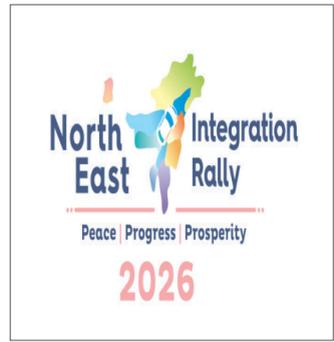




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STAY-ENRICHED



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PERSPECTIVE
The minds of youth are easily corrupted, which is why the corrupt ply their propaganda to the youth ~ Elon Musk

CBSE launches first sub-regional office in Tripura

AGARTALA
In a major development for education in Tripura, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has inaugurated its first-ever sub-regional office in Agartala today, October 4.

The new office aims to simplify CBSE-related processes for schools, teachers, and students across Tripura. Until now, CBSE-affiliated schools in the state had to liaise with the Guwahati regional office, often causing delays and logistical difficulties.

An official from the Education Department highlighted the significance of the move, stating, "This is the first sub-regional office in Tripura, addressing a long-standing demand from local educational institutions. Currently, the office is operating from Rabindra Nagar, with plans to set up a dedicated building near the airport soon."

The office will provide a wide range of services, including assistance with admissions, student and subject record corrections, coordination of exam centres, mark sheet updates, grievance redressal, and teacher training programs. Additionally, it will collaborate with state education authorities and regional institutions to ensure smooth conduct of examinations and support initiatives aimed at student development. Officials believe that the establishment of the sub-regional office will greatly benefit students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, improving efficiency, communication, and overall support for the CBSE network in Tripura.

WHO SAID WHAT

Deeply pained by the loss of lives due to a bridge mishap in Darjeeling. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon. The situation in Darjeeling and surrounding areas is being closely monitored in the wake of heavy rains and landslides. We are committed to providing all possible assistance to those affected. ~ Narendra Modi, PM

Global EDM icon Diplo set to rock Shillong's Cherry Blossom Festival

SHILLONG

Three-time Grammy Award winner Diplo will headline the second day of the Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival, organisers announced on October 3, adding another major international name to what is shaping up as one of India's most ambitious music events this year.

The American DJ and producer, ranked among the top 10 most-streamed artists in electronic music history, joins an already stellar lineup that includes Jason Derulo, The Script, and Nora Fatehi on Day 1 of the two-day event scheduled for November 14-15 at JN Stadium, Polo Grounds in Shillong.

Diplo has previously collaborated with Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan for the movie "Jab Harry Met Sejal," where he contributed to the music production and even appeared in the music video for the popular song "Phurr."

This collaboration marked a significant crossover, showcasing Diplo's influence reaching into India's film and music industry, and adding a



global dimension to his artistic portfolio.

Organisers said they are still finalising a live music headliner for Day 2, who will perform alongside Diplo, with details expected in the coming weeks.

The festival has experienced rap-

id growth since its inception, claiming four Gold Awards at Wow Asia last year, including Festival of the Year and Entertainment Event of the Year. Those honours placed it ahead of established events like Sunburn and other major concert tours in India.

Biren Singh and Cabinet Colleagues Rush to Delhi as BJP Pushes for Manipur Government Reinstallation



IMPHAL

Former Manipur Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh, along with three BJP MLAs, flew down in the national capital from Imphal airport to press the central leaders, including the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister, for reinstallation of a BJP-led popular government at the earliest.

N Biren Singh, a leader of the BJP Manipur Pradesh, was accompanied by three BJP MLAs - Heikham Dingo, Tongbram Robindro, and Dr. Sapam

Ranjan, and they are currently in New Delhi on Saturday in a renewed move widely seen by the political observers as a push to restore a popularly elected government in the state.

Former cabinet minister and MLA Leishangthem Susindro Meitei, who is currently in Guwahati, is also expected to join the delegation in the national capital.

There are also reported that additional MLAs, Konthoujam Govindas and Thounaojam Shyamkumar, loyal to N Biren Singh, will follow to

strengthen the team to press the central leaders, reports from the state BJP unit. The political observers believe that the visit by N. Biren Singh and the BJP team comes amid growing demands for the immediate installation of a government from certain quarters that reflects the will of the people.

Reports stated that the delegation is expected to meet BJP Northeast Co-ordinator Sambit Patra before seeking an appointment with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, though no official confirmation has been made regarding meetings with the Prime Minister or the BJP National President.

Amid mounting criticism from political quarters and civil society for the prolonged absence of elected governance in the state, the President's Rule has now been extended until February 13, 2026. Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 13, 2025, following N. Biren Singh's resignation as Chief Minister on February 9 in the midst of ethnic turmoil that cost the lives of over 260 individuals, and approximately 60,000 people of the two warring communities were displaced since May 2, 2023, due to communal violence.

Tripura's Samuel Debbarma tops NE Zone in AITT 2025, honoured by PM



NEW DELHI

In a moment of pride for Tripura, Samuel Debbarma, a trainee of the Mechanic Diesel Trade (2024-25) at Government ITI Teliamur of Kowai District has been declared the Topper of the North-East Zone under the All India Trade Test (AITT) 2025 conducted by the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

Tripura SC Welfare and ARDD Minister Sudhangshu Das announced this and congratulated Samuel on his remarkable achievement, calling it a "proud moment for Tripura" on his Facebook. Samuel received the pres-

tigious award from Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 4th Kaushal Dikshan Samaroh 2025, a recognition that highlights his dedication and hard work in the field of skill development. Minister Das expressed his heartfelt congratulations, stating, "Receiving this esteemed award from the Prime Minister is a testament to Samuel's perseverance and excellence. It is indeed a matter of great pride for our state."

He said this achievement not only brings recognition to Samuel but also showcases the quality of training and skill development being imparted at Govt. ITI Teliamura, encouraging more students to excel in technical education and vocational training.

Northeast's Spirit Shines Bright at NEST Fest 2025 Finale in Delhi

NEW DELHI

Delhi's Talkatora Stadium came alive with colours, sounds, and flavours of the Northeast; performers from Maharashtra and Punjab were here too, which makes it feel like all corners of India unite to understand each other better," she added. Mizo band Lilac and Jack, performing for the first time outside their state, said the festival gave them a valuable platform. "Last year also some Mizo artistes performed here. This festival gives us a big enough platform to reach audiences beyond our state," a band member said. Organised by My Home India, NEST Fest celebrates the diversity of the Northeast and aims to bridge communities through dialogue and culture. "This 'My Home' concept is rooted in the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - the world is one family," said the organisation's founder Sunil Deodhar. "We started with the thought that our country is our home. Now, countries in Africa like Nigeria and Mali are showing interest in starting 'My Home' chapters in their nations. In the coming years, we hope this festival becomes a truly global celebration of unity," he said. Deodhar said My Home India was founded with the vision of connecting the Northeast with the rest of India and works to promote national integration through cultural exchange and outreach initiatives that highlight the talent and traditions of the region. As the evening drew to a close, music and laughter echoed across the venue - a reminder, perhaps, that "home is not just a place, but a feeling shared across borders".

at this time, especially because one of my favourite artistes from Assam was performing." "It's not just about the culture of the Northeast; performers from Maharashtra and Punjab were here too, which makes it feel like all corners of India unite to understand each other better," she added. Mizo band Lilac and Jack, performing for the first time outside their state, said the festival gave them a valuable platform. "Last year also some Mizo artistes performed here. This festival gives us a big enough platform to reach audiences beyond our state," a band member said. Organised by My Home India, NEST Fest celebrates the diversity of the Northeast and aims to bridge communities through dialogue and culture. "This 'My Home' concept is rooted in the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - the world is one family," said the organisation's founder Sunil Deodhar. "We started with the thought that our country is our home. Now, countries in Africa like Nigeria and Mali are showing interest in starting 'My Home' chapters in their nations. In the coming years, we hope this festival becomes a truly global celebration of unity," he said. Deodhar said My Home India was founded with the vision of connecting the Northeast with the rest of India and works to promote national integration through cultural exchange and outreach initiatives that highlight the talent and traditions of the region. As the evening drew to a close, music and laughter echoed across the venue - a reminder, perhaps, that "home is not just a place, but a feeling shared across borders".

Forensic report on Zubeen Garg's death due October 10

GUWAHATI

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has informed that the forensic report on the death of cultural icon Zubeen Garg will be furnished by October 10, adding that crucial details surrounding the incident in Singapore will become clearer once the viscera findings are available.

"On October 10, the viscera report will come. So, we will come to know on October 11 what actually happened," Sarma told the press, responding to queries after visiting Garg's residence in Kahilipara on Saturday evening. Also Read - Singapore to give Zubeen's autopsy report solely to family; not for public release: SIT Advertisement The Chief Minister's remarks came amid claims by Garg's bandmate and one of the accused, Sekhar Jyoti Goswami, who reportedly told investigators that the singer was poisoned. Clarifying that the statement did not originate from the police, Sarma said, "Now, why has he made that statement? Is it to safeguard himself or to blame someone else? These things will be revealed during the investigation."

Garg's viscera samples were sent to the Central Forensic Laboratory (CFL) for detailed examination on September 24. The Chief Minister also appealed to the people of Assam to mount moral pressure on the Assamese



community in Singapore, urging those who were present on the yacht with Garg to come forward and cooperate with the ongoing probe.

"Assam Police cannot go to Singapore, so it cannot take up the investigation there. They (Assamese community members) are in Singapore, and it is not under my jurisdiction. Unless they come here, nobody will be able to join the dots," Sarma said. The state CID, which is investigating the case, has issued notices to several members of the Assam Association, Singapore, to appear before it by October 6. "Their parents stay in Assam. So, we, the people of Assam, must put pressure on the parents to ask their wards to come here for the probe," Sarma added. He cautioned that if the individuals failed to turn up by the deadline, "we will have to enter

another cycle," without elaborating. So far, more than 60 FIRs have been lodged across Assam against organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta and around 10 others, including Garg's manager Siddharth Sharma and band members Goswami and Amrit Prabha Mahanta. All four have been arrested and are currently under 14-day police remand. Meanwhile, the Assam government has constituted a one-man judicial commission, headed by Justice Soumitra Saikia of the Gauhati High Court, to probe Garg's death. The Chief Minister said the sitting judge will also have the authority to oversee the ongoing CID investigation. "It is a kind of body which will also take care of the proofs, and if they find that we are doing something wrong, the judicial commission will be able to be stricter on us. It will be a completely independent commission," Sarma said, adding that this was the first time a sitting High Court judge had been entrusted with such a task in the state. Garg, one of Assam's most beloved cultural figures, died under mysterious circumstances in Singapore on September 19. He had gone there to attend the fourth edition of the North East India Festival, organised by Mahanta and his company. The singer reportedly drowned while swimming during a yacht trip with members of the Assamese community based in Singapore.

www.northeastintegrationrally.in



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WHEN CHAMPIONS REFUSE THE CUP

The 2025 ICC Asia Cup, which opened under clouds of bitterness, has ended with a thunder-clap. India, undefeated throughout the tournament, humiliated Pakistan not once, not twice, but thrice in the space of two weeks, a clean 3-0 sweep. The crescendo was the Dubai final, where the men in blue thrashed their old rivals to clinch a record ninth Asia Cup title. Yet, when the smoke of fireworks cleared, there was no glittering silverware in Indian hands. Instead, there was a phantom gesture, India's captain Suryakumar Yadav lifting an "imaginary trophy," the players laughing, arms aloft to the sky, and the crowd roaring its approval.

Why? Because India had refused to accept the cup from Mohsin Naqvi, Pakistan's Interior Minister and the chair of the Asian Cricket Council. The refusal was more a principle. To have accepted it from the very hand that represents Pakistan's ruling power, a government accused of sponsoring the Pahalgam massacre earlier this year, where 26 innocent Indian civilians were slain, would have been a betrayal of memory, a desecration of grief.

More than a tournament, this Asia Cup was the extension of April's brutal four-day aerial war between India and Pakistan, missiles, drones, dogfights in the sky, bases struck and destroyed. It was fought under the shadow of Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Modi's name for India's retaliatory campaign. "Outcome is the same, India wins," Modi declared after the final, repeating his earlier parliamentary speech. The metaphor was clear: whether on battlefield or cricket field, India had asserted supremacy.

Some called it jingoism but for millions of Indians still mourning the Pahalgam victims, the metaphor rang true. Sport and war were no longer separate theatres. Cricket itself had become a weapon of diplomacy and more accurately of defiance.

Naqvi, the ACC chief who also wears the hat of Pakistan's Interior Minister, insisted on presiding over the trophy ceremony. India made it clear they would not accept silverware from him. Rather than quietly stepping aside, Naqvi petulantly withdrew the trophy and medals altogether, leaving the victors to pose with shadows and emojis. It was a farce unworthy of an international competition, yet perfectly emblematic of Pakistan's politicisation of cricket.

To critics who carp that India disrespected "the spirit of the game," one must respond: what spirit was left when PCB's own head politicised the event with war-tinted tweets? When Pakistani players mimed crashing jets and mock gunshots towards Indian fans?

When even the handshake, that simple gesture of mutual respect, became impossible because Indian players had buried their comrades and countrymen earlier this year?

From the very first match, India's stance was stark. No handshakes at the toss. No smiles at the close. Three matches, three cold shoulders. Was it rude? Certainly. Was it justified? Absolutely. A neighbour that exports terror, cannot expect courtesy on the crease.

Pakistan's head coach lamented that "even when Indo-Pak relations were worse, we still shook hands." But he forgets: never before had an Interior Minister of Pakistan sat atop the ACC dais, never before had a PCB chief so nakedly entwined cricket with war narratives. This was not "sport as bridge." It was sport as theatre of humiliation. India, by withholding its hand, was holding its line.

History reminds us that athletes, too, protest when principle demands. Cassius Clay later Muhammad Ali, disgusted by racial injustice at home, famously threw his 1960 Rome Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River. He would rather lose a medal than betray his conscience. India's cricketers did the same in Dubai.

They refused a trophy not because they disdained it, but because the hands offering it were tainted. Better an empty podium than a poisoned chalice. Better a shadow trophy held aloft in jest, than a gleaming cup that mocked the tears of Pahalgam.

Yet let us not be distracted by theatre alone. On the field, India's dominance was breathtaking.

Unbeaten in the entire Asia Cup, sweeping aside Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and, most memorably, Pakistan, thrice 37 victories in their last 40 T20 internationals, stretching back to 2023, a streak unmatched in cricket's annals. Nine Asia Cups in the cabinet, cementing India as the continent's unchallenged master.

More than just cricketer strength, it is the projection of a nation's confidence, its preparation, its unity of purpose. Pakistan, by contrast, appeared fractured, politicised, bereft of resilience. Their sledging was loud, their performances limp. Their cricket mirrored their polity: divided, defensive, delusional.

No less shameful were the words from Pakistan's cricket establishment. In the midst of the tournament, PCB officials tweeted analogies to "military victories," dragging sport into the gutter of propaganda. Such behavior only underscored India's wisdom in refusing symbolic courtesies. When the governing body of cricket doubles as a megaphone for military triumphalism, cricket ceases to be sport. It becomes an extension of the battlefield. By contrast, India's players donated their match fees to the Indian Army, a gesture of solidarity, not provocation. Pakistan's squad tried to mirror it by pledging to "victims of Indian attacks," a symmetry that fooled no one. One was solidarity with defenders of the homeland. The other was a political stunt, absolving their own state of culpability. Critics may wring their hands that "no one looks good" after this fiasco. They are wrong. India looks good because it looks strong. It looks principled. It looks unwilling to bend knee to hypocrisy. Sport is supposed to ennoble. But sport cannot exist in a vacuum, isolated from blood and memory. To insist that Indian players should smile, shake hands, bow for trophies, is to demand amnesia. India chose remembrance instead. In doing so, they elevated their victory beyond runs and wickets, beyond finals and medals.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If a thief helps a poor man out of the spoils of his thieving, we must not call that charity. Dante Alighieri

DRIVING THROUGH SHELLING!



DR A S BHATIA

It was around 4:30 AM on the morning of 10th May 2025 when the stray dogs, although not the right nomenclature for these fox breeds, started barking madly and loudly, piercing through the ever-peaceful early morning of the Mehra campus, which is surrounded by the beautiful hills of Government Medical College Rajouri. I, being an early riser, was preparing a cup of lemon tea as usual and, while holding the cup, came out of my room onto the terrace just to look for the abnormal crying of these dogs, as the campus is home to about five hundred girls and boys, and at each and every moment we are concerned about their well-being and safety. I saw the dogs holding their heads towards the sky and making a mad noise. I looked upward. What I saw was a strange thing for me—the sky was covered with red fiery lines. I could hear the deafening sounds of explosions. As I was trying to understand the situation, my mobile phone started ringing. The call was from a staffer: "Sir, shelling has started from across the border, they are targeting the civilian population of Rajouri."

"Hanish!!! Come out!" I shouted loudly to my driver, who was sleeping in the adjoining room. And I rushed towards my room.

"Harleen calling—the screen of my phone started blinking. I picked up the call.

"Jeet, shelling has started. Where are you?" was the simple query from my wife.

"Me, in the campus," was my two-word reply in the environment of fear and uncertainty.

"You should have been in the hospital at this time." The voice was calm, bold, and fearless.

By that time, I was wearing my red-colored T-shirt over my black trousers, and while putting on my slippers, I told Hanish to take out the car. He stared at me; by this time, he had understood the gravity of the situation. The enemies across the border had started arbitrary firing, including artillery shelling. I smiled. "Yes, we will drive to the hospital."

The Associated Hospital GMC Rajouri is about ten kilometers from our campus. In no time we were driving down the hills

towards Rajouri town amidst the darkness of the surrounding mountains, which were looking very dreadful on that early morning. While driving, Hanish pointed towards the sky through the windscreen and screamed, "Sir, look!!"

I bent my neck slightly downwards in order to have a look at the sky from the front seat of the car.

"Yes, these are drones, but these are very high, heading towards Jammu. Don't panic and look sideways whether one is coming towards us also!" I replied jokingly in a loud voice as the entire area was witnessing the terrific sounds of firing and blasts.

He looked towards me with very strange expressions on his face and pressed the accelerator in an attempt to get far away from the reach of falling shells. By this time, the entire administration of Rajouri had swung into full action. The electricity supply of the entire town was snapped off, and an undeclared blackout was imposed to protect the residents of Rajouri town. We also switched off the headlights of our car, but it became very difficult to drive down the hills of Mehra campus as the Moon was also hiding somewhere at that time, and the entire area got engulfed in dead darkness. We had to stop our car on a sharp turn as the edge of the road was not visible. I came out of the car. Shelling was continuously going on, and we could sense the shells falling on the civilian population, violating all norms of the Geneva Conference.

I decided to drive the car while using parking lights and started our seemingly unending journey towards the hospital, with occasional bright flickering lights falling on the hilly road from the shells in the surrounding areas.

"GOD BE WITH YOU"—a message got displayed on the screen of my phone. It was from the Administrative Secretary, Health and Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rashid Shah, who was constantly in touch with me since 4:45 AM and was enquiring about the current situation and the safety of the staff. It was a pleasant experience when your administrators are with you in difficult times and you feel more motivated.

We were crossing the airfield Rajouri just then when a shell fell about 100 metres behind us on a two-storey small house. We had to stop our car and bow down with our forehead, nose, both hands, knees, and all toes touching the car seat mattress. The very next moment, a shell fell on a parked car about 200 metres in front of us, and there was a loud explosion. It was a terrible sight. The entire area was engulfed in dust and smoke. The windowpanes were broken, and splinters breached the sides of the car and sprayed both outside and inside the parked vehicle. After a halt of a few minutes, we again decided to move towards the hospital in a state of shock and bewilderment.

"Sir, Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Rajouri Dr. Raj Kumar Thappa is injured in the shelling," a call from the office of the District Development Commissioner said.

That was shocking for me, as just a day before, both of us had attended the review meeting chaired by the Deputy Chief Minister in the DAK Bungalow Rajouri. More heart-wrenching was the fact that I had invited Dr. Raj Kumar Thappa, a close friend of mine and a long-time associate from Government Medical College Jammu, for dinner and had requested him to stay with me for the night. But fate had something else in store. I had called the ADC during the evening and enquired at what time he would come.

"Sir, I am too busy and also have to finish some of my important official assignments. Let us postpone it for tomorrow."

I was not agreeing and said I am sending my driver to pick him up. "Please do come, Dr. Thappa!" I pleaded.

But the spirit of duty was so high in Dr. Raj Kumar Thappa that he politely refused and said he had to do some urgent official work during the night. I was now left with no choice but to accept his arguments.

I was filled with some unexplainable fear on hearing this news and pressed my foot on the accelerator.

I reached the emergency of the hospital, and by that time the ambulance carrying the injured ADC had arrived, and he was being shifted to the resuscitation room. I ran after

him, laid him on the resuscitation table, but by that time we had lost a brilliant officer. A Pakistani shell had landed on his official residence in DC Colony, Rajouri town, and the flying splinters pierced into his abdomen and chest. He sustained multiple grievous injuries and lost his life while being shifted to the hospital. Dr. Raj Kumar Thappa laid down his life in the line of duty and made the supreme sacrifice for the cause of the Nation. I was totally shattered and sat down on the floor with trembling legs. By this time, the entire district administration had reached the hospital, defying the continuous shelling. I could see the tears rolling down the eyes of the District Development Commissioner, Rajouri.

Saheedo ki Chitaa par lagega har baras mela

Watan par mitne walon ka yahi nishaan hoga

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Nothing wrong with having the Union Jack in a corner of our flag. We must take note of virtues of the British - MK Gandhi
The virtuous British killed 35 million Indians, manufactured 12 famines, drove our life expectancy to a mere 32 years, looted \$ 45 trillion, broke us in two.

~ Anand Ranganathan, Author & Political Commentator, critical of MK Gandhi, Father of the Nation



TACKLING OBESITY AND MALNUTRITION HEAD-ON: THE MISSION SAKSHAM ANGANWADI AND POSHAN 2.0 STRATEGY

SMT. ANNPURNA DEVI

In 2018, under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Poshan Abhiyan was launched as a flagship scheme to transform Bharat's nutritional landscape. With its emphasis on inclusive growth and social development, Poshan Abhiyan has laid the foundation for a well-nourished and empowered nation and has emerged as a key pillar in our journey towards Viksit Bharat@2047. In pursuit of this goal, the Ministry of Women and Child Development is resolved to build a New Bharat where every child is well-nourished, every mother is empowered, and every citizen can thrive.

Through Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, we aim to improve nutritional outcomes in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers and to develop and promote practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity. The nucleus of the operation is a network of 14 lakh Anganwadi Centres through which the Ministry is supporting around 10 crore beneficiaries.

The Ministry is nourishing the future by supporting the health and nutrition of

over 8 crore children across the nation. At the heart of this effort is the Supplementary Nutrition Programme, delivering wholesome Hot Cooked Meals (HCM) to children and Take-Home Rations (THR) to all beneficiaries, aiming to bridge the crucial gap between Recommended Dietary Allowance and the Average Daily Intake. By embracing diet diversity and championing local and traditional foods like Shri Anna- millets, jowar, bajra, ragi, etc. - we are endeavouring to ensure that every child receives the fuel they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

While we have made headway in creating a programme to address stunting and wasting amongst children, we are aiming to address another major nutrition indicator- overweight incidence and obesity. According to WHO, childhood obesity can have dire consequences for children as they enter adulthood, increasing the risk of non-communicable diseases like Type 2 Diabetes and hypertension.

A study by University of Southern California with the University of California Berkeley and McGill University, found that children facing sugar restrictions during their first 1,000 days, including in utero during pregnancy, showed lower risk of developing

Type 2 diabetes and lower risk of hypertension as adults.

To address this, and to improve the overall quality of Supplementary Nutrition, the Ministry has issued an advisory to the States and UTs, keeping in line with recommendations from the WHO and National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).

According to the WHO, sugar intake should be reduced to 10% of the total daily energy intake for adults as well as children. The WHO also suggests a further reduction of free sugars to 5% of daily energy intake.

The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) recommends no added sugar for children under the age of 2 years and recommends that sugar should be less than 5% of the daily energy intake for all age and gender groups, including pregnant women as part of a balanced diet.

Our Ministry has advised the States and Union Territories to restrict use of refined sugar, use jaggery where needed and even then, to restrict it to less than 5% of total intake. We have requested that salt usage may be minimized. We are also encouraging the reduction of sweet offerings as part of the Morning Snack and HCM.

We are encouraging the development

of THR recipes that exclude added salt and sugar, and restrict use of foods high in fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS). We have urged that ingredients must comply with Food Safety and Standards Regulations 2011 and Food Safety and Standards (Food for Infant Nutrition) Regulations, 2020. By saying no to excess sugar, India is saying yes to a future free from obesity, and related diseases like hypertension and diabetes.

To promote traditional food, the Ministry offers Pushtahar, nutritious pre-mixes made from seasonal, local ingredients and cereals like ragi, millets, and Bengal gram. Pushtahar is a healthier and more versatile alternative to store-bought mixes, providing local, seasonal flavours and wholesome nutrition.

Our Hon'ble Prime Minister stated, "by making small changes in our food habits, we can make our future stronger, fitter and disease-free." In this AmritKaal, our children should have access to nutritious food and adequate calories. More importantly, the food they have should not only be adequate, but wholesome, contributing to their holistic growth and development.

Smt. Annpurna Devi, Union Minister of Women and Child Development

“Shekhar Jyoti Goswami extorted money from producers”, claims artist Prasenjit Lahon

GUWAHATI

In a startling revelation, renowned Assamese artist Prasenjit Lahon has levelled serious allegations against musician Shekharjyoti Goswami and others during a Facebook Live session, calling for a thorough investigation into the alleged malpractice surrounding the late music legend Zubeen Garg's professional circle.

Lahon claimed that ongoing investigations have identified Zubeen Garg's manager Shyamkanu Mahanta as the alleged key figures in the controversy. According to him, both individuals were arrested on the same day Zubeen's Adyosradha ceremony was held in Jorhat. Alongside them, Amritprabha Mahanta and Shekharjyoti Goswami were also reportedly taken into custody by the Assam Police.

Speaking about the individuals involved, Lahon clarified that he had never personally met Amritprabha Mahanta,



remarking that “she doesn't appear to be an artist.” However, he confirmed that he had interacted with Shekharjyoti Goswami several times, both in person and over the phone, regarding work-related matters.

Lahon alleged that Goswami, who served as the recordist at Zubeen Garg's studio, had been extorting Rs 3,000-Rs5,000 from each producer per song recorded. He further added that Goswami, a resident of Gariaon, Jalukbari, collected the amount as a travel charge for recording services at Zubeen's studio.

The artist went on to highlight Zubeen Garg's unmatched dedication to music, revealing that the singer recorded five to six songs daily even while battling poor health. Remarkably, he mentioned that Zubeen once recorded 36 songs in a single day at Jorhat's DCG Studio in 2005 — a record-worthy feat that could have entered the Guinness Book of World Records, had proper documentation been maintained.

Recounting his own experience, Lahon said that last year, he had recorded five songs with renowned lyricist Arup Dutta, after which the production responsibilities were handed over to Goswami. However, he alleged that Shekharjyoti became unresponsive, repeatedly postponing recording schedules and making excuses such as being unwell or unavailable.

Lahon further remarked that had Zubeen not worked with Shekharjyoti, he might have recorded as many as one lakh songs by now, alleging that the recordist ran a business and engaged in brokerage under the guise of music recording.

In his concluding statement, Prasenjit Lahon appealed to the Assam government to ensure a fair and transparent probe into the alleged irregularities linked to Zubeen Garg's professional and personal circle, stressing that the late artist's legacy deserves justice and protection from exploitation.

Biometric enrollment of Myanmar nationals in Mizoram reaches 37 per cent

AIZAWL

The Mizoram Home Department has reported that biometric enrollment of Myanmar nationals residing in the state has reached 37.40 per cent, covering 11,683 individuals out of the total 31,235 currently sheltered in Mizoram. According to official figures, the registered population includes 3,319 males, 3,594 females, and 4,790 minors under the age of 18. The enrollment drive, which commenced in July, has made steady progress in districts with smaller migrant populations but has faced slower advancement in Champhai, Siaha, and Lawngtlai—areas that host the highest concentration of Myanmar nationals. “Biometric enrollment is nothing to fear. However, those who refuse to participate will be regarded as illegal migrants and may face deportation,” an official stated, emphasizing the government's position on ensuring lawful identification.

The process, however, has encountered several logistical challenges. Poor internet connectivity, continuous cross-border inflow, and frequent return migration have disrupted data consistency and slowed the overall pace of enrollment. Additionally, while many Myanmar nationals live in designated relief camps, others are scattered across rented accommodations, requiring extensive field outreach by enrollment teams. It is worth recalling that the Centre had earlier instructed the Mizoram government to carry out biometric registration of Myanmar nationals. Initially, the state government resisted the directive, citing concerns that collected data might be shared with the Myanmar authorities via embassy channels. The Union Government later resolved the issue by approving enrollment through the Foreigners Identification Portal (FIP), ensuring that the process could proceed securely and independently.

Manipur police arrest six militants, seize weapons cache in statewide crackdown

IMPHAL

Manipur Police dismantled a militant recruitment operation over two days, arresting a 23-year-old man suspected of enlisting youths for the proscribed Revolutionary People's Front and its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army.

Leimapokpam Marjit Singh, known by the alias Khaba, was detained at his residence in Hiyanglam Makha Leikai on October 3. Authorities seized a mobile phone during the raid, which they believe contains evidence of his recruitment activities in Kakching district.

The arrest was part of a broader crackdown that netted six militants across multiple districts. Security forces also apprehended a 44-year-old RPF/PLA cadre, Wangkhem Santikumar Singh, from Bishnupur district, the same day.

Two additional RPF/PLA op-

eratives were arrested in Imphal West's Chingmeirong area. Police allege the men, aged 31 and 27, ran an extortion racket targeting valley residents and mediated debt collection disputes through threats. Officers recovered a loaded .45 Glock pistol with 11 rounds, three mobile phones, cash totaling Rs 1.26 lakh, a four-wheeler, and related documents.

The following day, authorities arrested two members of the Kangleipak Communist Party (PWG) in Imphal East district. Both men, both 44 years old, allegedly extorted money from hospitals, government officials, and civilians across the valley region.

Security forces separately recovered a significant weapons cache near Kotlen in Kangpokpi district on October 4. The haul included a Heckler & Koch G4 rifle, four other firearms, two improvised mortars, two hand grenades, and a tube launcher.

Garima Saikia Garg returns Zubeen's autopsy report, says it's not her personal property

GUWAHATI

Late singer Zubeen Garg's wife, Garima Saikia Garg, on Saturday confirmed that she has returned the post-mortem report of the singer to the Investigation Officer, stating that it is not her personal property.

“I don't want to keep anything that might either assist or obstruct the investigation. I believe the report is not my private property. Since the investigation is ongoing, I have returned it to the Investigation Officer,” Garima said.

She reiterated her trust in the judiciary and the government's handling of the case. “I don't know anyone from the Judicial Commission, but I trust that the government's decisions are moving in the right direction—because this is about Zubeen Garg. I have deep faith in the law,” she added.

Addressing the recent



statement by Shekharjyoti Goswami about Zubeen being given poison, Garima demanded strict punishment against those responsible. “If Shekhar knew the truth, why did he hide it for so long? In that case, the guilty must face the harshest possible punishment,” said Garima. Also Read - UPPL

port of the first post-mortem in Singapore was handed to Garima earlier on Thursday. A nine-member Special Investigation Team (SIT), constituted under the CID, is currently investigating the circumstances of the singer's mysterious death.

In addition, the Assam government has set up a one-man Judicial Commission to carry out a parallel inquiry into the case. Zubeen Garg had travelled to Singapore to participate in the 4th edition of the NorthEast India Festival, organised by Shyamkanu Mahanta and his company. Following his death, festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, Garg's manager Siddharth Sharma, and two band members—Shekharjyoti Goswami and Amritprabha Mahanta—were arrested and have been remanded to 14 days of police custody.

Armenian, Polish troupes bring traditional folk performances to Shillong festival

SHILLONG

International artists from Armenia and Poland captivated audiences at the 9th India International Folk Festival, marking a significant cultural exchange in Meghalaya.

The event, held at LARITI Multipurpose Hall in Mawkasiang on October 2, brought together performers from two countries separated by thousands of miles yet united through artistic expression. Hay Astger (Armenian Stars), Nane Folk Dance Ensemble from Armenia, and Ziemia Bydgoska from Poland travelled specifically to showcase their nations' heritage through music and dance.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Zonal Office for North East, working alongside



Meghalaya's Department of Arts & Culture, coordinated the festival as part of nationwide celebrations held simultaneously in New Delhi and other Indian cities.

The timing coincides with ICCR's 75th anniversary year, during which the organisation plans to send three Meghalaya cultural troupes abroad. The acclaimed

Shillong Chamber Choir will represent the state and country in London this December.

Earlier, on September 26, the State Central Library at IGP hosted a painting competition exploring the theme “Seva Parv- Vision of Viksit Bharat Ke Rang Kala ke Sang,” focusing on culture and tradition.

The North East Zone Cultural

Centre, under the Ministry of Culture, partnered with the state's Arts & Culture Department to organise the event, which drew 41 participants across three categories.

Professional category winner Balaiaon Kharnag Kynta led a field of 10 adult artists, while Fasterfield Rynthiang topped the college division. About 21 school participants, Nelsynthel Sitlhou claimed first place.

The Director of Arts & Culture for Meghalaya presided over the closing ceremony, commending participants for their creativity and urging continued participation in cultural programs. Three additional school students—Sanikanan Chailam, Smaran Nath, and Tanushree Choudhury—received consolation prizes for their efforts.

Cooperation from Assamese Association in Singapore extremely crucial in Zubeen's death probe: Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has emphasized the need for active cooperation from the Assamese Association in Singapore to ensure a fair and comprehensive investigation into the mysterious death of celebrated singer-actor Zubeen Garg.

Addressing reporters on Saturday, October 4 the Chief Minister said that certain individuals currently in Singapore are crucial to the ongoing investigation. “If the people in Singapore do not come to Assam, the probe cannot be conducted properly. It is important that the local community urges them to participate so that the truth can emerge. Without their cooperation, the matter could go in circles again,” Sarma said.

Dr. Sarma clarified that his recent visit to the Kahilipara residence of the late singer was personal and not connected to the ongoing investigation. “I spent some time with Garima Saikia Garg, Zubeen's father, and other family members as a gesture of solidarity. I did not discuss the case, investigations, or legal matters with them. I am here to share their grief,” he stated.

The Chief Minister revealed that the Viscera report, expected on October 10, 2025, will be pivotal to determining the cause of death. “By October 11, we will have a clearer understanding of what

happened to Zubeen,” he said.

Responding to claims made by Shekhar Goswami, who alleged that Zubeen was poisoned, Sarma maintained that such assertions are witness statements and not verified police findings. “Witnesses can say anything in their statements. The police's role is to record them in the case diary. The investigation will determine whether an accused is defending themselves or trying to mislead the probe,” he explained.

The Chief Minister confirmed that several individuals, including Shekhar, Shyamkanu, and Siddharth, are either under custody or being questioned by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in Assam. However, he reiterated that cooperation from those in Singapore remains critical to uncover the entire truth. Sarma also cautioned that certain statements made in police stations are intended for publicity and should not be mistaken as facts. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to transparency, stating that a judicial commission has already been set up to allow anyone with relevant information to come forward. “The government wants this investigation to be thorough, transparent, and discreet. Only through cooperation from all sides can justice be ensured for Zubeen Garg,” the Chief Minister asserted.

“Come, Experience the Heartbeat of the Northeast” — Biswadeep Gupta Calls for Unity Through the Northeast Integration Rally 2026

IMPHAL:

“Come, experience the heartbeat of the Northeast.” With these words, Biswadeep Gupta, Founder of the Northeast Integration Rally 2026, invites people across India to discover the region's breathtaking landscapes, diverse cultures, and enduring spirit of unity.

Speaking about the inspiration behind the rally, Gupta shared a deeply personal memory from his childhood. Recalling a journey with his younger brother from Shillong to Dimapur three decades ago, he said, “My brother once asked me, ‘Dada, why do people go to Switzerland? This is Switzerland. This is the Northeast.’ Those words have stayed with me ever since — they echo in our hearts even today.”

For Gupta, the rally is more than an event — it's a movement to rediscover and reconnect with the Northeast. He believes that the best way to explore the region is by road, where every turn reveals its natural beauty and human warmth. “We have far better roads today than we did 30 years ago,” he said. “But what matters most is understanding the culture, humility, and enormous potential of the people of the Northeast.”

Gupta emphasised that the region's potential lies not only in its rich flora and



fauna but also in its human resources and strategic geography, which can play a transformative role in India's growth story. However, he noted that this potential can only be realised through peace, progress, and prosperity.

“The most important part of our journey as a region is peaceful coexistence,” he said. “That is why the Northeast is so crucial — it's a power hub for many things in the decades to come.”

The Northeast Integration Rally 2026 aims to celebrate that spirit of unity and adventure. It invites participants from across India and beyond to join a road journey that showcases the beauty, diversity, and promise of the region.

For more information or to join the rally, visit <https://northeastintegrationrally.in/>



Biswadeep Gupta is a public leader and social thinker dedicated to the idea of social re-engineering and inclusive development. With over 29 years of professional experience spanning media, entrepreneurship, business consulting, and training, he has built a diverse career that blends leadership, communication, and social impact. He holds an MBA in Marketing and Human Resources from Assam University (1998-2001) and a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Tripura Engineering College (1991-1995). His schooling

was completed at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Dimapur, Nagaland, where he pursued Higher Secondary Science with Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Biology (1986-1991).

Currently, he serves as the Managing Trustee of the Knowledge Resource Centre Foundation (KRC Foundation), headquartered in Silchar, Assam. The foundation operates KRC Times—a journalistic think tank that engages in both print and digital media—and 5E For Success, an initiative focused on entrepreneurial research, training, and socio-economic consulting.

Over the years, Biswadeep has held several key journalistic roles, including Editor of Manipur Chronicle, Principal Correspondent for Eastern Chronicle (Kolkata and New Delhi), Special Correspondent for Eastern Chronicle (Imphal and the Northeast Region), and Editor of KRC TIMES. He also serves as Vice President of Sankha Press Pvt. Ltd., which publishes three newspapers: Jugashankha, Eastern Chronicle, and The Mizoram Post.

Beyond his professional commitments, Biswadeep is deeply involved in social initiatives. He is the President of the Barak-Manipur Friendship Association and remains active as a writer, journalist, content developer, photographer, presenter, behavioural researcher, and motivator. As a “propreneur,” he channels his passion into areas like training and development, social re-engineering, media and mass communication, coaching, and management consulting—working constantly at the intersection of ideas, people, and purpose.

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Three children go missing every day in Uttarakhand, raising concerns over child safety



DEHRADUN

A deeply alarming trend of missing children continues to plague the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, casting a dark shadow over its image as a peaceful haven.

Despite intensified police vigilance, awareness campaigns, and frequent checkpoints, official data reveals a staggering and deeply concerning rate of disappearances.

According to the latest report from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the fiscal year 2023-24, an average of three children went missing in Uttarakhand every single day.

The report highlights that a total of 1,209 children under the age of 18 were reported missing during this period. The most heartbreaking statistic, however, is the low recovery rate, only 276 of these children have been reunited with their families, leaving a staggering 933 children still unaccounted for.

The report further breaks down the missing minors, 408 boys and 802 girls were reported missing, of whom 128 boys and 148 girls were subsequently found.

Social activists have voiced strong concerns over the persistent crisis. Anoop Nautiyal, founder president of the Social Development for Communities

Foundation, told this newspaper, "This situation is deeply worrisome, especially when the state police run 'Operation Smile' every year specifically to trace missing children."

The opposition has sharply criticised the ruling government's handling of law and order in light of these figures.

Mohan Kala, spokesperson for the Congress party in the state, stated, "The claims of the BJP government, which boasts of a safe and tranquil Uttarakhand, have been completely exposed by this data on law and order. Furthermore, the image of Uttarakhand, famous nationwide for tourism and religious pilgrimage, has been severely tarnished."

Kala added, "There is much fanfare and photo opportunities when claims are made about finding missing children and reuniting them with their families, but the NCRB report released just two days ago has laid bare the reality of police performance."

The NCRB report, which compiles annual crime statistics across the country, also tracks general missing persons cases. In Uttarakhand, a total of 6,532 individuals were reported missing in 2023-24, comprising 3,277 men and 3,255 women. Out of these, the police managed to trace 2,701 missing persons, including 1,688 men and 1,013 women.

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday demanded answers from the government on why India's "once most reliable strategically" Russia is providing military support to Pakistan by supplying engines of Chinese-made JF-17 fighter jets and said it was a failure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personalised brand of diplomacy.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh alleged that Modi's diplomacy prioritises image-building and global spectacle over national interests.

In a post on X, he said the government "must explain why Russia - once India's most reliable strategic ally - has chosen to ignore New Delhi's appeals and proceed with supplying advanced RD-93MA engines to Pakistan's fleet of Chinese-made JF-17 fighter jets."

"The latest Block III variant of this aircraft will feature the upgraded engine and the same PL-15 missiles believed to have been used against our country during Operation Sindoor. The IAF Chief has also stated that the JF-17 may be among the Pakistani fighters that were used against us," he claimed.

Ramesh said according to multiple news reports, this deal is moving forward despite direct interventions by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in June.

"The government owes the nation an explanation as to why a long-time and trusted partner like Russia is now providing military support to Pakistan, even as India



continues to purchase S-400 missile systems and negotiates for Su-57 stealth fighters from Moscow," he said citing a news report.

"This development underscores yet another failure of Prime Minister Modi's personalised brand of diplomacy, which prioritises image-building and global spectacle over national interests," the Congress leader also said.

"Years of high-profile summits, choreographed photo opportunities with hugs, and grandstanding on the world stage have failed to yield substantive outcomes," he claimed.

Ramesh alleged that India remains unable to diplomatically isolate Pakistan.

"Instead, Pakistan's leadership - including its Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir,

whose communally poisonous statements provided the immediate backdrop to the Pahalgam terror attack - is being courted very warmly by President Donald Trump and supplied weapons by President Vladimir Putin, all while enjoying unqualified backing from China during Operation Sindoor," the Congress chief whip in Rajya Sabha said in his post.

INTERNATIONAL

Netanyahu vows to secure release of hostages, disarm Hamas diplomatically or militarily

TELAVIV

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday said he instructed his negotiating team to travel to Egypt to finalise technical details of the deal, which he hoped would see all captives returned in the coming days, ideally during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot starting Monday.

Netanyahu did not specify exact dates for the talks but said they would be limited to a few days.

In addition to the diplomatic push, Netanyahu reaffirmed Israel's determination to disarm Hamas, stating that it would be achieved either through Trump's proposed peace plan or by military means.

"Hamas will be disarmed ... it will happen either diplomatically via Trump's plan or militarily by us," he said in a televised statement. "I also told Washington that. It will be achieved either the easy way or the hard way, but it will be achieved."

The announcement came after reports that two envoys of US President Donald Trump were en route to Egypt to discuss the release, signalling close coordination between Israel and the US.

Two envoys of US President Donald Trump headed to Egypt on Saturday to discuss the release of hostages in Gaza, after Hamas agreed to his ceasefire proposal, while Israeli forces launched deadly strikes across the territory.

Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff were expected to finalise details on the release of hostages and discuss a deal pushed by Trump to end the nearly two-year war between Israel and Hamas, a White House official said.

Egyptian state-linked media reported that Israel and Hamas would also



held indirect talks in Cairo on Sunday and Monday over a detainees and hostages exchange.

The talks come after Trump urged Israel to halt its bombardment of Gaza, following Hamas's announcement that it was ready to release all the hostages and begin negotiations on the ceasefire proposal.

"The movement announces its approval for the release of all hostages - living and remains - according to the exchange formula included in President Trump's proposal," Hamas said in a Friday statement.

Trump later posted on Truth Social: "Based on the Statement just issued by Hamas, I believe they are ready for a lasting PEACE. Israel must immediately stop the bombing of Gaza, so that we can get the Hostages out safely and quickly!"

On Saturday, he had a warning for Hamas, telling the group he would "not tolerate delay" on the peace deal.

Israel meanwhile, conducted deadly strikes across Gaza on Saturday.

At least 39 people were killed since dawn Saturday, according to Mohammed Abu Salmiya, head of Gaza's main Al-Shifa Hospital.

Salmiya said the dead included

34 people killed in Gaza City itself, where Israeli forces have carried out a sweeping air and ground assault in recent weeks.

"The Israeli bombardment on Gaza continues with the same intensity and pattern - air strikes, artillery shelling and quadcopter drone fire are ongoing," said Mohammed al-Mughayyir of Gaza's civil defence, a rescue force operating under Hamas authority.

A Hamas official said Egypt, a mediator in the truce talks, would host a conference for Palestinian factions to decide on Gaza's post-war future.

Al-Qahera News, which is closely linked to Egypt's intelligence service, reported that delegations from Israel and Hamas "have begun moving to launch talks in Cairo tomorrow and the day after, to discuss arranging the ground conditions for the exchange of all detainees and prisoners, in accordance with Trump's proposal."

Trump's plan calls for a halt to hostilities, the release of hostages within 72 hours, a gradual Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Hamas's disarmament.

It also stipulates that Hamas and other factions "not have any role in the governance of Gaza", with administration of the territory instead taken

up by a technocratic body overseen by a post-war transitional authority headed by Trump himself.

"President Trump's demand to stop the war immediately is essential to prevent serious and irreversible harm to the hostages," the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, an Israeli group that has campaigned for the release of captives, said in a statement.

Mahmud Bassal, a spokesman for the Gaza civil defence agency, told AFP that the night was "very violent", adding that 20 homes were destroyed overnight.

The Israeli military said it was operating in Gaza City and warned residents not to return there.

"The IDF (Israeli military) troops are still operating in Gaza City, and returning to it is extremely dangerous. For your safety, avoid returning north or approaching areas of IDF troop activity anywhere - including in the southern Gaza Strip," the military's Arabic-language spokesman, Colonel Avichay Adraee, said on X.

Israeli media reported that the military had shifted to a defensive posture in Gaza following Trump's call, though the military did not confirm this to AFP.

Of those killed in Gaza City, 17 died in an Israeli air strike on the home of the Abdul Aal family in the city's Al-Tuffa neighbourhood, hospitals said.

Jamila al-Sayyid, 24, a resident of Gaza City's Al-Zeitoun neighbourhood, said "I was happy when Trump announced a ceasefire, but the warplanes did not stop."

An AFP journalist in the coastal area of Al-Mawasi reported hearing celebratory cries of "Allahu akbar!" (God is greatest) from tents housing Palestinians as news of Hamas's statement spread.

Sanae Takaichi breaks barriers as Japan's first female ruling party leader



TOKYO

In a country that ranks poorly internationally for gender equality, the new president of Japan's long-governing Liberal Democrats, and likely next prime minister, is an ultra-conservative star of a male-dominated party that critics call an obstacle to women's advancement.

Sanae Takaichi, 64, admires former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and is a proponent of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative vision for Japan.

Takaichi is the first female president of Japan's predominantly male ruling party that has dominated Japan's postwar politics almost without interruption.

She hardly touched on gender issues during the campaign, but on Saturday, as she tried out the party president's chair and posed for a photo as customary for the newly elected leader, Takaichi said: "Now that the LDP has its first female president, its scenery will change a little."

First elected to parliament from her hometown of Nara in 1993, she has served in key party and government posts, including

mentary chambers. Only two of Japan's 47 prefectural governors are women.

A drummer in a heavy-metal band and a motorbike rider as a student, Takaichi has called for a stronger military, more fiscal spending for growth, promotion of nuclear fusion, cybersecurity and tougher policies on immigration.

She vowed to drastically increase female ministers in her government. But experts say she might actually set back women's advancement because as leader she would have to show loyalty to influential male heavyweights. If not, she risks a short-lived leadership. Takaichi has backed financial support for women's health and fertility treatment as part of the LDP policy of having women serve in their traditional roles of being good mothers and wives. But she also recently acknowledged her struggles with menopausal symptoms and stressed the need to educate men about female health to help women at school and work.

Takaichi supports the imperial family's male-only succession, opposes same-sex marriage and a revision to the 19th-century civil law that would allow separate surnames for married couples so that women don't get pressured into abandoning theirs.

She is a wartime history revisionist and China hawk. She regularly visits Yasukuni Shrine, which Japan's neighbors consider a symbol of militarism, though she has declined to say what she would do as prime minister.

Political watchers say her revisionist views of Japan's wartime history may complicate ties with Beijing and Seoul. Her hawkish stance is also a worry for the LDP's longtime partnership with Komeito, a Buddhist-backed moderate party. While she has said the current coalition is crucial for her party, she says she is open to working with far-right groups.

Women comprise only about 15% of Japan's lower house, the more powerful of the two parlia-

Was Zubeen murdered in Singapore? Assam demands justice....



NAVA THAKURIA

Assam's maverick singer Zubeen Garg was always reported extensively by the local media, and his mysterious death, thousands of kilometres away from the motherland, gave enough space for the media fraternity to narrate stories according to their wishes (some claim it as wisdom!). Critics now start making observations that if anyone prefers to experience conflicting media reports following a cult-like personality's demise under an unexplained situation on foreign soil, he (or she) needs to reach Assam, as the journalists here have attained a rare expertise to describe stories as they determine. With no quote or sound bite from the location, the Guwahati-based television anchors earned a rare capacity to kill time with unorganised narrations that often confused the audience. So when the heartbreaking news surfaced from Singapore that shocked the entire population of northeast India, multiple electronic media outlets started toiling for conflicting reports that puzzled the viewers in realising the real fact, how the cultural icon had to die in the island nation.

The initial sadness and melancholy slowly turned into outrage among millions of Zubeen's fans and admirers. The netizens also cried foul, why his tragic incident was not properly reported, even though a group of Asomiya people (including a journalist, a news channel owner, a police officer and many media-savvy individuals) accompanied Zubeen to participate in the 4th North East India Festival, organised in the Southeast Asian country. As the sad news broke in the afternoon hours of 19 September, Assam came to a standstill. Guwahati turned into a sea of humans- weeping, sobbing, crying and exclaiming why Zubeen was put to death in seawaters. The phenomenal singer's last journey on 21 September in a flower-decked ambulance, two days of public viewing and homage at Sarusajai stadium and cremation at Kamarkuchi near Guwahati on 23 September with full state honours after four days of mourning witnessed unprecedented crowds. Many recollected sad memories relating to the final departure of Dr Bhupen Hazarika (8 September 1926 - 5 November 2011), another widely acclaimed singer, musician, writer, filmmaker and public communicator, when the residents of the eastern Indian subcontinent grieved in total for many days.

Born to a modest family of Mohini Mohon Borthakur (a retired magistrate who used to write poems with pen-name Kapil Thakur) and Ily Borthakur (a classical singer, who died some years back) in Tura of Meghalaya, adjacent to western Assam, on 18 November 1972, Zubeen was named in childhood days as Jiban Borthakur (later adopted new name with admiration to maestro Zubin Mehta). He had two sisters, namely Jonkey (who died in a road accident two decades back while travelling to a distant place for per-

forming in a cultural show) and Palme, a city-based professional. Married to popular fashion designer Garima Saikia in 2002, Zubeen got all-India fame with his resounding voice in the song 'Ya Ali..' for the Bollywood movie Gangster. An animal lover, a philanthropist and versatile genius, Zubeen sang thousands of songs in multiple languages and could play a number of musical instruments. Awarded with various honours, the identity of Assam's hugely popular Bihu functions in recent decades. Zubeen also produced and acted in Assamese movies.

Meanwhile, all the newspapers of Assam dedicated front pages to Zubeen-related developments and news channels started telecasting all important updates round the clock. Hundreds of thousands of Zubeen's well-wishers started a massive campaign on social media demanding justice for the flamboyant artiste. Now less than 60 police complaints were lodged in various localities in Assam alleging that Zubeen had to die in Singapore because of the collective callousness shown by Shyamkanu Mahanta (chief organizer of the festival in Singapore, where Zubeen was scheduled to perform), Siddharth Sharma (his manager), Shekarjyoti Goswami (a Zubeen associate) and Sanjive Narain (businessman and owner of Prag News satellite channel and Dainik Janambhumi newspaper). Facing unprecedented public cries, the State government urgently formed a special investigation team (SIT) under the crime investigation department (CID) of Assam Police.

As the investigation proceeds, Mahanta, Sharma, along with Goswami and Amritprabha Mahanta (a Zubeen's co-signer), are arrested under various sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanghita, and many others continue facing interrogations. Lately, murder charges have been brought in the case, and the government declared the formation of a judicial commission under Justice Soumitra Saikia, a sitting judge of Gauhati High Court, to monitor the investigation. Amidst all developments, the prime accused, Mahanta, is reported to be approaching the Supreme Court for transferring the case from Assam. In his appeal to the apex court (on 30 September), Mahanta urged to hand over the probe to a central agency to be monitored by a retired SC judge. The young entrepreneur, who is incidentally the younger brother of a former director general of police (presently chief of the State information commission) and a current vice-chancellor of an Assam-based prestigious university, also sought protection of his life and properties.

Zubeen's widow, Garima Saikia, insisted on extracting all details relating to the unfortunate incident from the accused individuals. She lamented that Zubeen was like a child, and he loved, helped and trusted everyone. The video clips, circulated on social media, show him as exhausted during the swimming. Zubeen had a medical issue, and the doctors advised him to avoid going near the fire and water, but the group of people brought Zubeen to a yacht party and even encouraged him to swim. She cried out, asking everyone among them to be questioned.

However, The Straits Times, Singapore's widely circulated daily, reported that the Singaporean police ruled out foul play in Zubeen's death (during a sea outing in wa-

ters off St John's Island and not after scuba diving as initially reported by international media outlets). Speaking to the acclaimed newspaper, a Singapore Police Force (SPF) spokesman on 1 October stated that a copy of the autopsy report (issued by the Singapore hospital), along with its preliminary findings on Zubeen's demise (due to drowning), was sent to the High Commission of India, upon

its request. Quoting Ng Kai Ling, associate director at LIMN Law Corporation, the newspaper claimed that SPF's initial statement could be assumed to mean that they do not suspect Zubeen was murdered or that he died as a result of criminal violence. She pointed out that 'a coroner's inquiry' could ascertain the sequence of events that led to his drowning and subsequent death.

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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.
School, College, University Department, Individual & Group Competition.



11 JAN
Adventure Sports
Trekking & Canoe, Obstacle Navigation, Sport Climbing, Disaster Management Technique, Water Sports.
www.krcfoundation.org



11 JAN
Barak Valley Conclave
Potential Issues and Challenges of Barak Valley to be discussed by stakeholders.
Industry, NGOs, and Government can register for this important awareness & awareness program and present their proposals. Participation through invitation only. Different rewards are provided.



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.





BROADCAST PARTNER



REGISTER HERE

Contact: info@krcfoundation.org
WP: 0721300019

11 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'.
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'.
Workshop: Journalism, Publishing, Design & Corporate HR, Leadership, HR, Analytics, Marketing.



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Barak Festival 2025

10-12 JAN
Science Studio
Real a glimpse of Science to its new heights. Class VI-XI | Teachers | Seniors, Administrators | Parents.
Raw science out of textbooks 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'



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



www.krcfoundation.org

Barak Festival 2025

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



www.krcfoundation.org

Barak Festival 2025

10-12 JAN
Book Bank
Anti-Book Campaign | Book Bank | e-Books | e-News | e-Books

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

Painting Carnival
Water Colour painting and Draw-Paint Campaign

www.krcfoundation.org

Barak Festival 2025

10 JAN
Band Night
Musical Night | 10 JAN



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Barak Festival 2025

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