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# KRC TIMES

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### PERSPECTIVE

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## Militant involved in Kokrajhar railway track blast killed in police encounter

**KOKRAJHAR**  
A dreaded Maoist-linked militant, allegedly involved in multiple railway bomb blasts, was killed during a police encounter in Nadanguri, Kokrajhar district, Assam, on October 25.

The deceased has been identified as Apil Murmu, also known as Rohit Murmu (40), in Jharkhand. According to Kokrajhar Police, Murmu was one of the key accused in a recent railway track bombing in Kokrajhar and had earlier been involved in a similar blast in Jharkhand.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kokrajhar said Murmu had carried out a railway track explosion in Jharkhand in October last year before fleeing to Assam. In Jharkhand, he was known as Rohit Murmu, while in Assam, he used the name Apil Murmu, claiming to be a resident of Grahampur village under Kachugaon in Kokrajhar district of Assam.

Investigations revealed that Murmu had links to both Jharkhand and Assam, and was previously a member of the NSLA (Nation Saotal Liberation Army). When the outfit laid down arms, Murmu refused to surrender and instead escaped to Jharkhand, where he formed a breakaway faction and reportedly became a commander.

### WHO SAID WHAT



Those "journalists" who were advocating not to burst crackers for Diwali due to Zubeen's demise went and burst crackers after they won the Guwahati Press Club elections yesterday.

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM

## Sushmita Dev accuses CM Himanta of politicising Zubeen Garg's death to postpone municipal polls

**SILCHAR**

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev launched a scathing attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over his recent remarks during a visit to Silchar, accusing him of misleading the public with his claims of Rs 1,000 crore worth of projects for the town while failing to hold municipal elections for five years.

Speaking to the media, Dev said, "The Chief Minister of Assam was in Silchar yesterday, and he is due to leave today. He made a sweeping statement saying that in a single day, he had announced projects worth Rs 1,000 crore for Silchar town itself. What he is not telling the rest of Assam is that for the last five years, in a prestigious municipal area and the second most populated town of the state, there have been no municipal elections."

She alleged that both the



Chief Minister and the minister in charge of Cachar have "consistently lied" about holding the civic polls.

"He has repeatedly said he will have the elections. Now he is saying that because of the sudden and sad death of Zubeen Garg, no work is happening at the officer level, and therefore, elections can't be held. Is he using Zubeen's name to tell the people of Silchar that for five years they

cannot have an elected body in the Silchar Municipal Corporation? It's shameful and disgraceful," Dev remarked.

The TMC MP also questioned Sarma's claims of development in the Barak Valley, citing unfulfilled promises from the BJP's own vision document for 2016-2025. "Mr. Chief Minister, please pull out and dust your own vision document that said what you were going

to deliver for the people of Barak Valley. You had promised all-weather roads — yet the Mahasadak remains incomplete. You had promised urban trading centres — there isn't a single one in the Barak Valley. You promised an agricultural university, a bench of the High Court, a mini-secretariat, and five bridges over the Barak River. None of these has been delivered as per your own vision document," she said.

Concluding her remarks, Dev said, "If I were to give you a mark for your promises and performance, you would get a zero from me."

Her criticism comes a day after Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, during his visit to Silchar, said that while the Congress once made headlines for announcing Rs 1,000 crore for the entire Barak Valley, his government has now laid the roadmap for projects worth Rs 1,000 crore for Silchar alone.

## "Not a single village will go to Dima Hasao," assures CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

**SILCHAR**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday categorically assured residents that not a single village from Cachar will be transferred to Dima Hasao, describing the matter as "closed". Speaking at a large public gathering in Lakhimpur, Sarma reiterated the state government's commitment to protect Assam's territorial integrity, safeguard women's dignity, and promote citizens' prosperity. "This is the Assam government's guarantee that not a single village of Lakhimpur will go to Dima Hasao. These are some of the lies of the Congress; let me assure you this will not happen," Sarma stressed. The assurance comes amid territorial anxiety in Cachar, where speculation has persisted that 19 villages from the Lakhimpur division might be reassigned to neighbouring Dima Hasao district due to a proposed administrative reorganisation.

In August, the Citizens' Rights Preservation Committee



(CRPC) strongly opposed the government's reported plan, claiming it was taken unilaterally without consulting affected residents.

The committee also alleged that the move was influenced by demands from the Dima National Liberation Army (DNLA) and the Dima Hasao District Peoples' Council (DPSC), reportedly discussed in a meeting chaired by North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council chief executive member (CEM) Debolal Gorlosa. By declaring the issue "closed", the Chief Minister sought to reassure Cachar residents and put an end to fears regarding any potential loss of territory.

## Nagaland showcases rich culture at Autumn Festival in Delhi



**KOHIMA**

Delhi welcomed a vibrant display of Nagaland's cultural heritage on October 24 as the two-day Autumn Festival 2025 opened at Nagaland House. The event, organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Nagaland, features traditional music, dance, handicrafts, and cuisine, offering visitors a glimpse into the state's rich traditions.

The festival was inaugurated by Delhi minister Kapil Mishra, who also opened the Artisans' Corner and traditional stalls showcasing handmade crafts, Naga attire, and local delicacies prepared by tribal artisans. The opening ceremony drew Union Minister Jitendra Singh, diplomats, and senior officials.

Highlighting the growing cultural connection between Delhi and Nagaland, Mishra said the festival reflects longstanding ties and proposed expanding such events beyond Nagaland House to larger public venues, including Delhi Univer-

sity campuses and Central Park. He also announced plans to work with the Delhi Tourism Department to establish a dedicated annual Naga Culture Festival.

Nagaland's Tourism Minister Temjen Imna Long said the festival allows Delhi residents to experience the state's heritage firsthand and serves as a prelude to the 26th Hornbill Festival, scheduled from December 1 to 10. Along also noted efforts to simplify the Inner Line Permit process for tourists and the establishment of special helpline centres at Nagaland Houses in Delhi, Kolkata, and Guwahati.

Abu Metha, chairman of the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland, stressed the importance of boosting tourism and investment cooperation between Delhi and Nagaland.

The Autumn Festival 2025 immerses visitors in the vibrant crafts, textiles, music, and cuisine of Nagaland, bringing the spirit of Northeast India to Delhi and reinforcing the message of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat.

**AGARTALA**

Aloke Kumar Chakraborty, Inspector General, BSF Tripura Frontier, called on Governor of Tripura, Indrasena Reddy Nallu, at Raj Bhavan, Agartala, on Friday.

During the meeting, the Governor was apprised of the prevailing security and operational scenario along the Indo-Bangladesh border, and of the various measures being undertaken by the BSF to ensure effective border management.

The Hon'ble Governor deeply appreciated the commitment of the BSF in safeguarding the international border and ensuring the safety and security of the people of Tripura.

Earlier, Tripura Governor Indrasena Reddy Nallu welcomed Goa Governor P Ashok Gajapathi Raju upon his arrival in Agartala on Wednesday evening.

According to Rajbhawan, the visiting Goa Governor was received with traditional hospitality at the Raj Bhavan. The officials from the Governor's Secretariat and senior state government representatives were also present during the welcome ceremony.

The Rajbhawan said that both governors are expected to discuss matters of mutual interest,

including inter-state cooperation and cultural exchange, during the visit. Meanwhile, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha inaugurated the newly constructed party office in the 12-Takarjala Mandal in the state on Wednesday. During the event, 200 families comprising 690 people joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), marking a significant boost to the party's grassroots strength in the region.

Addressing the gathering, Saha said, "Under the guidance and inspiration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, we are tirelessly working for the overall development of our Janajati brothers and sisters."

He also criticised certain individuals who, he said, are still engaged in divisive politics. "Unfortunately, a few people contin-

## BSF IG meets Tripura Governor, reviews Indo-Bangladesh border security



ue to play divisive politics and conspiracies in the style of the communists. I want to warn them that there is no benefit in trying to mislead the tribal community," the Chief Minister remarked.

CM Saha reaffirmed that the people of Tripura believe in peace, development, and democracy. "The use of force will not be tolerated in any form in this state. If anyone tries to harm us, we will respond appropriately — but through completely democratic means," he asserted.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from local residents and BJP leaders, who expressed confidence that the new office would serve as a hub for strengthening the party's organisational activities in Takarjala and nearby areas.

## India's biggest hydro project at Subansiri enters wet commissioning phase with first 250 MW unit

**NEW DELHI**

In a landmark moment for India's hydropower sector, NHPC Limited has commenced the wet commissioning of the first 250 MW unit of its 2,000 MW Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project (HEP).

The process follows the successful mechanical run of the turbine, marking a decisive step toward the operational launch of India's largest hydroelectric project and NHPC's most powerful unit to date.

Located at Gerukamukh on the Arunachal Pradesh-Assam border, the Subansiri Lower HEP was launched in January 2005. The project had faced an eight-year suspension between 2011 and 2019 due to protests in Assam and legal hurdles concerning downstream environmental impacts. Work resumed in October 2019 after NHPC adopted enhanced mitigation and safety measures, leading to this major breakthrough.

The milestone ceremony was attended by NHPC Chairman and Managing Director Shri Bhupender Gupta, Executive Director and Proj-



ect Head Shri Rajendra Prasad, along with NHPC Directors and senior officials from both the corporate and project sites.

Expressing his gratitude, Shri Gupta extended thanks to the Ministry of Power, Government of India, and the governments of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, as well as past NHPC leaders, the Subansiri project team, and all stakeholders.

"This achievement is a shining testament to NHPC's engineering excellence and India's growing strength in world-class infrastructure," he said. "It represents more than just a project milestone—it reflects India's steady march towards a cleaner, greener, and self-reliant energy future." With Unit-1 now in the wet commissioning phase, grid synchronisation is expected shortly. NHPC aims to commission three more 250 MW units within this year, adding 1,000 MW to the national grid. Once all eight units (8 x 250 MW) are operational, the Subansiri Lower HEP will emerge as India's largest hydroelectric facility, lighting millions of homes and strengthening the nation's energy security.

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## THE SOFT POWER OF EDUCATION DIPLOMACY

**C**an you imagine that on a metro ride in Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai or Chennai, you might be sitting next to an overseas student who would one day turn out to be a head of government? If it comes to pass, the student's experiences in India may well turn out to be significant for his or her country's foreign relations someday.

My countless rides on Delhi University's special buses came flooding into memory last week as I read of the visit by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya to her alma mater, Hindu College, where she recalled her days at the institution. Amarasuriya was a sociology student admitted in 1991 on an Indian government scholarship, as her own country was ravaged by violence and strikes. Her recollections included teachers who encouraged her to think critically.

Sushila Karki, who was named Nepal's first woman prime minister this year as head of an interim government after having served as the chief justice of her country, received a master's degree in political science from Banaras Hindu University in 1975. The university was also the place where she met her future husband, Durga Prasad Subedi.

Amarasuriya and Karki are no oddball exceptions, though it might seem so to Indians who have grown up reading about their own leaders having been educated in the West. Jawaharlal Nehru and Manmohan Singh went to Cambridge in the UK, and Mahatma Gandhi to University College London, while Sardar Patel studied law at London's Middle Temple. Bhimrao Ambedkar received a doctorate in economics from Columbia University in the US and another from the London School of Economics.

Even leaders associated with rugged socialism were adorned with Western degrees. Jayaprakash Narayan hopped through Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, and California's Berkeley as a university student. Ram Manohar Lohia held a PhD from Berlin's Humboldt University before turning into a pioneering ideologue for India's backward castes.

While colonialism made many of India's aspiring young men and women look to the West in those days, things changed after independence, when India emerged as an affordable, often inviting, education hub for those who could sense in the country the prospects of a reverse swing from the colonial era.

Like Amarasuriya, Myanmarese opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi made headlines when she visited her alma mater, Delhi's Lady Shri Ram College, in 2012—48 years after her graduation. She credited the college for building her self-confidence as she described herself as "partly a citizen of India".

Hamid Karzai visited Shimla in 2006 as president of Afghanistan, 23 years after he took a master's degree in political science from Himachal Pradesh University. He had arrived as an exchange student in 1979, the year that Soviet forces entered his country, and learnt English from the young women of a family he was staying with. The university awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2003, shortly before he became president.

The list of India-educated leaders is long but often goes unnoticed. Two former Nepali prime ministers, Girija Prasad Koirala and Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, also studied at BHU like Karki, while Baburam Bhattarai studied architecture in Delhi.

The current prime minister of the Pacific island nation of Fiji, Sitiveni Rabuka, controversial as an instigator of two coups but now a democratically elected coalition leader, graduated from the picturesque Defence Services Staff College at Wellington in Tamil Nadu's Ooty Hills. Though he acquired some notoriety for his stance against ethnic Indians in the multi-cultural nation, Rabuka, a much-decorated soldier who rose to be a major general in Fiji's army, also received a master's degree in science from the University of Madras in 1979.

Being educated in India is, of course, not a guarantee that a foreign leader is a friend of India or a democrat. Pakistan's military dictator Gen Zia-ul-Haq, studied at Delhi's St Stephen's College, while Field Marshal Ayub Khan and former PM Liaquat Ali Khan studied at Aligarh Muslim University—though all that was in colonial India.

Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck studied at the National Defence College in New Delhi, while Olusegun Obasanjo, who served as Nigeria's president from 1999 to 2007, is also a Wellington DSSC product like Rabuka. I only recently learnt that my own claim to reflect alumnus glory rests with Bingu Wa Mutharika, former president of Africa's Malawi, who studied at Delhi's Shri Ram College of Commerce and later at the Delhi School of Economics. What is abundantly clear to me is that India's role as an education centre is somewhat overwhelmed by Western institutions, even though there are plenty of MBAs and IITians from India leading global companies. Our universities and colleges also serve as instruments of soft power alongside fusion jazz and Bollywood movies, as we can see in the case of Karzai and Amarasuriya, who arrived in India as part of what one might call education diplomacy.

Apart from state-run universities, India's new private universities are also attracting foreign students, aided by memorandums of understanding with overseas educational institutions.

All that should not surprise us. After all, Nalanda and Takshashila were renowned centres of higher learning in ancient India. Given the UGC's recent policy for collaboration and twin degrees with foreign universities, we may well expect more foreign students in India—and maybe some nostalgia mixed with diplomacy.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

Peace dies when the framework is ripped apart. When there is no longer a place that is yours in the world. When you know no longer where your friend is to be found.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

# From Shrimps to Software -- New Trade Deal Opens Big Market For India



PIYUSH GOYAL

India has unlocked another gateway to prosperity, signing an innovative trade agreement with a wealthy block of European countries which has a per capita income of over \$100,000. This opens a lucrative market for Indian farmers, fishermen and MSMEs, and accelerates PM Modi's Viksit Bharat 2047 mission.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with the European Free Trade Association - Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein - that came into force from Oct 1 during the auspicious navratni period, is historic. EFTA countries have pledged an investment of \$100 billion over 15 years - the first such commitment in any trade pact in the world. With this, governments of EFTA countries will champion investments into India, creating at least a million jobs, and catalyzing PM Modi's 'Make in India' mission.

Trade Strategy for Viksit Bharat: The Modi government has shed the hesitations of the past, embracing free trade agreements (FTAs) that catapult our products and services into premium, developed markets. These pacts don't just open doors, they sharpen our industries, instilling competitiveness and quality that propel us forward. In July 2025, India sealed a landmark deal with the UK, while talks with the European Union have progressed well. Earlier, PM Modi's decisive hand delivered win-win agreements with Australia and the UAE.

Indian industry stands tall today, brimming with confidence to conquer global arenas while thriving amid competition. Stakeholder have cheered every Modi-era FTA, crafted through exhaustive consultations, unlike the UPA regime's hasty deals, struck without input and often with competing economies that got access to our markets but did not open their own doors adequately.

Making India Attractive - This transformation traces back 11 years, when PM Modi rescued our economy from the "fragile five" tag, and made it a magnet for trade and capital. The Modi government dismantled inherited woes, stagnation, high inflation, corruption and inefficiencies through foundational reforms. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme alone has drawn ₹1.76 lakh crore in investments by March 2025, spawning over 12 lakh jobs. PM Gati Shakti and the National Logistics Policy have slashed costs and streamlined infrastructure. Our digital backbone-Jan Dhan, UPI, and Trade Connect-has democratized opportunity, powering 65,000 crore transactions worth ₹12,000 lakh crores in six years, lifting the underserved into the financial mainstream.

Investment, Job Creation - Now, EFTA's US\$100 billion infusion promises one million direct jobs and countless more indirectly. The investment pledge is quantum leap from the mere US\$11.9 billion FDI from these nations over the past 25 years. With India's total FDI hitting US\$81 billion in 2024-25, a 14% surge, the real flow could eclipse commitments, thanks to the opportunity seen in the world's fastest growing large economy, and robust Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) laws which are effectively enforced. TEPA bolsters IPR with enhanced cooperation on enforcement and streamlined safeguards, empowering innovators and luring high-tech capital amid rock-solid regulatory certainty.

Farmers and fishermen - Beyond FDI, labor-intensive exports like textiles and gems & jewelry will boom, generating waves of employment. EFTA's affluent consumers crave our agri-goods, tea, and coffee. India has shielded sensitive sectors like dairy, while unleashing opportunities for rice, guar gum, pulses, grapes, mangoes, vegetables, millets, and cashews. Duty cuts on processed delights like biscuits, confectionery, chocolate, and sauces

sweeten the deal. Fishermen rejoice as exports of frozen shrimp, prawns, and squid will surge through seamless standards cooperation.

Aspirational Indians: Services get a turbo boost as TEPA paves the way for Mutual Recognition Agreements in nursing, accountancy, and architecture, easing Indian professionals' entry into EFTA. Doors swing wide open for IT, business, cultural, recreational, education, and audio-visual services, slashing technical hurdles via proactive regulatory talks. Removing Barriers: TEPA transcends tariffs, weaving fair, transparent rules on food safety, animal and plant health, product quality, safety and consumer protection. Clear information sharing, verifications, import checks and certifications prevent these from becoming trade traps, smoothing Indian goods' path to EFTA while inspiring industry to elevate standards at home. Our farmers and manufacturers will craft safer exports, pest-free produce, globally compliant products, thereby uplifting domestic quality too. Better testing and compliance mean healthier meals and reliable goods for every Indian family.

Better Future: These deals ignite passion among manufacturers, service providers and ordinary citizens, who savor premium global products through deeper economic ties. At its heart, TEPA embeds sustainability, championing trade that drives inclusive growth, combats poverty and safeguards our environment. Reaffirming the Paris Agreement and ILO core principles, it fosters collaboration on climate action, gender equality, and biodiversity conservation, ensuring fair wages, safe jobs, and a greener planet. Through green tech exchanges and cooperation, it uplifts workers, slashes inequality and secures a thriving future for our children. A child born in Modi's India gets as many opportunities at home as in the Alps, the land of fire and ice, or in the land of the midnight sun!

India's destiny is one of active partic-

ipation, not isolation. As ancient seafarers from our civilizational state navigated uncharted waters with courage, today's 140 crore Indians rise as one-confident, determined and united. The goal is to expand the global footprint, empower through education and digital revolution and build a sustainable future. Together, we restore India's place as a leader in commerce, where trade and technology serve humanity, while innovation and inclusion advance hand in hand.

(The author is the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry)

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

**India's Economic Momentum:**  
**Consumption Revival: GST 2.0 has triggered record festive sales - the strongest Navratni in 10 years. Investor Confidence: Domestic institutions absorbed \$69B of equities even as FPIs exited- a sign of deepening market maturity. Tech & AI Expansion: Google to invest \$15B and TCS \$7B in data centers building India's digital backbone. Powering Growth: Surging energy demand across generation, transmission, and distribution. Global Reallocation: As China & Japan cool, global investors are rediscovering India's long-term potential. The world's most vibrant democracy is transforming.**

~ Harsh Goenka,  
Chairman, RPG Enterprises



## Political theatrics enter, arousing high high-profile Zubeen Garg death probe

NAVA THAKURIA

As sorrows over the mysterious death of Assam's beloved son Zubeen Garg in Singapore turned into massive outrage against the government, where the opposition political parties started extracting benefits to prepare their ground for their next benefits, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has now jumped into the space, keeping an eye on the next State assembly elections scheduled for early next year. The saffron party announced the erection of statues of the cultural icon and the opening of two music schools (along with one in memory of Dr Bhupen Hazarika) in different locations. After various civil society groups and opposition entities made a rigorous movement for justice to the maverick singer, the BJP plans a Nyay Yatra (march for justice) to pressure the authorities to initiate a fair probe into the incident where he died on 19 September 2025 at only 53.

The party launched its mission from Nalbari in western Assam on 22 October, where amazingly over 50,000 Zubeen admirers (read BJP supporters) participated. Carrying banners, posters and placards in their hands, the demonstrators demanded a speedy judicial investigation into Zubeen's unforeseen demise in the Southeast Asian nation. Leading the procession, Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia, Union minister Pabitra Margherita, State ministers Jayanta Malla Baruah and Chandra Mohan Patowary,



and other leaders raised voices for justice through judicial proceedings. Soon, more such programs were materialised in Mangaldoi of central Assam, Dhemaji and Dibrugarh of eastern Assam, along with different localities under the leadership of State ministers like Pijus Hazarika, Ranaj Pegu, Bimal Borah, Prasanta Phukan and others with the same spirit of participation.

Meanwhile, when the probe into Zubeen's unexplained death continues during a sea yacht outing, a statement from the Singapore Police Force (SPF) emerges intriguingly as stated that they are currently investigating the case in accordance with Singapore's Coroners Act 2010, and it will take at least three months to complete the procedures. Forwarded by the Singapore High Commission in New Delhi, the SPF statement however, ruled out any foul

play as the preliminary investigations indicated. Asserting that they are 'aware of speculation and false information' circulating online regarding the circumstances of Zubeen's passing away, the SPF sought patience and understanding of the parties involved to complete the investigation thoroughly. So they urged the public (seemingly the residents of Assam) not to speculate and spread unverified information.

Thousands of Zubeen fans in Assam continue a digital campaign named 'JusticeForZubeenGarg' for ensuring justice to the prince of melody. Nearly three million social media users have joined the movement asking for legal actions against the perpetrators. Even after the Assam government formed a special investigation team of police (which has already arrested seven individuals) and also a judicial commission, headed by Justice Soumitra Saikia of Gauhati High Court, to monitor the investigation, a large number of people are demanding urgent justice. Lately, a two-member police team, led by SIT chief MP Gupta, visited the island nation and reportedly received vital information from the Singaporean authorities.

Earlier, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, also in charge of the State home portfolio, assured that the charge sheet in the case will be filed within three months. Though an autopsy was conducted in Singapore General Hospital before handing over Zubeen's mortal remains, another post-mortem was conducted

at Guwahati Medical College Hospital, as a large section of people alleged foul play in Zubeen's death. But the death certificate, earlier issued by the Singaporean government, also indicated that Zubeen died due to drowning in the sea waters. Similarly, both of his postmortem reports and toxicology findings from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory in Delhi seemingly reveal no act of poisoning (read murdering Zubeen). Meanwhile, CM Sarma met Alice Cheng, the acting Singapore high commissioner in New Delhi and sought cooperation from the Singaporean authorities over the probe. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi recently visited Zubeen's cremation ground at Kamarkuchi near Guwahati to pay homage, and later, the opposition leader in Lok Sabha reached the artiste's residence in Kahlipara locality to meet Zubeen's widow, Garima Saikia and other close relatives. He was accompanied by Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi, State assembly's opposition leader Debabrata Saikia and other party leaders, but Gandhi avoided political engagements in the city on that day. Later, attending a public memorial, lawmaker Gogoi alleged that the probe was not heading in the right direction. On the other hand, legislator Saikia sent a letter to Singapore Premier Lawrence Wong demanding a transparent inquiry into Zubeen's death. Two other regional party leaders, namely Akhil Gogoi and Lurinjyoti Gogoi, are demanding a national-level probe into the incident.

## Administration is directed to take strict action against those responsible for attack on govt officers: Tripura CM Manik Saha



### AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said that no one will be spared involved in the attack on government officials in Santirbazar under Surma Assembly constituency under Dhalai District during a strike called by Tiprasa Civil Society, a part of the Tipra Motha Party (TMP).

CM Saha said this on Friday after visiting GB Pant Hospital to enquire about the health conditions of the victims who were attacked at Santirbazar under Surma Assembly Constituency in Kamalpur sub-division during the bandh called by Tiprasa Civil Society on Thursday.

In a post on X, CM Saha shared, "We strongly condemn the violent attack by Tipra Motha supporters on Abhijit Majumdar (BDO,

Salema), Engineer Animesh Saha, and residents of Santirbazar, Dhalai District. Such acts of violence are unacceptable. The administration is directed to take swift and strict action against those responsible.

CM Saha said that on Thursday at Santirbazar under Kamalpur subdivision, following a strike, officials and many people came under attack and were injured.

"We have seen what happened. The entire night, I was monitoring the incident and the situation. I have given proper direction. Today I have come here to enquire about the health condition of the victims. This is really unacceptable. The way they attacked with sticks, rods, and snatched chains - I don't understand what kind of protest this is. I have directed

Tripura Police to take proper steps, and the law will take its own course of action," said CM Saha.

He said no one will be spared and assured that they will be punished.

"Around 12 persons were injured, and some are under treatment at Kamalpur only. Huge police personnel were deployed. On social media, I have identified who was engaged.

No one will be tolerated and accepted. They will be nowhere in the coming days. Just wait and see what will happen," he added. In a post on X CM Saha further said, "Last night, in the Shantirbazar area of Surma Assembly in Dhalai district, workers of Tipra Motha, under the name of 'Civil Society of Tripura', carried out a brutal and planned attack. In this inci-

dent, BDO of Salema Block, Abhijit Majumdar, Engineer Animesh Saha, and businessman Subrata Pal were seriously injured. The injured were initially admitted to Kamalpur Sub-Divisional Hospital."

"As their physical condition deteriorated, I directed that they be urgently transferred to GB Hospital that same night.

This morning, I visited GB Hospital to inquire about their physical condition and spoke with their family members and officials of the Tripura Civil Service Association who were present. The government will take the strictest action against those involved in this brutal incident. No one is above the law. The law will take its course," he further added.

Speaking to the media,

CM Saha said that around 10 to 12 people were injured in separate incidents and assured that strict action would be taken against those responsible.

The Chief Minister said he had been closely monitoring the situation since Thursday and had directed the administration to ensure peace and order across the state.

Saha expressed astonishment over the severity of the attacks carried out by TMP followers during what was announced as a "peaceful protest". He also expressed shock in his address to the media and in a social media post.

Large numbers of police personnel have been deployed in the Shantirbazar and Kamalpur subdivisions under the Dhalai district to prevent further untoward incidents.

### Fake Bangladeshi documents target Tipra Motha MLA, vows legal action

#### AGARTALA

A fresh controversy has erupted in Tripura after purported Bangladeshi National ID and Birth Certificate documents, allegedly belonging to Tipra Motha MLA Ranjit Debbarma, surfaced on social media.

The National ID card, reportedly bearing ID no. 1949027487, lists Ranjit Debbarma's name along with those of his parents. The accompanying Birth Registration Certificate claims he was born on January 2, 1964, identifies his nationality as Bangladeshi, and lists Dhaka, Bangladesh, as his place of birth.

The circulation of these documents has triggered criticism, especially considering the MLA's vocal stance against illegal Bangladeshi migrants in the state.

Responding to the controversy, Ranjit Debbarma stated, "I have seen these ID cards and the Birth Certificate circulating on social media, and some media outlets have reported them as well. These documents are completely fake. My ancestry is from Tripura, and it appears someone has deliberately circulated these fabricated documents. I will examine what the law says and take legal action. I will file a complaint with the Assembly Privilege Committee, demanding strict action against those responsible for creating and spreading them."

The MLA's statement underscores his intent to pursue legal remedies to protect his reputation and challenge the circulation of the fabricated documents.

### 'Assam government putting hurdles in tributes to Zubeen Garg': Gaurav Gogoi

#### GUWAHATI

Assam Congress President Gaurav Gogoi has accused the state government of obstructing public efforts to pay tribute to the late singer Zubeen Garg. Gogoi alleged that authorities are creating "various obstacles" for supporters seeking to honour the artist during candlelight marches and memorial events.

"People in Assam wish to pay tribute to Zubeen Garg, but the government has been trying to undermine this call for justice over the past few days," Gogoi said. He claimed that despite the alleged interference, there remains a strong public sentiment demanding justice for the late musician.

The singer, widely regarded as one of Assam's most influential cultural icons, passed away in Singapore on September 19, reportedly while swimming. He was scheduled to perform the following day at the Northeast India Festival.

Thousands of admirers and

prominent personalities joined the memorial event, offering floral tributes and sharing memories of the singer's impact on Assamese society. Gogoi described Garg as "a true leader of Assamese society," noting that while the artist was apolitical, he inspired unity and courage among people across the state.

"People of Assam are still grieving; they miss his leadership and his guidance," Gogoi said. He urged the government to ensure a transparent investigation into the circumstances of Garg's death and to see that justice is served. The Special Investigation Team and CID have so far arrested seven people in connection with the case. Those detained include event organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, Garg's manager Siddharth Sharma, his cousin and suspended APS officer Sandipan Garg, bandmate Shekhar Jyoti Goswami, co-singer Amritprava Mahanta, and two PSOs, Nandeswar Bora and Paresh Baishya.

#### KOKRAJHAR

The swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Members of the Council Legislative Assembly (MCLAs) Pramod Boro, Rakesh Boro, and Rekha Rani Das Boro was held on Friday at the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTC-LA) complex, Bodofo Nwgvw, in Kokrajhar.

The oath of office and secrecy was administered by BTCLA Speaker Tridip Daimary, marking the formal induction of the three elected members into the Council. While most of the MCLAs had taken their oaths earlier on October 14, the trio could not attend the event at that time due to health reasons. With their swearing-in today, all elected members of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) have now officially assumed office.

Speaking after the ceremony, BTC Chief and UPPL President



Pramod Boro reaffirmed his party's commitment to peace, unity, and development across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). He stressed that the UPPL stands firmly against any form of violence or the use of arms in society. Also Read - Titabor youths build upper Assam's first German-tech temperature controlled farm "We do not want any incidents of violence to occur here," Boro said. "As a responsible party, the UPPL is committed to ensuring that no one spreads the

use of arms or disrupts peace. We appeal to all to remain vigilant so that such elements do not harm our society. The future of our children depends on the peace and stability of this region."

Highlighting the party's broader vision, Boro said that the UPPL aims to create a transparent and democratic administration that promotes inclusive growth. "We are working on the foundation of development for the BTC. Today, as we took our oath before the Speaker, we renewed

our pledge to serve all communities equally and to ensure progress and harmony in the region. The Bodoland Territorial Region is home to people from diverse backgrounds, and we believe in peaceful coexistence and collective development," he added. Reaffirming the UPPL's grassroots strength, Boro noted that the party continues to maintain a strong organisational base across the region. "As a party, we have representation in 40 constituencies and 445 primary committees. Our focus will always remain on building a healthy democracy, ensuring transparency in governance, and fostering unity among all communities," he stated. The ceremony concluded with senior BTC officials, party leaders, and well-wishers congratulating the newly inducted members, marking another step toward the Council's ongoing efforts for peace and progress in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

### Nagaland JCC puts tools down strike on hold after govt assurances; pen down strike to continue

#### KOHIMA

The Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) on IAS Induction, comprising CANSSEA, FONSESA, NIDA, NSSA, and NF&ASA, has decided to keep its proposed Tools Down Strike on hold following a meeting with the Nagaland Chief Secretary.

According to a circular issued by the JCC's Media Cell on Thursday, the decision was made after the Chief Secretary invited the committee for discussions, assuring that the government would take steps to resolve the anomalies related to the selection of Non-State Civil Service (Non-SCS) officers into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).



"In good faith, the Tools Down Strike scheduled to commence from October 27, 2025, shall be kept on hold."

However, the ongoing Pen Down Strike will continue until our demands are met," the circular stated.

The JCC has also requested the All Nagaland Government Drivers' Association, Nagaland Civil Secretariat Drivers' Association, All Nagaland Directorate & District Government Drivers' Union, and the Nagaland Civil Secretariat Grade-IV Staff Employees Association to keep on hold any preparations for the proposed Tools Down Strike until further instructions. The JCC reaffirmed its commitment to pursuing a fair resolution to the IAS induction issue through dialogue and coordination with the state government.

### Manipur police arrest three insurgents linked to different militant groups



#### IMPHAL

Manipur police conducted simultaneous operations across three districts of the state on October 24, resulting in the arrest of militants from separate insurgent groups and the seizure of weapons and identification documents.

The most significant arrest came in Churachandpur district, where forces apprehended 18-year-old Hao-minthang Haokip, an active member of the United Kuki National Army (UKNA), from his residence in Old Gelmoul. Authorities recovered a pistol loaded with two live rounds, along with a mobile phone and an Aadhaar card. According to officials, Haokip had been actively involved in extortion

activities and illegal fund collection from businesses and residents in Churachandpur town.

In Kakching district, forces arrested Salam Sushil Singh, 23, identified as an active cadre of the banned outfit KCP (Taibanganba). The arrest took place at his residence in Kakching Wairi Bamon Pareng locality. Security personnel seized a mobile

The third arrest occurred in Imphal West district, where Shamjetsabam Sanjit Singh, 42, also known by the aliases Inaobi and Nongshaba, was detained from Sangaithel Makha Leikai under Patsoi police station jurisdiction. Singh, believed to be an active member of the Revolutionary People's Front/People's Liberation Army (RPF/PLA), was found with a mobile phone at the time of his arrest.

All three suspects remain in custody as investigations continue. The arrests come amid ongoing security operations to curb militant activities and illegal extortion networks operating in the state.

## IIT Guwahati Students Win Global 24 Hours Animation Contest 2025

#### GUWAHATI:

Students from IIT Guwahati have secured first place at the 24hourscontest 2025, an international 24-hour animation challenge organised by Toon Boom Animation.

This year's event saw participation from 185 institutions across 35 countries.

Guided by Mriganka Madhukailya, assistant professor in the Department of Design, the team consisting of Arin Bandyopadhyay, Aditya Ravi Pawar, Aseel Pasha, and S. Balasankar emerged victorious among 764 teams and 3,820 students worldwide, claiming the top accolade.

The contest's theme, "Flip Your Perspective," required participants to create a 30-second animated short within 24 hours.

The IIT Guwahati team impressed judges with their creative storytelling and technical skill, earning first place among hundreds of international entries.

Congratulations the winners, IIT



Farting can actually help reduce high blood pressure and is beneficial to your health.



Guwahati Director Professor Devedra Jalihal said, "This achievement

reflects the creativity and hard work of our students and faculty. Winning an

international competition of this scale is a testament to the world-class talent nurtured at IIT Guwahati."

The 24-hour contest is known for testing participants' ability to combine creativity with precision under tight deadlines.

Teams were given the theme at midnight and had to complete every stage, from storyboarding to final animation, within 24 hours. Pre-made assets were not permitted, and AI-generated visuals or sounds were strictly prohibited. Even a submission delayed by a second led to disqualification, highlighting the contest's strict standards.

This year's competition was supported by major studios including Walt Disney Animation Studios, Pixar, Sony Pictures Animation, Nickelodeon, Warner Bros. Animation, Bento Box, Netflix, Cartoon Saloon, Illumination, DreamWorks, Wacom, XP-Pen, ASIFA Hollywood, Animation Is Film Festival, and Toon Boom Animation.

The IIT Guwahati team will be awarded student passes to the Toronto Animation Arts Festival International (TAAFI) 2026, professional animation software licenses, studio memberships, and mentorship opportunities with Disney animators, along with other prizes.

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## India slams Pakistan at UN, says democracy 'alien' concept for Islamabad



### UNITED NATION

India on Saturday strongly rebuked Pakistan at the UN, stressing that democracy is an "alien" concept for Islamabad, which continues to subject the people of its "illegally occupied territories" to grave human rights violations.

Responding to references made by Pakistan's envoy at the UN Security Council's open debate on 'The United Nations Organisation: Looking into the Future' on Friday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathani Harish, said, "The people of Jammu and Kashmir exercise their fundamental rights in accordance with India's time-tested democratic traditions and constitutional framework."

"We, of course, know that these are concepts alien to Pakistan," he said.

Reiterating that Jammu and Kashmir "has been, is, and will always be" an integral part of India, Harish called on Pakistan to end its ongoing human rights violations in the occupied territories.

"We call upon Pakistan to end the grave and ongoing human rights violations in the areas illegally occupied by it, where

the population is in open revolt against Pakistan's military occupation, repression, brutality and illegal exploitation of resources," he said.

Harish also emphasised that the UN must undertake "real, comprehensive reforms," saying that the 80-year-old Security Council architecture no longer reflects contemporary geopolitical realities. "An outdated Council architecture that mirrors the geopolitical realities of 1945 is not equipped to handle the challenges of 2025," he said, calling for expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories through "time-bound" and "text-based negotiations."

Harish stressed the need for the Global South to have a greater voice in global decision-making, adding that "postponing reforms indefinitely does immense disservice to our citizens, especially in the Global South." "This bloc of countries represents the overwhelming proportion of humanity and has its unique set of challenges, particularly in the areas of development, climate and financing," Harish said, adding that global decision-making must be more democratic and inclusive.

Highlighting India's commitment to multilateralism, he said the world must move beyond

"pennies and posts" to craft a new vision for the UN that is more agile and responsive to global challenges such as pandemics, terrorism, economic instability, and climate change.

Harish noted that the world's largest multilateral body faces questions of "relevance, legitimacy, credibility, and efficacy."

He cautioned that international cooperation is increasingly being viewed as charity and that prosperity is being "ring-fenced amid shrinking access to resources and technologies necessary for growth."

He said progress that is not universal is "neither sustainable nor tenable in moral terms or on a practical basis."

Harish also called for making UN mechanisms more agile, noting that peacekeepers face "newer challenges every day" and need realistic mandates, adequate resources, and technological support. "Structural adjustments of different UN bodies are welcome, but not enough," he said, urging that UN80, the 80th anniversary of the organisation, should aim for "real, comprehensive reforms of the UN and its principal organs."

Harish further emphasised the need to revitalise the General Assembly as the UN's principal deliberative and policymaking body, enhancing coordination with other organs, particularly the Security Council, to realise the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

He cautioned member states against using the UN as a "theatre for divisive politics and parochial purposes," saying, "In a world fractured and fragmented along multiple fault lines, the United Nations... is the only vehicle we possess to harness our collective energies for global public good."

## Bihar assembly polls: Don't allow 'jungle raj' of Congress and RJD to re-enter the state, says Amit Shah

### PATNA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah today addressed two massive public rallies in Siwan and Buxar, Bihar, launching a strong attack on the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and its leader Lalu Prasad Yadav. He accused the RJD of returning Bihar to the days of "jungle raj" and urged people to reject the politics of crime and corruption.

Speaking in Siwan, Shah said this was his first visit to the district after nomination and that he had come to pay his respects to the people of Siwan. He recalled the period of what he called "twenty years of jungle raj" under Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi, saying that during that time the people of Siwan had suffered terror and violence at the hands of former RJD MP Mohammad Shahabuddin. "The land ran with blood, but the people never bowed. They ended the rule of Lalu-Rabri," he said.

Shah strongly criticized the RJD for giving a ticket to Shahabuddin's son Osama from Raghunathpur, calling it an attempt to revive the atmosphere of fear in the region. He declared that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, no one would be allowed to get away with crime. "Even if a hundred Shahabuddins come, they will not escape the law. Do not let jungle raj return, do not let Osama win, and do not let the ideology of Shahabuddin prevail," he said.

The Union Minister told the crowd that the true Diwali would come on November 14, when, according to him, "Lalu's son's fate will be sealed." Praising Nitish Kumar, Shah said that Bihar had been freed from jungle raj under Nitish's leadership and had progressed further under the "double-engine government" of Modi at the Centre and Nitish in the state. "For the last eleven years, Modi ji and Nitish ji have worked together to take Bihar forward. Shahabuddin left Siwan bloodstained, but Modi ji has put Bihar on the path of development," he said.

Listing the achievements of the



Modi government, Shah said that in the last eleven years, crores of poor people across India have received free food grains, health insurance of Rs 5 lakh under Ayushman Bharat, tap water connections, and direct financial support to farmers. He said 12 crore toilets, 10 crore gas cylinders, and 4 crore houses have been provided under various central schemes, while the government has also taken measures like reducing GST on 395 items to benefit the common people.

Shah highlighted major infrastructure projects sanctioned for Siwan, including a four-lane road from Siwan to Masrath at a cost of Rs 1,500 crore, widening of the Chhapra-Siwan-Gopalganj road, construction of a new bypass, and rebuilding of Siwan railway station at Rs 92 crore. He also mentioned the establishment of a medical college at Merwa for Rs 568 crore, an engineering college, a pharmacy college, and a power grid worth Rs 180 crore. "Lalu ji, what development did you bring in twenty years?" he asked. "You ran scams — fodder scam, land-for-job scam, railway hotel scam, corruption in flood relief, and many others. Should Bihar again choose those who brought jungle raj and corruption?"

Shah also accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of supporting infiltrators, claiming that illegal immigrants were taking away the jobs and rations meant for local people. He said the BJP and NDA would ensure that infiltrators are identified and removed if voted back to power.

"Bihar will vote for development, not dynasty politics"

Later in the day, addressing a rally in Buxar, Shah invoked Chhathi Maiya and prayed that "jungle raj never returns to Bihar." Referring again to RJD's decision to field Osama, he said, "By giving Shahabuddin's son a ticket, Lalu ji wants to frighten the people. But this is the land of Veer Kunwar Singh — the people here fear no one."

He compared the RJD's candidature with the NDA's choice, Anand Mishra, a former Indian Police Service officer who, he said, had left a prestigious career to serve Bihar. "While Lalu gives tickets to criminals' sons, we are giving tickets to capable sons of the soil," he said, claiming that the NDA stood for good governance while the opposition was leading Bihar back to lawlessness.

Shah also spoke about the cultural and religious development of the

region, noting that Buxar has been included in the Ramayana Circuit. He said that projects worth Rs 850 crore were underway to develop places associated with Lord Ram and Goddess Sita, including the Sitamarhi temple and Sita Mata's final abode. He accused the Congress and RJD of opposing the Ram Temple in Ayodhya for vote-bank politics, adding that "the people of Bihar will give them a fitting reply."

Continuing his attack on Lalu Prasad Yadav, Shah said, "Lalu ji has made five attempts to launch his son like a rocket, but unlike Sriharikota, all have failed." He said the NDA under the leadership of Modi and Nitish represented development and good governance, while the opposition parties were focused only on promoting their own families. "The future of Bihar's youth lies with the BJP, JD(U), Paswan ji, Manjhi ji, and Kushwaha ji," he said.

Concluding his speeches, Amit Shah expressed confidence that the people of Bihar would once again choose the NDA in the upcoming elections. "On November 14, the people of Bihar will vote for good governance and ensure that jungle raj never returns to this sacred land," he said.

## INTERNATIONAL

## India on alert as polio cases rise in Pak, Afghan

### NEW DELHI:

Despite being officially certified as polio-free since 2014, India remains at risk of polio reinfection due to vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV), its proximity to endemic countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and potential gaps in immunity, experts said here on the occasion of World Polio Day on Friday.

Deepak Kapur, Chairman, Rotary International's India National PolioPlus Committee (RI-INPPC), said, "India was officially declared polio-free in 2014, but the battle against the virus is still ongoing."

As surveillance is key to India maintaining its polio-free status, he said, maintaining strong immunisation and surveillance programs is critical to preventing re-emergence.

"Polio surveillance is critical for achieving and maintaining global eradication by detecting and tracking all poliovirus, including asymptomatic cases, informing vaccination strategies, and confirming the absence of circulation. Without it, public health authorities would be unable to pinpoint where the virus is still spreading," said Kapur, who played a significant role in the polio eradication campaign in India.

"As the world nears complete polio eradication, the importance of highly sensitive surveillance remains paramount. In the post-eradication era, surveillance will continue to be a priority for monitoring the cessation of vaccine virus circulation and confirming eradication for certification purposes. It is an essential and ongoing investment," said Kapur, who was instrumental in signing an MoU with the Union Health Ministry in 2017 to provide support and accelerate the efforts under the Polio Eradication Programme, Routine Immunisation, including Mission Indradhanush, and Intensified Mission Indradhanush.

India's last reported polio case was on January 13, 2011, in West Bengal.

After that, India managed to keep the virus at a distance through large-



scale vaccination programs and careful monitoring.

However, Kapur, who has been chairman of RI-INPPC for more than two decades, said the danger is still close due to neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan, which share their borders with India and continue to experience polio outbreaks, making it easier for the virus to cross over if the surveillance is less attentive.

"Monitoring for polio is an essential part of the country's defence system, which is supported by many health authorities that are capable of detecting very quiet and symptomless poliovirus circulation. This constant checking is not just to prevent repeated outbreaks; it also indicates that no wild or vaccine-derived poliovirus is circulating undetected in the country," he said.

He said India has made this long journey towards progress by adopting highly sensitive surveillance systems as a form of national and global health security insurance.

"The testing of each stool sample, the investigation of every suspected case and the identification of each 0-dose child contribute to the closing of possible loopholes. In the post-abolition period, the single way of ensuring the

complete disappearance of the virus is care. It is because the moment attention is turned away, the whole progress of the last three decades could reverse," he stressed.

Highlighting that India recorded over 9 lakh children who received no vaccines last year or missed even one vaccine under the regular immunisation program, could help the virus hide and spread.

"The presence of such unvaccinated children creates gaps where the virus can hide and then spread quickly once again. This means that no country, even India, can declare that they are totally safe as long as polio exists somewhere in the world," he added.

Added Dr. Anand Narayanan, Associate Consultant, Paediatrics, Sarvodaya Hospital, Faridabad, India must sustain strong polio surveillance as neighbouring countries remain endemic.

"Detecting and stopping any importation early is of utmost importance, failing which we face the risk of new polio cases in our country."

"With over 9 lakh unvaccinated children, gaps in immunization threaten resurgence. Every child must be reached through regular immunization

drives and rapid response systems to maintain India's polio-free status," Dr Narayanan said.

Kapur further said that the only way to prevent the virus from returning is to ensure that every child receives all scheduled doses of the oral polio vaccine (OPV), and parents should not miss any immunisation round, because even one missed dose can break the protective chain that has kept the country safe for 14 years.

"In addition to vaccinations, India must also have strong surveillance and rapid response mechanisms in place to detect and contain any strains of vaccine-derived. India's polio-free status is a great legacy. Still, it also requires constant monitoring, active public participation and the recognition that eradication is only real when protection is universal," said Kapur.

Remarking on India's journey in eliminating polio, Union Health Minister JP Nadra said, "As we observe World Polio Day, it reminds us of India's remarkable journey in eliminating polio, a milestone achieved through unwavering national efforts and strong public participation. Behind this success are our dedicated healthcare workers, who reached every household with compassion and determination, ensuring no child was left behind in the fight against this preventable disease."

"Let us renew our commitment to safeguarding every child through timely vaccination and work together for a healthier, polio-free future," he posted on X.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General, said, "We are on the verge of making #polio the second human disease to be consigned to history. Decades ago, humanity bridged geopolitical and geographic borders to end smallpox. Let's do the same for polio. Let's finish the job."

This year, 36 cases of polio were recorded in two endemic countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### ISLAMABAD

Pakistan and Afghan officials are set to hold the second round of talks in Turkey on Saturday to find a negotiated solution to the border tensions and curb terrorist activities from Afghan soil, officials said.

The talks follow a temporary restoration of calm along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border after the first round of discussions was held in Doha on October 19.

The dialogue was facilitated by Qatar and Turkiye, and both sides had agreed to meet again in Istanbul on October 25 to continue discussions aimed at addressing mutual security concerns.

Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi in a statement on Friday confirmed that the agreed talks would go ahead as scheduled.

Pakistan also looks forward to the establishment of a "concrete and verifiable monitoring mechanism" in the next meeting to be hosted by Turkiye in Istanbul "to address the menace of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil towards Pakistan and prevent any further loss of life of Pakistanis," he said.

Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban avoid a deeper war for now, but how long can the peace hold?

Andrabi emphasised that Pakistan, as a responsible state committed to regional peace and stability, does not seek escalation.

However, he urged the Afghan Taliban authorities to honour their commitments to the international community and to take verifiable action against terrorist entities operating from Afghan territory.

Andrabi reiterated Pakistan's demand for

## Pakistan, Afghan to hold second round of talks in Turkey to ease border tensions



action against the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).

The spokesperson welcomed the outcome of the Doha meeting as a "first step" toward ensuring regional peace and stability and appreciated the constructive roles of Qatar and Turkiye in facilitating the process.

According to Andrabi, the earlier talks focused on immediate measures to halt cross-border terrorism against Pakistan and to restore peace and stability along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Afghan interim administration spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid also confirmed the Istanbul talks, saying the Afghan delegation

would be led by Mawlawi Rahmatullah Najeeb, deputy minister at the Ministry of Interior.

"The remaining issues (with Pakistan) will be discussed in the meeting," Mujahid said in a social media post.

Pakistan has witnessed a renewed wave of militant attacks since the Taliban takeover of Kabul in 2021.

Islamabad has repeatedly urged the Afghan authorities to rein in the TTP militants using Afghan soil to launch attacks inside Pakistan, but with limited success.

The growing mistrust has led to repeated clashes along the 2,611-km-long border, known as the Durand Line, which Afghanistan does not officially recognise.

## The Essence of K-Dramas: Why They Keep Us Watching



A single tear on a rain-soaked face, the hush before a kiss, the way silence fills a hospital corridor—these aren't accidents. They're designed.

Culturally, K-dramas carry a sense of sincerity that modern storytelling often sidesteps. They're unabashed about love, family, tradition, and sacrifice. They don't treat sentiment as weakness. That's part of why global audiences connect—there's honesty beneath the polish.

But K-dramas have evolved. Beyond romance, they now tackle social pressure, mental health, corruption, and gender roles. Shows like *It's Okay to Not Be Okay* or *My Mister* dig into emotional scars without melodrama. Others like *Crash Landing on You* or *Reply 1988* celebrate connection and nostalgia. Even the outlandish ones—*Goblin*, *Vincenzo*, *Sweet Home*—carry a beating human heart under their high-concept surfaces. What keeps people watching isn't just the cliffhangers. It's the empathy. K-dramas remind us that feelings are worth taking seriously, that beauty can live in small moments, and that even the most predictable love story can feel like the first time if told with truth.

That's the essence of K-dramas: not just drama, but humanity—carefully written, beautifully shot, and quietly universal.

At their core, K-dramas understand emotion. They don't rush it. A look across a crowded street, a brief hand touch, a quiet confession—these moments carry weight. The storytelling leans into tension and release, not instant gratification. Even in fantasy or thriller plots, human feeling is the anchor. The heartbreak, loyalty, guilt, and hope always feel earned.

Part of the appeal comes from how K-dramas treat characters. Heroes are rarely perfect; villains often have reasons for what they do. The moral lines blur, but the emotional truth stays clear.

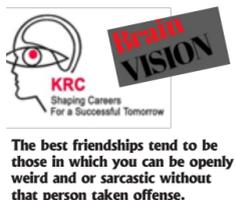
A typical series might start as a lighthearted rom-com, only to unfold into something deeper about loss, forgiveness, or identity. You end up caring about people who don't exist because they're written as if they could.

Then there's the craft. Korean directors know how to build atmosphere. The lighting is deliberate, the music does half the storytelling, and every episode feels cinematic.



**RAJKUMMAR**

There's something about Korean dramas that pulls people in. Maybe it's the way they balance emotion and restraint, or how they can make a love story feel both familiar and brand new. Whatever the reason, K-dramas have become more than just entertainment—they're a cultural language spoken across continents.



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## Prof (Dr.) Sukamal Deb on NEIR: A Movement of Unity, Cultural Pride, and Rediscovery of Northeast's Living Heritage



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### RECOGNISING the UNRECOGNISED

#### SHILLONG:

At the foothills of Meghalaya, in the quiet greens of Ri-Bhoi district, something remarkable unfolded on October 17. The pre-launch of the North East Integration Rally (NEIR) was not a routine event. It was the first spark of a movement — one that seeks to connect eight states through their shared soul. While delivering the keynote speech at the ceremony, Prof. (Dr.) Sukamal Deb, Adviser to the NEIR and Lead of the Project of 40 Languishing Crafts of the Northeast under the KRC Foundation, spoke not as an administrator or academic, but as a believer in the region's collective destiny.

"The NEIR is not a show-piece," he said, his words calm yet charged with conviction. "It's a living movement — a journey to rediscover who we are as people, as communities, and as a civilisation that has thrived in diversity for centuries." He is a dedicated advocate for inclusive development, having worked with the government for over three decades on initiatives for the North East Region. Currently, he is affiliated with several universities and serves as the nominee of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi at the Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University, New Delhi.

#### A MOVEMENT BORN OF VISION

The North East Integration Rally 2026, conceptualised by Biswadeep Gupta, Founder of the KRC Foundation, is envisioned as one of the most ambitious cultural journeys in the region's history. Over a month, it will travel across all eight Northeastern states — Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim — showcasing not only their art and music but the living stories of their people.

For Prof Deb, the NEIR represents more than logistics or performance. "This is not merely a parade of diversity," he ex-

plained. "It's a reminder that our differences are our strength, and our shared identity is our foundation."

He credited Biswadeep Gupta for conceiving an initiative that moves beyond token celebration. "Biswadeep's vision has turned culture into a mission," Deb said. "He understands that culture is not ornamental — it's essential. If we ignore it, we lose the root of progress itself."

#### THE SYMBOLISM OF A NEW BEGINNING

The NEIR is set to begin in January 2026, deliberately timed with the dawn of a new year. For Prof Deb, that choice carries deep meaning. "Every new year brings hope, but this one should bring confidence," he said. "Starting the rally at that moment signals a new chapter — one of solidarity, self-belief, and cultural pride."

Throughout its journey, the rally will host performances, exhibitions, and interactions designed to capture the Northeast's full range of cultural expression. Yet, as Deb emphasised, it is not spectacle but substance that defines NEIR's intent.

"The Northeast is too often seen in fragments — each state boxed in, each identity simplified. The NEIR aims to tell the whole story," he said. "It's about resilience, coexistence, and the creativity that binds our people together."

#### REDISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN HANDS

At the heart of the NEIR lies one of its most compelling undertakings — the Project of 40 Languishing Crafts of the Northeast. Led by Prof Deb himself under the KRC Foundation, the project seeks to identify, document, and revive traditional crafts teetering on the brink of extinction.

"These crafts are not museum pieces," he said firmly. "They are living traditions that carry our collective memory. When we revive them, we are not only saving art; we are re-

storing dignity and livelihood."

Across villages and valleys, from Nagaland's bamboo weavers to Tripura's handloom artists, thousands of artisans continue their work in silence, often unseen by policy or market. Many of their crafts have no digital record, no institutional recognition. NEIR seeks to change that — not with token awards, but with tangible visibility, training, and economic linkage.

#### THE PROJECT INCLUDES:

Identifying and documenting artisans across all eight states.

Honouring master craftsmen with citations, medals, and certificates of excellence.

Creating visual archives — short films, photography, and written documentation.

Showcasing crafts during the rally's journey and in the grand closing ceremony.

Connecting artisans with designers, researchers, and potential markets.

"It's not just about preserving something old," Prof Deb said. "It's about building something sustainable. If people can earn from their craft, tradition becomes a source of life, not nostalgia."

#### HERITAGE AS LIVELIHOOD

India's craft sector employs more than 11 million artisans, second only to agriculture. In the Northeast, it holds unmatched potential for sustainable development, especially among rural women.

Prof Deb sees the NEIR as a platform that unites culture and economy — where preservation meets production. The KRC Foundation also plans to work with the World Crafts Council (WCC-AISBL) to secure World Craft City status for one Northeastern capital, bringing it on par with Srinagar, Jaipur, Mamallapuram, and Mysuru.

"This recognition isn't just a badge," he explained. "It's a way to place the Northeast on the global craft map, where it has

always belonged."

At the end of the rally, the Award of Excellence Ceremony will honour outstanding artisans whose craftsmanship embodies the spirit of the region — innovation grounded in authenticity.

#### WHY THE NORTHEAST MATTERS — AND MUST BE HEARD

Stretching across 4,500 kilometres of international borders and home to over 160 Scheduled Tribes and 220 ethnic groups, the Northeast is both India's frontier and its cultural reservoir. Yet, as Deb reminded the audience, isolation began long before modern politics — when British trade routes with Bhutan, Myanmar, and China were severed, cutting the region off from its historical lifelines.

Today, the Northeast connects to mainland India through the narrow Siliguri Corridor, just 22 kilometres wide. Despite its immense biodiversity and cultural wealth, the region remains economically fragile. Agriculture is constrained by terrain and inputs; industrialisation is slow; and most states depend heavily on central grants.

"The way forward," Deb argued, "isn't only through infrastructure or policy. It's through people — through culture and community-based institutions that can rebuild from within."

#### A LIFELONG MISSION

Prof Deb's words carry weight because they are backed by decades of ground experience. He has worked in nearly 3,000 villages across the Northeast's 44,544 settlements, helping artisans, youth, and local communities build self-reliant systems of livelihood.

"Peace cannot be built on speeches," he said. "It grows from work, income, and dignity."

Globally, 650 million people live in extreme poverty, including 7% of India's population. For Deb, empowerment means giving people the tools to cre-

ate — not wait for help. His approach blends sustainability with participation: community-based development rooted in cultural awareness.

"The NEIR embodies everything I believe in," he said. "Work that uplifts. Culture that connects. Identity that unites."

#### FROM MOVEMENT TO MINDSET

As preparations gather pace, anticipation is rising across the Northeast. Cultural bodies, universities, and local institutions are aligning with the rally's goals. Artists, musicians, and craft cooperatives are preparing to join the month-long journey.

But for Prof Deb, the true success of NEIR will not be in numbers or media coverage. "If one young person sees the Northeast differently — as whole, proud, and creative — then the movement has already begun," he said.

In his closing words, he called the NEIR "a call to move — not just across borders, but across minds and hearts."

"The Northeast's greatest strength has always been its unity in diversity," he added. "This rally will make that truth visible, mile after mile."

#### THE ROAD AHEAD

The North East Integration Rally 2026 is not simply a cultural expedition. It's a statement of intent — that the Northeast will define its future through its own voice, its own crafts, and its own people.

In doing so, it aims to revive what has always set the region apart: its ability to weave diversity into harmony and heritage into hope.

As the rally's motto says, "Reviving Heritage, Empowering Artisans, Reclaiming the Cultural Soul of the Northeast."

If the movement succeeds, it won't just connect eight states; it will reconnect a region with itself — and in that rediscovery, the Northeast may finally find the recognition it has long deserved.

