

# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED

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### PERSPECTIVE

They say philosophers and wise men are indifferent. Wrong. Indifference is a paralysis of the soul, a premature death.  
~ Anton Chekhov

## SIT recovers deleted videos showing Zubeen Garg's final moments: Sources

GUWAHATI

In a major breakthrough in the investigation into the death of singer-actor Zubeen Garg, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) has recovered video footage capturing his final moments before his death.

According to sources, the videos were deleted but later retrieved by the SIT's cyber experts during forensic analysis. The footage was found on a mobile phone belonging to Amritprabha and another electronic device seized during the investigation.

Siddharth Sharma, Zubeen's manager, confirmed that the videos had been deleted by Amritprabha and others. However, the SIT's technical experts managed to recover the crucial files, which could shed new light on the circumstances surrounding the artist's death.

Officials believe that the recovered videos could play a decisive role in establishing the sequence of events leading to Zubeen Garg's tragic demise and in determining whether foul play was involved. The SIT continues to examine the digital evidence as part of its ongoing probe.

### WHO SAID WHAT

The region's clean environment, natural farming traditions, and diverse agro-climatic conditions make it ideal for cultivating premium spices," he noted, citing the GI-tagged Karbi Anglong ginger, Lakadong turmeric, and Bhut Jolokia chili as shining examples of globally acclaimed produce.  
Lakshman Prasad Acharya Governor

# CID questions two Assamese NRIs over Zubeen Garg's death probe

## CID got "definite angle" in Zubeen Garg death case after viscera report: Himanta

GUWAHATI

The investigation into the mysterious death of Assam's iconic singer Zubeen Garg has reached a decisive juncture, as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on Monday, October 13 interrogated two Assamese-origin Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who were reportedly present at the Singapore yacht party on the night of the incident.

The two individuals, Tammy Phukan and Abhimanyu Talukdar, appeared before the CID headquarters in Guwahati on Monday morning. According to reports, both are being questioned extensively for their possible knowledge of the events that unfolded before Garg's untimely demise.

Sources close to the investigation revealed that Phukan and Talukdar were among a small group of attendees at the private yacht gathering in Singapore where the celebrated singer was last seen alive. They are believed to be key eyewitnesses, whose



statements could provide crucial insights into the final hours leading to the tragedy.

Officials stated that the ongoing interrogation is aimed at reconstructing the sequence of events, activities, and interactions that occurred during the yacht party. Investigators are hoping the testimonies will help establish a clearer timeline and possibly identify incon-

sistencies or new leads related to the circumstances surrounding Garg's sudden death.

Two more Assamese expatriates Sushmita Goswami and Debojit Hazarika, who were also reportedly present at the same gathering, are expected to appear before CID officials for questioning in the coming days.

In parallel, the CID is collaborat-

ing with Singaporean authorities to procure CCTV footage, digital communications, and forensic reports to cross-verify the statements of witnesses and strengthen the case with material evidence.

Zubeen Garg's death in Singapore last month has left Assam in mourning and sparked widespread public outrage, with fans and civil society groups demanding a transparent and thorough probe.

The incident has not only shaken the music fraternity but has also led to emotional appeals for justice across the state.

Officials described Monday's interrogation as a critical development in the ongoing investigation, which will continue to intensify as more witnesses and persons of interest are summoned for questioning in the days ahead.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on October 12 that the CID now has a "definite angle" in the investigation into singer Zubeen Garg's death following the receipt of

the viscera report.

Speaking during a Facebook Live session, Sarma said four more Assamese expatriates, who reportedly witnessed Garg's final moments, will arrive in Guwahati on Monday to record their statements before the CID.

"The Central Forensic Laboratory in Delhi has given us the viscera report. I am happy to say that now the CID has got a definite angle into the case. Within a very few days, the entire chronology of the Zubeen Garg (death case) will be presented before the court," he said.

Garg, a celebrated singer, died in Singapore on September 19 while swimming. He had travelled to the Southeast Asian nation to participate in the 4th edition of the North East India Festival.

After the post-mortem at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), his viscera sample was sent to the Central Forensic Laboratory for detailed examination.

## Dengue spikes in Manipur: 2,332 cases, one fatality, Imphal West worst affected

IMPHAL



IMPHAL

At least 2,332 dengue cases have been reported in Manipur this year, with one fatality, according to an official

health report. The cases were reported between January 1 and October 11, following tests conducted on 5,613 individuals, the report further added.

This marks a sharp increase of 979 cases compared to the same period last year, when 1,353 infections were reported across the state. Imphal West has recorded the highest number of cases (1,679), followed by Imphal East (363). Also Read - Union Health Ministry ranks Meghalaya second in India for palliative care excellence Advertisement The districts of Bishnupur and Thoubal reported 68 and 63 cases, respectively, while the sole fatality this year occurred in Bishnupur. Among the hill districts, Senapati reported 45 cases, followed by Ukhrul (23), Churachandpur (3) and Kangpokpi (2).

Last year dengue cases had also surged during the same period, with Imphal West and Imphal East emerging as the worst-affected regions. At that time, Health Minister Sapam Ranjan Singh had stated that the overall incidence was comparatively low and urged collective community action to prevent further outbreaks.

Manu Dengue, a viral infection transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, typically causes high fever, severe headache, joint and muscle pain, nausea, and skin rashes. In severe cases, it can lead to haemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome, which can be fatal if untreated.

## Kuki-Zo leaders unite in Shillong to push for constitutional solution to Manipur conflict

GUWAHATI



GUWAHATI

Kuki-Zo community leaders, civil society groups, and policy experts gathered in Meghalaya's Shillong for a high-level conclave focused on ending the prolonged ethnic unrest in Manipur.

The event brought together a broad spectrum of voices, including legal experts, national and regional think tanks, and representatives of armed groups currently under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement.

Together, they crafted a unified call for a constitutionally

grounded and inclusive political settlement as the only viable path to lasting peace.

Participants expressed deep concern over the ongoing two-year conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities and stressed the urgent need for reconciliation through meaningful dialogue.

They highlighted the plight of internally displaced persons and victims of violence, urging authorities to ensure justice and security as part of the broader peace process.

During the discussions, the

conclave collectively backed the Kuki-Zo people's demand for a Union Territory with a legislature, to be established under Article 239A of the Indian Constitution.

They argued that this political recognition aligns with their historical and cultural identity and would address long-standing grievances. In addition, the attendees proposed constitutional safeguards under Article 244 to protect Kuki-Zo land, customs, and traditional practices.

They asserted that such mechanisms are essential to reverse decades of marginalization and to foster stability in their territories.

Calling for impartial governance, the participants urged both the administration and security forces to maintain neutrality and uphold accountability.

They warned that peace efforts would falter without transparent and unbiased enforcement of law and order.

The conclave concluded with a strong message of unity and collaboration among Kuki-Zo civil society organizations.

Organizers announced future rounds of dialogue and consultations aimed at accelerating the peace process while promoting development, self-reliance, and long-term security in the region.

# Historic Find in Manipur: India Records Its First Sighting of Burmese Peacock Softshell Turtle

IMPHAL

In a discovery that has stunned herpetologists and conservationists alike, researchers have confirmed the first-ever record of the critically endangered Burmese peacock softshell turtle (*Nilssonina formosa*) from India — expanding the known range of this elusive species beyond Myanmar for the first time.

The finding, published in the latest issue of *Zootaxa* by Balázs Farkas (Hungary) and Peter Praschag (Austria), is based on a re-examination of an overlooked photograph from a 2016 study on Manipur's turtle diversity, where *Nilssonina formosa* was wrongly identified as the Indian Peacock Softshell turtle (*Nilssonina hurum*). *N. formosa* is one of the world's rarest and most threatened freshwater turtles.

The authors report the species' presence at Loktak Lake and Irong Ichil in Thoubal district of Manipur — both wetland habitats in India's Indo-Myanmar biodiversity hotspot. The study notes that the Loktak specimen represents the first photographic voucher of *N. formosa* from India.



Its discovery also extends the species' known elevation range from 200 meters to 780 meters above sea level, revealing its ecological adaptability in new terrain.

*Nilssonina formosa* is easily distinguishable from related species by its yellow or orange bar-like markings on the temples, which fade into intricate black vermiculations as the turtle ma-

tures.

Once thought to be confined to Myanmar's Chindwin River basin, its presence in India confirms long-suspected hydrological links between the Manipur River (known as the Myittha in Myanmar) and the Chindwin system, allowing for natural range expansion.

The researchers emphasize that this record raises the number of *Nilssonina* species known from India to five, encompassing all recognized members of the genus. "This is a remarkable discovery that reshapes our understanding of the species' distribution," they write, adding that such findings underscore the importance of re-examining historical field data and photographs with modern taxonomic tools.

With *N. formosa* listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List due to habitat loss and exploitation, experts say the discovery calls for immediate conservation attention in northeast India. Loktak Lake — already a Ramsar site and home to the endangered Sangai deer — could now become a key stronghold for one of Asia's most imperiled turtles.

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## INDIA -AFGHAN- TIES

In diplomacy, there are no permanent friends or foes—only enduring interests. This timeless principle finds clear expression in the evolving dynamics between India and Afghanistan. The visit of Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to New Delhi marks a decisive step in reshaping bilateral ties after years of uncertainty following the Taliban's return to power in Kabul. The decision to upgrade India's technical mission in Kabul to a full-fledged embassy, alongside Afghanistan's plan to send diplomats to New Delhi, signals a mutual recognition of shared interests that transcend ideology or political systems.

Historically, India has been one of Afghanistan's most steadfast partners. From infrastructure projects like the Salma Dam and the Afghan Parliament building to humanitarian aid and capacity-building initiatives, India's footprint in Afghanistan has always reflected a policy rooted in friendship, stability, and regional cooperation. The Taliban's earlier hostility towards India is well documented, but the group now appears to be seeking a pragmatic reset—acknowledging that a cooperative relationship with New Delhi can yield tangible economic and strategic dividends. For Afghanistan, the logic is clear. After four years of Taliban rule and minimal international recognition, Kabul urgently needs economic partners and legitimacy. India, with its expertise in infrastructure, education, and technology, remains a natural partner in rebuilding Afghanistan's fragile economy. Muttaqi's invitation to Indian businesses to invest in mining, energy, and infrastructure highlights a growing realisation within Kabul's leadership that engagement, not isolation, is the key to stability.

From India's perspective, re-engagement with Afghanistan is not merely about humanitarian goodwill—it is a matter of strategic necessity. Afghanistan remains a vital land bridge connecting South Asia with Central Asia and beyond. An economically integrated Afghanistan, especially one open to Indian influence, is a counterweight to both Pakistan and China's growing assertiveness in the region. The Taliban's assurance that Afghan soil will not be used to harm other countries directly addresses India's long-standing security concerns about cross-border terrorism emanating from Afghan territory. Equally important is the potential synergy over the Chabahar port project in Iran. With U.S. sanctions complicating trade routes, Chabahar offers India an alternative corridor to Central Asia and Europe, bypassing Pakistan altogether. Muttaqi's call for India and Afghanistan to jointly remove obstacles to Chabahar's full development aligns perfectly with India's strategic priorities. A functional trade corridor linking Mumbai, Chabahar, and Kabul could redefine the economic map of the region, offering both nations new opportunities for trade, transit, and investment.

The geopolitical angle cannot be ignored. Pakistan's hostility towards both New Delhi and Kabul has created an unusual convergence of interests between the two neighbours. Recent Afghan criticism of Pakistan's border attacks and interference marks a shift in regional alignments. A coordinated understanding between India and Afghanistan effectively forces Pakistan's military to guard both its western and eastern borders, thereby stretching its resources and strategic bandwidth. This emerging equation subtly strengthens India's hand without direct confrontation.

The Taliban's refusal to allow foreign military bases, including U.S. requests for access to the Bagram airbase, has also positioned Afghanistan as a sovereign actor asserting its independence. This stance aligns with India's broader vision of a multipolar Asia free from external domination. Furthermore, the recent Moscow Format meeting—where 11 nations, including India, Russia, China, and Iran, opposed foreign military deployment in Afghanistan—shows a growing regional consensus for cooperative security frameworks. In this context, New Delhi's renewed engagement with Kabul enhances its diplomatic leverage within a wider coalition of regional powers seeking stability and autonomy.

Of course, caution is warranted. But diplomacy is about working with realities, not idealism. By engaging rather than isolating Kabul, India can retain influence and shape outcomes from within. Quiet diplomacy and calibrated engagement will be essential tools in this process. The re-establishment of embassies and direct diplomatic contact is only the first step. What follows must be a structured roadmap—expanding economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and joint infrastructure projects, while maintaining a firm line on terrorism and extremism. If managed with strategic foresight and mutual respect, this renewed partnership could redefine South-Central Asian geopolitics for decades to come.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. ~ Andy Warhol

# Renewable energy- future beckons for India!



PROF K S CHANDRASEKAR

Indian economy has increased tenfold in the last three decades and is projected to be the third largest, with an estimated GDP of \$7.3 trillion by 2030. Jostling for the same, the economic growth has also led to an unprecedented increase in its annual material consumption, which grew from 1.18 billion tonnes in 1970 to 7 billion tonnes in 2015 and is projected to reach 14.2 billion tonnes by 2030. UN has given SDG long back for nations to follow so that they achieve the objectives by 2030. As India strives to become a Viksit Bharat, a developed economy, by 2047, it must restructure its growth model to a more resource-efficient one by embedding circular strategies. This shift is not an environmental but an economic imperative that boosts jobs, growth, and sustainability.

Sustainability is a dynamic process which enables all people to realize their potential and to improve their quality of life in ways that simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth's life support systems. Indigenous communities, who have lived sustainably on Earth for centuries, typically define sustainability around principles of relationality, community-based governance, quality of life and health, and communal recognition of nature and external, non-human entities as life-givers and enablers. Sustainability clearly exists to find balance between economic, societal, and environmental needs, both now and in the future. It's also a form of systems thinking which recognizes everything is connected, actions cannot be compartmentalized, and no individual, organization, or nation operates by itself. It can only be cherished through protecting and progressing in the field of renewable energy.

As per millennium institute report, renewable energy refers to energy derived from natural resources that replenish themselves continually and sustainably, such as solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, and biomass. Unlike fossil fuels, renewable sources emit significantly lower greenhouse gases, reducing environmental impacts. The primary types of renewable energy are Solar Energy which is generated from sunlight using photovoltaic cells or solar thermal systems,

Wind Energy produced by converting wind currents into electricity through wind turbines, Hydro Energy which is obtained from flowing or falling water, typically via dams and rivers, Geothermal Energy sourced from the heat within the earth and Biomass Energy which is called as geothermal energy and biomass energy derived from organic matter such as plants and agricultural waste.

Government of India has set up autonomous institutions to propagate the need for renewable energy. Sardar Swaran Singh National Institute of Bioenergy (SSS-NIBE), Kapurthala is one such autonomous institution of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE). The Institute has a mandate to carry out state-of-the-art R&D and innovations, covering the entire spectrum of bioenergy leading to commercialization of technology and their integration with other renewable energy technologies. National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) is another autonomous specialized institute under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India situated at Gwal Pahari on Gurugram-Faridabad Road in Haryana mandated for research and development, solar component testing and certification, capacity building, and development of solar products and applications. National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) was established in Chennai in the year 1998, as an autonomous R&D institution by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India. It has a Wind Turbine Test Station (WTTS) at Kayathar in South Tamil Nadu with the technical & partial financial support by DANIDA, Govt. of Denmark.

According to IEEFA, several Indian public sector undertakings (PSUs) have also been committing to install renewable energy capacity in a bid to decarbonise their operations, diversify their business portfolio and also contribute to the government's renewables plans. Non-power sector PSUs, including Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and GAIL, have a combined renewable capacity addition target of 16.5 GW by 2030.

Renewable energy is now a critical factor in every country's energy devel-

opment, and countries around the world are planning, building, and incorporating greater amounts of wind, solar, hydro, storage, and geothermal capacity into their energy mix every year. The challenges to renewables from transmission, seasonal storage, grid flexibility, demand response, and digitization (among others) are substantial, but the benefits from zero-cost inputs, clean air, and energy security continue to drive this change. As renewable energy uptake rises, it will be crucial to monitor high-growth areas of expansion, like offshore wind and distributed systems, full-cost factors of incorporation like storage and smarter grids, as well as the flexibility and efficiency of consumers to shape demand and smooth peak load.

According to PIB, the solar PV sector in India employed about 318,600 people in both on-grid and off-grid systems. India added 9.7 GW of solar PV capacity in 2023 and ranked fifth globally for new installations and cumulative capacity, which reached 72.7 GW by the end of the year. Out of the 1.02 million people employed in India's renewable energy sector in 2023, Hydropower and Solar Photovoltaic were the largest contributors, employing the most individuals. In addition to that, Wind Power generated 52,000 jobs, Liquid Biofuels provided 35,000, and Solid Biomass accounted for 58,000 jobs. The Solar Heating and Cooling sector employed 17,000 people, while Biogas created 85,000 jobs, showcasing the diverse employment landscape within the sector.

National Green Hydrogen mission, PM-KUSUM, PM Surya Ghar, PLSI scheme, green energy corridors can generate more entrepreneurs also and can provide direct and indirect employment. By ensuring job opportunities alongside energy transition, India not only advances its environmental goals but also fosters a robust economy that supports livelihoods nationwide. Team lease services, a manpower company projects that As India pushes towards its goal of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030, employment in the renewable energy sector is projected to grow by 18.9% this fiscal year 2025-26. Organisations are also seeking professionals qualified in solar, wind, and hybrid energy systems, with growing demand for solar PV technicians,

roofers, production operators, storage operators, waste management specialists, energy auditors, and operational support roles. This is high time, universities in J&K use this opportunity to launch very attractive programmes by offering certificate, diploma and degree in this specific area so that appropriate opportunities are created in employment and entrepreneurship for the aspiring young students of J&K. Cluster University of Jammu is keen on providing support to the needy and ensuring overall benefits for the student community and creating entrepreneurship in J&K. "India is not just aiming to be a developed nation but a global example of sustainable energy, prioritizing solar, wind, and hydro power due to limited fossil fuel reserves" quotes Prime Minister Modiji which augurs well for this sector with ample opportunities.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Assam has long been a victim of demographic change due to decades of illegal infiltration — a reality now reflected in the fact that over 38% of our population is Muslim.**

**Announcement of a High-Powered Committee by Honble Home Minister Sri @AmitShah on Demography Mission is a historic and much-needed step to scientifically study and counter this national challenge through the 3-D Policy — Detect, Delete and Deport. A decisive move to protect identity, security, and cultural heritage.**

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam

Year	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)
1971	72.51%	24.56%
1991	67.13%	28.48%
2001	64.89%	30.92%
2011	61.46%	34.22%
2021 (Projected)	57%—	38% + +

## TIME FOR A SAMVAD ON SANGH

### MAKARAND R PARANJPE

Vijayadashami, the tenth day of the waxing moon in India's national calendar, also known as the Saka Samvat coincided with the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2 this year. This auspicious day marks the triumph of good over evil, the slaying of the demonic Mahishasura by Goddess Durga, and the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya after killing Ravana.

This day was observed nationwide as the 100th anniversary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's foundation. The release of a commemorative postage stamp crowned celebrations. The achievements of the Sangh, despite decades of negative propaganda and misinformation, are too numerous and incontrovertible to deny.

However, like all great things, the precise beginnings of the RSS are also difficult to pin down. In fact, not just its exact, determinate commencement, but several other facts and facets of its extraordinary history right up to the present times remain not properly explained, let alone fully understood. No wonder, for many outside the fold, the RSS has remained somewhat of an enigma.

Few, for instance, know that what actually transpired on Vijayadashami 1925 in Nagpur was only an informal gathering of a small band of young patriots and nationalists, at the behest of Dr Keshav Baliram Hegdegar. Doctorji, as he was popularly known, was then thirty-six years of age. Trained and qualified in the famous Calcutta Medical College as a physician, Hegdegar, on his

return to Nagpur, devoted himself to national service rather than his medical practice.

Even the name of the organisation was then undecided and took close to seven months to finalise on April 17, 1926. In fact, several names cropped up, but none were accepted by all. Finally, it came down to three: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Jaripataka Mandal, and Bhadratradharak Mandal. We know which one won, and with hindsight, rightly so.

Even the Sangh's unique methodology of assembly daily in shakhas or branches took some time to crystallise. The very first one was held on May 28, 1926, in Mohitewada, where part of the RSS headquarters stands to this day.

The colonial authorities, whose hawk eyes rarely missed any sign of dissent, let alone revolt, believed that the Sangh was little more than an open-air gymnasium, a slightly innovative version of a traditional akhara. They were, of course, quite mistaken. For the Sangh's goal was nothing short of a total reconstruction of the nation, especially Hindu society.

But why 'Sangh'? This question is not answered clearly in secondary literature.

The idea of the Sangha has been so important to Indian civilisation since before the Buddha. One of the Tathagata's three vows to bhikkhus was "Sangham saran gacchami"—I take refuge or surrender to the Sangh.

Our amelioration, the wise one taught, was collective, not individual. The broader collective

takes priority over the liberation of an individual. No wonder the RSS also advocates for its members and cadres, the goal of service to society and nation.

Just over a hundred years ago, Sri Aurobindo, in his letter to his younger brother Barindra, wrote: "You will perhaps ask, 'What is the need of a sangh? Let me be free and fill every vessel. Let all become one, let all take place within that vast unity.' All this is true, but it is only one side of the truth. Our business is not with the formless Spirit only; we have to direct life as well. ... We do not want to exclude any of the world's activities. Politics, trade, social organisation, poetry, art, literature—all will remain. But all will be given a new life, a new form. ... But now the time has come to take hold of the substance instead of extending the shadow. We have to awaken the true soul of India and to do everything in accordance with it. ... But in the temple of India we want not Hanuman but the Godhead, the Avatar, Rama himself".

The letter, which analyses what ails India and what must be done, is so movingly relevant even today. I have only quoted excerpts from it, to suggest the atmosphere and situation, whence the deeper impulses of the formation of the Sangh. The general dissatisfaction with the main thrust of the freedom movement, so obsessed if not handicapped by Gandhian ahimsa and moralism, combined with the rising threat of Muslim separatism in the subcontinent, no doubt encouraged by colonial power in its last gasp.

Sri Aurobindo's clarion call to reawaken the

soul of India, such that in the temple of India, not only Hanuman, representing might, but Sri Rama, the Godhead, the Avatar, Divinity itself, might take his rightful place, would surely resonate with the restoration of Ram Jambhoomi, the birth-shrine of Lord Rama, which occurred in January 2024.

To me, the purpose of the true Sangha, from the Buddha to RSS, would be to inspire and shape a spiritualised and exalted "life divine" on earth, which Sri Aurobindo fleetingly refers to in his letter but spent much of his energies conceptualising and creating.

It is only from the loftiest ideals of our civilisation that the limitations and drawbacks of the Sangh, such as they are, might be viewed. Not as failings or pitfalls, but steps on the way, given the present stage of evolution of Hindu and Indian society.

Thus, the ultimate aim of a centennial cogitation would dare to go beyond the official narrative, enforcing or admiring the Sangh's innumerable accomplishments or even the removal of misunderstandings.

I called my latest book, Hindutva and Hind Swaraj: History's Forgotten Doubles, a 'Swaraj Samvad'. Perhaps, what we need, in a similar spirit, is a 'Sangh Samvad' commemorating RSS@100.

Because merely praise, let alone blame, on such an occasion will not suffice. What we need is nothing less than a meditation on the meaning of Sangh as it—and a grateful nation—celebrates its 100th birth anniversary.

# Assamese Hindus now about 40 per cent of population: CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on October 12 said that Assamese Hindus now constitute only around 40 per cent of the state's population—roughly the same as that of Muslims—calling it a “matter of concern” and urging swift action under the Centre's proposed Demography Mission.

Addressing reporters in Guwahati, Sarma stated that Assam has undergone a “sharp demographic shift” over the years. “Assam has been a big victim of demographic change. In 2021, the Muslim population crossed 38 per cent, and as we speak, it is about 39.5 per cent of the state population,” he said.

Citing projections based on 2011 Census data, Sarma said that the population of Assamese Hindus has dropped significantly when compared to earlier dec-



ades. “If people from other parts and communities are excluded, Assamese Hindus are not more than 40 per cent today,” he added. The Chief Minister pointed to

districts such as Majuli—known as the centre of Vaishnavite culture and the world's largest inhabited river island—as examples of the demographic transformation.

According to him, these areas have seen “100 per cent growth in Muslim population,” which he attributed not to natural population increase but to infiltration.

Sarma said the Christian population in Assam stands at about 6-7 per cent. He underscored that the proposed Demography Mission, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address, is a “crucial initiative” to tackle the issue.

“The central government will form a high-power committee under this mission to detect, delete, and deport infiltrators. It is for the first time that the government of India has spoken

in such clear terms,” the Chief Minister said, adding that he would seek further details in his upcoming meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Referring to Shah's recent comments in Delhi, Sarma said that the rise in Assam's Muslim population is “not just due to internal growth but also due to people coming from outside.”

Earlier on Friday, the Chief Minister had remarked that “Miya-Muslims”—a term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in the state—could emerge as the largest community in Assam in the next census, likely forming over 38 per cent of the total population.

The term ‘Miya’, once used as a slur to label Bengali-origin Muslims as “Bangladeshi immigrants,” has in recent years been reappropriated by activists from the community as a symbol of identity and resistance.

## AASU announces statewide agitation demanding justice for late singer Zubeen Garg

GUWAHATI

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) has unveiled a series of statewide programs demanding justice for late singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg, whose untimely death has left Assam in deep grief. The student body has outlined a three-phase agitation, including a sit-in protest on October 14, a candlelight vigil on October 19, and a symbolic “Nyay Samdal” (Justice March) on October 23 across all districts of the state.

According to AASU, the October 14 sit-in will be held at prominent public venues in each district headquarters. On October 19, regional student units will organise candlelight vigils in local public spaces during the evening hours to honour Zubeen's memory. The final phase, on October 23, will witness the symbolic “Nyay Samdal” across Assam, calling for a fair, transparent, and time-bound investigation into the circumstances surrounding the singer's death.

AASU leaders — President Utpal Sharma and General Secretary

Samiran Phukan — reiterated their core demands: Justice must be ensured for Zubeen Garg. The investigation should be swift, transparent, and thorough. All individuals found guilty must face exemplary punishment. A comprehensive chargesheet must be prepared with concrete evidence to prevent any escape from justice. Criticising the ongoing probe, AASU expressed dissatisfaction over the handling of the case, pointing out that while several individuals, including Shyamkanu Mahanta, Siddharth Sharma, and Shekhar Goswami, have been arrested, others associated with Zubeen Garg's care team and certain members of the Assam Association in Singapore have allegedly failed in their responsibilities, resulting in what AASU termed a “serious and irreversible crime.” The union also raised concerns about the Assam government's inability to bring back Assamese individuals from Singapore believed to be connected to the case, questioning the administrative efficiency of the current leadership.

## IED found at Meghalaya market safely defused; one suspect identified



SHILLONG

A potential tragedy was averted in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district after police safely defused an improvised explosive device (IED) discovered at Umsning market on the evening of October 11. According to Superintendent of Police Vivekanand Singh, a suspicious bag was spotted in a compound near the Meghalaya Rural Bank. “Upon examination, it was confirmed that the bag contained explosives,” he said. A bomb detection and disposal squad (BDDS), along with a K-9 team, were immediately deployed to the site. The IED was successfully neutralised without any damage or casualties. “On analysis, it was found that the IED was made using 4.7 kg of gelatine, 10 detonators, and around 50 iron rod pieces as splinters,” Singh said. The materials were seized following standard procedures, and all safety measures were observed during the operation, he added.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation. One suspect has been identified, and efforts are underway to trace and arrest him.

Authorities praised the swift response of the BDDS team, noting that their timely action prevented a possible disaster in the busy market area.

## Pakistani woman who escaped Nepal jail caught at Tripura railway station

AGARTALA

A 50-year-old Pakistani woman, who allegedly escaped from a Nepalese prison where she was serving a sentence for drug trafficking, has been detained at Sabroom Railway Station in South Tripura.

Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel took the woman into custody after noticing her suspicious behaviour upon arrival by the Kanchanjunga Express, officials confirmed on October 12.

According to a senior Tripura Police officer, the woman initially identified herself as Saheena Parveen from Purani Basti, Delhi, but could not produce any valid identity documents. “During the search, several Pakistani contact numbers were recovered from her possession,” the officer said.

Investigators later learned that she was actually Louis Nighat Akhtar Bhano, wife of Md. Golaf Faraj, a resident of Village Younganabad, Chak No. 371, District

Sheikhpura, Pakistan.

Police sources said Bhano had entered Nepal about 12 years ago using a Pakistani passport and became involved in drug trafficking. In 2014, she was arrested by Nepal Police with one kilogram of brown sugar and sentenced to 15 years in prison. She was held in Kathmandu Jail until last month, when she reportedly escaped amid unrest in Nepal. “Approximately 15 to 16 days ago, she crossed into India through an illegal route,” the officer added. “She told us she sought help from agents who advised her to travel through Tripura or West Bengal to reach Bangladesh and then return to Pakistan.” After failing to find a route in West Bengal, Bhano allegedly traveled by train to Tripura, planning to cross into Bangladesh from Sabroom. The woman is currently in custody, and police have launched a detailed investigation into her movements and possible network in India.

SILCHAR

Traffic along the Silchar-Imphal National Highway 37 came to a standstill after a major landslide blocked the road near Lakhipur in Assam's Cachar district on October 12.

Continuous heavy rainfall triggered the slide in the Jujang hill area, dumping large amounts of mud and debris across the highway.

Officials confirmed that hundreds of vehicles, including passenger buses and trucks, remain stranded on both sides of the blockade. Excavators have been deployed to clear the debris, but the volume of mud has made restoration efforts slow and difficult.

Teams from the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), Lakhipur police, and local administration are working jointly to reopen the route. The closure has disrupted traf-



fic between Assam and Manipur, leaving travellers stuck for several hours and affecting the

transport of essential supplies. Authorities have urged motorists to avoid the route

until clearance work is completed and normal movement resumes.

## On RTI's 20th anniversary, Assam Congress accuses BJP of weakening law

GUWAHATI

On the 20th anniversary of the enactment of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, Leader of Opposition, Debabrata Saikia, on Sunday, accused the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) of “systematically” weakening the landmark Act's framework through amendments and administrative neglect. Also Read - Forensic report offers major leads in Zubeen Garg case; final report in court soon: CM “Ever since the BJP government took over, the RTI Act has faced repeated attacks. The 2019 amendment changed service conditions of information commissioners, making their tenure and salary dependent on the government's discretion. This undermined their independence and reduced their ability to act impartially,” Saikia told the press, at Rajiv

Bhawan.

Terming the RTI Act as the biggest weapon against corruption, Saikia said that the essence of the law has been eroded, particularly after the BJP came to power in 2014. “The Right to Information Act, enacted under Dr. Manmohan Singh's leadership in 2005, was a transformative step in India's fight against corruption. RTI is not just a law; it's a tool for social development. We demand that the government reinstate the powers of the Information Commissions and protect citizens' right to know. The integrity of democracy depends on it,” Saikia asserted. Also Read - Fact-finding panel begins 2-day visit to probe charges against Tezpur University VC He further criticised the Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023, arguing that certain clauses within it, particular-

ly Clause 44.3, allow public data to be classified as personal information, shielding it from scrutiny.

“This provision has created a loophole for hiding corruption. If information can be declared as personal data, it no longer falls under RTI. This goes against the spirit of transparency that the Act stood for,” he said. Highlighting the administrative lapses, Saikia pointed out that the Central Information Commission (CIC), which should ideally have one Chief Information Commissioner and ten Information Commissioners, currently functions with only two commissioners. “Due to this shortage, there are over 23,000 pending cases as of November 2024. Nationwide, more than 4.5 lakh complaints remain unresolved, many of which should have been disposed of within one or two

months,” he added. Referring to the Assam State Information Commission, he said that significant irregularities have been reported, further weakening public confidence in the system. Saikia also accused the government of failing to implement the Whistleblower Protection Act of 2014, leaving those who expose corruption without security or support. “Without protecting whistleblowers, the fight against corruption is meaningless. People are afraid to speak up because the law is not implemented in spirit,” he said. Drawing parallels between the UPA and BJP governments, Saikia recalled that the UPA's tenure saw several pro-people legislations, including the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005), Right to Education (2009), and National Food Security Act (2013).

## Indian Army hosts Civil-Military fusion event in Arunachal Pradesh



SICAR

The Spearhead Division of Spear Corps conducted a significant Military-Civil fusion event at the Sigar Military Station under the Mebo Sub-Division in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang District on Sunday.

The event aimed to foster synergy, understanding, and cooperation between the Indian Army and the civil administration of Arunachal Pradesh.

Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, DGP Anand Mohan, Major General Vivek Bankshi (General Officer Commanding, Spearhead Division), along with other dignitaries from various departments and the Indian Army, attended the interaction.

The attendees brainstormed collaborative initiatives in diverse fields such as humanitarian and disaster relief operations, integrat-

ed development in border areas, border tourism, and socio-cultural development.

While appreciating the efforts of Spear Corps toward the welfare of veterans in the state, the participants also discussed additional steps to enhance veteran welfare.

The Indian Army showcased high-end military equipment, including drones, highlighting its technological advancements achieved through the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

The civil dignitaries commended the armed forces for ensuring security while actively supporting communities and developmental efforts.

The event effectively reinforced the spirit of a “whole-of-the-nation approach,” underlining the shared vision of progress, security, and harmony between the civil administration and the Indian Army in Arunachal Pradesh.

## Assam aims to train 50,000 students in Japanese for overseas employment

GUWAHATI

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Sunday, announced that the Assam government aims to send at least 50,000 youths to Japan for employment under the Chief Minister's Foreign Language Initiative for Global Human Talent (CM-FLIGHT). Also Read - Forensic report offers major leads in Zubeen Garg case; final report in court soon: CM Speaking at the CM-FLIGHT milestone event in NorthEast Skill Centre, Guwahati, Sarma described the initiative as a “double benefit” programme that would simultaneously create global job opportunities for Assam's youth and boost the state's economy through foreign remittances.

“Today is a proud day for Assam. Remittances from Indians working abroad have greatly strengthened India's economy and states like Maharashtra and Kerala are far ahead in this sector. CM-FLIGHT is about promoting our youth and strengthening our economy. When our people work abroad and send money home, it will give Assam's economy a major boost,” the Chief Minister said. CM-FLIGHT, a flagship programme of

the government, aims to equip Assamese youth with the language proficiency and prepare them for overseas careers. Chief Minister Sarma expressed strong confidence in the potential of Assamese youth, saying they possess the skills, intelligence, and temperament needed to succeed globally.

“Assam's women are loving and caring and they can excel in nursing and caregiving professions, even more than women from Kerala. Assam's men are intelligent, disciplined and capable of competing anywhere in the world,” he said. Drawing a parallel with Nepal, Sarma cited how Nepali youth are successfully working in Japan after receiving training in Japanese language centres in their country.

“When I visited Tokyo and Osaka in Japan, I met many Nepali boys and girls employed there. Their remittances are strengthening Nepal's foreign exchange reserves. Assam too can grow similarly when our youth work abroad with dignity and skill,” he observed. The Chief Minister referred to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Prime Ministers of India and Japan, under which both countries agreed to enhance workforce exchange through the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) visa. “This is a golden opportunity for our youth. Those who learn Japanese will be eligible for the SSW visa, which allows work in over 160 skill categories

in Japan,” Sarma said. He announced an ambitious target, “My goal is to ensure that 50,000 youths from Assam find employment in Japan. Just two days ago, I received a letter from the Speaker of Japan that said, ‘Sarma, we are ready to take more if you can send more.’ I have visited Japan only once, but that one visit has brought immense possibilities for our people.” Sarma also revealed ongoing talks with South Korea and Germany to expand international employment opportunities under similar arrangements. “If these partnerships are finalised, it will further boost opportunities for Assam's youth and take our state to new heights,” he said. A key highlight of the Chief Minister's address was the significant fee reduction for CM-FLIGHT participants, following his meeting with his Japanese counterpart earlier in the day. “Earlier, the total fee was Rs 3.6 lakh where Rs 1 lakh from the Assam government, Rs 50,000 from the Japanese government, and Rs 2.1 lakh paid by the applicant. After discussions, the fee has now been reduced to Rs 1.8 lakh.

The applicant will now pay only Rs 30,000, while the Assam government and Japan will continue to cover Rs 1 lakh and Rs 50,000 respectively. Axis Bank has also agreed to provide easy loans for this amount,” Sarma announced. He emphasised that proficiency in Japanese (JLPT N2 level) is the most important requirement for securing employment

under the scheme. Initially, 200 students will be trained, but facilities in Aminagaon are ready to accommodate more. “If the number of interested candidates grows, we will open additional training centres in Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University,” he said. Chief Minister Sarma added that though the Assam government has not yet facilitated direct placement of candidates in Japan, several Assamese youths who studied Japanese in Delhi have already gone abroad independently. “We haven't sent anyone officially through the government yet, but a few students who learnt Japanese in Delhi have found opportunities there,” he said. The Chief Minister reiterated that candidates aged below 45 years and with at least Class 10, 12, or graduate-level education can apply. “They should be sufficiently educated to learn Japanese effectively,” he said, adding that even though no candidate has yet been officially sent to Japan under the government programme, a few Assamese youths trained in Delhi have already secured jobs there independently. Implemented under the Assam Skill Development Mission (ASDM) and the Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department (SEED), the CM-FLIGHT programme lays the foundation for creating globally employable Assamese talent through Japanese language training and international career opportunities.

**Quest!**  
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## 'Girls shouldn't be out at night': Mamata's shocking remark on Durgapur gangrape; CM says comments taken out of context

KOLKATA

Reacting to the gangrape of a medical student in West Bengal's Durgapur, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday made a controversial remark suggesting that girls "should not be allowed" to go outside college at night.

Banerjee, however, later alleged that her comments were taken out of context.

Speaking to reporters at Kolkata airport, Mamata called the incident "shocking" and said no accused would be spared.

"This is a shocking incident... We have zero tolerance for such crimes. Three accused have been arrested and police are conducting search for others. Nobody will be spared," she said.

The student, from Jaleswar in Odisha's Balasore district, was allegedly raped by several men in Durgapur, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred outside the private medical college campus on Friday night, when the second-year student went out with a friend for dinner.

In her first reaction, Banerjee criticised the institution for letting the girls go out at night, saying, "She was studying in a private medical college. Whose responsibility is it? How did she come out at 12.30 am?... The girls should not be allowed to go outside (college) at night. They have to protect themselves also."

"Students staying in hostels, especially those from outside West Bengal, are expected to follow hostel rules. They should avoid venturing out late at night, although they have the fundamental right to go wherever they want," the chief minister added.

"But the police have cer-



tain logistical limitations in monitoring the movement of every individual. Officers would not know who is leaving home at night and cannot stand guard outside every home," she said.

Banerjee also held the college partly responsible. "Private colleges must ensure security within and around their campuses," she said.

Speaking to reporters later Banerjee said, "My address at Dum Dum airport has been deliberately distorted. You ask me a question, and when I answer, my words are twisted and taken out of context. Do not try this nasty politics with me."

Unlike others, I have the decency to meet you and speak directly. Others merely respond to pre-decided questions."

Meanwhile, three people

were arrested and another detained on Sunday for their alleged involvement in the gangrape, police said. The identities of the three arrested were not disclosed.

"We arrested three persons in connection with the case this morning. They are being questioned. This is a very sensitive case and we will give out further details later," a police officer told.

Sources said the mobile phones of the accused were seized.

Police on Sunday cordoned off the crime spot, a jungle adjacent to the Paranaganj Kali Bari cremation ground.

Massive search operations were being conducted in villages around the private medical college in Durgapur, with drones deployed to search the nearby jungles, the officer said.

## NDA finalises seat-sharing for Bihar polls: BJP, JD(U) to contest 101 seats each, Chirag Paswan gets 29

NEW DELHI

The ruling NDA on Sunday announced its seat share deal with BJP and JD(U) bagging 101 seats each, while union minister Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) will contest 29 seats in the elections to the 243-member Assembly. Union minister Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) and former union minister Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) will contest six seats each.

The deal follows extensive deliberations in Delhi and Patna involving senior NDA leaders, including BJP election in-charge Dharmendra Pradhan, Vinod Tawde, and Nityanand Rai, as well as interactions with LJP, RLM, and HAM leadership. LJP chief Chirag Paswan, who had initially demanded 40 seats, agreed to the reduced share of 29 seats.

The announcement was made by Union Minister and BJP's Bihar election in-charge Dharmendra Pradhan on social media platform X.

It will be first time that BJP and JD(U) will contest equal number of seats since 2005. In the October-November 2005 Bihar Assembly polls, JD(U) contested 139 seats and BJP 102 seats. In the 2010 Assembly election, JD(U) contested 141, and BJP 102 seats.

In 2015, JD(U) contested Assembly polls with RJD and its allies. In the 2020 Assembly polls, JD(U) contested 115 seats, while BJP and JD(U) agreeing to contest polls on equal numbers this time, both parties want to give a clear message to the electorate that there is no dispute in the alliance in Bihar. In the 2020 election, Chirag's LJP (RV) contested independently.

In the present seat share deal, Chirag emerged as a "big gainer" as he finally got 29 seats even when BJP had initially offered him 26 seats. To satisfy Chirag's demands, the BJP has even reportedly conceded its some sitting seats to him.

LJP (RV)'s strike rate was 100% in the last Lok Sabha election as it won all five seats it contested. On the other hand, HAM, which had contested seven seats in the last Assembly election, had to contend with six seats even when it



was demanding 15 seats.

Manjhi asserted that his party had no objection to being allotted six seats. He said that the NDA high command took a decision in this regard. "In Parliament, we were given only one seat, were we upset? Similarly, if we got only six seats, it is the decision of the high command. We accept it..." he remarked.

Before the announcement of the seat share deal, Manjhi said, "I am heading to Patna now... I've said before and I'm saying again today... I, Jitan Ram Manjhi, will stand with the Honorable PM Narendra Modi ji until my last breath."

JD(U) national working president Sanjay Jha commented on X, "We NDA colleagues have completed the distribution of seats in a cordial atmosphere. JD(U) - 101, BJP - 101, LJP(R) - 29, RLM - 06, HAM - 06. Leaders and worker comrades of all NDA parties welcome this with joy and are resolved and united to

make CM Nitish

Kumar the Chief Minister again with a massive majority. Bihar is ready, the NDA government again." Chirag as well as RLM leader Kushwaha also declared the seat share deal on the social media, adding that the deal was struck in a cordial atmosphere.

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) has released its list of 32 candidates for the elections and hinted at formation of a third front. The party's Bihar chief, Akhtarul Iman, said that the party would field candidates from multiple seats, including Kishanganj, Purnea, Katihar, Araria, Gaya, Motihari, Nawada, Jamui, Bhagalpur, Siwan, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Vaishali and Gopalganj.

Meanwhile, the opposition 'Mahagathbandhan' alliance in Bihar is likely to finalise its seat-sharing in the next few days and may announce its candidates along with a joint man-

ifesto this week.

Top sources said talks between the RJD and Congress are underway, and their leadership may meet on Monday as RJD chief Lalu Prasad and Tejashwi Yadav are in the national capital.

On the delay in seat-sharing announcement, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "We have to adjust some new partners in the 'Mahagathbandhan' and we have to adjust them too in seat-sharing." "In the next two-three days, we expect all the seats to be finalised and declared," he said.

Asked about the number of seats the Congress will contest this time, Ramesh said, "Anything between half a century and a century".

The Congress contested on 70 assembly seats in the last Bihar polls and won 19, while the RJD contested on 144 seats and bagged 75 in the 243-member Assembly.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Trump sets off for the Mideast to mark a ceasefire deal and urge Arab leaders to seize the moment

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE:

President Donald Trump set off for Israel and Egypt on Sunday to celebrate the U.S.-brokered ceasefire and hostage deal between Israel and Hamas and urge Middle East allies to seize the opportunity to build a durable peace in the volatile region.

It's a fragile moment with Israel and Hamas only in the early stages of implementing the first phase of the Trump agreement designed to bring a permanent end to the war sparked by the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas-led militants.

Trump thinks there is a narrow window to reshape the Mideast and reset long-fraught relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. "The war is over, OK?" Trump told reporters traveling with him to the region ahead of the expected release of hostages from Gaza.

"I think people are tired of it," he said, emphasizing that he believed the ceasefire would hold because of that.

It is a moment, the Republican president says, that has been helped along by his administration's support of Israel's decimation of Iranian proxies, including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The White House says momentum is also building because Arab and Muslim states are demonstrating a renewed focus on resolving the broader, decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, in some cases, deepening relations with the United States.

Trump has said that he expects wealthy regional players to take the lead in rebuilding war-torn Gaza, but acknowledged that the work would take years.

Israel expects hostages to be freed from Gaza 'in a few hours' as ceasefire holds

Trump has said that he expects wealthy regional players to take the lead in rebuilding war-torn Gaza, but

acknowledged that the work would take years.

In February, Trump had predicted that Gaza could be redeveloped into what he called "the Riviera of the Middle East." But on Sunday aboard Air Force One, he was more circumspect.

"I don't know about the Riviera for a while," Trump said. "It's blasted. This is like a demolition site." But he said he hoped to one day visit the territory. "I'd like to put my feet on it, at least," he said.

The first phase of the ceasefire agreement calls for the release of the final 48 hostages held by Hamas, including about 20 believed to be alive; the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel; a surge of humanitarian aid to Gaza; and a partial pullback by Israeli forces from Gaza's main cities.

Israeli troops on Friday finished withdrawing from parts of Gaza, triggering a 72-hour countdown under the deal for Hamas to release the Israeli hostages, potentially while Trump is on the ground there. He said he expected their return to be completed on Monday or Tuesday.

Trump will visit Israel first to meet with hostage families and address the Knesset, or parliament, an honor last extended to President George W. Bush during a visit in 2008. Vice President JD Vance on Sunday said Trump also was likely to meet with newly-freed hostages, too.

"Knock on wood, but we feel very confident the hostages will be released and this president is actually traveling to the Middle East, likely this evening, in order to meet them and greet them in person," Vance told CBS' "Face the Nation."

Trump then stops in Egypt, where he and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi will lead a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh with leaders from more than 20 countries on peace in Gaza and the broader Middle East.

It is a tenuous truce and it is unclear

whether the sides have reached any agreement on Gaza's postwar governance, the territory's reconstruction and Israel's demand that Hamas disarm. Negotiations over those issues could break down, and Israel has hinted it may resume military operations if its demands are not met.

"I think the chances of (Hamas) disarming themselves, you know, are pretty close to zero," H.R. McMaster, a national security adviser during Trump's first term, said at an event hosted by the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies on Thursday. He said he thought what probably would happen in the coming months is that the Israeli military "is going to have to destroy them."

Israel continues to rule over millions of Palestinians without basic rights as settlements expand rapidly across the occupied West Bank. Despite growing international recognition, Palestinian statehood appears exceedingly remote because of Israel's opposition and actions on the ground.

The war has left Israel isolated internationally and facing allegations of genocide, which it denies. International arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense minister are in effect, and the United Nations' highest court is considering allegations of genocide brought by South Africa.

Hamas has been militarily decimated and has given up its only bargaining chip with Israel by releasing the hostages. But the Islamic militant group is still intact and could eventually rebuild if there's an extended period of calm.

Netanyahu reiterated that Israel would continue with its demilitarization of Hamas after the hostages are returned. "Hamas agreed to the deal only when it felt that the sword was on its neck — and it is still on its neck," Netanyahu said Friday as Israel began

to pull back its troops.

Much of Gaza has been reduced to rubble and the territory's roughly 2 million residents continue to struggle in desperate conditions.

Under the deal, Israel agreed to reopen five border crossings, which will help ease the flow of food and other supplies into Gaza, parts of which are experiencing famine.

Trump is also standing up a U.S.-led civil-military coordination center in Israel to help facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid as well as logistical and security assistance to Gaza.

Roughly 200 U.S. troops will help support and monitor the ceasefire deal as part of a team that includes partner nations, nongovernmental organizations and private-sector players. U.S. troops will not be sent to Gaza, Adm. Brad Cooper, the U.S. military commander for the region, said in a social media post Saturday.

The White House has signaled that Trump is looking to quickly return attention to building on a first-term effort known as the Abraham Accords, which forged diplomatic and commercial ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco.

A permanent agreement in Gaza would help pave the path for Trump to begin talks with Saudi Arabia as well as Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country, toward normalizing ties with Israel, according to a senior Trump administration official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity.

Such a deal with Saudi Arabia, the most powerful and wealthy Arab state, has the potential to reshape the region and boost Israel's standing in historic ways.

But brokering such an agreement remains a heavy lift as the kingdom has said it won't officially recognize Israel before a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### Israel expects hostages to be freed from Gaza 'in a few hours' as ceasefire holds

CAIRO

Israel said Sunday that it expected all of the living hostages held in the Gaza Strip to be released Monday in its breakthrough ceasefire deal with Hamas, as Palestinians awaited the release of hundreds of prisoners held in Israel and a surge of aid into the famine-stricken territory.

"In a few hours, we will all be reunited," Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, said in a statement.

U.S. President Donald Trump planned to leave later in the day to visit Israel and Egypt to celebrate the ceasefire announced last week that offered hope for an end to the two-year war.

"We are expecting all 20 of our living hostages to be released together at one time to the Red Cross and transported among six to eight vehicles," Israeli government spokesperson Shosh Bedrosian said, noting that Israel did not expect militants to stage the exchanges in the same public manner as previous rounds.

Bedrosian said the hostages will be driven to a military base to reunite with their families or, if needed, immediately to a hospital. After the hostages are freed, Israel was ready to release about 2,000 Palestinian detainees and receive the 23 hostages believed to be dead.

The military planned a ceremony on their behalf in Gaza, Bedrosian said.

An international task force will start working to locate deceased hostages who are not returned within 72 hours, said Gal Hirsch, Israel's coordinator for the Hostages and the Missing. Officials have said the search for the bodies of hostages, some of which may be under rubble, could take time.

Timing has not been announced for the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel who are to be freed. They include 250 people serving life sentences in addition to 1,700 seized from Gaza during the war and held without charge.

Dr. Mounir al-Boursh, head of Gaza's Health Ministry, said he hoped the bodies of medical personnel who died in Israeli

detention centers will be among those handed over.

On Gaza's borders, preparations were underway to ramp up aid entering the war-battered territory. The Israeli military body in charge of humanitarian aid in Gaza said the amount of aid entering was expected to increase Sunday to around 600 trucks per day, as stipulated in the agreement.

"Much of Gaza is a wasteland," U.N. humanitarian chief Tom Fletchertold The Associated Press. He said the U.N. has a plan for the next two months to restore basic medical and other services, bring in thousands of tons of food and fuel and remove rubble.

Egypt said it was sending 400 aid trucks into Gaza on Sunday. AP footage showed dozens of trucks crossing the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing. The Egyptian Red Crescent said the vehicles carried medical supplies, tents, blankets, food and fuel. The trucks will head to the inspection area in the Kerem Shalom crossing for screening by Israeli troops.

The United Nations has said it has about 170,000 metric tons of food, medicine and other humanitarian aid ready to enter once Israel gives the green light. Abeer Eftifa, a World Food Program spokesperson, said workers were clearing and repairing roads inside Gaza to make way for deliveries.

The fate of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an Israeli- and U.S.-backed contractor that replaced the U.N. aid operation in May as the primary food supplier in Gaza, remained unclear.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, which has the equivalent of 6,000 trucks of aid waiting in Egypt and Jordan, also had no clarity on its role in the relief effort. A spokesperson for the agency known as UNRWA, Jonathan Fowler, said the organization has enough food in its warehouses for Gaza's entire population for three months.

Trump, who pushed to clinch the ceasefire deal, was expected to arrive Monday morning in Israel. He will meet with families of the hostages and speak at the Knesset, Israel's parliament, according to a schedule released by the White

House.

Trump will continue to Egypt, where the office of Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi has said he will co-chair a "peace summit" Monday with regional and international leaders.

While both Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza welcomed the halt to the fighting and plans to release the hostages and prisoners, the longer-term fate of the ceasefire remains murky. Key questions about governance of Gaza and the post-war fate of Hamas, including its proposed disarmament, have yet to be resolved.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said on X that he had instructed the military to prepare to begin destroying the network of tunnels built by Hamas under Gaza "through the international mechanism that will be established under the leadership and supervision of the U.S." once the hostages are released.

How that will be achieved with Israeli forces having pulled back within Gaza was not immediately clear.

Palestinians continued to move back to areas vacated by Israeli forces. Many were returning to homes reduced to rubble.

Mohamed Samy said he immediately went back on foot to see if his home in Jabaliya was still standing.

"It was flattened, just like everything else in Jabaliya," Samy said. "It was an empty plot of land. It was like the building never even existed in that place. I questioned my sanity."

Satellite photos taken Saturday and analyzed by the AP showed a line of vehicles traveling north to Gaza City along the strip's coastline. Armed police in Gaza City and southern Gaza patrolled the streets and secured aid trucks driving through areas where the Israeli military had withdrawn, residents said. The police force is part of the Hamas-run Interior Ministry.

The ministry said in a statement Sunday that it would allow members of armed gangs not involved in the killing of Palestinians to turn themselves in as early as Monday, "repent and be pardoned."

# HAMFEST India 2025 in Goa Marks 35th Edition with Global Participation



ANUP KUMAR BISWAS, VU3GWI

GOA

The 35th edition of HAMFEST India 2025 concluded successfully in Goa on Sunday, drawing more than 700 delegates from across the country and abroad. The two-day national convention of amateur radio enthusiasts, organised by the Goa Radio Amateur Society (GRAS) in association with the Goa College of Engineering (GEC), celebrated the enduring spirit of India's ham radio community since the country's first HAMFEST held at Kuttikkanam, Kerala, in December 1991.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by Rohan Khaunte, Minister for Tourism, Information Technology, Electronics & Communication, and Printing & Stationery, Government of Goa, as the Chief Guest. Other dignitaries included Nitin V. Raiker, Director of Fire & Emergency Services, as Guest of Honour, and Group Captain and Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla (VU2TNI), who was the Special



Make it a habit to speak positively to yourself every day.

Guest of Honour. The event was hosted in the presence of Dr. M. S. Krupashankara, Prin-

cipal, Goa College of Engineering, and Shri Sandesh Bhat (VU2DX), Convenor of HAMFEST India 2025.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from various states, including North Eastern States like Assam, Tripura, with Karnataka leading the numbers with 165 delegates. HAMS from the Royal Omani Amateur Radio Society, AMSAT India, and the Upagrah Amateur Radio Club of ISRO also participated, adding an international flavour to the historic meet.

Over 40 technical sessions, including 8 live demonstrations, were conducted across four parallel tracks at GEC, covering topics from antenna design to satellite communication. In addition, 37 exhibitors showcased advanced amateur radio, antenna, and communication equipment.

A major highlight this year was the first-ever HAM ASOC examination conducted during a HAMFEST, with around 40 participants, including delegates, students, and faculty from GEC's electronics and telecommunication departments.

Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, who trained under AMSAT India and the ISRO-led Upagrah Amateur Radio Club, interacted with students of the GEC Astronomy Club and shared vivid experiences of life aboard the International Space Station (ISS), discussing microgravity challenges and com-

munication techniques.

In his address, Nitin V. Raiker emphasised the role of amateur radio in disaster management and emergency communication, highlighting how local HAMS can collaborate with emergency services in Goa. Chief Guest Rohan Khaunte lauded GRAS's efforts and assured government support for the development of HAM radio activities in

the state. He expressed gratitude to Group Captain Shukla for his inspiring participation and contribution to the HAM community.

The event concluded with an award ceremony honouring senior HAMS, Elmers (mentors), lifetime achievers, and the Belugum Net controllers for their contributions to amateur radio operations in India.

**KRC FOUNDATION**

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**2026**

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### NAME CHANGE

I, M. GunadonSingha, S/o. Purnachand B Singha, R/o. House No. 33, New Link Road, ADC Colony, Rongpur Part-IV, Silchar Pin Code - 788009, Cachar, Assam have changed my name to GunadonSingha for all future purposes.

### PLACEMENT SERVICES

Fresher, job seekers can register with KRC Placements. Send resume to - [5eforsuccess@gmail.com](mailto:5eforsuccess@gmail.com) To source candidates, organisation can contact KRC Placements at [info@krctimes.com](mailto:info@krctimes.com) For Details Visit: <https://bit.ly/krctimesplacements> Apply here: <https://bit.ly/KRCPlacementForm>

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Students can apply for a three-months internship with KRC Foundation. During the internship the student can get an opportunity to work on a live project. On successful completion the student is awarded a certificate. Apply to 5E for Success: [5eforsuccess@gmail.com](mailto:5eforsuccess@gmail.com) For Details Visit: <https://bit.ly/krctimesinternship> or [www.krctimes.com/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship](http://www.krctimes.com/products-services/training-development-5e-for-success/internship)

### NE INDIA WRITING STAR CONTEST

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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. [www.krcfoundation.org](http://www.krcfoundation.org)



**11 JAN**

### Barak Valley Conclave

Potential, Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different youth organizations. Includes: KOCs, and D' group and can register for free. [www.krcfoundation.org](http://www.krcfoundation.org) | 971 8562 5



**12 JAN**

### River-Climate Conclave

Climate Change will influence on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, technical and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competition and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.

**JAN'25**

### Online Global Fest

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



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



**11 JAN**

### 5E For Success Conclave

The 4th Annual 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.



**10 JAN**

### Media Conclave

Media Conclave: Media Conclave, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the "Barak Festival 2025". Theme: "One for All, All for One".



**Barak Festival 2025**  
PAINTING CARNIVAL  
NE CULTURAL FEST  
E-SPORTS



**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.



**DEC'24-JAN'25**

### Photography

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



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



**10-12 JAN**

### E-Sports

Full-Blown Competitive | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



**11 JAN**

### film festival

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



**5E SUCCESS**  
**STUDENT INTERNSHIP**



**10-12 JAN**

### Book Bank

Anti-Book Campaign | Book Bank | e-books | e-audio | e-video



**Book Club**

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



**Painting Carnival**

Water Colour painting and Draw-Paint Campaign