and transparency across Blue Economy initiatives such as Marine Spatial Planning.

The journey to Viksit Bharat is a shared one and Blue Economy is a national commitment to responsibly harness the full power of our oceans. By empowering our people, protecting our nature, and investing in science and technology, we are building a maritime future that will benefit all Indians. As we look ahead to 2047, building a New India that is prosperous, inclusive, and ecologically secure, the tide is with us, and we are ready to ride it towards a brighter future.

(The writer is Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions)

“Cruel blow to us all”: N Biren Singh condemns terror attack on Assam Rifles personnel

IMPHAL

Former Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh expressed grief over the killing of two Assam Rifles personnel in a terrorist attack in the Nambol Sabal Leikai area of Bishnupur district on Friday.

Calling the attack a “cruel blow” to the country, he conveyed condolences to the families of the deceased and demanded the harshest punishment for the perpetrators.

“I am deeply shaken to hear about the ambush on our brave 33 Assam Rifles personnel at Nambol Sabal Leikai. The loss of two jawans and injuries to several others is a cruel blow to us all. My deepest condolences to the families of the fallen and prayers for the quick recovery of the injured. Their courage and sacrifice will remain in our hearts forever. The perpetrators of this heinous crime must face the harshest punishment,” N Biren Singh wrote on X.



According to security officials, two Assam Rifles personnel, including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO), were killed and five others injured in the attack. A press note stated that in a brazen act of terrorism in an AFSPA-denotified area of Manipur, unidentified terrorists ambushed a vehicle-based column of the 33 Assam Rifles unit around 5:50 pm on September 19. The column was moving on National Highway 2 through a heavily built-up area in Nambol Sabal Leikai during hours of darkness when it came under unprovoked automatic weapon fire. Two personnel lost their lives, while five others sustained injuries. The injured were evacuated to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) Hospital in Imphal and are reported to be stable. Search operations are underway, though no group has claimed responsibility so far. Manipur has been reeling from ethnic violence since May 3, 2023, which displaced thousands of families from both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities. Earlier this month, the Kuki-Zo Council decided to reopen National Highway 2 (NH-2) for the free movement of commuters and essential goods. The decision followed a series of meetings in New Delhi between officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and a delegation of the Kuki-Zo Council. “Kuki-Zo Council has given a commitment to cooperate with security forces deployed by the Government of India to maintain peace along NH-2,” the MHA said in a statement. NH-2, a key lifeline connecting Manipur with Nagaland and other parts of the Northeast, had remained blocked amid ethnic tensions since May 2023. Its reopening is seen as a confidence-building measure to ease hardships faced by displaced families and civilians in relief camps. The MHA also said a tripartite meeting was held in New Delhi with representatives of the ministry, the Government of Manipur, and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People’s Front (UPF).

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“The meeting concluded with the signing of a tripartite Suspension of Operations (SoO) Agreement on re-negotiated terms and conditions (ground rules) to be effective from the day of signing of the Agreement for a period of one year,” the ministry said.

The revised provisions include safeguarding the territorial integrity of Manipur and pursuing a negotiated solution for lasting peace. The KNO and UPF also agreed to relocate seven designated camps away from conflict-prone areas, reduce the number of camps, shift weapons to nearby CRPF and BSF camps, and conduct strict verification of cadres to remove foreign nationals, if any.

The MHA said a joint monitoring group will oversee the enforcement of the new ground rules, adding that violations will be dealt with firmly, including a possible review of the SoO agreement.

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Tripura Assembly passes resolution hailing PM Modi, armed forces for Operation Sindoor

AGARTALA
Tripura Legislative Assembly on September 19 passed a congratulatory motion moved by Chief Minister Manik Saha, commending the Indian armed forces for the success of Operation Sindoor against cross-border terrorism.

Opening the session, Saha condemned the April 22 Pahalgam massacre in Kashmir, where 26 people, including tourists, were killed by Pakistan-backed extremists. “This heinous act has deeply saddened the nation. I strongly condemn it and extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims,” he said.

The chief minister recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s assurance that India would not tolerate such attacks and that perpetrators and their sponsors would face consequences. He highlighted that Operation Sindoor was launched on May 7, targeting terrorist camps inside Pakistan and neutralising a large number of militants.

According to Saha, India’s retaliatory missile strikes following Pakistani shelling damaged key military infrastructure without harming civilians. “Every attack from Pakistan has been met with courage and precision by our armed forces. Under Prime Minister Modi’s leadership, Operation Sindoor reflects India’s strength, resolve, and commitment to protecting its citizens,” he added.

He praised the Army, Navy, Air Force, BSF, and security agencies for their coordinated effort, calling the operation a “historic milestone in India’s fight against terrorism.” The motion extended the Assembly’s congratulations to the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, National Security Advisor, military leadership, and soldiers safeguarding the nation.

Tributes Paid to Singer Zubeen Garg



SILCHAR
Hundreds gathered at Gandhi Bagh on Saturday to pay tribute to the late singer Zubeen Garg, a versatile artist beloved across Assam and beyond. Garg passed away on Friday in Singapore, leaving fans and the wider community in deep mourning.

The programme drew participation from a diverse cross-section of society, including cultural and sports organisations, government and private institutions, clubs, NGOs, temple and festival committees, student and political groups, journalists, lawyers, and members of the public. Cachar District Commissioner Mridul Kumar Yadav described Garg’s death as a profound loss to the community. He extended heartfelt condolences to the family, friends, and all those affected, acknowledging the widespread grief that has touched the district. Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty also expressed his condolences, paying tribute to Garg’s enduring legacy in music and culture. He highlighted the shared mourning among residents and the administration, noting that Garg’s impact extended far beyond his immediate circle. ASP Subrata Kumar Sen, Municipal Commissioner Srishti Singh, Rumlee Bhatlacharjee, Joydeep Chakraborty, Soumitra Shankar Choudhury, Seema Purkayastha, Sharmista Deb, Sauvik Bhattacharjee, Meghraj Chakraborty, and others also offered tearful tributes. The ceremony was anchored by Biplab Biswas, who guided the proceedings with sensitivity and reverence.

Manipur child rights body flags “grave violation” in Guwahati assault case coverage

IMPHAL

The Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MCPCR) has raised serious concern over the alleged violation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, after the identities of minors linked to a sexual assault case in Guwahati were disclosed in media and on social platforms.

In a letter addressed to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central), Guwahati, MCPCR Chairperson Keisam Pradipkumar highlighted that five students of Assam Down Town University had come under public scrutiny following allegations of sexual assault on a Tripuri girl. Out of the five, two students were confirmed to be minors and are currently lodged in an Observation Home in connection with Pragjyotshpur Police Station Case

No. 125/25, dated September 17, 2025, registered under Sections 70(1)/3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The Commission expressed deep concern over the circulation of the accused students’ names and details — including those of the minors — across social media, electronic channels, and news agencies. Reports circulating online described the case as a gang rape involving “five Meitei students,” a portrayal the MCPCR warned could be misleading, inflammatory, and unlawful.

Quoting Section 74 of the Juvenile Justice Act, the Com-

mission reminded that the law strictly prohibits disclosure of the identity of children in conflict with the law. Violations are punishable by up to six months’ imprisonment, a fine of up to ₹2,00,000, or both.

“The disclosure of names and details of minors not only breaches legal provisions but also risks exacerbating ethnic tensions at a time when Manipur is already grappling with a fragile situation,” the Commission stated.

The MCPCR urged immediate action on three key fronts: Cyber Crime Police intervention in Assam and Manipur

to stop the unlawful circulation of minors’ names and details.

Strict instructions to media and social platforms to remove content violating the JJ Act.

An official police clarification to present an unbiased and factual account of the case to prevent the spread of distorted narratives.

While reiterating its commitment to protecting women from atrocities and sexual violence, the Commission emphasized the equal importance of safeguarding the dignity, privacy, and future prospects of children who may be wrongly implicated.

“The MCPCR strongly opposes sensationalized reporting that violates the rights of minors and could provoke communal discord in Manipur, Tripura, and Assam,” Chairperson Pradipkumar noted, urging Guwahati police to take urgent corrective measures.



This election is not tough for UPPL: Pramod Boro

BISWADEEP GUPTA

KOKRAJHAR: Speaking while on the election campaign, Pramod Boro spoke to KRC TIMES Editor-in-Chief on the upcoming elections of the Bodoland Territorial Council.

From the difficult situation for Bodoland, in the last five years, there has been a visible transformation from uncertainty to certainty. Unrest to rest, violence to peace, everywhere there is peace, echoed Pramod Boro, the chief of UPPL, who is going to face the people’s mandate for the second time.

He asserted that peace and normalcy have returned, and no fear in Bodoland now, which was prevalent earlier. We could remove all the fear from society for the people.

He highlighted the removal of trust deficit among people and that they could rebuild the society where twenty-six communities are living together, and co-exist.



Talking about governance, he said earlier, there was no effective governance system, and people were deprived. He asserts that now the governance has taken a pro-people stand, and people have more expectations from the system. Highlighting the policy vacuum of earlier governments, but his government could implement policies on the ground effectively. On his relationship with the

Central Government, Pramod Boro stated that the Council is an intermediary and the Bodoland region has been fighting for decades for their rights, and now his government has a working relationship with both the state and central government for implementing the Bodo Accord.

He highlighted that the goal is to develop the thirty-five lakh people of the region and the twenty-six

communities residing here. His party’s only focus is on the infrastructure development of the region and the people, he said.

On the development of twenty-six communities in the region, Boro stated that this is very important for guaranteeing the rights of the people as per the Constitution.

Despite the guarantees the discrimination exists, and in the last four years, the UPPL government studied the deficiencies and could come out with a “Vision Document”, which is a “Model” for the region.

On work still to accomplish, Pramod Boro echoed social development and gaps amongst the people are to be filled, and he will continue to work on that mission, irrespective of the outcome of the election results. He finally said that he has got the love and affection of people, which he believes his party will get the support of all twenty-six communities in order to build a better Bodoland.

Cachar administration reclaims 17 bighas of temple land in Katigorah eviction drive

KATIGORAH

The Cachar district administration on Thursday reclaimed 17 bighas of Debottar (temple-owned) land at Mahadevpur Part III under Katigorah constituency, demolishing permanent structures and clearing out years of encroachment.

The eviction drive, led by Katigorah Circle Officer Dr Robert Tolor, was carried out under high security. Bulldozers were deployed to demolish concrete houses and clear bamboo groves and trees that occupied the land for years.

After the eviction, the reclaimed land was marked with red flags to re-establish its boundaries.

Officials said the encroached land had been under unlawful occupation of four families for decades. However, the occupants fled before the eviction, leaving behind their homes.

“The occupants fled ahead of the eviction, abandoning their homes. The land will now be transferred to the temple after the demolition of the concrete structures,” said Cachar

District Commissioner Mridul Yadav.

He further hinted that similar eviction drives could soon be undertaken in forest areas within the district, while assuring that the administration would ensure peace and stability during such operations.

The issue gained traction after locals raised complaints with North Karimganj MLA Kamalakshya Day Purkayastha, who pressed for action.

An inquiry by the Circle Officer confirmed the encroachment, prompting Thursday’s crackdown.

Cachar District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, while talking to The Assam Tribune on Friday said that the occupants fled ahead of the eviction, abandoning their homes and the land would be transferred to the temple after demolishing the concrete structures.

However, he hinted that similar eviction drive could be carried out in forest area within the district as well. He said that the district administration will ensure that the law-and-order situation stays undisturbed.

Assam Rifles pay tributes to two jawans killed in Bishnupur terror attack

GUWAHATI

The Assam Rifles paid tribute to its two jawans who lost their lives in the Bishnupur terrorist attack.

According to security officials, two Assam Rifles personnel, including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO), were killed and five others have been injured in the attack.

“Lt Gen Vikas Lakhera, AVSM, SM, Director General Assam Rifles & All Ranks of Assam Rifles pay solemn tribute to Nb Sub Shyam Gurung & Rfn Ranjit Singh Kashyap who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty in Manipur today and offer deep condolences to the families of our Brave Soldiers,” Assam Rifles wrote on X.

A press note stated that in a brazen act of terrorism in an AFSPA-denotified area of Manipur, unidentified terrorists ambushed a vehicle-based column of the 33 Assam Rifles unit around 5:50 pm on September 19. The column was moving on National Highway 2 through a heavily built-up area in Nambol Sabal Leikai during hours of darkness when it came under unprovoked automatic weapon fire.

Two personnel lost their lives, while five others sustained injuries. The injured



were evacuated to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) Hospital in Imphal and are reported to be stable. Search operations are underway, though no group has claimed responsibility so far.

Manipur has been reeling from ethnic violence since May 3, 2023, which displaced thousands of families from both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

Earlier this month, the Kuki-Zo Council decided to reopen National Highway 2 (NH-2) for the free movement of commuters and essential goods. The decision followed a series of meetings in New Delhi between officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and a delegation of the Kuki-Zo Council.

“Kuki-Zo Council has given a commitment to cooperate with security forces de-

played by the Government of India to maintain peace along NH-2,” the MHA had said in a statement.

NH-2, a key lifeline connecting Manipur with Nagaland and other parts of the Northeast, had remained blocked amid ethnic tensions since May 2023. Its reopening is seen as a confidence-building measure to ease hardships faced by displaced families and civilians in relief camps.

The MHA also said a tripartite meeting was held in New Delhi on September 4 with representatives of the ministry, the Government of Manipur, and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People’s Front (UPF).

“The meeting concluded with the signing of a tripartite Suspension of Operations (SoO) Agreement on re-negotiated terms and conditions (ground rules) to be effective from the day of signing of the Agreement for a period of one year,” the ministry said. The revised provisions include safeguarding the territorial integrity of Manipur and pursuing a negotiated solution for lasting peace. The KNO and UPF also agreed to relocate seven designated camps away from conflict-prone areas, reduce the number of camps, shift weapons to nearby CRPF and BSF camps, and conduct strict verification of cadres to remove foreign nationals, if any.

The MHA said a joint monitoring group will oversee the enforcement of the new ground rules, adding that violations will be dealt with firmly, including a possible review of the SoO agreement.

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Tighten cyber security measures in Smart Cities: MHA to housing ministry



NEW DELHI

In view of rising cyber threats, the Union Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA) has asked the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to take immediate steps to strengthen cyber security mechanisms across smart cities.

Reiterating the points discussed in a recent conference on cyber safety, the MHA has stressed the need for each smart city to appoint a dedicated Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), backed by a technical team. CISOs will play a critical role in safeguarding digital infrastructure, monitoring cyber risks, ensuring compliance with national security protocols, and leading

timely responses to potential attacks. Officials said the move comes against the backdrop of increasing dependence on technology-driven governance and services under the Smart Cities Mission. In the conference, deliberations were held over the possible threats, the required cyber security measures, the steps to curb cybercrimes, and the relevance of critical information infrastructure and protected systems in smart cities. "In the wake of emerging cyber challenges, there is a need to appoint a suitably qualified and dedicated CISO with a requisite technical team for every smart city... A robust Information Security Management System may be implemented including

firewalls, intrusion detection and prevention systems (IDS/IPS), endpoint protection, data encryption and multi-factor authentication. Regular comprehensive cyber security audits along with vulnerability assessments and penetration tests (VAPT) should be conducted to identify and address potential weaknesses and patch them effectively," MHA secretary Govind Mohan wrote in his letter to MoHUA counterpart. Officials said that following the letter, MoHUA has designated CISOs.

The communiqué also highlighted the operationalisation of a 24x7 Cyber Multi Agency Centre by MHA as a nodal point for reporting, coordinating,

PM Modi to virtually dedicate MoUs worth Rs 66,000 crore under Ministry of Ports

GANDHINAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside over the Samudra Se Samridhhi programme in Bhavnagar on September 20, 2025. To advance the country's development through maritime growth, the PM will virtually dedicate MoUs worth Rs 66,025 crore of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India, according to a statement from the Gujarat Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

This includes 21 MoUs focused on ports and shipping. The PM will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for various projects totalling Rs 7,870 crore, aimed at the development of the nation's major ports under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

The Prime Minister will present several development projects to the people of Gujarat. He will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for projects worth Rs 26,354 crore under various departments of the Government of India and the Government of Gujarat.

Through this initiative, PM Modi will, from Bhavnagar, present development works worth over Rs 1 lakh crore to the people of India.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Union Cabinet Minister for the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, Government of India, will also be present at the programme.

Additionally, the PM will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth over Rs 2,500 crore across several Gujarat Government departments.

These include the Energy and Petrochemicals Department, Health and Family Welfare, Roads and Housing, Urban Development, Water Resources and Water Supply, and Fisheries (Agriculture) Department.

The PM will present development works totalling Rs 26,354 crore to the people of Gujarat on September 20, during a programme in Bhavnagar.

The PM will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for various projects worth Rs 23,830 crore under various



ministries of the Government of India and Rs 2,524 crore under multiple departments of the Government of Gujarat.

Key development projects under the Ministries of the Government of India include the inauguration of the HPLNG LNG Regasification Terminal at Chhara Port, constructed at a cost of Rs 4,700 crore under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and the Acrylic/Oxo-Alcohol Project of Indian Oil at Gujarat Refinery, Vadodara, built at a cost of Rs 5,894 crore.

The PM will also inaugurate the 280 MW Solar Project at Surendranagar, constructed at a cost of Rs 1,500 crore under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, along with projects under the PM-KUSUM Scheme across 17 districts of Gujarat—Amreli, Ahmedabad, Banaskantha, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Kutch, Mehsana, Porbandar, Rajkot, Sabarkantha, Surendranagar, Aravalli, Morbi, Devbhoomi Dwarka, Gir-Somnath, and Botad—at a cost of Rs 1,660 crore, including around 172 decentralised solar power plants totalling 475 MW.

Additionally, the PM will lay the foundation stone for various wind and solar power projects under the Ministry of Coal, as well as multiple road projects under the Ministry of Roads, Transport

and Highways.

In another development, the Dhordo village in Kutch, recognised as the 'Best Tourism Village' by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), is now 100 per cent solarised.

Under Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, all residential electricity connections in the village have been converted to solar, improving Gujarat's rooftop solar capacity and allowing homes in Dhordo to generate their own electricity.

The PM will dedicate the solar-powered Dhordo village during a programme in Bhavnagar on 20 September 2025. Furthermore, the PM will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth Rs 2,524 Crore by the Gujarat government departments during the 'Samudra Se Samridhhi' programme.

Additionally, a 45 MW solar PV project and a waste-to-energy plant will also be inaugurated. The PM will also lay the foundation stone of a project worth Rs 303 crore to replace existing power line wires with Medium Voltage Covered Conductors (MVCC) in Bhavnagar, Botad, Amreli, and Surendranagar districts.

Foundation stone for a teaching Hospital and MCH Block at Takhtsinji Hospital, Bhavnagar, with an invest-

ment of Rs 583.90 crore and an OPD, MCH, and super speciality hospital building at the Guru Gobind Singh Government Hospital, Jamnagar, with an investment of Rs 525.10 crore, will also be laid down.

Furthermore, the foundation stone of development projects worth Rs 440.7 crore, which includes widening and strengthening of roads in Kutch and Saurashtra, and the construction of a railway overbridge on the Jetpur Bypass Missing Link Road, will also be laid. Additionally, development work worth Rs 267 crore, including the construction of a 45 MLD sewage treatment plant at Kumbharwada in Bhavnagar, foundation stone laying for a four-lane paver road from Kumbharwada to Dasnala, and an underground sewerage project at Varteji village, will also be laid.

Under the Water Resources Department, the Foundation stone laying for the 'Chanch Anti-Sea Erosion' with an investment of Rs 56 crore will be laid down while the Junagadh-Vanthal Sudharana Juth Pani Purvatha Yojana with an investment of Rs 38.27 crore will be inaugurated.

Under the Agriculture Department, the foundation stone of a Fish Landing Centre at Dhamlej in Gir-Somnath district, with an investment of Rs 39.46 crore, will be laid.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump's \$100k visa: Another move aimed at hurting India?

NEW DELHI

The Trump administration's move to impose a \$100,000 annual fee on H-1B visa holders is a decision taken at the intersection of politics, economics, and global competition.

It is certainly framed as a tough measure to rebalance the American labour market, tinged with immigration nationalism.

But the proposal may also prove to be a high-stakes gamble that could undercut US technological leadership, dent foreign relations and force companies to rethink their long-term strategies.

The H-1B visa programme has been a longstanding pathway for American companies to hire foreign workers in specialised roles, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Each year, 65,000 regular H-1B visas are issued, with an additional 20,000 reserved for those with advanced degrees from the US institutions.

The demand has far outpaced supply for years as the visa lottery system got flooded by applications from employers seeking talent that remains in short supply domestically.

In 2024, Indian nationals accounted for a staggering 71% of all H-1B visa beneficiaries, with China a distant second at 11.7%. In the first half of 2025, Amazon and its cloud arm AWS secured approvals for more than 12,000 H-1B workers. Microsoft and Meta each topped 5,000.

These are by no means any fringe hires. They are critical engineers, data scientists, and infrastructure architects driving next-generation platforms in AI, cloud computing, and enterprise software for the US.

So when US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick announced that "all the big companies are on board" with a \$100,000 fee per worker, per year, it sent immediate shockwaves through the industry.

Markets responded immediately. Shares of Cognizant, an IT services firm reliant on H-1B workers, dropped nearly 5%. Infosys and Wipro, two Indian tech giants with large US footprints, saw



their US-listed shares fall by 2 to 5%.

Yet the broader implications go beyond market jitters for sure. This policy would effectively triple the cost of employing an H-1B worker for the duration of their stay, often between three and six years.

This policy would effectively triple the cost of employing an H-1B worker for the duration of their stay, often between three and six years.

While some large firms might absorb these costs, startups and mid-sized tech companies could be forced to slow hiring, reallocate work abroad, or pause key projects altogether.

This would also mean the underlying political message is deterrence. That foreign talent, no matter how qualified, comes with a heavy price in the US, for long touted as the land of opportunities.

This doesn't mean that H-1B was flawless. Some employers, particularly outsourcing firms, have used the visa to import large numbers of workers at below-market wages.

This has distorted labour markets and disadvantaged American workers, particularly recent graduates struggling to enter high-tech fields.

For them, the fee is not punitive;

rather, it is corrective. It compels firms to reconsider their overreliance on foreign workers and incentivises investment in domestic talent pipelines.

But the trade-offs are stark. Over the past two decades, the number of foreign-born STEM workers in the US more than doubled, even as total STEM employment increased just 44.5%. That imbalance reflects a structural shortage. And this is not a temporary hiring preference. There aren't enough trained American workers to fill the roles in the fast-scaling sectors like artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and software engineering. Until that changes, foreign talent remains indispensable, not optional.

The timing is particularly sensitive. The United States is in a high-stakes global race for AI dominance, facing escalating competition from China, whose centralised approach to industrial policy and long-term planning presents a serious challenge. For many, access to the world's top technical talent is America's ace. Curtailing that access risks undermining the very advantage the US holds.

This policy would effectively triple the cost of employing an H-1B worker for the duration of their stay, often between three and six years.

The policy could also add to the existing geopolitical tension.

India has long been one of the United States' most important technology partners. With Chinese-US relations in a deep freeze, Washington has leaned heavily on New Delhi. India's rise as a digital power has been supported, in part, by its deep integration with the US tech industry through the H-1B pipeline. Penalising that relationship now could send another conflicting signal to India.

Complicating matters further is a parallel proposal: a so-called "gold card," which would offer permanent residency to foreigners willing to invest \$1 million in the US economy. This bifurcation of immigration policy, welcoming the wealthy while taxing the skilled, has raised eyebrows.

It risks creating the perception that merit is secondary to capital, a sharp departure from America's traditional framing of itself as a magnet for talent, not just money. In fact, it smacks of immigration nationalism.

It's not unreasonable for the government to examine how temporary visa programs impact domestic labour. Nor is it irrational to ask whether companies have become too dependent on external hiring to the detriment of local capacity-building. But policy needs to be proportional and future-facing. A blunt \$100,000 fee risks becoming a barrier, not a balancing tool.

There is also the issue of legality. Critics argue that the proposed fee structure could exceed the government's authority under current law, which permits visa-related fees only to cover the cost of application processing—not as a revenue-generating mechanism. That could open the door to legal challenges.

The H-1B program represents more than just labour mobility. It is a symbol of America's role in the global knowledge economy. Tinkering with it has consequences far beyond payrolls or campaign slogans. It affects how the US is perceived by investors, innovators, and allies.

As global competition for talent intensifies, the question is no longer whether the US can attract the world's best minds. It's whether it chooses to.

UN chief says world should not be intimidated by Israel

UNITED NATION

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told AFP Friday the world should not be "intimidated" by Israel and its creeping annexation of the occupied West Bank.

In an interview at UN headquarters in New York, he also called for more ambitious climate action saying that efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 Celsius above pre-industrial levels were at risk of "collapsing."

Guterres spoke to AFP ahead of the UN's signature high-level week at which 10 countries will recognize a Palestinian state, according to France — over fierce Israeli objections.

The meeting of more than 140 heads of state and government, which paralyzes a corner of Manhattan for a week each year, will likely be dominated by the future of the Palestinians and the war in Gaza.

Israel has reportedly threatened to annex the West Bank if Western nations press ahead with the recognition plan at the UN gathering.

But Guterres said, "We should not feel intimidated by the risk of retaliation."

"With or without doing what we are doing, these actions would go on and at least there is a chance to mobilize international community to put pressure for them not to happen," he said.

"What we are witnessing in Gaza is horrendous," Guterres said as Israel threatened "unprecedented force" in its ongoing assault on Gaza in Gaza.

"It is the worst level of death and destruction that I've seen my time as Secretary-General, probably my life and the suffering of

the Palestinian people cannot be described — famine, total lack of effective health care, people living without adequate shelters in huge concentration areas," he said.

Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has called for annexation of swaths of the West Bank with an aim to "bury the idea of a Palestinian state" after several countries joined the French push on statehood.

But Israel's staunch ally the United States has held back from any criticism of the war in Gaza or vows to annex the West Bank — and excoriated its allies who have vowed to recognize a Palestinian state.

Also on the agenda will be efforts to combat climate change which Guterres warned are flourishing.

Guterres said efforts to cap climate warming at 1.5 Celsius above pre-industrial levels were in trouble.

The climate goals for 2035 of the countries that signed the Paris Agreement, also known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), were initially expected to be submitted several months ago.

However, uncertainties related to geopolitical tensions and trade rivalries have slowed the process.

"We are on the verge of this objective collapsing," he told AFP.

"We absolutely need countries to come... with climate action plans that are fully aligned with 1.5 degrees (Celsius), that cover the whole of their economies and the whole of their greenhouse gas emissions," he said. "It is essential that we have a drastic reduction of emissions in the next few

years if you want to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit alive."

Less than two months before COP30 climate meeting in Brazil, dozens of countries have been slow to announce their plans — particularly China and the European Union, powers considered pivotal for the future of climate diplomacy.

Efforts to combat the impact of man-made global warming have taken a backseat to myriad crises in recent years that have included the coronavirus pandemic and several wars, with Guterres seeking to reignite the issue.

The UN hopes that the climate summit co-chaired Wednesday in New York by Guterres and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will be an opportunity to breathe life into efforts ahead of COP30.

Guterres said he was concerned that Nationally Determined Contributions, or national climate action plans, may not ultimately support the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

"It's not a matter to panic. It's a matter to be determined, to put all pressure for countries."

Containing global warming to 1.5C compared to the pre-industrial era 1850-1900 is the most ambitious goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement. But many scientists agree that this threshold will most likely be reached before the end of this decade, as the planet continues to burn more and more oil, gas, and coal.

The climate is already on average 1.4C warmer today, according to current estimates from the European observatory Copernicus.

NORTH EAST GRIEVES ZUBEEN GARG: LEADERS AND LITTERATEURS PAY HEARTFELT TRIBUTE



Who Is Zubeen Garg?

A heartfelt tribute by Gitanjali Goswami from Guwahati

He was fire wrapped in music, a voice that echoed beyond borders, a soul too wild to be caged.

A fearless spirit— he spoke when others stayed silent, stood tall where others bent low.

You said, "Be like water." And your heart was like an ocean— deep, endless, and free. And in the end, it was the ocean that took you home.

He gave without asking, loved without limits, and lived like every moment was his last. He didn't just carry Assamese



silence, he's louder than ever.

Because legends don't die. They just become the sky, the sea, the very air we breathe.



Gitanjali Goswami
19-9.2025

culture— he was it. In every note, every verse, he made us feel like home.

A leader, not by title, but by presence. A man who lit up rooms, and tore down walls.

The son every mother prayed for, the brother every sister trusted, the quiet crush of every heart that caught his smile just once.

And now— a silence where his voice used to be. But even in that

The sudden demise of celebrated singer, composer and actor Zubeen Garg has sent shockwaves across the North East, with the political leadership and literary fraternity of Arunachal Pradesh mourning the loss of the region's most loved cultural icon.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu, in his condolence message, said Zubeen Garg was "more than a singer – a cultural torchbearer whose melodies united people, lifted spirits, and gave voice to a shared identity."

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also expressed deep grief, calling the incident "extremely shocking and saddening". He added: "His voice and legacy will forever remain in our hearts. At this hour of grief, I extend my deepest condolences to his family, friends, and countless

admirers. May his soul rest in eternal peace."

Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society (APLS) president Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi described Zubeen as a "heart-throb" whose popularity transcended generations.

"After Dr Bhupen Hazarika, he became the true icon of Assamese music. In his untimely demise, we have lost one of the most gifted singers, musicians, lyricists and filmmakers of our times," he remarked.

On behalf of the APLS, Thongchi extended condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma expressed sorrow over the demise of music legend Zubeen Garg in Singapore today.

Sangma, a music aficionado himself, wrote on X: "Deeply saddened by the passing of Zubeen Garg, a musical icon of the North East and the pride of Assam."

He added: "His voice gave life to countless Assamese songs and bridged cultures through his art. He will remain a legend whose melodies will echo for generations. Extend my deepest condolences to his family,

friends and fans. May he rest in peace."

Notably, the late singer was born at Tura, the district headquarters of West Garo Hills district.

Nagaland minister Temjen Imna Along and popular singer Alobo Naga have expressed grief over the passing of singing icon Zubeen Garg.

"#ZubeenGarg will always be an emotion, a voice that never fades," Along wrote on his X handle.

"Heartbroken to hear about the passing of @zubeen.garg, an icon who inspired millions, including me personally," Alobo wrote on his X handle, sharing a photo with Zubeen.

Former Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh has condoled the sudden demise of renowned Assamese singer Zubeen Garg on Friday.

"Deeply saddened by the untimely demise of Mr Zubeen Garg, Assam's musical heartbeat and a true cultural icon whose voice echoed the soul of the people of Northeast," Biren Singh wrote on X. "My heartfelt condolences to his family, fans, and the entire Assamese community. May his soul rest in peace."

North East Integration Rally
Peace | Progress | Prosperity
2026

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BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

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10 JAN
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11 JAN
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11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders. Includes NGOs, and Government officials, for better planning, awareness, and disaster management and preparedness programs. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.

10 Jan
Barak Festival: Peace Progress & Prosperity



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.



12 JAN
River-Climate Conclave
State leaders will deliberate 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.



10 JAN
Media Conclave
Media Conclave: Media Experts, Journalists, and the Public. Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Media experts, journalists, producers, writers & content creators, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.

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10-12 JAN
Science Studio
Use a glimpse of Science to arts through digital. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Parents | Administrators | Parents. Raw science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.

10-12 JAN
E-Sports
Full featured tournaments | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



10-12 JAN
Book Bank
Anti-theft Campaign Book Bank at all schools | issue | issue

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

Painting Carnival
Water Colour painting and Draw-Paint Campaign

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'.



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





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Barak Festival
Band Night | 10 JAN
Musical Night | 11 JAN



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