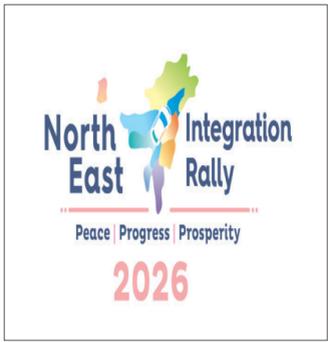




# KRC TIMES

## STAY-ENRICHED



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**PERSPECTIVE**

Life's time audit: 1. Family time is limited—cherish it. 2. Friend time is limited—choose real ones. 3. Partner time is significant—never settle. 4. Children's time is precious—be present. 5. Coworker time is impactful—share energy. 6. Alone time is highest—love yourself.

— Harsh Goenka, Chairman, RPG Enterprises

### Tripura jailbreak 2.0: 12 Bangladeshi escape from detention centre

**AGARTALA**  
In a major security breach, twelve Bangladeshi nationals awaiting deportation escaped from a temporary detention centre in the Narsingarh area on the outskirts of Tripura's Agartala after injuring a security guard. The incident occurred on September 29 but only came to light after senior state officials confirmed the breakout on Sunday. All twelve individuals had completed their court-mandated sentences and were being housed at the centre under the jurisdiction of the Airport police station, pending deportation.

Tapan Kumar Das, Director of the Social Welfare and Social Education (SW&SE) Department, informed the media that detainees are typically kept in the centre for 15 to 30 days until deportation processes, known as "pushback" are finalised.

"On September 29, twelve detainees managed to escape. So far, we have succeeded in recapturing one of them," he said. Das also clarified that while his department is tasked with providing basic facilities such as shelter and food, the responsibility for ensuring security rests with the Home Department.

This escape comes close on the heels of a similar jailbreak in North Tripura. Just days earlier, six inmates, including Bangladeshi infiltrators, a drug offender, and a convict serving a life sentence, broke out of Dharmanagar Sub-Jail after attacking a guard.

Authorities have launched an intensive search operation to locate the remaining escapees.

#### WHO SAID WHAT

An attempt to attack the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India in the Supreme Court today is unprecedented, shameful and abhorrent. It is an attack on the dignity of our Judiciary and the rule of law. When a sitting Chief Justice who rose to the nation's highest judicial office through merit, integrity, and perseverance is targeted in such a manner, it sends a deeply disturbing message. It reflects an attempt to intimidate and humiliate a man who has broken social barriers to uphold the Constitution. Such mindless act shows how hate, fanaticism and bigotry has engulfed our society in the past decade. On behalf of the Indian National Congress, I condemn this attack in the strongest possible terms. The safety and security of our Judiciary is paramount. Let justice and reason prevail, not intimidation.

— Mallikarjun Kharge, President, Indian National Congress

## Sikkim's 'Shape of Momo' Triumphs at Busan International Film Festival

#### GANGTOK

Sikkim-based filmmaker Tribeny Rai has struck gold at the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) with her debut feature, Shape of Momo. The Nepali-language film bagged two major honours — the Taipei Film Commission Award and the Songwon Vision Award, marking a stellar international debut for Rai and her team.

Confirming the news on Instagram, the makers wrote, "We are over the moon to inform you that our film Shape of Momo has won two awards @busanfilmfest... We just want to take this opportunity to thank the entire cast and crew for bringing this story to life. Certainly, awards add credibility, but with or without them, we would still be the same bunch of filmmakers, searching and persevering."

Premiered in September at BIFF, Shape of Momo tells the story of Bishnu, a young woman who returns to her mountain village after quitting her job. What begins as a homecoming soon turns into an



emotional tug-of-war as she faces family pressures, her pregnant sister's arrival, and a new romantic connection — all while navigating the clash between tradition and independence.

Speaking to reporters, Rai said she wanted to avoid romanticising her native landscape. "People always want to romanticize places like ours, turn them into some beautiful backdrop for someone else's story. I've never liked that," she said.

Rai described the film as a reflection of a "quiet struggle" — the tension between home and elsewhere. "We leave the places that shaped us in search of opportunity, freedom and a better life, only to find ourselves belonging nowhere," she told Variety.

Shape of Momo is directed by Tribeny Rai, produced by Geeta Rai and Kislav, and co-produced by Neha Malik, Himanshu Kohli, and Jung Woo Lee.

With two major wins at one of Asia's biggest film festivals, Rai's debut has put Sikkim's independent cinema firmly on the global map.

#### NEW DELHI

Security forces have launched a major crackdown on the banned People's Liberation Army (PLA), one of Manipur's most prominent valley-based insurgent groups, arresting 15 cadres including two key suspects allegedly involved in last month's deadly ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy that killed two soldiers in Nambol.

Officials identified the two prime accused as Thoungram Sadananda Singh alias Purakpa (18) and Khomdrang Ojit Singh alias Keilal (47). Their arrests were made within 72 hours of the ambush, which took place in Nambol Sabal Leikai on September 19.

The attack claimed the lives of Naib Subedar Shyam Gurung and Rifleman Ranjit



Singh Kashyap, whose vehicle was ambushed along the Patsoi-Nambol route, an area where the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is not in effect and road security is handled by the CRPF.

Security officials said a van suspected to have been used in the attack was later recovered from Mutum Yangbi, about 12 km from the ambush site. Six of the weapons seized during the ongoing op-

erations are believed to have been looted from a police armoury during the early phase of ethnic clashes in 2023, indicating that arms originally used in communal conflict are now resurfacing in insurgent attacks.

In a significant revelation, officials said that Thoungram Sadananda was earlier associated with the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) but switched alle-

giance to the PLA after the UNLF leadership agreed to a ceasefire and joined the Suspension of Operations (SoO) framework with the Union Home Ministry. The PLA, notably, has not claimed responsibility for the Nambol ambush — a rare deviation from its decades-long practice of owning its operations. Intelligence inputs suggest that the central leadership of the outfit neither sanctioned nor was aware of the attack, leading investigators to explore the possibility of a politically motivated "contract operation" aimed at destabilising Manipur under President's rule or discrediting efforts to restore normalcy. Following the ambush, Governor Ajay Bhalla chaired an emergency high-level meeting, calling for coordinated action among all security agencies to tighten

surveillance and secure soft targets, including major highways and transport routes.

Officials are also probing whether the PLA has received political backing, particularly as scrutiny intensifies in the wake of the UNLF's truce announcement. Authorities suspect certain vested interests are trying to project President's rule as ineffective and press for the reinstatement of the suspended state assembly. Observers have expressed concern about the reactivation of valley-based insurgent outfits such as the PLA, UNLF, Kanglei Yawol Kanba Lup (KYKL), and People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), warning that many cadres may exploit the ceasefire environment to regroup and redirect violence. The PLA, with an estimated 500 active

members, seeks to establish an independent Meitei homeland in the Imphal Valley. Other valley-based groups, including PREPAK (both factions), KYKL-OKEN, UNLF-K, and KCP-NOYON, have a combined strength of about 550 cadres, while the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and National Revolutionary Front of Manipur (NRFM) are believed to field around 900 and 200 fighters respectively.

Manipur has remained on edge since ethnic clashes erupted between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in May 2023, over disputes related to land ownership and political representation. The violence has so far claimed more than 260 lives and displaced over 50,000 people, leaving deep scars on the state's fragile socio-political landscape.

## Himanta Wants to Shed Own Security as VIP PSO's Slashed from 4,000 to 600



#### GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on October 5 reiterated his opposition to the "VIP culture," declaring that even his own security cover should be withdrawn to set an example.

Addressing a gathering, Sarma said, "I oppose VIP culture. If possible, I would like to remove my own security. During the time of Zubeen Garg's incident, we saw how much people dislike VIP culture. That's why there shouldn't be any VIP security at all."

The Chief Minister added that his government had drastically cut down on the

number of police personnel assigned to protect political leaders and officials.

"Earlier, around 4,000 police personnel were deployed for VIP arrangements in Assam. We have reduced that number to 600. Those officers are now deployed for road duties and public service instead," he said.

Sarma also argued that ministers and MLAs should not have personal security officers (PSOs), as excessive protection creates unnecessary barriers between the public and elected representatives. "I believe ministers and MLAs shouldn't have security either. Otherwise, we'll always have to assign someone to protect someone else," he remarked.

#### GUWAHATI

The deadline set by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for the appearance of Singapore-based associates linked to the mysterious death of Assamese singer Zubeen Garg expires today (October 6), yet none of the individuals have shown up for questioning.

Despite repeated notices and a final deadline fixed for October 6, not a single person has appeared before the SIT so far.

The SIT had summoned all those reportedly present in Singapore at the time of the incident, including Tannoy Phukan, Abhimanyu Talukdar, Debojyoti Hazarika, Rupkmal Kalita, Siddharth Bora, Parikshit Sharma, Sudipta Chatterjee, and Bazid Ahmed, urging them to cooperate with the investigation. However, none have returned to Assam or extended any assistance to the probe team.

Officials said that the non-cooperation of these key witnesses has raised concerns over the transparency and pace of the ongoing investigation. Some summoned individuals have cited "personal reasons" or "technical difficulties" for their absence, while others have not responded



#### ED AT ALL.

Sources from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) noted that continued non-cooperation could hamper the progress of the SIT's probe. The team is now considering next steps, including issuing fresh summons or taking stricter legal measures against those ignoring repeated notices.

Earlier, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma addressed the issue, clarifying that the state government cannot forcibly bring anyone back from abroad. "This is entirely up to them. The Assam government cannot bring anyone back to the state

by force. We will have to coordinate with their parents to ensure their return. Assam Police cannot go to Singapore and arrest them, which is why we must bring them back through proper channels," the Chief Minister said.

Issuing a stern warning, CM Sarma added, "We have given them time until October 6, and we will take strict action if they refuse to return."

The SIT, constituted to investigate the circumstances surrounding Zubeen Garg's death, continues its probe while evaluating legal options to ensure the cooperation of witnesses crucial to the case.

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VOLUME:1, ISSUE 586

## WHY LADAKH DOES NOT NEED STATEHOOD

The peaceful Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh, a region bordering two hostile neighbouring countries, China and Pakistan, saw violence recently. Subsequently, precious lives were lost, around 90 people were injured and internet was disrupted. Normalcy is yet to return to this land of lamas, Buddhist ascetics and unmatched beauty of high mountains. Tourism was badly impacted as those already in Leh, the capital city, could not move out due to curfew. The arrival of more tourists in such an atmosphere was not possible and large scale cancellations happened.

The last such violence, triggered by the politics of the day, was seen in 1989 when the agitation in Leh was led by the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA). Six years later, in 1995, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill District Council (LAHDC) was created. A couple of years later, another LAHDC was created, this time in Shia-dominated Kargil. The two LAHDCs, one each in Kargil and Leh, the two districts of Ladakh, has led to grassroots empowerment of local communities.

According to 2011 census, Ladakh had around 2,74,000 people and the number may have touched 3,00,000 at present. It is vast, has mostly inhospitable terrain and does not have too many habitations. A section of agitating Ladakhis is demanding that Ladakh be made a full-fledged state with a Legislative Assembly of its own. Besides, these people are saying that there should be two Lok Sabha seats, one in Kargil and one in Leh.

### Legislature Demand

In 1951, when the first elections were held in Ladakh, for the Constituent Assembly of J&K, both Kargil and Leh chose one legislator each. In 1996, full 45 years later, two new assembly segments of Zaskar (in Kargil) and Nubra (in Leh) were created, raising the number of legislators to four. In 2014, Ladakh chose four legislators only.

Now that a full-fledged assembly is being demanded in Ladakh, what can or should the number of MLAs there? Doubling the present number would mean eight MLAs, and quadrupling it would mean a House of 16. It needs to be mentioned here that the smallest assembly is of UT of Puducherry with 30 members, for a population of 12 lakh. Sikkim has a House of 32 members (approximately 7 lakh population), Goa and Mizoram have Houses of 40 each, with populations of 16 lakh & 14 lakh, respectively.

Some Ladakhi leaders have also been demanding that there should be two MPs, one in Kargil and one in Leh. This too is an impractical demand as it is not possible for the government to increase the number of MPs in Ladakh in view of the 84th Constitutional Amendment piloted by late Arun Jaitley.

Under this amendment, passed during Atal Behari Vajpayee's tenure as Prime Minister, enacted in 2001, the constitutional freeze on delimitation was extended. As such, the number of Lok Sabha seats cannot be increased. This was done until the first census after 2026, with the intention of not penalizing states that controlled their population growth. This amendment aimed to maintain the existing population-based representation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies and was intended to allow population control measures to take effect without immediately impacting political representation.

### Small Population

As we have seen in preceding paragraphs, Ladakh has a much smaller population as compared to Puducherry, Sikkim, Goa and Mizoram, states with small legislatures. As such, making Ladakh a state does not look like a practical solution out of the present impasse. Further, in any UT, decision-making is usually much faster, as compared to states, due to less bureaucratic and political tiers.

Incidentally, Ladakh receives one of the highest per capita Central support of as compared to other states and UTs. For a sensitive border region, faster decision-making and direct Central supervision can be critical. There are chances that a state government, unfriendly to the Centre, can create bureaucratic hurdles.

### Security, Local Concerns

If we faced Pakistan in Kargil during 1999 war, the flare-up with China in June 2020 in Galwan in Leh district is too recent a happening to be easily brushed aside. Any compromise on security concerns regarding Ladakh cannot be wished away. There is a real fear that a devolved state government with legislative powers could obstruct military logistics, land-use decisions and infrastructure projects vital for national security.

We saw hereinabove as to how granting statehood to Ladakh may not be a practical solution. Of course, the locals have aired grievances which cannot be dismissed as irrational fears alone. They need to be addressed, and sincerely, and to make a beginning, the two LAHDCs of Kargil and Leh can be strengthened further, with some additional powers, and liberal funding. These can be given more powers regarding land, employment and resource management.

The absence of a Public Service Commission after 2019 in Ladakh has halted recruitment to gazetted posts. A domicile-based recruitment mechanism, including for gazetted posts via UPSC supervision, can be fast-tracked for addressing joblessness concerns. The recruitment at lower levels also needs to be taken up on urgent basis and the policy of officials from J&K manning top posts should be phased out in a systematic, time-bound manner.

### Development Dilemma

A good regulatory mechanism based on stringent laws and penalties needs to be put in place to curb exploitative behaviour by new industries that can be, and need to be, set up in Ladakh. In the unskilled and semi-skilled categories, a large percentage of employees can be locals. Providing them training for leadership roles in industries relating to renewable energy and some other sectors can help allay fears about heavy influx of outsiders.

Infrastructure development in Ladakh is being given top priority, with tunnels, roads, bridges and power supply being improved with every passing day. A couple of days ago, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) constructed a road at Mig La which is 19,400 feet high, relegating Uming La (19,024 feet) to second place and pushing Khardung La (18,379 feet) to the third spot. Incidentally, it is very few local Ladakhis who are involved in the road and bridge construction. The labour for these projects is sourced from Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

**"When I had nothing to lose, I had everything. When I stopped being who I am, I found myself."**  
- Paulo Coelho

# ZUBEEN GARG WAS THE SOUL OF NORTH EAST



MITHUN DEY

Zubeen Garg famously stated "Assam is famous for tea. Rhinos and Zubeen Garg". It's hard to believe that Zubeen Garg, the "Poet of Music" is no more on earth. He leaves us untimely at the age of 52. Our most beloved Zubeen da died on September 19 in Singapore while swimming at Lazarus Island. He was in Singapore to take part in the North East India Festival 2025. His death was a heart-rending episode for millions state wide. Garg's passing sparked an outpouring of grief from fans around the state and his legacy continues to be honoured, including memories at his star in the heart of Assamese people. The singer of 'Ya Ali' still is an idol to million hearts of Assam.

Zubeen Garg was established to be for Assam through public demonstrations of love and respect at his funeral, where thousands of fans and supporters gathered, sang his songs, and paid tribute to his cultural influence and philanthropic work. His funeral in Guwahati listed as second biggest gathering as an artiste in the world after Popstar Michael Jackson, enters Limca Book of Records.

The legend was born as Zubeen Borthakur in an Assamese Brahmin family on November 18, 1972 in Tura. Later, he adopted the surname Garg from his Gotra in the year 1990 and was named after the renowned Indian conductor of Western classical music, Zubin Mehta. Zubeen da started his musical journey at the tender age of three. His mother Ily Borthakur was widely considered as his first guru (teacher) since she provided foundational knowledge of tabla and introduced Zubeen to the term for a musical note. "His mother was his Goddess", the legend often used to say. Ily Borthakur was a dancer, singer and actress and his father, Mohini Mohan Borthakur was a Magistrate and is also a lyricist and poet under the pen name Kapil Thakur.

The noted singer and his spouse Garima Saikia who is fashion designer shared their love story illustrating that began through the profound and personal connection with a simple fan letter. Over more than a couple of decade, their relation-

ship endured distance, family obstruction built in their love that led to disappointment. From letters to lifelong devotion, the couple adopted 15 underprivileged children and transformed their lives. This is the story of two souls brought together by music, letters and destiny.

Zubeen was also from a musical and cultural upbringing and was musically inclined. He had spent his boyhood at his hometown, Jorhat of Assam. First and foremost he was not merely a singer but a complete writer, actor, music director, composer and producer whose work touched the hearts of people of Assam and made him relatable. He was an incredible piece of personality. The saddest part of his life was when her sister Jongki Borthakur died in a tragic road accident on January 20, 2002, at the age of 18. She was also a singer and actress. The both were born into an artistic family. Zubeen's other sister Dr. Palmi Borthakur is a Bharatnatyam dancer and she is also a professor of Geography department at a private university in Guwahati.

His debut album was released in 1992 under the name of 'Anamika' at the age of 19 that brought him into professional music. With a musical career spanning over three decades, Zubeen sang in 40 different languages including Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Bishnuipriya Manipuri, Adi, Boro, Dimasa, Goalpariya, Sanskrit, Tiwa, Sindhi, Telugu, Tamil, Nepali, Odia, Malayalam, Marathi, Kannada, English, Bhojpuri and many indigenous dialects. He became a powerhouse of music industries.

His central Bollywood breakthrough appeared in 2006 with the release of "Ya Ali" which was introduced in the movie "Gangster" directed by Anurag Basu. This son won him the best playback singer Global Indian Film Awards (GIFA). His debut recorded songs were "Tumi Junu Pariba Hun" and "Tumi Junaki Hubakh" for the album Ritu. Let's take some examples of Zubeen whose albums have appeared on many different lists such as Xopunor Xur in 1992, Junaki Mon in 1993 Maya in 1994, Asha in 1995 and many more. He released his first Bihu album Ujan Piriti in 1995 which was a commercial attainment.

Our beloved Zubeen da was also known for his extensive work in Bollywood as well as Tollywood of Kolkata. Zubeen, the "Voice of Assam" recorded nearly 39000 songs in his musical profession. As an actor, his debut film was Hiya Diya Niya, an Assamese film released in 2000. The film Mission China (2017) was directed and acted by Zubeen himself. He was also credited with playing multi-instrumentals and played 12 instruments including mandolin, keyboard, guitar, dotara, tabla, anandalahari, drums, dhol and et al. Undoubtedly, he was the most influential musicians in Assam.

Zubeen Garg's songs resonate with the young generation because of their emotional authenticity, ability to capture modern sentiments and his versatility across various genres. His voice carries a deep sense of emotion and relatability, which deeply connects with listeners, particularly the youth who often seek out music that reflects their own experiences.

Zubeen Garg was a social activist. He always used to provide crucial support during critical situations by identifying unmet needs, mobilizing communities and advocating for system change to address injustices and promote the common good. The singer offered services such as conducting on-site inquiries into human rights, violations, raising awareness through media outreach, organizing protests and marches and provided direct support and guidance to individuals impacted by crises. He is the man who did not actively look for or pursue money and assets. He always abstained from such activities. Zubeen da stated that he was a true believer in Cha Guevara's ideology, believed in socialism and was a social leftist. He was real, honest, predictable, less diplomatic and upfront. He did not believe in caste, creed and religion. He took an apolitical stance.

Indeed, the artiste was also a biophile since he had a strong love for nature and living things. He was a zoophile since he loved all the animals. He was a naturalist because he loved to live in natural world. He works as an environmentalist since he tried to protect the natural environment and its inhabitants.

To ensure justice and find the truth in Zubeen's death where the circumstances are a mystery, authorities would need to conduct a proper investigation. The noted Assamese singer was cremated with full state honours and 21-gun salute on September 23 at Kamarkuchi of Sonapur. The rites were performed by his younger sister, Palmi Borthakur. Zubeen da will remain immortal to the people of Assam. The big soul never dies.

## DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**Relieved to see Peace and calm returning to Ladakh. One thing that is unacceptable is some misguided people trying to call the Very PATRIOTIC people of Ladakh traitors. Almost half their male population serves in the Ladakh Scouts. They have taken part in each and every one of India's wars since independence and made huge sacrifices and earned so many awards( including Ashok Chakra and MVCs, etc). They are a very brave people of a very sensitive border region. We cannot afford to let their grievances fester**

**~ Maj Gen (Dr)GD Bakshi SM, VSM (ret'd), Editor Indian Military Review**



## FISHING WARS, POLITICAL RHETORIC AND A DEAD ISSUE

### DILRUKSHI HANDUNNETTI

A small island spanning 285 acres (1.16 sq km) situated approximately 33 km from the Indian coast and 24 km from Delft Island in northern Sri Lanka sparks controversy each time Tamil Nadu prepares for elections.

For Sri Lanka, the island is a non-issue and a matter settled way back in 1974. Sri Lanka's northern Tamils, with a history of relying on India to reflect their concerns on ethnicity, separate homeland, language rights, and so on, also treat the dispute over Katchatheevu Island as settled. It is they who are impacted and hence vocal about Indian fishers entering Sri Lankan waters, which directly affects their livelihood.

However, the island is back in the news, as Vijay, an actor-turned-politician and leader of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), has dredged up the matter to criticise all governments since 1974. Vijay has claimed that nearly 800 fishers have died over the years due to Sri Lanka's navy shooting them. The actor-politician was quoted in the Indian media as saying, "I am not asking for something big for you to condemn this. Please do something very small. Retrieve Katchatheevu from Sri Lanka at least now for our fishers' safety. That would be enough."

It is customary for Tamil Nadu politicians to critique the Indian National Congress for what they call a fundamental mistake that has risked the safety of Indian fishers and their livelihood. Even the ruling BJP has used Katchatheevu as

an election slogan, but treats it as a matter that is resolved, yet convenient to be dredged up during elections to make impassioned speeches and muster support among Tamil voters. The election gimmick is well known, but it has some weightage in Tamil Nadu.

Vijay went a step further, glorifying Velupillai Prabhakaran, the slain leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), calling him the mother of Sri Lanka's Tamils. The LTTE is believed to have carried out the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and the organisation that remains prohibited in India.

Vijay's call to acquire Katchatheevu received a response from Sri Lanka. Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath reaffirmed Sri Lanka's sovereignty over the island. He dismissed Vijay's remarks as political rhetoric meant to win votes before the Tamil Nadu assembly elections in April-May 2026. Vijay is following a rhetorical stance used by many Tamil Nadu leaders before him, including MKarunanidhi of DMK, J Jayalalithaa, and Vaiko. They have all demanded the acquisition of this uninhabited island, situated between Neduntheevu in Sri Lanka and Rameshwaram in India, which has traditionally been used by fishermen from both countries.

It is important to understand that the settlement of the disputed island entailed both give and take. The measured decision prioritised diplomacy and bilateral ties, and both countries stood to gain from settling the maritime boundaries. India ceded the island, conferring permanent sovereignty and juris-

isdiction over the Katchatheevu island to Colombo through a 1974 agreement, which delineated the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). Equally significant to note that Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, had been laying claim to Katchatheevu since 1920. Similarly, a significant bilateral agreement in 1976 established the Wadge Bank within India's exclusive economic zone, which upheld India's sovereign rights over the bank and banned Sri Lankan fishing activities there. Further, the agreement envisaged the possibility of future oil and gas exploration in the bank. The benefits of Wadge Bank are not discussed as often.

The area is a large continental shelf south of Cape Comorin, known as Kanyakumari. It is rich in resources, offering deep-sea fishing opportunities and hydrocarbon reserves. The agreement restricted Sri Lankan fishers from entering the area. It placed the area within India's exclusive economic zone.

Beyond territorial claims, the issue affects fishers and their livelihood. Vijay referenced about 800 fishermen killed. In 2024, Sri Lanka's navy arrested 535 Indian fishers near Katchatheevu for fishing in Sri Lankan waters. Authorities seized 198 Indian trawlers, and 142 people remain in custody. In 2022 and 2023, the number of arrested Indian fishers was 229 and 220, respectively.

The central issue is that, fifty years after the island was ceded, the bilateral issue persists. Arrests of Indian fishers for violating Sri Lankan waters remain contentious. Fishers have long complained of ill-treatment, including physical violence and harsh, prolonged detention. Tamil Nadu has often urged the Centre

to act. However, the proposed solution is usually the takeover of the ceded island, rather than establishing a reliable mechanism to manage cross-border fishing, prevent inhumane treatment, and respect territorial boundaries. The issue of fishers from both countries keeps coming up in bilateral talks. However, these fishers still risk jail time and lose their boats and equipment. Both countries have agreed to a humanitarian approach when dealing with each other's fishers. New Delhi has called for humane handling and respect for agreements. Colombo says its territory must be respected, given that the island was ceded fifty years ago. Indian fishers have two specific rights in Katchatheevu: the right to dry their nets and the right to attend the annual three-day St Anthony festival (no visa required).

In 2024, two deaths were reported, while there were none in 2022 and 2023. The 1974 and 1976 agreements set maritime boundaries and banned unauthorised fishing. However, Tamil Nadu fishers still often fish in Sri Lankan waters. This raises serious concerns for their safety, their livelihoods, and Sri Lanka's exclusive economic zone rights. Fishing in Sri Lankan waters went largely unchallenged during almost thirty years of Sri Lanka internal conflict.

But this does not grant an ongoing right to fish in foreign waters. India should recognise this. Instead of letting the problem remain by trading accusations, Colombo and Delhi should work together and keep Indian fishermen out of Lankan waters and ensure the safety and dignity of any arrested fishers.

# State will back BTC fully but will not interfere in Council's functioning: CM Sarma

KOKRAJHAR

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Sunday, extended his congratulations to Bodoland People's Front (BPF) chief Hagrama Mohilary on being sworn in as the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). Also Read - India aims high at BWF World Junior Championships in Guwahati with strong lineup. He affirmed that the state government would provide full support to the new administration while allowing it to function independently. Speaking after the oath-taking ceremony at the Bodoland Secretariat Field in Kokrajhar, Sarma said, "We congratulate Hagrama Mohilary and wish that he leads BTC on the path of peace, stability, and development. The Government of Assam will offer full cooperation and all



possible support."

Reiterating that the BTC holds autonomy over its governance and policy matters, the Chief Minister emphasised that decisions concerning land and administration would rest solely with the Council. "Issues such as eviction or land rights will be decided by the BTC itself, not by the state government," he stated firmly.

Sarma also recalled his long-standing association with Mohilary, noting that their relationship dates back over two decades.

"My association with Hagrama Mohilary is not new; it dates back to 2001-02. Even during the last five years, when he was away from power, we continued to stay in touch," he said. Also Read - SIT under fire for including 'defamatory' claims on Zubeen Garg in arrest note Hinting at possible

future political collaboration. Sarma revealed that he had discussed with Mohilary how the BPF and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) could work together for the development of the region. "We spoke about how BPF and BJP can collaborate for BTC's progress. Today was the oath-taking, so we didn't discuss politics in detail.

The BPF has submitted a memorandum, and I'll go through it on my way back," he added. He, however, added that BPF is certain to play a crucial role in the upcoming 2026 Assembly polls. "We will discuss these matters later," he said, without elaborating further. Sarma also addressed the pending Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) elections, explaining that they could not be held yet due to constitutional procedures. "As per the 125th Amendment, there should

be VDC elections. But since the amendment hasn't been passed yet, the elections cannot take place for now," he noted. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated Mohilary on taking oath as BTC Chief. In a post on micro-blogging site, Modi wrote, "I congratulate Shri Hagrama Mohilary on being sworn in as the Bodoland Territorial Council's CEM. My best wishes to him and his team for their tenure.

The Central government and Assam government will continue to support the BTC government as we all collectively work to fulfil the great Bodofa Upendranath Brahma's vision and ensure all-round development." The oath-taking ceremony, held in the presence of Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya and several state ministers, also saw Rihon Daimary sworn in as Deputy CEM.

## Meghalaya: Two killed, several injured in back-to-back road tragedies in Ri-Bhoi

SHILLONG

Two people lost their lives and three others were injured after a truck collided with a government vehicle at Quinine in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district on October 5.

According to police, a truck (Reg. No. ML-05L-4968) heading towards Guwahati veered off course, crossed into the opposite lane, overturned, and crashed into a District Sports Office vehicle (Mahindra Bolero, Reg. No. ML-01-7455) from Resubelpara.

The collision killed driver Sanbirth M. Momin and Smart Sangma on the spot. Nilkash M. Momin, who was also in the Bolero, suffered injuries along with the truck driver Anil Dorjee and handyman Bibash Thapa. All three were taken to Nongpho Civil Hospital for treatment.

Police said necessary legal procedures are underway, and the accident site has been cleared for traffic movement.

The crash comes just two days after another fatal road accident in the same district that claimed four teenage lives.

On October 3, a dumper truck travelling from Jowai to Bhoiryabong lost control near Thadrang village and ran over a group of pedestrians before overturning. Four girls — Phibanpyntgen Rynjah (13), Lashimi Nongrum (13), Theresa Nongrum (19), and Ridahunlang Nongrum (13) — died as a result of the crash. Another girl from the group remains in critical condition. The truck driver and his helper sustained injuries and were taken to the hospital. Police have seized the vehicle and launched an investigation to determine the cause of the accident.

The two back-to-back incidents have raised concerns over road safety in Ri-Bhoi, with residents urging authorities to enforce stricter traffic regulations and safety checks on heavy vehicles.

## 37 TTAADC bills stuck with Tripura govt and governor; says TMP MLA; party mulls SC move

AGARTALA

A senior Tipra Motha Party (TMP) legislator on October 5 alleged that 37 bills passed by the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) are still pending with the state government and the governor, some for nearly a decade.

TMP MLA Ranjit Debbarma said the pending bills include crucial provisions related to the customary laws of different tribes and the transfer of land rights to the tribal council. "As many as 37 bills passed by the TTAADC are pending with the state government since the CPI(M) rule in the council. Some bills are eight to ten years old but are still awaiting approval," Debbarma told.

The TMP, which governs the TTAADC, is an ally of the BJP-led coalition government in Tripura. However, tensions have emerged over delays in granting greater administrative and legislative

autonomy to the tribal council. Debbarma said the party is now preparing to file a petition in the Supreme Court to seek directions for the clearance of the pending bills. A TMP delegation led by party chief Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma is scheduled to reach New Delhi on Monday to consult senior lawyers on the legal course of action.

"We have already decided to approach the Supreme Court seeking its intervention to get these bills cleared. We want to know from the top court if the government or the governor is in favour of giving our rights or not," Debbarma said.

The issue underscores growing discontent within the TMP over what it perceives as administrative delays in empowering the TTAADC, which governs two-thirds of Tripura's geographical area and is home to the state's tribal population.

## Arambai Tenggol Clarifies Stand on Kuki-Zo Community, Reaffirms Focus on Illegal Immigration Issue

IMPHAL

Arambai Tenggol has issued a statement addressing recent discussions and public perceptions surrounding the movement and integration of various communities within Manipur, particularly those of the Kuki-Zo ethnicity.

In the statement, the organisation acknowledged that many individuals from the Kuki-Zo community have been regularly using the Bir Tikendrajit International Airport in Imphal for travel over the past sixteen months. Arambai Tenggol made it clear that such activities do not concern the group, as they are viewed as normal

aspects of civilian life.

"We find no inherent issue with individuals, as residents and citizens of Manipur, engaging in such standard life activities," the statement read. It added that devoting organisational energy to these routine movements would be a "misallocation of resources."

The organisation drew a clear line between "citizens of Manipur with rightful claims to belonging" and those "present without legal sanction." It dismissed as inaccurate any narrative suggesting that Arambai Tenggol is preoccupied with the movements of legitimate Manipuri communities.

According to the group, its "urgent mandate" lies in tackling what it described as the "unchecked influx of illegal immigrants and refugees" into the state—an issue it says has placed a strain on Manipur's resources, social harmony, and demographic stability.

Reiterating its stance, Arambai Tenggol called for the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur, with 1951 as the base year. The statement emphasised that this benchmark is historically grounded and essential for distinguishing original inhabitants from recent entrants without legal authori-

sation.

"This is not a call for animosity or division," the group stated. "It is a pragmatic and essential step toward restoring peaceful coexistence in Manipur."

The organisation concluded by expressing confidence that identifying and repatriating illegal immigrants would help ensure a "stable, prosperous, and harmonious Manipur" where all legitimate citizens can coexist with mutual respect and shared prosperity.

The statement was issued by Laishram Robason, Control Room Operator, Arambai Tenggol GHQ.

## Former Nagaland Upa-Lokayukta Mayang Lima passes away at 72; CM Rio, Deputy CM Patton condole demise

KOHIMA

Former Upa-Lokayukta of Nagaland, Mayang Lima, passed away on Sunday, October 5 at a hospital in Jorhat, Assam, after succumbing to critical injuries sustained in a recent road accident. He was 72 and is survived by his wife and children, family sources confirmed.

According to reports, Lima was seriously injured in a car accident that occurred in the early hours of October 2 near Golaghat, Assam, while he and three others were travelling from Tuli in Mokokchung district to Dimapur. Despite intensive medical care, he succumbed to his injuries on Sunday.

The funeral service for the late leader will be held on Monday at 11 a.m. at Senden Riju, Purana Bazar, Dimapur, where family members,



colleagues, and well-wishers are expected to gather to pay their final respects.

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio expressed profound grief over Lima's demise, remembering him as an able lawyer, dedicated public servant, and principled leader who devoted his life to the service of the people.

"Even after his retirement, his dedication to public duty remained unwavering as he continued to serve as Vigilance Commissioner and later as Upa-Lokayukta," Rio said. "His entry into electoral politics, contesting from the 22-Arkakong Assembly Constituency in the 2018 state election, was yet another reflection of his passion to serve."

Calling Lima's passing "a great loss to society," the Chief Minister said, "He still had much to offer for the welfare of our people. The void left by his departure will be difficult to fill. As we mourn his passing,

let us cherish the legacy he leaves behind—a life defined by integrity, compassion, and service."

Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton also extended his condolences, describing Lima as a distinguished legal luminary who upheld justice with unwavering commitment.

"His contributions to the legal fraternity and public life have left an invaluable legacy that will continue to inspire generations," Patton stated.

Mayang Lima's decades-long career in law and governance earned him wide respect across Nagaland. From his early years as a legal practitioner to his later appointments as Vigilance Commissioner and Upa-Lokayukta, he was known for his ethical leadership and dedication to transparency.

## 'Abok Ki Singju' — a touching story of a roadside vendor

### WORLD TEACHERS' DAY CELEBRATION BY PALEM FILMS

BISWADEEP GUPTA

MPHAL: On the occasion of World Teachers' Day, Palem Films proudly initiated its upcoming short film project, "Abok Ki Singju," by unveiling the official teaser at Green Lane Café, Soibam Leikai. The event was organised to honour and celebrate the spirit of unsung teachers — those who impart wisdom, compassion, and values far beyond the walls of a classroom.

The gathering brought together members of Palem Films, the film's cast and crew, and several well-wishers who shared a common admiration for teachers who make a lasting difference in people's lives through their actions and words.

The program featured heartfelt addresses by Ningthoukhongjam Jotin Singh, Producer of the film, and R. K. Mahira, Director, who spoke passionately about the film's inspiration. They reflected on how 'Abok Ki Singju' draws from everyday life in Ma-



nipur — portraying a humble roadside vendor whose words and warmth quietly shape the lives of those around her. Their speeches highlighted the belief that true education often comes from lived experiences, not just

from books or classrooms.

Speaking on the occasion, M. Prakash Singh, Managing Director, Palem Films, expressed that 'Abok Ki Singju' is not merely a short film but a heartfelt tribute to the

silent teachers who guide us through life's simplest and most meaningful moments. He also conveyed his deep appreciation to the entire team for their dedication, creativity, and sensitivity in capturing such a universal and emotional theme.

The film has been produced under the expert guidance of eminent filmmaker Bijou Thangjam, whose mentorship and creative insight played a pivotal role in shaping the project from concept to execution. His support and experience added depth and artistic strength to the storytelling process.

Several key members of the film's creative team were also present at the event, including Raju Mutum (Music Composer), Uchek Symbam (Editing), Naoton, Portia Mayanglambam (Assistant Director), Pakhi Amakcham (Artist), and R. K. Sorjini Devi, who plays the main character 'Abok' in the film.

The teaser beautifully captures the essence of 'Abok Ki Singju' — a touching story of a roadside vendor who, through her humble singju stall, becomes a teacher to many. Her wisdom, kindness, and quiet resilience remind viewers that teachers can be found in the most unexpected corners of society.

## As rat menace spreads, 73 Mizoram farmers say no to poison, cite crop, water risks

AIZAWL

As Mizoram battles a severe rodent infestation, 73 farming families from Mamte and Thlangang villages in Lunglei district have refused to join a government-led mass poisoning campaign. While rats have ravaged paddy fields across 130 villages in all 11 districts, these farmers are standing firm, opting for safer, traditional methods to protect their crops.

Upper Multipurpose Project The Lunglei District Agriculture Office launched a mass rodent poisoning drive on Friday in Tawpui North-I, Muacheng South, Thingfal, Mamte, and Thlangang — all among the worst-hit areas. But the operation faced resistance from dozens of families who warned that rodenticides could harm their standing paddy, other crops, and nearby water streams, especially with the harvest season in full swing.

For many in Mamte and Thlangang, the timing of the poison drive felt disastrous. Farmers argued that applying toxic substances now could contaminate the grain they have struggled to save and endanger their livelihood for the entire year.

Mamte village, home to 134 households, depends heavily on traditional agriculture, with 47 families cultivating paddy and mixed crops. In Thlangang, 40 of 50 households rely on farming. Despite the growing rodent menace, most of these families have rejected chemical measures, preferring natural or

community-based solutions. Also Read - Tripura to supply 40 MW power to Mizoram during Christmas Officials from the district agriculture office visited the affected villages to assess crop loss and explain the poisoning process. They documented extensive damage but maintained that no coercion was used and that farmers' decisions would be respected. The outbreak has devastated large swathes of cropland across Mizoram. The sudden explosion in rodent numbers has been linked to Thingtam, a rare ecological event caused by the gregarious flowering of the Rawthing bamboo (Bambusa tulda). The phenomenon, which occurs roughly every 48 years, last struck in 1977 and has again triggered widespread rat breeding and crop destruction. According to R Lalnunzira, Director of the State Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Department, rodents have damaged about 1,737 hectares of paddy fields out of the State's 6,870 hectares of cropland. Apart from paddy, crops like maize, sugarcane, cowpea, ginger, eggplant, chilli, pumpkin, sesame, and cucumber have also been hit. Lalnunzira said many farmers have suffered near-total losses, with recovery expected to take time. The department is exploring alternative control methods and support measures, but the long-term impact of the Thingtam-driven infestation remains a major concern for Mizoram's farming community.

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## Mid-air scare for Air India Dreamliner as emergency turbine activates before landing



NEW DELHI

An Air India Boeing Dreamliner flight from Amritsar to Birmingham made a safe landing after suffering a major scare just before reaching its destination, when its emergency device, the Ram Air Turbine (RAT), was auto-activated mid-air shortly before landing.

Air India has since cancelled the return leg of the flight, which was to reach Amritsar via Delhi. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is probing the incident.

The RAT is automatically deployed whenever there is an electrical or hydraulic power failure, or if both engines of an aircraft fail. It is a wind-driven turbine that generates power using the aircraft's speed, providing enough energy to ensure a safe landing. In the

deadly Ahmedabad plane crash on June 12, which claimed 260 lives, the RAT got deployed before the crash.

The Boeing 787-8 aircraft took off from Amritsar's Sri Guru Ram Das Jee International Airport on Saturday at 12.58 pm. The RAT was activated at 500 feet, just minutes before landing, and was detected by the pilots.

In a statement, an Air India spokesperson said, "The operating crew of flight AI117 from Amritsar to Birmingham on October 4 detected deployment of the Ram Air Turbine (RAT) of the aircraft during its final approach. All electrical and hydraulic parameters were found normal, and the aircraft performed a safe landing at Birmingham. The aircraft has been grounded for further checks, and consequently, AI114 from Birmingham to Delhi has been cancelled.

Alternative arrangements are being made to accommodate the guests. At Air India, the safety of passengers and crew remains our top priority."

In the aftermath of the incident, the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has demanded that the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the DGCA conduct a thorough probe into the electrical systems and air-conditioning units of all Boeing aircraft operating in India.

In a statement, the FIP said that after the AI-171 crash, the DGCA had only checked the fuel control switches of Air India's B-787 fleet.

Referring to the latest incident, it added: "The incident occurred when the RAT deployed automatically at 500 ft on approach into Birmingham. In today's incident, the Aircraft Health Monitoring (AHM) system detected a fault in the Bus Power Control Unit, which may have caused the auto-deployment of the RAT. All electrical and hydraulic parameters were found normal, and the aircraft performed a safe landing at Birmingham. The aircraft has been grounded at BHX."

The FIP further stated, "Since the time the B-787 has been flying, there have been numerous incidents involving the aircraft. We have strongly taken up with MoCA and the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) the need to thoroughly inspect the electrical systems of all B-787 aircraft in the country. In the interest of air safety, the FIP insists that the DGCA must thoroughly check and investigate the electrical systems of all B-787 aircraft operating in India."

## India's IT sector faces job cuts as firms rebuild for AI

BENGALORE

Thousands of IT employees in India are out of work. The cuts span homegrown giants like TCS, Infosys, and Wipro, as well as global firms such as Accenture, Oracle, IBM, and Capgemini. Companies say they are reshaping themselves for AI, cloud, and product-focused services. Analysts, however, warn that deeper forces are at play.

In 2023-24, India's IT and ITES exports touched around USD 199 billion, accounting for 25.6% of total exports worth USD 778.2 billion. For 2024-25, exports are projected to reach USD 224 billion—about 27% of total estimated exports of USD 824.9 billion. The sector remains a pillar of India's export economy, even as layoffs mount.

TCS trimmed 12,000 roles—about 2% of its workforce—for "organisational restructuring to become future-ready and agile." Infosys laid off 25,994 employees in FY24 for "workforce optimisation amid volatile demand." Wipro removed 24,516 jobs to improve "cost efficiency and productivity."

Tech Mahindra cut 10,668 positions for "portfolio rebalancing." Oracle India reduced over 100 roles in September 2025 to support its "AI-driven product strategy." HCLTech shed 8,080 employees largely due to divestitures and realignments. Accenture's global cuts of 11,000 roles included a significant impact on India, aimed at "reinvesting in AI and digital transformation."

Cognizant eliminated 3,500 positions globally to "simplify organisation and improve delivery speed." IBM India dropped around 1,000 roles during its pivot to hybrid cloud and AI, while Capgemini India cut 800 jobs to align with "evolving client demand."

Analysts say the story runs deeper. After a hiring boom in 2021-22, global demand cooled. Projects were scaled back or delayed. Automation and AI began



replacing repetitive tasks. Clients are shifting from labour-intensive outsourcing to outcome-based models. Lower-cost hubs like Vietnam, the Philippines, and parts of Africa are taking over simpler services. Many roles now require cloud, AI, and data skills—capabilities that a large share of the workforce does not yet possess.

The trend is not confined to India; it has a global footprint. Microsoft, Intel, Salesforce, SAP, and other tech giants have also cut thousands of jobs in 2024-25. Many of these global cuts ripple into India, where shared services, engineering, and support hubs are based. NASSCOM warns that

the sector is at a turning point. Continued AI adoption will shrink routine and mid-level roles. Labour economists and unions say hundreds of thousands of mid-level tech jobs could disappear without large-scale reskilling.

Is India losing its cost advantage? Not entirely. Wages have risen, and AI reduces labour requirements. In low-skill, repetitive work, India is losing its edge to newer, cheaper hubs. But for complex engineering, product development, and domain-specific work, India remains competitive—thanks to its large talent pool, mature delivery ecosystem, global capability centres, and

strong English-language skills.

AI is undoubtedly a key driver of the shift. Accenture, IBM, and TCS acknowledge that AI changes the required skill sets and makes tasks faster and leaner. But AI is not the only factor. Weak client demand, margin pressure, past over-hiring, and competition from new geographies also contribute.

The next few years will test India's IT sector. Routine roles may shrink further, but new positions in AI architecture, design, and product development could absorb displaced workers—if reskilling keeps pace. The sector is not collapsing; it is restructuring for the AI era.

## INTERNATIONAL

## Israel continues bombing Gaza despite Trump's order; at least 16 Palestinians

TELAVIV

Israel on Sunday continued attacks across Gaza, killing at least 16 Palestinians, including two aid workers, despite its primary ally, US President Donald Trump's order to "immediately" halt the bombing.

Another Palestinian died of hunger on Sunday, bringing the death toll from Israel-induced starvation in Gaza to 460, including 154 children. According to the territory's Health Ministry, at least 182 deaths, including that of 39 children, have been recorded since the UN-backed global hunger monitor, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, declared famine in Gaza in August this year.

"We're on the brink, and we don't know whether one will die of a strike or starvation," said Mahmoud Hashem, a Palestinian father of five, who is forced to shelter in a tent in the centre of Gaza City, reported Associated Press.

Israel's continuous attacks on Gaza came as a team of Israeli negotiators prepared to depart for Egypt Sunday night for scheduled talks with Palestinian group Hamas regarding the exchange of prisoners as part of a plan pushed by Trump.

Hamas and Israeli negotiators will hold talks in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm El-Sheikh on Monday. Confirming the talks, Cairo said it would be hosting a delegation from Hamas for talks on "the ground conditions and details of the exchange of all Israeli detainees and Palestinian prisoners."

Ahead of the talks, Hamas on Sunday called for a swift start to the prisoner exchange, stressing that the group is keen to reach an agreement to immediately end Israel's genocidal



war.

"Hamas is very keen to reach an agreement to end the war and immediately begin the prisoner exchange process in accordance with the field conditions," a senior Hamas official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday said the current situation is "the closest we've come to getting all of the hostages released."

Calling for an end to Israeli attacks on Gaza, he stressed that Israeli captives held by Hamas cannot be released otherwise.

"I think the Israelis and everyone acknowledge you can't release

hostages in the middle of strikes, so the strikes will have to stop," Rubio told CBS News talk show "Face the Nation."

"There can't be a war going on in the middle of it," he said.

However, Israel on Sunday said that there is no ceasefire taking effect in Gaza right now, but just a temporary halt to some of the bombing.

"While certain bombings have actually stopped inside of the Gaza Strip, there's no ceasefire in place at this point in time," Israeli government spokeswoman Shosh Badrosian told journalists.

According to the Wafa News

Agency, at least 70 Palestinians, most of them children, have been killed by Israel since Trump's order on Friday to "immediately" halt the bombing, following Hamas' partial acceptance of his proposal.

A woman carries a placard with a picture of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as tens of thousands of protesters march demanding their government do more to halt Israel's campaign in Gaza, during a demonstration in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Sunday, Oct. 5, 2025.

Welcoming Hamas' response to his plan, Trump had said on Friday, "Israel must immediately stop the bombing of Gaza, so that we can get the Hostages out safely and quickly! Right now, it's far too dangerous to do that. We are already in discussions on the details to be worked out."

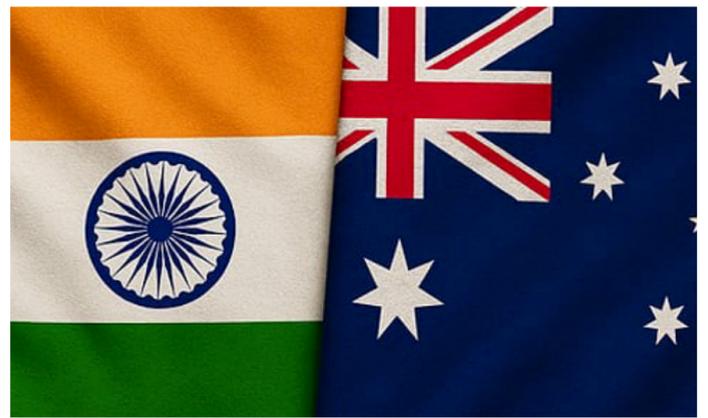
Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has so far killed at least 67,139 Palestinians, more than half of them being women and children. Over 220 journalists and at least 1000 healthcare workers have also been killed, mostly in targeted attacks by Israel.

Meanwhile, the foreign ministers of eight Muslim-majority countries issued a joint statement Sunday welcoming steps toward a possible ceasefire.

In backing Hamas' willingness to hand over the running of Gaza to a transitional committee, the ministers called for an "immediate launch of negotiations to agree on mechanisms to implement the proposal."

They also underlined their commitment to the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, unifying Gaza and the West Bank, and reaching an agreement on security, leading to a "full Israeli withdrawal" from Gaza.

## India, Australia to sign three co-operation agreements this week



NEW DELHI

The ongoing upswing in the India, Australia bilateral defence ties is to get a fillip as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will undertake a two-day official visit to Australia on October 09-10, 2025, at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Australia Richard Marles.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) on Sunday said, "During the visit, three agreements are planned to be signed, which will further enhance cooperation in the areas of information sharing, the maritime domain, and joint activities."

This, as per MoD, will also mark the first-ever visit of a Defence Minister to Australia under this government since 2014.

The key highlight of Defence Minister's visit will be the bilateral discussions with his Australian counterpart. The visit comes at a

historic moment when India and Australia commemorate 5 years of establishment of India Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

He will chair a business roundtable in Sydney, which will be attended by industry leaders from both sides. He will also call on other national leaders of Australia. The visit will provide an important opportunity for both sides to explore new & meaningful initiatives to further strengthen the bilateral relationship and the defence partnership.

India and Australia already have signed an arrangement which will enable the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and the Indian Armed Forces to conduct air-to-air refueling.

Defence engagements have expanded over time to include wide-ranging interactions between the services, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity-building and training programmes,

cooperation in the maritime domain, ship visits, and bilateral exercises.

India and Australia elevated their bilateral relationship from a Strategic Partnership in 2009 to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2020.

The two nations share a deep bond rooted in common values— pluralistic, Westminster-style democracies, Commonwealth traditions, growing economic engagement, and increasing high-level interactions. Long-standing people-to-people connections, the presence of Indian students in Australian universities as well as robust tourism and sporting ties, have further strengthened the enduring partnership between the two countries.

Richard Marles last visited India in June 2025 and met his counterpart Rajnath Singh, and also called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

# The Final Note: Unraveling the Mystery Behind Zubeen Garg's Death in Singapore

**W**hen the news broke from Singapore that Zubeen Garg - Assam's most beloved voice, composer, and performer - had died under mysterious circumstances, the entire Northeast felt the tremor. For millions across Assam, his death was not merely the loss of a musician; it was as though the collective rhythm of the state had stopped beating. The man whose songs transcended boundaries of language, generation, and geography was gone - leaving behind a void too vast to measure and questions too heavy to ignore.

The grief was instant, but it came hand in hand with anger. For in Zubeen's sudden passing, there are too many questions, too many inconsistencies, and too many silences. What really happened on that yacht in Singapore? Who failed him - and why?

**A Voice that Defined an Era**  
To understand why Assam grieves as it does, one must understand who Zubeen Garg was - not only as an artist but as a cultural force. For more than three decades, Zubeen's music was inseparable from Assamese identity. His songs weren't just popular; they were woven into the very fabric of everyday life. From the tea gardens of Dibrugarh to the markets of Guwahati, from the Bihu fields of Nalbari to the college hostels of Shillong - his voice carried everywhere.

When Ya Ali from Gangster catapulted him to national fame, the rest of India finally heard what Assam already knew: that Zubeen's artistry was as emotional as it was effortless. But back home, it was his Assamese repertoire - Mayabini, Pakhi, Xixu, O Moi Moi, and the Mission China soundtrack - that transformed him from a singer into an emblem of identity.

Zubeen's art was a living bridge - between folk and modern, between regional and global, between protest and poetry. He was fearless in his convictions, never shying away from political commentary or social criticism. His songs could move people to dance, but they could also make them question.

His funeral, held on the banks of the Brahmaputra, became one of the largest gatherings in Indian cultural history. Streets overflowed with mourners; riversides turned into seas of grief. According to the Limca Book of Records, it ranked among the world's four largest public gatherings for a single individual - standing alongside those for Michael Jackson, Pope Francis, and Queen Elizabeth II.

But even as Assam wept, another current began to flow beneath the surface: suspicion. The Singapore Tragedy: Questions Without Answers

Details of that final night remain disturbingly unclear.

Zubeen had reportedly been in Singapore to perform at a cultural event organized for the Assamese diaspora. On the evening in question, he was invited aboard a private yacht - a gathering that was supposed to be celebratory. But within hours, tragedy struck.

The first reports from Singapore were vague, offering no explanation beyond "sudden death." There was no immediate clarity on the cause, no verified timeline of events, and no consistent testimony from those who were present.

Who organized the yacht party? Who invited him aboard? Was there medical supervision? Why was there a delay in getting help? And why, most disturbingly, were the accounts of those on the yacht riddled with contradictions?

Each of these questions deepened the mystery, and the absence of clear answers fanned the flames of public outrage back home.

The Three Shadows: Negligence, Betrayal, and Carelessness

In Assam's public discourse, three names now dominate the conversation - each carrying the burden of a distinct accusation.

1. Negligence by Shyamkanu Mahanta  
As a prominent event organizer, Shyamkanu Mahanta had long styled himself as a champion of Assamese art and culture. But after Zubeen's death, his name became synonymous with negligence.

Was the event properly managed? Were safety protocols on the yacht followed? Did the organizers ensure that Zubeen's health and comfort were prioritized? Was there any oversight regarding his medications or fatigue from travel and performance?

For a man of Zubeen's stature and health concerns, such lapses could have been fatal. The unanswered questions surrounding Mahanta's management of the event have left a deep scar on public trust.

2. Betrayal by Siddharth Sharma  
Once seen as one of Zubeen's closest associates, Siddharth

Sharma's role has drawn intense scrutiny. Admirers whisper of professional betrayal, of financial disputes, of personal tensions that may have brewed in silence. Since the tragedy, Sharma's evasive statements and defensive posture have only amplified doubts. In the court of public sentiment, his name has come to symbolize disloyalty - a painful twist for those who once believed in their friendship.

3. Carelessness of the Assamese Community in Singapore  
Perhaps the harshest judgment has been reserved for the Assamese community members who were present that night.

Many back home cannot comprehend how no one intervened swiftly when Zubeen appeared unwell, how a man so revered could be left vulnerable in the company of those who claimed to adore him. The perception that carelessness or indifference cost Assam its voice has become a source of collective guilt and anger.

An Investigation Moving at a Crawl  
If grief has turned to anger, it is because the investigation has been painfully slow and opaque.

Singaporean authorities have released only fragmentary details, citing procedural norms. The Indian consulate has maintained a cautious stance, waiting on official communication from Singapore's police and corner. Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Assam's state government have been conspicuously restrained in their remarks.

This bureaucratic silence has created a vacuum - one swiftly filled by rumor, speculation, and conspiracy theories.

Every passing day without progress feels to Zubeen's admirers like a betrayal. They ask: how can a man of his stature die abroad, under questionable circumstances, without a clear accounting of what happened?

Transparency, they insist, is not too much to ask. Justice, they believe, is not a privilege - it is a debt owed to the man who gave Assam its cultural soul.

The People's Protest: Mourning with Defiance  
In Assam today, grief has taken the shape of resistance.

Murals of Zubeen now adorn walls across Guwahati. Street artists have turned corners of the city into open-air memorials. Candlelight vigils continue weekly, and social media platforms pulse with the hashtag #JusticeForZubeen.

In tea gardens and college canteens alike, conversations return to the same question: will the truth ever emerge?

The mood is one of betrayed devotion. For many, this is not merely about a celebrity's death - it is a reckoning for how a society values its artists.

Students' groups have organized marches demanding an independent inquiry. Cultural bodies have urged both the Assam and Indian governments to pursue diplomatic pressure for the release of all investigation details from Singapore.

The sense of injustice cuts deep because Zubeen was not a distant figure. He was one of them - the boy from Jorhat who sang his way into every Assamese home, who fought for the rights of regional artists, who spoke openly against exploitation in the music industry.

That such a man could die without answers feels to many like a collective failure.

What Zubeen Represented - and Why His Death Matters  
To treat Zubeen Garg's death as a mere accident is to misunderstand his legacy.

He was not simply a singer but a conscience. His lyrics often spoke against hypocrisy, corruption, and cultural commodification. He warned that artists must not be reduced to tools of commerce - that art must retain its dignity and soul.

Ironically, the circumstances of his death seem to echo the very themes he fought against. If negligence, greed, or betrayal were indeed factors in his demise, then it is not just Zubeen who has fallen - it is the moral foundation of Assamese cultural life.

In a broader sense, this tragedy tests whether Assam, and India at large, can protect those who give meaning to its identity. If the state and society cannot deliver justice to someone of Zubeen's stature, what hope remains for the countless unnamed artists who struggle in silence?

Echoes of an Unfinished Song  
Every note of Mayabini, every haunting refrain of Ya Ali, now carries a new weight - an echo of what was lost.

For the people of Assam, the call for justice is not born of vengeance but of love. They want to know what happened on that yacht not to assign blame blindly, but to reclaim dignity for a man who gave them so much joy.

His widow, family, and fans continue to demand transparency from both Singaporean and Indian authorities. Legal efforts are underway, with petitions filed in courts and appeals made to the Ministry of External Affairs for the release of all investigative documents. But as weeks turn into months, and the silence deepens, hope begins to flicker. Will the truth ever emerge? Will accountability ever follow?

**A Call for Closure**  
Assam owes Zubeen Garg more than tributes and tears. It owes him truth. Until the world knows exactly what happened that night in Singapore, every melody he sang will feel unfinished, every silence too loud.

Zubeen once said in an interview, "I sing because it is my way of praying for my people." Today, it is his people who pray - not for songs, but for justice.

He gave Assam his voice. Now Assam must give him the truth.

Only then can the Brahmaputra sing again.



Sharma's role has drawn intense scrutiny. Admirers whisper of professional betrayal, of financial disputes, of personal tensions that may have brewed in silence. Since the tragedy, Sharma's evasive statements and defensive posture have only amplified doubts. In the court of public sentiment, his name has come to symbolize disloyalty - a painful twist for those who once believed in their friendship.

3. Carelessness of the Assamese Community in Singapore  
Perhaps the harshest judgment has been reserved for the Assamese community members who were present that night.

Many back home cannot comprehend how no one intervened swiftly when Zubeen appeared unwell, how a man so revered could be left vulnerable in the company of those who claimed to adore him. The perception that carelessness or indifference cost Assam its voice has become a source of collective guilt and anger.

An Investigation Moving at a Crawl  
If grief has turned to anger, it is because the investigation has been painfully slow and opaque.

Singaporean authorities have released only fragmentary details, citing procedural norms. The Indian consulate has maintained a cautious stance, waiting on official communication from Singapore's police and corner. Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Assam's state government have been conspicuously restrained in their remarks.

This bureaucratic silence has created a vacuum - one swiftly filled by rumor, speculation, and conspiracy theories.

Every passing day without progress feels to Zubeen's admirers like a betrayal. They ask: how can a man of his stature die abroad, under questionable circumstances, without a clear accounting of what happened?

Transparency, they insist, is not too much to ask. Justice, they believe, is not a privilege - it is a debt owed to the man who gave Assam its cultural soul.

The People's Protest: Mourning with Defiance  
In Assam today, grief has taken the shape of resistance.

Murals of Zubeen now adorn walls across Guwahati. Street artists have turned corners of the city into open-air memorials. Candlelight vigils continue weekly, and social media platforms pulse with the hashtag #JusticeForZubeen.

In tea gardens and college canteens alike, conversations return to the same question: will the truth ever emerge?

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## SPACE FOR YOU ONLY

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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.

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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**  
Trekking | Canyoneering | Sport Climbing | Disaster Management Technique | Water Sports  
www.krcfoundation.org





**11 JAN**  
**Barak Valley Conclave**  
Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley by different stakeholders. Includes NGOs, and Governmental institutions for their participation. Awards & Certificate to be presented to participants. Participation is through invitation only. Different awards are provided.

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



**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.



**12 JAN**  
**River-Climate Conclave**  
State leaders will deliberate on Climate Change, pollution and river flooding. The Conclave will focus on the importance, treatment and protection of River Barak. Training & Geography competition and exhibition on River Barak, Climate Change.





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**10 JAN**  
**Media Conclave**  
Media Conclave, Media Awards, Workshops, and the Fund, Talks and Conferences are part of the 'Barak Festival 2025'. Theme: 'One for All, All for One'. Welcome your media partners, journalists, media & corporate houses, sponsors, guests, speakers, members.



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**10-12 JAN**  
**5E For Success Conclave**  
The 4th Annual Success Conclave is going to be held at the theme: 'From School to Campus to Corporate'. Schools, Educational Institutions and corporate houses can join the Conclave as sponsors.

Quiz and Group Discussion for Barak valley Schools & Colleges, Extension School, Public Speaking (College) & an online event where students of NE India Schools and Colleges can participate.



**10-12 JAN**  
**Science Studio**  
Use a glimpse of Science to arts through projects. 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



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**10-12 JAN**  
**E-Sports**  
Full-Blown Demos | CASH PRIZES | Trophy



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



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