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PERSPECTIVE

If you are always worried about what others think of you, you will never be happy.

Displaced Manipur Police commando dies after self-inflicted gunshot

IMPHAL

A Manipur Police commando havildar, who had been displaced with his family since the outbreak of ethnic violence in the state in May 2023, died after allegedly shooting himself at a family quarter inside the Commando Complex at Minuthong in Imphal West on Monday, police said.

The incident occurred around 4.15 pm under the jurisdiction of Imphal Police Station.

The havildar, a resident of Khumujamba Leikai in Churachandpur district, was serving with the Imphal West Commando unit on attachment from the 7th Manipur Rifles.

He sustained a gunshot wound to the head and was rushed to Raj Medicity Hospital in Imphal. He succumbed to his injuries and was declared dead by the hospital authorities around 6.30 pm, police said.

The circumstances surrounding the incident are being investigated, an officer said.

The death came on the final day of the Manipur Assembly session, during which Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam reiterated the state government's commitment to the resettlement and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Responding to a question from Congress MLA Kangujam Ranjit Singh on compensation for IDPs who had lost movable property during the ongoing crisis, Konhoujam said no compensation had so far been provided for such losses.

WHO SAID WHAT



On his 100th birth anniversary, remembering the legendary Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Ji. His voice carried the soul of Assam and the spirit of the Northeast to the entire nation. Through his music he beautifully gave expression to the thoughts and spirit of countless people. His songs brought people closer. I warmly recall attending the start of his birth centenary celebrations in Guwahati last year. Bhupen Da's life and work will continue to inspire generations.

~ Narendra Modi, PM

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VP Radhakrishnan visits INA Museum in Manipur, heads to Arunachal for final leg of Northeast tour

IMPHAL

Vice-President C P Radhakrishnan arrived in Manipur on Tuesday as part of his four-day tour of the Northeast and visited the Indian National Army (INA) Museum and War Memorial at Moirang.

Radhakrishnan was received at Bir Tikendrajit International Airport around 10.30 am by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh. An Indian Reserve Battalion contingent accorded him a Guard of Honour.

The Vice-President then travelled to Moirang, about 45 km from Imphal, where he visited the INA Museum and the War Memorial.

His itinerary in Manipur also includes a visit to Sainik School Imphal at Pangei in Imphal East district, where he is scheduled to participate in cultural and public engagements.

Security has been tightened



across the State, particularly around the venues included in his itinerary. Traffic arrangements have also been modified in parts of Moirang in view of the visit.Radhakrishnan will later leave for Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh, the final destination of his four-day Northeast tour. He is scheduled to attend a special session

of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly and visit the Assembly Gallery-cum-Museum.

The Vice-President's Office shared photographs of his arrival in Imphal on social media, saying he was received by the Governor, Chief Minister and other dignitaries before being accorded the Guard of



Honour.

Radhakrishnan began his Northeast tour in Assam, where he attended the golden jubilee celebrations of Geetanagar College and the convocation ceremony of Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences in Guwahati.On Monday, he attended a foundation stone-laying pro-

gramme for infrastructure projects at Gauhati University before travelling to Shillong, where he participated in a public reception and cultural programme at the Soso Tham Auditorium.The Manipur visit marks the third leg of the Vice-President's Northeast tour, which will conclude in Arunachal Pradesh.

SC gives Assam four weeks to operationalise two exclusive NIA courts



NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed Assam authorities to expedite the establishment of two proposed exclusive courts for cases investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and make them operational within four weeks.

The direction came as the apex court pressed the Centre, States and Union Territories to strengthen specialised judicial infrastructure for the speedy disposal of serious cases, including those registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant, hearing

a suo motu case on the creation of exclusive special courts, on Monday noted an "alarming increase" in NDPS cases and called for the required courts to be established at the earliest.

Assam already has one functional NIA court, the State's counsel informed the court.

The Bench observed that the objective of its earlier directions on setting up dedicated courts for NIA trials had been "largely achieved". However, gaps in judicial infrastructure remain in several States, prompting further directions.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati informed the Bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, that 449 special courts were required nationwide to deal effectively with NDPS cases, but only 176 were currently functional.

The Supreme Court directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps and provide infrastructure for the remaining courts, preferably within six weeks.On NIA trials, the court was informed that eight new exclusive courts had been established across the country, taking the total number of such courts to 22.The suo motu proceedings were initiated amid concerns over delays in NIA trials, with cases remaining pending for several years.The apex court has emphasised that expeditious disposal of such cases is necessary to safeguard the rights of both accused persons and victims while ensuring effective administration of justice.

Arambai Tenggol, village volunteers not banned organisations: Manipur CM

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh said that village volunteers in both the hills and the valley, or Arambai Tenggol, were not banned organisations.

He said the state government was studying the various cases of unlawful and criminal activities involving individuals in the wake of the violence that began on May 3, 2023.

The Chief Minister said the unprecedented violence had compelled many youths to take up arms. While some of them had good intentions, others could have indulged in criminal activities, he said.

Singh further said the state government had not declared village volunteers in the hills and the valley, or Arambai Tenggol, as banned organisations. He added that the police had not registered cases against individuals based on their affiliation with these groups. Arrests made by the police were based on individuals' involvement in criminal activities, he said.

He said the Manipur Police had been a very strong force in the past, but its morale had declined following the ethnic crisis. The government was now trying to strengthen the police force, he added.

Home Minister Konhoujam Govindas reaffirmed the government's 2024 decision not to prosecute individuals who were not involved in heinous crimes such as attacks on security forces, extortion, murder or other criminal activities.

He said it was the government's responsibility to protect youths who were not involved in heinous crimes.

Assam extends Class X, XII classes amid flood, Census disruptions



GUWAHATI

The Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB) has extended the academic session for Class X and Class XII students, allowing regular classes to continue into February and March 2027 in view of disruptions caused by the recent floods and the ongoing Census exercise.

According to a notification issued by ASSEB on Tuesday, regular classes for Class X may continue until February 22, 2027, while Class XII classes may continue until March 8, 2027, to help schools complete the prescribed syllabus.

ASSEB said the decision was necessitated by the likelihood that the course content would not be completed within the earlier timelines because of the disruption caused by the floods and Census-related activities.

"Due to recent devastating floods in some of the districts and also due to ongoing process of census activities in the state, there is every likelihood that the course contents of class X and XII will not be completed within first week of February 2027 (in case of class X)

and within 28th February (in case of class XII) respectively," the notification said.

The board clarified that the HSLC and Higher Secondary final examination schedules would be determined in accordance with the revised academic arrangements.

Copies of the notification have been sent to the Education Minister's office, the Commissioner and Secretary of the School Education Department, the Director of Secondary Education, Inspectors of Schools, the Controller of Examinations, ASSEB Divisions I and II, the State Academic Council and various teachers' and employees' associations for information and necessary action.

The extension comes amid significant disruption to academic activities in several parts of the state following the floods that began in July. The death toll in the Upper Assam floods has reached 108, while officials have assessed damage to 26,681 houses and 18,887 cattle sheds.

The ongoing Census exercise has also affected normal administrative activities. The house-listing and housing census phase in Assam is being conducted from August 17 to September 15. It follows the self-enumeration phase, during which more than 11.64 lakh households submitted their details online.

The revised class schedule is aimed at giving schools additional time to complete the syllabus before students sit for the crucial Class X and Class XII board examinations.

Eight held over death of Manipuri musician in Delhi assault

No racial motive established so far, police say; death triggers grief and protests in Manipur and Delhi

IMPHAL

Delhi Police have arrested eight people, including a juvenile, in connection with the death of Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh, who allegedly died after being assaulted by a group of men in southeast Delhi's Kilokari-Maharani Bagh area.

The arrested persons have been identified as Bharat Kumar (19), Pramod (26), Ramzan Khan (22), Deepanshu (21), Mohan Vishwakarma (32), Vijay (36) and Mannu (26), besides a 15-year-old juvenile.

According to police, the accused worked at nearby dhabas and eateries, with five of them employed at Saini Dhaba.

Police have registered an FIR and launched an investigation to establish the circumstances surrounding the alleged assault and Singh's death. His body has been sent for post-mortem examination.

Police have said that no racial motive has been established so far.



The incident reportedly began after Singh objected to a group of men allegedly making noise outside his residence late at night. According to Ngashan Vashum, a Delhi Police Northeast Representative (DPNER) and community liaison officer, the disagreement allegedly escalated into a violent confrontation during which Singh sustained serious injuries.

Singh, who lived in Delhi with his wife and son, was taken to Holy Family Hospital by his son, Yaiphaba. He later succumbed to his injuries.

His death has triggered grief and anger among the Northeast community in Delhi as well as in Manipur. Nearly 100 people gathered in the Kilokari-Ashram area on Monday evening for a candle-



light vigil, demanding justice and a swift and impartial investigation.

Participants held candles and called for accountability, urging authorities to ensure that all those found responsible are brought to justice.

The death has also prompted an outpouring of grief among musicians, artistes, friends and

political leaders in Manipur. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi questioned the safety of people from the Northeast living in the national capital.

"After many such incidents, every Northeast family in Delhi is asking the same question today - are we safe here?" Gandhi said in a social media post, questioning the Union Home Ministry

and Delhi Police over what he described as growing lawlessness against people from the Northeast.Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh expressed deep sorrow over Singh's death and said his contribution to the State's music and cultural life would be remembered.Former Chief Minister N Biren Singh urged Delhi Police to conduct a thorough investigation and ensure that justice was delivered at the earliest.

A prominent figure in Manipur's Western music movement, Chongtham Vikram Singh had played guitar with bands including Ultra Vires, Phoenix and Eastern Dark. He later worked as a music teacher in Delhi and remained associated with efforts to promote Western music in Manipur.

With eight people now in custody, investigators are examining the events leading to the assault and Singh's subsequent death. The progress of the probe is being closely watched by members of the Northeast community.



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India Must Move Beyond Intent to Capability

The release of the 'Raksha' strategic vision by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is significant not because India has suddenly discovered the importance of national security, but because the strategic environment has finally made it impossible to postpone some uncomfortable questions. What kind of military does India need? How much dependence on foreign suppliers can a country aspiring to strategic autonomy afford? And can an economy seeking global power status continue to tolerate the leisurely pace at which its defence establishment often moves?

These are no longer abstract questions. The world in which India framed much of its post-Independence defence thinking has disappeared. The Russia-Ukraine war, now in its fifth year, has demonstrated that large-scale conventional warfare between states is hardly a relic of the past. The continuing confrontation involving the United States and Iran has kept the Gulf on a knife-edge, with consequences for energy supplies and maritime commerce. Meanwhile, tariffs, export controls, sanctions and technology restrictions have transformed economic interdependence into another theatre of strategic competition.

The lesson is stark: national security can no longer be compartmentalised into military, economic, technological and diplomatic silos.

India ignores this convergence at its peril. Warfare, too, is becoming more technologically intensive and less prohibitively expensive. The traditional instruments of war - tanks, aircraft, warships and large formations - remain indispensable. But drones, loitering munitions, precision missiles, cyber capabilities, electronic warfare and satellite-based surveillance are changing the economics of conflict. Ukraine has demonstrated how inexpensive unmanned systems can threaten enormously expensive military platforms. The Red Sea has shown how relatively modest capabilities can disrupt one of the world's most important maritime trade corridors.

The implication for India is obvious. Quantity, quality and affordability must increasingly coexist in defence planning. India has the additional complication of having to prepare for a difficult continental security environment while simultaneously protecting a vast maritime and economic space. Two adversarial neighbours on its borders make military preparedness non-negotiable. The country's dependence on sea-borne energy and trade makes maritime security equally vital.

In this context, a ten-year vision is not excessive ambition. It is the minimum required for serious strategic planning. The four pillars of Raksha - strategic partnerships, capacity building, indigenous defence production and exports, and maritime security - are therefore broadly the right ones. But the government must resist the temptation to confuse identifying priorities with delivering them.

India has had no shortage of defence policies, committees, acquisition procedures and strategic declarations. What it has lacked, too often, is execution.

That is where Raksha must be judged. Strategic partnerships, for example, cannot become a euphemism for purchasing weapons from friendly countries. Joint exercises and defence cooperation matter because they build interoperability, expose weaknesses and create habits of cooperation that become invaluable during a crisis. But partnerships are useful only when they expand India's strategic choices. Strategic autonomy does not mean refusing foreign technology; it means ensuring that India is never strategically paralysed because a foreign supplier chooses not to deliver. This makes indigenous capability the real test of the Raksha vision.

The argument for defence self-reliance has moved beyond the language of national pride. Modern wars are wars of endurance. They consume ammunition, missiles, drones, spare parts, electronic components and replacement platforms at extraordinary rates. A military may possess sophisticated equipment and still find itself dangerously vulnerable if its supply chains are controlled elsewhere. India has learnt this lesson repeatedly - through technology denial regimes, sanctions and disruptions in defence supplies. It should not need another war to relearn it. But atmanirbharta must also be rescued from becoming a slogan. Import substitution alone is not self-reliance. Assembling foreign-designed systems in India does not amount to technological sovereignty. Nor does increasing the percentage of indigenous content in a platform automatically guarantee strategic autonomy if its most critical components remain dependent on overseas sources.

The objective must be much more demanding: India should be able to design, manufacture, maintain, repair, upgrade and replenish its critical military systems during a prolonged conflict.

That requires a defence-industrial ecosystem rather than a collection of government factories. Private companies, start-ups, universities and research institutions must be given a larger and more predictable role. Procurement procedures must reward innovation and delivery rather than merely compliance. Defence laboratories must be more closely integrated with industry. And projects that repeatedly miss deadlines and budgets cannot be allowed to survive indefinitely simply because they carry the label of indigenous development.

The same logic applies to defence exports.

India should welcome the emergence of an export-oriented defence industry, but the ambition must be strategic rather than promotional. Export contracts provide foreign exchange and production economies of scale, but their greater value lies in creating enduring defence relationships. Training, maintenance, upgrades and interoperability can turn a weapons sale into a long-term strategic partnership.

Yet India will not become a major defence exporter merely by offering cheaper alternatives. Its systems must be reliable, competitive, deliverable on schedule and supported by credible after-sales infrastructure. The world does not buy strategic autonomy; it buys equipment that works.

The maritime pillar of Raksha presents perhaps the clearest opportunity.

India's geography gives it a natural strategic advantage in the Indian Ocean. But geography alone does not create influence. Naval power, maritime domain awareness, surveillance capabilities, logistics facilities and partnerships with littoral states are necessary to convert geographical centrality into strategic influence.

India's aspiration to be a first responder and a net security provider in the Indian Ocean is therefore welcome. Piracy, trafficking, terrorism, geopolitical competition and attacks on commercial shipping demonstrate why a secure Indian Ocean is essential not only for India but for the wider global economy.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

We look up at the same stars and see such different things.

- George R. R. Martin

RAGHAV CHADHA AND PUNJAB SIR



INSAF

Amid the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Punjab, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha may now be getting a taste of what it feels like to be on the other side of the issue. His name is missing from the state's draft electoral roll. Chadha has accused the Aam Aadmi Party government of "political vendetta".

However, Chadha was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Punjab as an AAP candidate in 2022 and joined the BJP earlier this year. He says he is registered as a voter in Mohali and has questioned why he has been placed in the "transferred" category.

The AAP has rejected the allegation, saying the SIR is being conducted by the Election Commission and that the Punjab government has no role in it.

Chadha is among the 20.66 lakh voters-equivalent to 9.7 per cent of the electorate before the SIR-whose names have been excluded from the draft roll. Voters affected by the deletions can file claims and objections until September 12, while the final electoral roll will be published on October 12.

Chadha says he is filing his claim under the prescribed procedure and will have the "wrong classification" corrected. But the matter may not be quite so simple.

The AAP says it is a matter of public record that Chadha lives in Delhi, not Punjab. The irony is hard to miss. Just before the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, Chadha, then an AAP MP, had accused the electoral authorities of a "planned and large-scale conspiracy of voter fraud" in Arvind Kejriwal's New Delhi Assembly constituency and described it as a deliberate attempt to influence the election results.

Now, thanks to the SIR, Chadha himself is in the headlines! Progressive Kerala

Three cheers to Kerala Chief Minister Satheesan for taking a clear stand in support of Muslim women's freedom and rejecting the regressive views of influential cleric Kanthapuram Aboobacker Musliyar. In doing so, he has also risked a possible confrontation with his coalition partner, the Indian Union Muslim League.

Following Eid Milad-un-Nabi programmes last week, Kanthapuram issued written instructions stating that women being present in public places and among unrelated men was not in accordance with Islam. He claimed that the Quran teaches women to remain within the confines of their homes and that their entry into public life could lead to "great disaster".

Community leaders and scholars-including some who disagreed with his views-criticised the posi-

tion. Several Muslim women also voiced their opposition on social media. The Congress too disagreed with the statement, while the Indian Union Muslim League backed Kanthapuram.

Satheesan, however, was unequivocal. He said such views belonged in the 19th century, not the 21st. "Our approach is progressive," he said.

He asserted that women must participate fully in mainstream social life and that the Quran was being misinterpreted.

Indeed, Kerala, popularly known as "God's Own Country", has its own distinctive way of championing women's rights!

Tug-of-War Over PM Candidate in Tamil Nadu

An interesting political tug-of-war has already begun in Tamil Nadu over a possible prime ministerial candidate for the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

Newly elected legislators of the ruling TVK are lobbying to project Chief Minister Vijay as the prime ministerial candidate, while alliance partner Congress remains firm that Rahul Gandhi is its undisputed choice.

The statements coming from the two camps have generated considerable curiosity.

TVK legislator Kanimozhi Santhosh says, "Delhi will not decide who becomes the Prime Minister; Tamil Nadu will decide." She claims Vijay will bring about a major change in national politics and that Rahul Gandhi himself will support him for the prime minister's post.

Congress leaders dismissed the claim on Wednesday as a manifestation of a "fan mentality". They said there was "no confusion" about the official position of the party or the broader alliance.

The Congress also reminded everyone that Vijay himself had earlier described Rahul Gandhi as the alliance's declared candidate.

So far, there has been no response from the TVK headquarters or from Vijay. Perhaps remaining silent is the better strategy in this case.

After all, it was the support of the Congress and other alliance partners that helped Vijay reach the Chief Minister's chair.

Three years is a long time in politics and, as the saying goes: "There are no permanent friends or permanent enemies in politics; only permanent interests."

This is certainly a development worth watching closely.

Defection Season Begins in Uttar Pradesh

Political preparations for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, scheduled for early next year, have gathered pace and the season of defections has begun as well.

Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM has suffered its first setback. The party's

national spokesperson, Syed Asim Waqar, and his close associates joined the Congress on Wednesday.

The development has raised hopes in the opposition camp, which is seeking to unseat the BJP-Yogi government.

This is not merely a defection; it also carries a political message.

Waqar has alleged that AIMIM talks about defeating the BJP but ultimately contests elections against the Congress and the Samajwadi Party. This has revived the opposition's long-standing allegation that AIMIM's presence divides anti-BJP Muslim votes.

The timing is also uncomfortable for Owaisi, who is intensifying AIMIM's campaign in Muslim-dominated areas of western Uttar Pradesh. The crowds at his rallies and his aggressive speeches have heightened concerns in the Samajwadi Party camp.

In the 2022 elections, AIMIM secured only 0.49 per cent of the vote across the state. However, in several targeted constituencies, its vote share ranged between 5,000 and 25,000 votes, and in seven or eight seats, its vote count was greater than the margin by which the Samajwadi Party lost.

In other words, had AIMIM not contested those seats-or had some of its votes gone to the Samajwadi Party-the results could have been different in several close contests.

Thus, even without winning seats, AIMIM has the ability to influence electoral outcomes.

Waqar has taken the first step. The question now is: will others follow him?

Political Face-Off Between TMC and BJP Continues

The political confrontation between the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the BJP in West Bengal shows no sign of abating.

In the latest development, TMC national general secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Abhishek Banerjee alleged that BJP workers vandalised the party office on Camac Street in Kolkata on Thursday, damaged property and stole the mobile phones of party workers.

The BJP denied the allegations, saying that "no party worker was involved", and claimed that the TMC had staged the incident itself to remain in the political headlines.

Banerjee, however, posted CCTV footage on X and questioned whether there was any rule of law in the state. He asked the Governor, the Union Home Minister and the Prime Minister's Office whether they would "take action or simply watch".

He also targeted Chief Minister Suvedu Adhikari, asking why he was "so afraid" of the TMC and of him.

Banerjee warned that incidents of violence, vandalism and intimidation could undermine the gov-

ernment's "moral authority" and demanded Adhikari's resignation.

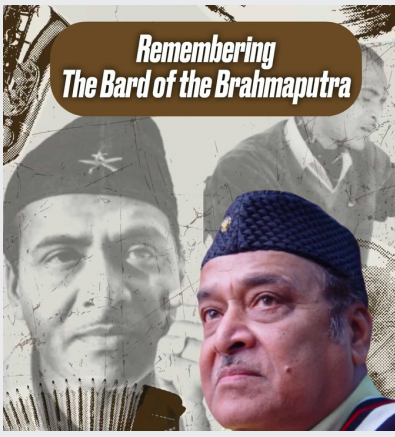
In an indirect warning, he said every attack would be remembered and "nothing would be forgotten".

The dispute is believed to have its roots in an incident last week involving a controversy between the Kolkata Municipal Corpora-

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

Dr Bhupen Hazarika is more than a name; he is an emotion that lives in the heart and soul of Assam. His timeless music and profound words continue to inspire generations. The year-long nationwide celebrations of his life and timeless creations have reaffirmed the enduring legacy of the Bard of the Brahmaputra, whose voice carried Assam's spirit, stories and dreams far beyond its shores. On his birth anniversary, I pay my humble tributes to the legendary Sudhakantha. #BupenDaAct100

~ Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, CM, Assam



tion and the TMC over an "illegal" hoarding installed at the party office. TMC workers had prevented the civic body from removing it.

But has Banerjee forgotten the history of allegations of violence by TMC workers against BJP workers?

This is truly a case of the pot calling the kettle black!

Warning Bells for Sikkim

Sikkim and New Delhi need to sit up and take notice. Of the 40 high-risk glacial lakes in the eastern Himalayan state, 16 have been classified as being at "very high risk". If any of these lakes suddenly bursts, it could trigger devastating floods in downstream areas.

The warning becomes even more serious in the backdrop of the recent flash floods in Nepal. More than a thousand people were killed and thousands remain missing in the devastation caused by the collapse of a glacier there. Although the tragedy was not attributed to a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF), it nevertheless highlighted the sweeping environmental changes taking place across the Himalayas.

Glaciers are retreating rapidly, new lakes are forming in their place and existing lakes are expanding. On Thursday, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang's government said remote sensing and satellite imagery were being used to monitor changes in glacial lakes.

The state government is also working towards preparing the country's first dedicated GLOF mitigation protocol. The objective is to establish a standardised scientific framework for assessing glacial flood risks, preparing for them and mitigating their impact.

The priority now must be to ensure that early warnings translate into timely evacuation of people, stronger infrastructure and coordinated disaster preparedness.

For Sikkim, this climate threat is not distant. It is real, immediate and staring the state in the face.

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Nagaon Lok Sabha bypoll on October 6; BJP not taking win for granted, says Assam CM

GUWAHATI

The Election Commission on Monday announced that polling for the Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election in Assam will be held on October 6, with counting scheduled for October 9.

The last date for filing nominations is September 16, while scrutiny will be held on September 17. Candidates can withdraw their nominations until September 19. The election process will be completed by October 11, according to the schedule announced by the Election Commission.

With political parties stepping up preparations for the contest, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the BJP would focus on consolidating its position in Assembly segments where it had performed strongly in the past, while seeking to improve its vote share elsewhere.



“There are 3.5 lakh minority people in the Nagaon constituency. The constituency is divided into two parts. BJP had earlier won across Nagaon, Jagirroad, Morigaon and Raha, whereas Congress and candidates from the opposition alliance won from Samaguri, Dhing, Rupahihat and Lahorighat,” Sarma said.

He said the BJP’s immediate objective would be to retain the four Assembly segments where it had previously held an advantage and increase its support in the remaining four.

“Our main aim will be to retain and secure our victory in the previous four constituencies where we had won earlier. BJP will enter the battlefield with this limited goal with the intention to improve and increase votes in the other four constituencies,” he said.

Sarma, however, cautioned against treating Nagaon as a traditional BJP stronghold.

“I will not talk about loss or victory because last time we had lost it with 2.5 lakh votes. Campaigns will be carried out and people will ensure victory of those they prefer,” he said.

“This is not a BJP seat, because traditionally BJP has not won earlier, neither in MLA elections nor in MP polls. However, it doesn’t mean that losing twice will ensure loss for the third time again,” the chief minister added.

BJP begins preparations

Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia said the party had already begun preparations across the constituency.

“Joined a crucial strategy meeting for the Nagaon Lok Sabha by-poll. We chalked out plans to further energize BJP Assam across eight Assembly segments, 25 Mandals and 2,306 booths with strong grassroots connect,” Saikia said in a social media post.

The bypoll preparations are also

taking place against the backdrop of controversy surrounding former Nagaon District Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer Devasish Sharma.Sharma is reportedly set to join the BJP, triggering speculation about a possible candidature in the by-election. The Election Commission has registered a complaint against him following allegations of administrative irregularities and questions surrounding his reported political plans. The allegations remain subject to the relevant inquiry.The Nagaon Lok Sabha seat fell vacant after former MP Pradyut Bordoloi resigned and joined the BJP ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections.

The October 6 bypoll is expected to see a high-stakes contest as parties seek to consolidate their positions across the constituency’s eight Assembly segments.

Assam cuts qualifying service for government promotions from four years to three

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has reduced the qualifying service period for promotion of government employees from four years to three years, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

The decision is aimed at expediting the promotion process and providing eligible employees with earlier opportunities for career advancement, Sarma said.

The reduction in the qualifying service period is expected to shorten the waiting period for employees who fulfil other prescribed criteria for promotion.

Sarma also announced changes to the format of the state’s Khel Maharan, with the sporting event to be conducted in two phases this year.

Under the revamped format, a separate Shishu Khel Maharan will be organised for children below 12 years of age. The initiative is aimed at giving younger participants a dedicated platform to compete and helping identify sporting talent at an early age.

Both Khel Maharan and Shishu Khel Maharan will feature competitions at the district and state levels, allowing participants to advance from district-level events to the state stage.

The two events will be held from November 1 to January 23, according to the announcement.

The changes to the government promotion rules and the Khel Maharan format were announced by the chief minister on Monday as part of the state government’s administrative and sports initiatives.

Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh dies after alleged assault in Delhi

NEW DELHI

Renowned Manipuri guitarist and Western music pioneer Chongtham Vikram Singh, 54, died after he was allegedly assaulted by a group of people near his residence in south-east Delhi, police said on Monday.A PCR call regarding the alleged assault was received at the Sunlight Colony police station on September 7, following which an assistant sub-inspector was assigned to take necessary action, police said.

According to preliminary police findings, Vikram had objected to alleged shouting and nuisance by delivery workers and dhaba staff outside his residence in Kilokari village.Police said he came downstairs to protest against the disturbance and was allegedly assaulted with fists and blows.Vikram sustained injuries and was taken to Holy Family Hospital by his son, Yaiphaba, for treatment. He later succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment, police said.An investigation has been launched to establish

the circumstances leading to the alleged assault and his subsequent death.Some suspects, including a minor, have been detained or apprehended, police said.

Vikram was a prominent figure in Manipur’s Western music scene and had performed with bands including Ultra Vires, Phoenix and Eastern Dark. He was the eldest son of noted Manipuri singer Chongtham Kamala.

The North East Students’ Society, Delhi University (NESSDU), has condemned the alleged assault and called for a swift and impartial investigation. Members of the Northeast community and civil society organisations gathered at the Sunlight Colony police station, demanding that those responsible be identified and prosecuted.

Some members of the community have alleged that the incident could have involved racial targeting. Police, however, have not established any such motive and said the circumstances and motive remain under investigation.

Nine Naga MLAs boycott Manipur Assembly over Leilon Vaiphei killings

IMPHAL

Nine Naga legislators in Manipur on Monday boycotted the final sitting of the eighth session of the 12th state Assembly, protesting the government’s handling of the Leilon Vaiphei killings and demanding the immediate removal or suspension of Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen pending completion of the investigation.

The protest cut across party lines, with the legislators objecting to the Home Minister’s statement in the Assembly that police personnel and the Leilon Vaiphei village chief were not involved in the May 13 incident.

The MLAs alleged that Kipgen’s husband was named as the prime accused in the case. The allegations have not been established by an investigation.

Six Naga civilians were killed in the incident following the abduction of 18 people from Leilon Vaiphei, according to the report.

Addressing a press conference



at the official residence of Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho in Lamphel, Naga People’s Front (NPF) Manipur unit president Awangboun Newmai criticised the government over what he described as a four-month delay in delivering justice.

Newmai said the legislators could not accept the Home Minister’s

clarification that police personnel and the village chief were not involved in the incident.

He cited accounts of people who were abducted and subsequently released, claiming that their statements contradicted the government’s position.

Newmai also claimed that individuals named in the FIR, includ-

ing the village chief, remained at large. He further alleged that the bodies of the victims bore signs of mutilation.

Dikho said the boycott was not aimed at rebelling against the state leadership but was intended to press for accountability and a thorough investigation into the killings.

He said the Naga community had maintained restraint during the wider ethnic conflict in Manipur and referred to earlier humanitarian initiatives, including the release of 14 Kuki detainees, which he said had been appreciated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Both Newmai and Dikho said the Naga community’s patience had run out over the lack of visible progress in the investigation.

The legislators’ boycott came as the Assembly concluded its latest session amid renewed demands for accountability over the Leilon Vaiphei killings.

Gauhati HC orders Assam govt to pay Rs 2 lakh to woman allegedly pushed into Bangladesh

GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has directed the Assam government to pay Rs 2 lakh as interim compensation to Mumtaz Begum, who was allegedly expelled to Bangladesh without being given an opportunity to challenge a Foreigners Tribunal order declaring her a foreign national.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Kalyan Rai Surana and Justice Susmita Phukan Khaund passed the order while hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Begum’s family.

The family came to know that Begum had been pushed into Bangladesh only after approaching the High Court with the petition, according to the case proceedings.

The court expressed serious concern over the manner in which the Nagaon Foreigners Tribunal dealt with Begum’s case and observed



that “malice in law” appeared to be evident from the record.The tribunal had declared Begum a foreigner on May 30 after she appeared before it following an earlier High Court direction to reconsider her case. The High Court had previously found that the tribunal had failed to consider all the evidence submitted by her.

The Bench noted that Begum was not informed about the May 30 order and was arrested shortly afterwards, leaving her without an

opportunity to challenge the decision.It also questioned discrepancies in the accounts provided by the tribunal judge and police regarding the timing and circumstances of her arrest.The court held that the procedure followed amounted to a “direct violation” of the standard operating procedure governing the deportation of declared foreign nationals, under which a person must be allowed to exhaust available legal remedies before being expelled.The Bench

said the state machinery had effectively prevented Begum from exercising her right to approach the High Court against the tribunal’s order. It accordingly directed the Assam government to pay her Rs 2 lakh as interim compensation.

The High Court also directed the Home and Political Department to inquire into when the Foreigners Tribunal’s May 30 order was prepared.If required, the tribunal member’s computer may be seized to establish the date and time when the opinion was prepared, the Bench said.The court further directed district Superintendents of Police to ensure that declared foreign nationals are informed about tribunal orders before being taken into custody.

An adult member of the person’s family must also be informed before the individual is removed from the district, it directed.

Namsai child trafficking probe: Police trace 38 victims, arrest fourth facilitator



NAMSAI

Namsai Police have traced 38 people, including 34 children, in connection with a suspected child trafficking and illegal child placement racket and arrested a fourth alleged facilitator, officials said on Monday.The development came during the investigation into Namsai Police Station Case No. 54/2026, being probed by DySP Kengo Dirchi under the supervision of Namsai Superintendent of Police Sangey Thinley.According to a police statement, the 38 people traced so far include 34 children and four adults from different locations.Police have arrested Smti Rupali Padung as the latest accused in the case, taking the total number of arrests to four.

Investigators are examining Padung’s alleged role in the transportation and placement of the victims, police said.

The investigation is now focused on establishing the alleged trafficking chain, including the roles of facilitators, transportation networks, placement arrangements, financial transactions and digital evidence.

Police are also examining the involvement of individuals with whom the children were allegedly placed, as well as the parents or guardians who handed over the children. Legal action will be taken on the basis of evidence, officials said.The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Namsai, are coordinating with police to ensure care, protection, counselling and rehabilitation of the rescued children.

Police said the identities of the rescued children were being kept confidential in accordance with legal provisions.

Assam SRD teachers resume protest over salary mechanism, seek rollback to old system

GUWAHATI

Teachers recruited under Assam’s Special Recruitment Drive (SRD) on Monday renewed their protest demanding restoration of the earlier salary disbursement system, with the education department saying the rollback has been delayed by technical issues.

A large number of SRD teachers from across the state gathered outside the Directorate of School Education (Elementary) office at Kahilipara, opposing the continued use of the SNA-SPARSH salary payment module.

The teachers, under the banner of the Assam State Primary Teachers’ Association (ASPTA), said the government had earlier assured them that their salaries would again be processed through the system used before the introduction of SNA-SPARSH.

Association president Ratul Chandra Goswami said the agitation was resumed after an assurance given by Education Minister Ranaj Pegu on August 11 was not implemented in September.

“On August 11, Minister Ranaj Pegu assured us that, from September, SRD teachers would receive regular salaries through the system that existed before SNA-SPARSH. That did not happen. That is why we renewed our agitation today,” Goswami said.



The association questioned the decision to place 15,029 SRD teachers under the new salary disbursement mechanism, arguing that they had already been regularised and were receiving salaries through the earlier system.

Following the protest, an association delegation submitted a memorandum to Director of School Education (Elementary) Suranjana Senapati, seeking withdrawal of the SNA-SPARSH mechanism for SRD teachers.

The delegation later held discussions

with Senapati and other departmental officials.

Goswami said officials assured the teachers that the earlier salary system would be restored and SNA-SPARSH discontinued for SRD teachers.

“The government’s decision to follow a new disbursement model has created several issues. We expressed our dissatisfaction and demanded the immediate suspension of salary payments through the SNA model,” he said.

The association was subsequently as-

sured that the previous salary payment mechanism would be restored from October, Goswami said.

Department cites technical hurdles

Senapati said SRD teachers are regular teachers under the elementary education department and that the government was working to restore the earlier salary payment mechanism.

“There are certain technical issues in reverting to the earlier salary disbursement system,” she said.Senapati said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Education Minister Ranaj Pegu had discussed the matter in Delhi and that the new system would be withdrawn and the earlier mechanism restored.

“The process is underway and, technically, it will take some time to convert them back to the previous model,” she said.The department’s priority, she added, was to ensure that all teachers receive their salaries on the first day of every month.

“The demands raised are already under process,” Senapati said.

The teachers suspended their protest after submitting the memorandum and receiving the assurance from the department. However, they insisted that their October salaries be processed through the previous system.

On August 11, Pegu had said the government had decided against continuing salary payments to SRD teachers through SNA-SPARSH and would process their salaries in the same manner as those of other regular teachers.

The association later claimed that the corresponding changes had not been reflected in the FinAssam salary records and renewed its demand for restoration of the earlier payment mechanism.

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Women will lead beyond 33 per cent reservation in assemblies, Lok Sabha: Om Birla



NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday said women would go beyond the 33 per cent reservation provided for them in state legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha, and eventually account for more than half of leadership positions in government and public institutions.

Addressing a two-day capacity-building workshop for women legislators organised by the National Commission for Women (NCW) in Faridabad, Birla said women had been change-makers throughout India's history and were now leading across social, political, government and private sectors.

"There is already 33 per cent reservation, but in the coming time, women will lead beyond that percentage in the states, legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha," Birla said.

He said women legislators should play a greater role in policy-making and lawmaking

rather than being viewed only as beneficiaries of government schemes.

"The time has now come not merely to say that the government is giving something to women or that the government is working towards women's empowerment. Women themselves will make policies, formulate schemes and make laws," he said.

Birla said women's representation in various services had also increased and expressed confidence that women would constitute more than half of the leadership in the country's and states' services and institutions within the next decade. "I say from this platform that within the next 10 years, women will constitute more than 50 per cent of the leadership in the country's and states' services and institutions," he said.

He urged women legislators to strengthen their understanding of parliamentary procedures, policy-making,

legislation and budgets, and use their positions to promote inclusive governance.

NCW chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar said women's meaningful participation in governance was essential for building an inclusive and equitable society.

"Women legislators bring valuable perspectives and lived experiences to the process of policy-making and public decision-making," she said.

She said women legislators were contributing not only to issues concerning women but also to areas such as education, health, economy, technology, environment, infrastructure and good governance.

"Women's empowerment is not a separate agenda; it is a key part of the national development agenda," she added.

The two-day workshop, held under the NCW's "She is a Changemaker" initiative, focuses on strengthening the political and legislative capabilities of women representatives.

'Peace not weakness'; armed forces free to respond to threats: Rajnath Singh

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said the armed forces have been given the "freedom and resources" to respond decisively to threats, including the ability to strike adversaries inside their own territory.

Addressing an event, Singh said India believes in peace and does not seek war or the occupation of another country's territory. But, he added, peace should not be confused with weakness.

"Peace born of the fear of war is to be condemned, while war fought for the sake of peace is worthy of reverence," he said.

Singh said the government had made it clear that countries promoting terrorism against India would face a military response rather than dialogue. "We've made it clear that if any country promotes terrorism against India, there will be no dialogue; instead, our defence forces will deliver a befitting response," he said.

The Defence Minister said India was pursuing strategic autonomy and independent decision-making amid geopolitical uncertainties. He accused adversaries of attempting to undermine the country's security by misleading youth in Jammu and Kashmir, funding anti-India activities, spreading violence and terrorism, and creating divisions within society.

The government, he said, had countered these efforts through rehabilitation and de-radicalisation programmes, efforts to bring misguided youth into the mainstream, and the creation of employment and business opportunities.

Singh said Jammu and Kashmir had witnessed "unprecedented progress" since the abrogation of Article 370, with new opportunities opening up for the youth.

He cited surgical strikes, the Balakot airstrike and Operation Sindoor as examples of India's strategy of dealing with terrorism through decisive military action targeting terrorists and their handlers.

"The suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty sent a clear message that blood



and water cannot flow together," he said.

Referring to attempts to create social discord, Singh said such efforts had been thwarted by the unity of Indians. He also referred to attacks on places of worship during Operation Sindoor, saying people had rejected attempts to divide society.

On the changing nature of warfare, Singh said space and cyberspace had emerged as new domains of conflict alongside land, air and sea. Artificial intelligence, drones, autonomous systems and precision weapons, he said, were transforming the battlefield.

The government was working to make India's defence strategy and security apparatus "future-ready", with a focus on developing advanced technologies domestically, he said.

Singh said India's defence policy had moved "beyond reactive to being pro-active". He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomacy and leadership for India's entry into the Missile

Technology Control Regime in 2016, which, he said, facilitated efforts to extend the range of the BrahMos missile.

On the transformation of the defence sector, Singh said the government had focused on strengthening border security, modernising the armed forces, increasing indigenous production and revamping ordnance factories.

These measures, he said, had made India more self-reliant in defence. Defence production, which stood at around Rs 40,000 crore before 2014, has risen to approximately Rs 1.80 lakh crore, while defence exports have grown 56-fold to over Rs 38,000 crore, he said.

Singh said India had moved from an import-dependent model towards indigenous defence manufacturing under the Aatmanirbharta initiative.

He listed systems and platforms including the Akashteer air defence control system, Akash missile, Pinaka rocket launcher, Astra air-to-air missile,

Prachand and Dhruv helicopters, Tejas fighter aircraft, Arjun tank and indigenous drone and counter-drone systems.

India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, has also been inducted into the Navy, he said, adding that the country was now developing a range of advanced defence systems, including sixth-generation fighter aircraft.

"Our aim is to export defence equipment worth Rs 50,000 crore by 2029," Singh said.

He said the government's objective was to achieve Aatmanirbharta in defence while building an ecosystem that strengthens national security, drives economic growth and expands India's role in the global security architecture.

Singh expressed confidence that by 2047, India would not only become a Viksit Bharat but also emerge as a global leader in technology, the economy and defence.

INTERNATIONAL

Germany fights Gaza genocide claims at the top UN court

THE HAGUE

Germany told the United Nations' top court on Monday that a genocide case over weapons sales to Israel was improperly filed by Nicaragua and should be thrown out.

The Central American country accuses Berlin of violating the Genocide Convention and international humanitarian law by "facilitating" acts of genocide in Gaza by providing arms and other military support to Israel.

While the case centers on Germany, it indirectly takes aim at Israel's campaign in Gaza in response to the deadly Oct. 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas. Israel, which isn't a party in the proceedings, strongly denies that its actions amount to acts of genocide.

"Nicaragua's conduct indicates that it was not interested in hearing Germany's view on its allegations, but simply in bringing Germany before this court," Julia Monar, Germany's top lawyer, told the judges.

According to Monar, Nicaragua failed to properly notify the German government and gave her country less than a month to reply before launching proceedings. Countries are typically expected to attempt to resolve disputes before bringing them to the court.

Another lawyer for Germany, Antonios Tzanakopoulos, said that Nicaragua's formal notification about the case came from a Yahoo email address sent to an general inbox, rather than through the appropriate diplomatic channels.

Germany has been a staunch supporter of Israel for decades and is the second-largest supplier of arms to



Israel after the United States.

Monar stressed that her country carefully reviews all exports of military equipment in accordance with international law. "Germany has not, since 2024, authorized an export of weapons of war, with final destination in Israel that can be used in the Gaza conflict," she said.

The logo of the International Court of Justice displayed on the judges' bench, in The Hague, Netherlands, May 4, 2026. Germany moves to end ICJ case over its military support for Israel in Gaza war. In 2024, the court rejected an emergency request from Nicaragua to order Germany to halt military and other aid to Israel in Gaza, but the 16-judge panel declined to throw out the case altogether.

Proceedings at the ICJ can take a long time to conclude.

The proceedings are the latest legal attempt to rein in Israel's military campaign by a country with historic ties to the Palestinian people, after South Africa accused Israel of genocide at the same court in 2023.

In January 2024, judges at the ICJ

massacre, when Bosnian Serb forces rounded up and murdered some 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys in eastern Bosnia.

In May, the court set a November 2027 deadline for South Africa to file its written pleadings and gave Israel until May 2029 to reply. Hearings on the core question of the case — whether Israel committed genocide in Gaza — likely won't be heard until late 2029 at the earliest.

In separate proceedings at the International Criminal Court, also in The Hague, which tries cases against individuals rather than between nations, judges have issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in connection with the conflict.

The pair are charged with crimes against humanity, not genocide. The court said it found that there was reason to believe they used "starvation as a method of warfare" by restricting humanitarian aid and intentionally targeted civilians in Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza — charges Israeli officials deny.

In response, the United States has issued sanctions against many senior court staff, including nine of the ICC's 18 judges.

The conflict in Gaza has left tens of thousands of Palestinians dead and devastated the enclave. Despite a fragile ceasefire brokered by the United States last year, violence has continued. Since the ceasefire was announced, Israeli fire has killed more than 1,300 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Five Israeli soldiers have also been killed.

Eiffel Tower shuts after female staff sidelined during Hindu group's visit, reopens after management apologises



PARIS

The Eiffel Tower shut down after staff went on a strike following allegations that female employees were sidelined during a private visit by a Hindu religious delegation, reports said.

The dispute reportedly involved around 100 people associated with BAPS (Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha), a prominent Hindu spiritual organization. According to reports, the delegation requested that arrangements be made to limit interactions with women during its visit.

Eiffel Tower employees alleged that female workers were instructed to leave their workstations, avoid certain

areas and, in some cases, were replaced by male colleagues. Union representatives criticized the arrangements, saying they effectively pushed female employees out of their normal duties.

The tower's operating company, Société d'Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel (SETE), acknowledged that the conditions requested for the visit had been accepted. However, management later said that the decision "should not have been accepted" because it conflicted with principles of gender equality.

The incident triggered a strong political response in France. Paris Mayor Emmanuel Grégoire condemned the decision as unacceptable and called for an immedi-

ate investigation. French Equality Minister Aurore Bergé also reaffirmed the country's commitment to equality, saying that no religious belief can take precedence over French law.

BAPS's Paris temple reportedly issued an apology and said it took the concerns raised by Eiffel Tower employees seriously. The organization said the arrangements were intended to prevent overcrowding and minimize disruption to other tourists, rather than discriminate against women.

The Eiffel Tower remained closed to visitors throughout Monday as workers went on strike. It resumed normal operations on Tuesday after management apologized to staff.

Bhargav Saikia's 'Bokshi' trailer spotlights Sikkim's myths and landscapes

Shot extensively across Sikkim, Bokshi marks Saikia's feature directorial debut after an acclaimed international festival journey



GUWAHATI

Assam filmmaker Bhargav Saikia's much-anticipated directorial debut feature *Bokshi* has unveiled its trailer ahead of its nationwide theatrical release on October 9, offering audiences a first glimpse into the unsettling folk-horror world of a film that has already travelled to some of the world's leading international genre film festivals.

Originally from Biswanath in Assam and now based in Mumbai, Saikia has made his feature directorial debut with *Bokshi*, an ambitious independent film inspired by the myths, landscapes and folk traditions of Sikkim. The trailer brings together dense forests, ancient legends, rituals and psychological horror, with the mountains of Sikkim becoming an integral part of the film's mysterious and atmospheric world. The trailer follows troubled teenager Anahita, played by Prasanna Bisht, whose school expedition into the mountains takes an increasingly sinister turn when she encounters a mysterious site and unsettling connections to an ancient legend. Her history teacher Shalini, played by Mansi Multani, becomes part of the unfolding mystery as myth and reality begin to blur.

Adding to the film's growing anticipation, acclaimed filmmaker Anurag Kashyap has shared the *Bokshi* trailer on Instagram and expressed his enthusiasm for the project. For Assam, the film marks an important milestone in Saikia's filmmaking journey. After growing up in Biswanath and studying at The Assam Valley School, Saikia went on to study at The University of Manchester in the UK before moving to Mumbai in 2011 to pursue filmmaking at Whistling Woods International.

He began his professional career as a producer with the acclaimed independent feature *Kaafron* Ki Namaaz

in 2014, before directing internationally screened short films including *Awakenings* and *The Black Cat*. *Bokshi* now marks his first feature as a director. The film's journey began long before its theatrical release. Saikia and writer-executive producer Harsh Vaibhav spent nearly three years travelling through Sikkim and researching the region before mounting the production. The film was subsequently shot over an extensive 80-day schedule across East Sikkim, West Sikkim and around Gangtok, with the region's forests, mountains and landscapes becoming an essential part of its visual and narrative identity.

Bokshi had its World Premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) in 2025 and went on to be showcased at several major international genre festivals. It holds the distinction of being the only Indian feature film at the 2025 editions of the Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival in Spain, the Neuchâtel International Fantastic Film Festival in Switzerland, and SXSW Sydney in Australia.

Unlike conventional horror films that rely heavily on visual effects, *Bokshi* takes a practical filmmaking approach, using practical effects and real locations to create an atmosphere of psychological dread. Its multilingual world incorporates Hindi, English and Nepali, alongside *Boksirit*, a fully developed fictional language created exclusively for the film by renowned Dutch linguist Jan van Steenbergen.

The film features Prasanna Bisht, Mansi Multani and Siddharth Shaw in pivotal roles, with Shernaz Patel lending her voice to the titular character. Cinematography is by A. Vasanth (*Game Over*) and debutant Siddharth Sivasankaran, with editing by Himanshu Saikia, sound design by Dhiman Karmakar and music by Advait Nemlekar. As *Bokshi* prepares to arrive in Indian theatres on October 9, the film brings together an Assam filmmaker's feature directorial debut, a story deeply rooted in the folk imagination of the eastern Himalayas, and an international festival journey that has already taken it far beyond India.

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