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North East Integration Rally
Peace | Progress | Prosperity
2026

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www.northeastintegrationrally.in

VOLUME:1, ISSUE 597 | SILCHAR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2025. EAST AND NE INDIA EDITION | e-mail: krctimes@gmail.com ,www.krctimes.com

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Rahul Gandhi pays tribute to Zubeen Garg at Sonapur cremation site



GUWAHATI

Rahul Gandhi, leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, paid his respects to singer Zubeen Garg on Friday at the cremation site in Sonapur, on the outskirts of Guwahati.

Gandhi laid a traditional Assamese scarf, known as a 'gamosa,' and a wreath at the platform where the singer was cremated.

He was joined by Assam Pradesh Congress president Gaurav Gogoi, AICC

general secretary and Assam in-charge Jitendra Singh, leader of the opposition in the legislative assembly Debabrata Saikia, and other senior Congress leaders from the state.

As Gandhi honored the singer, those gathered chanted slogans such as "Justice for Zubeen" and "Joy Zubeen."

The Congress delegation participated in the 'naam-kirtan' (prayer ceremony) at the site.

Gandhi also planted a 'nahor' (Indian rose chestnut) sapling, a tree that the

singer favored, at the cremation ground.

Before departing for New Delhi, Rahul Gandhi visited Zubeen Garg's home at Kahilipara in Guwahati to offer condolences to his family, according to party sources.

He met Zubeen Garg's wife, Garima Saikia Garg, father Kapil Borthakur and his sister, Palme Borthakur. He also called for transparency in the investigation.

Zubeen Garg, 52, died while swimming in Singapore on September 19 and was cremated with state honors on September 23 at Sonapur near Guwahati.

An SIT appointed by the Assam government continues to investigate the circumstances surrounding his death.

Ahead of Gandhi's visit, Gaurav Gogoi inspected the cremation site on Thursday to oversee arrangements.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma commented on Gandhi's visit, noting that it came 28 days after Garg's death but remarked that it was "better late than never."

He added that a senior Congress leader's presence at the cremation was expected and welcomed Gandhi's arrival in the state.

No foul play in Zubeen Garg's death, says Singapore Police; case to proceed under Coroners Act

GUWAHATI

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) has issued an official statement addressing widespread speculation and misinformation regarding the death of Indian singer Zubeen Garg.

According to the SPF, the case is being investigated in accordance with Singapore's Coroners Act 2010, and no foul play is suspected based on preliminary findings. The police emphasised that a thorough and professional investigation is ongoing and may take up to three more months to complete.

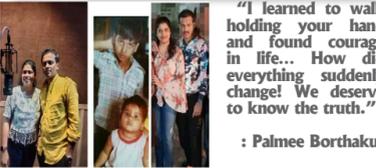
Once the investigation concludes, the findings will be submitted to the State Coroner, who will determine whether

to hold a Coroner's Inquiry (CI) — a judicial fact-finding process to establish the cause and circumstances of death. The Coroner's findings will be made public upon completion.

The SPF further clarified that, despite the ongoing investigation, it had shared the autopsy report and preliminary findings with the High Commission of India in Singapore on October 1, 2025, at the latter's request.

Reiterating its commitment to transparency and due process, the SPF appealed to the public to exercise restraint and avoid spreading unverified information. "We seek the patience and understanding of the parties involved," the statement added, assuring that the investigation will continue with diligence and objectivity.

PERSPECTIVE



"I learned to walk holding your hand and found courage in life... How did everything suddenly change! We deserve to know the truth."

: Palme Borthakur

Centre to install 'popular gov't' in Manipur after Nov 15: BJP MLA

GUWAHATI

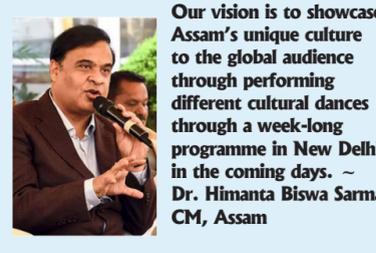
Manipur BJP MLA Thounaojam Shyamkumar has indicated that a new state government may be installed after November 15, with the chief minister to be hand-picked by the party's central leadership.

Speaking to media on Thursday, the Andro MLA said the assurance came during recent discussions in New Delhi between BJP legislators from Manipur and central party leaders. "A popular government will be formed after November 15. The Centre will decide who the chief minister will be. Everyone wants the post, but I want the Centre to make the call," Shyamkumar stated. The remark follows a week-long trip to the national capital by 26 BJP MLAs from Manipur, including Shyamkumar, seeking clarity from the top brass on the leadership question and a resolution to the ongoing political crisis.

While the party has not officially confirmed any leadership change, Shyamkumar's comments have intensified speculation about a potential reshuffle in the state's top post.

The statement also reflects a growing demand within party ranks for a centrally mediated solution to end months of instability in the state.

WHO SAID WHAT



Our vision is to showcase Assam's unique culture to the global audience through performing different cultural dances through a week-long programme in New Delhi in the coming days. ~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

Shekharjyoti, Amritprabha remanded to 14 days judicial custody, lodged in Haflong jail



HAFLONG

After spending 14 days in CID custody, Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amritprabha Mahanta were today remanded to judicial custody and lodged in Haflong Jail.

The duo appeared before the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) court in Haflong before being taken to the facility.

Their arrests form part of the ongoing investigation into the mysterious death of popular singer Zubeen Garg. So far, seven individuals have been taken into custody in connection with the case. Five of them—including Shyamkanu Mahanta, Siddhart Sharma, Zubeen's cousin Sandeepan Garg, and two of the singer's personal security officers, Nandeswar Bora and Paresh

Baishya—remain lodged in Baksa Jail.

Before being produced in court, Goswami and Mahanta underwent routine medical examinations. Tight security arrangements were put in place at both the CID office and the CJM court premises, reflecting heightened vigilance following previous unrest in Baksa, where angry fans clashed with police during the transfer of other accused.

Authorities have intensified security measures to ensure smooth proceedings, as public interest in the case continues to run high.

The investigation into Zubeen Garg's death remains under close scrutiny, with law enforcement under pressure to conduct a thorough and transparent probe.

Article 371A will not be touched for ENPO demand: Nagaland government

KOHIMA

The Nagaland government has confirmed that Article 371A of the Constitution, which grants special status to the state, will not be amended to accommodate the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) demand for a separate administrative arrangement.

Talks between the Centre and the ENPO are ongoing, with a subcommittee now constituted to address unresolved issues, a senior state minister said on Thursday.

The ENPO has long demanded a separate state comprising six districts of Eastern Nagaland. The organisation, however, has "temporarily accepted" the Centre's proposal for a mechanism granting the region a degree of autonomy under the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory Authority (FNATA).

Speaking after a Cabinet meeting, government spokesperson and senior minister KG Kenye said the Centre has held multiple rounds of discussions with the ENPO, the latest reportedly in Dimapur in early September. He noted that the state government had already submitted its recommendations on various points raised by the ENPO.

"On many points, we have agreed, but certain areas required reconsideration," Kenye said. To address these, the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (DPAR) has formed a subcommittee in coordination with ENPO officials. "This is a



new development, and we hope it will address the core issues that have been holding back further progress," he added.

While specifics were not disclosed, Kenye indicated that discussions are focused on administrative arrangements in the event of the FNATA Executive Council's dissolution, as well as funding patterns and cadre appointments within the proposed framework. He described these as "relatively minor issues" that should be resolved with further deliberation.

On proposals for a separate constitutional provision under Article 371A for the FNATA, Kenye clarified that the matter was discussed in detail during the Cabinet meeting. A team led by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, which had visited New Delhi earlier, received confirmation from

the Centre that no amendment to Article 371A will be made. Instead, changes may be introduced through a separate chapter, possibly via an ordinance or a State Act, to address matters outside the scope of Article 371A.

Expressing optimism, Kenye said both the State and Central Governments are committed to resolving the issue expeditiously. "Everything is moving smoothly, and we hope the Centre will be sincere and expedite the process," he stated.

The ENPO, representing eight tribes across six districts—Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak, and Shamator—has been demanding separate statehood since 2010, citing decades of neglect in governance and development since Nagaland's formation in 1963.

Army camp attacked in Assam's Kakopathar; 3 SOLDIERS INJURED, ULFA(I) EYED

GUWAHATI

A powerful late-night attack sent shockwaves across Kakopathar in Assam's Tinsukia district after unidentified assailants launched multiple grenades and opened heavy gunfire on an Indian Army camp.

The camp is located about 1 kilometre from the Kakopathar police station, 18 kilometres from Doomdooma, 32 kilometres from the Tinsukia district headquarters, and 532 kilometres from the state capital, Guwahati.

"First, I heard three loud explosions, it felt like an earthquake. Then came continuous gunfire, like from an AK-47. We all woke up terrified, thinking it was the end. We tried calling people here and there. Around 2:30 am, things started returning to normal," said an elderly woman from the neighbourhood.

According to security sources, the assault began around 12:30 AM when the attackers reportedly fired three Under Barrel Grenade Launchers (UBGLs) at the Army installation. They then unleashed nearly 30 minutes of sustained automatic gunfire, sparking widespread panic among residents. The sound of ex-



plosions and bullets echoed through the quiet town, keeping locals awake in fear and confusion.

Neither the Army PRO nor the Tinsukia police administration has issued an official statement so far.

Eyewitnesses claimed that the militants arrived in a truck, carried out the attack, and fled the scene under the cover of darkness. Three Army personnel sustained injuries during the exchange of fire. However, officials have not yet

confirmed the severity of their injuries or the extent of material damage caused by the assault.

Security forces immediately cordoned off the area, restricted civilian movement, and launched massive search operations across Kakopathar and adjoining localities. Additional reinforcements arrived from nearby Army and police units to prevent further escalation.

While the investigation is underway,

preliminary intelligence suggests the involvement of the banned insurgent outfit ULFA (Independent), which has previously executed similar high-intensity strikes in Upper Assam.

Senior officials from the Army and Assam Police have reached the site and are coordinating joint combing operations. "Our authorities are treating this incident with the utmost seriousness. The search to track down the perpetrators is ongoing and being carried out promptly," said a senior police officer on condition of anonymity.

The attack marks one of the most serious security incidents in Upper Assam in recent months, raising fresh concerns about a possible resurgence of militant activity in the region.

Residents of Kakopathar, still reeling from the shock, have urged the administration to bolster security measures in the area to prevent further violence.

Sources confirmed that senior police officers and Army personnel have launched massive combing operations across Upper Assam and neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh to apprehend the culprits.

North East Integration Rally
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2026

January 4 - February 4, 2026

PRE LAUNCH CEREMONY, MEGHALAYA

Chief Guest: **Shri Timothy D Shira**
Special Thanks to: **Shri A.L. Hek**

Date: 17th October (Friday), 2025
Venue: Mebaal Resort, Umtraew, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya

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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 597

BIHAR POLL IS AN OPEN BOOK

GEO-TAGGING OF WATER BODIES



The directive by the Chief Secretary to compulsorily geo-tag all water bodies across Jammu and Kashmir marks a crucial step toward safeguarding one of the Union Territory's most valuable but gravely endangered natural assets—its water resources. The move, though technical in nature, carries deep ecological, economic, and social implications for the region. It is a necessary precondition for the sustainable management and survival of lakes, ponds, springs, rivers, and wetlands that have for centuries sustained life, culture, and livelihoods in the region. J&K is known for its extensive forest cover and the hundreds of natural and man-made water bodies that dot its landscape. From the world-famous Dal and Wular lakes in Kashmir to smaller village ponds and natural springs across the Jammu plains, these water bodies have historically served as the lifeline of communities—providing drinking water, supporting agriculture, regulating local climates and replenishing groundwater. Yet, over the years, the reckless pace of urbanisation, neglect and encroachment has pushed many of them to the brink of extinction.

In urban centres, several traditional ponds and small lakes have been turned into dumping grounds or filled up for construction. What were once vibrant ecosystems have been replaced by granite parks, parking lots, or private housing. With the advent of piped water supply systems, people gradually lost their sense of dependence on local water sources, and with that, their instinct to protect them. The result is evident—vanishing water bodies, degraded catchments, and diminishing groundwater reserves.

It is in this backdrop that the directive for compulsory geo-tagging assumes immense significance. By digitally mapping every water body with precise coordinates and measurements, the Government is laying the foundation for a comprehensive, scientific approach to water conservation. Geo-tagging creates an authentic, tamper-proof digital record that can be accessed and monitored by multiple departments. Once the data is digitised, it becomes challenging for anyone to encroach upon or alter the status of a water body without leaving a trace.

Moreover, the benefits of geo-tagging extend far beyond protection against encroachments. It enables real-time monitoring of water levels, helping identify early signs of stress due to drought, pollution, or illegal diversions. Abnormal fluctuations can trigger timely investigations into causes—whether natural or man-made—and allow for quick remedial actions. It also helps demarcate catchment areas and buffer zones, ensuring that no developmental activity disturbs the natural flow and recharge mechanisms. In a region that experiences both excessive rainfall and prolonged dry spells, such predictive capability is invaluable for ensuring water security.

The directive also comes at a time when even the High Court has repeatedly expressed concern over the administration's failure to provide accurate data or action-taken reports regarding encroachments on water bodies. In many cases, District Administrations have been unable to present clear demarcations or ownership details due to a lack of proper records. Geo-tagging fills this critical information gap and empowers both the Government and the Judiciary to act based on verified data rather than estimates or outdated maps.

The one-month deadline set by the CS for completing the geo-tagging exercise is ambitious but achievable, provided all stakeholders act in coordination. The Chief Secretary has assigned shared responsibility to the Jal Shakti Department, the Forest Department, and the Rural Development Department, emphasising the importance of seamless collaboration among them. Equally important is what follows after geo-tagging. The data must be integrated into an accessible central digital dashboard where any decline in water levels, encroachment attempt, or pollution indicator triggers alerts. Regular audits and drone-based verification can further enhance accuracy and credibility. Linking geo-tagged water bodies with land revenue and forest records would make it nearly impossible for vested interests to manipulate boundaries or ownership.

At a time when climate change is amplifying water stress across the Himalayas, J&K cannot afford to lose its natural storage systems. Every pond, spring, and wetland contributes to the delicate hydrological balance that sustains the rivers and the aquifers below. Neglecting them means courting an ecological and economic disaster. Geo-tagging every water body is indeed the first digital step toward reclaiming J&K's natural soul.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present.



BRIJ BHARDWAJ

With dates out, Bihar is set for a battle royale for a very crucial election which may not only decide who would rule Bihar, but also give indications about the outcome of polls to be held in Bengal, Assam, and U.P. Elections in Bihar have always been interesting, with the two major parties, BJP and RJD leading two blocks and having a firm grip on voters. The BJP has the support of upper castes plus some lower castes, while RJD is supported by Yadavs and Muslims. RJD also has the support of Congress and Left Parties, and BJP on the other hand has the support of United Janata Dal, led by present Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Chirag Paswan. The difference between the two blocks is

switching sides with ease. This election in Bihar so far has been a bi-polar fight, but this may change due to Pran Kishore, who has been well known as an election strategist and is credited with having been the man behind many victories. He gave up his flourishing business and has been trying to build up a third force to revive Bihar. He has called his effort an attempt to pay back the debt that he owed as a son of the soil and as a Bihari. Serious doubts were expressed about whether he could make any dent in the caste ridden politics of Bihar, but Mr Kishore feels that Bihar is not different from other states and there is a big chunk of voters who are unattached and if he is able to get them plus make a small dent in the vote bank of two blocks he has a chance.

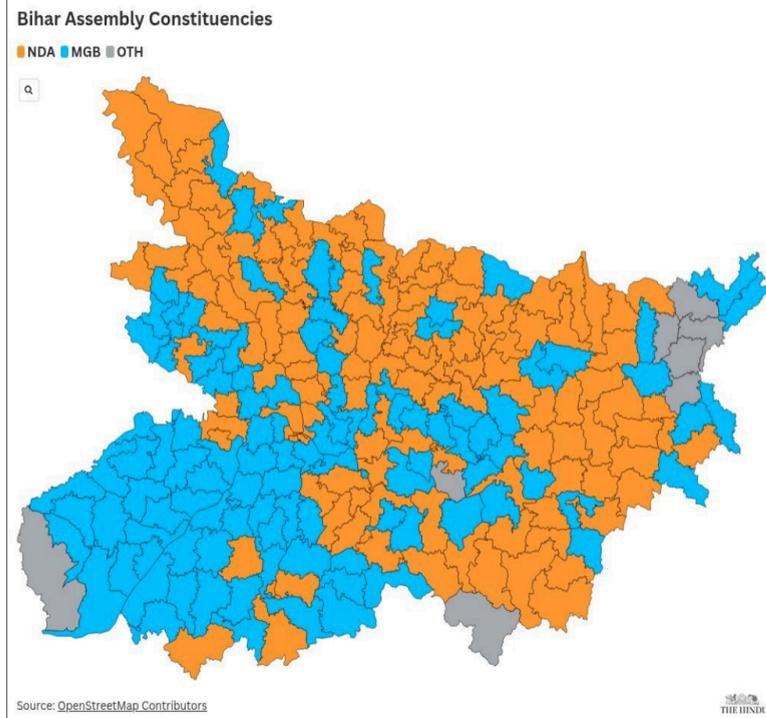
ambitions under control. To start with, Mr Owaisi, who was keen to join the opposition block, has decided to fight alone as he felt that RJD leaders were arrogant. Now RJD which is keen to fight 134 seats and has to persuade Congress and Left parties to accept fewer seats as compared to the last poll.

BJP is also having problems with Chirag Paswan having agreed to give Janata Dal over 100 seats. Mr Paswan will have to be satisfied with a few seats in the parliamentary constituencies won by him. The electioneering will start once the seat distribution is over in the coming week. So far the leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, and RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav, have extensively toured the state by undertaking yatras. BJP has organised many meetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has been working hard and has given Rs 10,000 to poor women and unemployed youth in the hope that it will work as it did in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The opposition, which has talked of jobs for unemployed youth, argues that one time grants will not make any difference as it has come too late and covers only a small section of voters.

BJP has raised the issue of infiltrators while the Opposition is talking of Vote Chori by manipulating the voters list. The Supreme Court, which has been looking into the issue of the latest revision of the voters list, has asked the Election commission to give a list with reasons of all voters whose names have been deleted following revision. This is expected to take care of any manipulation suspected.

The other factors which may influence the outcome of the poll is Modi as he is the choice of Bihar Voters as Prime Minister. Mr Rahul Gandhi's appeal has improved but he does not match up so far according to recent polls carried out by newspapers. Will Pran Kishore be able to make a dent or remain a poor third?



narrow, and Nitish Kumar, who is popularly known as "Paltu Ram", has become the Chief Minister by aligning with BJP or RJD by

At present both blocks are busy in seat allocation for their allies. The task is not easy as they have to persuade the allies to keep their

Bihar is one state where voters are very enlightened and have been part of many revolutions.

As such the only prediction that one can make is like last time the gap between two blocks will be narrow. Will Congress do better? Last time it won only 19 seats out of the 70 it contested. Will Nitish do as well as last time because of his indifferent health and frequent crossing over? There is a general feeling that there will be a change of Chief Minister. Meanwhile, Pran Kishore who at one time was being described as B team of BJP has suddenly started attacking BJP leaders in Bihar Cabinet.

The best bet is that it will be a tough fight with every seat keenly contested.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

REMINDER: I predicted the biggest crash in world history was coming in my book Rich Dad's Prophecy. That crash will happen this year. Baby Boom Retirements are going to be wiped out. Many boomers will be homeless or living in their kids basement. Sad. REMINDER: I have been warning anyone who would listen not to save printed assets. Invest in real assets. REMINDER: For years I have saying "SAVERS are LOSERS" Inflation turns savers cash into trash. REMINDER: For years I have been saying save gold, silver, Bitcoin, and recently Ethereum. Today I believe silver and Ethereum are the best because they are stores of value...but more importantly....used in industry....and prices are low. Please study pros and cons and usefulness of silver and ethereum.... from haters and lovers of silver and ethereum....and then invest with your own financial wisdom. Thats how you elevate your own financial intelligence and get richer. Take care.

~ Robert Kiyosaki, Investor, Entrepreneur, Author



CHILD HUNGER IS NOT DESTINY

DR RANI MUGHAL

"Our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation." - Nelson Mandela.

But the nations of today's world that we live in do not think so, it seems. The world has not been successful in nurturing this asset even to the extent of providing basic nutritious food to the entire child population living on this planet. This "greatest asset" of all the nations can be found in abundance, hungry and malnourished, in the towns and villages of Asia and Africa and even in the lanes and bylanes of the so-called developed nations of the world. Ironically, this happens while tonnes of food are wasted daily across the globe, highlighting the tragic imbalance between abundance and hunger.

According to an article published on the website of Children Incorporated (a non-profit 501(c)(3) international child sponsorship and child assistance organization based in North Chesterfield, Virginia, USA) by Shelley Callahan on February 19, 2020, the following facts regarding problems related to child hunger are stated:

* Every year, 3.1 million children (8,500 children per day) die due to poor nutrition. (It comes to around one child every 10 seconds.)

* Today, there are 815 million people in the



world who do not have enough to eat. * Approximately 28% of all children in developing countries are considered to be underweight, or have had their growth stunted as a

result of malnutrition.

* Worldwide, malnutrition contributes to almost half of the deaths of kids under the age of 5, claiming the lives of over 3 million children per year.

A UNICEF press release dated 27 July 2020 says that an additional 6.7 million children under 5 could suffer from wasting, and therefore become dangerously undernourished, in 2020 as a result of the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our children are going through this pain and will continue to go through the residual pain, as the economic aftereffects of the nearly three years of the pandemic are going to last much longer than the disease itself. So, what are we doing now, and what do we need to do in the future? To be honest, what we are doing now is not sufficient by any standard. But there are a few things that can and should be done now and in the future.

To begin with, the privileged of the world must see in the eyes of a suffering child an image of their own child, their own flesh and blood. Furthermore, the illusion that the governments and UNICEF are capable of doing this alone while the rest of the population can focus on making money must be shed. Everyone must do their bit. Moreover, prioritizing child welfare should become a way of thinking, and people must take

it upon themselves as their duty to help any child who is suffering, especially for economic reasons and also because of any other reason, near them, wherever they are. Finally, every government in every country should be made to give an account of their performance in taking care of children who are vulnerable. Child welfare must and should become an electoral issue in every country, in every election. The media must make it a point to hold the government of the day to account on their performance on child hunger and child welfare.

Yes, it can be done, provided the humanity at large apply its will to get it done. Provided the world understands that children are not only the greatest asset, but the shared asset and the shared future of the human race. If the world decided today that they will not tolerate that tear depicting pain, pain of any kind, of any nature, in the eyes of any child, it can be done. The day the world decides to protect its future, it will be done.

In conclusion, as a proud Indian citizen, let me remind all that if we are truly committed to building a Viksit Bharat, we must remember that a nation cannot be truly Viksit if even one child sleeps hungry.

The Principal GDC Surankote, on the occasion of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October).

Himanta Biswa Sarma constitutes fast-track court, to appoint special public prosecutor in Zubeen Garg case



GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday responded to the violence that erupted outside Baksa District Jail after the five accused in the Zubeen Garg death case were brought there.

Speaking on the incident, CM Sarma said, "... We could have taken them (the accused) to Dhubri, Diphu, but that would have required a five-hour journey. So the police calculated which jail they could go to immediately. So they decided Baksa because there is usually no law and order situation in Baksa, the people are very nice and cooperative..."

He added, "I think all

these things will go to Justice Soumitra Saikia's commission, and it will be found out whose lapses were there."

CM Sarma also announced a series of key decisions regarding the investigation into Zubeen Garg's death and the creation of a memorial in his honour.

He said, "We have constituted a powerful committee that will approve the drawing and designs for the Samadhi of Zubeen Garg. That committee consists of his wife (Garima Saikia Garg) as well as many members of his close family and friend circle."

The Chief Minister added, "Second, we have decided to constitute a fast-track court, as we have been giv-

en an understanding by the SIT that they will be able to file the chargesheet on time... The SIT has actually progressed in a very commendable way."

He further said, "Along with a fast-track court, we have decided to appoint a special public prosecutor as per the recommendation of the Advocate General of Assam. We are also thankful to the Singapore government for allowing the Assam police team to visit Singapore on October 21. That was a constant request by the Assam government."

"Yesterday I met Dr S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, he immediately called the Singapore authority and he conveyed my uneasiness about not

allowing the Assam police team to visit Singapore. Because of the interference of the level of External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, today, Singapore has approved the visit of the Assam police team," he added.

Meanwhile, the Assam government on Wednesday ordered a temporary suspension of telecom services in Baksa following violent protests outside the district jail.

Vehicles were set on fire and stones were pelted outside Baksa District Jail after five accused in the Zubeen Garg death case were brought there following a Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) court order sending them to judicial custody. Police resorted to mild

lathi charge and used tear gas shells to control the situation.

The accused include main event organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, Zubeen Garg's manager Siddharth Sharma, suspended APS officer Sandipan Garg, and two PSOs - Nandeswar Bora and Pareswari Baishya.

A large number of people gathered near the Baksa District Jail demanding justice for Zubeen Garg, with some among them pelting stones at vehicles carrying the accused.

Noted singer Zubeen Garg died in Singapore on September 19, allegedly while swimming, a day before he was scheduled to perform at the Northeast India Festival.

Aizawl gears up for 2nd International Half Marathon

AIZAWL

The Mizoram government is set to host the 2nd Aizawl International Half Marathon, with preparations underway to transform the event into a grand celebration of sports, culture, and community.

Speaking at the launch, Mizoram Sports Resident Commissioner Alexander V. Chongthu described the marathon as "not just a sporting event, but a festival where we will celebrate sports and life and enjoy the beautiful Aizawl and its surroundings."

Chongthu highlighted the growing connectivity of Mizoram, noting that "Aizawl appears very distant on the Indian map, but now we are connected through Indian Railways thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who recently inaugurated the Aizawl train station." He added that the new rail link is expected to draw participants from across the country, boosting nationwide engagement in the event.

The marathon will include inclusive race categories for both juniors and seniors, ensuring broad participation. "We are also targeting international runners, especially professional marathoners from Africa," Chongthu said, emphasizing the event's global appeal.

He further expressed optimism that the marathon would help showcase Mizoram's potential as a vibrant destination for both tourism and sports, underlining the state's commitment to fostering athletic excellence and promoting its scenic charm on the global stage.

"Der Aaye, Durust Aaye": Himanta on Rahul Gandhi's visit to Zubeen Garg family

GUWAHATI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to visit Guwahati tomorrow on a completely private trip, with no party-related events included in his itinerary.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma commented on the visit, saying, "Der aaye, durust aaye" (Better late than never).

He added that the Congress leader's visit comes 28 days after the singer's demise, noting that while many had come earlier to condole Zubeen Garg's passing, Rahul Gandhi is arriving now.

As per reports, Rahul is expected to arrive in the city by 1 PM on October 17, and will first proceed to Sonapur to pay his respects at the Samadhi Khetra of Assam's late cultural icon Zubeen Garg.

Following this, he will visit the bereaved family at Kahilipara before returning to Delhi.

On the other hand, the Gauhati High Court has set aside an order

allowing additional witnesses in a nine-year-old criminal defamation case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, providing him relief in the long-running legal matter.

A single-judge bench of Justice Arun Dev Choudhury, in a criminal revision petition hearing on Monday, quashed the September 2023 order of the Additional Sessions Judge of Kamrup Metropolitan, who had permitted the inclusion of new witnesses in the trial.

The case, filed by RSS worker Anjan Kumar Bora, dates back to 2015 when Gandhi claimed he was prevented from entering Barpeta Satra by RSS workers. Bora alleged the Congress leader made false statements and filed a criminal defamation petition. The trial court had initially disallowed the listing of three additional witnesses after recording statements from six witnesses in March 2023. Bora challenged that decision, leading to the Sessions Court's order to admit new witnesses.

KOHIMA

The Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) comprising the Confederation of All Nagaland State Services Employees Association (CANSSEA), Federation of Nagaland State Services Employees Association (FONSSEA), Nagaland In-Service Doctors' Association (NIDA), Nagaland Secretariat Service Association (NSSA), and Nagaland Finance & Accounts Services Association (NF&ASA) has announced the extension of its ongoing pen-down strike from October 17, 2025, until further notice.

The decision came after a detailed deliberation by the JCC on the ongoing three-day



pen-down strike, which was launched to protest alleged irregularities and subversion of meritocracy in the non-State Civil Service (non-SCS) Indian Administrative Service (IAS) induction process. In a statement issued today, the JCC said the strike will continue until the state government takes necessary corrective measures to re-

store fairness and transparency in the selection process. However, responding to an appeal from the All Nagaland School Teachers' Association (ANSTA) and keeping in mind the welfare of students, the JCC has decided to exempt teachers and educational institutions from the purview of the strike. "We acknowledge and appreciate every member of

ANSTA for standing steadfast in support of meritocracy and for their continued solidarity in spirit," the JCC said. The committee also expressed gratitude to all associations, organizations, and individuals who have extended their support to the movement, both publicly and privately. "We sincerely regret any inconvenience caused to the public during this protest and appeal to all right-thinking citizens to bear with the movement as we strive to secure a fair and merit-based system for future generations," the JCC added.

All modalities and directives related to the pen-down strike issued earlier will continue to remain in force.

Meghalaya govt to install CCTV in 47 Shillong areas to tackle crime

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya government has launched a multi-pronged safety initiative, beginning with the installation of CCTV cameras across 47 localities in Shillong.

The surveillance network will be linked to the Integrated Command and Control Centre under the Smart City project.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma unveiled the initiative on Thursday following an extensive meeting with community stakeholders, including representatives from NGOs, faith-based organisations, and Dorbar Shnongs.

The government sought their input on improving security and support systems for vulnerable



groups. "We are strengthening our surveillance infrastructure, and community involvement will be key in building a safer Shillong," Sangma said.

As part of the first phase, CCTV systems are already operational in seven areas.

The remaining 40 localities will

be covered within the next two months. Plans are also underway to establish sub-command centres in each locality.

These centres will be accessible to local heads (Rangbah Shnong) and will later integrate with the central command hub to ensure real-time monitoring.

Stakeholders at the meeting also recommended setting up counselling centres and deploying trained counsellors to assist troubled youth.

The state government is committed to implementing these suggestions.

Participants further called for improved street lighting and robust public awareness campaigns targeting issues faced by the youth.

While Chief Minister Sangma

acknowledged a recent dip in crime statistics, he expressed concern over disturbing new cases and urged communities to stay alert.

He also cautioned citizens against reacting to unverified content circulating on platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp, warning that misinformation could spark unnecessary public unrest.

Emphasising a collaborative approach, Sangma urged parents, schools, and local institutions to educate children about personal safety, including understanding appropriate and inappropriate physical boundaries.

He reiterated that long-term solutions lie in combining technology, community awareness, and responsive governance.

Tripura police hand over bodies of three Bangladeshis killed in mob attack over cattle theft



AGARTALA

Tripura Police handed over the bodies of three Bangladeshi nationals who were lynched by a mob on suspicion of cattle theft on October 15 in the Vidyabali area of Khowai district.

Police said a case was registered at Champahar Police Station after the three bodies were recovered. "After investigation, we found that they are Bangladeshi nationals. Af-

ter the post-mortem, the bodies were handed over to the Bangladesh Police and Border Guards of Bangladesh through the Paharua border area," officials said.

Authorities reported that the deceased allegedly attacked villagers with sharp weapons, critically injuring two locals when they were caught stealing cattle. In retaliation, a crowd beat the men, leading to their deaths on the spot.

The handover on the Indian side was attended by Assistant Commandant of the 104th BSF Battalion Kundan Kumar, Officer-in-Charge of Khowai Police Station, Krishna Dhan Sarkar, Officer-in-Charge of Champahar Police Station Dilip Kumar Debbarma, and Additional Superintendent of Police. On the Bangladesh side, Commandant of the 55th Battalion BGB Company Abul Khair and Officer-in-Charge of Chunarughat Police Station Zahidul Islam were present.

The deceased have been identified as Jewel Mia, Pandit Mia, and Sajal Mia. Following the incident, border security forces on both sides have intensified surveillance to maintain peace in the area.

Assam cracks down on quackery, 22 fake doctors arrested statewide in 2025

GUWAHATI/SILCHAR

At least 22 fake doctors have been arrested in Assam since the formation of the Anti-Quackery & Vigilance Cell earlier this year. Rural and semi-urban areas, as well as tea garden regions where access to proper healthcare remains limited, have become hotspots for these unqualified practitioners.

According to Dr. Abhijit Neog, Anti-Quackery & Vigilance Officer, 11.01 per cent of deaths in Assam involve patients who received medical attention from quacks prior to their death. The all-India average is even higher, at 19.8 per cent, as per a report from the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India. Also Read - Three soldiers injured in explosion and gunfire attack on army camp in Kakopthar Advertisement "Fake doctors continue to thrive in Assam due to the lack of effective verification, reporting, and enforcement mechanisms," Dr Neog said, who has played a key role in identifying and apprehending over 61 such individuals across the State. "Even when people suspect a practitioner's



credentials, they often don't know which authority to approach. Moreover, district-level health authorities, such as the Joint Directors of Health Services, have not been proactive in enforcing the Clinical Establishments Act (CEA)."

He cited a recent case in Nagaon where a fake doctor was granted permission to operate a clinic with five specialities under the CEA, allegedly with approval from the local health

office. Dr Neog emphasized that rural and semi-urban areas, where public awareness is low and government medical facilities are scarce, remain safe havens for quacks. "Tea estates, especially privately owned ones, are also vulnerable. Limited public interaction and the owners' preference for cheaper, unqualified alternatives to meet the Plantation Labour Act requirements further encourage the employment of fake doctors," he said.

The problem isn't confined to rural areas. Fake doctors have been arrested in urban centers like Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Silchar, and Nagaon, with some even employed in nursing homes and hospitals. A recent case in Silchar made headlines when a fake doctor was found performing surgeries as an obstetrics and gynecology (O&G) specialist.

The Anti-Quackery Cell has also uncovered fake doctors working with outsourced agencies contracted by the government for healthcare schemes, including Mobile Medical Units. "What we have uncovered is just the tip of the iceberg," Dr. Neog warned. The methods used by these individuals vary. Many rely on forged degrees, while others go so far as to steal the identity or registration number of legitimate doctors. To verify a doctor's credentials, the public can search the "Indian Medical Register," maintained by the National Medical Commission. A search by name or registration number will display the doctor's qualifications and official details. However, Dr. Neog cautioned that this system is not foolproof. "In many cases, we've found quacks using the identities of genuine doctors. We need stronger legislation, with harsher punishments and heavier fines to deter such practices," he urged.

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208 Maoist cadres surrender at a formal ceremony in Chhattisgarh's Jagdalpur



JAGDALPUR

In the largest single-day surrender, as many as 208 cadres, including 110 women naxals, have laid down arms at Reserve Police Line in Jagdalpur (Bastar district), about 300 km south of Raipur, on Friday.

The incident has inflicted a big setback to the banned outfit CPI (Maoist) movement in Chhattisgarh.

The surrendered Red rebels led by senior Naxal leader Rupesh also deposited 153 weapons, including AK-47 rifles, INSAS assault rifles, self-loading rifle (SLR), Barrel Grenade Launcher (BGL), besides other arms.

They were accorded a symbolic red carpet welcome at the venue after they arrived on buses, with each given a copy of the Indian Constitution and a rose on the stage under a formal ceremony, 'Puna Margem', indicating the

Maoist cadres rejoining the mainstream.

The earlier official schedule of the mass surrender of Maoists before the Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai stands cancelled, a senior police officer said. The CM, however, is expected to address a press conference later in Jagdalpur, he added. "Owing to the government's comprehensive Naxalite eradication policy, as many as 208 cadres from the Dandakaranya region, including senior Maoist leaders, have renounced the path of violence and returned to the social mainstream, said the officials.

"This decisive and significant development is the result of the sustained and sincere efforts of the police, security forces, local administration, and conscious society under the guidance of the government. Sustained efforts focused on peace, dialogue, and development have inspired many Maoist cadres to embrace a

dignified and harmonious life", they added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah yesterday acclaimed the occasion as a major success in the fight against Naxalism. "North Bastar region and Abujmad are now Naxal free. I commend all of them for their decision to restore their faith in the Indian Constitution", Shah stated. "The new era of peace and development in Bastar has begun. It's a historical success towards wiping out Naxalism in a mission led by PM Shri Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah", CM Sai said.

List of weapons deposited:

- 1) AK-47 rifle: 19
- 2) SLR rifle: 17
- 3) INSAS rifle: 23
- 4) INSAS LMG: 01
- 5) .303 Rifle: 36
- 6) Carbine: 04
- 7) BGL launcher: 11
- 8) 12 Bore/ Single shot: 41
- 9) Pistol: 01

India slams Pakistan for supporting terror amid cross-border fight with Afghanistan



NEW DELHI

Amid the border tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, India on Thursday launched a scathing attack on Islamabad, accusing it of sponsoring terrorism and deflecting blame for its own failures.

"We are closely monitoring the situation," said Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal. "Three things are clear — first, Pakistan hosts terrorist organizations and sponsors terrorist activities; second, it is an

old practice of Pakistan to blame its neighbours for its own internal failures; and third, Pakistan is infuriated with Afghanistan exercising sovereignty over its own territories," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson reiterated that "India remains fully committed to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Afghanistan." Answering another question, he said India will upgrade its technical mission to an embassy in the coming days.

The spokesperson's remarks

came in response to Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif's provocative accusation that the Taliban government in Kabul was "fighting a proxy war" on behalf of India. Asif also alleged that Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi had made "ulterior plans" during his recent six-day visit to New Delhi. The trip, his first to India, was aimed at stepping up ties between the two countries.

The diplomatic row also coincides with a fragile 48-hour ceasefire that came into effect late Wednesday

between Pakistan and Afghanistan, following days of fierce cross-border clashes. The fighting has left dozens of soldiers and civilians dead on both sides. Pakistan's Foreign Office said both sides would "make sincere efforts to find a positive solution to this complex but solvable issue through constructive dialogue" during the truce.

The Taliban confirmed the ceasefire through spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, who stated on X that Afghan forces had been instructed to respect the truce "unless any aggression takes place."

The week-long fighting had erupted after Taliban forces launched attacks near the southern Afghan-Pakistan border, prompting retaliatory strikes from Islamabad. Pakistan continues to accuse Kabul of harboring militants from the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a charge the Taliban denies.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani military announced on Thursday that 34 TTP militants were killed in intelligence-based operations across North and South Waziristan and Bannu districts. Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif said his government was open to talks with Kabul, stating, "The ball is in their court."

The United Nations has also called for a permanent end to the hostilities. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan welcomed the ceasefire and urged both sides to protect civilians, noting the significant toll the fighting has taken.

INTERNATIONAL

Peru's president refuses to resign after Gen Z protests leave at least one dead, 100 injured

LIMA

Peru's new President José Jeri refused to resign on Thursday following the death of a protester during a massive demonstration led by Gen Z activists demanding he step down.

About 100 people were also injured, including 80 police officers and 10 journalists, according to authorities, who said they were investigating the shooting and killing of the protester.

"My responsibility is to maintain the stability of the country; that is my responsibility and my commitment," Jeri told the local press after visiting Peru's Parliament, where he said he would request powers to combat crime.

The protests began a month ago calling for better pensions and wages for young people and expanded to capture the woes of Peruvians tired of crime, corruption and decades of disillusion with their government.

After Jeri, the seventh president in less than a decade, was sworn in on Oct. 10, protesters called for him and other lawmakers to resign.

Peru's prosecutor's office announced Thursday that it was investigating the death of 32-year-old protester and hip-hop singer Eduardo Ruiz, who prosecutors said was shot by firearm during the mass demonstration of thousands of young people. It wrote on the social media platform X that it has ordered the removal of Ruiz's body from a Lima hospital and the "collection of audiovisual and ballistic evidence in the area where the incident occurred, in the context of serious human rights violations."

Local media and security cameras showed video of Ruiz collapsing in a Lima street after a man fleeing from several protesters fired a shot. Witnesses said the shooter was running away because he was accused of being a plainclothes police officer infiltrated among the demonstrators.



At least 24 protesters and 80 police officers were injured in the demonstrations, according to Peru's Ombudsman's Office. Six journalists were struck by pellets and another four were assaulted by police, according to the National Association of Journalists.

The president expressed regret over the protester's death. A demonstrator waves a Peruvian flag as a cardboard doll burns in front of Congress during a protest against new President Jose Jeri in Lima, Peru, Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025.

The Peruvian protests comes amid a wave of protests unfolding across the world, driven by generational discontent against governments and anger among young people.

Protests have broken out in Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru and Morocco, with protesters often carrying black flags with the "One Piece"

anime symbol — a pirate skull wearing a straw hat.

In Lima's main plaza 27-year-old electrician David Tafur said he decided to join the demonstration after learning about it on TikTok.

"We're fighting for the same thing — against the corrupt — who here are also killers," he said, referring to violent 2022 protests and government crackdown in which 50 people were killed.

The escalating tensions come just days after Peru's Congress ousted President Dina Boluarte, was known as one of the least popular presidents in the world for repressing protests and failing to control crime.

Jeri, the 38-year-old president of Congress, then took office, promising to get a recent crime wave under control. He swore in Ernesto Alvarez, a ultraconservative former judge active on social media, as prime minister.

Álvarez has not yet commented on it, but previously claimed said that Peru's Gen Z is a "gang that wants to take democracy by storm" and does not represent "the youth who study and work."

Criticisms of Jeri and his government quickly emerged because he previously faced an investigation after being accused of a woman of raping her. The prosecutor's office dismissed the case in August, though authorities continue to investigate another man who was with Jeri the day of the alleged rape. Protesters also condemned Jeri because as a legislator he voted in favor of six laws that experts say weaken the fight against crime.

During the protest, more than 20 women shouted "The rapist is Jeri" or "Jeri is a violin" — a slang expression in Peru where "violin" means rapist. Protesters launched fireworks at police, who responded with tear gas and rubber pellets.

That anger was built upon decades of frustration by Peruvians, who have seen their leaders, year after year, plagued by corruption scandals, fueling a feeling of cynicism and deception in many of Peru's youth.

"After the pension issue, other frustrations followed — linked to insecurity, the erosion of state capacity in Peru, and corruption," said Omar Coronel, a sociology professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, who studies social movements.

Violent scenes from the protest drew back memories of violent protests in the early months of Boluarte's government, when 50 protesters were killed.

Protesters held signs reading "Protesting is a right, killing is a crime." One woman carried a poster that read "From a murderers to a rapist, the same filth," criticizing the change in government.

"For me, it's about outrage over abuse of power, corruption and killings," said Tafur, the protester.

Trump says he will meet Putin in Hungary for Ukraine talks after 'very productive' phone call



WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump spoke with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Thursday in a "very productive" telephone conversation, according to a post by Trump on Truth Social.

Trump said that Putin congratulated him on the peace deal to end the Israel-Hamas war, which the US President thinks would help in negotiating the end of the Ukraine war.

"I have just concluded my telephone conversation with President Vladimir Putin, of Russia, and it was a very productive one. President Putin congratulated me and the United States on the Great Accomplishment of Peace in the Middle East, something that, he

said, has been dreamed of for centuries. I actually believe that the Success in the Middle East will help in our negotiation in attaining an end to the War with Russia/Ukraine," Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social after the call.

Trump said that they spent a great deal of time talking about trade between Russia and the United States when the war with Ukraine ends.

Trump said that a "high level advisors" from both countries will meet next week. "President Putin and I will then meet in an agreed upon location, Budapest, Hungary, to see if we can bring this 'inglorious' War, between Russia and Ukraine, to an end," he said. Putin's special envoy

confirmed the call was "productive" and clearly established the framework for future talks.

The phone call comes just before Trump is scheduled to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office on Friday.

After the phone call, Kremlin said it would "immediately" start preparing a summit between Russian and US presidents after Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump held an "extremely frank and trustful" phone call.

"It has been agreed that representatives of the two countries will immediately start organising the summit which could be held, for instance, in Budapest," Putin's top aide Yuri Ushakov told journalists.

“RAHUL VS HIMANTA: ZUBEEN GARG’S LEGACY TURNS INTO POLITICAL BATTLEGROUND”



Assam’s political stage has found a new script: the state’s biggest tragedy of this century. The death of Zubeen Garg, the state’s most adored cultural icon, has morphed into a political spectacle, unfolding six months before the assembly elections. When the 52-year-old legend drowned off a yacht in Singapore waters on September 19, few could have predicted that the mourning for a musician would evolve into a contest over memory and manipulation.

Yet as Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi arrives today in Guwahati, nearly a month after the tragedy, to pay his respects, it becomes clear that Zubeen’s legacy has been conscripted into service for the upcoming assembly elections. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has mocked Rahul’s visit, pointing out that the Congress leader was arriving 28 days after Zubeen’s death, long after others had paid their respects. To Rahul’s credit, he was the first national leader to publicly mourn Zubeen’s passing, even before Prime Minister Narendra Modi did. Yet, despite being the only pan India political figure to come and pay respect to Zubeen in person, Rahul’s delayed homage, framed as private, carries unmistakable political overtones. It confirms that Zubeen’s afterlife in Assam’s political imagination could be decisive.

The transformation of grief into public spectacle began almost immediately after Zubeen’s death. The initial confusion over how Zubeen died—paragliding, scuba diving, drowning—triggered a wave of outrage directed at two individuals, the show organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta and Zubeen’s manager Siddhartha Sharma. What began as an emotional outburst quickly turned into a coordinated campaign, largely because of who these men are and how they initially responded to the tragedy, at least in public perception.

Shyamkanu happens to be the brother of two powerful figures: Assam’s Information Commissioner and former DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, and Nani Gopal Mahanta, now Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University and until recently the Education Advisor to the Assam government with cabinet rank. Nani Gopal, a batchmate and close associate of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, is also ideologically aligned with the RSS and has hosted its chief Mohan Bhagwat twice at his residence in recent times.

Leveraging his powerful family network, Shyamkanu ran a consultancy firm and organised high-profile cultural events such as the Northeast Festival, drawing sponsorships from both state and central governments. Known for his flamboyance, he had also accumulated a fair number of silent adversaries. With Zubeen’s death, those enemies suddenly found their voice, and their target. From here, Zubeen’s death began to resemble not just a tragedy but a parable of power and privilege. Chief

Minister Sarma was quick to gauge the public mood, and the political potential behind it. Within hours of Zubeen’s death, he was at the forefront, personally receiving the body, singing one of the late musician’s songs before cameras, and presiding over the funeral rites. His tone was both empathetic and managerial, a signal that the state’s most powerful man stood closest to the people’s pain. His calculation was clear: to stay ahead of public sentiment, he had to become its custodian even if it meant declaring himself one of the singer’s “top ten fans.”

When Singaporean authorities ruled out foul play, Sarma echoed their findings. But when public fury grew louder, he changed his script. To ensure the rising Gen Z outrage didn’t turn against him, he ordered a second autopsy and a full-fledged probe into Zubeen’s death. The parallels to recent youth-led upheavals in Bangladesh and Nepal were not lost on the chief minister. On September 25, a mob tried to storm Zubeen’s manager Siddhartha Sharma’s apartment in Guwahati, pelting stones at police before being dispersed by a lathi charge. Sarma urged calm, warning against turning Assam “into Nepal.”

That was when the political drama truly began. Opposition leaders Gaurav Gogoi of Congress and Akhil Gogoi of Rajiv Dal (ironically, once a critic of Zubeen) demanded a CBI inquiry, alleging that Himanta was shielding Shyamkanu. Soon, social media exploded with photos of Shyamkanu alongside Himanta, followed by counter posts showing his pictures with every major leader in Assam, proof of how deeply embedded he was in the state’s power network.

What followed was a masterclass in political theatre. Mahanta and Sharma were arrested on charges of culpable homicide, their photographs in custody released to satisfy public bloodlust. But aware that the case was legally weak and the duo couldn’t be held for long, the probe activated another strategy, invoking financial irregularity charges and bringing in the Enforcement Directorate.

The plot thickened when Shekhar, one of Zubeen’s bandmates who had been in Singapore, suddenly claimed that Zubeen had been poisoned by Shyamkanu and Siddhartha, contradicting his earlier media statements asserting death by drowning. On this basis, police upgraded the case to murder and arrested Shekhar and a female singer who was also in Singapore.

Soon after, public turned to Zubeen’s cousin Sandipan Garg, a policeman who had accompanied him to Singapore. He was also arrested too. Later, two of Zubeen’s government-assigned security officers—Assam Police personnel Nandeswar Bora and Paresw Baishya, were arrested after the SIT detected suspicious bank transactions in their accounts.

The probe widened further as the Assam Association in Singapore, the group that hosted the ill-fated yacht party, came under public glare. Several have since recorded statements with the SIT, prompting public questions about why none have been arrested. Assam Police now plan to visit Singapore to trace the events back to their origin. On October 15, Sarma met Singapore’s acting high commissioner in Delhi to seek formal cooperation in the probe. The public frenzy soon drew even

Zubeen’s wife, Garima, into its whirlpool. Initially, she had defended Siddhartha, calling him loyal and incapable of harm, and had even wanted him at the funeral. The gesture, however, prompted a vicious social-media backlash accusing her of an affair with Siddhartha. Under siege, she later shifted her position, now voicing suspicion of negligence. “Siddhartha was like family. Zubeen trusted him completely, with both personal and financial matters. That’s why we wanted to meet him, to understand what really happened,” Garima told my colleague Aparmita Das. “Intentional or accidental, I don’t know. But no care was taken. Siddhartha and organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta should have ensured medical assistance. The yacht had no medical staff despite water sports.”

Then came Baksa. When the accused

were shifted to the district jail there, mobs erupted in fury, pelting stones and torching police vehicles. Two dozen were injured; arrests followed. Among those detained were two men who were publicly identified as Bengali-origin Muslims or “Miyas”, reviving Assam’s most combustible political subtext: identity. There are many in the ruling dispensation who believe that the Miya community, Bengali-speaking Muslims of immigrant origin, has sought to appropriate Zubeen as a cultural symbol, presenting him as an inclusive icon beloved by all communities, and in the process asserting their existence as a legitimate shareholder in larger Assamese identity. This attempt to appropriate Zubeen’s legacy is also a subtle challenge to Sarma’s anti-immigration politics, particularly in Upper Assam where the CM’s Hindutva narrative finds less traction among certain communities who don’t fully align with the RSS brand of Hinduism.

Referring to the Baksa jail violence, Sarma accused “certain groups” of exploiting Zubeen’s death for political gain. “When Zubeen was alive, the entire ecosystem tried to defame him. Now, the same people worship him as a god,” he wrote on X, calling them “fake fans” using the singer’s name to attack the BJP. “True love is shown when someone is alive, not when it becomes convenient after death,” he added.

Ironically, the BJP, despite governing both Assam and the Centre, has launched a statewide campaign from October 22 to 26 demanding “justice for Zubeen.” The party seeks a fast-track trial under a High Court judge’s supervision and an airtight chargesheet from the SIT, even though the government itself has already ordered a fast-track court, appointed a special public prosecutor, and the SIT has pledged to file its chargesheet within 90 days.

In the end, Assam’s most loved voice has been repurposed as an electoral chorus, where grief is choreographed, justice is scripted, and emotion is weaponised. The singer who once united Assam through melody has, in death, become the fault line through which its politics now sings its loudest, and most discordant, tune.

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