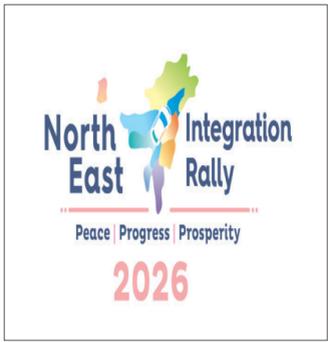




# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED



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### PERSPECTIVE

**Sometimes trusting a friend is the hardest thing to do. Even the closest friends can become your enemies.**

### Centre extends ban on NSCN-K for five more years amid security concerns

**NEW DELHI**  
The central government, on Monday, extended the ban imposed on the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) along with all its factions, wings and front organisations for five more years. The ban will be effective from September 28, a notification of the Ministry of Home Affairs informed. According to the notice, the Centre is of the opinion that the NSCN (K) has declared its aim to create a sovereign Nagaland incorporating the Naga inhabited areas of the Indo-Myanmar region by secession from the Indian Union and aligned itself with other unlawful associations like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) (I), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and People's Liberation Army (PLA).  
The group is also involved in kidnapping for ransom and extortion of money from businessmen, government officials and other civilians, possessed illegal arms and ammunition and obtained assistance from anti-India forces in other countries to procure arms and other assistance.  
"Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967), (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the central government hereby declares the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) [NSCN (K)] along with all its factions, wings and front organisations as an unlawful association," the notification added.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**"You cannot have a profession where you use words like 'my lord', or when you're doing a petition, it's called a prayer. You've got to be kidding me. We are all citizens of the same democratic republic"**  
~ Sanjeev Sanyal, PM EAC member

## Assam Bids Tearful Goodbye: Zubeen Garg Laid to Rest with State Honours



SONAPUR

Assam fell silent on Tuesday as the flames rose over Kamarakuchi, Sonapur, marking the final journey of its beloved son, Zubeen Garg. The legendary singer, who gave voice to generations, was cremated with full state honours in a farewell that will be etched in the state's collective memory for eons.  
A guard of honour and a 21-gun salute by Assam Police set the solemn tone of the rites. Then, in a deeply emotional moment, Zubeen's sister Pami Borthakur, along with family members Arun Garg and Rahul Gautam Sharma, lit the funeral pyre.  
As the flames took hold, Mayabini, the singer's timeless ballad of longing, drifted across the grounds

- his wish fulfilled, his farewell underscored by his own music.  
The crowd of lakhs stood in reverent silence, broken only by chants of "Joi Zubeen Da" that rippled through the gathering.  
Many wept openly, while others raised their phones high, desperate to capture a final glimpse of the icon who had touched their lives with his timeless melodies, movies, phrases, and so forth.  
At intervals, voices joined the music, turning the farewell into one last concert, one last communion with the man who had given them so much.  
Zubeen's wife Garima Saikia Garg, father Kapil Borthakur, and other family members also offered their heartfelt tributes, standing alongside the grieving masses in an

atmosphere of profound sorrow.  
Assam's tribute was not just from its people, but also its institutions and leaders.  
Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma laid his final respects, joined by Union Ministers Sarbananda Sonowal, Kiren Rijiju and Pabitra Margherita, Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary and Opposition leader Debabrata Saikia.  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's condolences were conveyed by Union Minister Rijiju, while an official representative attended on behalf of the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister.  
Organisations including ABSU, AASU, AJYCP, the Sutiya Students Association, AATSA, AKRASU, the Karbi Sattrra Association, and the Assam Sahitya Sabha were all present to honour the legend.  
Artists, colleagues and friends stood alongside the grieving masses. Papon, Jatin Bora, J.P. Das, Garg's band and many from the cultural fraternity paid their respects.  
As the flames consumed the mortal frame of Garg, Assam was left with the immortal—the songs, the spirit, the defiance, and the love. His cremation was not just the end of a life, but the closing of an era.  
Yet in the chants, the music and the tears of lakhs, one truth was clear - Zubeen Garg will never truly leave Assam.

## NSCN-IM Chief Thuingaleng Muivah to Make Rare Manipur Visit on Oct 22

IMPHAL

The Government of the People's Republic of Nagalim (GPRN) has cleared the proposed visit of NSCN-IM general secretary and Ato Kilonser, Thuingaleng Muivah, to his native village of Somdal in Ukhrul district next month, marking a rare homecoming for the veteran Naga leader to Manipur.  
As per the approved itinerary, Muivah will travel from Dimapur to Ukhrul and Somdal on October 22 and return via Somdal-Senapati to Dimapur on October 29.  
Ahead of the visit, the Council of Nagalim Churches has been requested by the organising committee to arrange a special prayer programme for all national workers on October 5, the first Sunday of the month.  
The prayers are aimed at seeking blessings for the smooth conduct and success of the visit. The request was formally conveyed in a letter signed by Francis Ningshen, Member Secretary of the organising committee.  
The announcement carries weight given the sensitive history surrounding Muivah's earlier attempts to visit Manipur.  
During the tenure of former Chief Minister O. Ibobi Singh, his



proposed entry into Ukhrul was blocked by the Manipur government, which deployed heavy security to prevent his arrival. The standoff at the time triggered widespread tensions across the region.  
Since then, Muivah has largely confined his movements abroad or within Nagaland, refraining from setting foot in Manipur.  
His scheduled return to Somdal is therefore being seen as a development of considerable significance — one expected to draw close attention from the Naga community as well as security and political observers.  
The organising committee has described the journey as "a moment of great importance" for the community, urging people to pray for peace and the smooth conduct of the programme.

## Himanta Warns of Arrests for Any Disrespect Shown to Zubeen Garg



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday delivered a firm warning to those misusing the name of late singer Zubeen Garg, stating that any disrespect, violence, or unlawful activity will be met with immediate legal action.  
"If anyone disrespects Zubeen Garg tonight, they will be arrested immediately. Those who have suddenly claimed to be his fans in the past two days and indulged in violence will face strict action. Their behavior prevented genuine well-wishers from paying their last respects," Sarma said, condemning the overnight chaos at Sarusajai Stadium.  
Police have already collected video evidence of individuals involved in fights and unruly conduct, with strict

action set to follow. "Offensive remarks against one of Assam's most beloved artists go against our cultural ethos of compassion and unity. Zubeen would have been deeply hurt to see this negativity," the Chief Minister added.  
Sarma also ordered all shops and businesses to reopen from 2 PM tomorrow, warning that attempts to forcibly keep them closed will invite legal consequences. "Zubeen belonged to the public, not to unruly elements. Overnight fadism turning into chaos is unacceptable," he said.  
The Chief Minister condemned attacks on Zubeen's family and team, including a targeted pharmacy on Zoo Road and social media harassment of his wife Garima Saikia Garg and manager Siddharth Sharma. Citizens with evidence were urged to submit it to the CID for verified action.  
On the probe into Zubeen's death, Sarma confirmed that Assam Police will coordinate with Singapore authorities, sending a letter rogatory through Gauhati Court while working alongside Singapore police to collect all relevant evidence.  
Sarma's uncompromising stance marks a decisive effort to restore order and protect the dignity of Assam's cultural icon during a period of intense public mourning.

## Assam Leader of Opposition urges Indian envoy to Singapore for probe into Zubeen Garg's death

GUWAHATI

Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia has called for urgent diplomatic intervention of the High Commissioner of India to Singapore to facilitate comprehensive investigation and legal proceedings into the demise of Zubeen Garg.  
Saikia on Monday sent a letter to the High Commissioner of India to Singapore in this regard. "I am writing to formally request your immediate diplomatic intervention regarding the suspicious death of Zubeen Garg in Singapore, which has raised serious concerns about potential criminal conspiracy and demands comprehensive investigation at multiple levels," he stated.  
Saikia added that FIRs have been filed in various places across Assam regarding the incident. "The government of Assam has transferred all the FIRs to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and consolidated those into one FIR for investigating the circumstances surrounding this death. Public allegations and preliminary evidence suggest this may involve criminal conspiracy, warranting thorough investigation across jurisdictions," Saikia stated.  
He sought the High Commis-



sioner's intervention for coordination with the Singapore police, as well as for evidence preservation and diplomatic facilitation. "Issue official communication to Singapore police authorities requesting immediate registration of a criminal case and comprehensive investigation into the circumstances of death. Ensure that all medical records, autopsy reports, CCTV footage, witness statements, and circumstantial evidence in Singapore are properly preserved and made available for investigation. Coordinate between Singapore

authorities and the Indian investigating agencies for seamless information sharing and joint investigation protocol," the Congress leader stated in his letter.  
Saikia added, "The gravity of allegations and cross-border implications necessitates your immediate attention to ensure justice through proper legal channels. In view of the circumstances, we respectfully request your urgent diplomatic intervention to facilitate comprehensive investigation and legal proceedings."  
Saikia further called upon the Central government to constitute a high-level judicial inquiry commission headed by a sitting High Court Judge to investigate all aspects of the case. He also called upon the Central government to direct the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to provide technical and investigative assistance to the CID registered case, and to ensure coordination between CBI, CID, and international law enforcement agencies by considering the urgent factors including the time-sensitive nature of evidence preservation, public concern over alleged conspiracy, the need for a transparent and credible investigation, and international jurisdictional complexities requiring diplomatic support.

## Assam's Fertility Rate Falls to 2: Rural at 2.1, Urban Down to 1.3

**GUWAHATI**  
The State has witnessed good progress in bringing down the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in the period between 2018 and 2023. As per latest government data, Assam's TFR stood at 2 in 2023, as against 2.2 in 2018.  
The TFR in the rural areas of the State was 2.1 in 2023, while it was as low as 1.3 in the urban areas.  
Assam had registered an overall TFR of 2.2 in 2018 and 2019, which came down to 2.1 in 2020 and remained at that level for the next two years, before falling further to 2 in 2023, the latest year for which data was released recently.  
In rural Assam, the TFR has declined from 2.4 in 2018 to 2.1 in 2023. Likewise, the urban TFR has also decreased from 1.6 in 2018 to 1.3 in 2023.  
The TFR for the country as a whole stood at 1.9 in 2023, with a higher TFR in rural areas (2.1) than in urban areas (1.5).  
During the same year, Bihar

reported the highest TFR at 2.8, while Delhi recorded the lowest at 1.2.  
It is noteworthy that the replacement level TFR, viz. 2.1, has been attained at the national level, along with Delhi (1.2), Tamil Nadu (1.3), West Bengal (1.3), Kerala (1.5), Punjab (1.5), Himachal Pradesh (1.6), Maharashtra (1.4), Andhra Pradesh (1.5), Jammu & Kashmir (1.5), Karnataka (1.5), Telangana (1.5), Odisha (1.7), Uttarakhand (1.7), Gujarat (1.8), Haryana (1.9), Assam (2.1), and Jharkhand (2.1).  
The cumulative value of the Age-Specific Fertility Rates at the end of the child-bearing age gives a measure of fertility known as the TFR. It indicates the average number of children expected to be born

per woman during her entire span of reproductive period, assuming that the Age-Specific Fertility Rates to which she is exposed, continue to be the same and that there is no mortality.  
In 2011-13 (three-year average), Assam's average TFR was 2.3, which fell to 2.1 in 2021-23. The decline was 12.5 per cent overall — 12 per cent in rural areas and 6.7 per cent in urban areas.  
The TFR also shows variation by the level of education of women. In Assam, the TFR for illiterate women was 2.7 in 2023, 2.3 for those with below primary education, 2.2 among those with primary education, 2.1 for middle level schooling, 1.6 for women with education

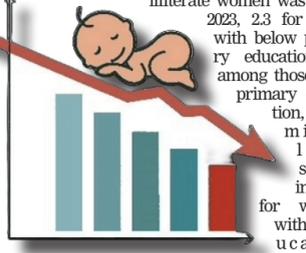
till Class 10, and 1.7 for women who have studied till Class-12 and above. The State's Gross Reproduction Rate (GRR) was 0.9 in 2023. GRR measures the average number of female children a woman is expected to give birth to during her entire reproductive span, conforming to the Age-Specific Fertility Rates for a given year, if there is no mortality. The GRR for India for 2023 has been also estimated at 0.9, which means that on average, each woman in India is having one daughter who survives to reproductive age and has children of her own. Most of the deliveries in Assam are institutional, which includes government as well as private hospitals.  
In 2023, 85.6 per cent of the total deliveries in the State were in government hospitals. The quantum in rural areas was 87.1 per cent and in urban areas it was 73 per cent.  
Another 8.3 per cent of the total deliveries were in private

## Healthcare Focus: Manipur Governor-in-Council Sanctions Initiatives in Nursing, Research

IMPHAL

In a significant move to strengthen healthcare delivery and medical education, the Governor-in-Council of Manipur on Monday approved the establishment of multiple new nursing institutions and research facilities across the state.  
Under the Central Sector Scheme for the Development of Nursing Services, two B.Sc Nursing colleges will be set up in Thoubal and Churachandpur. Additionally, another B.Sc Nursing college will be established at Churachandpur under the Central Sponsored Scheme, "Augmenting Nursing Education - Establishment of New Colleges of Nursing (Co-located with Medical Colleges)." To complement these initiatives, two new state-funded GNM Nursing Schools will be opened in Thoubal and Churachandpur, compensating for existing schools set to be phased out following upgradation. Currently, Manipur has 14 GNM schools (2 government and 12 private) with a total intake capacity of 519, while over 800 qualified students apply each year. Similarly, the state has 16 B.Sc Nursing colleges (2 government and 14 private) with 610 seats, against more than 1,600 applicants annually. The new institu-

tions are expected to address the existing 40% shortfall in GNM courses and 64% deficit in B.Sc Nursing seats, producing more trained nurses and expanding access to quality healthcare, particularly in rural and underserved areas. These measures are also projected to generate employment opportunities and empower youth, especially women, with professional skills for domestic and international careers. In addition, the Governor-in-Council approved a significant increase in the stipend for undergraduate interns (MBBS and BDS) at JNIMS, raising it from Rs 15,210 to Rs 25,000. The previous stipend had remained unchanged since 2015. This revision aims to alleviate financial constraints faced by medical and dental students. The Council also sanctioned the recruitment of staff for the establishment of a Multi-Disciplinary Research Unit (MRU) at JNIMS, funded under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's umbrella scheme for health research infrastructure. The MRU will serve as a platform for biomedical innovation, clinical studies, and evidence-based healthcare solutions, enhancing institutional capacity for advanced research and improving public health outcomes.





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## TRUMP'S \$100,000 H-1B VISA FEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to avoid confronting United States President Donald Trump, while the former real-estate developer with business interests worldwide including in India, harasses India with stupidly high tariffs and now by horrendously increasing the H-1B visa fee. Instead, PM Modi's response was as follows: "Our real enemy is 'dependence', we've to be atmanirbhar".

Of course, we've have to stop depending on the United States, China and a score of other countries; but we're yet not the economic force we aspire to become. Like the poet said, we have miles to go before we sleep. PM Modi need not remind us of India's Achilles heel every time his "friend" ups the ante against India.

President Trump is a tyrant but he also claims to be Prime Minister Modi's friend. With friends like Trump, India doesn't need another enemy to cook our goose. Modi has been avoiding naming President Trump "India's No.1 enemy", paraphrasing the song, "When will Modi ever learn?"

What did Prime Minister Modi say? "Greater a nation's dependence on other countries, the greater its risk of failure." For global peace, he said, "we must become Atmanirbhar."

Modi on Saturday said India's "real enemy" is its dependence on other countries, stressing the need for self-reliance to ensure national strength and global respect. We have no major enemy in the world. Our only real enemy is our dependence on other countries. This is our biggest enemy, and together we must defeat this enemy of India, the enemy of dependence."

Modi was in his home state Gujarat, Bhavnagar, where he linked the need for Atmanirbharta with "national pride and the future of the country", stating that "the greater the foreign dependence, the greater the nation's failure. For global peace, stability, and prosperity, the country with the world's largest population must become Atmanirbhar."

Modi's remarks should strike home. India's "real enemy" at this point in time is the Trumped US administration. Trump has a team of US secretaries who are viscerally anti-India, one of them being his commerce secretary.

Friday President Trump signed the imposition of a \$100,000 fee for H-1B visa applications. Guess what, Indians in America are 70 percent of the H1B visa holders. Trump doesn't care, Trump's secretaries do not care. This is the Trump administration's way of showing the middle finger to the Modi dispensation. Will Modi react, and how?

The \$100,000 fee will be effective September 21. Indians are the hardest hit. And this comes even as businesses in India are reeling from Trump tariffs. Who is "our real enemy" is as plain as the writing on the wall.

There is no relief from the sweeping 50% tariffs imposed by the US on Indian imports. Now Indian tech workers would feel the Trump effect while Modi will be fiddling with his newest catchphrases.

Trump's reasoning is that he signed the order to overhaul the H-1B visa programme, that the \$100,000 fee for applications will "curb overuse". Nobody can argue with that, it's a Trump prerogative. Companies will have to pay \$100,000 for the H-1B if they want to hire Indian talent, period.

The US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick says the move will see to it that US companies will hire more American talent. Foreign workers will have to go back to their home countries.

This does make us wonder whether Trump and cohorts in the White House are "colour racists". Trump's actions are a direct attack on India and Indians but Prime Minister Modi continues to give Trump a wide alley.

The Indian diaspora in America has been reduced to fighting with his one hand tied. Trump needs to be told, at least made aware that he is India's real enemy. Trump has said these latest restrictions will last a full year from the date implemented. Trump has alleged that the H-1B regime is "systemic abuse" of the visa system. Does the Modi government have an answer? Trump had gone on to say that the misuse of the H-1B programme was a "national security threat." "Further, the abuse of the H-1B visa program has made it even more challenging for college graduates trying to find IT jobs, allowing employers to hire foreign workers at a significant discount to American workers," his order read. Indian tech workers will limit job mobility and make renewals costly. "Employers may hesitate to sponsor or retain H-1B employees, especially early-career professionals, increasing the risk that some will have to go back to India or be attracted to other countries such as Canada, the UK, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia," said an immigration lawyer.

Amazon has advised employees holding H-1B and H-4 visas to stay put. Microsoft also. But what is Prime Minister Modi's two pence to the development, what's his advice to these US visa holders. And will he correct himself and name India's current problem, US President Donald Trump?

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

The best way to cheer yourself is to try to cheer somebody else up.  
- Mark Twain

# GST BACHAT UTSAV: A TAX REFORM FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE

NAVROOP SINGH

India stands at a moment of deep economic transition, where the aspirations of a billion citizens meet the structural reforms of a government intent on reshaping the trajectory of growth. The launch of GST 2.0 marks not just a revision of taxation but the unveiling of a broader economic philosophy that seeks to fuse consumption-led growth with the vision of Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation on September 21, 2025, his words reflected both confidence and urgency: "From tomorrow, 'GST Bachat Utsav' will commence. Your savings will increase and you will be able to buy your favourite things. GST Bachat Utsav will benefit all sections of the society." This framing is not accidental as by positioning GST 2.0 as a festival of savings, PM Modi was signalling that tax reform in India is no longer a matter of bureaucratic tinkering but a social and cultural phenomenon with direct bearing on the lives of ordinary people.

The story of GST began in 2017, when the government replaced a complex web of central and state taxes with a uniform system that dismantled border check posts, reduced compliance burden, and aimed to create a common market across India. Yet, the initial GST had its own complexities with multiple slabs of 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%. Businesses frequently found themselves in ambiguity, unsure whether a particular good should attract 12% or 18%. GST 2.0 reforms are thus simplification designed to match the maturity of India's economy in 2025. By eliminating the 12% and 28% slabs and retaining only two primary rates 5% and 18% except for luxury or "sin" goods, the reform restores clarity and predictability.

As PM Modi himself explained, "In the new form, there will now be only 5% and 18% tax slabs. This means that most everyday items will become cheaper. Food items, medicines, soap, brush, paste, health and life insurance many such goods and services will either be tax-free or only a 5% tax will have to be paid. Out of the goods which were earlier taxed at 12%, 18%, and 28% items have now come under the slab of 5% tax." In one stroke, the government has both simplified compliance and delivered a tangible reduction in prices that millions will feel almost instantly.

The most immediate impact of GST 2.0 will be experienced in the kitchens and living rooms of Indian households. Everyday goods coffee, ghee, biscuits, edible oil, and milk have shifted into lower brackets, pulling down the effective GST rate on the top 30 household consumption items from about 11% to 9%. This may appear a small percentage change, but in a country where marginal changes in price often determine purchasing decisions, it translates into a meaningful increase in disposable income. For the middle class, which often finds itself squeezed between aspirations and rising costs, this reform is a welcome change. For the poor, it represents real financial relief in daily essentials. The reform thus carries the seeds of both equity and stimulus.

This reform is not only about reducing prices but about creating new opportunities. The savings of the middle class will increase, the youth will benefit and the entire economy will gain momentum. The timing on the eve of India's busiest shopping season encompassing Navratri and Diwali ensures that these savings will almost immediately translate into demand. Retailers are already preparing for a surge in purchases, particularly in semi-urban and rural India where consumption is highly price-sensitive.

The beneficiaries, however, are not just consumers. GST 2.0 offers a lifeline to India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which constitute the beating heart of India's employment generation and local innovation. By pushing more goods into the 5% slab and cutting compliance costs, the reform strengthens margins, reduces input costs, and unclogs working capital cycles. Fewer slabs mean fewer classification errors, fewer disputes with tax authorities, and quicker business turnover. Small traders and retailers most of whom deal in items now taxed at only 5% can expect increased footfalls and faster stock movement.

For an economy that depends heavily on



MSMEs for job creation, this reform is a structural boost. It empowers small entrepreneurs to reinvest in better technology, expand operations, and hire more workers. It also levels the playing field between large corporates with deep compliance teams and small businesses that previously struggled with complex paperwork and bureaucratic bottlenecks. By easing the burden of taxation, GST 2.0 encourages MSMEs to become more ambitious and competitive.

The broader macroeconomic logic of GST 2.0 lies in its ability to revive consumption, which accounts for nearly 60% of India's GDP. By reducing tax incidence and increasing disposable income, GST 2.0 injects what economists call a "demand stimulus" into the system. Analysts estimate that an additional ₹2 lakh crore will circulate in consumer wallets due to these tax cuts and this influx is perfectly timed with the festive rush. This is not an abstract number it represents the refrigerator a family can finally afford, the two-wheeler a student can ride to college, or the health insurance policy that becomes viable for a lower-middle-class household. Each of these purchases has ripple effects. A refrigerator boosts demand for steel, plastic, and logistics. A two-wheeler drives growth in auto components, steel and retail finance. Insurance brings more households into the formal financial sector.

Thus, GST 2.0 is not merely a tax tweak but a catalyst for a virtuous cycle of consumption and production that will run for months & years.

Sectoral implications are already becoming evident. The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is poised for a 2-3 percentage point growth bump, lower maximum retail prices and higher rural demand push volumes upward. Automobiles, particularly two-wheelers and SUVs, will become more affordable, leading to higher bookings during the festive season.

Insurance, both health and life, is now cheaper, drawing more citizens into the safety net of financial protection. The healthcare sector too benefits from lower tax rates on medicines and medical products, making basic healthcare more accessible. In rural India, handicrafts, jute products, and agro-based goods have been given a leg-up, with tax relief making local products cheaper and helping artisans and farmers. These sectoral gains demonstrate how GST 2.0 is designed not only to reduce consumer prices but also to encourage investment, formalization and job creation across industries.

Perhaps the most significant ideological thrust of GST 2.0 lies in its alignment with Swadeshi. PM Modi's appeal during his address was unmistakable: "Proudly say, 'I buy swadeshi, I sell swadeshi'." This should be every Indian's mood." By making Indian products cheaper and compliance easier, GST 2.0 strengthens domestic producers against foreign competition. Sectors

with predominantly Indian supply chains such as textiles, agro-processing, handicrafts, and consumer durables will be positioned to gain market share. The reform thus provides a direct economic foundation for the cultural call to embrace Swadeshi goods. It is a reminder that the Swadeshi movement is not merely about nostalgia or symbolism but about creating competitive advantages for Indian enterprises in the present global economy.

This links directly to the vision of Atma Nirbhar Bharat. GST 2.0 is not protectionism in the crude sense of shielding domestic firms from competition; rather it enhances competitiveness by lowering costs and expanding demand. It supports domestic manufacturers in scaling up, innovating and accessing both Indian and global markets. By aligning tax policy with the goals of self-reliance, the reform turns abstract slogans into practical policy instruments. It also highlights cooperative federalism. The consensus achieved in the GST Council between the Centre and states underscores a rare moment of political unity in pursuing economic reform amid global challenges.

This reform will accelerate India's growth story, will enhance ease of doing business, make investment easier, give a chance to all states to grow. The inclusivity of GST 2.0 is evident in its distributional impact. When combined with the income tax reliefs announced earlier in the year, households are expected to save an additional ₹2.5 lakh crore over the coming year. This double bonanza extends benefits across the social spectrum cheaper medicines and insurance for the elderly, reduced costs on daily products for women managing households, lower burdens on students and youth. By cutting taxes on essentials, the government ensures that the gains of reform reach the poorest citizens, making growth more equitable. It is a reform that allows every Indian to participate in the national growth story, not just as a producer or investor but as a consumer.

In the end, GST 2.0 represents the maturation of India's economic reform journey. It is not merely a technocratic adjustment but a social contract that connects policy with people's daily lives. It transforms consumption from an act of necessity into an act of empowerment. It signals that Swadeshi pride is not a sentimental slogan but a rational choice backed by policy. It embodies the Atma Nirbhar Bharat ethos of self-reliance, not through isolation but through competitiveness. It brings relief to households, confidence to MSMEs, stimulus to industries, and clarity to the tax system. As India embarks on the GST Bachat Utsav, the festive season becomes more than a marketplace it becomes a metaphor for a nation embracing reform with optimism. If GST in 2017 was about unifying India into

a single market, GST 2.0 is about democratizing prosperity within that market. It is about ensuring that every Indian, whether farmer or factory worker, artisan or entrepreneur, student or salaried professional, feels the pulse of reform in the products they buy, the services they access, and the opportunities they aspire to. The tax revolution of 2025 is thus not only about numbers on a ledger but about shaping the everyday reality of 1.4 billion people. It is about turning the Swadeshi dream into a lived experience and making economic growth not just an abstract GDP figure but a festival of shared hope, dignity, and progress. Just as Navratri marks new beginnings, GST 2.0 turns the festive season into a celebration of reform, renewal and rising consumption.'

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**After my column in the Indian Express and other newspapers on September 14, 2025 on GST, Mr Mani Shankar Iyer has written an op-ed in the Indian Express today Both pieces effectively puncture the claim of the government that the GST rate cuts are a PM-inspired 'reform' by the government. In truth, the rate cuts are a belated realisation that the multiple and high rates of GST were a monumental blunder. Of course, the Modi government will never admit it was wrong -- from demonetisation to the Wakf Amendment Act ~ P. Chidambaram, MP (RS) & Former Union Finance Minister**



## THREAT OF INFECTIONS AFTER FLOODS

DR TASADUK HUSSAIN ITOO

Floods are among the most devastating natural disasters faced by humanity. They cause immediate destruction by sweeping away homes, damaging infrastructure, and displacing populations. But beyond the visible damage, floods carry an often-overlooked danger: the rise of infectious diseases. The true health crisis often begins once the waters recede, when contaminated environments, poor sanitation, and disrupted healthcare services create a fertile ground for outbreaks.

Waterborne Diseases:

One of the biggest health challenges after flooding is the contamination of drinking water. When sewage systems overflow and mix with floodwaters, harmful bacteria and viruses spread rapidly. This increases the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, viral hepatitis-A, and acute diarrhoeal illnesses.

Flood victims, especially in rural or resource-poor settings, may rely on rivers, wells, or hand pumps that become unsafe during floods. Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable, as dehydration from diarrhoeal illnesses can quickly turn fatal if left untreated.

Vector-Borne Illnesses:

Stagnant pools of water left behind after floods are perfect breeding sites for mosquitoes. As a result, outbreaks of malaria, dengue, and chikungunya often follow flood events. The



spread of these vector-borne diseases further strains already overburdened health systems. Without timely vector control measures such as drainage, spraying, and distribution of mosquito nets-flood-affected areas can experience epidemics.

Skin and Respiratory Infections:

Living conditions in temporary shelters also increase the risk of infections. Overcrowding, inadequate ventilation, and poor sanitation often result in skin rashes, fungal infections, respiratory tract infections, and even tuberculosis transmission. Injuries sustained during floods-such as cuts, bruises, and snakebites-fre-

quently become infected due to lack of clean wound care facilities.

Secondary Impacts and Climate Change: Floods disrupt livelihoods, displace populations, and create food insecurity, which in turn weakens immunity and increases vulnerability to infections. Climate change has intensified these risks by making extreme rainfall events more frequent and severe. Warmer temperatures and erratic monsoons across South Asia and other parts of the world now mean that flood-related infections are becoming a recurring public health concern.

The Way Forward:

Addressing the health fallout of floods requires both immediate and long-term strategies. In the short term, authorities must ensure access to clean drinking water through chlorination, water purification tablets, or bottled supplies. Mobile health camps should be deployed to provide quick diagnosis and treatment of diarrhoeal and vector-borne diseases. Preventive vaccination campaigns-particularly for hepatitis-A and typhoid-can reduce risks in vulnerable populations.

Vector control programs, safe sanitation practices, and widespread community awareness campaigns are equally critical. People must be educated on boiling water, washing hands, and using mosquito protection to reduce their risk of infection.

# Post-mortem completed for Assam music icon Zubeen Garg at GMCH

GAURAV GOGOI QUESTIONS DELAY IN ZUBEEN'S POSTMORTEM; STATE ASSURES TRANSPARENCY

## GUWAHATI

Post-mortem procedures for celebrated Assam singer Zubeen Garg were completed at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) on September 23 morning, with massive crowds gathering both at the medical facility and Sarusajai Stadium as the state prepares for the final farewell of its beloved music icon.

A specialised medical team comprising four expert doctors from GMCH, Pragyotishpur Medical College, and AIIMS conducted the examination under strict supervision. The entire postmortem was recorded on video to allow thorough analysis.

Senior officials from the state and district administration, along with

top-ranking Assam Police officers and Health Department representatives, monitored the proceedings at the hospital.

Following completion of all medical procedures, including X-ray examinations, Garg's mortal remains will be transported back to Sarusajai Stadium in a specially arranged vehicle.

The final journey to Sonapur will commence from the stadium, with appropriate arrangements made for family members to accompany the procession.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had announced the post-mortem schedule on Monday, emphasising the need for proper medical procedures before cremation ceremonies. He urged citizens with relevant information

about Garg's death to contact CID directly while warning against spreading unverified claims on social media platforms.

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju will represent Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the ceremony. Other dignitaries expected include the Assam Legislative Assembly Speaker, Leader of Opposition, Assam Sahitya Sabha representatives, All Assam Students' Union members, and former Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

Vehicular movement remains suspended until 4 pm Tuesday to facilitate smooth arrangements. Citizens are permitted to line the main roads to pay tribute during the procession.

The Chief Minister issued stern warnings against shop closures or pub-

lic disorder after 2 pm Tuesday, stating that authorities have collected footage of recent disturbances and will take action against violators, including those involved in incidents at Zoo Road pharmacy. Garg's ashes will be handed over to family members immediately following the last rites, concluding the state's official farewell to one of Assam's most cherished cultural ambassadors.

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on Monday expressed strong dissatisfaction over the delay in conducting the postmortem of legendary singer Zubeen Garg, questioning why the procedure was not carried out immediately after his body arrived in Guwahati.

He also criticised the dissemination of information through screenshots instead of official statements, calling for

greater clarity and accountability.

In response, the Assam state government assured that the postmortem process will be fully transparent, with all arrangements being made to allow fans and well-wishers to pay their last respects.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that a second post-mortem will be conducted on Tuesday morning at Gauhati Medical College Hospital (GMCH). The first autopsy was conducted in Singapore, where Garg tragically passed away by drowning on September 19. His last rites are scheduled on Tuesday on the outskirts of Guwahati with full state honours.

Sarma clarified that the second postmortem is being conducted not at the behest of the public, but to address

concerns raised by certain groups, with the consent of Garg's wife. "We do not want to create any controversy over Zubeen, so this decision was taken," he said, emphasising that democracy sometimes requires accommodating minority demands even if personal wishes differ.

The CM added that Singapore doctors, who conducted the first post-mortem, possess greater technical expertise, but the procedure at GMCH—conducted by a team of doctors from GMCH and AIIMS, Guwahati—will ensure there is no scope for politicization of Zubeen's demise. Following the procedure, the singer's journey to the cremation ground will begin at 9:30 AM, two hours later than previously announced.

## Nagaland's Ophiolite and Meghalaya's caves enter UNESCO tentative heritage list

### KOHIMA

Two remarkable geological sites from Northeast India have gained international recognition as potential World Heritage locations, with Nagaland's Naga Hill Ophiolite and Meghalaya's ancient cave systems now on UNESCO's tentative list.

The Naga Hill Ophiolite in Kiphire district represents one of the world's most significant geological formations, containing remnants of ancient oceanic crust that tell the story of how continents formed millions of years ago.

These rare rock assemblages provide scientists with direct access to materials typically found deep beneath ocean floors, making the site invaluable for understanding Earth's geological evolution.

Meghalaya's contribution comes through the Meghalayan Age Caves in East Khasi Hills, a complex cave system that not only showcases extraordinary limestone formations but also contains evidence of early human habitation.

The caves derive additional significance from lending their name to the current geological age - the Meghalayan Age - marking them as globally important reference points for understanding recent Earth history.

Both sites joined five other natural heritage locations from across India in the latest addition to UNESCO's tentative list. The Archaeological Survey of India submitted detailed documentation for all seven properties, which also include Maharashtra's Deccan Traps, Karnataka's St. Mary's Island Cluster, two sites from Andhra Pradesh - Erra Matti Dibba, and the Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills, and Kerala's Varkala coastal formation.

## Assam pushes back 37 Bangladeshis, CM vows stricter action against infiltrators



### GUWAHATI

Assam authorities returned 37 Bangladeshi nationals to their home country, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Tuesday, underlining the state government's strict approach toward illegal immigrants.

Sharing blurred images of men,

women, and children on X, Sarma described the operation in the Sribhumi sector as a part of ongoing efforts to make Assam free of infiltration.

"Goodbye infiltrators; your time's up in Assam. All unwanted guests will be treated with the same gesture," he said.

Details on the exact timing of the operation were not immediately available. Sarma emphasised that the state is maintaining a weekly pushback routine, with 35-40 people being sent back regularly, bypassing lengthy legal deportation procedures.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed his administration's commitment to ensuring that all illegal immigrants are identified and removed from Assam.

## Tripura Congress slams BJP for excluding opposition during PM Modi's temple visit

### AGARTALA

The Tripura Congress on Monday strongly criticized the state government for allegedly sidelining opposition parties during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inauguration of the PRASAD project at the Mata Tripurasundari Temple.

Pradesh Congress President Ashish Kumar Saha expressed deep disappointment over the exclusion, calling it a reflection of the BJP's "one-party attitude." "It is very sad that the official function of the PRASAD project at Mata Tripurasundari Temple was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, yet opposition parties were not invited," Saha said. He added that the Prime Minister represents all citizens, and traditionally, opposition leaders are included in such



events.

Saha further accused the BJP of politicizing the temple, stating, "The ruling party has taken this to such

an extent that it seems Mata Tripura Sundari Temple is only for the BJP. This is highly condemnable." He also appealed to civil society

to protest against what he described as the government's partisan approach.

Meanwhile, Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman took to social media to condemn the exclusion, writing, "He [the Prime Minister] is the Prime Minister of the country. The identity of any political party does not apply here. The government showed utmost indecency by not inviting MLAs or office bearers from other parties to the inauguration of the new architecture of the Mata Tripurasundari Temple." Barman added that the public is now aware of the ruling party's willingness to indulge in political games even in matters concerning the temple.

The Congress's strong reaction highlights growing concerns about the politicization of religious and cultural events in the state.

## \$125 million India-ADB project to transform urban infra across 6 Assam districts

### GUWAHATI

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday signed a USD 125-million loan agreement aimed at enhancing urban livability and strengthening climate resilience across six districts of Assam.

The Assam Urban Sector Development Project will benefit 360,000 residents by providing continuous metered water supply and upgrading storm water management systems, according to the finance ministry. The initiative also focuses on strengthening urban governance through institutional reforms and capacity building.

Key infrastructure investments include the construction of six water treatment plants with a com-



bined capacity of 72 million litres per day and 800 km of distribution pipelines in Barpeta, Bongaigaon,

Dhubri, Goalpara, Golaghat, and Nalbari. A real-time monitoring system will be deployed to main-

tain non-revenue water below 20 per cent.

In Guwahati, the project will improve storm water management in the Bahini Basin through flood diversion channels, upgraded drainage systems, and a nature-based retention pond designed to reduce flood discharge and enhance groundwater recharge.

The loan agreement was signed by Juhli Mukherjee, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of India, and Mio Oka, Country Director, India Resident Mission, for ADB.

Officials said the project is expected to significantly improve urban infrastructure while promoting sustainable water management and climate resilience in Assam's rapidly growing towns.

## Over 600 trucks stranded on NH-306 in Mizoram as Sairang-Kawnpui stretch turns impassable



### AIZAWL

Movement of essential commodities into Mizoram has been severely disrupted as more than 600 trucks remain stranded on the National Highway due to the poor condition of the Sairang-Kawnpui stretch, officials said on Sunday.

NH306, parts of which are also referred to as NH6, is the state's lifeline, connecting Mizoram with the rest of the country through Silchar in Assam. Despite being repaired as recently as July and August, the Sairang-Kawnpui section has once again fallen into disrepair, making it almost impossible for loaded trucks to ply. According to officials, 339 trucks carrying essential supplies for Aizawl were stuck at Kawnpui, while another 264 empty trucks heading toward Assam were stranded at Khamrang as of Sunday morning. Earlier, more than 500 Assam-bound trucks stranded between Sairang and Khamrang were released on

Saturday after gradual clearance efforts.

The crisis has raised alarm among traders and transporters. The Mizoram Merchant Association (MIMA) and the Northeast Transporters' Union convened a meeting in Aizawl on Saturday, where they warned of a drastic step if the issue remains unresolved.

MIMA president PC Laldinthara said the two organisations unanimously decided not to transport essential goods during next year's rainy season unless the highway is made reliably passable. He added that the recurring problem of the national highway turning unusable during monsoons has created immense hardship for both traders and consumers, underscoring the urgent need for a permanent solution. The disruption has sparked concerns of supply shortages in Mizoram, as the stranded trucks continue to block the movement of goods on the state's only road lifeline.

## Congress abandoned difficult development work, harming Northeast: PM in Arunachal

### ITANAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Monday, alleged that the Congress has an "inherent habit" of abandoning any development work that is difficult, and this caused significant harm to the Northeast.

Addressing a rally at the Indira Gandhi Park in Itanagar after unveiling development projects worth over Rs 5,100 crore, Modi said he knew that the Northeast couldn't be developed from Delhi, and so, he sent ministers and officers more frequently to the region, and he himself came here more than 70 times.

"One inherent habit of Congress is that they never take up development work which is difficult to do; they abandon it. This habit of Congress caused significant harm to Arunachal Pradesh and the entire Northeast. In the hilly and forested areas, where development work was challenging, Congress would declare the regions backward and simply forget them," he claimed.

The Prime Minister said that with the launch of GST reforms on the first day of Navratri, people will receive a "double bonanza" this festive season.

"Today, next-generation GST reforms



have been implemented across the country, and the GST 'Bachat Utsav' has begun. During the season of festivals, the people have received a double bonanza," he said.

Modi said the previous Congress government kept on increasing taxes even as everything got expensive.

"Congress imposed a heavy tax burden on the people, but our government has gradually reduced taxes, giving relief," he said.

Modi alleged the border villages were neglected by successive Congress governments, leading to the migration of people from these areas.

He claimed that the Congress also overlooked Arunachal Pradesh, as it has only two Lok Sabha seats.

"When I was given the opportunity to serve the nation in 2014, I resolved to free the country from the mindset of Congress. Our guiding principle is not the number of votes

or seats in any state, but 'nation first'. Our only mantra is 'Nagrik Devo Bhava' (the citizen is God)," he said.

"Modi worships those whom no one has ever asked about. That is why Arunachal Pradesh, which was neglected during Congress rule, has since 2014 become a centre of developmental priority," he added.

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju described Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh as a "sacred and historic day" for the frontier state and the country.

Addressing the rally, Rijiju said the state was proud to host the Prime Minister on the auspicious occasion of Navratri, and to be the state from where the next-generation GST reforms were launched.

"Today is a holy day for Arunachal Pradesh and for the nation. The PM has chosen our state, the land where the first rays of the sun touch the country, to roll out the his-

toric GST reforms that will benefit crores of poor people across the country," the Union Parliamentary and Minority Affairs minister said.

He recalled the difficult days more than a decade ago, when Arunachal lacked basic connectivity.

"Fourteen to 15 years ago, we had no airport, no railway line, no proper highways and even mobile services were absent in many villages. Reaching from one district to another often took weeks, especially during monsoons. Those hardships are still fresh in our memory," he said.

Rijiju, who represents Arunachal West Parliamentary constituency, highlighted the transformation brought about in recent years under Modi's leadership.

"Today, Arunachal Pradesh has its own airport connecting us directly to Delhi, Kolkata, and Guwahati. We have a railway line, national highways, tunnels, and better roads. From any corner of Arunachal, people can reach Itanagar in a single day," he said, adding that the state now has the highest length of national highways in the Northeast.

The minister said Modi's frequent visits to Arunachal had accelerated the state's development and boosted people's morale.

"No PM in history has visited Arunachal so many times. Each time, he brings new gifts of development. Today also, several important projects are being inaugurated or their foundation stones laid," Rijiju said.

### Quest!

There is a mathematical equation that can accurately determine whether a married couple will divorce with 90% accuracy.

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# Unemployment, corruption will rise as long as elections are stolen: Rahul Gandhi



NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday claimed that as long as elections are "stolen", unemployment and corruption will continue to rise, and asserted that young people will no longer tolerate "job theft" and "vote theft."

In a post on X in Hindi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said unemployment is the biggest problem facing youth in India and it is directly linked to "vote chori."

When a government wins public trust and comes to power, its first duty is to provide employment and opportunities to the youth, he said.

"But the BJP doesn't win elections honestly -- they stay

in power by stealing votes and controlling institutions," Gandhi alleged. That's why unemployment has reached a 45-year high, he said.

"That's why jobs are declining, recruitment processes have collapsed, and the future of youth is being jeopardised. That's why every exam paper leak and every recruitment is linked to stories of corruption," Gandhi said.

"The country's youth work hard, dream, and fight for their future. But (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi is solely focused on his PR, getting celebrities to sing praises for him, and billionaire profits. It has become the government's identity to shatter the hopes of the youth and leave them frustrated,"

the former Congress chief said. "Now, the situation is changing. India's youth understand that the real fight isn't just for jobs, but against vote theft. Because as long as elections are stolen, unemployment and corruption will continue to rise," he said.

Young people will no longer tolerate "job theft" or "vote theft", Gandhi asserted. "The ultimate patriotism now lies in freeing India from unemployment and vote theft," he said.

Gandhi also shared a split screen video montage of police lathi-charging protesting students seeking jobs on one half of the screen and Prime Minister Modi planting saplings, feeding peacocks and practising Yoga on the other half of the screen.

# Very heavy rains flood Kolkata, halt normal life; four die from electrocution

KOLKATA

At least four people died from electrocution in rain-hit Kolkata, officials said, as heavy overnight rainfall caused widespread waterlogging, halting traffic, public transport and daily life across the city on Tuesday.

The victims were identified as Firoz Ali Khan (50) of Beniapukur, Pranatosh Kundu (62) of Netaji Nagar, and Mumtaz Bibi (70) of Ekbalpur, besides an unidentified person in Gariahat.

Heavy rain since past midnight flooded roads and residential complexes across the city, leaving vehicles stranded for hours in knee-to-waist-deep water at major intersections, including Park Circus, Gariahat, Behala, and College Street.

"So far, we have received information of four deaths due to electrocution in different places in the city," Kolkata Mayor and state Urban Development Minister Firdhad Hakim told.

Hakim said that most parts of the city were waterlogged and teams of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) were working round the clock to drain out the water.

"Our officers are working hard. But the canals and rivers are full of water and every time water is drained out, more is getting inside the city. We fear that the high tide which is around 1.30 PM today, may not help in our efforts to drain out the excessive water from the city. It would be around 10 PM when the situation could be expected to improve," Hakim said.

Traffic movement was severely affected across most arterial roads, with vehicles stranded for hours in knee-to-waist-deep water at key intersections such as Park Circus, Gariahat, Behala, and College Street.

Long traffic snarls were reported on EM Bypass, A/C Bose Road and Central Avenue, while several smaller lanes in south and central Kolkata were completely cut off due to waist-deep water.

Commuters complained of buses breaking down mid-way, while taxis



and app cabs either stayed off the roads or charged exorbitant fares.

Significant waterlogging was reported in the mid-section of the Blue Line (Dakshineswar Shahid Khudiram), particularly between Mahanayak Uttam Kumar and Rabindra Sarobar stations, prompting the immediate suspension of services on this stretch.

A Metro Railway Kolkata spokesperson said in order to ensure passengers' safety, services have been suspended between Shahid Khudiram and Maidan stations since morning hours. "Truncated services are being run between Dakshineswar and Maidan stations," he said, adding that normal services are expected to be resumed soon.

Owing to waterlogging of tracks, train movement in the Sealdah south section has been suspended, while

skeleton services are being run in the Sealdah north and main sections, an Eastern Railway official said.

Train services have been partially affected to and from Howrah and Kolkata terminal stations of Eastern Railway as tracks got waterlogged owing to heavy downpour, he said.

Train movement in the Circular Railway line has also been suspended due to waterlogging at Chitpur yard, he added.

Many schools have declared a holiday in the wake of very heavy downpour and waterlogged streets. Office-goers were having a tough time reaching their destinations because of lack of public transport and traffic snarls.

The city is bracing for more downpour as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that a low-pressure area over the northeast Bay of

Bengal is likely to bring heavy rain in several south Bengal districts.

The intensity of rain was higher in the southern and eastern parts of the city, with Garia Kamdhari recording 332 mm of rain in just a few hours, followed by Jodhpur Park at 285 mm, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) said.

Kalighat recorded 280 mm of rain, Topsia 275 mm, Ballygunge 264 mm, while Thantania in north Kolkata received 195 mm of rain, they added.

The weather office said heavy rainfall is likely to occur in Purba and Paschim Medinipur, South 24 Parganas, Jhargram and Bankura districts in South Bengal till Wednesday. It said another fresh low-pressure area is likely to form over the east-central and adjoining north Bay of Bengal around September 25.

# INTERNATIONAL

## Trump to take aim at 'globalist institutions', make case for his foreign policy record in UN speech

NEW YORK

Watched by the world, US President Donald Trump returns to the United Nations on Tuesday to deliver a wide-ranging address on his second-term foreign policy achievements and lament that "globalist institutions have significantly decayed the world order," according to the White House.

World leaders will be listening closely to his remarks at the UN General Assembly as Trump has already moved quickly to diminish US support for the world body in his first eight months in office. Even in his first term, he was no fan of the flavor of multilateralism that the United Nations espouses. After his latest inauguration, he issued a first-day executive order withdrawing the US from the World Health Organization.

That was followed by his move to end US participation in the UN Human Rights Council, and ordering a review of US membership in hundreds of intergovernmental organizations aimed at determining whether they align with the priorities of his "America First" agenda. "There are great hopes for it, but it's not being well run, to be honest," Trump said of the UN last week. The US president's speech is typically among the most anticipated moments of the annual assembly. This one comes at one of the most volatile moments in the world body's 80-year-old history.

Global leaders are being tested by intractable wars in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan, uncertainty about the economic and social impact of emerging artificial intelligence technology, and anxiety about Trump's antipathy for the global body.

Trump has also raised new questions about the American use of military force in his return to the White House, after ordering US airstrikes on Iranian nuclear facilities in June and a trio of strikes this month on alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean Sea.

The latter strikes, including at least two fatal attacks on boats that originated from Venezuela, has raised speculation in Caracas that Trump is looking to set the stage for the ouster of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Some US lawmakers and human rights advocates say that Trump is effectively



carrying out extrajudicial killings by using US forces to lethally target alleged drug smugglers instead of interdicting the suspected vessels, seizing any drugs and prosecuting the suspects in US courts.

"This is by far the most stressed the UN system has ever been in its 80 years," said Anjali K. Dayal, a professor of international politics at Fordham University in New York.

Trump to hold one-on-one talks with world leaders

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump would tout "the renewal of American strength around the world" and his efforts to help end several wars.

"The president will also touch upon how globalist institutions have significantly decayed the world order, and he will articulate his straight forward and constructive vision for the world," Leavitt said.

Following his speech, Trump will hold one-on-one meetings with UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the leaders of Ukraine, Argentina and the European Union. He will also hold a group meeting with officials from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan. He'll return to Washington after hosting a reception Tuesday night with more

than 100 invited world leaders.

Trump has struggled to deliver on his 2024 campaign promises to quickly end the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. His response has been also relatively muted as some longtime American allies are using this year's General Assembly to spotlight the growing international campaign for recognition of a Palestinian state, a move that the US and Israel vehemently oppose.

France became the latest nation to recognize Palestinian statehood on Monday at the start of a high-profile meeting at the UN aimed at galvanizing support for a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict. More nations are expected to follow. Leavitt said Trump sees the push as "just more talk and not enough action from some of our friends and allies."

Trump, for his part, in the lead-up to Tuesday's address has tried to keep focus on getting agreement on a ceasefire that leads Hamas to releasing its remaining 48 hostages, including 20 still believed to be alive.

"I'd like to see a diplomatic solution," Trump told reporters Sunday evening. "There's a lot of anger and a lot of hatred, you know that, and there has been for a lot of years ... but hopefully we'll get something done."

Leaders in the room will also be eager to hear what Trump has to say about Russia's war in Ukraine.

It's been more than a month since Trump's Alaska summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin and a White House meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and key European leaders.

Following those meetings, Trump announced that he was arranging for direct talks between Putin and Zelenskyy. But Putin hasn't shown any interest in meeting with Zelenskyy and Moscow has only intensified its bombardment of Ukraine since the Alaska summit.

European leaders as well as American lawmakers, including some key Republican allies of Trump, have urged the president to dial up stronger sanctions on Russia. Trump, meanwhile, has pressed Europe to stop buying Russian oil, the engine feeding Putin's war machine.

Despite his struggles to end the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, Trump has made clear that he wants to be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, repeatedly making the spurious claim that he's "ended seven wars" since he returned to office. He points to his administration's efforts to end conflicts between Israel and Iran, India and Pakistan, Egypt and Sudan, Rwanda and the Democratic Congo, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Cambodia and Thailand.

Although Trump helped mediate relations among many of these nations, experts say his impact isn't as clear cut as he claims.

Still, Trump's Nobel ambitions could have impact on the tenor of his address, said Mark Montgomery, an analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington.

"His speech is going to be driven by how much he really believes he has a chance of getting a Nobel Peace Prize," Montgomery said. "If he thinks that's still something he can do, then I think he knows you don't go into the UN and drop a grenade down the tank hatch and shut it, right?"

## Kamala Harris claims she 'had a certain responsibility' to argue against Biden running again



WASHINGTON

Former US Vice President Kamala Harris said on Monday evening that she regrets not expressing her concerns about then-President Joe Biden running for a second term when a majority of Americans felt he was too old for the job.

"I have and had a certain responsibility that I should have followed through on," Harris told Rachel Maddow on MSNBC in her first live television interview since the election.

Such a conversation, even if it happened privately and behind the scenes, would have been an extraordinary breach in a relationship between a president and vice president.

Harris' comments expand on a passage in her book, "107 Days," that looks back on her experience replacing Biden as the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee after he dropped out of the race. Harris ultimately lost to Republican candidate Donald Trump.

In the book, Harris wrote that everyone in the White House would say "it's Joe and Jill's decision" about running for reelection, referring to the president and first lady. "Was it grace, or was it recklessness? In retrospect, I think

it was recklessness," she wrote.

"The stakes were simply too high. This wasn't a choice that should have been left to an individual's ego, an individual's ambition. It should have been more than a personal decision."

In her interview with Maddow, Harris said, "when I talk about the recklessness, as much as anything, I'm talking about myself."

Harris said in the interview she was concerned that "it would come off as completely self-serving" if she had counseled Biden not to seek reelection. She had competed against him for their party's 2020 nomination, and she was well positioned to run again.

Kamala Harris says leaving reelection decision to Biden was 'recklessness', but she defends his abilities

Although Harris wrote that she wasn't worried about Biden's ability to continue doing the job, she had concerns about him campaigning.

"His voice was no longer strong, his verbal stumbles more frequent," she wrote. Before Biden dropped out, there were plans for him to run a White House-centric campaign while Harris did more traveling. A week after Biden's disastrous debate against Trump, she wrote that "he felt so frail."

Harris turns 61 next month, and she hasn't detailed her future plans. Asked about running for president again in 2028, Harris said "that's not my focus right now." She's already passed on an opportunity to run for governor of her home state of California.

She backed a plan by Gov. Gavin Newsom to redraw congressional districts to counteract a similar plan by Republicans in Texas that was intended to help Trump keep control of the House in next year's midterms.

"We tend to play by the rules," Harris said. "But I think this is a moment where you got to fight fire with fire."

She spoke harshly about Trump in the interview, criticizing him as acting like "a tyrant" and "Communist dictators," saying "that's what we're dealing with right now in Donald Trump."

Harris also pointed the finger at business leaders who she accused of capitulating to the president. "These titans of industry are not speaking up," she said.

Maddow referenced a passage in Harris' book where she wrote that Pete Buttigieg was her first choice for vice president but she was worried that Americans weren't ready to vote for a ticket featuring a Black woman and a gay man. "It's hard to hear ... he couldn't be on the ticket, effectively, because he was gay," Maddow said.

Harris said "it wasn't about any prejudice on my part" but "we had such a short period of time, and the stakes were so high."

"It made me very sad, but I also realized it would be a real risk," she said. Harris conceded "maybe I was being too cautious." Buttigieg told Politico he was "surprised" by the passage in the book about him. He also said he believes in "giving Americans more credit."

# Zubeen sleeps: Assam bids tearful farewell to its icon



dents' Union, along with artist forums and the Zubeen Garg Fan Club, joined hands in respect. The attendance of the Resident Commissioner from Arunachal Pradesh underscored how Zubeen's music had crossed borders, resonating deeply across communities.

Floral tributes from Assam's highest dignitaries further reiterated the magnitude of this loss. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary, Union Ministers Kiren Rijiju, Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita, Opposition Leader Debabrata Saikia, and representatives from esteemed cultural bodies like Assam Sahitya Sabha, AASU, and AJYCP stood united in their sorrow. Their collective presence was a solemn acknowledgment that Zubeen was more than a singer—he was the very embodiment of Assam's cultural spirit and pride. The police ensured the peaceful conduct of the event, facilitating a seamless flow of the vast sea of mourners who were determined to pay their last respects. Special gates opened to accommodate fans, who came with flowers in hand and memories in their hearts. Posters, albums, and cherished tokens were carried by many, each item a silent testament to the indelible mark Zubeen had left on their lives.

As the final rites were solemnly performed, the stillness of Hatimura was disrupted only by the soft sobs of grief and the chorus of chants—"Zubeen Dada Amar Rahok" (May Zubeen live forever). Though Assam has lost its most treasured voice, his legacy is immortal. His songs, woven into the fabric of the land, will continue to echo through the valleys, towns, and hearts of the people, reminding all that true artistry never dies but lives on eternally in the spirit it inspires.



**A**ssam stood shrouded in a profound silence today, September 23 as Sonapur bore witness to the final farewell to Zubeen Garg, the state's most treasured cultural icon and voice of a generation. At 10:55 am, the mortal remains of the legendary singer arrived at the Hatimura cremation site, where thousands had already gathered since dawn, their hearts heavy with grief and their

eyes moist with tears. Fans, family, and leaders alike came together in a solemn, collective tribute to a man who had given Assam its music, its voice of love, rebellion, and hope.

From the early morning hours, the streets bore testament to the deep bond between Zubeen and the people. Thousands lined the funeral procession route, showering flowers and whispering prayers, grappling with the stark reality that the voice which had once filled every corner of their lives was now silenced forever. The air was thick with sorrow as many wept openly, while others stood rooted in disbelief, unable to come to terms with the loss of not just an artist, but a symbol of their cultural identity.

At the cremation ground, Zubeen's immediate family stood closest

to the pyre, their grief raw and palpable. His wife Garima Saikia Garg, father, sister, and close relatives held one another, seeking strength amidst the crushing pain. Their tears were not only for the loss of a revered singer but also for the beloved man who was the heart and soul of their family. Around them, fans and well-wishers from distant places mirrored their anguish, unified in a shared mourning.

The scene was a poignant reminder of Zubeen Garg's transcending influence. Political leaders, student unions, and cultural organizations converged at Hatimura to pay homage. Representatives from the All Tai Ahom Students' Union, All Bodo Students' Union, Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association, All-Assam Chutia Students' Union, and All Koch-Rajbongshi Stu-

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# BARAK FESTIVAL

## 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

Tracking & Campus, Obstacle Navigations, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Techniques, Water Sports and more. Participants will face the challenges in life, increase confidence and sense of purpose in their life and also connected with nature.

Barak Festival  
**2025 BARAK VALLEY CONCLAVE**

10th January, 2025 | Theme: Silchar  
POTENTIAL, ISSUES & CHALLENGES

REGISTER NOW

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### 11 JAN Barak Valley Conclave

Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley to be discussed by stakeholders. Includes: KCCs, and D'gongal and can register for free. Registration fee: 500/- for members and 1000/- for non-members. Participation is through invitation only. 5 different events are conducted.

### 10 Jan Barak Festival: Peace Progress & Prosperity

Barak Festival 2025  
10th January 2025  
Theme: 2025  
KRC Foundation Logo

KRC FOUNDATION BOOK CLUB  
10th January 2025  
KRC Foundation Logo

### 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.

Media Conclave  
10th January 2025

### 10 JAN Media Conclave

Media Conclave (Media Awards, Workshops, and the Film, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'). Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Media professionals, students, journalists, media & corporate leaders, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.

5E SUCCESS CONCLAVE  
"From School to Campus to Corporate"

### 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, technical and practical of River Barak. Training & Geography competitive and certification on River Barak, Climate Change.

River-Climate Conclave  
Climate Change, Pollution, Flooding, River Barak

### 11 JAN 5E For Success Conclave

The 4th For Success Conclave is going to be held 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 & Colleges. Extension: School/Institute Speaking Competition. In an online event, where students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.

Barak Festival  
Adventure Sports, Art & Culture Promotion

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REGISTER HERE

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E-SPORTS

FILM FESTIVAL | EXHIBITION  
BOOK CLUB | SPEECH & DEBATE  
RACE RALLY | CONCLAVE

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### 10-12 JAN Science Studio

Use a glimpse of Science to see how things work. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents. Raw science into real-life experiences of students.



### 10-12 JAN E-Sports

BARAK FESTIVAL PRESENTS  
E-SPORTS TOURNAMENT

REGISTER NOW

### 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'.

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST  
Send us your best photos!

### 11 JAN film festival

Award-Giving Ceremony | Film from Mizoram. Short Films from Barak Valley, NE India, W's. Media Talk | Exhibitions | Meet & Greet.

Watch Out!  
Film Festival

Barak Festival  
Band Night 10 JAN  
Musical Night 11 JAN

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### 10-12 JAN Book Bank

Anti-Book Campaign Book Bank 2025 | Donate | Reuse | Recycle

### Book Club

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

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