



# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 585 | SILCHAR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2025. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

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### PERSPECTIVE

**A bird asked a bee: "Don't you feel sad when man steals your honey?" The bee replied: "He can steal my honey, but not my art of making it." ~ Harsh Goenka, Chairman RPG Enterprises**

### HOLIDAY NOTICE

The offices of KRC TIMES will remain closed on 29th September to 02 October 2025 on account of Durga Puja. Accordingly, there will be no publication of the E-copy. Normal publication will resume from 3rd Oct. We wish our readers a very HAPPY PUJA.

Editor

## Justice Soumen Sen named Chief Justice of Meghalaya High Court

SHILLONG

Justice Soumen Sen, currently serving as acting chief justice of the Calcutta High Court, has been appointed to head the Meghalaya High Court.

The notification came on September 26, following the Supreme Court collegium's recommendation earlier this month.

Justice Sen began his legal career in 1991 after enrolling with the Bar Council of West Bengal. He practised at the Calcutta High Court before being elevated as a judge of the court in April 2011. He took charge as acting chief justice of the Calcutta High Court on September 16.

In other judicial appointments, 24 judges were cleared for the Allahabad High Court, while two judges were appointed to the Himachal Pradesh High Court.

### WHO SAID WHAT



**A Leftist Ecosystem in Assam, which is desperate to create a "Nepal" like situation, spread another FAKE NEWS. They claimed the government cut trees to construct Guwahati's Dighalpokhuri flyover. Fact is each of these trees were transplanted in an adjacent location. ~ Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM**

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today clarified that the post-mortem report of late singer Zubeen Garg will not be made public immediately.

He said the report will first be examined by the police and legal authorities before any further action.

"If anyone wants to see Zubeen Garg's post-mortem report, they must apply through proper legal channels. It will not be circulated for public viewing," Sarma stated.

The CM's remarks come amid rising demands for transparency over the circumstances surrounding the singer's death in Singapore earlier this month. He reiterated that due legal procedure must be followed in all sensitive cases of this nature.

The government has already barred Syamkanu Mahanta and his associated organisations from state events over controversies linked to Garg's death, while investigations continue under CID supervision.



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

Speaking during a live interaction, the Chief Minister said,

"The day I will fail to give justice to Zubeen, the public can punish me. If we cannot give justice to Zubeen, why would people vote for us in 2026? That is a fact we must all accept." Sarma recalled that six years ago he had warned that certain individuals around Zubeen were misleading and misguiding him.

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

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on September 27 issued a stern warning to those attempting to politicise the tragic death of singer Zubeen Garg, saying the state would not tolerate unrest or lawlessness.

Sarma announced that Look Out

Notices have been issued against Shyamkanu Mahanta, organiser of the North East Festival, and Siddharth Sharma, Zubeen Garg's manager. In addition, their bank accounts, debit cards, and credit cards have been frozen as part of ongoing investigations. Speaking via Facebook Live, he urged both individuals to appear before the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) by October 6, cautioning that failure to comply would trigger intensified police action. "This is Zubeen's Assam. People want justice for him, and we understand that, but it cannot be sought through violence," Sarma said. He compared the potential for unrest in Assam with the recent political turmoil in Nepal, which saw weeks of violent protests following government restrictions on social media. "We cannot allow Assam to descend into such instability," he added.

"After decades of unrest, we have brought a new growth momentum in Assam. From semiconductors to ethanol to new infrastructure, As-

sam today is steadfast on its goal to become a developed State- DO NOT TRY TO INCITE VIOLENCE AND TURN IT INTO NEPAL. The consequences will be HARSH," CM Sarma wrote on his X handle.

The Chief Minister framed the situation as a matter of Assam's cultural identity, invoking historical and cultural icons such as Lachit Borphukan and Bhupen Hazarika. He said the state's legacy of resilience and pride must be preserved and emphasised that he was ready to make personal sacrifices to maintain law and order.

Sarma also warned against attempts to exploit Zubeen Garg's death for political gains, noting that some groups were using the tragedy to incite anti-government sentiment. "Any effort to disturb peace under the guise of Zubeen's name will not be tolerated," he said.

He reaffirmed that the investigation will proceed through legal channels, urging the public to remain calm and allow authorities to carry out justice.

## ADRE Grade III, IV results to be out on Oct 10 & 15, appointments to follow: CM Sarma



GUWAHATI

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Saturday, announced a detailed schedule for the declaration of results of various state recruitment examinations, along with timelines for major welfare schemes including Orunodoi Phase 3 and Nijut Moina.

Addressing the people on a live session in a social media website, the Chief Minister clarified that while the results were initially slated for September, delays arose due to "the sudden demise of Zubeen Garg" and a directive from the Gauhati High Court.

"We had earlier planned to declare ADRE results and distribute appointment letters by September 25. However, because of the court order and recent situation, we had to wait. Now, the ADRE Grade III results will be declared on October 10, and the Grade IV results on October 15," Sarma said. Also Read - 24 Bangladesh nationals pushed back from Cachar; 61 sent

back in a week Reiterating his government's commitment, Chief Minister Sarma added, "We are working to ensure results are declared without overlap, especially for teacher recruitments, and that appointments are delivered on time. By the end of October, new recruits will be in place and key welfare schemes will be rolled out as promised."

Sub-Inspector and Fire Brigade results: October 10 Graduate and Post-Graduate Teachers' results: October 15 Health Department exams (technical and non-technical): before October 12 Elementary and Primary Teacher results: between October 15-20 Armed Branch and Unarmed Branch Constable exams: results expected within October The Chief Minister assured that appointment letters will be handed over by October 25-26, fulfilling the government's promise of timely recruitment. Alongside recruitment updates, Sarma also shared timelines for key welfare schemes. "Through Orunodoi, 30 lakh families are already receiving Rs 1,250 per month. We had scheduled the 3rd phase for September 25, but due to unavoidable circumstances, it will now be released on October 7 after completing all formalities. Similarly, the Nijut Moina scheme will be launched between October 10-15," he said.

## 'Kohinoor of Assamese Culture': PM Modi's Emotional Tribute to Zubeen Garg in Mann Ki Baat

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a heartfelt tribute to the late Assamese singer Zubeen Garg during his 126th Mann Ki Baat broadcast on September 28, describing him as the "Kohinoor, the brightest gem of Assamese culture" and assuring listeners that his musical legacy would endure for generations.

The Prime Minister's emotional remembrance of Garg, who died in a drowning incident in Singapore on September 19, became the centrepiece of Sunday's radio programme. Modi emphasised that despite the singer's physical absence, his spirit would live on through his music and in the hearts of fans across Assam and India.

"Zubeen was the Kohinoor of Assamese culture. Though he is physically no longer with us in this world, he will always be with us in our hearts," Modi stated. He added that Garg's songs would continue to mesmerise future generations, highlighting the singer's unmatched contribution to Assamese cultural heritage.

The tribute underlined Garg's deep connection to his native culture and his significant impact on Indian music. Modi reflected on the profound grief



felt across the nation following the 52-year-old artist's untimely death, acknowledging his status as both a cultural icon and beloved entertainer who gained fame far beyond Assam's borders. The Mann Ki Baat episode also featured commemorations of other notable figures, including Shaheed Bhagat Singh on his birth anniversary, whom Modi praised as an inspiration for Indian youth. The Prime Minister also honoured legendary playback singer Lata Mangeshkar, recognising her monumental contributions to Indian music and culture.

The Prime Minister also discussed cultural preservation efforts, particularly the government's initiative to secure UNESCO's Intangible Cultural

Heritage recognition for Chhath Puja. He emphasised how such international acknowledgement helps spread India's cultural heritage globally.

The broadcast wove together themes of culture, heritage, and patriotism, with Zubeen Garg's memory serving as an emotional focal point while celebrating India's achievements across music, arts, defence, and cultural preservation. Garg's passing has left a significant void in the Indian music industry, particularly in Assamese entertainment. Known for his like "Mayabini" and numerous other compositions, he was recognised not only as a versatile artist but also as a philanthropist who contributed extensively to community welfare initiatives.

## Mizoram leads Northeast in tourist visits while Manipur falls

SHILLONG

Northeast India's tourism sector presents a tale of contrasts, with some states posting impressive growth while others face significant challenges in attracting both domestic and foreign visitors, according to the India Tourism Data Compendium 2025.

Mizoram emerged as the standout performer among northeastern states, recording a remarkable growth of 101.74 per cent in domestic tourist visits, jumping from 0.209 million visitors in 2023 to 0.422 million in 2024. The state also saw foreign tourist arrivals surge by 44.22 per cent, though from a modest base of 4,000 to 5,000 visitors.

However, this growth story wasn't uniform across the region. Manipur experienced a steep decline, with domestic tourist visits plummeting by 49.56 per cent from 58,000 in 2023



to just 29,000 in 2024. Foreign tourist arrivals also dropped by 31.35 per cent, highlighting the ongoing challenges facing the state's tourism sector.

Meghalaya showed posi-

tive momentum with domestic tourist visits growing 13.04% to reach 1.586 million, while foreign arrivals increased by 15.24 per cent to 23,000 visitors. Nagaland also posted healthy gains,

with domestic tourism up 25.87 per cent to 126,000 visitors and foreign arrivals rising 19.01 per cent.

Tripura recorded substantial growth in domestic tourism, with visits increasing 64.07 per cent to 601,000, though foreign tourist arrivals grew at a more modest 36.15 per cent to 91,000 visitors.

Among the larger northeastern states, Assam remained relatively stable with domestic tourist visits declining marginally by 0.06 per cent to 7.608 million, while foreign arrivals increased by 14.07 per cent to 27,000. The state maintained its position as the region's tourism leader, accounting for 0.26 per cent of India's total domestic tourist visits.

Arunachal Pradesh faced headwinds with domestic visits falling 16.40 per cent to 870,000, though it managed a slight increase in foreign tourists.

Sikkim, popular among international visitors, saw domestic tourism grow 16.60 per cent to 1.540 million, though foreign arrivals dipped by 9.68 per cent.

Nationally, the northeastern states' combined share remains modest, with the region collectively attracting less than 1% of India's total domestic and foreign tourist visits. This underscores the untapped potential of the region, which offers diverse cultural experiences, pristine landscapes, and unique biodiversity.

The data reveals that while traditional tourism powerhouses like Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka continue to dominate with their historical attractions and established infrastructure, the northeastern states are gradually finding their footing in India's tourism landscape, though progress remains uneven across the region.

Unveiling the Goddess, the celebrations rise

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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 585

## RABIES FREE INDIA BY 2030

Rabies is 10th most common cause of human deaths. Rabies is endemic in India except the Andaman & Nicobar and the Lakshadweep Islands. Rabies is deadly but 100 percent preventable disease caused by Lyssa virus of family – Rhabdoviridae . It affects all warm blooded animals and transmitted by saliva, bite or scratches from animals mainly dogs, foxes, Jackals, Monkeys and Mongoose etc. World Rabies day is observed on 28th September every year for awareness of people about rabies and enhance prevention and control measures. The day is commemorated on the death anniversary of Louis Pasteur, who first developed an effective Anti-rabies vaccine. While canine rabies tragically takes around 59,000 human lives each year, its impact extends far beyond just mortality. It also robs millions of their health, causing the equivalent of 3.7 million years of healthy life to be lost due to disability. This devastating toll also has a financial cost, estimated at \$8.6 billion annually in economic losses, affecting families and healthcare systems worldwide, with a disproportionate burden borne by developing nations. India has the most people in the world, and also the most stray dogs. Because there are so many people and so many dogs living close together, there's a higher chance for diseases to spread from dogs to people, especially rabies. Sadly, this is why India accounts for a very large number of deaths from rabies, even though it's a disease that can be prevented. It's a big challenge because of how many people and dogs share the same spaces.

Despite the optimism, formidable challenges remain. The sheer scale of the stray dog population, estimated to be in the tens of millions, presents a logistical nightmare for comprehensive vaccination coverage. Ensuring consistent and widespread access to vaccines, especially in remote areas, is a perpetual struggle. Moreover, cultural perceptions and a lack of consistent enforcement of animal birth control (ABC) programs contribute to the burgeoning stray population. "Effective rabies elimination hinges not just on vaccination, but also on managing the dog population humanely," explains Mr. Rajesh Kumar, a municipal animal welfare officer. "Without sustainable ABC programs, the cycle continues." Another significant hurdle is the continued reliance on unscientific and often inhumane culling practices in some areas, which have proven ineffective in controlling rabies and are ethically questionable. Building trust with communities and advocating for humane, evidence-based strategies is paramount. The awareness among the common person regarding rabies prevention and proper post-bite care is a mixed bag. In urban centers and areas where specific campaigns have been intense, there's a growing understanding of the importance of vaccinating pets and seeking immediate medical attention after an animal bite. However, in many rural communities, misconceptions persist, traditional remedies are sometimes prioritized over modern medical care, and awareness about dog vaccination remains low. While messaging from medical and veterinary associations, along with government outreach, is increasing, bridging the knowledge gap effectively across all socio-economic strata and ensuring that awareness translates into prompt action is an ongoing battle. The challenge lies in converting episodic campaigns into continuous, deeply embedded community knowledge and proactive health-seeking behaviours.

India confronts a major challenge that calls for a coordinated public response, given its position as the country with the largest human population in the world, as well as the largest population of stray dogs. The One Health approach represents a potential game changer for this complex issue. This strategy recognises that the health of humans, animals, and the environment are strongly linked. Instead of fragmented efforts by separate government departments, a One Health approach would create a coordinated, multidisciplinary strategy involving public health officials, veterinarians, and environmentalists . This integrated effort would focus on preventing diseases at the source through widespread dog vaccination and sterilisation. The most effective and humane strategy is the Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (CNVR) program. This approach addresses the root cause of the problem by stabilizing dog populations and, most critically, creating herd immunity through mass vaccination. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) endorse CNVR as the global gold standard for rabies control and stray animal population management.

This approach is particularly relevant in India, where towns and cities are home to over 30 million stray dogs, which account for 97% of human rabies cases from bites. The battle to control rabies by brutally killing stray dogs has not yielded results. Mass vaccination of 70% of the dog population in endemic areas creates a barrier of healthy, immune dogs that prevents the disease from spreading. The cost of vaccinating dogs is minimal compared to the cost of emergency post-exposure treatments for bitten people. The government can offer subsidies to both pet owners and animal welfare organisations to reduce the cost of vaccines and sterilisation procedures. Schemes like the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules already provide financial assistance, but these can be expanded and made more accessible to local bodies and NGOs. Deploying mobile veterinary clinics can bring ARV and sterilisation services directly to underserved and rural areas. This reduces the logistical burden and travel costs for pet owners and local communities. Promote the use of Oral anti-rabies vaccine in pets – Right now, getting dogs vaccinated for rabies is a big challenge. The shots require multiple visits, which can be hard for pet owners to keep up with, and the cost can be too high. Plus, getting the vaccines to rural areas is tough because they need to be kept cold, and that's not always possible. But there's a promising solution: oral rabies vaccines (ORVs). Think of how the oral polio vaccine made it easier to reach more people. ORVs work the same way for dogs. They come in a bait, so you don't have to catch or restrain the dogs to vaccinate them. This could be a game-changer for India's fight against rabies, making it much easier to vaccinate the large population of free-roaming dogs and helping us get closer to a rabies-free country.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

A civilized man is one who will give a serious answer to a serious question. Civilization itself is a certain sane balance of values.

- Ezra Pound

# PROBLEMS OF INDIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

RAM RATTAN SHARMA

India often celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and diverse traditions, has long held a reputation for placing a premium on education. Parents in the country frequently emphasize the importance of academic success hoping to secure a brighter future for their children. However this relentless pursuit of academic achievement has given rise to harrowing phenomena the intense pressure on Indian children to perform in studies. This culture of cutthroat competition, the relentless race for marks and numbers and the resulting mental health issues, including anxiety attacks, low self confidence, depression, and tragically suicide, is a growing concern. The burden of expectations, coupled with perpetual drive to outperform their peers places an immense strain on young minds.

The Rat race of academic excellence: The relentless pursuit of academic excellence in India has often been linked to high stakes game, where the coveted prize is nothing less than a prosperous and successful life. This intense pursuit starts early, with the children as young as five or six years old being thrust into a fiercely competitive educational environment. As these young minds embark on their academic journeys, they are immediately faced with the expectation of securing high grades, a prelude to a life of promise and accomplishment. From the moment they enter the hallowed halls of school; Indian students find themselves in the thick of this relentless race of academic success. The pressure steadily mounts as they progress through various stages of their education, intensifying with each passing year. The race to secure top marks and be the best in their class becomes a constant presence in their lives, promoting every facet of their existence. A significant factor contributing to this relentless pressure is the prevailing emphasis on rote memorization and standardized examinations. Students are often expected to memorize vast amounts of information and re-regurgitate it on exams, leaving them with a little room for genuine understanding or critical thinking. The emphasis on examinations, while necessary to assess knowledge and skills, has the unintended consequence of reducing education to a numbers game, where the only measure of success is the score on a piece of paper. In this environment, students face a formidable challenge. They must not only excel academically but also navigate a system that can be highly competitive and sometimes unforgiving. The fear of falling short of not being able to keep up with the relentless pace or not achieving the high grades expected by parents, teachers, and society, can create an immense burden this year, in turn, drives many students to push themselves to their limits, often at the expense of their mental and emotional well being. In this high stress environment the pursuit of holistic learning and creativity can often be sacrificed. The narrow focus on exam oriented education can stifle student's innate curiosity and suppress their ability to explore, innovate, and discover. The pressure to perform to a predetermined path can lead students feeling trapped, unable to pursue their passions or talents beyond the prescribed curriculum.

The coaching institute epidemic: A strain on school and higher education In recent years, the educational landscape of India had witnessed transformation. Marked by the proliferation of coaching institutes, notably in cities like Kota, Rajasthan, Kota, Often referred to as the "Coaching Capital" of India, has earned, its reputation as an education hub with a multitude of coaching centers that cater to students aspiring to clear competitive examinations, particularly those preparing for engineering and medical entrance exams such as the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). The meteoric rise of these coaching institutes and the overwhelming influx of students from all corners of the country have brought both opportunities and challenges, contributing significantly to the mounting pressure on Indian children.

The lure of these coaching institutes, many of which boast a record of producing top performers in competitive exams,

is undeniable. They promise a shortcut to success a chance to secure a coveted seat in prestigious institutions that can potentially shape one's entire future. In response to this promise, students and their families often invest substantial time, money and effort to enrol in the institutions, driven by the belief that the pursuit of academic excellence is the surest path to prosperity.

However, behind the façade of guaranteed success lies a complex reality. The competition within these coaching centers is fierce, with students vying for limited slots in highly competitive exams. The rigorous study schedules gruelling hours and overwhelming emphasis on exam preparation contributes to the immense stress faced by students. Many spend years away from their families, living in hostels or rented accommodations, isolated from their support systems. Furthermore the immense pressure to perform in these coaching centers not only affects the mental and emotional well being of students but also intruded into their school education. With the majority of a student's time and energy consumed by the coaching curriculum, their regular school education takes a back seat. This can result in a one dimensional approach to learning where students, are primarily trained to excel in standardized tests while neglecting the broader holistic aspects of their education. The competition fostered by coaching institutes and the obsession with examination results can create an environment where the joy of learning is diminished. This academic tunnel vision may deter students from exploring their passions, pursuing extracurricular activities or cultivating critical thinking skills, as the focus becomes exclusively centered on securing higher marks. The Toll on Mental Health: The pounding pressure to excel in academics and cut throat competition prevalent in India's educational system exacts a heavy toll on the mental health of the country's youth. This unyielding pursuit of success often leads to a myriad of emotional and psychological challenges, profoundly affecting the well being of students. The burden of expectations, coupled with the perpetual drive to outperform their peers, places an immense strain on young minds. Anxiety attacks are a frequent occurrence, as students find themselves overwhelmed by the relentless demands placed up on them. The persistent fear of letting down not only their parents and teachers but also society at large can instill a paralyzing sense of self doubt. This fear of failure or the fear of not living up to the lofty standards set by their peers and society further exacerbated the already fragile mental state of these students.

Feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy are common place, as students grapple with the constant comparison to their peers and the unrealistic expectations set by their surroundings. The pressure to secure top grades, gain admission to prestigious institutions and ultimately achieve societal success can be all consuming. It often leads to students feeling as though they are in a never ending race, and this persistent feeling of inadequacy can lead to a myriad of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. Moreover, this mental toll is not confined to the academic area alone. The lack of balance between rigorous study schedules and personal life can result in a sense of isolation and a profound disconnection from their own well being. The toll on mental health and over all emotional happiness in the relentless pursuit of success

Depression and Suicide : The issue of depression and suicidal tendencies with in India's education system paints a grim picture of immense challenges and pressures that students face. The relentless pursuit of top scores and academic excellence can exact a heavy toll on the mental health on young minds, pushing them to the brink of despair. The pressure cooker environment within the education system in India can create a perfect storm for students. The weight of expectations from parents , teachers and society as a whole can be suffocating leaving many an feeling overwhelmed and trapped as a result, students often find them struggling with profound depression, a condition that robs them of their joy, energy and enthusiasm for life.

Isolation is a common companion to this depression, as students may withdraw from their social circles and retreat in to their own world of misery. The fear of disappointing loved ones or sense of loneliness. The pursuit of academic excellence, which often involves long hours of solitary study, further exacerbates this isolation. The loss of purpose is another profound consequence of this unrelenting pressure. Students, which once had dreams and dreams and aspirations beyond just their academic success, may find themselves consumed by the singular goal of securing top grades. This myopic focus on academic achievement can strip them of their sense of purpose, leaving them feeling adrift and aimless.

Regrettably some students in their desperate search for an escape from this never end cycle of academic stress resort to the ultimate tragedy, suicide. The decision to end one's own life is a heart wrenching testament to the severity of the crisis. It highlights the deep despair and hopelessness that can overcome even the highest young minds when they are pushed beyond their limits. Kota a city known for its intense coaching centers and the pursuit of competitive exams has gained notoriety for the alarming number of student suicides. This serves as a stark reminder of the gravity of the problem with in the Indian education system, it underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in the way of education is imparted, assessed and perceived in the country. Addressing the issue of depression and suicidal tendencies among students is not just matter of concern, it is a moral imperative. It calls for a holistic approach that involves educators, parents, and society at large. Promoting mental health awareness, offering support systems, and encourage more balanced and well rounded approach to education can help alleviate the pressure that drive students to such despair. Ultimately the well being of young minds should be a paramount consideration in the pursuit of academic excellence. A call for Change: India's education system stands at a crucial cross roads with an urgent need for transformation to relieve the immense mental and emotional pressure thrust up on its young learners. In this era of rapid societal and technological changes a significant shift is essential. The focus must transit from mechanical rote memorization to a more compassionate and nurturing approach, prioritizing creativity, critical thinking and the holistic development of students, parents, educators and institutions must recognize that genuine success transcends the realm of grades and marks, and the mental and emotional well being of students should take centre stage.

Redefining Success: The conventional definition of success, primarily linked to academic performance has created an environment where students are burdened with the relentless pursuit of High scores. This one dimensional view fails to acknowledge the diversity of talent and potential among students. A pressing need for change is to redefine success, emphasizing the development of skills, character, and emotional intelligence. Instead of grading students based solely on exams, assessments should encompass a more comprehensive evaluation of their overall growth and development.

Nurturing creativity and critical thinking: One of the essential aspects of reform is the fostering of creativity and critical thinking. The current system often discourages individuality and problems, creatively and engage in experiential learning, providing opportunities for students to innovate in favour of uniformity. Students should be encouraged to think independently, solve explore their interests and talents.

Prioritizing mental health: The relentless pursuit of high academic achievements often takes a toll on students mental health support services must become more accessible and destigmatized. Students should have a safe and confidential space to express their anxieties, fears and concerns. Schools and colleges should provide trained counselors and resources to guide students through the challenges, they face, helping them cope with the pressures of academic life.

Institutional Responsibility: Educational institutions should also take on the respon-

sibility of monitoring the mental health of their students. Regular check in and open communication channels should be established to ensure that students are provided with the necessary support and guidance.

Furthermore, teachers and staff should be trained to identify signs of emotional distress and act accordingly, promoting a supportive and compassionate environment.

India's education system has long been lauded for its rigor and excellence, but it is essential to acknowledge the significant toll it takes on the mental health of its youth. The intense pressure to perform in studies, the cut throat competition and the relentless race for marks and numbers have depression and tragically suicide. It is imperative that society, parents, and educators come together to prioritize the well being of students and promote a more balanced, nurturing and supportive environment for the country's young minds. Only then can India truly harness the potential of its youth and pave the way for brighter and healthier future.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**We have an 8000 year-old culture to showcase and yet while one city - Paris - attracts 25 million foreign tourists a year, an entire country - India - gets 11 million. We haven't plucked the lowest-hanging fruit. We are watching it rot.**

~ Anand Ranganathan, Author



## FASTING ANATOMY REQUIRES FEASTING AUTONOMY

S VAIDHYASUBRAMANIAM

The festive Navaratri season fasting is for the resting body, mind and soul to search elevated ideals. Once the fasting season ends, comes the feasting festival of sorts, Deepavali that elevates peoples' moods to fun and food. This transition from fasting to feasting is an annual ritual in our Indic tradition practiced in an unparalleled way with unbroken continuum. Just as this celebration feasting from regimental fasting signals human anatomy's lifestyle transition, there needs to a cerebral feasting from regimental fasting in higher education institution (HEI) to signal academic autonomy transition. Here is more.

Let me begin with the Trumpian volte-face as an ex-Presidential candidate to his current Presidential stance that is tellingly visible. Trump's sudden H1B policy reversal salvo is a red card jerk to his election campaign assurance of a diploma on graduation with a green card perk. Be that as it may, the repercussions of the same has different effects for different nations. For Indian techies, it's an opportunity to step into a new future with the past providing certain guidance vectors. The latest dispatch of The Economist

states that seven of the top 10 tech companies that benefitted from the H1B visa are American including the Big 5: Amazon, Apple, Google, Microsoft and Meta, and three Indian firms—TCS, Infosys and Cognizant. The majority beneficiary of H1B visa is the Indians who have garnered over 60 per cent of the H1B visas issued between October 2020 to June 2025 with China a distant 12 per cent (pause to ponder the benefits that China has accrued domestically) and no other country greater than two per cent. Another National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) study by Wharton provides an interesting perspective on how globalised American MNCs internationalise workforce by circumventing local restrictive policies. For every visa rejection, such firms employ 0.9 people abroad at their own facilities (read GCCs) with India, China and Canada their preferred off-shore destinations, an emerging opportunity for India to capitalise. There is a strong case for greater autonomy to Indian HEIs in the spirit of being 'Atmanirbhar' as much as its given to foreign university campuses in India. Here is why.

As per the latest Open Doors data of the Institute of International Education, Indian students consti-

tute 30 per cent of the international student community with STEM and Management education (60 per cent) being the most sought after in the top 5 destinations—US, UK, Canada, Australia and Germany. The main reasons for students flocking to international destinations are: charm of a foreign land, flexibility and institutional autonomy that foreign universities enjoy and promise of a foreign job, and lifestyle. At a domestic level for India, we definitely can boast of a rich culture but still grappling with infrastructure issues despite improving trajectory. The second is related to academic policy making which has begun well but still restricted to the 'elitist' few and needs to extend to deserving plenty. The third is linked to policy reforms that are bilateral with each sovereign nation's interest being of paramount importance. In the middle of this three-dimensional confluence, lies the hope for Indian higher education. If hope is not delayed disappointment, then the action has to begin now in Deepavali Dhamaka fashion.

The NEP 2020 is a charter for reforms in which institutional autonomy forms the centrepiece for higher education transformation through skilling, training, education, research,

innovation and entrepreneurship. The first five years have been a mixed bag of sensitisation and action with the former gaining majority space and energy. The next decade belongs to NEP 2020 actions that shall propel Viksit Bharat @ 2047 to matured work in process by 2035. One actionable agenda is the need to provide complete autonomy— financial, administrative, and academic to all deserving HEIs. Unless this is given, there is very little scope and incentive for institutional reforms which is a key trigger to retain domestic talent. The current mode of full autonomy to select few HEIs has demonstrated a welcome reversal in student traffic and a case in point for sweeping reforms in HEI autonomy, a much-needed main course.

NEP 2020 is the anatomy of India's higher education transformation and its appetiser reforms have shown promise. It is now the time to serve the main course with multiple options for HEIs to choose from. The status-quo restrictive fasting menu has to expand to a full-autonomy driven feasting menu to retain Indian talent in India making India the preferred off-shore destination for global technology companies. In short: Fasting Anatomy Requires Feasting Autonomy. Is anybody listening?

# Himanta Biswa Sarma claims BPF part of NDA after Bodoland Territorial Council polls

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday asserted that the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) remains a part of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) following the recent Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections. He met with BPF chief Hagrama Mohilary to congratulate him on the party's performance.

The BPF won 28 of the 40 seats in the BTC polls, while the BJP and the UPPL, who had jointly run the administration for the last five years, secured seven and five seats, respectively. Sarma emphasised that the BPF is still part of the NDA



and controls all 40 seats of BTC, as well as the NEDA constituencies.

Speaking on the sidelines of a program, Sarma said, "I congratulate Mohilary and the BPF on their victory in the BTC polls. BPF is also part of NDA, and now all 40 seats of BTC are held by NDA constituents." He also clarified that Mohilary would continue to meet him and the BJP on matters concerning the BTC polls and that there were no issues with the alliance. "We will continue to work together," he said, adding that the election results would have been different if not for the "unfortunate death of Zubeen Garg."

The Chief Minister noted that the BJP narrowly lost in some con-

stituencies and could have won 10 to 11 seats but said the party's vote share had increased considerably overall. Attacking the Congress, which failed to win a single seat in the BTC elections, Sarma remarked, "People have already realized that its leader is a Pakistani agent," in an apparent reference to Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi. He added that when the SIT report, investigating alleged links with certain people in Pakistan, is tabled, it would become clear why Congress has struggled to gain public trust.

Sarma confirmed that the SIT report will be discussed in the cabinet meeting on October 4, and the government will take necessary steps thereafter.

## Nagaland MP stresses fair representation, federal equity at international delimitation conference



KOHIMA

Nagaland's Rajya Sabha member, S Phangnon Konyak, attended the inaugural session of the International Conference on Delimitation in India: Balancing Representation and Federal Equity, held at Sir Shankar Lal Concert Hall, University of Delhi.

The event was organised by the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, and featured Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh along with leading academics and policymakers.

Konyak, speaking as the guest of honour, stressed the critical role

of delimitation in ensuring fair representation across India's diverse states and in reinforcing the federal structure. She praised the Faculty of Law for addressing this timely issue, highlighting its significance for democratic governance.

Drawing attention to cooperative federalism, she cited the Next Gen GST reforms as a successful example of collaboration between the central government and states, made possible through unanimous decisions in the GST Council. Konyak noted that such initiatives reflect the vibrancy of India's democracy and the importance of consensus-driven policymaking.

The conference brought together experts to examine the challenges and implications of delimitation, aiming to promote balanced representation while maintaining federal equity across the country.

## Manipur police destroy massive cache of narcotics in Imphal West

IMPHAL

Manipur Police carried out a major drug disposal exercise on September 27, destroying large quantities of narcotics at the Shija Common Biomedical Waste Treatment Facility in Lamdeng, Imphal West.

The seized drugs included 6 kilograms of heroin powder, 87 kilograms of brown sugar, 22 kilograms of WY tablets, 36 kilograms of pseudoephedrine, 182 kilograms of ganja, and smaller amounts of SP capsules.

The consignment had been recovered in operations led by various district police units, the Narcotics and Affairs of Border (NAB), and other security agencies.

Director General of Police (DGP) Rajiv Singh, IPS, supervised the disposal process alongside senior officials. Addressing the gathering, Singh reiterated the department's commitment to a drug-free Manipur and praised the tireless efforts of police personnel engaged in anti-narcotics operations. He acknowledged the personal risks officers face in tackling trafficking networks and urged citizens to assist law enforcement by sharing information about drug dealers and peddlers. Following the event, the DGP visited Lamshang Police Station, where he interacted with officers, including women personnel, commandos, Manipur Rifles/India Reserve Battalion staff, and Central Armed Police Forces posted in outposts under Lamshang jurisdiction.

## Traffic restrictions announced in Guwahati for Durga Puja, effective Sept 28 to Oct 3

GUWAHATI

The Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Traffic, Guwahati, has announced a series of traffic restrictions across the city to ensure public safety and smooth movement during the Durga Puja festivities. The restrictions will remain in force from September 28 to October 3, 2025.

Authorities said the measures aim to protect vulnerable road users such as children, women, senior citizens, and differently abled persons, while also ensuring free passage for emergency vehicles, including ambulances and fire tenders.

As per the notification, the movement of goods vehicles will be restricted, with entry allowed only between 4 AM and 12 Noon during the Puja days. Several "No Entry" and "One Way" regulations have been imposed in busy areas under different po-

lice stations, including Dispur, Basistha, Bharalumukh, Jalukbari, Panbazar, Chandmari, Noonmati, and Latastil. Key roads such as Dr. R.P. Road, Bel-tola Market Road, Bishnu Rabha Path, AT Road, DG Road, and FC Road will see restrictions to control congestion.

City bus routes have also been modified. Buses plying between Basistha and Dharapur, Adabari and Lalgaon, Panjabari and Dharapur, and Hatigaon and Dharapur will follow diverted routes via GS Road, Ganeshguri, Chandmari, MG Road, and other alternative stretches.

Inter-district buses from Lower Assam will not be allowed to enter the city through Jalukbari and will instead be diverted to ISBT.

The Guwahati Traffic Police has urged commuters to cooperate with the new arrangements and plan their journeys accordingly during the festive period.

## Assam minister inaugurates puja pandals in Sribhumi, pays tribute to Zubeen Garg

SRIBHUMI

The festive spirit of Durga Puja lit up Sribhumi on Panchami night, September 27, as minister Krishnendu Paul inaugurated multiple puja pandals across the area. Among the inaugurated pandals were those of the Youth Unity Club at AOC Point, Madhya Sribhumi, and Shatabhisha Club.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of former Rajya Sabha MP Mission Ranjan Das, former BJP district president Subrata Bhattacharya, and officials of the organising clubs. Extending a warm invitation, the minister urged the people of Barak Valley to visit and experience the grandeur of the Sribhumi pujas.

Amid the celebrations,



Minister Paul took a poignant moment to express grief over the untimely demise of Assam's music icon Zubeen Garg.

Recalling Zubeen's deep-rooted connection with the area, he noted that the puja organised by Madhya Sribhumi Club is held at a government school where Garg once taught.

He fondly remembered that during the school's annual function, the late singer had captivated the audience with his tabla performance.

"Today, he is no longer with us. I bow before Goddess Durga to bless his departed soul with eternal peace. Zubeen will forever remain alive in our hearts," the minister said, evoking an emotional response from the gathering.

## 'Tourism must give back': Nagaland stresses sustainability on World Tourism Day

KOHIMA

Nagaland Tourism Commissioner and Secretary Arelna Jamir, on Saturday, said tourism should not only be about taking from a place, but also about giving back to the people, the land and the culture. Speaking at a programme here on the theme "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation" on the occasion of World Tourism Day on Saturday, Jamir said Nagaland has immense potential as the "Land of Festivals", offering a blend of culture and nature through the Hornbill Festival, Dzükou Valley, handwoven textiles, tribal cuisines, and eco-tourism initiatives.

While tourism can create livelihoods and preserve identity, she cautioned that unchecked growth could also lead to environmental



degradation, cultural dilution, and inequality. Jamir highlighted departmental initiatives such as community-based tourism, eco-camps, skill development of

youth as cultural ambassadors, eco-tourism projects with strict ecological safeguards, and digital promotion using virtual reality to manage tourist inflow.

She added that collaborations with NGOs and international agencies are being pursued to align the state's strategies with global sustainability goals. Stressing that sustainable transformation requires collective responsibility, Jamir called upon communities, private stakeholders, NGOs, and tourists to partner with the government. Tibetan women refugees to defy tradition; build roads at 15,000 ft She urged the youth to become cultural entrepreneurs and custodians of tradition, while inviting visitors to explore Nagaland with "open hearts and responsible intentions." A highlight of the programme was the recognition

of Khonoma, India's first Green Village, under the UN Tourism Best Tourism Villages Upgrade Programme 2022. Neikedolie Hiekha, chairman of the Khonoma Upgrade Programme, said the selection was for the village's pioneering role in community-led conservation and sustainable tourism. Hiekha recalled Khonoma's hunting ban, forest preservation, and the establishment of the Tragopan Sanctuary, which have transformed the village into a model of conservation-based livelihoods through homestays, eco-treks, and handicrafts. The event also featured 2024 Best Tour Operator Award winner Nino Zhasa, who shared how community-led tourism has transformed Kigwema village, empowering women entrepreneurs and preserving cultural authenticity.

## Ceremonial Welcome of Jatinga Migratory Birds Marks World Tourism Day at Jatinga



ANUP BISWAS

HAFLONG: In a colourful and symbolic event, the ceremonial welcome of the world-famous Jatinga migratory birds was held on Saturday, coinciding with the celebration of World Tourism Day at the Jatinga Festival site. The occasion drew enthusiastic participation from locals, nature lovers, and cultural performers who came together to highlight the natural allure of Dima Hasao and its significance in eco-tourism.

The programme was graced by Donpainon Thaosen, Executive Member of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC), who attended as the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, Thaosen lauded the uniqueness of Jatinga as a natural habitat that attracts global attention, saying that the migratory birds have become a symbol of the district's identity.

He also emphasised the need to balance tourism with conservation in order to preserve Jatinga's ecological heritage for future generations.

The ceremonial welcome of the birds included traditional and cultural performances, reflecting the harmonious ties between communities and nature. The event also featured awareness messages on the protection of migratory species and responsible tourism practices.

Organisers highlighted that the observance of World Tourism Day at Jatinga illustrates the district's potential to emerge as a premier destination for eco-tourism in Northeast India. With the arrival of migratory birds beginning around this season, the ceremony marked not only a cultural celebration but also an invitation to visitors and researchers from across the globe.

## Dhubri Puja Eve Stunner: Papad Durga and Zubeen Garg Tributes Ready

DHUBRI

On the eve of Durga Puja, Dhubri is abuzz with tradition, innovation and emotion, best captured by an artisan's striking creation: a Durga idol crafted entirely from expired papad.

Senior artisan Pradip Kumar Ghosh, a private tutor by profession and a pioneer in eco-friendly idol-making, unveiled his extraordinary creation at his modest workshop, drawing admiration from locals and visitors alike.

"I always try to think differently. For me, Durga Puja is not just about grandeur, but also about sending a message. Waste materials can be transformed into beauty. If this idol inspires people to reflect on sustainability, I consider my work successful," Ghosh said, surrounded by curious onlookers.

For over three decades, Ghosh has experimented with unconventional materials - vegetables, plastic bottles, dried branches, jute and clay substi-



tutes.

This year, he turned to expired papad, using nearly 15 kilograms of the discarded food item to build the idol. Each piece was treated and arranged meticulously to capture the form and spirit of Goddess Durga. The result is a striking work of art, rich in texture and detail.

The idol will be installed at the Sabuj Sangha Puja Mandap at Raja Probhat Chandra Baruah field in

Ward No. 1 of Dhubri town. Organisers expect it to become a major attraction.

"We invite everyone to witness how imagination can transform even expired food into divine art," Ghosh said.

Meanwhile, across Dhubri district, preparations for the grand festival are in full swing. Carpenters, decorators, and volunteers are working tirelessly to complete pandals,

adorned with dazzling lights, colourful themes, and innovative installations.

Several committees are focusing on themes of environmental awareness, cultural pride and social issues, blending devotion with contemporary messages.

Yet, this year's celebrations carry a note of solemnity. The sudden demise of cultural icon Zubeen Garg has left an emotional void across Assam. In Dhubri, most Puja committees have resolved to honour his memory during the festivities.

Special corners dedicated to Zubeen Garg will be set up at many mandaps, where his songs will play softly in the background. Some committees plan to organise shradhanjali (tribute) sessions to celebrate his contributions to Assamese music and culture.

"We grew up listening to Zubeen da. His music was the heartbeat of Assam," said a young volunteer at one pandal.

Another organiser added, "For us, Durga Puja without Zubeen's songs feels incomplete. Paying tribute is our way of thanking him for what he gave us."

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## TVK chief Vijay announces Rs 20 lakh for kin of Karur stampede victims, Rs 2 lakh for injured



### CHENNAI

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) president and actor Vijay on Sunday announced a financial assistance of Rs 20 lakh each to the families of those who have lost their lives in the Karur stampede, which killed at least 39 people. He also announced Rs 2 lakh each to those who suffered injuries in the stampede.

"I know this is not a large amount in the face of such loss. Yet at this time, it is my duty as one of your own to stand with you in spirit," said Vijay.

The TVK leader said his heart and mind are unbearably heavy thinking of what happened in Karur. "In the immense grief of having lost our loved ones, I do not know

how to express the pain I feel. My eyes and mind are clouded with sorrow", he added.

Vijay said he prayed that all those injured and undergoing treatment recover swiftly and return home. "I also assure you that Tamil Nadu Vetri Kazhagam will firmly extend every possible assistance to all our loved ones who are under treatment", he added.

The Tamil Nadu government had announced a solatium of Rs 10 lakh each to the families of the deceased. Chief Minister MK Stalin said Rs 1 lakh will be given to each of those undergoing intensive treatment in hospitals.

He also announced that a one-member Commission of Inquiry, headed by retired High

Court Judge Aruna Jegadeesan, will be constituted immediately to investigate the tragic incident and submit a report to the government.

Earlier, the Director General of Police/Head of the Police Force (in charge), G Venkataraman, said that TVK functionaries had sought permission to hold the rally in Karur in the Lighthouse Roundabout or the Uzharav Sandhai area for about 10,000 people. However, according to police sources, more than 50,000 people had gathered at the venue.

The venue lacked adequate food and water for the crowd that had gathered since 11 am, and the actor arrived only at 7.40 pm, Venkataraman added.

# India-Russia ties stand independent of US relations: Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

### NEW DELHI

Russia fully respects India's independent foreign policy and national interests, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, asserting that New Delhi's relations with Washington or any other country are not a benchmark for India-Russia ties.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the 78th UN General Assembly, Lavrov stressed the strength of the "particularly privileged strategic partnership" between India and Russia.

He said that the bilateral relationship stands on its own merit, irrespective of US pressure over issues like oil imports.

"These situations that might arise between India and the United States or any other country cannot be criteria for India-Russia relations," Lavrov said, responding to a question on India's continued purchase of Russian oil despite US objections.

He praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy approach, saying, "We have full respect for the national interests of India and the foreign policy that PM Modi is pursuing to promote those interests."

Lavrov noted ongoing high-level engagement between the two nations, referencing the recent Modi-Putin meeting at the SCO summit in China, and confirmed that President Putin is expected to visit India in December.

Lavrov said, "There is no threat to this relationship. If someone does attempt to pressure India, both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister have made it clear, India chooses its own partners."

He also praised External Affairs

Minister S. Jaishankar's firm stance on energy trade, referencing Jaishankar's earlier comments, "If the US wants to sell oil to us, we're open to discussions. But what we buy from others, including Russia, is our sovereign decision."

"That is a very worthy response," Lavrov said, adding that India, like Turkiye, conducts itself with "self-respect."

Lavrov and Jaishankar held bilateral talks on the sidelines of the UNGA, also participating in the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, with India as the incoming Chair for 2026.

Following the meeting, Jaishankar posted on X: "Good conversation with FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia on the sidelines of #UNGA80. Useful discussion on bilateral ties, the Ukraine conflict and developments in the Middle East."

Despite increasing US tariffs, reportedly up to 50 per cent on India, including penalties for Russian oil imports, New Delhi has consistently maintained that its energy policy is guided by national interest and market dynamics, assembly this month passed a nonbinding resolution urging Israel to commit to an independent Palestinian nation, which Netanyahu has said is a non-starter.

The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant accusing Netanyahu of crimes against humanity, which he denies. And the U.N.'s highest court is weighing South Africa's allegation that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, which it vehemently refutes.

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

quarters.

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

"I will tell our truth," Netanyahu said. "I will condemn those leaders who, instead of condemning the murderers, rapists and burners of children, want to give them a state in the heart of Israel."

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

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

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

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

Back in the Mideast, in addi-

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

Netanyahu was preceded Thursday by Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who addressed the General Assembly via video, since the U.S. denied him a visa. He welcomed the announcements of recognition but said the world needs to do more to make statehood happen.

"The time has come for the international community to do right by the Palestinian people" and help them realize "their legitimate rights to be rid of the occupation and to not remain a hostage to the temperament of Israeli politics," he said.

Abbas leads the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, which administers portions of the West Bank. Hamas won legislative elections in Gaza in 2006 before seizing control from Abbas' forces the following year.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war, then withdrew from Gaza in 2005. The Palestinians want all three territories to form their envisioned state, part of a "two-state solution" that the international community has embraced for decades.

Netanyahu opposes it robustly, maintaining that creating a Palestinian state would reward Hamas.

# INTERNATIONAL

## Airstrikes and gunfire kill at least 59 people in Gaza as pressure grows for ceasefire, hostage deal

### DEIR AL-BALAH

Israeli strikes and gunfire killed at least 59 people across Gaza, health officials said Saturday, as international pressure grows for a ceasefire and hostage return deal while Israel's leader remained defiant about continuing the war.

Among the dead were those hit by two strikes in the Nuseirat refugee camp, nine from the same family in a house and, later, 15 in the same camp, including women and children, according to staff at al-Awda Hospital, where the bodies were brought.

Five others were killed when a strike hit a tent for the displaced, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the dead.

Israel's army said it was not aware of anyone being killed by gunfire Saturday in southern Gaza, nor of a strike in the Nuseirat area during the time and at the location provided by the hospital.

The director of Shifa Hospital in Gaza City told The Associated Press that medical teams there were concerned about Israeli "tanks approaching the vicinity of the hospital," restricting access to the facility where 159 patients are being treated.

"The bombardment has not stopped for a single moment," Dr. Mohamed Abu Selmiya said.

He added that 14 premature babies were treated in incubators in Helou Hospital, though the head of neonatal intensive care there, Dr. Nasser Bulbul, has said that facility's main gate was closed because of drones flying over the building.

The attacks came after a defiant Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told fellow world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly on Friday that his nation "must finish the job" against Hamas in Gaza. Forty-eight hostages are still held captive there, around



20 of them believed by Israel to be alive.

Netanyahu's words began after dozens of delegates from multiple nations walked out of the U.N. General Assembly hall en masse Friday morning as he began speaking.

"You were like the last of the lepers. Netanyahu, we promise you that if you don't bring a comprehensive agreement and end the war, you will forever be a leper," said Itzik Horn, the father of Eitan Horn, one of the hostages held in Gaza since the Hamas attack that started the war. He was referencing the U.N. speech and Israel's isolation.

"My son Eitan sleeps sick and starving on the floor of a tunnel in Gaza or, worse, is used as a human shield against IDF fighters. What will you save him with?" Horn added Saturday evening.

International pressure on Israel to end the war is increasing, with a growing list of countries deciding recently to recognize Palestinian statehood, which

Israel rejects.

Countries have been lobbying U.S. President Donald Trump to press Israel for a ceasefire. Trump and Netanyahu are scheduled to meet Monday. At a weekly protest in Tel Aviv Saturday night, a hostage who had been held in Gaza for 471 days begged Trump to give the remaining captives the same chance to return home.

"Mr. President, as you meet Prime Minister Netanyahu, please make the hostages your top priority," Doron Steinbrecher, 32, said. "Families remain torn apart, their loved ones trapped in darkness, some waiting for a chance to return to life and freedom, others waiting to be buried with dignity."

Among those whose bodies are held in Gaza is Inbar Haiman. Her uncle asked Saturday at a protest in Jerusalem that Trump help facilitate the return. "We want her back home as if she were alive," Eli Cohen said.

On Friday, Trump told reporters he believes the U.S. is close to achieving a deal on easing fighting in Gaza that "will get the hostages back" and "end the war."

Yet, Israel is pressing ahead with another major ground operation in Gaza City, which experts say is experiencing famine. More than 300,000 people have fled, but up to 700,000 are still there, many because they can't afford to relocate.

The strikes Saturday morning demolished a house in Gaza City's Tufah neighborhood, killing at least 11 people, more than half of them women and children, according to Al-Ahly Hospital, where the bodies were brought. Four other people were killed when an airstrike hit their homes in the Shati refugee camp, according to Shifa Hospital. Six other Palestinians were killed by Israeli gunfire while seeking aid in southern and central Gaza, according

to the Nasser and Al Awda hospitals.

Hospitals and health clinics in Gaza City are on the brink of collapse. Nearly two weeks into the offensive, two clinics have been destroyed by airstrikes, two hospitals shut down after being damaged and others struggling with medicine, equipment, food and fuel in short supply, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Many patients and staff have been forced to flee hospitals, leaving behind only a few doctors and nurses to tend to children in incubators or other patients too ill to move.

On Friday, aid group Doctors Without Borders said it was forced to suspend activities in Gaza City. The group said Israeli tanks were less than a kilometer (half a mile) from its facilities, creating an "unacceptable level of risk" for its staff.

Meanwhile, the food situation in the north has also worsened, as Israel has halted aid deliveries through its crossing into northern Gaza since Sept. 12 and has increasingly rejected U.N. requests to bring supplies from southern Gaza into the north, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said.

COGAT, the Israeli military agency in charge of transferring aid to the territory, said Saturday that humanitarian aid to the northern Gaza Strip "continues on an ongoing basis," and that it has increased significantly over recent weeks at a crossing into central Gaza.

"Food is scarce and expensive and water is not safe to drink," said Amal al-Aas, who lives with her husband, three children and her father in western Gaza City.

People who are fleeing Gaza City for the south said food remains too expensive, and runs out at crammed charity kitchens offering staples like lentil soup and rice.

## Trump says he will send troops to Portland, Oregon, in latest deployment to US cities

### PORTLAND:

President Donald Trump said Saturday that he will send troops to Portland, "authorizing Full Force, if necessary" to handle "domestic terrorists" as he expands his deployments to more American cities.

Oregon Democratic Gov. Tina Kotek responded by saying Trump is abusing his authority by ordering troops into a city that she said is doing "just fine" on its own. She was joined by other government, police and business leaders who all said soldiers are not needed and Trump is presenting a patently false picture of the city.

Trump made his announcement on social media, writing that he was directing the Department of Defense to "provide all necessary Troops to protect War-raged Portland." Trump said the decision was necessary to protect U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities, which he alleged are "under siege from attack by Antifa, and other domestic terrorists."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for details on Trump's announcement, such as a timeline for the deployment or what troops would be involved.

In an afternoon news conference, Kotek said she directly told Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem earlier in the day that troops are not needed, and she believes he does not have the authority to deploy the military there.

"We can manage our own local public safety needs. There is no insurance. There is no threat to national security," Kotek told reporters.

The governor said she "tried to understand his reasoning" during their conversation and his response was just, "Let's keep talking."

"This is an American city. We do not need any intervention," Mayor Keith Wilson said at the news conference. "This is not a military target."

Kotek said the president did not give a timetable for troops arriving. She said she told him the Oregon National Guard is not needed and she does not plan to

call it up. Trump, however, previously deployed guard soldiers and active duty Marines in Los Angeles even though California Gov. Gavin Newsom opposed it. The federal government is appealing a judge's ruling that Trump's use of the guard was illegal.

Kotek urged the public to stay calm, saying any kind of property damage or violence will not be tolerated.

"Let's not take the bait," she said. "Let's not respond to what the president is trying to do."

Residents ask, "Where's the emergency?" Earlier Saturday, there was no sign of any federal presence downtown, where people jogged along the Willamette River, relaxed by a riverside fountain or rode bikes on a sunny fall day. "Where's the emergency?" asked resident Allen Schmeitzler, 72, who said he was "disgusted" by the president's decision.

Another, John McNeur, 74, called Trump's statement "ridiculous." He pointed out that he was taking "a leisurely stroll" along the river on a peaceful, sunny day. "This place is not a city that's out of control," he said. "It's just a beautiful place."

Trump has also named Chicago and Memphis

Trump previously threatened to send the National Guard into Chicago but has yet to follow through. A deployment in Memphis, Tennessee, is expected soon and will include only about 150 troops, far less than were sent to the District of Columbia for Trump's crackdown on crime or to Los Angeles in response to immigration protests that turned violent with the troops' arrival.

A woman stands off with a law enforcement officer wearing a Houston Field Office Special Response Team patch outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs (ICE) building during a protest Saturday, June 14, 2025, in Portland, Ore.

In Memphis, about 80 to 100 people marched to a plaza in front of City Hall to protest the expected arrival next week of the guard and more than a dozen federal law enforcement agencies, ranging from immigration to drug enforcement.

Protesters held signs with messages such as "Resources Not Task Forces" and "Memphis don't need no occupation, Memphis don't need no government control" — a play on the Pink Floyd song "Another Brick in the Wall."

Speakers said beforehand that instead of federal troops and agents, Memphis needs more funding for education, crime prevention, youth services and hospitals. The Oregon officials made similar comments.

Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said the Department of Defense would provide information and updates when available.

"We stand ready to mobilize U.S. military personnel in support of DHS operations in Portland at the President's direction," Parnell said. A spokesperson for the Oregon National Guard, Lt. Col. Stephen Bomar, said via email that "no official requests have been received at this time" for Guards support. "Any requests would need to be coordinated through the Governor's office," he added. Oregon's congressional delegation, with the exception of GOP Rep. Cliff Bentz, demanded that the Trump administration keep federal agents and troops out of Portland. "This unilateral action represents an abuse of executive authority, seeks to incite violence, and undermines the constitutional balance of power between the federal government and states," the Democratic lawmakers wrote in a letter to Trump, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Noem.

Portland, population 636,000, was the site of long-running and sometimes violent racial justice protests following George Floyd's killing by Minneapolis police in 2020. The Trump administration sent hundreds of agents, including from the U.S. Border Patrol, for the stated purpose of protecting the federal courthouse and other federal property from vandalism. Late Saturday evening, a small crowd of protesters gathered on the sidewalk outside the ICE facility. One person was arrested by federal law enforcement after a brief confrontation as ICE agents cleared a path for a vehicle exiting the facility.

# Durga Puja in Northeast: Faith, Culture, and Identity in a Festival Beyond Borders

SIVASHIS BHATTACHARJEE

When the rhythmic beats of the dhak echo across bamboo pandals, and the fragrance of incense mingles with the heady scent of shiuli blossoms, one knows that the most anticipated festival of the year has arrived. Durga Puja, once seen as a largely Bengali religious celebration, has today become a cultural phenomenon that binds together communities across the Northeast. In states as diverse as Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram, the arrival of Goddess Durga is not just about devotion—it is about history, identity, artistic expression, and the weaving of social harmony.

Durga Puja in the Northeast is not merely transplanted tradition from Bengal; it is a festival that has taken root in local soils, absorbing regional flavors and becoming an integral part of the region's cultural calendar. Understanding its significance here requires looking at multiple layers—historical migration, colonial legacies, syncretic practices, artistic expressions, and its present role as a platform for unity in a region often fractured by identity politics.

The spread of Durga Puja into the Northeast can be traced back to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when Bengali zamindars, traders, and officials under colonial administration migrated to states such as Assam and Tripura. The earliest recorded Durga Puja in Assam dates back to the 18th century during the reign of the Ahom kings, who welcomed Hindu rituals into their courtly life. Tripura's royal family, tracing descent from the Manikya dynasty, also patronized Durga Puja as part of their court rituals, merging tribal customs with Hindu worship.

With the coming of the British, large numbers of Bengalis settled in Guwahati, Shillong, Agartala, Silchar, and Dibrugarh, carrying with them the tradition of Durga Puja. But over time, the festival expanded beyond Bengali neighborhoods. Assamese Hindus embraced it alongside their own traditions of Namghar-centered Vaishnavite practices. In Manipur, where Vaishnavism had flourished since the 18th century, Durga Puja slowly found a place alongside Manipuri Ras Lila festivities. In Shillong, once the capital of undivided Assam, Durga Puja became one of the biggest public events, cutting across ethnic and religious divides.

Thus, the roots of the festival in the Northeast lie in cultural migration and royal patronage—but its flourishing owes itself to the capacity of the region's communities to adapt and celebrate diversity.

One of the striking features of Durga Puja in the Northeast is its ability to act as a bridge between communities. While the ritualistic core—invocation of Goddess Durga slaying Mahishasura—remains the same, the surrounding cultural activities often reflect local traditions.

In Assam, pandals are adorned with motifs of Ahom, Bodo, and Mising art forms. Bamboo craft, an indigenous skill of the region, is central to pandal construction. In Tripura, tribal dance troupes perform during Puja evenings, bringing Kokborok songs into the celebration space. In Manipur, Durga idols are often accompanied by Manipuri Shankirtan performances, blending Vaishnavite devotional music with Puja rituals.

In Shillong and other parts of Meghalaya, where Christians form the majority, Durga Puja has nevertheless become a citywide cultural festival. Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo youth actively participate in pandal competitions, food stalls, and cultural programs, turning the Puja into a shared urban carnival.

The syncretism is not accidental. In a region where ethnic and linguistic divides have often sparked conflict, Durga Puja has come to symbolize a safe space of cultural co-existence. It is common to see a Khasi artisan designing a pandal in Shillong, a Bodo drummer playing for a Puja procession in Assam, or a tribal craftsman carving intricate bamboo frames for idols in Tripura.

Much like Kolkata, the cities and towns of the Northeast have turned Durga Puja into an art festival. Guwahati's Beltola, Silpukhuri, and Pandu pandals compete with each other to showcase innovative themes. Themes range from replicas of famous temples to contemporary social messages such as environmental conservation or women's empowerment. In recent years, Guwahati pandals have recreated the Kamakhya temple, Majuli satras, and even bamboo forests to highlight local heritage.

Agartala's Puja pandals often showcase Tripura's indigenous traditions—such as replicas of bamboo huts of the Reang tribe or murals depicting Jhum cultivation. In Shillong, creativity runs wild, with pandals themed around everything from global landmarks to Khasi folklore.

The idol-making traditions too reflect local flavor. While traditional clay idols continue to be brought from West Bengal, many local artisans now craft idols incorporating bamboo, paper, and eco-friendly materials. In



Dibrugarh, artisans experiment with Assamese silk and weaving motifs, while in Tripura, tribal jewelry sometimes adorns the goddess. The rise of "green Puja" initiatives—banning plastic, using natural dyes, and ensuring eco-friendly immersion—is also notable across the region, reflecting growing environmental consciousness.

For the people of the Northeast, Durga Puja is more than worship—it is a celebration of community. It is a time when relatives travel back to their hometowns, when migrant students and workers reunite with their families, and when neighborhoods buzz with festive energy.

Evenings are filled with cultural programs—folk songs, Bihu dances, Rabindra Sangeet, rock concerts, and drama performances. Food stalls offering Assamese pithas, Manipuri singju, Tripura mui boro dishes, alongside Bengali sweets like rosogolla and sandesh, turn pandal premises into gastronomic fairs.

The Puja also generates seasonal employment. Thousands of artisans, electricians, decorators, dhakis (drummers), and small traders depend on Puja for income. For women's groups and self-help collectives, Puja fairs are an opportunity to showcase handicrafts and homemade snacks.

Moreover, Durga Puja is deeply tied to the nostalgia of urban life in the Northeast. For those who have migrated to Delhi, Bengaluru, or abroad, returning home during Puja is akin to reconnecting with their roots. Social media too amplifies the sense of community, with live streams of Guwahati or Agartala pandals watched by diasporic Assamese and Bengali families worldwide.

Durga Puja has also acquired political significance in the Northeast. State governments, particularly in Assam and Tripura, extend grants and support to Puja committees, recognizing the festival's role in generating tourism and showcasing cultural vibrancy. Politicians often inaugurate pandals, seeing it as an opportunity to connect with constituents.

In Assam, the festival overlaps with the state's identity politics. While Vaishnavism remains central to Assamese culture, Durga Puja has been embraced as a parallel symbol of Assamese-Hindu identity, especially in urban centers. In Tripura, where tribal and Bengali populations have at times been polarized, Puja becomes a stage where both communities participate, reinforcing the idea of shared belonging.

On a broader scale, Durga Puja in the Northeast also represents a cultural assertion of the region within the Indian nation-state. Just as Kolkata's Puja has gained UNESCO recognition as intangible cultural heritage, Northeastern states are increasingly projecting their Puja celebrations as symbols of inclusivity and creativity to the national stage.

Yet, the Puja is not without challenges. In areas with fragile ethnic relations, Puja celebrations sometimes face opposition or restrictions. In Meghalaya, for instance, periodic clashes between Bengali settlers and Khasi groups occasionally overshadow the otherwise joyous Puja mood. In Tripura, political violence in the past

occasionally disrupted the festival. Commercialization is another concern. Crit-

ics argue that the essence of devotion is being overshadowed by corporate sponsorship, flashy competitions, and excessive spending on pandals. The rising cost of organizing Puja also sidelines smaller community groups who cannot compete with big-budget pandals.

Environmental concerns too loom large. Idol immersion in rivers like the Brahmaputra has raised alarm over pollution. While eco-friendly initiatives are gaining momentum, ensuring their widespread adoption remains a challenge.

Despite these challenges, Durga Puja in the Northeast continues to thrive because it is a living tradition—adaptable, resilient, and inclusive. Its significance lies not only in the worship of Goddess Durga but in what she symbolizes: the victory of good over evil, the triumph of resilience over adversity, and the power of unity amidst diversity.

In a region often portrayed as conflict-ridden, Durga Puja tells another story—that of shared celebration, intermingling of cultures, and the building of social harmony. For the youth of the Northeast, the festival is as much about music nights, food festivals, and Instagram-worthy pandals as it is about heritage. For elders, it is about nostalgia and continuity. For artisans and workers, it is about livelihood. And for the faithful, it is about devotion to the goddess who embodies strength and protection.

Durga Puja in Northeast India is far more than a borrowed tradition from Bengal. It is a regional cultural phenomenon that has adapted to local histories, absorbed indigenous expressions, and become a unifying thread in the diverse social fabric of the Northeast. Whether in Guwahati's grand pandals, Tripura's tribal-infused celebrations, Shillong's cosmopolitan carnival, or the quieter Pujas of Manipur and Nagaland, the festival is a testament to the region's ability to celebrate diversity within unity.

As the dhak beats grow louder and the goddess is welcomed once more this year, the Northeast does not just bow to Durga as a deity—it celebrates her as a symbol of shared culture, resilience, and hope. In doing so, it reminds India that the spirit of Durga Puja is not confined to Bengal's borders but is alive in the hills, plains, and valleys of the Northeast, where faith and festivity continue to weave communities together.

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JANUARY 10-12, 2025

**ACTIVITY PROGRAM**



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



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



**11 JAN**  
**Barak Valley Conclave**  
 Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders. Includes NGOs, and Governmental institutions for development, awareness, awareness, awareness and awareness through participation through involvement of different stakeholders and institutions.



**12 JAN**  
**River-Climate Conclave**  
 Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, climate and environment. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and practical of River Barak, Planning & Geography, environment and development in River Barak, Climate Change.

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



**Barak Festival**  
 Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion

**10 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
 Media Conclave (Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Media Conclave will include, Journalism, media & corporate relations, sponsors, guides, speakers, members.

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**Barak Festival 2025**  
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 NE CULTURAL FEST  
 E-SPORTS  
 FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION  
 BOOK BANK | SPEECH & DEBATE  
 RAW SCIENCE | RECORDS

**10-12 JAN**  
**Science Studio**  
 Real science out of textbooks into real-life experiences of students.

**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'

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

**10-12 JAN**  
**E-Sports**  
 BARAK FESTIVAL PRESENTS E-SPORTS TOURNAMENT

**11 JAN**  
**film festival**  
 Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Mizoram  
 Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W & Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet



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 Discover valuable experience and learn more about the industry.

**10-12 JAN**  
**Book Bank**  
 Book Bank Campaign

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

**Painting Carnival**  
 Water Colour and Oil Paint Campaign



**Watch Out! Film Festival**

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