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PERSPECTIVE

Be careful who you trust, even salt looks like sugar.

Manipur Govt announces Rs 5 lakh ex gratia for slain Assam Rifles personnel

IMPHAL
The Manipur Government has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh each for the two Assam Rifles personnel killed in the ambush carried out by suspected militants in Bishnupur district on Friday. The five injured personnel will get Rs 2 lakh each. In a press release today, Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Home) N Ashok Kumar said that the Government would extend all necessary support during treatment and rehabilitation of the injured. The two personnel of 33 Assam Rifles were killed when their convoy travelling from the Imphal side to Bishnupur, came under attack at Nambol Sabal Leikai under the Nambol Police Station. Meanwhile, following the "heinous attack" on the Assam Rifles, Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla reviewed the security situation in the State by chairing a meeting at the Raj Bhavan here on Saturday evening. The State Chief Secretary, Security Adviser, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, GOC 3 Corps, Commissioner (Home), ADGPs, IGAR (S), IGAR (E), GOC 57 Mountain Division, IG CRPF, DIG (BSF), Secretary to the Governor, Joint Director, SIB Manipur, along with other police and military officers, attended the meeting.

The discussion stressed the need for coordinated action among all security agencies to ensure swift identification of the perpetrators, stated a press release issued by the Raj Bhavan.

WHO SAID WHAT



Wishing you all Shubho Mahalaya! As the sacred days of Durga Puja draw near, may our lives be filled with light and purpose. May the divine blessings of Maa Durga bring unwavering strength, lasting joy and wonderful health.

~ Narendra Modi, PM

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Tears Flow in Guwahati as Assam Bids Farewell to Zubeen Garg

GUWAHATI

The mortal remains of Assam's beloved Zubeen Garg, began their final journey home on Sunday morning, as thousands of grief-stricken admirers thronged the streets of Guwahati to pay tribute to the cultural icon.

The convoy, carrying his flower-decked coffin, moved slowly from Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport towards his Kahilipara residence, a 25-kilometre stretch that transformed into a sea of humanity.

Fans from all walks of life, clutching cut-outs of the singer and gamosas embroidered with the words "Z G Forever", showered flowers on the ambulance while singing his songs and chanting, "Jai Zubeen da".

The sombre procession included Garg's favourite open jeep, in which he often travelled to concert venues. A large portrait of the singer adorned the front, and members of his band accompanied the convoy.

Assam's Director General of Police Harmeet Singh and Guwahati Police Commissioner Parthasarathi Mahanta were seen walking ahead of the ambulance to clear the way.

Crowds lined both sides of the road, with some climbing walls and others holding up mobile phones to capture their idol's last journey. Many wept and wailed, asking, "Why Zubeen da, why did you have to leave us so soon?"

Fans had already begun gathering outside the Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex, where the body will lie in state for the public to pay homage from 9 am to 7 pm on Sunday.

Before that, Garg's body will remain at his Kahilipara residence for approximately 90 minutes, allowing close family members, including his 85-year-old ailing father, to pay their final respects in private.

Media and the public were barred from entering the approach road at the family's request.

Meanwhile, the Assam Cabinet is scheduled to meet Sunday evening to finalise the venue for Garg's cremation. Earlier, the flight carrying Garg's body landed in Guwahati from Delhi around 7 am, following its departure from Indira Gandhi International Airport at 4.30 am.

The coffin had arrived in New Delhi from Singapore around midnight and was briefly placed near the runway before being moved.



In a poignant moment, Garg's wife, Garima Saikia Garg, broke down upon seeing the casket, offering floral tributes, placing a gamosa atop it, and hugging it tightly.

The coffin was then placed inside a flower-adorned ambulance, with Garima accompanying it as it exited the airport through the VIP gate. Senior Assam government officials, including Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who had earlier received the body in Delhi along with Union Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita, were also present at the airport to pay their respects.

Garg, who mesmerised audiences for over three decades with more than 38,000 songs across 40 languages and dialects, is widely regarded as Assam's most versatile and prolific musical talent.

His untimely death in Singapore has plunged the state and the wider Northeast into mourning, with tributes pouring in from across India.

For countless fans, Sunday marked not only the farewell of a singer but the departure of a cultural icon whose voice defined a generation.

Manipur to launch Online Pension Processing System



BISWADEEP GUPTA

IMPHAL In an effort to remove backlogs in processing pensions for retired Government employees, Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, on Saturday chaired a meeting at Raj Bhavan, Imphal. Various agendas, including sanctioning and payment of pensions, challenges in processing, streamlining of the pension process, and reasons for the backlog, were thoroughly discussed. Chief Secretary, Secretary to the Governor, and senior officers from the Treasury, AG Office, Pension Cell, among others, attended the meeting.

The Governor reviewed initiatives to clear the backlog and make the entire process more efficient. This includes the introduction of an Online Pension Processing System, which

will be launched shortly. Neilenthang Telien, Special Secretary (Finance), gave a detailed presentation. The new system will digitize the existing manual process, allowing employees and departments to track applications, and enable end-to-end digital processing—from DDO to AG Office to Treasury—with all documents digitally signed. Additionally, pension processing will begin one year prior to an employee's retirement, and the Employee Identification Number (EIN) will be used to track applications.

The Governor directed the officers to clear existing backlogs at the earliest. This is one of the many initiatives undertaken by the Governor for the welfare of Government employees since the imposition of President's Rule earlier this year.

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will break from his usual practice of addressing gatherings when he visits Tripura on September 22, limiting his engagement to a brief 45-minute ceremony at the historic Tripureswari temple without delivering any speech.

The unusual decision for the typically vocal Prime Minister marks a departure from standard protocol as he travels to Gomati district to inaugurate the newly redeveloped temple, one of India's 51 revered Shakti Peethas.

"The PM will not deliver any speech," confirmed Gomati District Magistrate Rinku Lather, emphasising the streamlined nature of Modi's visit scheduled for September 22. The 523-year-old temple, originally constructed by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya in 1501, has undergone extensive renovation under the central government's PRASAD scheme at a cost of Rs 52 crore. The Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive aims to boost religious tourism in India's northeastern states.

Modi's itinerary involves landing at Agartala's Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport at 3 pm before taking a helicopter to Palatana. From there, he will travel by road



to the temple under heightened security arrangements.

Security preparations have been thorough, with officials conducting complete trial runs of the Prime Minister's route from Palatana power plant to the temple site. All logistical arrangements have been finalised for the visit. Chief Minister Manik Saha, along with cabinet members and senior officials, will join Modi for the temple inauguration.

The Chief Minister has already inspected the venue alongside Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy and Director General of Police Anurag Dhanekar. This marks Modi's 11th visit to Tripura since assuming office in 2014, with his previous trip occurring on April 17, 2024. The redeveloped temple is expected to significantly enhance the state's religious tourism infrastructure.

Not Just for Festival: Zubeen Garg Came to Singapore to Relax, Clarifies Organiser

GUWAHATI

Popular Assamese singer Zubeen Garg had travelled to Singapore primarily to relax and spend time with members of the Assam Association, and not solely to attend the North East India Festival (NEIF), festival chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta has clarified.

The three-day festival, scheduled to begin on Friday, was cancelled following the singer's untimely death while swimming in the sea without a life jacket.

Speaking to media from Singapore, Mahanta said, "Zubeen had told the festival organising team that he wanted to go to Singapore and we arranged for his stay at a hotel. He had not come for the festival alone but had also made his own plans with members of the Assam Association in Singapore."

According to Mahanta, Garg had coordinated with the Assam Association even



before arriving in Singapore to explore local sites, relax, and interact with people. "He was not supposed to give a full-fledged performance but wanted to meet people and sing a few songs for them," he added.

Garg had travelled with only a small entourage: his cousin Sandeepan Garg, manager Siddhartha Sharma,

and musician Shekhar Jyoti Goswami. Mahanta emphasised that the singer's visit was voluntary and dismissed circulating claims that he had already performed in Singapore prior to the incident.

The organiser also clarified that the festival team was unaware that Garg and his associates had gone on a yacht

trip with members of the Assam Association. "We were holding meetings with stakeholders at a hotel far from the incident site when we received the news, and we immediately rushed to Singapore General Hospital," Mahanta said.

Mahanta further refuted claims that NEIF is a business venture. "The festival aims to

connect Northeast India with Southeast Asia to promote industry, trade, tourism, and agricultural products from the region. After organising the festival in Thailand, a direct flight between Bangkok and Guwahati was inaugurated," he said.

NEIF seeks to promote northeastern India's culture, music, dance, cuisine, and fashion in Southeast Asia, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Act East Policy. The festival's past editions were held in Bangkok in 2019 and 2022, and in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in 2023. This year's edition was expected to mark the 60th anniversary of India-Singapore diplomatic relations and coincide with the India-ASEAN Year of Tourism.

Mahanta concluded, "Zubeen Garg always attended our events voluntarily, whether in India or abroad. He felt it was his duty, as a prominent figure from the Northeast, to represent the region positively on all platforms."




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MAYHEM IN NEPAL: WARNING FOR INDIA

Violent rumblings from across the eastern Himalayan ranges are causing widespread concern among those observing the alarming developments in Nepal through prime-time broadcasts and social media. What began as protests by ‘Generation Z’ against nepotism, corruption, and unemployment appears to have been hijacked, transforming into frightening anarchy and mayhem that have placed Nepal on the boil and on the brink of an unfathomable disaster. The presence of unruly mobs, blood on the streets, widespread lawlessness, the burning of the presidential palace and parliament, the resignation of the Prime Minister, and the flight of the Nepalese Cabinet to safety paint a deeply dismal picture of a beautiful Himalayan country more commonly associated with serene, tranquil tourist destinations and people with an unhurried and relaxed attitude. To describe the situation as grim and worrisome would be an understatement.From the days of absolute monarchy to the eventual transition to a constitutional monarchy and finally to a federal republic, Nepal’s relations with India have traditionally been warm and friendly. Irrespective of political shifts — including the recent communist government, which understandably leaned towards China — the two countries have enjoyed strong, historically unique military ties built on cooperation and mutual respect.

This defence partnership forms a crucial pillar of the broader bilateral relationship. From the fearless Nepali soldiers serving in the Gurkha regiments of the Indian Army to the practice of conferring honorary army chief titles on each other’s military leaders, Indo-Nepal defence ties remain legendary.

The causes of the mass unrest, which culminated in extreme violence by an overly energised and agitated mob causing serious harm to life and property, require careful analysis, particularly because the events are occurring in India’s immediate neighbourhood. While political analysts may point to missteps by policymakers, opposition parties, or flawed government initiatives, it is equally important to examine the implications of this turmoil for India’s security.

Although it may be far-fetched to suggest that another front has opened on the Indo-Nepal border, the possibility of the border being exploited to stoke unrest in eastern India cannot be dismissed. For years, the open-border policy has facilitated legitimate movement between the two countries but has also gained notoriety as a safe haven for Indian criminals and as an entry point for terrorists and anti-national elements infiltrating India with malicious intent.

Despite the presence of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), which is tasked with securing India’s borders with Nepal and Bhutan, the Indo-Nepal border has not attracted the same degree of public or political attention as the Indo-Pakistan, Indo-China, or even Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Myanmar borders.

Yet, no international border can be fully secured to the last inch, and the Indo-Nepal border is no exception. Historically seen as a symbol of ease of movement for citizens engaged in travel, trade, and business, this frontier is now at risk owing to Nepal’s mass unrest, sudden absence of governance, and violent uprising. It is for analysts to draw parallels between Nepal’s current crisis and recent events in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Pakistan, and to deduce which actors benefit from orchestrating violent mass protests to topple governments.

Nonetheless, it is imperative for India to learn lessons and take precautions to prevent similar developments within its own borders. Almost all recent upheavals in neighbouring countries have been fuelled by the rapid circulation of malicious ‘toolkits’ on social media. These toolkits typically combine portrayals of societal grievances — such as corruption, unemployment, lawlessness, abuse of authority, nepotism, and religious divides — with subtle instructions on how and where to ignite protest. Such movements are then carefully manoeuvred so that sparks escalate into uncontrollable infernos, engulfing entire nations before authorities can respond effectively. While smaller countries, with limited geography and more homogenous populations, may be especially vulnerable, larger and more diverse nations like India are not immune. From a security standpoint, more effective oversight of social media platforms is urgently required, as they remain the primary vehicle for disseminating such toolkits at speed and scale.

The Government should establish dedicated expert agencies to monitor social media chatter, track public sentiment, analyse the rhetoric of influencers, and trace funding sources of potential protest leaders. This calls for constant vigilance and round-the-clock monitoring so that sparks can be extinguished before they grow into intractable fires. Similarly, the liberal use of drones and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) should be encouraged to monitor affected border areas, detect infiltration, and identify suspicious activity. Large-scale production of low-tech tactical drones will be necessary for deployment at the local level, complemented by human intelligence and other forms of surveillance. In matters of national security, no degree of vigilance can be considered excessive. Equally significant is the need to monitor institutions such as colleges and universities, which often serve as fertile grounds for recruiting protestors who later become the willing foot soldiers of faceless mobs.

Academic administrators must be sensitised and trained to identify early warning signs and to prevent external influencers from exploiting student populations for destabilising purposes. Although the situation in Nepal continues to evolve, and there is hope that peace and stability will eventually be restored, the lives lost and the destruction of governance, law, and property cannot be reversed.

Rebuilding Nepal will demand considerable effort and resilience. For India, the lesson is clear: the people and the Government must remain alert and responsive to any warning signs that may foreshadow similar turbulence within its own borders.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

One’s life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation and compassion. - Simone de Beauvoir

ASHOK OGRA

The recent incident in Dubai, where the Indian cricket captain Surya Kumar Yadav did not shake hands with Pakistan’s Salman Ali in what turned out to be a one-sided match, has sparked controversy – particularly in the neighbouring country. Cricket fans are asking: Was it a breach of sportsmanship? A silent protest? Or both? Was it personal, political, or a mix of the two?

Handshakes, simple as they seem, have often carried far more meaning than a greeting. They can be gestures of respect, solidarity, or even quiet defiance. And sometimes, not shaking hands can make a statement louder than words.

In 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte made headlines when he announced a national “no-handshake” policy. But moments later, in a natural reflex, he extended his hand, realized his mistake, laughed, and apologized: “Oh, sorry! We can’t do that anymore. Sorry, sorry.” The incident was light-hearted and funny.

The Dubai situation was different. There was no laughter. The silence between the players reflected real tension. Adding to the moment, Indian batsman Captain dedicated India’s victory to the victims of the recent Pahalgam terror attack. Many saw this as a heartfelt gesture of solidarity.

Pakistan, however, objected sharply. This raises a question: If a country had no role in Pahalgam terror attack, why would it feel provoked by honouring its victims?

This is not the first time a handshake-or the lack of it-has captured the world’s attention. Sports history is filled with such moments.

In cricket, the rivalry witnessed between England and Australia during the Ashes series is legendary. Remember the1932-33 BODYLINE series- watched by millions of Indians when first telecast on Doordarshanduring the 1980s. England’s captain, Douglas Jardine, used short-pitched bowling aimed at the bodies of Australian batsmen-particularly Donald Bradman. At the time, no helmets or other upper-body protective gear was worn. It was technically legal, but many considered it dangerous and unsportsmanlike. The anger it generated went beyond cricket. It touched national pride and politics. The bowling tactic became symbolic of a country asserting its dominance over another, showing how sports and politics can intertwine.

Thanks to a powerful documentary aired on the Discovery Channel in the late 1990s-during my time working there-I got a firsthand glimpse into the incredible story of Jesse Owens, the legendary African-American athlete. He left the world in awe at the 1936 Berlin Olympics by winning four gold medals- thus shattering Hitler’s so-called Aryan supremacy myth. Hitler’s absence during the medal ceremony made headlines worldwide-though there is debate over whether Hitler deliberately ignored Owens. Needless, this incident was enough to carry profound political and social symbolism.

During the Cold War, the 1972 World Chess Championship between American Bobby Fischer and Soviet Boris Spassky turned out to be not just about chess. The Soviets had dominated the World Chess Championship since 1948. To them, it wasn’t just a game-it was proof of their intellectual superiority.Fischer’s refusal to engage normally with Spassky mirrored the ideological standoff between



the United States and the USSR. Every move on the board, and even their interactions outside it, reflected larger political tensions.

Fischer won the tournament and rewrote the story of chess, transforming it from a quiet intellectual pursuit into a global spectacle laced with Cold War drama.

Tennis too has seen its share of symbolic gestures.In 1974, the Indian Davis Cup team, led by Vijay Amritraj, refused to play the final against apartheid-era South Africa. It was a lost opportunity for India to make history in the Davis Cup, but a significant victory for the movement against apartheid.”

In 2023, top Ukrainian tennis player Elina Svitolina refused to shake hands with Russian Aryna Sabalenka, silently protesting the war in Ukraine.

At the 2016 Rio Olympics, Egyptian Judo player Islam El Shehaby refused to bow or shake hands with Israeli Or Sasson. The boos from the crowd echoedshowing that even a simple gesture can become an international talking point.

Imagine, the football superstar Lionel Messi once ignored a handshake from Real Madrid’s Alvaro Arbeloa during a tense match against FC Barcelona in 2010.

In 1980, Pakistan along with the United States along with many western countries boycotted the Moscow Olympics to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Four years later, the Soviets retaliated by boycotting the Los Angeles Olympics. Sports were no longer limited to just games-they were platforms for political expression.

For whatever reasons, all forms of sport and politics in this region are inseparable. The games often carry a symbolic weight far beyond the playing field. Is it the legacy of Partition, or the many provocations since, including state-sponsored

terror attacks on Indian soil, that make every match so charged?These questions are complex, and no single answer captures the full picture.

Take Hockey that has its own history of gestures laden with meaning in South Asia. At the 2014 Hockey Championships Trophy match against India played in Bhubaneshwar, two Pakistani hockey players were banned after making provocative gestures towards the crowd.

After the 2016 Uri terror attack, the Indian hockey team initially refused to shake hands with Pakistani players at the Asian Champions Trophy in Malaysia.

The point is clear: a handshake-or its absence-is never just a gesture. It can convey respect, protest, resentment, or political defiance. The context makes it significant, especially in situations where historical tensions run deep.

This brings us back to India vs Pakistan cricket matches that often evoke raw emotions and nationalist fervour. Every encounter between the two nations is more than a game. The backdrop of wars, terror incidents, and a shared but painful history makes every boundary, wicket, and gesture symbolic.

Yet the quiet grace of sportsmanship-in how players behave during victories, losses, or tense encounters-remainworth defending.

It is worth recalling sportsmanship as displayed by England cricket captain Andrew Flintoff during the second Test of the 2005 Ashes against Australia. England won the match by just two runs. While players and fans celebrated, England captain Andrew Flintoff showed great sportsmanship by consoling Australia’s Brett Lee, who remained not out at 43 – saying something like, “Bad luck mate... see you inside for a beer after.”

This beautiful gesture on the part of Andrew Flintoff reminds us that

SPORTSMANSHIP is a quality worth sticking up for.

But then England does not sponsor terror against Australia.

Also, cricket just isn’t what it used to be in England.

A hundred years ago, it was a national passion-now, the spark feels faded. Instead, it has become far more sub-continental game.... a cultural ritual, and close to two billion-strong spectacle.The noted political psychologist and social theorist Ashis Nandy once said: “Cricket is an Indian game accidentally discovered by the British.”

Meanwhile, expect more intense celebrations and stronger controversies – at least till borders remain tense. However, the tournaments will carry on so will the drama...

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

It’s good that the PM at least acknowledged one of our iconic singers, from India’s Northeast. But remember, when one of the greatest playwrights and theatre directors Oja Ratan Thiyam passed away, what did you do then? A contemptuous silence! The same silence on the tragedy in the state or you not acknowledging in your speech at Kangla (Imphal) the Speaker of the Manipur State Assembly, let alone the former CM, who was present in that gathering! Although Oja Ratan Thiyam need no introduction to those in the field of theatre, it needs to be reiterated that he was a cultural giant who revolutionized Indian theatre by introducing new idioms and strengthening theatrical moorings in indigenous and traditional performing arts. A Sangeet Natak Academy and Padma Shree Awardee, he also served as the Director and the Chairman of the National School of Drama, and a fellow and the Vice Chairman of Sangeet Natak Academy. An internationally recognised playwright and theatre director, he was awarded La Grande Medaille, 1997 (France) and Fringe First Award, 1987 (Edinburgh International Festival). When such a cultural icon expired, you didn’t utter a word of condolences. Why? Because he’s a Manipuri, someone who belongs to the Meitei community? Who says all Indians are one! Not certainly to the PM Modi.

~ A. Bimol Akoijam, MP Manipur



SCHOOL FEE BILL MAKES PARENTS’ ROLE PARAMOUNT

Last week Delhi assembly passed the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Bill 2025 to ‘bring about transparency in the matters of fixation, regulation and collection of fee’, applicable to all the 1798 recognised private schools in the city. These include unaided schools, minority schools and schools on private land too. This Bill, which in due course would become an act, is in alignment with the National Policy on Education 2020 that seeks to curb commercialisation of education and profiteering by educational institutions.

In Delhi, the private school sector exploded by a staggering 1423.71% since 1973, becoming an industry fuelled by parental anxiety and unchecked by any meaningful regulation. What should have been a sacred duty, as thinkers and reformers like Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee envisioned, was corrupted into a business of balance sheets and profit margins.

We saw the grotesque spectacle of fee hikes, with a 2024 report by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) highlighting that private school fees in urban areas had increased by over 169% in the last decade, outpacing salary growth. This

happened even as the quality of infrastructure and the dignity of teacher salaries stagnated.

For years, successive governments in Delhi were mute spectators to this robbery. They were either intimidated by the powerful “education mafias” or, worse, complicit in their dealings. Laws that existed on paper, like Section 17(3) of the DSEAR, 1973, which mandated prior approval for fee hikes, were rendered toothless. The state, which had a sworn duty to protect its children, abdicated its responsibility, leaving parents to fight lonely, expensive, and often futile battles in court.

Today, we declare that the era of neglect is over. As a government, we have learned from past shortcomings. Our focus now is on ensuring that once a child is in a school, her/his future is not held hostage by commercial interests. Our instrument for initiative is the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Bill, 2025. This is not a mere regulatory amendment; it’s a radical restructuring of power. It’s a document that tears down the walls of commerce and hands keys of the institution back to its true stakeholders: the parents.

The revolutionary heart of this Bill

lies in its rejection of the old bureaucratic model, where a single officer in a closed room held all the cards. We are replacing this with a more accessible, democratic framework.

First, we are creating school-level committees. The School-Level Fee Regulation Committee will no longer be a rubber stamp for the management. With eight votes held by parents and teachers against a mere two for the management, we are ensuring that the community’s voice is not just heard, but is the deciding factor.

Second, we are handing parents the ultimate weapon of accountability: the Parental Veto. In a provision that is a true Brahmasutra for parents, this Bill mandates that fee increase requires the unanimous agreement of the committee’s members. If even one parent representative dissents, the proposal is blocked. The power dynamic is fundamentally, irrevocably altered. The management must now convince, not command. They must justify, not dictate.

Third, the Bill establishes a powerful, multi-tiered grievance redressal mechanism. It empowers individual parents to voice concerns through Parent-Teachers Associations and the new School Level Fee Regulation Committee prior to any

formal appeal. Crucially, the Education Department can now launch an investigation based on a single parental complaint about an arbitrary fee hike.

The Bill formally recognises the power of collective action. The 15% threshold to form an “aggrieved parents group” is not a barrier but an empowering tool for collective bargaining. In a class of 40, this means just six united parents can legally launch an appeal to the District Fee Appellate Committee.

This provision transforms the fight for fair fees from an individual struggle into a recognised, collective right. Applying to every private unaided recognized school in Delhi, this entire framework mandates transparency and floods the dark corners of school finances with inescapable light.

This Bill is a declaration that the democratisation of education, not stopping at the school gate but extending into the functioning of the school itself, into its finances, and into its philosophy. It is Chief Minister Rekha Gupta government’s solemn pledge to create a new social contract between schools and parents, built on trust and transparency. It is about ensuring that in the schools, the only thing that grows unchecked is the potential of our children.

“Just the beginning, crowds will really swell up”: Gaurav Gogoi on Zubeen Garg’s farewell

GUWAHATI

As Guwahati braces for an unprecedented outpouring of grief following the arrival of Zubeen Garg’s mortal remains, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has cautioned that the crowd is likely to swell further through the day. He noted that many people from across Assam were travelling overnight and would reach the city by afternoon.

“This is just the beginning. I think more and more people will come... from what info I have there are many people travelling overnight from across the state of Assam, they will reach by afternoon. We can expect the crowds to really swell up. I hope the administration is ready... Hopefully, once the body arrives here, we will be able to say farewell to Zubeen in the manner we want to,” Gogoi said.

The mortal remains of the legendary singer, who died in Singapore on Friday while swimming without a life jacket, landed in Guwahati on the morning of September 21. His body



was flown from Singapore to Delhi, where Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union Minister Pabitra Margherita paid tribute at Indira Gandhi International Airport, before being flown to Assam.

Additional security forces have been stationed outside Garg’s residence on Kahalipara Road, where

his family — including his ailing 85-year-old father — will pay their respects. Later, the body will be kept at the Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex in Sarusajai from 9 am to 7 pm for the public to offer homage.

On Saturday night, the first signs of the overwhelming public

response were visible when fans broke barricades at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, forcing police to resort to baton-charge to control the situation.

Authorities have since imposed sweeping traffic restrictions, including a ban on goods vehicles on NH-27 and NH-17 from 6 am to 11 pm. Visitors to the sports complex must enter through Gate 1A and exit via Gate 3. Parking has been arranged at ISBT Khanapara, Greenwood Resort, Lokhra Biha-toli, Bathowpuri Bodo HS School, and several other locations.

The Assam Cabinet will meet later in the evening to finalise the cremation venue after consultations with Garg’s family and cultural organisations.

With thousands already on the move and many more expected by afternoon, Guwahati is set for a rare moment of collective mourning, reflecting the depth of Assam’s affection for its most cherished cultural icon.

Police detain two after Assam Rifles convoy ambush kills jawans in Manipur



IMPHAL

Police have detained two individuals in connection with the deadly ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy that left two personnel dead and five others injured in Manipur’s Bishnupur district.

The attack took place on the evening of September 19 in Nambol Sabal Leikai, where armed men opened fire on a con-

voy vehicle. Security forces quickly launched combing operations in nearby Shantipur and Ishok, leading to the detentions. Officials said the two men are being held for verification.

Investigators also recovered a silver-blue van believed to have been used by the attackers. The vehicle was located in Mutum Yangbi, about 10 kilometres from the ambush site.

According to police, the preliminary probe has revealed that the van had changed hands several times, and efforts are underway to trace its previous owners and establish a clear link to the assault.

Security has been tightened across the region, with search operations continuing to track down those behind the ambush.

Protests erupt after two deaths at Manipur’s RIMS, raising concerns over medical negligence

IMPHAL

Two deaths at the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Manipur have triggered public outrage and protests, as family members and local residents allege medical negligence.

On September 20, 50-year-old Yambem Sanjoy of Bamon Kampu Mayai Leikai, Imphal East, died shortly after being readmitted to RIMS. Sanjoy was first admitted the same day with complaints of arm pain.

Initial tests were conducted, and his family was told results would be available on September 22, after which he was discharged. He was later brought back to the hospital at 2:00 pm, underwent an ECG, and was declared dead soon after, according to hospital authorities.

The incident immediately sparked protests, with relatives accusing the hospital of mishandling his treatment. This morning, September 21, another patient, 35-year-old Chingshubam (O) Manju of Lilong Chajing, died after childbirth. Her condition reportedly worsened soon after the delivery, resulting in her death. Locals and family members again protested, demanding accountability from hospital officials.

The twin incidents have intensified scrutiny on RIMS, with residents calling for urgent action to ensure patient safety and proper medical care.

NEIR Pays Tribute to Zubeen Garg, Calls Him a Voice of Unity for Northeast India

SILCHAR

The organising committee members of North East Integration Rally (NEIR) have expressed deep grief at the sudden demise of legendary singer Zubeen Garg, describing him as a cultural force who gave voice to the idea of unity in the region. NEIR founder and CEO Biswadeep Gupta said the organising committee has decided to dedicate its upcoming events in Garg’s memory. “Zubeen was very vocal about the integration of Northeast India. With more than 38,000 songs in nearly 40 languages, his contribution to society and culture is enormous, and many may not even realise the scale of it,” Gupta said.

In a Facebook post, Gupta wrote, “Today God must be crying watching the tears on Earth,” while sharing one of Garg’s last songs, performed in Singapore. He also posted a tribute poem by Guwahati-based Gitanjali Goswami, a member of the NEIR 2026 team.

Professor (Dr) Sukamal Deb from Ahmedabad called Garg a true artist whose creativity, empathy, and large-heartedness embodied unity and humanity. “With his departure, a void is created. The loss is ours, especially in a time when fellow feeling has taken a back seat,” he wrote, adding that Garg’s songs reflected his deep love for humanity.

Meghalaya MLA and former minister Alexander Laloo Hek also condoled the loss. “The sudden demise of Zubeen Garg is a big loss to all the people of the Northeast, and Assam in particular. I convey my deepest condolences to his family, near and dear ones. It is also a great loss to the singers’ fraternity, music lovers, and his countless fans,” Hek said. The NEIR has resolved to celebrate Garg’s contributions during its upcoming rally, describing him as not only a celebrated singer but also a unifying voice for the entire region.

KOKRAJHAR

Nearly 4,500 polling personnel, including presiding and polling officers, set out on Sunday for their designated stations across Kokrajhar district, carrying ballot materials under security escort ahead of tomorrow’s fifth Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections.

The Kokrajhar district administration has put in place elaborate arrangements for the polls, which will cover 12 constituencies - Fakiragram (Non-ST), Banargaon (ST), Debargaon (ST), Baukhungri (ST), Salakati (ST), Guma (Unreserved), Srirampur (Non-ST), Jomduar (ST), Saraibil (ST), Kachugaon (ST), Dotma (ST) and Parbatjhora (ST).

A total of 942 polling stations has been set up to ensure the smooth conduct of the voting process. According to official sources, ballot boxes were



checked and distributed early this morning from the Basic Training Centre, Kokrajhar.

Polling teams were equipped with all necessary materials, while adequate security personnel have been deployed to maintain law and order at each station.

Kokrajhar district has 7,00,951 registered voters, in-

cluding 3,50,412 women. Over seven lakh voters are expected to cast their ballots tomorrow, with 100 candidates contesting across 12 constituencies. Polling will take place from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

Across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), a total of 26,58,136 voters, including 13,34,600 women, will exercise

their franchise in 3,359 polling stations. As many as 316 candidates are in the fray for the 40 BTC constituencies.

The BTC elections hold significant importance for the political landscape of Assam as the council is vested with considerable powers in administering the region under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

The outcome will decide not only the composition of the 40-member council but also the future trajectory of governance, development and ethnic harmony in the area.

With multiple parties and independents in the fray, the polls are expected to be closely contested, reflecting the aspirations and concerns of the diverse communities inhabiting the BTR.

Counting of votes for this crucial election is scheduled for September 26.

Women SHG make incense sticks for PM Modi’s Tripura Sundari temple visit

AGARTALA

In a unique initiative of women empowerment, members of the Jaba Mahila Dal Self-Help Group (SHG), supported by the Tripura Rural Livelihood Mission (TRLM), have started making incense sticks from flowers offered at the sacred Tripura Sundari temple.

The incense sticks will hold a special significance on September 22 (Monday), when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will perform puja at the temple using them.

SHG members expressed gratitude to TRLM and the state government for their continuous support, while also acknowledging Chief Minister Manik Saha for his efforts towards women’s empowerment.

Sukla Rani Das, a member of the SHG, said, “Our self-help group



is called Jaba Mahila Dal. For the past 8-10 days, we have been undergoing training in making incense sticks. A total of 17 of us are participating in this training together. We collect the flowers offered at the Tripura Sundari Temple, dry them

using a dryer, and then process them to make incense sticks with the machine provided by TRLM.”

“From TRLM officials, we came to know that the incense sticks made by us will be used by the Prime Minister during his

worship at the temple. Hearing this has made us feel very proud and extremely happy. TRLM and the State Government are providing us with immense support, for which I sincerely thank them. I also express my heartfelt gratitude to Chief Minister Manik Saha for his efforts in empowering women,” she said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura on September 22 and will lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over Rs 5,100 crore at Itanagar. He will also address a public function, according to an official statement from the Prime Minister’s Office.

Thereafter, he will visit Tripura and perform Pooja and Darshan and inaugurate the development work of ‘Mata Tripura Sundari Temple Complex’ at Matabari.

GU to hold postgraduate students’ union polls amid grief over Zubeen Garg’s demise

GUWAHATI

Gauhati University (GU) has announced that the Postgraduate Students’ Union (PGSU) elections for the 2025-26 session will go ahead as scheduled on September 25, following a brief pause in campaigning due to the sudden demise of Assamese cultural icon Zubeen Garg.

On September 19, the Returning Officer of the PGSU elections issued a notification directing all candidates and supporters to immediately halt election campaigns in view of the tragic loss. The notification, issued under the directive of the Vice-Chancellor, emphasized respect for the late artist and stated that further instructions would follow regarding the resumption of campaigns.

A day later, on September 20, the Election Committee met and, while expressing condolences to Zubeen Garg’s family, friends, and fans, decided to resume election campaigns with guidelines urging candidates to maintain a low tone in their activities. The committee also extended the election canvass period until 9:00 am on Sep-



tember 24 to allow candidates to prepare ahead of the voting day.

The Returning Officer appealed to all stakeholders to follow official notifications for updates and to demonstrate leadership and maturity, ensuring that the election reflects the values of the university community even in this period of mourning. The notices have been circulated to all department heads, election officers, tribunal members, wardens, and other authorities for display on campus notice boards.

The PGSU election will proceed under these adjusted guidelines, balancing the statutory requirement of holding elections with the need to honor the legacy of Zubeen Garg.

Buddhists rally in Gangtok demanding repeal of Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949

GANGTOK

The nationwide movement seeking the repeal of the Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949 (BT Act) gathered fresh momentum on Sunday as hundreds of Buddhists held a rally in Gangtok, demanding full management rights of the Mahabodhi Mahavihara — the site where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment.

The protest, led by the All India Buddhist Forum (AIBF), argued that the Act, framed in 1949 when Bihar had a small Buddhist population, denies Buddhists rightful control over their holiest shrine. Under the law, the Mahabodhi Temple is managed by an eight-member committee with equal representation of Buddhists and non-Buddhists, but the District Magistrate — always a non-Buddhist — serves as its chairperson.

“This structure is outdated and unconstitutional,” said Aakash Lama, General Secretary of the AIBF. “Bodh Gaya is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the holiest shrine for Buddhists worldwide. Yet Buddhists remain a minority in its management. The 1949



Act must be repealed.” Lama noted that the AIBF has been

agitating peacefully for three years through hunger strikes, signature

campaigns, and legal petitions. “From February 12, we began hunger strikes in Bodh Gaya and across India. On August 10 this year, we launched a nationwide Mashaal Yatra from Nagpur. We have already collected over one lakh signatures, and petitions are pending before the Supreme Court, with the next hearing scheduled for October 30,” he said.

The Gangtok rally carried special significance because of Sikkim’s Buddhist heritage. Sikkim remains the only state in the world with a reserved Legislative Assembly seat for Buddhists, symbolising its constitutional recognition of the community.

“Sikkim has a very large Buddhist population and a constitutional duty to back this demand,” said SD Tshering Lepcha, Advisor of the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC). “Thousands of Sikkimese pilgrims travel to Bodh Gaya every year. It is only right that Buddhists manage their own holiest site.”

The protest in Sikkim is part of a wider campaign unfolding across Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. The demand has also been raised in Parliament by leaders including Ramdas Athawale and Upendra Kushwaha, while the Supreme Court is set to hear the matter on October 30.

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Tejashwi raises Bihar pitch, says ‘won’t contest’ polls without a CM face, pressuring allies



PATNA

RJD leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav on Saturday said the Grand Alliance (GA) will not contest Bihar Assembly elections without a CM face, mounting pressure on the partners.

“Are we the BJP which does not have any face? We will definitely not contest elections without projecting a CM face,” he told a news channel during his Bihar Adhikar Yatra, which concluded in Vaishali.

The Congress, which did not endorse Tejashwi as CM face of the GA, has said the people of Bihar will decide

the CM after the election due in October-November.

Toeing the Congress’ line, CPI-ML (Liberation) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya said the Opposition bloc will contest polls without a CM face. He, however, hastened to add that Tejashwi is the natural choice for the CM’s post. “The CM’s name will be decided only after the alliance wins the election,” he told the media.

Tejashwi, on the other hand, declared Rahul Gandhi as INDIA bloc’s PM candidate at the national level. But Rahul remained non-committal on endorsing Tejashwi as CM face. “People of Bihar will

decide the CM after the election,” said Krishna Allavaru, AICC in-charge of Bihar.

During Bihar Adhikar Yatra, SIR of electoral rolls and slogan ‘Vote Chor Gaddi Chor’, rallying cry of Rahul Gandhi’s ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’, featured only as a concluding slogan. Tejashwi focused on unemployment, migration, price rise, corruption, poor law and order and lack of industrialisation. “The shift in approach compared to the campaign he carried out alongside Rahul indicates that Tejashwi may be aiming for more than just reinforcing his CM candidature,” said an analyst.

Dependence on other nations India’s biggest enemy: PM

BHAVNAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India’s main adversary is its dependence on other nations as he made a strong pitch for “aatmanirbharta” and called for indigenous production of everything from semiconductor chips to ships.

Speaking at the ‘Samudra se Samruddhi’ event, where he inaugurated and laid foundation stones of projects worth Rs 34,200 crore, Modi said all the problems of India have only one solution, and that is self-reliance.

“India is moving forward with the spirit of global brotherhood and India has no major enemy in the world today, but in true terms, India’s biggest adversary is dependence on other nations,” stated the Prime Minister, emphasising that this dependence must be collectively defeated.

He said greater foreign dependence leads to greater national failure. “For global peace, stability, and prosperity, the world’s most populous country must become self-reliant,” Modi said, and cautioned that reliance on others compromises national self-respect.

“The future of 140 crore Indians cannot be left to external forces, nor can the resolve for national development be based on foreign dependence. The future of the coming generations cannot be left to others. If the country with a population of 140 crore is dependent on others, it compromises national self-respect,” he added.

As per a popular saying, pain of 100 kinds has only one remedy; similarly, all problems of India have one solution, and that is aatmanirbharta (self-reliance), Modi stated.

Targeting Congress, Modi said the talent of young people was suppressed after Independence by the then ruling party which brought in a “license Raj”.

“As a result of consistently ignoring inherent strengths of India, the country couldn’t achieve the success it truly deserved even after six to seven decades of freedom,” Modi said and blamed “prolonged entanglement in the license-quota regime and isolation from global markets” as the main factors.

When the globalisation era began, the then governments focused solely



on imports, which led to scams of thousands of crores of rupees, Modi said.

Citing India’s shipping sector as a major example of the damage caused by flawed policies, Modi said that India once had a very vibrant ship-building industry.

“Ships built in India’s coastal states once powered domestic and global trade. Even fifty years ago, India used domestically built ships, with over 40 percent of its import-export conducted through them.

“Till 50 years ago, our trade was carried out by 40 per cent ships made in India, but this has now come down to just 5 per cent,” the PM pointed out.

He said India pays a staggering USD 75 billion or Rs 6 lakh crore every year to foreign shipping companies for their services.

“Can people imagine how much money has been paid in freight to other countries over the past seven decades? This outflow of funds has created millions of jobs abroad. If even a small portion of this expenditure had been invested by earlier governments in the domestic shipping industry, the world would have been using Indian ships today, and India would have been earning lakh of crores in shipping services,” the PM added.

“Chips (semiconductor chips) or

ships, we must make them in India,” Modi said, adding that domestic ports are the backbone of India’s rise as a global maritime powerhouse.

India’s maritime sector is now moving towards next-generation reforms, he said, and announced that from today, all major ports in the country will be freed from multiple documents and fragmented processes.

“The implementation of ‘One Nation, One Document’ and ‘One Nation, One Port’ Process will simplify trade and commerce,” he said.

He said a series of reforms have been initiated in the maritime sector, and five maritime laws have been introduced in a new form.

The PM said a historic decision has been taken to strengthen the maritime sector, with large ships now accorded the infrastructure status.

“Ship-building companies will now find it easier to secure loans from banks and will benefit from reduced interest rates. All benefits associated with infrastructure financing will now be extended to these ship-building enterprises,” Modi added.

He said the Government is working on three major schemes to make India a major maritime power.

“These initiatives will ease financial support for the shipbuilding sector, help shipyards adopt modern technology, and improve design and quality standards. Over Rs 70,000 crore will be invested in the coming years,” he said. He inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for development projects related to the maritime sector worth more than Rs 7,870 crore. He also unveiled and laid the foundation stone of multiple projects of the Central and state governments, worth more than Rs 26,354 crore, catering to various sectors in Gujarat.

The PM also conducted an aerial survey of Dholera Special Investment Region, a greenfield industrial hub located around 100 km south of Ahmedabad. Later, he reviewed the progress of the under-construction National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal in Ahmedabad district which seeks to showcase India’s maritime heritage.

Upon arrival in Bhavnagar earlier in the morning, he participated in a roadshow.

INTERNATIONAL

White House says \$100K H-1B fee for new visas only, current holders can re-enter US

WASHINGTON

The White House issued a major clarification on Saturday to its new H-1B visa policy that had rattled the tech industry, saying a \$100,000 fee will be a “one-time” payment imposed only on new applicants.

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, in announcing the major fee increase on Friday, said it would be paid annually, and would apply to people seeking a new visa as well as renewals.

But White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt issued a clarification on Saturday, hours before the new policy went into effect. “This is NOT an annual fee. It’s a one-time fee that applies...only to new visas, not renewals, and not current visa holders,” she said in a social media post.

The executive order, which is likely to face legal challenges, came into force on Sunday at 12:01 am US Eastern time (04:01 GMT), or 9:01 pm Saturday on the Pacific Coast.

Prior to the White House’s clarification, US companies were scrambling to figure out the implications for their foreign workers, with several reportedly warning their employees not to leave the country.

Some people who were already on planes preparing to leave the country on Friday de-boarded over fears they may not be allowed to re-enter the United States, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

“Those who already hold H-1B visas and are currently outside of the country right now will NOT be charged \$100,000 to re-enter,” Leavitt said.

“H-1B visa holders can leave and re-enter the country to the same extent as they normally would,” she added.

The fee takes effect at 12:01 a.m. ET Sunday. It is scheduled to expire after a year. But it could be extended if the government determines that is in the interest of the United States to keep it.

H-1B visas allow companies to spon-



sor foreign workers with specialized skills — such as scientists, engineers, and computer programmers — to work in the United States, initially for three years but extendable to six.

Such visas are widely used by the tech industry. Indian nationals account for nearly three-quarters of the permits allotted via lottery system each year. The United States approved approximately 400,000 H-1B visas in 2024, two-thirds of which were renewals.

Notably, US President Donald Trump announced the change in Washington on Friday, arguing it would support American workers.

The H-1B program “has been deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers with lower-paid, lower-skilled labor,” Trump’s proclamation said. “The main thing is, we’re going to have great people coming in, and they’re going to be paying,” Trump told reporters as he signed the orders in the Oval Office.

Lutnick, who joined Trump in the Oval Office, said multiple times that the fee would be applied annually. “The

company needs to decide... is the person valuable enough to have \$100,000 a year payment to the government? Or they should head home and they should go hire an American,” he told reporters.

Though he claimed that “all the big companies are on board,” many businesses were left confused about the details of the H-1B order.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of External Affairs on Saturday said the mobility of skilled talent had contributed to “innovation” and “wealth creation” in both countries and that it would assess the changes.

It said in a statement the new measure would likely have “humanitarian consequences by way of the disruption caused for families,” which it hoped would be addressed by US authorities.

The announcement has dealt a body blow to the 2,83,397 (71%) skilled technology workers from India, as per 2024 data. At 71%, India was the largest beneficiary of the H-1B visa program last year, while China was a distant second at 12%.

According to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data,

Amazon was the top H-1B visa employer with 10,044 workers as of June 2025, followed by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) with 5,505 visas approved.

Other top beneficiaries included Microsoft (5,189), Meta (5,123), Apple (4,202), Google (4,181), Deloitte (2,353), Infosys (2,004), Wipro (1,523) and Tech Mahindra Americas (951).

The fee takes effect at 12:01 a.m. ET Sunday. It is scheduled to expire after a year. But it could be extended if the government determines that is in the interest of the United States to keep it.

H-1B visas, which require at least a bachelor’s degree, are meant for high-skilled jobs that tech companies find difficult to fill. Critics say the program undercuts American workers, luring people from overseas who are often willing to work for as little as \$60,000 annually. That is well below the \$100,000-plus salaries typically paid to US technology workers.

Historically, H-1B visas have been doled out through lottery. This year, Amazon was by far the top recipient of H-1B visas with more than 10,000 awarded, followed by Tata Consultancy, Microsoft, Apple and Google. Geographically, California has the highest number of H-1B workers.

Critics say H-1B spots often go to entry-level jobs, rather than senior positions with unique skill requirements. And while the program isn’t supposed to undercut US wages or displace US workers, critics say companies can pay less by classifying jobs at the lowest skill levels, even if the specific workers hired have more experience.

As a result, many US companies find it cheaper to contract out help desks, programming and other basic tasks to consulting companies such as Wipro, Infosys, HCL Technologies and Tata in India and IBM and Cognizant in the US. These consulting companies hire foreign workers, often from India, and contract them out to US employers looking to save money.

Thousands protest in the Philippines over massive corruption scandal

MANILA

Thousands of protesters took to the streets in the Philippine capital on Sunday to express their outrage over a corruption scandal involving lawmakers, officials and businesspeople who allegedly pocketed huge kickbacks from flood-control projects in the poverty-stricken and storm-prone Southeast Asian country.

Police forces and troops were put on alert to prevent any outbreak of violence. Thousands of police officers were deployed to secure separate protests in a historic Manila park and near a democracy monument along the main EDSA highway, also in the capital region, where organizers hoped to draw one of the largest turnouts of anti-corruption protesters in the country in recent years. The United States and Australian embassies issued travel advisories asking their citizens to stay away from the protests as a safety precaution.

A group of protesters waved Philippine flags and displayed a banner that read: “No more, too much, jail them,” as they marched in the Manila protest and demanded the immediate prosecution of all those involved in the scandal.

“I feel bad that we wallow in poverty and we lose our homes, our lives and our future while they rake in a big fortune from our taxes that pay for their luxury cars, foreign trips and bigger corporate transactions,” student activist Althea Trinidad told The Associated Press in Manila, where she joined a noisy crowd that police estimated at around 8,000 people by midday. “We want to shift to a system where people will no longer be abused.”

Trinidad lives in Bulacan, a flood-prone province north of Manila where officials said the most flood-control projects were being investigated either as sub-



standard or nonexistent.

“Our purpose is not to destabilize but to strengthen our democracy,” Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, the head of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, said in a statement. He called on the public to demonstrate peacefully and demand accountability.

Organizers said protesters would focus on denouncing corrupt public works officials, legislators and owners of construction companies, along with a system that allows large-scale corruption, but they would not call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to step down. Marcos first highlighted the flood-control corruption scandal in July in his annual state of the nation speech. He later established an independent commission to investigate what he said were anomalies in many of the 9,855 flood-control projects worth more than 545 billion pesos (\$8.5 billion) that were supposed to have been undertaken since he took office in mid-2022. He called the scale of Organizers said protesters would focus on denouncing corrupt public works officials, legislators and owners of construction companies, along with a system that allows large-scale corruption, but they would not call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to step down. corruption “horrible” and has accept-

ed his public works secretary’s resignation.

Public outrage erupted when a wealthy couple who ran several construction companies that won lucrative flood-control project contracts showed dozens of European and American luxury cars and SUVs they owned during media interviews. The fleet included a British luxury car costing 42 million pesos (\$737,000) that they said they bought because it came with a free umbrella.

Under intense public criticism, the couple, Sarah and Pacifico Discaya, later identified during a televised Senate inquiry at least 17 House of Representatives legislators and public works officials who allegedly forced them to pay huge kickbacks so they could secure flood-control projects in an explosive testimony.

Two prominent senators were later implicated in the scandal by a former government engineer in a separate House inquiry. All those named denied wrongdoing but they face multiple investigations. Senate President Francis Escudero and House Speaker Martin Romualdez separately stepped down in a widening fallout from the scandal, as both chambers of Congress face intensifying criticism after several legislators were implicated in the corruption allegations.

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SUBHAS AND SARAT

AN INTIMATE MEMOIR OF THE BOSE BROTHERS

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BIDHAYAK DAS PURKAYASTHA

A Birthday and a Legacy
6 September 1889, a sacred date in the history of Bengal. On this day was born a leader whose name still reverberates with unfulfilled dreams :Sarat Chandra Bose.

For the Bengali nation, his birth was not merely the arrival of an individual, but the rise of a national consciousness rooted in self-restraint, courage and resistance. Sarat Bose was not only the elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose, but also his mentor, financier, strategist and guide. If Netaji became the firebrand who electrified masses, it was Sarat who provided the anchor, the shield and the structure behind him.

Revered as the spiritual son of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, Sarat Bose was the golden leader of golden Bengal - my leader, your leader, a leader who revealed the past and showed the light of the future. From his legal battles in defence of revolutionaries to his political campaigns for a united Bengal, he embodied the uncompromising Bengali nationalist spirit.

Yet, history has been cruel. Delhi sought to erase his memory. After Partition, Jawaharlal Nehru's government kept him under 24-hour surveillance, generating 1,824 pages of IB reports in just two and a half years. In his last political battle of 1949, Sarat Bose thundered that "Delhi is destroying Bengal", and the people of South Calcutta elected him over Nehru's candidature. But in February 1950, Bengal lost this great son.

Today, as Bengal struggles to reclaim its own voice, Sarat Bose's life reminds us that history is not merely about those who fought with the sword, but also about those who defended with the pen, the law and the sheer force of organisation.

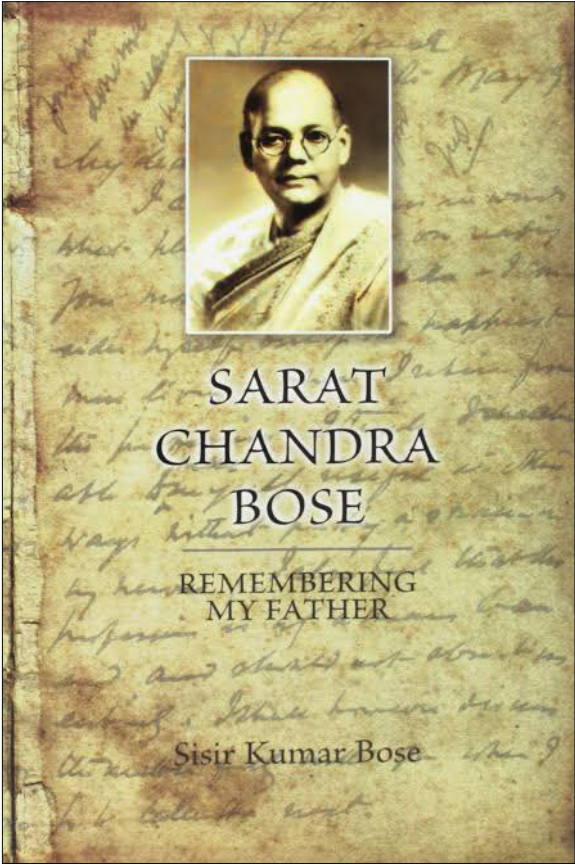
This essay seeks to reclaim Sarat Bose's rightful place - not as a shadow of Subhas, but as a Titan in his own right, the unseen architect of India's revolution.

The Power Behind Netaji
The British secret police were unanimous in their assessment :Subhas was dazzling, but Sarat was dangerous.

Charles Tegart, the infamous colonial police officer who masterminded Bengal's intelligence machinery, wrote of him :
"The power behind his



It's not luck.
It's alignment.



Press and Propaganda : Through newspapers like Forward, he gave voice to suppressed nationalist narratives.

United Front Politics : As President of the Bengal Congress, he built alliances between moderates, radicals and revolutionaries.

Netaji's Escape (1941) : When Subhas staged his daring flight from house arrest, Sarat was accused of facilitating it. His arrest thereafter underscored the British fear of his role in enabling his brother's movements.

Tagert's assessment sums it up :Sarat was not the man of the revolver, but the man who made the revolver's cause respectable.

The Two Brothers : Fire and Flame

The Bose brothers embodied two complementary dimensions of India's struggle :

Subhas Chandra Bose : The electrifying orator, mass mobilizer and revolutionary who believed in armed struggle.

Sarat Chandra Bose : The strategist, organiser, barrister and institution-builder who ensured the underground and overground wings of nationalism worked in tandem.

They were not rivals but partners. Subhas openly acknowledged his debt to Sarat's guidance and resources, while Sarat respected Subhas's daring spirit even when he disagreed with specific choices - such as aligning with Axis Powers. In fact, both the brothers loved and respected each other to the fullest. Together they were parallel titans - one is the lightning, the other is the steady flame.

The Visionary of United Bengal

Even in the final decade of colonial rule, Sarat Bose's imagination defied boundaries. In 1946, with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, he advanced the radical idea of a United -Independent Bengal - a sovereign state that would avoid partition along communal lines.

The proposal, signed on 20 May 1947, included :

Bengal to be a sovereign state, free to decide its relation with India.

Universal adult suffrage for elections, with seats reserved proportionately for Hindus and Muslims.

A Balanced Cabinet, with equal members of Hindus and Muslims. Prime Minister from the Muslim community and Home Minister from the Hindu side.

Equal Distribution (50-50) of army, police and administrative jobs between the two communities, reserved for Bengalis alone.

This was in effect, the last practical initiative for a united India. Though it ultimately failed, it revealed Sarat's extraordinary vision to rise above communal politics.

After partition he went

struggle - now against the dominance of Delhi over Bengal. He warned repeatedly that Bengalis, especially in West Bengal, were yet to grasp the extent of political, social and economical subjugation forced upon them by partition.

In June 1949, contesting the South Calcutta seat against Nehru's Congress candidate, he campaigned under the banner of Bengali unity. His slogan was unflinching : "Delhi is destroying Bengal." Bengalis rallied with him and he won the seat with a resounding victory.

But his independent stance made him inconvenient. Surveillance did not end with British rule. Between 1947 and his death in February 1950, the IB compiled a staggering 1,824 pages of secret reports on Sarat Bose - proof that he remained as feared by Nehru's India as he had been by the British

Raj.

Why Sarat Bose Remains in the Shadows

"Spectacle Vs. Subtlety : Subhas's dramatic career and mysterious death (if at all) made him a legend. Sarat's work grounded in law and institutions, lacked the same mythic aura.

"Historiographical Bias : Indian historiography has celebrated charismatic leaders and martyrs, often sidelining strategists and organisers.

Political Inconvenience : Sarat's advocacy for United Bengal and his criticism of Delhi's centralism were uncomfortable truths for post-independence politics.

Thus, while the Raj saw Sarat as a nightmare, free India chose to remember him only as Netaji's elder brother, not as the Titan he truly was.

Reclaiming of the Shadowed Titan

The history of India's liberation is incomplete without Sarat Chandra Bose. To revolutionaries, he was a defender and benefactor.

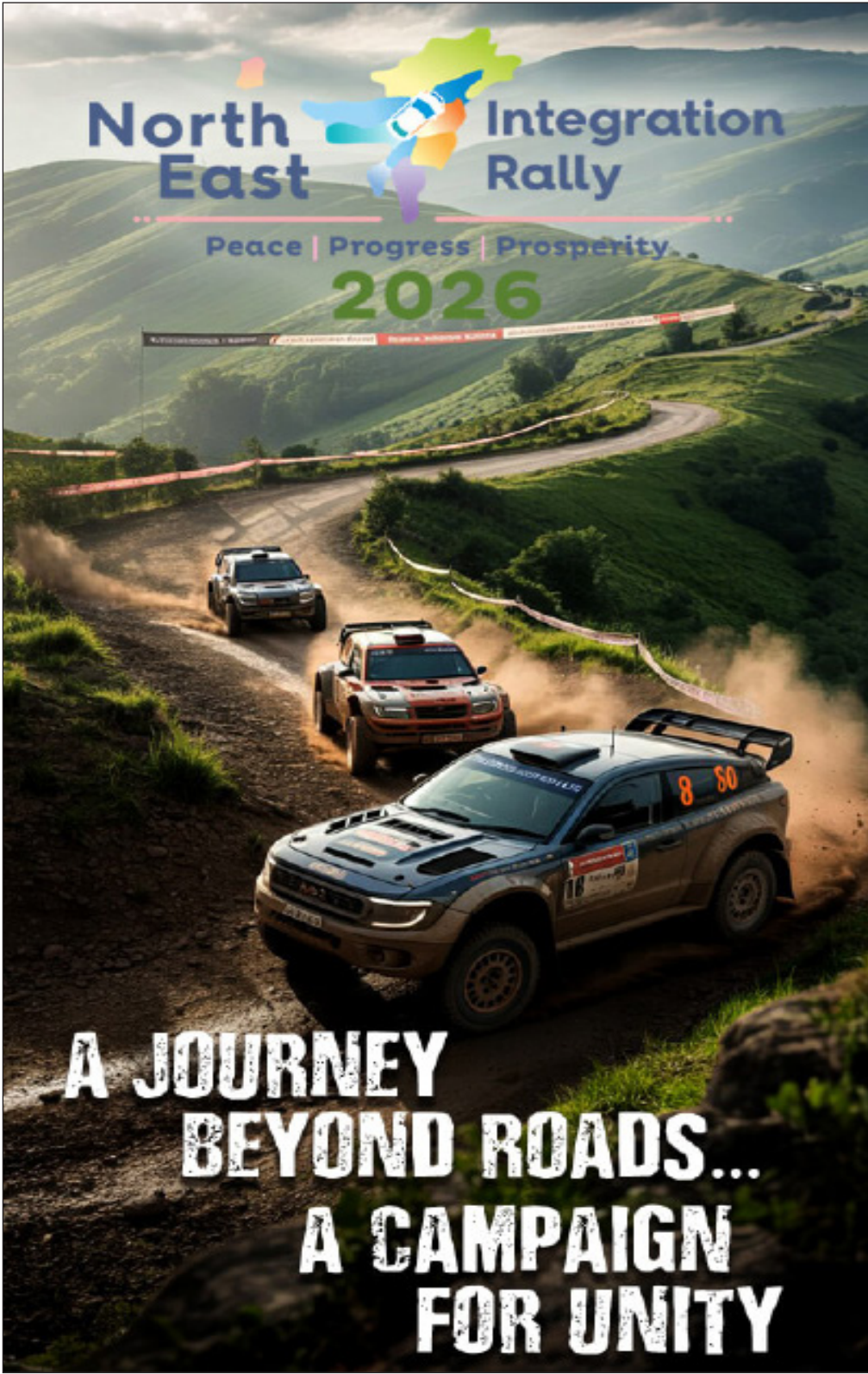
To Subhas, he was a mentor and anchor. To the British, he was the "most dangerous opponent" in a barrister's robe. To free India, he was a prophet silenced too soon.

If Subhas symbolises the lightning strike of rebellion, Sarat represents the steady enduring flame that kept the fire alive. Together, they embody a fuller truth of India's freedom, passion and planning, sword and pen, fire and light.

It is time, at long last, to lift Sarat Bose out of the shadows - to honour him not as a mere shadow of Subhas but as a Titan in his own right, the unseen architect of a revolution that redefined a nation.



Bidhayak Das Purkayastha is a son of mother India. Though a self-reliant engineer by profession, his true identity lies hidden in his pen. With equal mastery over English and Bengali, he crafts columns, essays and poetry where the tangled realities of society and politics and the unspoken truths of our times, find their voice. Beyond his professional pursuits, he dedicated himself with unwavering sincerity to social service - standing beside the suppressed and oppressed in their struggle for rights. The pledge to uphold justice, equality and human dignity is the flame that drives both his work and his creations forward.





BARAK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 10-12, 2025

ACTIVITY PROGRAM



12 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.
School, College, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.





11 JAN Adventure Sports

Tracking | Canyoneering | Sport Climbing | Disaster Management Technique | Water Sports



11 JAN Barak Valley Conclave

Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different sector stakeholders.
Industry, NGOs, and Government can register for seminar, discussion, debate, workshop, and present their proposals. Participation is through invitation only. 5 different awards are provided.

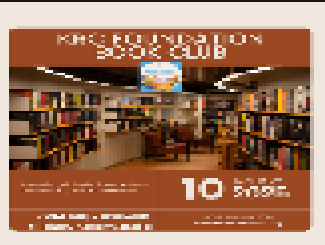
10 Jan Barak Festival: Peace Progress & Prosperity



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.





11 JAN 5E For Success Conclave

The 5E success conclave is going to deliberate on the theme: "From School to Campus to Corporate". Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.
Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & College Extension School, Alumni Speaking (College).
In an online event where students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.

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

Photo Competition, Video Competition, Cartooning, and the Fund, Talks and Contest are part of the Barak Festival 2025. Theme: "One for All, All for One".
Students from schools, colleges, universities, and corporate houses, sportsmen, girls, students, teachers, and parents.





Barak Festival

Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion



CONTACT: WP: 67218000-10 | info@krcfoundation.org



BARAK FESTIVAL 2025

PAINTING CARNIVAL NE CULTURAL FEST E-SPORTS

FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION
BOOK BANK | WORKSHOP | DEBATE | MEET THE AUTHOR



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10-12 JAN Science Studio

Real glimpse of Science to all who are curious.
Class VI-XI | Teachers | School 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

Online Campaign Book Bank for all who are curious.

Book Club

Meet Authors, Publishers, Read & Discuss, Buy and Sell Books.

Painting Carnival

Online Campaign and Book Bank Campaign.

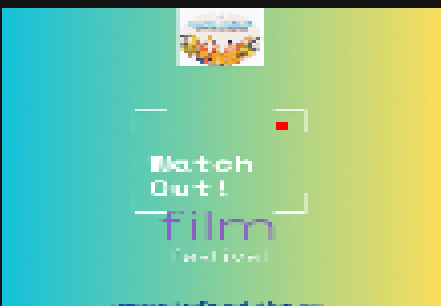
DEC'24-JAN'25 Photography

Online Photography Contest
River Barak | NE India | Art & Culture of NE | NE Outlines
Real-Time Photography Contest of "Barak Festival 2025"



11 JAN film festival

Award-Winning Documentary Film from Manipal
Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, Wb
Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet the Maker





Barak Festival

Band Night 10 JAN Musical Night 11 JAN



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