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Zubeen Garg's fusion of folk and modern music made him a youth icon

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: The fusion of folk with contemporary music with a deep understanding of people's evolving taste had made singer-composer Zubeen Garg a youth icon for generations and his sudden death in Singapore has left Assam heartbroken.

From 'Anamika' to 'Mayabini', 'Hiya Diya Niya' to 'Pakhi', the innumerable melodies of Zubeen have echoed through the streets and lanes of the state since the news of his death broke on Friday afternoon.

Parents joined their children and

teachers stood with their students in mourning the popular singer-music composer, whose creations transcended age, class and hearts.

"There were three aspects that came together to make Zubeen unique and give him that ability to appeal beyond age barriers," senior journalist and singer-composer Gautam Sharma told PTI.

First was his unparalleled blend of folk music from across the North East—up to Myanmar—alongside Assamese and Indian modern music. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM leaves for Delhi to receive Zubeen Garg's body

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma left for Delhi on Saturday to receive singer Zubeen Garg's body, arriving from Singapore around midnight, and accompany it to Guwahati, an official said.

Sarma said he has asked the airport authorities in Delhi that he should be to go up to the aircraft to receive the body of Zubeen, who died in Singapore on Friday, and pay his tributes to the singer.

The CM was accompanied by Union Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita, a close friend of Zubeen since their college days in Jorhat. The mortal remains of the singer will be brought to Guwahati by a special aircraft. It is likely to arrive in Assam on Sunday morning.

"I will be going to Delhi later today to receive our beloved Zubeen's mortal remains, which will arrive from Singapore. From there, we will immediately bring the body back to Guwahati," (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Guwahati stadium being readied for public homage to Zubeen

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: With popular singer Zubeen Garg's mortal remains expected to reach Assam on Sunday morning, preparations are being made at the Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah sports complex in Guwahati to enable people to pay their last respects to the youth heartthrob, who died in Singapore.

The mortal remains of Garg will be kept at a specially erected pandal (structure) inside the sports complex, which was earlier known as Sarusajai stadium, named after the locality, officials said.

An alternate site has also been readied inside the complex in case of heavy rains lashing the city and creating problems at the temporary structure being built for the memorial.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma reviewed the preparations twice on Saturday before leaving for New Delhi to receive the body of Garg, which will be flown in an Air India flight.

The mortal remains will be brought to Guwahati by a special flight and taken directly to Zubeen's residence at Kahilipara area in the city in a flower-decked ambulance. It will be taken to the sports complex for public tributes after the family members pay their respects (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Zubeen wanted to relax in Singapore, not just attend North East India Festival: Mahanta

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: Popular singer Zubeen Garg had come to Singapore to relax and not just attend the North East India Festival (NEIF), its chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta claimed.

The three-day festival was scheduled to begin on Friday, but was cancelled after the death of the singer while "swimming in the sea without a life jacket".

"Zubeen had told the festival organising team that he wanted to go to Singapore and we arranged for his stay at a hotel," Mahanta told PTI from the island nation. "He had not come for the festival alone but had also made his own plans with members of the Assam Association in Singapore," Mahanta claimed. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM directs DGP to transfer FIRs to CID

State govt to conduct inquiry into Zubeen Garg's death ● NE festival fest organiser and singer's manager under fire

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said his government would conduct an inquiry into singer Zubeen Garg's death.

The chief minister said that he has directed Director General of Police Harmeet Singh to transfer multiple FIRs lodged across the state over Garg's death to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and to register a consolidated case for a thorough investigation.

Sarma said that he has also spoken to Singapore High Commissioner in India, Simon Wong, and requested for a detailed inquiry into the circumstances leading to the singer's death.

The first FIR was lodged against North East India Festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta and the singer's manager Siddhartha Sharma at Morigaon police station, alleging that they (the accused), as a "part of a conspiracy, took Zubeen to a foreign

country, on the pretext of singing but with the motive to kill him".

Since then, several FIRs have been filed across the state, he said.

"Multiple FIRs have been filed against Shyamkanu Mahanta and Siddhartha Sharma in connection with the unfortunate and untimely demise of our beloved Zubeen Garg. I have directed the @DG-PAssamPolice to transfer all the FIRs to the CID and to register a consolidated case for a thorough investigation," the CM said in a post on X. "Assam Police will probe the death of Zubeen Garg and both Mahanta and Sharma, along with those who were present with the singer in his last moments, will be interrogated," Sarma told reporters.

There are reports that the singer was taken to a party the night before his death, and "we are also trying to ascertain its veracity," he said. Garg died in Singapore on Friday, while "swimming in the sea without a life jacket".

"I spoke to the High Commissioner of Singapore, Simon Wong, and requested a detailed inquiry into the circumstances leading to the untimely demise of our beloved Zubeen Garg. He has assured me of complete cooperation in this regard," the CM said in another post on X.

Singaporean authorities have also started their investigation, and "as the place of occurrence was not India, we will get the criminal part, if any, from that country, and if he was taken from Assam with a wrong intent, we will get this aspect from the state", the CM said. "The state government will impartially ascertain all aspects related to his death, and all arrangements will be made if anyone wants to give any information or be a witness," he said.

Sarma said that the matter should become absolutely clear to the people of the state so that nothing is hidden regarding the popular singer's death. (PTI)

Autopsy of Zubeen's body completed in Singapore: Himanta



GUWAHATI, Sept 20: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that the post-mortem examination of popular singer Zubeen Garg's body was completed in Singapore.

The mortal remains of the singer were being handed over to those who accompanied him there, Sarma said.

"The post-mortem of our beloved Zubeen Garg has been completed in Singapore. His mortal remains are now being handed over to the accompanying team — Shekar Jothi Goswami, Sandeepan Garg, and Siddhartha Sharma (Manager) — in the presence of officers from the Indian Embassy," the CM posted on X.

Indian High Commissioner to Singapore Shilpak Ambule had informed Sarma on Friday night that Garg died while "swimming without a life jacket" in the island country. Garg had gone with 17 others on a yacht trip and died while "swimming in the sea without a life jacket", Sarma had said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Karbi Anglong pays homage to Assam icon

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Sept 20: Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong joined the rest of Assam in mourning the death of singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg, who died in a scuba diving accident in Singapore on Friday while attending the North East India Festival.

As news of his passing spread on Fri-

day evening, youths and fans of the singer organised spontaneous candlelight vigils on streets, in homes and in offices.

Socio-cultural bodies, artists' forums and literary organisations across the district came together to pay tribute to the artist hailed as the 'Voice of Assam.'

KAAC Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang, in a condolence message

on social media, described Garg as "the singer, heart, soul and voice of generations" and said Assam had lost one of its favourite sons. He recalled Garg's contribution to Assamese music, his presence on global stages, and his generosity off stage. The Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) and Karbi Film Society (KFS) held a condolence (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Three-day state mourning over Assam icon's death

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: The Assam government on Saturday declared three days of state mourning over singer Zubeen Garg's death.

Chief Secretary Ravi Kota made the announcement in a post on X.

"The Government of Assam expresses deep shock and sorrow at the passing of Shri Zubeen Garg, eminent singer, filmmaker and cultural icon," he said.

"State mourning has been declared from 20th to 22nd September. During this period, there will be no official entertainment, dinners, or ceremonial functions," he added.

Kota said the 'Seva Saptah' programmes will also be postponed as a mark of respect.

"However, service-oriented activities such as health camps, Nikshay Mitra support for TB patients, and plantation drives will continue," he said. (PTI)



Students and well wishers of Zubin Garg paying floral tribute to celebrate singer Zubeen Garg at Ganeshguri on Saturday in Guwahati. HT Photo

Zubeen's family await singer's mortal remains

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: The grief-stricken family of popular singer Zubeen Garg was on Saturday awaiting the arrival of his mortal remains in Guwahati from Singapore, where he died a day ago while "swimming without a life jacket".

His octogenarian father Mohini Mohan Borthakur, who has been suffering from Alzheimer's disease, looked resigned to fate, while the wife of the singer appeared calm as they were receiving mourners and well-wishers at their Kahilipara residence in the city.

Garg (52), who was in Singapore to attend the North East India Festival, had gone with 17 others on a yacht trip and died while "swimming in the sea without a life jacket", Assam

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said.

He said the autopsy of Zubeen's body was conducted at a Singapore hospital on Saturday, and the body is expected to reach Delhi late in the evening.

"Dada (Zubeen's father) has Alzheimer's disease. He is also a diabetic patient, and there was a spike in his blood sugar level yesterday after he received the news. But he is under control now," Zubeen's uncle Manoj Kumar Borthakur, who reached Guwahati on Saturday morning to be with his elder brother, told PTI. For 85-year-old Mohini Mohan Borthakur, a former bureaucrat and acclaimed author-poet, losing those closest to him has been a tragedy that he has suffered over the years. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ULFA (I) mourns the death of Zubeen, calls him 'unparalleled jewel of Assamese culture'

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 20: The United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent), or ULFA (I), has expressed deep grief and extended heartfelt condolences over the untimely demise of renowned Assamese singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg.

In an official press statement issued by the group's Assistant Secretary of the Publicity Department, Sayed Uddin Ahmed, also known by his alias Rumel Asom, the outfit hailed Zubeen Garg as a "name and an identity" in Assamese music and society. Describing the singer as "an unparalleled jewel of Assamese culture," the banned (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Hundreds throng Zubeen's residence in Guwahati; hold spontaneous memorials

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: People from all walks of life thronged Zubeen Garg's residence in Guwahati on Saturday, standing in solidarity with the bereaved family as they awaited the arrival of the singer's mortal remains from Singapore, where he died the previous day.

From political leaders and artists to members of the general public, hundreds lined up at the late singer's flat in the city's Kahilipara area.

Condolence meetings and memorials were held across the state, with commercial establishments in different parts, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Zubeen's dream of world-class football academy in Assam remains unfulfilled

Beyond music, Zubeen's enduring love for football leaves behind a dream yet to be realised

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: If his songs got millions up on their feet and swaying to the rhythm, it was the juggling of the football on the field that gave him the adrenaline rush, as music and sports remained the two passions for singer Zubeen Garg.

A 'hardcore' football fan by his own admission, Zubeen's dream of setting up a residential football academy in league with such top institutes in the world remained unfulfilled as he breathed his last at the age of 52, "while swimming without a life jacket" in Singapore on Friday.

From participating in celebrity football matches in the state to closely following international tournaments, his love for the game was known to all.

"Zubeen was a hardcore football fan, as he would himself say. He had told me that he was helping groom a football club



in Guwahati and also spoke about developing a top-class academy for the sport here," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI.

"Whenever there was a celebrity football match, he would surely try to be part of it," he added.

He also recalled Zubeen's association with cricket in the state and said, "If a (international) match was being held in Guwahati, he would come to watch it. He was always part of every cricketing event and made his presence felt."

Saikia, who is also the general secretary of Guwahati Sports Association (GSA), said that as a tribute to the deceased singer, all GSA matches have been cancelled for the next two days.

Sidhartha Sankar Deka, a co-partner of Guwahati City FC with which Zubeen was associated, recounted how he came in touch with the singer-actor-music composer during the making of a film, which was not released.

"We bonded over football. It was in 2017, and I told him that a few of us were trying to form a football club, and sought his help. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Jorhat observes shutdown as demand grows for Assam icon's memorial

HT Correspondents
JORHAT, Sept 20: Jorhat witnessed a complete shutdown on Saturday as the state mourned the death of Assam's most popular singer, Zubeen Garg.

Business establishments, offices and educational institutions remained closed, while the otherwise busy streets wore a deserted look with only the occasional car or motorcycle passing by.

The grief also resonated on social media platforms, where tributes, poems, personal memories and photographs of the late singer flooded Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. By evening, silence gave way to the sound of Garg's songs being played from (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

PM Modi inaugurates Avaada Group's ₹ 1,600-cr solar project in Gujarat

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated Avaada Group's ₹ 1,600-crore solar project and laid the foundation stone for the company's new 100 MW solar project in Gujarat.

The 280 MW project spans over 1,170 acres in Tavi and Varsani villages in Surendranagar district of the state and entails a total investment of ₹ 1,500 crore, the Vinet Mittal-led industrial house said in a statement. "The project, which has been developed under the Gujarat State Solar Policy, was formally inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, underscoring the government's commitment to accelerating India's clean



energy transition and strengthening the vision of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat," it said. The electricity generated from the project will be

supplied to GUVNL (Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd), contributing significantly to the state's renewable energy mix and ensuring

cleaner and more affordable power for the region's citizens, particularly farmers. The Surendranagar project is expected to offset around 595,857 tons of CO2 emissions annually and conserve approximately 112 lakh litres of water per year using robotic module cleaning systems, thereby minimising the project's ecological footprint.

The PM also laid the foundation stone virtually for Avaada's 100 MW solar power project in Vadodra district, the company said.

Spread across 350 acres and with a planned investment of Rs 400 crore, the project is being implemented by Avaada GJ Solar and is expected to be commissioned by April 2026. (PTI)

Dedicated category on National Consumer Helpline portal to register GST complaints

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: The Centre has created a dedicated category on National Consumer Helpline's INGRAM portal for registering complaints related to revised GST rates and their redressal. The GST Council has reduced the tax rates on various goods and services with effect from September 22.

According to an official statement on Saturday, Department of Consumer Affairs has taken steps to align the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) with the 'Next-Gen GST Reforms 2025' approved during the 56th meeting of the GST Council.

"To address the expected consumer queries and complaints on NCH following the implementation of revised GST charges, rates and exemptions effective from September 22, a dedicated category has been enabled on the INGRAM (Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism) portal," it added.

This category features major sub-categories including automobiles, banking, consumer durables, e-commerce, FMCG and others wherein GST related complaints will be registered.

An inaugural training session by Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) officials was conducted on September 11 to equip NCH counsellors to handle GST-related queries and grievances effectively.

On September 17, a stakeholder consultation meeting was convened under the chairpersonship of Consumer Affairs Secretary with participation from leading e-commerce platforms, representatives of industry associations and consumer durables companies. During the meeting, the department asked them to pass on the benefits of GST rate reductions on specified goods and services to consumers.

"The helpline will also share data and insights generated from consumer complaints under this sector with concerned companies, CBIC and other concerned authorities to enable timely action under relevant laws," the statement said.

The move is expected to strengthen GST compliance and promote a participatory governance model by empowering consumers to become active stakeholders in fair market practices. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Zubeen Garg's fusion of folk

fused with Western harmonies and melodies, Sharma maintained. Zubeen's folk-based vocals and immaculate pronunciations was another aspect of his songs, he added. "The third and very important fact was that Zubeen knew what the young generation wanted. He had his finger on their pulse. And that's why he remained a 'youth heartthrob' till the time of his death at 52 years of age," Sharma said.

"He knew how to combine folk with modern, while keeping it appealing for all and it made him popular across generations," the senior journalist who had known Zubeen closely over the years maintained. He underlined another aspect of Zubeen that gave him a cosmopolitan view of the world.

"His father was a bureaucrat and the family travelled to different parts of the North-east. Zubeen was born in Tura (hills of Meghalaya), spent part of growing years in Tamulpur and Barak Valley, and then in Jorhat. He later shifted to Guwahati and also made Mumbai a second base. These varied experiences made him understand and present his songs with a universal appeal," Sharma said.

Another facet of Zubeen that endeared him to newer generation was encouraging young people who came to take up music as a profession.

Sharma, whose lyricist-composer son Rahul Gautam had worked with the singer, said, "Zubeen, who was my contemporary in age, lent voice to songs penned by veterans of the state as well as newcomers. He gave platform to upcoming musicians and which further kept him in sync with the changing trends."

This seamless integration of tradition with modernity is what brought families together in grief—each member feeling the loss in their own way.

"Each of his song struck a different note. From the lure of 'Mayabini' to the calmness of his later compositions, the lyrics spoke directly to our hearts, with his voice bringing it across," a retired government employee, Prodig Tamuli, of Jorhat said.

Zubeen's songs taken together with his public personality of a straight-forward person who didn't mince his words added another layer for his followers.

"His fearlessness was an attraction. The way he spoke directly appealed to us all. His death has left a big void," Tamuli added, as he prepared for a memorial for Zubeen at their village in Bebeja on Sunday after the mortal remains reach Assam.

Echoing the pain of Tamuli, his daughter Ritushna said, "We have lost so many artists and I have grieved for them. But with Zubeen da's death, the loss feels personal." "His songs are a constant in our lives, in celebration, in sorrow, in travel, in solitude," the Guwahati-based homemaker said.

Recalling her earlier days in Mumbai, she said friends who had met Zubeen always described him as kind and approachable.

"I didn't meet him there, but all those who knew him would vouch for how helpful he was, with no airs."

"I had a first-hand experience with him when I saw him seated alone in an eatery in Guwahati many years ago. I approached him for a selfie and he clicked it himself," she added. While Zubeen may not be physically present anymore, his songs and creations will continue to bind and inspire generations to come. (PTI)

Karbi Anglong pays homage

meeting at the Clock Tower in KPH Taralango on Friday evening, while Diphu's Kala Kendra hosted a tribute programme on Saturday.

Flowers and incense were offered at a life-size portrait of Garg as members of various organisations, artists and cultural activists remembered his legacy.

Kala Kendra president Mukul Chandra Baruah said Garg's songs had touched people across generations and languages.

Former MLA and cultural activist Chandra Kanta Terang said Garg had taken Assamese culture to the forefront and was idolised by the youth.

Singer-politician Semson Ingti called his death a personal loss, recalling their performances together.

Former KCS president Chondrosing Kro said that after Bishnu Prasad Rabha and Bhupen Hazarika, Garg was regarded as the face of Assamese culture.

Film artist Rajiv Kro, breaking down in grief, pledged to plant two saplings every year on Garg's birth and death anniversaries to keep his memory alive.

Several organisations, including Karbi Anglong Lekhika Samaro Samiti, Karbi Anglong Zila Mahila Samiti, Tiwa Sanskriti Samaj, Bangla Sangitya Sanskriti Samaj, Abiti Aro Sanskriti Samaj, Diphu Club, District Press Club of Karbi Anglong and others participated in the condolence meetings.

The regional office of Assam Sahitya Sabha at Lorulango also paid floral tributes, led by its president Deben Kakoti and general secretary Binoy Mahanta.

In the evening, members of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) took out a candlelight procession from Gandhi Park to Diphu Medical College and Hospital.

The march was joined by residents of Diphu along with students' leaders. AASU has announced a rally on September 21 and a condolence meeting on September 22 in honour of the late singer.

Autopsy of Zubeen's body

The crew members of the yacht and guards had insisted that Garg should wear it, the CM said.

"Garg had initially worn the life jacket, but after a few seconds, he took it off, claiming that it was oversized and he was finding it difficult to swim," Sharma said.

"The high commissioner has sent me a list of people accompanying Zubeen, and it includes 11 people, including one Abhimanyu Talukdar, who had booked the yacht, from the Assamese community living in Singapore, four members of the singer's team, and two crew members," Sharma said after visiting the singer's residence in Kahilipara area here on Friday night.

The singer was "found floating in the sea, and the crew of the yacht tried to revive him, and he was again given CPR at the port" before being rushed to the Singapore General Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the chief minister said. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is an emergency procedure used during cardiac or respiratory arrest. The Singapore authorities are questioning the people who had accompanied the singer, Sharma said.

"The Indian high commissioner has also informed that the autopsy will be conducted on Saturday, and we are hoping that Zubeen can return to his land by Saturday evening," the CM said.

"When all the formalities are completed, his mortal remains will be first brought to Delhi and then flown to Guwahati by Saturday," he said.

Sharma said that since all the people accompanying Garg are Indian citizens, "we will approach the Union home ministry on the procedure to be followed to ensure that our concerned authorities question them as the people of the state have the right to know what exactly happened to their icon in his last few minutes".

The chief minister said that the singer's mortal remains will be kept in the Sarusajai Stadium for the people to pay their last respects, and "all other arrangements will be made after the arrival of the Garg's body."

The singer's family said that "since Garg was popular among the people of Assam, they will decide how his last rites will be conducted", he said. "The family will fully cooperate with the people and the government in this regard," Sharma said.

Asked whether his body will be brought to his residence, the CM said, "We will discuss it again with his family as his father is ailing and wants to see him for the last time." On the demand of the people of Jorhat, Garg's hometown, the CM said, "cremation and memorial are two different issues and we will take a final decision only after Zubeen arrives in Assam". (PTI)

CM leaves for Delhi to

hopefully by 6 am on Sunday," Sharma said in a post on X. Sharma said the body has been handed over to the Indian High Commission in Singapore and the accompanying

team members of the singer. The chief minister, before leaving for the airport, reviewed arrangements for the second time during the day at Guwahati's Sarusajai Sports Stadium, where his body will be kept for people to pay their last respects.

Sharma also directed Minister for Cultural Affairs Bimal Borah to oversee the preparations at the stadium. After arrival in Guwahati, the singer's body will be placed in a flower-bedecked ambulance and brought out through the VIP exit. His body will first be taken to his Kahilipara residence, where members of the family will spend some moments with the mortal remains, and no public will be allowed, the CM said.

"Strict security arrangements will be ensured near his residence. I request people to stay away when Zubeen's body is taken to his home so that his family members, particularly his 85-year-old ailing father, can spend time before the body is taken to the stadium," he said. The singer's family members have requested that they be allowed at least one and a half hours time before his body is taken to the stadium.

Guwahati Commissioner of Police Parthasarathi Mahanta visited the residence to oversee the security arrangements in the locality. Sharma said several organisations from Jorhat have demanded that the singer's last rites be performed in the Upper Assam town, and a memorial dedicated to him established there.

"The government will not make any independent decision regarding the last rites of the singer. We will first consult his family whose wish will be the top priority, and also several organisations of the state, including the Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), and the people who were closely associated with him, before we make a final decision," the CM said. The Assam Sahitya Sabha has also written a letter to Sharma, urging him to hold the singer's last rites at Jorhat. (PTI)

Guwahati stadium being readied

at the residence, officials said. Sharma held discussion with the senior officers of the civil and police administration, and took note of the steps taken for the smooth conduct of public homage to the cultural icon. Anticipating a large turnout of admirers of the singer, Sharma asked the concerned authority to put in place facilities like drinking water, washrooms, adequate parking provision in and around the sports complex. He also asked the police administration to control the movement of the heavy vehicles on National Highway 27, which runs adjacent to the sports complex.

Cultural Affairs minister Bimal Borah, who was overseeing the preparations at the site, said, "A large number of people are expected and we are preparing to ensure that all can pay their last respects in a hassle-free manner." He said the chief secretary is co-ordinating with the top brass of the different departments involved in the process. Asked about the possible time from when the public tribute will be opened, Borah told reporters at Sarusajai that it will be fixed as per the schedule of the mortal remains reaching Guwahati.

Sharing details of the arrangements at Sarusajai, Kamrup (Metropolitan) district commissioner Sumit Sattawan said at a press conference that arrangements are being made at Sarusajai stadium for smooth paying of tributes to the popular singer. "The mortal remains will be first taken to Zubeen Garg's home and only his family members will be there. We urge the public to cooperate and come to Sarusajai to pay their tributes," he said.

Sattawan said channelised barricades are being built in the stadium to guide the people to view the mortal remains of Garg and pay their last respects.

"People will have to walk about 800 metres from entering to exiting the stadium. No vehicles will be allowed inside the stadium," the DC said. Provision for parking has been made in nearby areas, with movement of heavy vehicles restricted on NH 27 on Sunday, Sattawan added. (PTI)

Zubeen wanted to relax in

Garg had spoken to members of the Assam Association from the northeastern state itself and had made plans with them to visit places and relax before participating in the festival, he said. "He was also not supposed to give a full-fledged performance but wanted to meet, interact with people and sing a few songs for them," Mahanta said.

Garg did not even bring his entire team of musicians but only his cousin Sandeepan Garg, his manager Siddhartha Sharma and only one musician, Shekhar Jyoti Goswami, he said. "We had not asked him to perform at the festival, but he always attended our events, whether in India or abroad. He felt it was his duty, as a prominent figure from the Northeast, to represent the region and give out a positive message about the region from all platforms," he claimed. Mahanta claimed that a section of people was trying to peddle a false narrative.

"I want to make it clear that Zubeen Garg had come on his own free will. There are videos circulating on social media claiming that he had already performed in Singapore, which is not true as our event was scheduled to begin on Friday and he had not participated in any event before the mishap occurred," he said.

Mahanta said that festival organisers were not aware that the singer and his team members had gone on a yacht trip with members of the Assam Association in Singapore. "We were holding back-to-back meetings with various stakeholders at a hotel, which is very far from the incident site, when we received the news and we immediately rushed to the Singapore General Hospital," he said.

"Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has also mentioned that I was not present with Zubeen during the incident," Mahanta said. Mahanta said another narrative that NEIF is a business venture is "false".

"NEIF is an attempt to connect Northeast India with Southeast Asia to promote industry, trade, tourism and agricultural products from the region. After we organised the festival in Thailand, a direct flight between Bangkok and Guwahati started," he said.

The aim is to create a market for the products of Northeast India in the ASEAN countries in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of the Act East policy, he said. "The chief ministers of the northeastern states have been guests and more than Assam, it is the entrepreneurs from the other states of the region who participate in the events," he said. The NEIF is committed to "take music, dance, cuisine, fashion and all other aspects of our culture to Southeast Asia, which has many similarities with our northeastern states", Mahanta said.

The first edition of NEIF was held in Bangkok in 2019 and again in the same city after a gap of two years in 2022 while the third edition was held in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City in 2023. This year's edition was expected to mark the 60th anniversary of India-Singapore diplomatic relations and also coincided with the India-ASEAN Year of Tourism. (PTI)

Zubeen's family await singer's

Borthakur had lost his wife, homemaker-singer Ily Borthakur, a few decades ago, and one of the couple's daughters, Jongki, an actor-singer, in a road accident in 2002. After Zubeen's death, Borthakur now has a lone surviving child, Palme, who teaches Geography at a private university here.

"Our family members have come to be with Dada (Mohini Mohan Borthakur) and Garima (Zubeen's wife). Well-wishers have been coming to be part of our bereavement," Manoj Borthakur said.

He added that Garima, a renowned fashion designer herself, has been maintaining her composure after receiving the news of Zubeen's death.

With fans pouring in to pay their tributes to their beloved singer at his Kahilipara residence, the administration has restricted entry to ensure no untoward situation, Borthakur said. "We don't want a stampede-like situation or difficulty to our neighbours," he added.

A former neighbour of Zubeen, Rickjyoti Batshya, recalled the youth icon as a down-to-earth person who never refused a request.

"He was a good neighbour with no airs. He was the guy next door, hanging out at the corner shops just like we did," he said. Whenever anyone approached him with a request for a photo or just to greet him, Zubeen would never refuse them, Batshya said. "Once my father came across Zubeen da, he requested a selfie. Zubeen da himself clicked the photo," he added.

Batshya also recounted the craze for Zubeen, especially among the youth. "Perhaps,

the only time the apartment gates were locked was on Zubeen da's birthday as his fans flocked in huge numbers. Also, when his car passed through the gate, the residents of a youth hostel, opposite to the apartment, would shout out to him every time," he added. (PTI)

ULFA (I) mourns the death of

outfit stated that his contributions transcended the musical sphere, reaching deep into the heart of Assam's socio-cultural identity. "Zubeen Garg is an unparalleled jewel of Assamese music. He is the pride of Assamese culture," the statement read. ULFA (I) noted that Garg's sudden death is not only a monumental loss for Assam but also a major blow to the entire subcontinental music community.

According to the outfit, the singer's artistry was instrumental in expressing the collective voice of the people. "Through his songs, Zubeen Garg brought to life the inner voice of the people and society," the group said. The rebel outfit further lauded Garg's active role in voicing concerns related to Assam and its people.

"Not just as an artist, Zubeen also played an important role in the national life of Assam. He actively raised his voice on various issues impacting Assam and the Assamese people," the press release mentioned. Citing information received by the organisation, ULFA (I) stated that Zubeen Garg passed away in Indonesia during a scuba diving expedition due to sudden heart failure.

The circumstances of his death, though shocking, were acknowledged with solemnity by the group. In closing, the ULFA (I) expressed its deepest condolences to the bereaved family and fans of the late singer.

"We, the United Liberation Front of Assam [Independent], deeply mourn the death of this glorious son of Assam and convey our heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family and fans. May his soul rest in peace," the statement concluded. Zubeen Garg, widely regarded as one of the most prominent cultural figures of modern Assam, leaves behind a legacy of music, activism, and social engagement that resonated across generations.

Zubeen's dream of world-class

We didn't seek monetary help but only that he promote our club so that we can attract young talents," Deka told PTI. Sidhartha Sankar Deka, along with two other entrepreneurs, Kaustab Chakraborty and Darick Ranjan Deka, went on to form the club the same year and helped a camp at Gauhati University in association with the popular Shillong-based Lajong FC.

"We asked Zubeen da to be part of a friendly match at the end of the camp and not only did he agree, he brought his artiste friends to play, as well. When our club organised its first football fest, he again came for the finals," Deka said. The last time Sidhartha Sankar Deka met Zubeen was in 2018, a day before the singer was leaving for Russia for the football World Cup.

"He called me and introduced me to some of his friends. We held discussions about transforming our club into a fully residential academy like in foreign countries where youngsters can concentrate on their game," Deka said. Though the discussion did not proceed further, with the COVID-19 pandemic being one of the major reasons, Deka was optimistic that Zubeen would go ahead with forming the academy.

"We were sure that he would be forthcoming for the academy. Now that he is no more with us, we have decided that whenever we have a permanent set-up, we will name a part of it after Zubeen da. It could be the academy or a stand when we have our own stadium," Deka said. "I had last spoken to him over the phone months back and talked only about football. We hope to cherish his memory through the game that was close to his heart," he added. (PTI)

Hundreds throng Zubeen's residence

including Guwahati, spontaneously closing down as a mark of respect for Garg, Garg (52), who was in Singapore to attend the North East India Festival, had gone with 17 others on a yacht trip and died while "swimming in the sea without a life jacket", Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said.

He said autopsy was conducted at a Singapore hospital on Saturday and the body is expected to reach New Delhi late in the night, from where it will be flown to Guwahati in a chartered flight.

A garlanded photograph of the singer was placed in the parking lot of the apartment, where the fans and well-wishers paid floral tributes.

The singer's wife, Garima Garg, also joined the mourners for sometime as she sat among them, wiping away tears. State Congress president and party's deputy leader in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi said, "It is still difficult to believe that Zubeen da is no more. I request all to give a befitting farewell to the singer so that his soul finds peace in the after-world and wherever he is, he knows how much we loved him."

Rajior Dal president and MLA Akhil Gogoi, talking to reporters after calling on the bereaved family, said, "The family is in deep sorrow and we are with them in sharing this grief."

Questioning the circumstances of Zubeen's death, Gogoi said, "Though the chief minister has announced a CID inquiry, we feel that a CBI probe is needed. A CBI probe along with the investigation by Singapore authorities will assuage our apprehensions." The Rajior Dal leader's demand came in the wake of allegations of 'negligence' on part of the festival organisers, leading to the singer's death.

Assam Jaitya Parishad (AJP) chief Lurinjyoti Gogoi, paying his respects, said with Zubeen's death, the state has lost one of the most passionate voices.

"He was an identity of Assam. His songs, his creations touched every strata of society. It is now our responsibility to keep alive his songs, his ideals," he said.

Rallies and memorials were organised in several parts of the state, including Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Nagaon, as people came out to pay their tributes, singing popular numbers of the heartthrob together.

Events and competitions, be it sports or cultural, were postponed or cancelled by different organisations for next three days as a sign of respect to the deceased singer. (PTI)

Jorhat observes shutdown

a mini truck moving through the town. Across communities, people gathered at street corners and crossroads, particularly at Baruah Chariati, to light earthen lamps in front of the singer's photographs and posters in a collective act of remembrance.

The Jorhat Press Club joined organisations and individuals in offering condolences. Calls for performing Garg's last rites in Jorhat and for constructing a samadhi sthal gained momentum during the day.

The Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami, several organisations and a mass signature campaign appealed to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to fulfil the public demand.

Assam Sahitya Sabha president Dr Basanta Goswami told reporters at Chandrakanta Handique Bhawan that the literary body had received widespread appeals for a memorial in Garg's home district. He said he had written to the Chief Minister after consultations with organisations and discussions with the Jorhat MLA. MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami said the chief minister had assured him that the request would be considered.

The district administration has begun identifying possible sites in Jorhat for the memorial, with three to four locations capable of accommodating seven to eight lakh people being shortlisted.

Several cultural organisations also met Jorhat Deputy Commissioner Jay Shivani on Saturday to submit a memorandum urging the government to establish the memorial.

They pointed out that cultural icons Bishnu Prasad Rabha and Dr Bhupen Hazarika have their samadhi sthals at Tezpur and Guwahati respectively, and that Garg too deserved a final resting place in his native district.

Meanwhile, the Central Puja Coordination Committee, Jorhat, announced that all puja committees will refrain from taking out the customary Mahalaya procession scheduled for Sunday morning, as a mark of respect to the late singer. The procession usually draws large crowds at dawn to welcome Goddess Durga and herald the Durga Puja festivities.

Parties cancel events; leaders make final appeals as Kokrajhar readies for polls BTC Election Campaign ends in subdued mood amid Zubeen Garg's demise

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Sept 20: The untimely death of youth icon and celebrated singer Zubeen Garg has cast a pall of gloom over the BTC election campaign, leading to a subdued and restrained end to campaigning across Kokrajhar district.

As a mark of respect, political parties called off major campaign events, resulting in a quiet and colourless final phase. The campaign officially concluded on Saturday at 4:00 PM in accordance with election guidelines.

UPPL President and BTC Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro held a solemn press conference at Kajalgaon, paying tribute to Zubeen Garg and urging voters to support peace and development in the region. "The campaign has concluded peacefully. I appeal to every voter to participate in the festival of democracy with responsibility," said UPPL CWC leader Bharat Sharma.

In the final hours of the campaign, Bodoland People's Front (BPF) President Hagrama Mohilary wrapped up his party's



outreach with small meetings in Debargaon, Banargaon, and Baukhungrī constituencies. Speaking to reporters, Mohilary confidently declared, "BPF will win 25 seats in the BTC election and not less than that." He added that the party has received encouraging responses across constituencies and promised

to double development in the coming five years if voted to power.

Mohilary further appealed to people of all communities and faiths across the BTC to support the BPF, claiming that all 12 constituencies in Kokrajhar district are likely to go in BPF's favour.

Meanwhile, independent candidate from Debargaon constituency, Buddhadev Mushahary, expressed deep sorrow over the loss of Zubeen Garg and ended his campaign early as a mark of respect. Mushahary criticised both BPF and the ruling UPPL for what he described as years of neglect and deprivation in Debargaon.

He urged voters to reject the plough (BPF) and tractor (UPPL) symbols and support the "Sun" symbol for real change. "If Hagrama Mohilary doesn't return to power, nothing will come from him. People should not waste their votes. The same goes for Khampa Borgoyary of UPPL," said Mushahary.

The final day saw candidates across Kokrajhar's 12 BTC constituencies holding small-scale campaign events, as the entire district continued to mourn the loss of one of Assam's most iconic cultural figures. With the silence period now in effect, Kokrajhar awaits polling day on September 22 in an atmosphere of reflection and restraint.

Zubeen Garg's passing leaves Assam in Mourning; KA joins State in Grief

From cities to hill districts, fans remember the voice that united Assam



HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Sept 20: The Government of Assam has expressed profound sorrow over the passing of Zubeen Garg, one of the state's most iconic and beloved cultural figures. A legendary singer, composer, and filmmaker, Garg's remarkable contributions to music and the arts have left an indelible mark on Assam's cultural fabric, bridging generations and uniting communities through his voice and creativity.

In honour of his legacy, the state government has declared a three-day period of official mourning from September 20 (Saturday) to September 22 (Monday), 2025. During this time, all government-organised entertainment events, ceremonial dinners, and celebratory functions will remain suspended. Seva Saptah programs involving public gatherings or distribution of benefits have also been postponed as a mark of respect.

Joining the rest of the state, the people of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts have paid heartfelt tributes to Garg. Memorial gatherings and condolence meetings have been held at several locations, including the District Commissioner's offices, Diphu, Kheroni Zero Point, Mailoo Bazar, Bokajan, Dayangmukh, and other public venues. Zubeen Garg's artistic journey and musical legacy will continue to inspire and echo across Assam and beyond, immortalizing him as a beacon of the state's cultural identity.

Commercial shutdown in Nagaon to Mourn Zubeen Garg's death

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 20: The sudden demise of the state's beloved artist Zubeen Garg has sent shockwaves throughout Assam, including Nagaon district. Since yesterday evening, various organisations, educational institutions, and cultural bodies have been holding condolence meetings to pay their respects.

The journalists' community in Nagaon organised a condolence meeting at Natun Bazar, jointly hosted by the Nagaon Press Club, Nagaon Print Media Association, Working Journalist Union, and the All Assam Journalists' Association. Senior journalists such as Jiten Borkataki, Kanak Hazarika, and Hemen Kumar Das attended, along with prominent citizens, students, and representatives from educational institutions. The Silpi Samaj Assam held a condolence meeting at the Kishalay Cultural premises, while the Nagaon District Sahitya Sabha held a separate tribute event. Ramanujan Higher Secondary School also organised a meeting where students and teachers performed songs by the late artist.

The Assam Chamber of Commerce called for a bandh in Nagaon today to honor Zubeen Garg, with the business community responding by closing their establishments. As a result, normal life in Nagaon was disrupted.

Tinsukia district pays tribute to Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent

TINSUKIA, Sept 20: The Tinsukia district administration expressed deep sorrow over the demise of legendary artist and Asom Ratna awardee Zubeen Garg, who passed away on Saturday morning. As offices opened for the day, Tinsukia Deputy Commissioner Swapneel Paul led the district in paying tribute to the beloved cultural icon.

A portrait of Zubeen Garg was placed at the District Commissioner's office, where floral tributes were offered and candles were lit. Officers and staff members gathered to pay their respects to the departed artist.

Similar tribute events were held at the offices of the Co-Deputy Commissioners in Margherita, Doomdooma, Sadiya, Digboi, and Makum, where portraits of the late singer were displayed and floral offerings were made.

Tinsukia District Information and Public Relations Officer (DIPRO) Bikash Sarma informed that portraits of Zubeen Garg were also placed in various departmental offices across the district, including those of Transport, Public Works, Health, Public Health Engineering (PHE), Panchayat, Information and Public Relations, Block Development, and Circle offices. Candles and earthen lamps were lit as a mark of respect.

In the morning, all officers and employees observed a minute of silent prayer in front of Zubeen Garg's portrait. Regular government work continued afterward, though the atmosphere across offices remained solemn in memory of the legendary artist.

Mega Health Camp held

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Sept 20: As part of the Assam Government's new health initiative Susrusha Setu, a Mega Health Camp was organised at the Demow Public Playground in Demow LAC on Friday. The event was inaugurated by Pollabita Boruah Gogoi, Chairman of the Demow Municipal Board.

People from across the region gathered at the health camp, which was held in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 75th birthday. Speaking to reporters, Dr Makhhan Kalita, Joint Director of Health Services, Sivasagar, said the Mega Health Camp is being conducted across three constituencies — Demow LAC, Sivasagar LAC, and Nazira LAC. The camp in Demow LAC was held on September 19.

Veteran singer recalls her musical journey and brotherly bond with the late icon

Pokhila Lektheipi mourns Zubeen Garg's passing

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 20: Renowned singer and Asom Gaurav awardee Pokhila Lektheipi has expressed deep sorrow over the sudden demise of iconic singer Zubeen Garg, who passed away in a scuba diving accident in Singapore yesterday.

Lektheipi, who shared the stage and recorded several Karbi and Assamese songs with Zubeen Garg in the 1990s, recalled their long-standing musical and personal bond. Among their well-known duets are "Paipai mo nangklang" from the album Jontro, and "Joiroi penle koansi mir jangthu chepachoi" and "Chuli ka-chetong cheng lasa along" from the album Manai. The duo also performed together in a Bihu programme at Dharanmala, Diphu, around 1991-92.

Now retired from the public eye, Lektheipi resides with her family in Sonang Terang Nihang village on the outskirts of Diphu. Speaking at her residence, she described Zubeen as more than a colleague.

NFR spreads message of cleanliness through Walkathons

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: As part of the ongoing nationwide Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) Campaign 2025, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) conducted various cleanliness and awareness activities across its divisions on September 19.

In Lumding Division, the Medical Department organised walkathons to promote awareness on cleanliness and hygiene. One walkathon was held from the Divisional Railway Hospital, Dibrugarh to Barbari Railway Colony, while another took place from the DRM Office, Alipurduar (APDJ)

to the Railway Institute Hall, APDJ. Additionally, as part of scheduled SHS activities, larvicide spraying was carried out at the Diesel Loco Workshop in Dibrugarh to control mosquito breeding and ensure hygienic surroundings.

In Katihar Division, another walkathon saw enthusiastic participation from officers and their families. The event aimed at sensitising railway staff and the local community about the importance of maintaining cleanliness in their daily lives. Participants and citizens were engaged through awareness drives on Swachhata during the rally.

Meanwhile, extensive cleaning activities were undertaken at Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs) under the campaign. Guwahati Railway Station (GHY) witnessed a major cleanliness drive, focused on enhancing hygiene standards and providing passengers with a clean and safe travel environment.

Northeast Frontier Railway has reaffirmed its commitment to continuing such efforts across all its divisions under Swachhata Hi Seva 2025, emphasising the vital role of cleanliness, hygiene, and environmental sustainability in public spaces.

Union MoS Dr L Murugan inaugurates SOUL Docu-Fiction Film Festival in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: The inaugural edition of the SOUL – Docu-Fiction Film Festival was officially opened on Saturday in Guwahati by Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Dr L Murugan. The three-day festival, taking place from September 19 to 21, aims to explore the deep connections between people, land, and culture. It is expected to attract over 1,200 participants and will feature more than 70 films across various categories.

In his inaugural address, Dr Murugan emphasised the unique power of cinema as a medium to communicate swiftly and effectively with the public. He noted the ongoing transformation in the film industry, particularly the shift from traditional long-format films to short-form content, reflecting both technological advancements and changing audience preferences.

The Minister highlighted several government initiatives aimed at promoting Indian cinema on the global stage, under the leadership of the Prime Minister. He pointed to

the success of the WAVES Summit held earlier this year in Mumbai, which marked the first international gathering of the Media and Entertainment industry in India. Dr Murugan noted the impressive performance of participants from the Northeast in various "Create in India" challenges at the summit, covering sectors like AVGC, VFX, AI, AR/VR, and music, showcasing the region's talent and global competitiveness.

He also announced the establishment of the Indian Institute of Creative Technology in Mumbai, being developed with an investment of Rs 400 crore. The institute aims to nurture emerging talent in the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR) sectors.

Dr Murugan praised the festival's central theme, "Earth is My Mother", calling it a compelling tribute to the values of environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and sustainable living, as expressed through cinematic storytelling.

Bodo leaders mourn demise of beloved singer Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 20: A pal of gloom erupts in Kokrajhar soon after hearing the tragic death of renowned singer Zubeen Garg in Singapore on Friday. A candle light programme was arranged in the heart of Kokrajhar town in the evening to offer glowing tribute to late artiste.

The UPPL in association with Kokrajhar Municipality Board have a Shradhanjali at MG Park in Kokrajhar town this evening where leaders, fans and well wishers offered floral tribute to his portrait.

The CEM of BTC Pramod Boro, Assam cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, MP Joyanta Basumatary, MLA Lawrence Islay and other prominent leaders offered floral tribute at the portrait of Zubeen Garg.

CEM Boro stated that the state loss a great personality with his death of Zubeen Garg. "Zubeen Garg was the voice of a generation, a maestro whose melodies transcended

borders, united hearts, and carried the message of love and peace.

With a heavy heart, I offered tributes to our beloved Zubeen. Farewell, Legend," he said. In a condolence message, the president and the general secretary of the ABSU-Dipen Boro and Khanindra Basumatary expressed their deepest sorrow and profound grief at the untimely demise of the legendary artist Zubeen Garg a singer, music director, composer, lyricist, actor and director who dedicated his life to the enrichment of music, culture and humanity. They said Zubeen Garg was not just a musician but an institution, a voice of unity, identity and inspiration for the people of Assam and beyond and contributed immensely to Bodo music with his unparalleled voice, bringing it recognition and love from wider audiences. They also said his unparalleled contributions to art and society will forever be cherished and his legacy will continue to inspire generations.

become a more professional singer. "He encouraged me to move to Guwahati to build a better career. But I chose to stay close to my roots, my language, and culture," she added. Lektheipi described Zubeen as a person of simplicity, compassion, and humility, who held no ill feelings toward any community or religion. "Whenever he visited Diphu, he would always ask, 'Where is Pokhila baideo?'" she recalled fondly. As she spoke, tears rolled down her cheeks. "Zubeen da's passing is like losing my own brother. Another Zubeen da will never come again. Though we won't see him anymore, we will forever remember him through his songs and his kindness," she said.

Though she wishes to attend the final rites, financial constraints have made it difficult for her to travel. "I am praying for his soul to rest in eternal peace," she concluded, bidding a heartfelt farewell to someone she held dear.



"We were in the same profession and knew each other well. For me, Zubeen da was more like a brother than a friend. We shared our happiness and sorrows in the music world," she said, her voice breaking with emotion. She credited Zubeen for guiding her to

ENGAGEMENT UNDER SAMAGRA SHIKSHA AXOM

NO. 703128/SSA-15015/58/2025

The Samagra Shiksha, Axom invites online applications from Indian Citizens (as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India) for the under mentioned positions under Samagra Shiksha, Axom on contractual basis. The online applications will be received from 21.09.2025 to 02.10.2025. The posts are temporary in nature and the selected candidates will be initially engaged for a period of 11 (eleven) months only. The contractual engagement will neither be regularized under Samagra Shiksha, Axom nor will be absorbed under any job/programme of Government of Assam in future and no person (s) so engaged shall have any right (s) to claim for permanent position in any post (s) in the government or in the Samagra Shiksha, Assam.

Age for categories of post: The candidate should not be less than 18 years of age and not more than 62 years of age as on 01-01-2025. The age limit of the candidates will be calculated on the basis of the Matriculation/HSLC Admit Card or Pass Certificate issued by a recognized Board/ Council and no other document shall be accepted in lieu of the mentioned documents.

Sl No	Name of the Post	Essential Qualification and Experience	Pay in Pay Band in Rs.	Grade in Rs.	No. of Post	Place
1.	Quality Expert, [(Quality and Pedagogy)]	1. Education- a) Postgraduate degree in child development / Early Childhood care and Education/ psychology / Education/Social sciences/ Development studies from a recognised university. b) B.Ed. from any recognized university c) Degree / Diploma in pre-primary education from any recognised university or reputed national-level organisation. 2. Experience Requirements (a) Overall Experience- (i) A minimum of 5 years of progressive experience in development or social sector projects, with demonstrated ability to work in mission-mode initiatives. (ii) Prior experience in mission-mode early childhood care or education projects will be considered an added advantage. (b) Relevant Domain Expertise (i) Out of the total experience, at least 4 years of direct, relevant experience in managing projects related to pre-primary education, or the foundational stage of schooling. (c) Policy and Pedagogical Knowledge (i) Strong conceptual understanding of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) (ii) Hands-on experience in child-centric pedagogy programs, with exposure to teacher training, program management, procurement, and community development initiatives. (d) Technical and Analytical Skills (i) Proven expertise in MS Office. (ii) Experience in policy analysis, research report preparation, and data-driven decision-making.	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office

N.B-

- The link of the recruitment portal will be available in the Samagra Shiksha website <https://ssa.assam.gov.in>
- Read the User Guidelines carefully which is available on the recruitment portal on how to submit the online application form.
- Claims for any correction will not be entertained after submitting the online registration and online application.
- Before filling the on-line application, applicant has to go through the User Guidelines for online registration and online application.
- Candidate must upload the supporting document of educational qualification, experience and others through portal.
- Only eligible candidates will have to appear in test/interview, the exact date of which will be communicated separately.
- A candidate must be in good mental and bodily health and free from any physical defect likely to interfere with the efficient discharge of his/her duties as an Officer of the service.
- The exact date & time of the Test/ Interview will be communicated to the shortlisted candidates separately.
- Marking pattern will be on General Awareness, Personality & Aptitude, Subject matter in relevant field, Relevant Experience, etc. for the post. The applicant has to obtain minimum 50% of the total marks on the above in the interview and only then the candidates will be short-listed.
- The office will not be responsible for any non submission of online application due to any error or other problem.
- The decision of the Selection Committee in all aspects and all respects pertaining to the application and its acceptance or rejection as the case may be, conduct of test and at all subsequent stages concluding in the selection or otherwise of any candidate shall be final in all respects and binding on all concerned. The Mission also reserves its right to alter and modify time and conditions laid down in the notification for conducting the various stages up to selection or withdraw the Notification at any time, duly intimating details thereof to all concerned, as warranted by any unforeseen circumstances arising during the course of this process, or as deemed necessary by the Mission at any stage.

Sd/-

Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha, Assam
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

DIPR /DF/HLT/1072/21-Sep-25

Zubeen Garg: The voice that defined a generation

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the vast landscape of Indian music, few artists have managed to transcend regional boundaries while remaining deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. Zubeen Garg, the legendary singer whose voice became synonymous with modern Assamese identity, stands as a towering figure who fundamentally transformed how an entire generation of Assamese youth connected with their cultural roots. His influence extends far beyond mere entertainment, representing a cultural phenomenon that shaped the social fabric of Assam for over three decades.

Born as Zubeen Borthakur on November 18, 1972, Garg emerged as a multifaceted artist whose contributions spanned singing, music composition, acting, and film direction. However, it was his extraordinary ability to blend traditional Assamese musical elements with contemporary sounds that truly set him apart in the Indian music industry. Garg has recorded more than 38,000 songs in 40 different languages in the past 33 years, a testament to his versatility and prolific output that few artists in the world can match.

The cultural significance of Zubeen Garg's music lies not merely in its melodic appeal but in its profound ability to articulate the aspirations, frustrations, and dreams of Assamese youth. His breakthrough came with songs that captured the essence of modern Assam while paying homage to its rich traditional heritage. Known for his versatility, he has sung in over 40 languages and dialects. His most famous song, 'Ya Ali,' brought him national acclaim in 2006. This national recognition through "Ya Ali" from the Bollywood film "Gangster" opened doors for Assamese music on the national stage, proving that regional artists could achieve mainstream success without compromising their cultural identity.

Perhaps no single work exemplifies Garg's influence on younger generations more than his involvement in the film "Mon Jaai." With Mon Jaai, Zubeen didn't just sing; he also composed for a film that captured the mood of young Assam. The movie, which follows four unemployed youths, was selected for Indian Panorama 2008 at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). This project resonated deeply with Assamese youth because it addressed real issues they faced while presenting their struggles through the lens of hope and cultural pride. The film's success demonstrated how Garg understood the pulse of his generation and could translate their experiences into compelling artistic expression.

The universal appeal of Zubeen Garg's music transcends class, age, and educational boundaries, making him beloved across all strata of Assamese society. Singer, music composer, film director, and actor Zubeen is credited with singing in over three decades with his songs and films, which had a universal appeal. This cross-class appeal stems from his ability to infuse sophisticated musical arrangements with lyrics that spoke to common human experiences. Whether performing at elite cultural gatherings or local festivals, Garg's music found equal resonance among urban professionals, rural farmers, students, and elderly traditionalists.

His instrumental prowess further enhanced his credibility as a complete musician. He is also an instrumentalist and plays 12 instruments including dhol, dotara, drums, guitar, harmonica, harmonium, mandolin, keyboard, tabla and various percussion instruments. This multi-instrumental capability allowed him to experiment with diverse

musical styles while maintaining authentic connections to traditional Assamese instruments. The dhol and dotara, central to Assamese folk music, appeared alongside modern instruments in his compositions, creating a unique sonic palette that felt both familiar and innovative to listeners.

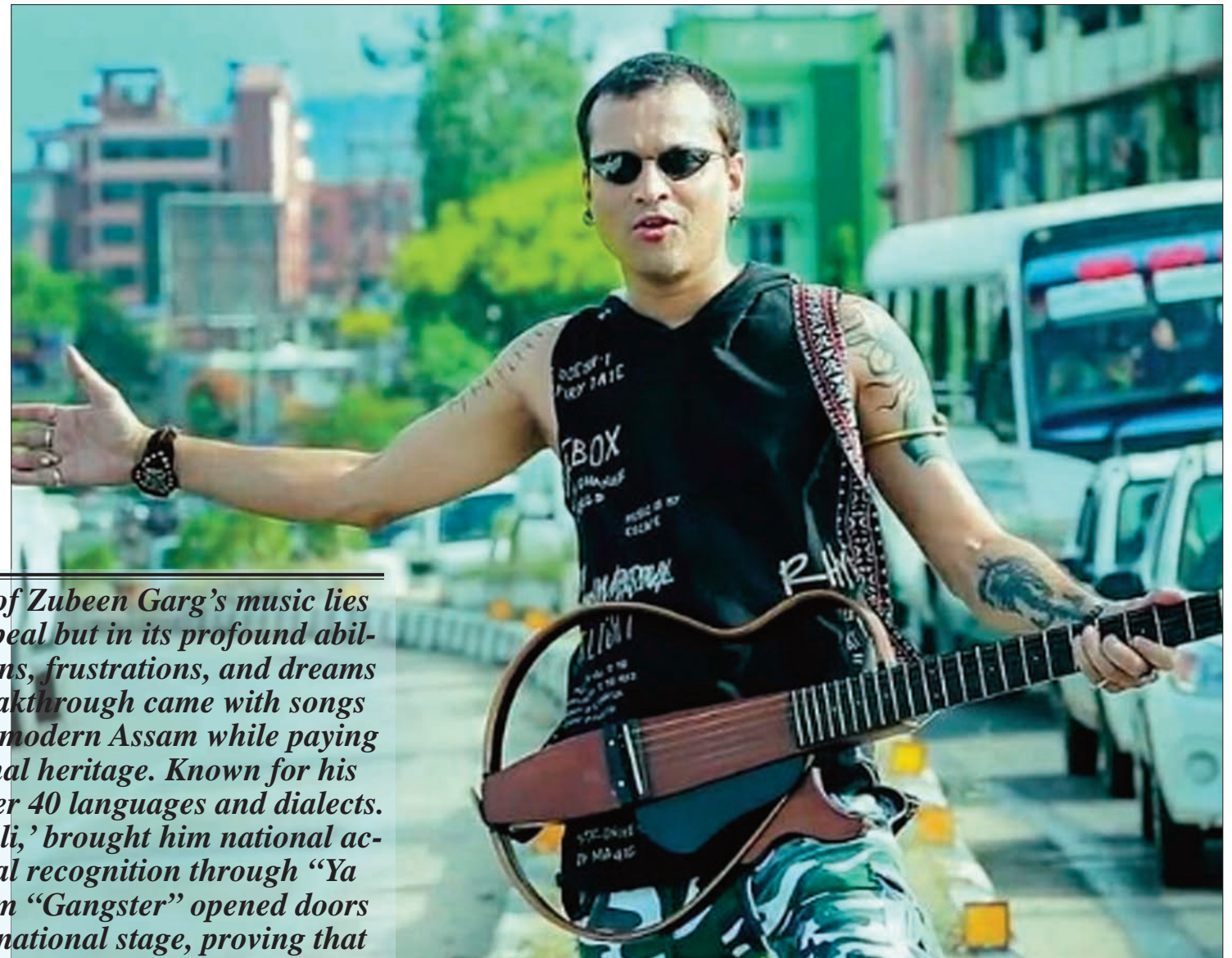
The influence of Zubeen Garg on Assamese youth extends beyond musical appreciation to cultural identity formation. In an era of globalization where regional cultures often face the threat of homogenization, Garg's music served as a powerful counterforce, encouraging young Assamese to take pride in their heritage while embracing modernity. The rich culture of Bihu songs, Borgeets, and modern Assamese music became the foundation upon which he would build his revolutionary musical career. By incorporating traditional elements like Bihu rhythms and Borgeet spiritual themes into contemporary compositions, he created a musical language that allowed youth to express their modern sensibilities without abandoning their roots.

His versatility in linguistic expression further broadened his appeal. Zubeen Garg has released numerous albums, featuring various musical styles like Assamese modern, folk, Bihu, and devotional songs. His melodious voice and genre versatility

The cultural significance of Zubeen Garg's music lies not merely in its melodic appeal but in its profound ability to articulate the aspirations, frustrations, and dreams of Assamese youth. His breakthrough came with songs that captured the essence of modern Assam while paying homage to its rich traditional heritage. Known for his versatility, he has sung in over 40 languages and dialects. His most famous song, 'Ya Ali,' brought him national acclaim in 2006. This national recognition through "Ya Ali" from the Bollywood film "Gangster" opened doors for Assamese music on the national stage, proving that regional artists could achieve mainstream success without compromising their cultural identity. Perhaps no single work exemplifies Garg's influence on younger generations more than his involvement in the film "Mon Jaai." With Mon Jaai, Zubeen didn't just sing; he also composed for a film that captured the mood of young Assam. The movie, which follows four unemployed youths, was selected for Indian Panorama 2008 at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI).

has made him a favorite among music lovers in Assam and beyond. This diversity ensured that different segments of society could find something meaningful in his work, whether they preferred devotional music, folk traditions, or contemporary pop sensibilities.

The emotional depth of Garg's music created lasting connections with listeners that persisted throughout their lives. His songs, celebrated for their emotive depth and lyrical brilliance, have inspired countless admirers and aspiring musicians alike. This emotional resonance explains why his



music continues to influence young artists and why fans maintain such deep personal connections to his work. The recent tribute where a young fan tattooed lyrics from his song "Mayabini" demonstrates the profound impact his words had on individual lives.

Garg's influence on the younger generation also manifested in his role as a cultural ambassador who introduced Assamese music to broader audiences. For someone raised on a staple diet of Shaan, KK, and Sonu Nigam, the voice of Zubeen Garg was not only new, it was distinct. This distinctiveness helped non-Assamese listeners discover the richness of Assamese musical traditions, while simultaneously inspiring Assamese youth to view their cultural heritage as something unique and valuable rather than provincial or limiting.

The social impact of his music cannot be understated. Many described him as a cultural icon whose songs gave joy, solace, and identity. This three-fold contribution—joy, solace, and identity—captures the essence of why Zubeen Garg became beloved across all classes. His songs provided entertainment during celebrations, comfort during difficult times, and a sense of belonging that helped people understand their place in the world.

His legacy continues to inspire contemporary musicians and cultural movements throughout the Northeast. At 52, Garg was not only one of the most influential voices from Assam but also a cultural figure who bridged folk, pop, and Bollywood with equal ease. This bridging function—connecting different musical worlds while maintaining cultural authenticity—represents perhaps his greatest contribution to Assamese culture and Indian music as a whole.

The enduring popularity of Zubeen Garg's music among younger generations reflects his understanding of how culture evolves while main-

taining its core essence. He recognized that preservation of cultural heritage required adaptation and innovation rather than rigid traditionalism. By creating music that honored the past while speaking to contemporary concerns, he provided a model for how regional cultures could thrive in the modern world.

Zubeen Garg's influence on the younger generation of Assam represents a unique cultural phenomenon where artistic excellence, cultural authenticity, and social relevance converged to create something truly transformative. His music gave voice to generational aspirations while preserving cultural heritage, creating a legacy that continues to inspire and unite people across all social boundaries. Through his extraordinary body of work, he demonstrated that regional artists could achieve global recognition without compromising their cultural identity, inspiring countless young people to pursue their dreams while remaining proud of their roots. His universal appeal across all classes of Assamese society stems from his ability to touch fundamental human emotions while expressing distinctly Assamese experiences, creating music that was simultaneously local and universal in its impact. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)



Zubeen composed for over 24 Assamese films, directed Mission China in 2017, acted in Tumi Mor Matho Mor in 2000 where he wrote, starred, and scored, and Mon Jai in 2008, a National Award winner. His discography swelled to over 32,000 songs in nearly 40 languages, from Bodo's earthy tones to Tamil's fiery cadence, Kannada's lyricism to Odia's grace. Mastering 12 instruments, from guitar to mandolin, he was a one-man orchestra, his irreligious heart rejecting caste's chains, embracing music as the true faith

Zubeen: Raw Soul, Timeless Tune

By: Satvabrat Borah

In the misty hills of Tura, Meghalaya, where the air carries the whisper of distant rivers and the rhythm of untamed winds, Zubeen Garg entered the world on November 18, 1972. Born Zubeen Borthakur to a family woven into the fabric of Assamese culture, he was christened after the legendary conductor Zubin Mehta, a nod to the symphonies that would one day echo through his own veins. His father, Mohini Mohon Borthakur, known in literary circles as Kapil Thakur, was a magistrate by profession but a poet and lyricist at heart, penning verses that danced like fireflies in the night. His mother, Ily Borthakur, embodied grace as a dancer, actress, and singer, her voice a gentle cradle for young Zubeen's earliest dreams. Though the family traced its roots to Janji in Sivasagar, Assam, their nomadic life followed the postings of a civil servant, planting seeds of resilience in the boy who would grow to become the soul of a region.

From these humble beginnings, Zubeen's childhood unfolded like a folk tale, rich with the sounds of Jorhat's bustling streets and the serene banks of the Brahmaputra. Music was not a pursuit; it was breath, an inheritance as vital as the gamusa draped over his shoulders during festivals. His mother, whom he often called his first guru, filled their home with melodies, teaching him the nuances of rhythm and tone amid the chaos of frequent relocations. Schooling at Tamulpur Higher Secondary brought structure, but it was a gold medal for a western solo performance at a 1992 youth festival that ignited his fire.

Enrolled in a Bachelor of Science program at B. Borooah College, Zubeen soon abandoned textbooks for tuning pegs, his heart pulling him toward the stage where notes could heal what words could not. In a land where Rongali Bihu's peppy beats pulse through paddy fields and Jhumur's sway mirrors the tea garden's gentle roll, Zubeen learned to blend the raw with the refined, the folk with the pop, creating a sound that felt like homecoming.

His professional odyssey began tentatively, with recordings for the 1993 album Ritu, where tracks like Tumi Junu Pariba Hun and Tumi Junaki Hubakh hinted at a voice both tender and thunderous. But it was Anamika in November 1992 that marked his debut as a composer and singer, a collection that stirred the youth of Assam like a sudden monsoon. Xapurur Xur followed in the same year, then Junaki Mon in 1993, each release a stepping stone across the cultural chasm. Yet, it was Maya, the 1994 album, that crowned him king.

The title track, a haunting pop ballad laced with illusion and longing, captured the ache of unrequited dreams. Nelage muk huwroni, he sang, his voice crackling like thunder over the hills, Dibohi mathu bedona, evoking the bittersweet pull of love's mirage. For 90s kids, Maya was more than music; it was a ritual, cassettes rewound until the ribbon frayed, loops played on battered tape recorders until the words etched into souls. Thirty years later, it remains

a staple, a testament to how Zubeen redefined Assamese pop, infusing it with Bollywood gloss while rooting it in the soil of Bihu and Bhawaiya.

Assam's music scene, once dominated by classical echoes and folk purists, found in Zubeen a bridge to modernity. He was the original gangster of pop ballads, blending synthesizers with the dotara's twang, electric guitars with the pepa horn's wail. Albums like Asha in 1995 poured forth like riverine floods, songs that spoke of hope amid hardship, love amid loss. By then, whispers of Bollywood beckoned, and in 1995, Zubeen packed his dreams into a suitcase bound for Mumbai. The city of dreams tested him harshly at first, yielding Hindi albums like Chandni Raat and Yuhi Kabhi, remixes in Chanda and Jalwa, but scant spotlight. He lent his voice to films such as Gaddaar in 1995, Dil Se in 1998 with its poignant Sapne Saare, Doli Saja Ke Raksha, Fiza in 2000, and Kaante in 2002. Tracks like Holi Re from Mumbai Se Aaya Mera Dost in 2003 flickered like distant stars, promising more. Yet, Mumbai's grind wore on him, a far cry from the intimate stages of Guwahati where fans sang back every word.

Persistence, that unyielding Assamese spirit, paid off in 2006 with Gangster: A Love Story. Ya Ali, composed by Pritam, exploded like a cultural grenade, Zubeen's gravely timbre wrapping around Sufi-infused lyrics in a plea both desperate and divine. Ya Ali, madad kar de, he implored, the song's remix by DJ Suketu blasting across airwaves from Delhi to Dubai. It clinched him the Global Indian Film Awards for Best Playback Singer, thrusting Assam's son into national lore. Overnight, Zubeen became the voice of the underground, the anthem for lovers and lost souls. Bollywood doors swung wide: Subah Subah with Vishal Dadlani for Bunty Aur Babli in 2005, Jaane Kya Chahe Man from Pyaar Ke Side Effects, Rama Re's playful jaunt, Kya Raaz Hai's mystery, and Dil Tu Hi Bataa from Krrish 3 in 2013, a duet with Alisha Chinai that soared on superhero wings. He composed for over 24 Assamese films, directed Mission China in 2017, acted in Tumi Mor Matho Mor in 2000 where he wrote, starred, and scored, and Mon Jai in 2008, a National Award winner. His discography swelled to over 32,000 songs in nearly 40 languages, from Bodo's earthy tones to Tamil's fiery cadence, Kannada's lyricism to Odia's grace. Mastering 12 instruments, from guitar to mandolin, he was a one-man orchestra, his irreligious heart rejecting caste's chains, embracing music as the true faith.

But Zubeen's genius lay not in quantity, but in the quiet revolution he sparked. In Assam, where insurgency scarred the 90s and floods drowned hopes yearly, his songs were salves. Intimate folk melodies like those in Xixu, dedicated to his sister Jonkey Borthakur who perished in a 2002 car crash near Tezpur en route to a show, wove grief into gold. Pakhi soared with freedom's wings, Asha bloomed defiant. He infused Bihu with urban edge, making Rongali festivals electric, youth swaying to his beats under banyan trees. Gaane Ki Aane, from 1989's early whispers, posed the eternal query: what does a

song bring? In Zubeen's world, it brought catharsis, identity, a thread connecting the diaspora in Oak Brook, Illinois, where he was guest artist in 2011, to the villages of Tengapani, where a bamboo bridge bears his name since 2020. His voice, raw as rain-soaked earth, stirred emotions too deep for words, spawning imitators yet unmatched, like Kishore Kumar's shadow over Bollywood.

Controversy, that shadow twin of fame, trailed him like monsoon clouds. Outspoken, Zubeen wielded his platform as a sword against injustice. In 2019, he snapped his sacred Brahmin thread on screen, declaring, I am Brahmin, but I have snapped my lagun, igniting protests from traditionalists. He lambasted the politicization of Bhupen Hazarika's Bharat Ratna, owning leaked voice notes that exposed the farce, his courage a beacon amid sycophancy. Critics decried his impulsiveness, fans defended his fire, cycles of clamor that only amplified his humanity. Yet, through it all, his music endured, a fortress against fleeting scandals.

Philanthropy flowed naturally: donations to flood victims, advocacy for the underdog, a 20-foot statue unveiled in his honor at Digboi's Nazirating Tamuli Tourism Festival in 2022. Married to fashion designer Garima Saikia since February 4, 2002, he guarded family choice, their life a private melody amid public roar. His net worth, whispered at eight million dollars by 2024, funded luxury like a BMW X5 and Range Rover, but also bikes that roared through Assam's roads, symbols of a free spirit.

Zubeen's legacy is etched in the heart of Assam, where he was treasure alongside the one-horned rhino and the gamusa. Generations defined by Maya, energized by Ya Ali, found in him a mirror to their joys and scars. He once quipped, Sing Mayabini for me when I am gone, a poignant plea fulfilled too soon.

On September 19, 2025, in Singapore's azure depths, tragedy struck during a scuba dive ahead of the North East Festival, where he was set to perform as cultural ambassador. Rescued by police, rushed to ICU, he slipped away at 52, leaving a void as vast as the Brahmaputra. Tributes poured: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma mourned, Today Assam lost one of its favourite sons. Zubeen's voice had an unmatched ability to energise people, and his music spoke directly to our minds and souls. Ripun Bora echoed, His indomitable spirit inspired generations across Assam and beyond.

In the hush after the storm, Assam weeps, but sings on. Zubeen's notes linger in wedding mandaps, roadside chai stalls, late-night drives through Kaziranga's shadows. He proved music's alchemy: from raw emotion to timeless balm, transcending borders, controversies, even death. Gaane ki aane, he pondered, emotions that bind, whispers to clouds and moons. In every replay of Maya, every hum of Ya Ali, he arrives anew, the voice of Assam eternal, weaving generations into one unending chorus. His departure silences no song; it amplifies them all, a legacy that flows like the river he loved, unending, unbreakable.

Zubeen Garg: Lost, but never forgotten



Not Just a Singer

By: Shahina Nargish

They say he's just a singer but to us, he was the night's own heartbeat, a flame in the dark that knew our pain a voice that held the weight of our tears when no one else would listen.

And now he is gone... leaving behind an unfinished chord a silence sharp enough to cut like the world itself forgot how to breathe without his songs.

His notes were not melodies they were lifelines. Each lyric, a wound made gentle, each verse, a mirror of our sorrow.

Now the stage is empty the mic remembers his breath and somewhere the heavens hum with the sound we lost below.

He was Assam's pride, a son of the Brahmaputra wide. Every Assamese heart still cries, as his melody dances in the skies.

He was not one among many he was the one. The voice that carried our bruised souls, the fire that turned silence into prayer. And though the earth is quieter now the sky sings louder because legends like him are born only once.

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The abrupt and heartrending loss of Zubeen Garg has cast a profound shadow over Assam, leaving an irreplaceable void in the cultural and emotional landscape of the state. His departure, cloaked in the enigma of a foreign sea, has plunged millions into a state of collective mourning, not only in Assam but across India and beyond, where his voice resonated as a symbol of artistic brilliance and cultural pride. Zubeen Garg was far more than a singer, lyricist, composer, or actor; he was a cultural titan whose contributions reshaped Assamese music, revitalized its cinema, and touched the lives of countless individuals through his social endeavors. This editorial delves into the depth of Zubeen's impact, exploring how his multifaceted legacy transformed Assam's cultural identity and why his memory will endure as a beacon of inspiration for generations to come.

Zubeen Garg's musical journey was a testament to his extraordinary talent and boundless passion. Over nearly three decades, he produced an astonishing repertoire of over thirty-eight thousand songs, a feat that underscores his unparalleled dedication to his craft. His voice, a seamless blend of raw emotion and technical mastery, traversed a remarkable range of genres,

from the sacred strains of 'Borgeet' and the earthy rhythms of Assamese folk to the polished beats of Bollywood. Zubeen's ability to sing effortlessly in languages as diverse as Bodo, Tiwa, Mising, Tamil, and Telugu was not merely a display of versatility but a profound act of cultural reverence. He wove the rich tapestry of Assam's heritage into his music, creating a sound that resonated with both the simplicity of rural life and the sophistication of urban India. His songs were a bridge, connecting Assam's traditions with a broader, modern audience, ensuring that the state's cultural voice was heard far beyond its borders.

The magic of Zubeen's voice lay in its ability to evoke a spectrum of emotions—joy, nostalgia, longing, and even protest—with an authenticity that felt deeply personal. His lyrics, often unadorned yet poignant, captured the universal language of human experience while remaining firmly rooted in Assam's cultural ethos. References to the Brahmaputra's flow, the verdant hills, and the vibrant pulse of 'Bihu' were not just poetic flourishes but heartfelt tributes to the land he loved. His music spoke to the heart of Assam, reflecting its beauty, its struggles, and its dreams. This unique ability to blend the local with the universal made his songs a cultural touchstone, resonating with villagers

and city dwellers alike, from the tea gardens of Assam to the bustling streets of Mumbai.

Zubeen's contributions to Assamese music were nothing short of revolutionary. Before his emergence, Assamese music, though steeped in tradition, often remained confined to regional audiences. Zubeen shattered these boundaries, infusing the genre with a contemporary sensibility that captivated the youth while honoring its roots. His songs departed from traditional structures, emphasizing themes of romance, emotional expression, and entertainment, which breathed new life into Assamese music. This evolution was not a rejection of heritage but a bold reimagining, making the genre accessible to a new generation. His collaborations with lyricists like Hiren Bhattacharya, Diganta Bharati, and Jayanta Kikati produced songs that balanced poetic simplicity with modern appeal, striking a chord with young listeners who saw their own emotions and aspirations reflected in his music. By blending traditional Assamese rhythms with Western influences, Zubeen created a sound that was both distinctly Assamese and universally appealing, elevating the genre to a national platform.

Zubeen's role as a cultural ambassador extended beyond Assam, as his work in Bollywood and Bengali cinema showcased the depth of Assamese talent. His voice, with its unmistakable emotional resonance, became a hallmark of Indian cinema, lending soul to songs that captivated diverse audiences. His contributions to Hindi and Bengali films were not just artistic triumphs but acts of cultural diplomacy, introducing Assam's rich heritage to the nation. This cross-cultural exchange broadened the horizons of Assamese music, fostering a sense of pride among Assamese people and reinforcing the state's place in India's cultural mosaic. His success in these industries was a powerful reminder that Assam's artists could compete with the best, their voices echoing in the hearts of millions across the country.

Beyond the realm of music, Zubeen Garg was a force for social good, driven by a deep commitment to Assam's welfare. His establishment of the 'Kalaguru Artist Foundation' was a testament to his desire to uplift the marginalized, providing support to struggling artists, artisans, and underprivileged individuals. Through this initiative, he brought hope and opportunity to those who needed it most, ensuring that talent, regardless of circumstance, could flourish. His efforts to revive Assam's football culture, a sport that had faded from prominence, reflected his vision for a vibrant, united youth.

Zubeen was a dream come true and a career-changing experience. By mentoring and uplifting others, he ensured that Assam's music industry remained vibrant and future-ready.

His philanthropy also extended to cultural preservation. Zubeen was deeply committed to promoting Assamese language and heritage. At a time when globalization threatened to erode regional identities, he infused modern music with Assamese folk elements, keeping traditions alive while making them appealing to younger generations. This cultural activism was also a humanitarian act—for preserving one's identity is essential for the dignity and pride of a community.

Even in moments of personal struggle, Zubeen never stopped working for others. He openly spoke about mental health, stress, and the pressures of fame, helping reduce the stigma surrounding such issues. His honesty gave courage to many who faced similar battles. He reminded people that it was okay to seek help and take care of one's mental well-being.

Awards and honors recognized Zubeen's artistic achievements, but his greatest reward was the love and respect he earned from people. To them, he was not just a musician but a companion, a guide, and a source of comfort. His songs became anthems of celebration and healing. They played at weddings, festivals, protests, and memorials—becoming part of the collective emotional landscape of Assam and beyond.

In remembering Zubeen Garg as a humanitarian artist, we celebrate the idea that art is not merely for entertainment but for transformation. Zubeen believed that music had the power to heal wounds, bring people together, and inspire change. He lived by this belief, turning every stage, every studio, and every public appearance into an opportunity to make the world a little better.

Today, as fans continue to sing his songs and share his legacy, Zubeen remains a beacon of hope. He showed that true greatness lies not just in talent but in compassion. He proved that an artist's real success is measured by how deeply they touch lives. Zubeen Garg will forever be remembered as the humanitarian artist who sang not just for applause, but for humanity.

By organizing matches across the state, he fostered a sense of community and pride, rekindling interest in a sport that held the potential to inspire. Zubeen's activism extended to environmental causes, particularly his vocal advocacy for the protection of Assam's rhinos, a symbol of the state's natural heritage. His calls to declare floods a national issue underscored his empathy for the annual suffering of Assam's people, and his hands-on approach—collecting donations and delivering aid during flood crises—demonstrated a selflessness that endeared him to the masses.

Zubeen's contributions to Assamese cinema were equally transformative. His acting in films like 'Deenbandhu' and 'Mon Jai' revealed a depth of emotion and authenticity that captivated audiences, proving his versatility as a performer. Yet, his most significant impact came as a producer and music director. At a time when Assamese cinema was struggling with declining audiences and financial challenges, Zubeen took a monumental risk by investing heavily in films like 'Mission China' and 'Kanchan-jangha'. These projects, crafted with cutting-edge technology and a vision to rival Bollywood, were not just commercial successes but cultural landmarks. They demonstrated that Assamese cinema could be both artistically rich and commercially viable, in-

spiring a new generation of filmmakers to dream boldly. Zubeen's courage in spearheading these ambitious ventures, when others hesitated, was a defining moment for the industry, cementing his legacy as a pioneer who reshaped the trajectory of Assamese cinema.

What made Zubeen truly unique was his relatability. Despite his towering achievements, he remained a son of Assam, deeply connected to its people. His candor, often laced with humor and a hint of defiance, made him a beloved figure. He spoke fearlessly, addressing issues that others avoided, even at the risk of controversy. This authenticity, while occasionally polarizing, was a hallmark of his character. He challenged the status quo through his music, his activism, and his public statements, yet the people of Assam never ceased to love him. His imperfections only made him more human, more cherished—a figure who felt like family to every household. Whether through his playful antics on stage or his unwavering support for those in need, Zubeen embodied the spirit of Assam, its pride, its struggles, and its boundless heart.

The circumstances of Zubeen's death, lost to the depths of a foreign sea, carry a poetic yet tragic weight. His love for nature, so evident in his music and activism, makes his final moments

seem almost fated, yet the mystery surrounding his passing leaves a lingering sense of unease. The unresolved questions—whether it was destiny or something more—do not diminish the magnitude of his contributions. Zubeen's life was a testament to the power of art to inspire, unite, and transform. His music, his films, and his social initiatives were not just expressions of talent but acts of love for Assam, its people, and its future.

The task now is to ensure that Zubeen Garg's legacy endures. His departure has left Assam in a state of profound grief, but it must also ignite a collective resolve to carry forward his vision. His dreams for Assam—whether in music, cinema, or social change—remain unfinished, and it falls to the people of Assam, from artists to ordinary citizens, to honor his work. His songs, which continue to echo in homes across the state, must be preserved and shared with future generations. His films, which breathed new life into Assamese cinema, must inspire filmmakers to push the boundaries of creativity. His social initiatives, from environmental advocacy to support for the underprivileged, must find new champions to continue his mission.

Zubeen Garg's music was a reflection of Assam's soul, capturing its beauty, its challenges, and its aspirations. His melodies wove together the simplicity of rural life, the vibrancy of its traditions, and the complexities of its modern existence. His voice was a unifying force, bringing together diverse communities under the shared banner of Assamese identity. To lose him is to lose a part of Assam's heartbeat, but to remember him is to keep that heartbeat alive. His songs, imbued with the spirit of the Brahmaputra and the hills of Assam, will continue to resonate through time, reminding us of a man who gave everything to his people.

As Assam navigates this profound loss, the path forward is clear: Zubeen Garg must not fade into memory. His contributions must be celebrated, his vision nurtured, and his spirit kept alive in the cultural consciousness of the state. He was not just a singer or an artist; he was Assam's pride, its voice, and its soul. His music will continue to inspire, his films will continue to captivate, and his legacy will continue to guide. Zubeen Garg may have left this world, but in the hearts of the Assamese people, he will remain an eternal presence—a symbol of creativity, courage, and an unwavering love for his homeland. Let us honor him by ensuring that his songs, his dreams, and his spirit live on, as vibrant and enduring as the land he so deeply cherished.

Zubeen Garg: The humanitarian artist who sang for a better world

By: Mowsam Hazarika

In the pantheon of Indian music, Zubeen Garg's name will always shine brightly—not just for his extraordinary talent, but for his humanity. While the world knew him as a celebrated singer, composer, and actor, those who followed his life closely understood that Zubeen was much more than an entertainer. He was a humanitarian artist whose music, actions, and words consistently reflected a deep empathy for people and a commitment to social good.

Born in Jorhat, Assam, in 1972, Zubeen grew up surrounded by music and culture. His parents, both accomplished in the arts, nurtured his talent from a young age. But even in his early life, Zubeen displayed an unusual sensitivity to the world around him. The struggles of ordinary people, the beauty of Assam's landscape, and the pain of social injustice all found their way into his music. This ability to transform human experiences into art would later make him a beloved figure not just in Assam but across India.

Zubeen's career spanned thousands of songs in more than 30 languages, but what stood out was his choice of themes. He did not limit himself to love ballads or commercial numbers. He sang for causes—for flood victims, for environmental protection, for communal harmony, and for peace. His compositions often carried messages that called for unity, compassion, and action. Through music, he invited listeners not just to feel but to reflect, and often to act. One of Zubeen's most remarkable contributions as a humanitarian artist was his work during Assam's devastating floods. Almost every year, he organized benefit concerts, donated his earnings, and personally visited affected areas to offer assistance. His presence alone brought hope to those in despair. He understood that being a public

figure meant having a responsibility to use his influence for the greater good. For many victims, Zubeen was not just a singer but a symbol of solidarity.

Zubeen also supported healthcare initiatives, particularly for children and cancer patients. He participated in numerous charity shows, often refusing payment, so that funds could go directly to treatment and relief efforts. He was known to help individuals quietly and personally, without seeking publicity. Many stories have emerged of him paying for a patient's surgery, funding education for underprivileged students, or supporting struggling artists financially. This side of Zubeen revealed that his generosity was not performative—it was heartfelt. As an artist, Zubeen also used his platform to challenge social evils. He spoke against substance abuse, domestic violence, corruption, and communalism. He often wrote or selected songs that carried a social message, urging people to build a more just and compassionate society. His boldness in addressing uncomfortable issues made him a role model for many young people who saw him as an artist with integrity.

Environmental awareness was another cause close to Zubeen's heart. He consistently voiced concern over deforestation, river pollution, and threats to Assam's biodiversity. Some of his music videos were shot in natural locations to highlight the need for conservation. He encouraged his fans to plant trees and respect nature, reminding them that culture and environment are deeply interconnected.

Zubeen's humanitarianism was not limited to organized charity. It was woven into his everyday life. His interactions with fans, co-artists, and ordinary people were marked by kindness and respect. He was approachable and never allowed fame to create a wall between himself and the public. Many people recall how Zubeen would stop for a chat, sign autographs, or share a few encouraging words with anyone who approached him. This humility and openness endeared him even more to the masses.

Another remarkable aspect of Zubeen's humanitarian contribution was his support for young talent. He frequently collaborated with new musicians, lyricists, and composers, giving them exposure and opportunities. For many, a song with

Zubeen: The immortal voice of Assam's heart

By: Satyabrata Borah

Death, you know, is so simple.

If death is an art, how could death be so simple! Zubeen himself sang about it one day! Ultimately, that's why death became so simple for him! Death comes to everyone. That's an eternal truth. But untimely death! It's impossible to accept an untimely death! And if that death is Zubeen's, then it's even more impossible! You know, he was a bit unruly! But talent! What talent Zubeen didn't have! A magical voice that enchanted lakhs of Assamese people! An extremely talented singer, lyricist, composer, actor, and above all, a very big heart! A heart even bigger than the ocean! Impossible! Can't even imagine it. That glorious journey starting from Anamika! Life was truly full of wonder. Zubeen himself sang, "Maya, Maya, Matho Maya!" Zubeen took Assam's music world to an unimaginable height. By infusing life into Assam's cinema world with his magical music, seeking to immerse it in the womb of the hills. If he had wanted, like Arijit Singh! How he would have captivated Bollywood!

Zubeen Garg is no more! That talented Zubeen Garg, who enchanted generation after generation with the magic of his sweet tunes, is no more! In a scuba diving accident in Singapore, at the age of 52, Zubeen bid farewell from this world. This death is unbearable! Zubeen was the soul of Assamese music. He was the bridge between tradition and modernity. Zubeen was the unbroken representative of Assam's soul.

Zubeen was extraordinarily talented! Modern songs, Bihu songs, folk songs, Borgeet, Hindi songs, and so many more that Zubeen could

sing! Zubeen Garg was a complete package of music! What especially made Zubeen unique was the fusion in his songs. He knew how to play more than 12 instruments. From dotara to drums to keyboard! He blended Western rock with Bihu! That was a new direction for Assamese music.

Born in a Meghalaya-based Assamese Brahmin family to Mohini Mohan Baruah and the late Ili Baruah, Zubeen was named after the music composer Zubeen Mehta and used Garg as his surname from his gotra. His father, Mohini Baruah, was a judge, and his mother, Ili Baruah, was a singer. He wrote poems and songs for his nephew under the name Kapil Thakuria. Due to his father's job, the family frequently relocated. Sitting on his mother's lap, Zubeen learned Assamese songs. His mother would tell him that music unites people and gives them strength. His sister Janki also sang and acted. But in 2002, Janki died in a motor accident. This sorrow deeply affected Zubeen, and a shadow of grief fell on his songs.

Zubeen's education was at Tamulpur Higher Secondary School and B. Barua College in Guwahati. He studied science, but music attracted him. While still in school, Zubeen wrote songs inspired by tea gardens and rain! In 1992, at a youth convention, he sang in a Western style and won a gold medal. This marked the beginning of his professional life. At the age of 20, his first album "Anamika" was released. The songs of Anamika, a fusion of Western music and Assamese melody, gained unprecedented popularity.

The success of Anamika encouraged Zubeen to produce more than 40 albums. Each album showcased variety. The album "Asha" illuminated the light of hope during the turbulent



times of the 1990s. "Maya" featured love songs. "Mukti" united people with its patriotic songs. "Meghar Barone" poetically depicted the love of a cloudy sky. "Rong" displayed the colors of life through a mix of folk and pop music. The soft songs of "Dilruba" touched everyone.

Zubeen's influence extended to cinema as well. In 2000, he acted in "Tumi Mor Matho Mor." The film's songs were extremely popular. He composed music for more than 24 films. He strengthened stories of love, sorrow, and struggle with his melodies. Who can forget the magical music of "Hiya Diya Niya!" For "Mon Jay" (2008), he received the National Award for Best Music. The songs there blended ragas and folk music to create emotion. The songs of "Priyar Priyo" (2017) and "Rodar Xithi" were popular.

Zubeen was equally proficient in acting and singing. In "Mission China" (2017), he acted superbly, and the film earned over 6 crores. "Kanchan-jangha" (2019) grossed 7 crores. Its songs topped the charts. Beyond studios and cinema, Zubeen was dedicated to live shows and social service. May your voice echo eternally in Assam's winds! You will remain immortal in every Assamese heart! Zubeen, you are immortal! Your influence can never end!

Cyberattack disrupts check-in systems at major European airports



BRUSSELS, Sept 20: A cyberattack targeting check-in and boarding systems has snarled air traffic and caused delays at some of Europe's top airports, officials said on Saturday.

The Brussels airport says the attack means that only manual check-in and boarding were possible there, and the incident was having a "large impact" on flight schedules.

"There was a cyberattack on Friday night, 19 September, against the service provider for the check-in and boarding systems affecting several European airports, including Brussels Airport," it said in a statement.

Authorities at Berlin's Brandenburg Airport said a service provider for passenger handling systems was attacked on Friday evening, prompting airport opera-

tors to cut off connections to the systems.

London Heathrow Airport, Europe's busiest, said "a technical issue" affected a service provider for check-in and boarding systems.

"Collins Aerospace, which provides check-in and boarding systems for several airlines across multiple airports globally, is experiencing a technical issue that may cause delays for departing passen-

gers," Heathrow said in a statement.

The airports advised travellers to check their flight status and apologise for any inconvenience.

Formed in 2018, Collins is a US aviation and defence technology company and a subsidiary of RTX Corp., which was formerly Raytheon Technologies. The company's system doesn't offer direct check-in for passengers, but pro-

vides the technology that allows passengers to check themselves in, print boarding passes and bag tags, and dispatch their own luggage, all from a kiosk. No one was immediately available for comment at the UK base of Collins near London's second busiest airport, Gatwick. The impact was felt only at some airports: the Roissy, Orly and Le Bourget airports in the Paris area reported no disruptions. (AP)

Russia launches large-scale attack on Ukraine, killing 3 and wounding dozens

KYIV, Sept 20: Russia launched a large-scale missile and drone attack targeting regions across Ukraine on early Saturday, killing at least three people and wounding dozens more, Ukrainian officials said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said attacks took place across nine regions, including Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia, Poltava, Kyiv, Odesa, Sumy and Kharkiv.

"The enemy's target was our infrastructure, residential areas and civilian enterprises," he said, adding that a missile equipped with cluster munitions struck a multi-story building in the city of Dnipro.

"Each such strike is not a military necessity but a deliberate strategy by Russia to intimidate civilians and destroy our infrastructure," he said in a statement on his official Telegram.

Zelenskyy said he expected to meet US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly next week. He also said the first ladies of Ukraine and the United States would likely hold separate talks focused on humanitarian issues involving children.

His comments, which he made on Friday, were embargoed until Saturday morning.

At least 30 people were wounded in the attack in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region, local governor Serhii Lysak said. Several high-rise buildings and homes were damaged in the eastern city of Dnipro.

In the Kyiv region, local authorities said there were strikes in the areas of Bucha, Boryspil and Obukhiv. A home and cars were damaged. In the western region of Lviv, Gov. Maxim Kozitsky said two cruise missiles were shot down.

Russia launched 619 drones and missiles, Ukraine's Air Force said in a statement. In total, 579 drones, eight ballistic missiles and 32 cruise missiles were detected. Ukrainian forces shot down and neutralised 552 drones, two ballistic missiles and 29 cruise missiles.

"During the air strike, tactical aviation, in particular F-16 fighters, effectively worked on the enemy's cruise missiles. Western weapons once again prove their effectiveness on the battlefield," the Air Force said in a statement.

Russia denies violating Estonia's airspace

Russia's Defence Ministry denied its aircraft violated Estonia's airspace, after Tallinn reported three fighter jets crossed into its territory on Friday without permission and remained there for 12 minutes.

The incident, described by Estonia's top diplomat as an "unprecedentedly brazen" incursion, happened just over a week after NATO planes downed Russian drones over Poland, heightening fears that Moscow's war on Ukraine could spill over.

In an online statement published on early Saturday, Moscow

stressed its fighter jets had kept to neutral Baltic Sea waters more than 3 kilometres from Estonia's Vaindloo Island in the Gulf of Finland.

"On September 19, three MiG-31 fighter jets completed a scheduled flight from Karelia to an airfield in the Kaliningrad region," it said, referencing the Russian enclave sandwiched between Polish and Lithuanian territory. Estonia, Poland and Lithuania belong to NATO.

"The flight was conducted in strict compliance with international airspace regulations and did not violate the borders of other states, as confirmed through objective monitoring," the statement said without providing details about the monitoring operation.

On Friday, Estonian officials said Tallinn had summoned a Russian diplomat to protest, and also moved "to start consultations among the allies" under NATO's Article 4, which states that parties would confer whenever the territorial integrity, political independence or security is threatened.

Polish and allied aircraft scrambled

Poland's Operational Command on Saturday said Polish and allied aircraft were deployed again overnight, due to Russian long-range airstrikes in neighbouring Ukraine. In a later post on X, the operational command described the operation as "preventive" and "aimed at securing the airspace in areas adjacent to the threatened zone."

Polish jets have been deployed repeatedly in recent months to patrol the country's airspace in connection with Russian attacks on Ukraine.

Last week, fellow NATO member Romania said it deployed two F-16 jets to intercept a drone that briefly entered its airspace.

Zelenskyy hopes to finalise security guarantees in New York meetings

Zelenskyy said that Ukraine and its partners have laid the groundwork for long-term security guarantees and that he hopes to gauge how close they are to finalising such commitments during next week's meetings in New York.

He said European nations are prepared to move forward with a framework if the United States remains closely engaged. He noted that discussions have taken place at multiple levels, including among military leadership and general staffs from both Europe and the US.

"I would like to receive signals for myself on how close we are to understanding that the security guarantees from all partners will be the kind we need," Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy said sanctions against Russia must remain on the table if peace efforts stall, and that he plans to press the issue in talks with Trump.

"If the war continues and there is no movement toward peace, we expect sanctions," he said, adding that Trump is looking for strong steps from Europe. (AP)

Trump announces USD 100,000 H-1-B visa fee in move that could impact Indian workers in US

The abuse of the H-1B programme is also a national security threat

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Sept 20: President Donald Trump has signed a proclamation to raise the H-1B visa fee to a staggering USD 100,000 annually, a move which will adversely affect Indian professionals in the US.

Trump on Friday signed the proclamation "Restriction on entry of certain nonimmigrant workers", saying the abuse of the H-1B visa programme is a "national security threat".

Immigration attorneys and companies have asked the H-1B visa holders or their family members currently outside America for work or vacation to return within the next 24 hours or risk being stranded and denied entry into the US after the proclamation comes into effect from 12:01 am September 21.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi described the decision to hike the H-1B visa fee as a "reckless attempt to cut America off from high-skilled workers who have long strengthened our workforce, fuelled innovation, and helped build industries that employ millions of Americans."

Ajay Bhutoria, a former advisor to President Joe Biden and Asian-American community leader on immigration policy, warned of a potential crisis for the US technology sector's competitive edge with Trump's decision on the H-1B visa fee.

"The H-1B programme, a life-line for innovation that has attracted top talent from around the world, faces unprecedented barriers with this massive jump from the current USD 2,000-USD 5,000 total fee, which will crush small businesses and startups reliant on

'Reckless H-1-B fee has negative impact on IT industry'

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Sept 20: US lawmakers and community leaders voiced concern over US President Donald Trump's plan to impose a USD 100,000 fee on H-1B visa applications, calling the move "reckless" and "unfortunate" that will have a "huge negative" impact on the IT industry.

Trump's USD 100,000 H-1B visa fee is a "reckless attempt to cut America off from high-skilled workers who have long strengthened our workforce, fuelled innovation, and helped build industries that employ millions of Americans," Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

Krishnamoorthi said many H-1B holders ultimately become citizens and launch businesses that create well-paying jobs in the US. (PTI)



diverse talent," he said.

Currently, the H-1B visa fee ranges from about USD 2,000 to USD 5,000, depending on employer size and other costs. The H-1B visas, which are very popular among Indian tech professionals, are valid for three years and can be renewed for another three years.

Trump's decision will significantly affect Indian technology professionals who are hired by tech companies and others on H-1B visas.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is the second-highest beneficiary from about 5,505 approved H-1B visas in 2025, after Amazon (10,044 workers on H-1B visas), according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Other top beneficiaries include Microsoft (5,189), Meta (5,123), Apple (4,202), Google (4,181), Deloitte (2,353), Infosys (2,004), Wipro (1,523) and Tech Mahindra Americas (951).

In his proclamation, Trump said the H-1B visa programme was created to bring temporary workers into the US to perform additive, high-skilled functions, but it has

been deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers with lower-paid, lower-skilled labour.

"The abuse of the H-1B programme is also a national security threat. Domestic law enforcement agencies have identified and investigated H-1B-reliant outsourcing companies for engaging in visa fraud, conspiracy to launder money... and other illicit activities to encourage foreign workers to come to the US," he said.

Trump said that it is necessary to impose higher costs on companies seeking to use the H-1B programme to address the abuse of that programme while still permitting companies to hire the best of the best temporary foreign workers.

On whether the technology CEOs, who hire foreign workers on H-1B visas, are concerned about the new move, Trump said they're going to be "very happy".

Trump ordered that the Secretary of Homeland Security shall restrict decisions on petitions not accompanied by a USD 100,000 payment for H-1B speciality occu-

Israeli strikes on Gaza City kill at least 14 as some countries move to recognise Palestinian state

CAIRO, Sept 20: Israeli strikes killed at least 14 people overnight in Gaza City, said health officials, as Israel ramps up its offensive there and urges Palestinians to leave.

The strikes come as Western countries are increasingly fed up with the intensifying war in Gaza, with some moving to recognise Palestinian statehood at the gathering of world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly next week. In a statement on Friday, Portugal's Foreign Affairs Ministry said it will recognise a Palestinian state on Sunday. The Iberian country had previously announced its plans to do so, but has now set an official date.

Portugal is among other Western nations, including the UK, Canada, Australia, Malta, Belgium and Luxembourg. Expected to recognise Palestinian statehood in the coming days.

The latest Israeli operation, which started this week, further escalates a conflict that has roiled the Middle East and likely pushes any ceasefire further out of reach. The



Israeli military, which says it wants to "destroy Hamas' military infrastructure," hasn't given a timeline for the offensive, but there were indications it could take months.

Israeli bombardment over the past 23 months has killed more than 65,000 people in Gaza, destroyed vast areas of the strip, displaced around 90 per cent of the population and caused a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, with experts saying Gaza City is experiencing famine.

Dr Rami Mhanna, the managing director of Shifa Hospital, where some of the bodies were brought, said the dead included six people from the same family after a strike hit their home early Saturday morning. They were relatives of the hospital's director, Dr Mohamed Abu Selmiya, he said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said five other people were killed in another strike close to Shawa Square. Israel's military didn't immediately respond to questions

about the strikes.

In recent days, Israel has been urging hundreds of thousands of Palestinians sheltering in Gaza City to move south to what it calls a humanitarian zone.

Palestinians have streamed out of the city — some by car, others on foot. Israel opened another corridor south of Gaza City for two days this week to allow more people to evacuate. But many Palestinians in the famine-stricken city are unwilling to be uprooted again, too weak to leave or unable to afford the cost of moving.

Aid groups have warned that forcing thousands of people to evacuate will exacerbate the dire humanitarian crisis. They are urging for a ceasefire so aid can reach those who need it.

On Friday, UNICEF said life-saving therapeutic food meant for thousands of children in Gaza was stolen from four of its trucks. The statement said armed individuals approached the trucks outside their compound in Gaza City, and the drivers were held at gunpoint while the food was taken. (AP)

Trump says US has carried out another fatal strike targeting alleged drug-smuggling boat

WASHINGTON, Sept 20: President Donald Trump said Friday the US military has carried out its third fatal strike against an alleged drug smuggling vessel this month.

Trump in a social media posting said the strike killed three and was carried out against a vessel "affiliated with a Designated Terrorist Organization conducting narcotrafficking in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility." He did not provide more precise details about the location of the strike.

The Pentagon deferred questions about the strike to the White House, which did not respond to a request for clarity about the origins of the vessel.

"Intelligence confirmed the vessel was trafficking illicit narcotics, and was transiting along a known narcotrafficking passage enroute to poison Americans," Trump said in the post.

Trump also posted a video of the latest strike that shows a vessel speeding through waters before it

appears to be struck by a pair of missiles from overhead and sink in a fiery explosion.

"It was at this moment, the narco-terrorists knew they screwed up," White House communications director Steven Cheung said on X in a posting with the video.

Trump on Monday announced the US military had carried out a strike on a boat allegedly carrying drugs from Venezuela. That strike also killed three on board.

That followed a September 2 military strike on what the Trump administration said was a drug-carrying speedboat that killed 11. Trump claimed the boat was operated by the Tren de Aragua gang, which was listed by the US as foreign terrorist organisation earlier this year.

The Trump administration has justified the military action as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States.

But several senators, Democrats

and some Republicans, as well as human rights groups have questioned the legality of Trump's action. They view it as a potential overreach of executive authority in part because the military was used for law enforcement purposes.

The Trump administration has yet to explain how the military assessed the boat's cargo and determined the passengers' alleged gang affiliation before the attacks on the vessels. National security officials told members of Congress that the first boat taken out was fired on multiple times after it had changed course and appeared headed back to shore. The strikes follow a buildup of US maritime forces in the Caribbean. It marks a dramatic shift in how the US is willing to combat drug trafficking in the Western Hemisphere. In Venezuela, some are speculating whether the strikes are part of a plan to try to topple President Nicolás Maduro, a notion that the Venezuelan leader has echoed. (AP)

Indian envoy lauds Irish leadership

LONDON Sept 20: Ireland leadership's condemnation of attacks on Indians has sent a message of reassurance and comfort to the community, said Indian Envoy to Ireland, Akhilesh Mishra, in a meeting with John Lahart TD, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade. The meeting came in the backdrop of an Embassy advisory issued last month urging Indian citizens to take "reasonable precautions for their personal security" following a series of racially aggravated attacks. Lahart spoke "affectionately" about the Indian community in Ireland, including Indian professionals living in his constituency in a meeting with Mishra on Thursday. Lahart added he attaches high priority to further strengthening bilateral ties with India, the press release posted on social media said. (PTI)

US President Trump announces 'Gold Card' for foreigners of 'extraordinary ability'

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Sept 20: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order entitled "The Gold Card", aimed at setting up a new visa pathway for foreigners of extraordinary ability who are committed to supporting the United States.

Under the Gold Card programme, signed on Friday, individuals who can pay USD 1 million to the US Treasury, or USD 2 million if a corporation is sponsoring them, will get access to expedited visa treatment and a path to a Green Card in the country.

"We're taking in hundreds of billions of dollars. The Gold Card will be taking in hundreds of billions of dollars, and companies will be able to keep some people they need. They need people of expertise, great expertise," Trump said.

Trump emphasised the gold card will be a "fantastic thing" and "we're going to take that money and we're going to reduce taxes, we're going to reduce debt".

"To apply, an applicant must pay a nonrefundable processing fee. Once an applicant's processing fee is received, the process for visa adjudication will take place, assuming applicants submit additional documents in a timely manner," the official website of the programme said.

The website said that if approved, an individual "must make a gift of USD 1 million, which has been determined to provide sufficient evidence that the individual will substantially benefit the United States."

The applicants must be "eligible for lawful permanent resident status, admissible to the United States,

and a visa must be available," the website added.

"The Order directs the Secretary of Commerce to deposit the gifts into the Treasury and use them to promote commerce and American industry," a White House statement said.

The Gold Card prioritises entry for high-value contributors to American society, including successful entrepreneurs, investors, and businessmen, it said.

"Early in his second term, President Trump proposed Gold Cards, a vision he is now delivering to attract wealthy investors and entrepreneurs," it added. The programme will generate revenue and provide certainty to immigrants who can make significant contributions to the American economy, the statement added. (PTI)

BJP ST Morcha Arunachal organises 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' tree plantation and documentary exhibition



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 20: In a spirited celebration of Seva Pakhwada 2025, the BJP ST Morcha Arunachal Pradesh, led by President Shri Kame Yangfo, successfully organised a tree plantation programme at Energy Park, Itanagar, under the inspiring theme "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam."

The initiative carries a symbolic message—each sapling planted is dedicated to mothers, reflecting eternal love, respect, and gratitude, while also underscoring the collective responsibility to safeguard the environment. The programme aimed to promote a cleaner, greener, and healthier Arunachal Pradesh, inspiring citizens to contribute actively to environmental conservation.

The event was graced by the presence of deputy chief minister Chowna Mein and State BJP President Kaling Moyong, whose participation added significance and motivation to the occasion.

Several party leaders, officials, and local volunteers joined hands in planting saplings across the park, demonstrating unity and commitment to the cause.

Later in the day, the participants attended a documentary screening and exhibition organised by the BJP Itanagar District Unit in collaboration with the Bharatiya Janata Kisan Morcha, also under the banner of Seva Pakhwada.

The exhibition highlighted the life and journey of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, illustrating his

principles of Seva (Service), Sankalp (Resolution), and Vikas (Development).

The event was again honoured by the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, State BJP President Kaling Moyong, State Vice President & Convenor Seva Pakhwada Chau Zingnu Namchoom, along with MLAs, Mayor Tamme Phassang, chairmen, vice-chairmen, senior leaders, and dedicated Karyakartas.

The exhibition served as a platform to showcase the vision and initiatives of the central government, inspiring participants to imbibe the values of service and dedication in their personal and social endeavours.

The BJP Arunachal Pradesh has extended an open invitation to the citizens of Itanagar to visit the exhibition at Energy Park.

The party expressed gratitude to all participants, volunteers, and well-wishers for their enthusiastic support in making the initiatives a grand success.

Through these initiatives, the BJP ST Morcha reaffirmed its commitment to promoting environmental awareness, fostering civic responsibility, and working towards a sustainable and progressive Arunachal Pradesh.

The tree plantation and exhibition together symbolised the intersection of ecological responsibility, cultural respect, and the spirit of public service, inspiring citizens to contribute to a brighter, greener future.

Parong village endorses Siang Upper Multipurpose Project with MoU signing

Parong households show confidence in SUMP, formalise support via MoU

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 20: Community support for the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) has gained further ground as Parong village formally extended its endorsement by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Arunachal Pradesh for preparation of the Project's Pre-Feasibility Report (PFR).

The signing ceremony, held in the presence of several key dignitaries, marked another significant milestone in the process of building consensus among local communities.

Those present included deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, minister of rural development and panchayati raj Ojing Tasing, chief secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, Chairman of SUMP Development Corporation (SUMPDC) Tamiyo Taga, Commissioner Hydropower Sonam Chombey, Commissioner (Planning and Investment) Ankur Garg, Joint Secretary Hydropower Hage Lailang, Deputy Commissioner Siang Tayi Taggu, and Advisor to the Deputy Chief Minister Anupam Tangu.

Deputy chief minister Mein, welcoming the endorsement, said the decision of the people of Parong reflected a collective aspiration for development and prosperity.

"The signing of the MoU by the people of Parong is a significant step forward. With over 62 percent households extending their support, the village has demonstrated its con-



confidence in the transformative potential of the project. This step reflects our shared belief that the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project will bring meaningful development and new opportunities to the region," he said.

Expressing their optimism, residents of Parong also shared their views during the event.

Taram Jerang, who attended the signing, remarked, "We, the residents of Parong, are

hopeful that by supporting the MoU for PFR, our village will see real progress."

Another villager, Tamat Pabin, echoed this sentiment, saying, "By supporting the MoU for PFR, we see this as a step toward a brighter future for Siang and Arunachal Pradesh."

The SUMP, declared a National Project by the Government of India in 2008, is envisioned as a crucial intervention in strengthen-

ing the country's water and energy security. It is expected not only to contribute significantly to hydropower generation but also to address concerns related to flood moderation and irrigation.

Officials have emphasised that while the project will bring modern development, equal care will be taken to preserve the cultural identity and traditions of the local communities. Parong now joins the growing list of villages backing the initiative.

Earlier, four villages — Pangkang, Riga, Riew, and Begging — had signed similar MoUs for the PFR process.

Together, these endorsements demonstrate an emerging consensus among Siang communities, laying a strong social foundation for the eventual implementation of the project.

Observers note that such village-level endorsements reflect a broader trend of trust-building between the government and local stakeholders.

With more communities coming forward in support, the SUMP is steadily moving from concept to groundwork, setting the stage for a project that aims to balance developmental goals with social and environmental considerations. With Parong's endorsement, the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project continues to gain momentum, reinforcing Arunachal Pradesh's pivotal role in India's pursuit of water and energy security.

Arunachal Congress says it'll submit memorandum to PM APBG condoles the demise of Gamde Ete Gamlin

ITANAGAR, Sept 20: The opposition Congress in Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday said it will submit a memorandum to PM Narendra Modi during his visit to the state on September 22 over a host of demands, including scrapping of the Siang hydropower project.

In the memorandum, a copy of which was made available to the press, the Congress will demand a special financial package for the state and restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), among others.

Welcoming the PM to Arunachal Pradesh, the Congress said the state is facing pressing socio-economic and political challenges that demand people-centric, sustainable solutions.

It said that during the tenure of the UPA government at the Centre, the

state had received a Rs 24,000-crore special development package and pressed for a similar comprehensive aid covering healthcare, education, employment, border area development, agriculture, and climate resilience.

The memorandum called for an amendment to Article 371(H), which grants discretionary powers over law and order to the governor, arguing that it undermines democratic governance and leaves the state without adequate constitutional safeguards over land, forests, and resources.

"Unlike Nagaland and Mizoram, Arunachal remains vulnerable to displacement, land alienation, and centralisation of power," the party said, demanding equal protection.

Raising strong objections to the proposed 11,000-mw Siang Upper

Multipurpose Project, the Congress claimed it would submerge 27 villages, displace over 1.5 lakh people, and devastate fragile Himalayan ecosystems in a seismic zone.

The party demanded an immediate halt to all surveys and drilling, withdrawal of paramilitary personnel from project sites, and adoption of alternative small and medium hydel, solar, and community-based energy projects.

The Congress reiterated its support for the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

"These are not just political issues but people's issues concerning the survival, dignity, and future of Arunachal Pradesh," the party said, expressing hope that the PM would address the demands in the interest of the state. (PTI)

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 20: The Arunachal Publishers and Broadcasters Guild (APBG) has expressed profound grief over the passing of Gamde Ete Gamlin, the beloved mother of APBG Chairman, former Arunachal Press Club President and Founding Editor of Eastern Sentinel, Jarpum Gamlin.

The guild conveyed its condolences through an official statement. Born on January 1, 1938, at Bene village in West Siang district, Late Gamde Ete Gamlin was regarded as a woman of dignity, courage, and compassion. Over the decades, she became the guiding force of a family whose contributions to public service and state affairs have been widely acknowledged.

She was the mother of a distinguished lineage including Former Minister Jarkar Gamlin, Former Chief Minister Late Jarbom Gamlin, Maj Gen Jarken Gamlin, social activist Jarpum Gamlin Ete, Jarsa Gamlin, Jarter Gamlin Ronya, and Jarpum Gamlin.

Beyond her role as the matriarch of this eminent family, she was remembered for her nurturing spirit, her strength in adversity, and her ability to inspire both kin and community.

According to the statement, she almost singlehandedly raised her children while also extending her care and guidance to many others.

She was deeply cherished as a loving mother, a doting grandmother and great-grandmother, and a strict but affectionate disciplinarian.

Arunachal reviews 203 teacher transfer appeals; revised order soon

ITANAGAR, Sept 20: The Arunachal Pradesh education department on Saturday conducted a high-level review meeting to examine appeals against the July 20 teachers' transfer and posting order affecting 203 people across the state.

The transferred teachers include primary teacher (PRT), trained graduate teacher (TGT), postgraduate teacher (PGT), physical education teacher (PET), and block education officer (BEO) cadres, officials said. Appeals were filed by the teachers citing spouse posting, medical conditions, prior service in hard areas, and specialised educational assignments.

The review, held under the framework of the Teachers' Transfer and Posting Policy, 2025, aims to ensure fair, need-based deployment of teachers, safeguard students' academic interests, and maintain transparency, fairness, and job satisfaction within the teaching community. The review meeting was chaired by Education Commissioner Amjad Tak, and attended by Secondary Education Director Tanyang Tatak, Elementary Education Director Tani Talom, Deputy Secretary Mudo Nikhang Tamo, Undersecretary Khumkon Mossang, and other officials.

Among the deliberations, 120 appeals submitted on medical grounds, covering 45 PRTs, 126 TGTs, 8 PGTs, 2 PETs, and 2 BEOs, were referred to the state medical board at Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMSS), with physical verification scheduled from September 23 to 25, the officials said. The department also clarified that teachers serving in special roles such as Booth Level Officers (BLOs), NCC Care-

taker Officers (CTOs), and Scout & Guide Coordinators cannot claim exemption from transfer solely based on these assignments.

Officials said the creation of formal head teacher posts is under process, and those currently holding such roles in a contingent capacity will not be retained until official appointments are made based on seniority. Appeals from teachers nearing retirement were sympathetically considered, with select cases approved for retention on compassionate grounds.

Teachers with children in class 10 or 12 have been granted temporary retention until the completion of board examinations, after which they are required to join their new postings, failing which disciplinary action will follow. Merit-based retention was approved for 2 PRTs and 10 TGTs, while other cases, excluding pending medical appeals, must report to new postings without delay.

The exercise is considered one of the most meticulous and transparent transfer processes undertaken by the department, involving clerical staff, branch officers, directors of elementary and secondary education, secretariat officials, and oversight by the commissioner himself. The process relied on district-level data and was guided entirely by the principles enshrined in the Transfer and Posting Policy, 2025.

A revised transfer order incorporating the board's recommendations will be issued shortly, and all DDEs have been instructed to ensure strict compliance without delay. (PTI)

BLOs trained in Yachuli for upcoming Electoral Roll Revision

HT Correspondent

YACHULI, Sept 20: In a significant step towards ensuring the accuracy of the electoral process, the Office of the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), Yachuli, recently organised an extensive training session for Booth Level Officers (BLOs) of Keyi Panyor District at the Mini Secretariat, Yachuli.

The training was conducted in preparation for the forthcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the Electoral Roll 2025.

The session was chaired by Shri Likha Teji, ERO Yachuli, who underscored the importance of the revision exercise in strengthening the foundations of democracy.

He said the BLOs, being the field-level officials, form the backbone of the electoral machinery and their role in maintaining an accurate and transparent roll is indispensable.

A key highlight of the programme was a Table-Top Exercise that involved mapping the 2025 Electoral Roll with data from 2006.

This exercise, Teji explained, was designed to test the preparedness of BLOs and to ensure that discrepan-

cies, duplications and errors are minimised during the actual revision. He reminded the officers that the credibility of elections largely depends on the quality of the rolls and urged them to approach their task with diligence and sincerity.

The ERO directed all BLOs to complete the mapping exercise and submit their reports by Tuesday, September 23, without fail. Stressing on teamwork, he asked the participants to extend guidance and share inputs with their colleagues who could not attend the training, thereby fostering a collective and uniform approach across the district.

He further assured that the District Election Officer (DEO) will be closely monitoring the progress of the exercise and will provide the necessary logistical and technical support to overcome challenges faced in the field.

The ERO also reminded the BLOs that they represent the face of the Election Commission at the grassroots, and as such, their work directly contributes to building public trust in the electoral system.

The training programme also saw

detailed discussions on field verification methods, correction of errors, inclusion and deletion processes, and the use of updated formats for record-keeping.

Participants were sensitised about the timelines, responsibilities, and accountability measures that accompany the revision exercise.

Officials present at the event noted that such sessions play a crucial role in ensuring uniformity in the implementation of instructions issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

They said the effort would not only streamline the roll revision process but also help build capacity among BLOs to handle similar exercises in the future.

The day-long training thus marked an important milestone in the preparatory activities for the Special Intensive Revision in Keyi Panyor District. With the SIR process approaching, the BLOs are now expected to play a pivotal role in ensuring that every eligible citizen is duly enrolled and that the electoral roll of 2025 reflects the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and accuracy.

PM to lay foundation stones for two power projects during visit tomorrow

ITANAGAR, Sept 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to lay the foundation stones for two hydroelectric power projects worth ₹ 3,689 crore and 10 infrastructure projects to be built at a cost of ₹ 1,291 crore during his visit to Arunachal Pradesh on September 22, officials said on Saturday.

In a statement issued by the state government, Modi will lay the foundation stones for the 186 MW Tato-I and 240 MW Heo hydroelectric projects and inaugurate the Integrated State of Art Convention Centre in Tawang. Governor KT Parnaik, Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, Lok Sabha MP Tapir Gao and Rajya Sabha MP Nabam Rebia will attend the event.

The Tato-I hydroelectric project on Yarjep river in Shi Yomi district will be implemented by the Arunachal Pradesh government and the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) at an estimated cost of ₹ 1,750 crore. It is expected to produce 802 million units of electricity annually, officials said.

The Heo hydroelectric project, also on the same river, is being implemented by the state government and NEEPCO at an estimated cost of ₹ 1,939 crore. The project is estimated to produce 1,000 million units of energy annually. The Integrated State of Art Convention Centre in Tawang is a government project under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region's (MDoNER) and PM-DevINE scheme. The project, worth ₹ 145.37 crore was completed recently by the state's Public Works Department. (PTI)

DC Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta chairs DLMC, reviews schemes under DISHA

HT Correspondent

YACHULI, Sept 20: The monthly District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC) meeting of Keyi Panyor District was held at the DC's Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, Yachuli, under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner-cum-Chairman of DLMC, Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta, IAS. The meeting was convened to review the implementation and progress of various government schemes and flagship programmes under DISHA. In her address, the Deputy Commissioner laid emphasis on accountability and efficiency in execution of projects. She reminded the executing agencies of their responsibility to complete schemes within stipulated timelines without compromising on quality.

Mehta also announced that she would soon conduct field inspections, accompanied by the concerned officials, to personally assess the status of ongoing works. She urged all departments to maintain proactive coordination and ensure regular follow-ups for smooth and timely implementation of government welfare and infrastructure initiatives. She further directed all Heads of Departments (HoDs) to attend DLMC meetings with proper preparation, underlining that absenteeism would not be tolerated.

During the course of the meeting, the Committee reviewed department-wise progress and discussed key issues. On the matter of irregularities among officials and staff, it was re-

solved that HoDs would issue show-cause notices to erring employees, with non-compliance liable to suspension. Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Deputy Commissioner directed the District Development, Rural Development (DD, RD) to furnish the list of approved works within one week.

Regarding the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) projects, the Executive Engineer, Rural Works Department (EE, RWD) was instructed to expedite the completion of the Pitapool-Rub and Shalley-Rubdi road projects, while field visits would be conducted to monitor all ongoing works. The meeting also took serious note of earth cutting and illegal construction along the Right of Way of National Highway 13, with National Highways officials directed to immediately report such activities and ensure they are stopped.

Another important directive was issued on the matter of data management, with all HoDs asked to segregate records and schemes pertaining specifically to Keyi Panyor District from those of Lower Subansiri to avoid confusion in reporting and execution. The meeting concluded with a strong call for better inter-departmental coordination, timely reporting, and strict adherence to accountability mechanisms to ensure that flagship programmes and government welfare schemes are effectively implemented for the benefit of the people of Keyi Panyor District.

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTORATE-CUM-
ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD(R&B),
HILLS, ASSAM, DIPHU.**

NO. ACEH/CS/GAD/18/2024-25/21, Dated. 15/09/2025.

NOTIFICATION

It is for general information to all concerned that the Tender invited vide this office Press Notice No - ACEH/CS/GAD/18/2024-25/11, Dated 09/06/2025 for the work "Construction of Guest House Cum Conference Hall," Hamren West Karbi Anglong is hereby cancelled as per Chief Engineer's letter No.CE/TB-II(Bldg)/79/2025-03,) Dated 11.09.2025.

Sd/-

Additional Chief Engineer,

P.W.D. (R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Memo No ACEH/CS/GAD/18/2024-25/15-(A) Dated. 15/09/2025.

AFFIDAVIT
I, Mamoni Deb wife of Boloram Paul resident of Doomdooma district Tinsukia, Assam declare before the Notary Public/ Magistrate Margherita through a affidavit number IN-AS87815262233401X dated 18th September 2025, that I have changed my name from Mamoni Deb to Mamoni Paul and I hereby declare that both Mamoni Paul and Mamoni Deb is one identical person that is me only.

AFFIDAVIT
I, Mohuwa Deb daughter of Boloram Paul resident of Margherita district Tinsukia, Assam declare before the Notary Public/ Magistrate Margherita through a affidavit number IN-AS87817438620911X dated 18th September 2025, that I have changed my name from Mohuwa Deb to Mohuwa Paul and I hereby declare that both Mohuwa Paul and Mohuwa Deb is one identical person that is me only.

AFFIDAVIT
I, Boloram Deb son of Late Motilal Paul resident of Doomdooma district Tinsukia, Assam declare before the Notary Public/ Magistrate Margherita through a affidavit number IN-AS87816792030524X dated 18th September 2025, that I have changed my name from Boloram Deb to Boloram Paul and I hereby declare that both Boloram Paul and Boloram Deb is one identical person that is me only.

AFFIDAVIT
I Abdul Kadir, D.O.B-03/05/1979, S/O- Late Matiar Rahman, General Secretary of ASHATUL ISLAM ROWARPAR MADRASSA, situated at Vill-Rowarpar, P.O.- Karaiguri, P.S.- Murajhar, Dist.- Hajoai (Assam)
That, the name of our Madrassa is ASHATUL ISLAM ROWARPAR MADRASSA. That, in society registration certificate vide Registration No- RS/711 OF 1984-1985 wherein name of the Madrassa has been recorded as ROWARPAR ESHATUL ISLAM ALIA AND KARIANA MADRASSA COMMITTEE instead of actual and correct name of the Madrassa is ASHATUL ISLAM ROWARPAR MADRASSA.
That, aforesaid ASHATUL ISLAM ROWARPAR MADRASSA and ROWARPAR ESHATUL ISLAM ALIA AND KARIANA MADRASSA COMMITTEE are the name of one and same society.

India's biggest enemy is its dependence on other nations: PM Modi

Citing India's shipping sector as a major example of the damage caused by flawed policies

BHAVNAGAR (GUJARAT), Sept 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India's main adversary is its dependence on other nations as he raised the pitch for "aatmanirbharta" and called for the indigenous production of everything from (semiconductor) chips to ships.

Addressing the 'Samudra se Samruddhi' event, where he inaugurated and laid foundation stones of projects costing ₹34,200 crore, Modi said all problems of India have only one solution, and that is self-reliance.

"India is moving forward with the spirit of global brotherhood and India has no major enemy in the world today, but in true terms, India's biggest adversary is dependence on other nations", stated the Prime Minister, emphasising that this dependency must be collectively defeated.

He said greater foreign dependence leads to greater national failure. "For global peace, stability, and prosperity, the world's most populous country must become self-reliant", Modi said and cautioned that reliance on others compromises national self-respect.

"The future of 140 crore Indians cannot be left to external forces, nor can the resolve for national development be based on foreign de-



pendency. The future of the coming generations cannot be left to others. If the country with a population of 140 crore is dependent on others, it compromises national self-respect", he added.

As per a popular saying, 100 types of pains have only one remedy; similarly, all problems of India have one solution, and that is aatmanirbharta (self-reliance), Modi stated.

Targeting Congress, Modi said the talent of young people was suppressed after Independence by the then ruling party which brought restrictions like "license Raj".

"As a result of consistently ignoring inherent strengths of India, the country couldn't achieve the

success it truly deserved even after six to seven decades of freedom," Modi said and blamed "prolonged entanglement in the license-quota regime and isolation from global markets" as the main factors.

When the globalisation era began, the then governments focused solely on imports, which led to scams of thousands of crores, Modi said. "These policies caused significant harm to India's youth and prevented the nation's true potential from emerging," he added.

Citing India's shipping sector as a major example of the damage caused by flawed policies, Modi remarked that India was historically a very vibrant ship building industry.

"Ships built in India's coastal

states once powered domestic and global trade. Even fifty years ago, India used domestically built ships, with over 40 percent of its import-export conducted through them.

Till 50 years ago, our trade was carried out by 40 per cent ships made in India, but this has now come down to just 5 per cent," the PM pointed out.

He said India pays a staggering USD 75 billion or approximately ₹ 6 lakh crore every year to foreign shipping companies for their services.

"Can people imagine how much money has been paid in freight to other countries over the past seven decades? This outflow of funds has created millions of jobs abroad. If even a small portion of this expenditure had been invested by earlier governments in the domestic shipping industry, the world would have been using Indian ships today, and India would be earning lakh of crores in shipping services", the PM added.

"Chips (semiconductor chips) or ships, we must make them in India," Modi said, adding that domestic ports are the backbone of India's rise as a global maritime powerhouse.

Modi said India's maritime sector is now moving towards next-generation reforms. He announced

that from today, all major ports in the country will be freed from multiple documents and fragmented processes.

"The implementation of 'One Nation, One Document' and 'One Nation, One Port' Process will simplify trade and commerce", he said.

Modi highlighted that during the recent monsoon session, several outdated laws from the colonial era were amended.

He said a series of reforms have been initiated in the maritime sector, and five maritime laws have been introduced in a new form. These laws will bring major changes in shipping and port governance, he added.

The PM said a historic decision has been taken to strengthen the maritime sector (with) large ships now accorded the infrastructure status. "When a sector receives infrastructure recognition, it gains significant advantages. Ship-building companies will now find it easier to secure loans from banks and will benefit from reduced interest rates. All benefits associated with infrastructure financing will now be extended to these ship-building enterprises," Modi added. He said the government is working on three major schemes to make India a major maritime power. (PTI)

EC not providing information to Karnataka CID about 'vote chori': Rahul Gandhi



WAYANAD (KERALA), Sept 20: Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused the Election Commission of India of not providing information sought by the Karnataka CID regarding the alleged 'vote chori' in that state.

Rahul, who arrived in Wayanad on Friday along with his mother Sonia Gandhi, told reporters here that Karnataka CID has sent several letters to the EC seeking information about the numbers used in the 'vote chori', but the poll panel is not providing it.

Gyanesh Kumar is the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and he is not providing the information sought by the police, the Congress MP claimed. "There can be no bigger indictment of the CEC than this. The police is asking for information, and he is not providing it.

This is not my statement. It is a fact. It is there in black and white," he said. Rahul further said that the Congress will show evidence of the alleged 'vote chori' "in such a manner that no one will have any doubt that PM Narendra Modi did it and won the election". "We are going to reveal a hydrogen bomb, like I have said in my two press conferences, that will completely devastate the reality of the situation. We have open and shut proof of what we are saying. "We are not saying anything without proof. I will do my job and I will deliver on my job," he added. Rahul had on Friday too reiterated his "vote chori" allegations and took a swipe at the EC, calling it an "election watchman" who "stayed awake, watched the theft, and protected the thieves". (PTI)

Nearly ₹ 2 lakh cr will be in people's hand due to GST reforms: FM Sitharaman

MADURAI (TAMIL NADU), Sept 20: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said with the new GST reforms set to come into effect from September 22, a total of ₹ 2 lakh crore will be in the hands of the people, boosting domestic consumption.

With the simplification of the Goods and Services Tax from the earlier four slabs to 2 slabs, Sitharaman said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is keen to ensure that the poor and downtrodden, middle class families and the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) largely benefit out of the GST reforms.

The finance minister was speaking at the 80th anniversary of the Tamil Nadu Foodgrains Merchants Association here on Friday.

The new set of GST reforms with a revised tax structure is set to

come into force from September 22.

"With the proposed GST reforms, there will be an increase in consumption in the domestic market. The Finance Ministry does not receive the ₹ 2 lakh crore as taxes from the public, but it goes back into the economy aiding domestic consumption," she said.

Elaborating, she said, because of the two slab structure, the price of a product which a customer normally buys gets reduced.

"For example, when you buy the same product, say a pair in larger quantities, the manufacturer increases the production. To increase production, he recruits a lot of people, and when there are a lot of people, they pay tax to the income. And there will be revenue to the government as indirect taxes. When this virtuous cycle keeps on

happening, it is good for the economy," she said.

To keep it simple, Sitharaman said when there is more spending from the public, there is higher demand. When there is higher production to meet the demand, there will be more jobs. And when there are more jobs, there will be a wider tax base.

To support her point, the finance minister said when the number of entrepreneurs who were paying taxes stood at 65 lakh before GST was introduced in 2017, it did not get reduced to 10 lakh. "But, entrepreneurs understood the benefit and in the last 8 years it has only increased to 1.5 crore," she said.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi termed the GST as a Gabbar Singh Tax, but it was not a Gabbar Singh Tax. "It (GST) only increased the tax base from 65 lakh entrepre-

neurs to 1.5 crore in the last 8 years," she remarked.

PM Modi has been insisting that the GST reforms should largely benefit the poor, middle class families and MSMEs in particular, she said.

Sitharaman also took a dig at a political comment whether the government was levying higher taxes for those products all these eight years and now it has been staging a drama that the rates have been cut or completely removed under the GST 2.0 reforms.

"One senior person asks whether the government was levying higher charges for all these eight years (since GST was introduced in 2017). I wish to state here that neither the NDA government nor the Prime Minister is inclined to do that," she said without divulging further. (PTI)

Non-judicial members of tribunals averse to passing orders against govt, must reflect: CJI

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai on Saturday said some of the non-judicial members of the tribunals, who are usually ex-bureaucrats, are averse to passing any orders against the government and urged them to reflect.

Addressing the 10th All India Conference of the Central Administrative Tribunal 2025 here, the CJI flagged various issues plaguing the tribunals and the country's justice delivery system in the presence of Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and Union Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh.

CJI Gavai said the administrative tribunals are unlike courts as they occupy a unique space between the executive and the judiciary, and many of their members come from administrative services while others come from the judiciary.

Though this diversity presents a strength as it brings together judicial acumen and administrative experience, it makes it imperative that members are consistently trained and held to uniform standards of eligibility and conduct, he said.

"Judicial members would benefit from exposure to the nuances of public administration, while administrative members would require training in legal reasoning. I should not be taken otherwise because nowadays you don't know what you say and what comes on social media.

"But as a judge, I have personally noticed that some of the administrative members -- some of the judges coming from the administration... do not forget that they come from the administration and... are averse to passing any order which will be against the government. So I think they should reflect on that..." the CJI said.

He added that regular workshops, conferences and training programmes conducted by judicial academicians can prove invaluable in this regard and greatly enhance the effectiveness of the tribunal members.

"Furthermore, if a uniform appointment process is enacted with clear eligibility criteria, this would abate all questions of arbitrariness and reinforce the trust of the citizens in the tribunal," CJI Gavai said.

He also flagged the multiplicity of appeals which arises from the tribunals' decisions, an issue that was also highlighted by Meghwal in his address, in cases where there are concurrent findings of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) and high courts but still appeals are filed in the apex court.

This happens because bureaucrats are afraid of taking any risk and want to pass on the buck to the courts, he said.

"If you can have some central agency to filter as to whether the matter really deserves to be appealed or not, that will greatly reduce the pendency of the matters before the court. All of us know that the central government is the biggest litigant before the Supreme Court, as well as the high courts," he added.

The CJI said that though the citizens' right to appeal is the cornerstone of justice, this process often results in lengthy litigation spanning years, therefore undermining the purpose of establishing tribunals. In numerous instances, he said, the government officials and officers reach the age of retirement before their cases are finally resolved. CJI Gavai further flagged the issue of uniform service conditions for members of tribunals and said the government needs to address this issue urgently.

"If the government desires that

the retired judges of the high court and good judicial officers should adorn the offices of the tribunals, a quick look, or a quick relook at the service conditions of the chairperson and the members of the tribunals is I think the need of the day," he said.

The CJI was also critical of the conduct of some judges and judicial officers in courtrooms and referred to a recent decision of the apex court where it made it mandatory for a fresh law graduate to have an experience of three years before appearing in the judicial service examination. He said that data was sought from the states and the high courts, and it was found that the fresh law graduates, who did not have any experience, or exposure of the court, "the chair would go to their head on the very first day, and they would browbeat or irritate the lawyers with a standing of 40 years and 50 years".

Referring to a recent incident where a young lawyer fell unconscious in a high court after being browbeaten by a judge, he said, "As judges, we must also accept the position that both judges, as well as the lawyers, are like two wheels of the golden chariot of justice. None superior or none inferior, unless both the judges and the lawyers work together, the institution of administration of justice, which exists for the last citizen of this country, cannot function properly." He said all litigants who appear before the court do so with the faith that they will receive justice and their judgements will not be coloured. "I urge everyone to honour this responsibility not just within the official spaces but outside as well. In many ways, our roles are like those of a leader who will shape the lives of several thousand citizens through the outcomes that we determine..." CJI Gavai said. (PTI)

Akhilesh slams Centre over H-1B fee hike



LUCKNOW, Sept 20: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday slammed the Union government over the hike in the H-1B visa fee.

Speaking to reporters at the party office in Lucknow, Yadav said, "Your foreign policy has failed in the foreign (countries). Economic policies have failed. You have failed in making relationships."

The former chief minister also attacked Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, alleging that he wanted guns in people's hands, not books.

"Try to remember, he (apparently referring to Adityanath) does not want anyone to go abroad, neither for studies nor for work, but only to operate guns. (People) can go to Russia, join the army (there). Go to Israel, and fight along with its army. Those with H-1B visas should not go for good jobs," he said.

The former UP chief minister said Indians will only get visa relief once the Narendra Modi-led central government is out of power.

US President Donald Trump on Friday signed a proclamation that will raise the fee for H-1B visas to a staggering USD 100,000 annually. The latest move in the Trump administration's efforts to crack down on immigration stands to impact thousands of Indian professionals.

White House staff secretary Will Scharf said the H-1B non-immigrant visa programme is one of the most abused visa systems in the country's current immigration system, and it is intended to allow highly skilled labourers, who work in fields where Americans are not employed, to enter the United States. (PTI)

Tribals in Maha can now lease barren land to private entities; govt to bring law: Minister

MUMBAI, Sept 20: Maharashtra Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Saturday said tribal farmers in the state will soon be able to lease their barren land to private entities, enabling them to generate additional income, and a law regarding this will be introduced.

The Congress, however, alleged that the government's decision will benefit industrialists and lead to the exploitation of tribals.

Officials said the move would not only provide tribals an opportunity to have a steady source of income but also safeguard their ownership rights.

Talking to reporters in Nagpur, Bawankule said, "Tribal landowners will benefit from this decision. If a tribal farmer wants to develop his land in partnership with an industrialist, he can now approach the district collector and take the

final decision. Earlier, such proposals had to be approved at Mantralaya, the state administrative headquarters in Mumbai."

He, however, clarified that the proposed law will apply only to barren land and not fertile land owned by tribals.

"I have received several requests from tribal landowners in Palghar and Nandurbar districts. If a private company wants to set up solar panels under a government scheme, it can enter into an agreement with the tribal landowner, who will continue to receive a fixed annual payment. Such income would not be possible from barren land," Bawankule said.

He said that the proposed legislation would also safeguard tribal ownership, as even if land is leased for a longer period, the owner would continue to receive payments annually from the entity

with whom the agreement is made. Earlier on Friday, the minister had said that tribal farmers will be able to lease their land directly to private parties.

At present, tribal farmers are not permitted to independently enter into lease agreements with private entities.

He said the proposed change aims to give them direct access to private investment and generate additional income from their holdings.

According to the minister, the agreements will require the participation of the district collector to ensure transparency and fairness in the process.

"The minimum lease rent will be ₹ 50,000 per acre annually or ₹ 1,25,000 per hectare a year. Farmers and private parties can mutually decide on a higher amount," he said. (PTI)

Congress attacks Modi as 'weak PM' over Trump's H-1B visa order

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: After the US imposed a USD 100,000 annual fee for H-1B visas for highly skilled workers, the Congress on Saturday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of being a "weak PM" whose preference for "strategic silence" and "loud optics" has become a liability for India.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also said that foreign policy is about safeguarding India's national interests and keeping "India First" and not holding "events".

Highlighting reports that H-1B Visa hike would hit Indians hardest, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said in a post on X, "I repeat, India has a weak PM."

Noting that Indian national interests are supreme, Congress chief Kharge took a swipe at the PM, saying, "Bear hugs, hollow slogans, concerts and getting people

to chant 'Modi, Modi' is not foreign policy!"

"Foreign policy is about safeguarding our national interests; keeping India First, and steering friendships with wisdom and balance. It cannot be reduced to superficial bravado that risks undermining our long-term standing," Kharge said in a post on X.

The Congress chief said, "Narendra Modi ji, Indians are pained by the return gifts you have received after the birthday call. 'Birthday Return Gifts from your 'Abki Baar, Trump Sarkar' Government! -- USD 100,000 annual fee on H-1B visas hits Indian tech workers the hardest, 70 per cent of H-1B visa holders are Indians and 50 per cent tariff already imposed, a loss of ₹ 2.17 Lakh crore to India is already estimated in 10 sectors alone," Kharge said.

He also cited the HIRE Act, which he claimed was targeting Indian outsourcing. (PTI)

Abhijat Sheth highlighted innovative initiatives being introduced by the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences and the NMC

Govt committed to increasing no of doctors uniformly across country: NMC chairman



NEW DELHI, Sept 20: The government is committed to increasing the number of doctors uniformly across the country to match the WHO's recommendation of maintaining a doctor-patient ratio of 1:1000, National Medical Commission (NMC) Chairman Dr Abhijat Sheth said on Saturday.

He said this while presiding over the 11th convocation ceremony of

the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Medical Sciences (ABVIMS) and Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital here.

Sheth congratulated the graduating students as well as their parents and faculty members for their dedication in guiding and motivating them towards a service in healthcare.

He emphasised the govern-

ment's commitment to increasing the number of doctors in the country to meet the World Health Organization's recommendation of maintaining a uniform doctor-patient ratio of 1:1000 countrywide.

The NMC chairman also shared information about ongoing efforts to achieve a balanced undergraduate (UG) to postgraduate (PG) ratio of 1:1, aiming to elevate the quality of India's healthcare system to the standards of developed countries.

He also highlighted innovative initiatives being introduced by the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences and the NMC, such as integrating skill-based and virtual learning alongside traditional physical education, to fulfil the requirements of competency-based medical education.

Sheth encouraged the students to prioritise their own health and

well-being to persevere through challenges and remain lifelong learners.

In her address to the graduating students, Director General of Health Services (DGHS) Dr Sunita Sharma said, "You are not merely receiving a degree today, you are shouldering a profound responsibility -- to heal, to lead and to serve the nation in whatever capacity you choose."

Whether pursuing clinical care, medical research or education, she advised, "Let your work be driven by empathy, evidence and excellence." Emphasising the sanctity of the medical profession, Sharma said, "This is a noble calling built on compassion and an unwavering commitment to human life." She encouraged the graduates to remain humble and grounded, no matter how far they go or how much they achieve in life. (PTI)

Search operations underway for attackers Manipur: People stage protests against ambush on Assam Rifles

IMPHAL, Sept 20: Locals of Nambol in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Saturday morning staged protests against the killing of two Assam Rifles personnel in an ambush in the area the previous day.

Search operations are being conducted in the area for the attackers and the vehicle used by them, police said.

The locals, wearing traditional mourning attire, raised slogans and held placards condemning the attack and for "creating fear and panic among the public", at a sit-in just 1 km from the ambush spot.

Later, women took out a protest rally denouncing the attack, and criticised the opening of fire in public places.

Two jawans of the Assam Rifles were killed and five others were injured when a group of armed men ambushed a vehicle of the paramilitary force in Nambol Sabal Leikai area on Friday evening, officials said, adding no group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

An uneasy calm prevailed in the state capital Imphal, and Bishnupur district on Saturday morn-



ing, with the identity of the perpetrators yet to be known.

One of the protesters, S Bungo, said, "What exactly did the armed men want to achieve through this barbaric and unprovoked attack? It would be extremely wrong on the part of the armed men to see the restraint shown by the uniformed personnel as weakness. They should realise that both security agencies and government officials have been tremendously considerate of the public emotions throughout the ethnic conflict. That should not be seen as a weakness."

Prominent Churachandpur-based organisation Kuki Zo Council also condemned the attack on the paramilitary forces.

The council emphasised that the attack occurred at a place in Imphal Valley where AFSPA was not in force.

The attack took place when Assam Rifles personnel were travelling towards Bishnupur district from Imphal on Friday evening.

"... the column was ambushed by unidentified terrorists on the highway in the denotified area of Manipur. In the ensuing action,

two personnel of Assam Rifles were martyred and five were injured, who have since been evacuated to RIMS and are currently stable. Search operations are ongoing to apprehend the terrorists involved in the incident," a defence statement said.

The deceased persons were identified as Naib Subedar Shyam Gurung and Rifleman Ranjit Singh Kashyap.

Injured personnel N Nongthon told reporters, "The assailants, numbering around four to five, suddenly opened fire at us. We did not immediately retaliate as it would have led to injuries to the public, as it was not an isolated area."

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla condemned the attack on security forces.

"The governor expressed profound grief and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of the martyred soldiers, acknowledging their unwavering courage and dedication in protecting the nation," a Raj Bhavan statement said.

Bhalla prayed for the speedy recovery of those who sustained injuries in the ambush. (PTI)

CPI(M) slowly vanishing due to negative mindset: Tripura CM



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 20: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said that the CPI(M) is slowly vanishing as they are unwilling to come out of their negative mentality, while the BJP is a government of the people and will remain forever.

Saha said this while participating in a mega blood donation camp organized by the Bharatiya Janata Party, Tripura Pradesh OBC Morcha, on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 75th birthday.

He said that the OBC Morcha has been working in line with the directives of the Central and Pradesh BJP. "Karyakram means Sewa hi Sangathan. They always try to give 100% effort in their work. Today, around 100 people came here to donate blood. On 17th September, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 75th birthday, a series of programs were set by the central BJP, and we are also carrying them out here. This is

known as Sewa Pakhwada, which includes a series of social works. Our government has also been working for the people. In terms of GSDP, Tripura stands second highest in the Northeast, and we are also ahead in per capita income. We are working for infrastructural development, and our state government is increasing the state budget. Tripura has a large OBC population—around 40%—and we are committed to working for the betterment of each and every person," said Saha.

Saha further said that no one has ever seen a Prime Minister like Narendra Modi, who has been working for everyone. He accused the opposition of trying to confuse people with misleading statements.

"Our government is also working for the development of SHGs. We must work to make women self-reliant and empowered. Due to heavy rainfall in Tripura, potholes have appeared on roads, and the rain has also hampered proper repair work. We acknowledge that a portion of the roads was damaged, but we took immediate steps to restore them. The opposition tries to highlight half-truths and spread them on social media to mislead people and gain votes. But they will never acknowledge the positive work being done. They have not even expressed gratitude to PM Modi for initiatives like GST, Operation Sindoor, and others. People have faith and trust in the present government, which is transparent and works for everyone. We should never distance ourselves from the public. The CPI(M) refuses to come out of its negativity, and that is why it is slowly vanishing. The BJP is a government of the people, and it will remain forever," he added.

DC orders immediate restoration of NH-29 in Kohima



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 20: Kohima DC B Henok Buchem ordered immediate restoration and repair work on the damaged NH-29 connecting Kohima and Phek districts.

Leading a team of officials, Buchem conducted a joint inspection of the damaged road on September 19.

During the inspection, the DC expressed strong displeasure and deep concern over the deteriorating condition of the road and criticised the contractor's lack of urgency in carrying out timely maintenance and repairs.

Emphasising the strategic importance of NH-29 as a vital lifeline for the districts of Phek, Meluri, Zunheboto, and Kiphire, linking them to the state capital Kohima, the NHIDCL and EPC contractor were instructed to initiate immediate road restoration and repair work.

The inspection team visited multiple critical locations, including the sinking zones at KM 22+536 and KM 22+834, as well as the damaged bridge at KM 23+665.

The contractor was directed to implement appropriate safety measures to prevent further road degradation, ensure prompt clearance of landslide debris, and resurface the damaged pavement along NH-29.

The contractor assured that safety measures at the sinking sites would be in place by October 3. A proposal has also been submitted to the implementing agency, NHIDCL, to include the restoration of the damaged bridge in the project scope.

Woman's half-burnt body found in Tripura, husband blames MLA's associates for abetting suicide

AGARTALA, Sept 20: The half-burnt body of a woman was found in Tripura's Gomati district on Saturday, following which her husband alleged that she died by suicide after being assaulted by associates of the local BJP MLA.

Police said they have registered a case of abetment of suicide in the incident that happened in Mirza in the Kakraban police station area.

The body of the woman was found early in the morning, SDPO of Uadaipur Debnajli Ray said.

"Initially, we registered a case of unnatural death. Later, a case of abetment of suicide was registered. We have started an investigation. More sections under the BNS will be added based on information received during the investigation," she said.

The woman's husband alleged that three persons, including Manna Majumder, who is the nephew of BJP's Kakraban-Salgarh MLA Jitendra Majumder, severely as-

saulted him and his wife on Friday night.

"Thereafter, we went to the police station to lodge a complaint, but they refused to accept it," he alleged.

"We returned home and went to sleep separately as we often do. This morning, my wife's half-burnt body was found on a nearby road. Manna Majumder and his two companions are responsible for the death of my wife," he alleged.

The MLA could not be reached for a comment.

The opposition Congress attacked the police over the incident, alleging that they were trying to shield the accused.

"Firstly, the police did not register their complaint. What is more disturbing is that the couple was chased by the accused when they were returning from the police station. It seems that the police are trying to shield the accused," district Congress president Titan Paul alleged.

Locals said that the couple was also known as BJP members in the area. (PTI)

Tripura Civil Society announces 12 hours bandh on October 13

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 20: The Tripura Civil Society has called for a statewide dawn-to-dusk bandh on October 13, demanding the introduction of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, action against illegal immigrants, and speedy implementation of the Tiprasa Accord, Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debarma said on Saturday.

Speaking at a press conference today, Debarma emphasised that the bandh has been called by a non-political organisation, with Tipra Motha extending its support.

He urged the Tripura government to take immediate action against illegal immigrants in line with Union Home Ministry directives, noting that other states such as Assam, Gujarat, and Delhi have already acted, while Tripura has not.

CPI(M) office vandalised in Agartala, LoP slams BJP, terms 'cowards'

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 20: Tripura Leader of Opposition and CPIM state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury today came down heavily on the ruling BJP, branding them "cowards" and vowing to continue the movement until the saffron party is ousted from power.

The remarks came after Chaudhury visited the CPIM's Pratagarh local committee office in Agartala, which was allegedly vandalized by BJP-backed miscreants using a bulldozer.

Speaking to reporters, the LoP alleged, "They used a bulldozer and vandalized it around 2 pm. This was a pre-planned attack. The barbarism of RSS and BJP in Tripura has reached its peak. By giving false promises, they came to power, but for the last seven years, they have only looted people. There are no democratic rights, no law and order. People are now rising against their misrule."

Chaudhury further said the BJP is panicking as their downfall nears.

"They don't have the courage to come in broad daylight. That's why they carried out the attack like cowards. This is the BJP's so-called 'good



governance' and 'development'—killing democracy every single day. But we will resist. Our movement will continue until BJP is ousted from

power. They cannot suppress us through such cowardly acts. We will also lodge a police complaint with all necessary documents," he asserted.

4th edition of WENN Bazaar to be held at CT Square, Chumoukedima Nagaland women entrepreneurs to hold 3-day bazaar to scale businesses of fellow entrepreneurs

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 20: Trekking through uncharted territory in 2022, a group of Naga women entrepreneurs came together to form the Women Entrepreneurs Network of Nagaland (WENN) to provide peer support and collective growth of women entrepreneurs in Nagaland.

Continuing their mission to strengthen the business acumen of women entrepreneurs of the state, the WENN will host the 4th edition of WENN Bazaar at CT Square, Chumoukedima, from October 2-4.

Announcing this at a press conference here on Saturday, WENN chairwoman Alemjungla Jamir said the event, supported by Nagaland industries and commerce department, will offer the women entrepreneurs a vibrant marketplace to showcase their products, while engaging in work-



shops, networking and skill development. She said 110 women entrepreneurs

have already registered to participate in the bazaar to be held on the theme 'year of business governance'. The

event is expected to attract more than 10,000 visitors, with a projected sale of ₹ 50 lakh.

The WENN started the pilot event in 2022 with 53 participants, fetching a sale of ₹ 18 lakh, while its second edition sales grew to ₹ 36 lakh with 75 stalls and 7,000 plus visitors.

The skill-building workshop of the event this time will include shiitake mushroom cultivation, calligraphy and bouquet-making, traditional loom weaving, banana fibre paper crafting, solar-powered lively innovations and business compliance and documentation.

The bazaar will also have interactive zones for networking, peer learning, and family-friendly activities.

It will remain open from 9 am to 11 pm. The organisers have invited all from Nagaland and neighbouring states to the bazaar.

Ex gratia each for kin of two jawans killed in ambush

IMPHAL, Sept 20: The Manipur government on Saturday announced ₹ 5 lakh ex gratia each for the families of the two Assam Rifles jawans who were killed in an ambush at Nambol Sabal Leikai in Bishnupur district and ₹ 2 lakh each for the five personnel who were injured in the attack, an official statement said.

In a statement, Home Commissioner N. Ashok Kumar said the state government is deeply concerned about the ambush on personnel of the 33 Assam Rifles on September 19 in which two jawans were killed and five others injured.

He added that the state government strongly condemns the incident and expresses deepest condolences to the families who lost their loved ones in "this cowardly act" and wished "speedy recovery" of the injured.

"In recognition of the sacrifices made by the jawans, the government announces an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh each for the kin of the two soldiers who were killed in the attack and ₹ 2 lakh for the five injured personnel. Additionally the government will extend necessary support for their treatment and rehabilitation" the statement said. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I, MAHAMMAD ALI S/O Suruj Ali village-Nizbarua-jhar P.O. No 1 Punia, PS-Kharupetia, Dist-Darrang. (Assam) declare that I am a permanent resident of above mentioned address and citizen of India by birth. That my actual and correct name is Mohammad Ali and My father's actual and correct name is Suruj Ali. That my name has been recorded in my educational documents including my HSLC Records vide Roll B05-157, No - 0437 of the year 2005 issued by SEBA as Md. Mahammad Ali in place of Mahammad Ali and in the same My father's name has been recorded as Md. Suruj Ali in place of Suruj Ali. That I hereby declare that Mahammad Ali and Md. Mahammad Ali is the same and one person and Md. Suruj Ali and Suruj Ali is the same and one person.

Sd/-
MAHAMMAD ALI

No. DHS/NHM/HJ/2025-26/93/2

Walk in interview for the post of Cleaner Cum Support Staff (Lumpsum basis) under NUHM

Tenure of engagement: 06 (Six) months
No of Posts: 6

Qualifications: Minimum 8th standard Passed.
Salary: Fixed 10,100/-

How to apply: walk in interview

Candidate must bring:

1. A Biodata with one passport size photo.
2. All original certificates along with photocopy of all same with self-attestation.
3. Pan, Voter Card & Aadhaar Card.

Interview Date and Time: 25/09/2025 (11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.)
Interview Venue: Office of the Joint Director of Health Services, Hojai.

General Information & Instructions:

1. Preference will be given to the local candidates.
2. No TA/DA will be paid to the candidates for appearing the interview.
3. No Prior applications bio data will be collected before interview.

Sd/-
Joint Director of Health Services
Cum-Member Secretary, DHS, Hojai

DIPR /D/HLT/174/21-Sep-25



অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-701022

No. 333PSC/DR-11/1/2022-23

NOTIFICATION

In pursuance to APSC's notification No.251PSC/DR-20/1/2023-24 Dated Guwahati the 20th September, 2025, it is for information to all concerned that the postponed date of interview/viva-voce for the post of Agricultural Development Officer (ADO) under Agriculture Department (Adv. No. 09/2025 Dated Guwahati, the 13th March, 2025) is as per programme at its office at Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22 is as given below:

Sl No.	Name of the post and Department	Scheduled Date of Interview/viva-voce	Rescheduled Date of Interview/viva-voce
1	Agricultural Development Officer (ADO) under Agriculture Department	22-09-2025 23-09-2025	25-09-2025 26-09-2025

Kindly note that no separate intimation letter to the candidates shall be issued. The intimation letters will remain the same and the candidates shall have to bring the same intimation letter which was already issued.

Sd/-
Secretary,
Assam Public Service Commission
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22

DIPR /D/HLT/173/21-Sep-25

GOVT. OF ASSAM DIRECTORATE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD, (R&B),HILLS, ASSAM,DIPHU.

NO.ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-2026/23,

Dated Diphu, the 20th September,2025.

Notice

In view of the statewide Mourning declared by the Govt. of Assam from 20th to 22nd September, 2025, due to the demise of Lt. Zubeen Garg, eminent singer, Filmmaker and cultural icon, it is hereby notified for information of all candidates that the written Examination for the post of L.D.A. (Jr. Asst.) and Section Assistant (S.A) which is schedule to be held on 21st September, 2025 is postponed to 28th September, 2025.

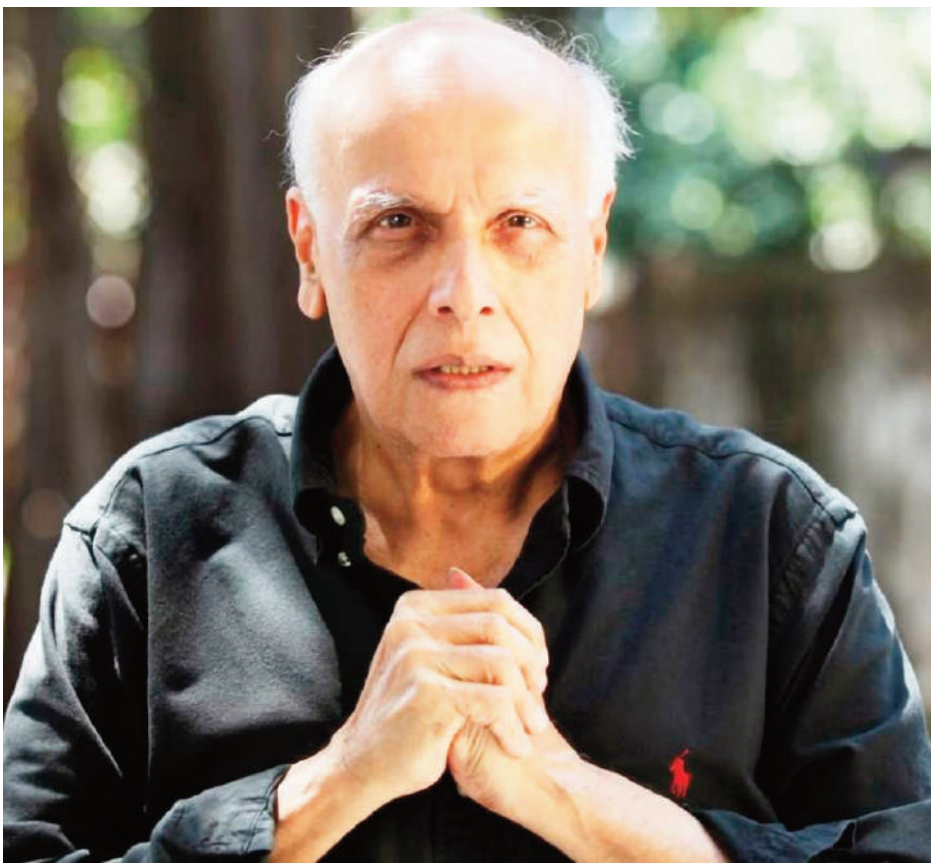
All concerned are requested to take note on the same.

Sd/-
Director-Cum-Addl. Chief Engineer,
PWD(R&B),Hills, Assam, Diphu.
Cum
Member Secretary,
Interview Board and Selection Committee.

NO.ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-2026/23 -A,

Dated Diphu, the 20th September,2025.

Was declared dead on arrival till 'Arth' happened: Mahesh Bhatt on early failures



MUMBAI, Sept 20: Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt says he still considers himself as a "stumbling-fumbling" person who delivered back-to-back failures when he joined the film industry.

Bhatt worked as an assistant director to the late Raj Khosla before making his directorial debut in 1974 with "Manzilein Aur Bhi Hain" but the Kabir Bedi and Prema Narayan-starrer did not work at the box office. He followed it with "Vishwasghaat", "Naya Daur", "Lahu Ke Do Rang", movies that didn't leave much impact on audiences.

He found his niche in direction with semi-autobiographical dramas like "Arth", "Janam", "Zakhm", and many others later. "My 20s were disastrous. I had three to

four films, back-to-back failures. I was declared stillborn, dead-on arrival, till 'Arth' happened to me. I stumbled into my autobiographical medium.

"I'm just a struggling, stumbling, fumbling person. Some movies I made would happen to be good. It was because of the collective vibe on the set, the contribution of my co-travellers. Many were mediocre, ranked bad. "So, if you look at my journey, I say that you can't make as many movies as I have made, which have flopped," the veteran filmmaker told PTI in an interview.

Bhatt, son of director-producer Nanabhai Bhatt, said he never saw himself as a filmmaker since he had joined the industry merely to make a living.

"At the age of 15, my mother said, 'Your father is going through a trying time, we need money. Your sister has started working as an aerospace engineer. You are sitting down here and eating in front of me. I don't like the sight of you eating'.

"I remember putting the food down, wiping my hands and going to my friend Asghar Ali and shouting out to him: 'Get me a job'. I started as a turner and a fitter in Kilklick Nixon, which was there in Powai. My first paycheck, after a week, was Rs 58... I gave it to my mother. I worked to put food on the table."

The 76-year-old director said he was not a good student and dropped out of college but what he knew was to "bulls***" his way through life by telling stories.

"I had a childhood which was perhaps a little scarred by the standards of normal, so-called normal home. I used stories to kind of cushion myself. So, the stories and storytelling skills were born in my infancy. Even then, when I started I stumbled and fell. I keep telling them, 'I failed my way to success'.

"If you're frightened of failure, don't come into this business. Here, failure is a constant and success is a fluke. If you have the courage to take it on the chin, fail publicly, be savage publicly, then come here. Otherwise, get up, get out of here."

Asked about his personal and professional life often intersecting into movies that he made, whether it was "Arth", "Zakhm" or "Woh Lamhe", Bhatt said it was easy for him to do those stories because cinema was his medium of telling stories.

"But I did have the naysayers who called me, 'An exhibitionist person, who washes his dirty linen in public', to which I said, 'There's no special charm in washing it in your backyard'... But those were within the matrix of what is called bearable and palatable truths." The mid-90s marked a downturn in his directorial ventures, with films such as "Dastak", "Chaahat", and "Duplicate" and few others struggling to resonate with audiences. It was with "Kartoos" in 1999 that he decided to step away from the director's chair. (PTI)

Mohanlal to receive Dadasaheb Phalke Award for year 2023

NEW DELHI, Sept 20 Malayalam superstar Mohanlal has been named the recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for 2023, the country's highest recognition in the field of cinema, the 18B ministry announced on Saturday. In a post on X, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry said the actor, director and producer is being honoured on the recommendation of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award Selection Committee for his "iconic contribution to Indian cinema".

The award will be presented to the 65-year-old during the 71st National Film Awards ceremony on September 23. "Mohanlal's remarkable cinematic journey inspires generations... His unmatched talent, versatility, and relentless hard work



have set a golden standard in Indian film history," the ministry said. With a career spanning more than four decades, Mohanlal has acted in over 350 films across Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and Kannada.

Some of his most popular and critically-acclaimed movies include "Thammathra", "Drishyam", "Vanaprastham", "Munthirivallikal Thalirkkumbol" and "Pulimurugan". Known for his effortless screen presence and wide range, he has received two Notional Film Awards for best actor, nine Kerala State Awards and international In addition to acting honours, Mohanlal was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2001, and the Padma Bhushan in 2019 for his contribution to the arts. (PTI)

Levi's declares 'Baggy is Back' campaign featuring Alia Bhatt and Diljit Dosanjh

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 20: Baggy is back and the Levi's brand is leading the charge with Easy in Levi's, a new campaign that showcases ease and effortless. Fronted by global brand ambassadors Alia Bhatt and Diljit Dosanjh, this drop is a celebration of silhouettes that move with you, breathe with you and elevate how you show up in the world.

Baggy is no longer just a trend; it's a shift in how people want to wear their denim. The Levi's® brand embraces this with a modern take on loose fits that feel effortless yet intentional. From relaxed jeans to oversized layers, these silhouettes make a statement without trying too hard. This season, baggy is about redefining comfort, confidence and personal style on your own terms. Alia Bhatt brings her signature authenticity and global style sensibility to her first campaign for the Levi's brand. Leading the women's denim narrative, she wears the Baggy Dad Barrel, a fresh take on a cult favorite with its sculpted ease, curved outseam, and slouchy attitude. Also featured is the XL Straight, a clean, 90s-inspired silhouette with a strong, minimal presence that feels both nostalgic and current. These two fits join the brand's much loved '94 Baggy and High Loose that lean into the loose and relaxed trend with a flattering silhouette.

Diljit Dosanjh returns with his unmistakable flair, continuing to champion freedom of movement and relaxed through denim. He takes on the 578™ Baggy, a laid-back fit with relaxed proportions and stacked detail as well as the Extra Baggy, an exaggerated silhouette that blends expression and ease in equal measure. Rooted in the streetwear aesthetic and embraced by a new generation, the Extra Baggy redefines comfort and confidence, offering room to move while making a bold style statement. With its oversized proportions and effortless drape, it embodies the cultural shift towards fluidity, creativity, and personal freedom in fashion today.

With Alia Bhatt and Diljit Dosanjh at the helm, Easy in Levi's captures a cultural shift that embraces silhouettes designed for individuality and ease. It's about comfort that doesn't compromise on personal style. The rise of baggy signals a move toward self-expression that prioritizes ease over restriction, confidence over conformity. Today's denim wearers aren't looking to fit in, they're dressing to stand out, to move freely, and to feel like their most authentic selves.

Deepika Padukone starts shooting for Shah Rukh Khan's 'King' after exit from 'Kalki 2898 AD' sequel

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone penned a heartfelt note on social media as she started shooting her next film, "King", with superstar Shah Rukh Khan.

The movie marks the sixth collaboration between Deepika and Shah Rukh, who have previously starred together in several films, beginning with her acting debut in 2007's "Om Shanti Om". They went on to appear in "Chennai Express" (2013), "Happy New Year" (2014), "Pathaan" (2023) and "Jawan" (2023).

In the post, which comes days after her exit from the sequel to her 2024 Telugu blockbuster "Kalki 2898 AD", Deepika thanked SRK for teaching her a valuable lesson that she has applied to every decision since.

"The very first lesson he taught me almost 18 years ago, while filming 'Om Shanti Om', was that the experience of making a movie, and the people you make it

with, matter far more than its success.

"I couldn't agree more and have applied that learning to every decision I've made since. And that's probably why we're back making our 6th movie together," Deepika, 39, wrote on Instagram alongside a photo where she is seemingly holding the superstar's hand.

"King" reunites Deepika as well as Shah Rukh with filmmaker Siddharth Anand, who had directed "Pathaan". The new movie will reportedly also feature SRK's daughter Suhana Khan.

On Thursday, Vyjayanthi Movies, which produced "Kalki 2898 AD", announced that Deepika will not return for the sequel, citing the project's need for "commitment and much more". The Nag Ashwin-directed film also stars Prabhas and Amitabh Bachchan.

"This is to officially announce that @deepikapadukone will not be a part of the upcoming sequel of

VISHAL JETHWA SAYS 'SURREAL' MOMENT AS 'HOMEBOUND' TO REPRESENT INDIA AT OSCARS



MUMBAI, Sept 20: Actor Vishal Jethwa says he is overwhelmed and humbled after his film "Homebound" was announced as India's official entry for Best International Feature Film at the 98th Academy Awards.

Also starring Ishaan Khatter and Janhvi Kapoor, the movie is directed by Neeraj Ghaywan and has legendary filmmaker Martin Scorsese on board as an executive producer.

"This moment feels absolutely surreal. To know that 'Homebound' is representing India on the world's biggest cinematic stage is beyond anything I imagined when I began my journey in films.

"I'm incredibly thankful to Neeraj Ghaywan for not only believing in me but for entrusting me with a role that challenged me as an artist and transformed me as a person," the 31-year-old actor said in a statement.

The actor, praised for his performances in "Mardaani 2" and "Salaam Venky", also credited his co-stars Khatter and Kapoor for enriching the experience.

"They were more than just co-actors; they were supportive collaborators who made every scene richer with their energy and generosity," he added.

According to Jethwa, the film's selection is a recognition of the collective hard work of the team.

"This recognition isn't just a milestone for me personally, it's a testament to the

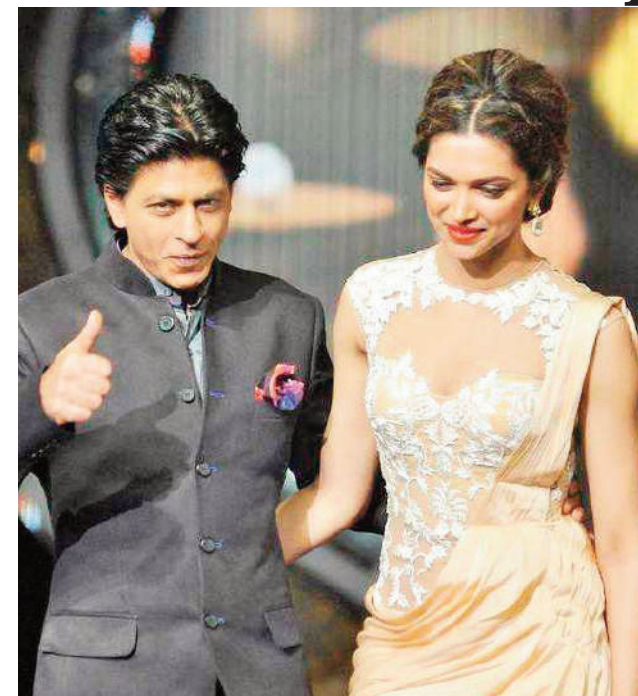
entire team's hard work, passion, and the power of Indian storytelling. I feel proud to be part of a film that carries a piece of our culture and heart to an international audience. To be standing alongside such incredible talent and representing my country on a global platform is truly humbling," he said.

The film, inspired by journalist Basharat Peer's The New York Times article "Taking Amrit Home", portrays the childhood friendship between a Muslim and Dalit who chase a police job that promises them the dignity they have long been denied due to their surnames.

"Homebound" has been receiving an overwhelming response on the international stage, including a nine-minute standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival, where the movie had its world premiere under the Un Certain Regard category.

It won best film and best director for Ghaywan at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM), and was the second runner-up in the International People's Choice Award category at the recently-concluded Toronto International Film Festival.

The film, produced by Karan Johar and Adar Poonawalla of Dharma Productions, is set for a theatrical release on September 26. The 98th Oscars will take place on March 15, 2026. (PTI)



#Kalki2898AD. After careful consideration, we have decided to part ways.

"Despite the long journey of making the first film, we

were unable to find a partnership. And a film like @Kalki2898AD deserves that commitment and much more. We wish her the best

with her future works," the studio had said.

In May this year, there were reports of Deepika's exit from filmmaker Sandeep Reddy Vanga's "Spirit", also headlined by Prabhas. However, there was never any official confirmation of Padukone's involvement in the film.

At the time, several reports claimed that Deepika had raised concerns about certain sequences in the film's script and had requested an 8-hour workday. There were also differences related to her remuneration for the project.

The makers of "Spirit" later cast actor Tripti Dimri, who starred in Vanga's 2023 blockbuster movie "Animal", as the leading lady opposite Prabhas. Deepika was most recently seen in Rohit Shetty's Singham Again. Besides King, she will also feature in an untitled project from Jawan director Atlee, alongside Telugu superstar Allu Arjun. (PTI)

ZUBEEN'S DREAM OF WORLD-CLASS FOOTBALL ACADEMY IN ASSAM REMAINS UNFULFILLED

GUWAHATI, Sept 20: If his songs got millions up on their feet and swaying to the rhythm, it was the juggling of the football on the field that gave him the adrenaline rush, as music and sports remained the two passions for singer Zubeen Garg.

A 'hardcore' football fan by his own admission, Zubeen's dream of setting up a residential football academy in league with such top institutes in the world remained unfulfilled as he breathed his last at the age of 52, "while swimming without a life jacket" in Singapore on Friday.

From participating in celebrity football matches in the state to closely following international tournaments, his love for the game was known to all.

"Zubeen was a hardcore football fan, as he would himself say. He had told me that he was helping groom a football club in Guwahati and also spoke about developing a top-class academy



for the sport here," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI.

"Whenever there was a celebrity football match, he would surely try to be part of it," he added.

He also recalled Zubeen's association with cricket in the state and said, "If a (international) match was being held in Guwahati, he would come to watch it. He was always part of every cricketing event and made his presence felt." Saikia, who is also the general secretary of Guwahati Sports Association (GSA), said that as a tribute to the deceased singer, all GSA matches have been cancelled for the next two days.

Sidhartha Sankar Deka, a co-partner of Guwahati City FC with which Zubeen was associated, recounted how he came in touch with the singer-actor-music composer during the making of a film, which was not released.

"We bonded over football. It

was in 2017, and I told him that a few of us were trying to form a football club, and sought his help. We didn't seek monetary help but only that he promote our club so that we can attract young talents," Deka told PTI.

Sidhartha Sankar Deka, along with two other entrepreneurs, Kaustabh Chakraborty and Darick Ranjan Deka, went on to form the club the same year and helped a camp at Gauhati University in association with the popular Shillong-based Lajong FC.

"We asked Zubeen da to be part of a friendly match at the end of the camp and not only did he agree, he brought his artiste friends to play, as well. When our club organised its first futsal fest, he again came for the finals," Deka said.

The last time Sidhartha Sankar Deka met Zubeen was in 2018, a day before the singer was leaving for Russia for the football World Cup. (PTI)

Hitaashee and Pranavi make the cut in La Sella

ALICANTE (SPAIN), Sept 20: Pranavi Urs and Hitaashee Bakshi were the only Indians to make the halfway cut at the La Sella Open in Spain, while Canadian teenager Anna Huang fired a bogey-free six-under 66 to move three shots clear at the top. Hitaashee added one-over 73 to her first round 72 and was now one-over for 36 holes and lying Tied-36th, while Pranavi (73-73) was Tied-47th.

Ridhima Dilawari (75-72) missed the cut by one shot, while India's other challengers this week, Avani Prashanth (78-70), Diksha Dagar (73-75), Vani Kapoor (78-71) and Tvesa Malik (71-78) were further down and also missed the cut, which fell at two-over.

Pranavi had three birdies, two bogeys and a double, while Hitaashee had two birdies, one bogey and a double bogey.

The two Indians will play their home event, the Hero Women's Indian Open in less than three weeks, so a good show will be important for them. France's Nastasia Nadaud sits in solo second place on 11-under-par after a round of 67 (-5) on day two at La Sella. Singapore's Shannon Tan is in outright third place on seven-under-par after a round of 68 (-4) which included one dropped shot and five birdies.

Spain's Nuria Iurrioz and Australia's Kirsten Rudgeley share fourth place at the midway mark on six-under-par. Iurrioz, who won the inaugural La Sella Open in 2023, fired a round of 66 (-6) which included a run of five birdies in a row. Australia's Rudgeley went bogey-free on day two making birdies on the third, fourth, seventh, eighth and 11th holes to be T4. Four players are in a share of sixth place with Italy's Alessandra Fanali, Slovenia's Pia Babnik, Australia's Maddison Hinson-Tolchard and Wales' Lydia Hall all on five-under-par. (PTI)

F1 extends Azerbaijan Grand Prix contract through 2030

BAKU (AZERBAIJAN), Sept 20: The Azerbaijan Grand Prix is set to stay on the Formula 1 calendar until at least 2030 after receiving a four-year contract extension Saturday.

The contract for the street circuit on the Baku seaford had been due to expire after next year's race.

Azerbaijan was widely considered a surprise choice of host ahead of its first race in 2016 but has become known for unpredictable racing, with Sergio Perez the only driver to win there more than once.

"The circuit is unique, with technical sections and long straights that run through the stunning shoreline and historic old town, delivering an eventful and entertaining race every year," F1 president and chief executive Stefano Domenicali said in a statement.

"This renewal reflects the strong trust and commitment between Formula 1, the Azerbaijani government, and the promoter, and paves the way for an exciting future in the country." This year's Azerbaijan Grand Prix takes place Sunday. (AP)

Playing with freedom will be crucial in World Cup: Pakistan skipper Sana



DUBAI, Sept 20: Pakistan captain Fatima Sana on Saturday said her side is determined to put up a spirited show in the upcoming ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in Sri Lanka, where stitching partnerships and "playing with freedom will be crucial".

The eight-team World Cup will be hosted in Sri Lanka and India from September 30 to November 2.

Pakistan will play all their matches in Sri Lanka and open their campaign against Bangladesh on October 2, followed by matches against India (October 5), Australia (October 8), England (October 15), New Zealand (October 18), South Africa (October 21) and hosts Sri Lanka (October 24).

"World Cups are always special, they give every cricketer a chance to test themselves on the biggest stage, and every team the opportunity to show how far they've come. For us, this World Cup is about playing good cricket, competing hard, and making our country proud," Sana said in a column released by the ICC.

Sana, who will spearhead the pace attack, said the conditions in Sri Lanka will demand discipline from both pacers and spinners.

"Our biggest test will be to strike at key moments and support each other through partnerships in the field. On the batting side, we know that building partnerships and playing with freedom will be crucial," she said.

The 23-year-old pacer, who will be leading Pakistan in an ODI World Cup for the first time, underlined that the squad is a fine blend of experience and youth.

"Sidra Amin, Diana Baig, Nashra Sundhu, Aliya Riaz and Muneeba Ali bring calmness and experience, while youngsters like Eyman Fatima, Shawaal Zulfqar and Natalia Parvaiz add fresh energy and depth to the team," she noted.

The skipper credited the support staff, including former internationals Mohammad Wasim and Junaid Khan, for sharpening the team's preparations. "Their guidance has helped us think deeper about the 50-over game and how to adapt in different phases of a match," she said.

Calling it an "honour and a humbling experience" to captain the national side in a World Cup, Sana vowed to keep the squad united and focused.

"My aim is to encourage every player to express themselves, and to approach each game with belief, discipline and team spirit." Sana also hoped Pakistan's campaign would inspire the next generation of female cricketers back home.

"We respect every opposition we face, but we also believe in the hard work we've put in. My hope is that our performances not only bring joy to our fans but also inspire more girls in Pakistan to pick up a bat or a ball and dream of representing their country one day," she said. (PTI)

Satwik-Chirag sail into China Masters final with win over Chia-Soh

SHENZHEN (CHINA), Sept 20: Star Indian pair of Satwik-sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty stormed into their second successive men's doubles final with a clinical straight-game win over former world champions Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia at the China Masters Super 750 badminton tournament here on Saturday.

Fresh from a World Championships bronze and a runner-up finish at the Hong Kong Open last week, the Asian Games champions outclassed their long-time nemesis Aaron and Soh 21-17 21-14 in a dominant performance.

Satwik and Chirag came into the match with a 4-11 head-to-head record against the Malaysian duo, who are two-time Olympic medallists. However, the Indians had recently got the better of Aaron and Soh en route to their bronze medal at the World Championships in Paris.

On Saturday, the Indians



came out with an all-out attacking approach, backed by a solid defence, while also dominating the front court as the Malaysians - particularly Aaron - looked out of sorts during the 41-minute semifinal clash.

The opening game was a tight affair with both pairs fighting

tooth and nail. Aaron and Soh grabbed a 10-7 lead with four straight points. But three errors from Aaron - including a service fault - allowed Satwik and Chirag to claw back. The Malaysians still held a slender one-point advantage at the interval.

Italian rapper Fedez apologizes for lyrics targeting Jannik Sinner after being accused of racism

MILAN, Sept 20: Italian rapper Fedez has apologized for publishing musical lyrics saying that tennis player Jannik Sinner speaks with "Adolf Hitler's accent," which prompted the musician to be accused of inciting racial hatred.

Fedez recently posted an Instagram story featuring lyrics of a new song that said in Italian: "Italian has a new idol named Jannik Sinner. Pure-blooded Italian with Adolf Hitler's accent."

A city council member in Bolzano — the capital of the German-speaking autonomous province of Alto Adige in northern Italy where Sinner is from — on Thursday filed a formal complaint with prosecutors over Fedez's lyrics based on an article in Italy's penal code that sanctions incitement of racial hatred and

propaganda. "I wanted to take a paradox and it came off terribly, about athletes who are born and raised in Italy but often are not considered Italian due to the color of their skin and apply it to Italy's top athlete," Fedez said during a concert in Milan on Friday, according to the Gazzetta dello Sport.

"I wasn't able to pull it off and all I can do is apologize," Fedez added. "If something like this isn't understood, it's because of a mistake made by whoever wrote it. So I take responsibility."

The reference to "pure-blooded Italian" recalls Italian fascist propaganda from the 1930s, according to Giuseppe Martucci, the city council member, who added that the reference to Hitler was unacceptable. "I felt it my duty to act and hold

up the founding values of our constitution," Martucci said. "We can't allow language that evokes racism and hate to be normalized by public figures." By winning four Grand Slam titles over the last two years, Sinner has exceeded Italy's soccer stars to become the country's most popular athlete.

By winning four Grand Slam titles over the last two years, Sinner has exceeded Italy's soccer stars to become the country's most popular athlete. He lost the U.S. Open final to Carlos Alcaraz this month and lost the No. 1 ranking to his Spanish rival.

This is not the first time that Sinner has faced an underlying sentiment that he isn't fully Italian. Before he won his first Grand Slam title and opted not

to play Davis Cup for Italy in September 2023 — saying he hadn't recovered in time from tournaments in North America — he was widely criticized.

"Caso Nazionale" (National Issue), said the front-page of Sportweek, the Gazzetta dello Sport's weekly magazine, in a headline with a double meaning.

Then when Sinner won his first Grand Slam title at the 2024 Australian Open, he was treated as a national hero on his return home and met with Premier Giorgia Meloni at the Chigi Palace.

Sinner and Meloni posed for photos as they held aloft together first the Australian Open trophy and then the Italian flag. Sinner then gave Meloni a warm embrace to end the meeting. (AP)

Indian trio in Australia U19 team reflects on cricketing, life journey Down Under

BENGALURU, Sept 20: Aryan Sharma, John James and Yash Deshmukh might be nourishing dreams of making it big in Australian cricket, but they have not snapped the inner connection with India, the country of their origin.

Australia Under-19's multi-format home series, beginning at Brisbane on Sunday against their Indian counterparts, is a splendid opportunity for them to meet some bright talents from the subcontinent and exchange notes.

But it is also a chance for them to reminisce about their families' journey from India to Australia years back, the first stepping stone in finding a sporting career Down Under. John James, a bowling all-rounder, son of Jomesh and Smitha, who migrated from Wayanad, Kerala, to Australia, for better career opportunities, initially found it tough to adapt to Australian sporting culture.

"I think the biggest challenge I had faced was when we moved an

hour away from Sydney to the Central Coast. Getting to and from training and games were tough but my parents made it easy by taking time off work ensuring I got the opportunity to play the best cricket possible," James told PTI from Brisbane.

"Initially, not many teams were willing to sign me up but I am grateful to Asquith Rugby League Cricket Club (Asquith Cricket Club) for signing me up halfway through the season."

The biggest moment in his budding career was when he worked as a water boy during the fifth Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test between India and Australia at Sydney earlier this year.

It gave James a chance to meet his heroes — Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Marsh.

"I was lucky enough to be a water boy for the Sydney Test in the Border-Gavaskar series and was able to meet all my heroes that I have watched on screen and got

to meet my favourite Mitch Marsh.

"Josh Hazlewood also being from New South Wales you see him at Cricket Central (centre of excellence) and have conversations with him," added James, who is eager to travel back to Kerala this off-season to meet family and friends and taste his grandmother's pork curry.

Similarly to James, Aryan Sharma, a batting all-rounder who hails from Chandigarh, remembers that adapting to Australian life was not really easy for his family.

"My dad (Raman Sharma) first came to Australia to attend his brother's wedding in 2000 as a visitor, then he moved to Australia in 2005. My parents always told me that moving from one country to another was challenging. It wasn't always easy for my family to ingrain into the Australian way of life, but the support they had (from relatives in Australia) made a big difference," said Aryan.

"I realise the real challenge was

n't mine, it was my family's. They sacrificed a lot to support me, with my dad taking me to training and games, meaning my siblings and mum missed out on his time. That commitment from my family is something I'll always be grateful for," he added.

Aryan said Cricket Victoria's pathways programme has played a massive role in his development as players. "I started playing at Epping Cricket Club, where Andrew Bennett helped me along with Michael Rogeneda. Now at Carlton where I have been playing cricket for the last 3 years. Evan Gulbis and Bruce help me a lot.

"Also, big thanks to Cricket Victoria and coaches Tom Evans, Travis Dean and Jon Holland (former Australian Test cricketer)."

Aryan cherishes the dream of meeting star batter Virat Kohli, possibly during India's upcoming one-day series in November. "My favourite player is Virat Kohli. He's always been someone

I've drawn inspiration from. If I ever get the chance to meet and talk with him, it would be an incredible experience.

"What inspires me most is the way he has impacted Indian cricket, and I want to do the same for Australia, to play with passion and make a difference for my country," he added.

Aryan has first-hand knowledge of how cricket is being played in India, and how fans follow the game religiously.

"I have been to India a couple of times recently. I went for cricket training purposes in 2024. I spent my time in Chandigarh and earlier this year when Cricket Australia sent a group of 10 boys for cricket training in Bangalore in India," said Aryan, who relishes typical Punjab dishes made of chicken and paneer. The family of Yash Deshmukh moved to Australia from Maharashtra, and the all-rounder recollected that the initial days have been quite tumultuous. (PTI)

Abu Hubaida-Prem Kumar pair bags bronze in China Para Badminton tournament

BELING, Sept 20: Indian men's para badminton pair of Abu Hubaida and Prem Kumar Ale clinched a bronze medal in the WH1-WH2 category after the top seeds lost their semifinal match to China's Mai Jianpeng and Qu Zimo 4-21, 10-21 in the China Para Badminton International, here on Saturday.

Abu Hubaida and Ale had finished second in Group A with two wins and one defeat. They beat Australia's Nang Nguyen and Chinese Taipei's Yu-Yu Ong 21-6, 21-10, and then overcame the Indian-Czech team of Haris Mythili Srikumar and Zbyněk Šýkora 21-10, 21-12.

Their only loss (12-21, 9-21) in the group stage came against Japan's Daiki Kajiwara and Keita Nishimura.

WH1-WH2 is meant for wheelchair-bound players.

"Every match is a new challenge, and every medal is a reward for the hard work and support behind me. This bronze motivates me to push

harder and represent India on bigger stages," said Abu Hubaida.

Abu Hubaida and Ale are ranked No. 4 in the world in men's doubles. The pair is also Asia No. 3 in the category.

The bronze came on the back of their recent success at the Asian Para-Badminton Championships in Thailand, where they won India's first wheelchair doubles medal.

Abu Hubaida, 31, from Lucknow, overcame polio in his childhood to become a four-time national champion. His international achievements include gold and bronze medals at the Uganda Para-Badminton International 2017 and gold at the Egypt Para Badminton International 2024.

Ale, a former Indian Army personnel, sustained spinal cord injuries in 2009. He made his international debut in 2014 and has partnered with Abu Hubaida to form India's most successful wheelchair doubles combination. (PTI)

Rising Tensions: India aim for another dominant show against Pakistan

DUBAI, Sept 20: Skipper Suryakumar Yadav will depend heavily on his spin trio as India gear up for yet another demolition act of Pakistan in what promises to be an intense and tense Super 4 face-off of the Asia Cup here on Sunday.

There have been numerous tense build-ups to Indo-Pak men's cricket matches in the past but 'surface tension' wasn't as visible as it has been in this case after last Sunday when Suryakumar and his team's decision to not shake hands with the rivals triggered a storm.

It is understood that the Indian team is likely to maintain the policy against the neighbours this Sunday too and handshakes might not be the order of the day even as Pakistani players and their supporters look at the game as a "Grudge Match".

Sundays are not always the most relaxed days and skipper Suryakumar, who anchored India's chase in their seven-wicket win on the previous one, would vouch for it.

In this tournament, Suryakumar is expected to be the best batter, a tactical genius and also an ambassador for his country -- all rolled into one.

Axar Patel's head injury while trying

to take a catch against Oman would keep him and head coach Gautam Gambhir little worried but fielding coach T Dilip allayed fears by stating that he thought the all-rounder was doing fine.

Before the Pakistan game, Surya needed to check all the important players in the line-up and it is very clear that Harshit Rana and Arshdeep Singh didn't look the part as little-known Pakistan-born Oman players -- 43-year-old Aamir Kaleem and Hamad Mirza -- thrashed the out-of-sync duo.

On Sunday though, one will get to see Jasprit Bumrah, whose mere presence lifts the spirit of his teammates in the playing eleven alongside Varun Chakravarthy. Both were rested in the inconsequential last game.

The pitches on offer at the Dubai International Stadium are helping the slow bowlers and onus will once again be on Kuldeep Yadav (eight wickets in the tournament so far), Axar and Varun to tilt the scales decisively in India's favour.

In case, Axar is reported unfit by this evening, there is enough time to fly in a Washington Sundar or a Riyan Parag to fill in that slot although it won't exactly



be a like-for-like replacement.

For Pakistan, a team whose beauty lay in its unpredictability, the current side surprisingly lacks quality, especially in the batting department where none of the players can read the slow bowlers from the hand.

For a country that produced cham-

pion players like Javed Miandad, Inzamam ul Haq, Saleem Malik, and Ijaz Ahmed in the bygone years, the current lot's technique is rather poor.

Opener Saim Ayub, the left-hander who scored back-to-back ducks, has become a subject of ridicule for making more impact with the ball.

"Saim Ayub had the ambition of becoming Saeed Anwar but he is turning into Saeed Ajmal," goes the joke on the specialist opener for having taken more wickets in the tournament than the number of runs scored.

Sahibzada Farhan, Hasan Nawaz are two batters, who are trying to hit out of trouble and only Shaheen Shah Afridi, to everyone's surprise, has looked like the best batter in the squad.

Currently, there seem to be only two players, who can keep them in fight -- Fakhar Zaman, the best batter in the squad, and Shaheen, who would like to bowl a better first spell against Abhishek Sharma.

Unlike the last game against India when Pakistan played a third spinner in left-arter Sufiyan Muqem, there is more chance of fast bowler Haris Rauf getting the nod on Sunday after his impressive show against the UAE in their last group league game.

It would be skipper Suryakumar, who would again be back at his familiar po-

sition which made him a world No.1 batter.

In case Abhishek gets out in Power-play, then left-handed Tilak Varma will bat at No.3.

For India, runs from Gill and some quality batting time for Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube hasn't happened so far. But one can trust India's top four to handle the Pakistani bowlers.

In any case, Suryakumar and his men know when and to what extent the outside noise needs to be shut.

Squads:

India: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Shubman Gill, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, Hardik Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Varun Chakravarthy, Jasprit Bumrah, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana.

Pakistan: Salman Ali Agha (c), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Harris, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Waseem Jr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Afridi, Sufyan Moqim.

Match starts at 8pm IST. (PTI)

Asia Cup: Pycroft to officiate Indo-Pak match again, Pakistan cancel media interaction



DUBAI, Sept 20: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has once again assigned the high-voltage India-Pakistan Asia Cup Super 4s game on Sunday to its Elite Panel Match Referee Andy Pycroft despite PCB's repeated requests to strike him off the roster.

"Andy Pycroft is the match referee for Indo-Pak game," a tournament source told PTI.

The list of match officials for the Sunday's game hasn't yet been made public. The other match referee in the tournament is former West Indies captain Richie Richardson.

Pycroft was the match referee last Sunday when Indian team as a policy decision, didn't shake hands with the Pakistan team but the Zimbabwean found himself in the centre of the controversy after India skipper Suryakumar Yadav didn't follow the convention at the toss.

The Pakistan team had written two mails to ICC, first requesting Pycroft's removal from the tournament and then asking the global body to remove him from their games.

Both the demands were outrightly rejected

by the ICC as it stood firmly behind its Elite Panel referee.

The ICC rejected PCB's claims that Pycroft violated the 'Spirit of the Game' code, insisting that he was merely a messenger, who passed on what was conveyed to him from the designated Venue Manager of Asian Cricket Council.

He could only pass on the message as there were only few minutes left for the match to begin.

The ICC later arranged a meeting between Pycroft and Pakistan team management comprising captain Salman Ali Agha, head coach Mike Hesson and manager Naveed Akram Cheema where he said that he "regretted the miscommunication".

The ICC, then in another e-mail, pointed out that Pycroft never apologised but only "regretted the miscommunication" and also accused PCB of violating protocols related to 'Players And Match Officials Area' (PMOA), which the latter denied.

In this backdrop, appointing Pycroft for another Indo-Pak game is a clear indication that the global body doesn't want to budge from its stand as removing the former Zimbabwe Test batter would have set a wrong precedent.

Meanwhile, Pakistan team management has decided not to interact with media ahead of the Super4 contest.

"Pakistan have once again cancelled pre match presser conference in order to avoid questions on Pycroft appointment and no hand-shake controversy," a tournament source said. (PTI)

Mooney's blistering 138 steers Australia to record 412 against India

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: Beth Mooney matched the searing Delhi heat with a blistering century, powering Australia to their joint highest-ever innings total of 412 all out against India in the series-deciding third women's ODI here on Saturday.

Australia had posted 412/3 against Denmark in 1997.

With the effort, Australia also posted the highest-ever innings total against India, surpassing their own mark of 371/8 set in Brisbane last year.

If Mooney's whirlwind 138 off 79 balls lit up the middle overs, young opener Georgia Voll (81), Ellyse Perry (68) and skipper Alyssa Healy (30) provided the early fireworks after electing to bat first.

India's bowling attack looked toothless on a flat Kotla track, conceding a whopping 270 runs via boundaries and maximums -- 60 fours and five sixes -- while the hosts' fielding unit floundered yet again with dropped chances and misfields, punctuated only by occasional flashes of brilliance.

Healy, searching for her first big knock of the series, came out all guns blazing, smashing new-ball bowlers Renuka Thakur and Kranti



Goud for seven boundaries before falling to the latter, who dismissed her for the third time in as many games.

Voll and Perry then consolidated with a 107-run stand, punishing India's inconsistent lengths. Eventually, Sneha Rana produced the breakthrough with an off-break spinning down leg which Voll went to sweep only to edge it to short fine.

But if India expected relief, Mooney ensured none came. The

left-hander swept, cut and lofted with authority, dismantling the spinners and pacers alike as she hit 23 fours and a six to put Australia in a commanding position.

Seasoned off-spinner Deepti Sharma, however, produced a fascinating 45th over, triggering a mini-collapse with three wickets, including Mooney's dismissal via a run out.

India made inroads at the fag end, but the damage had already been done. (PTI)

SAI hikes stadia rent for non-sports events: ₹ 25 lakh to book JLN, fines for no clean-up

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: In a bid to preserve the sanctity of its stadia that also host non-sports events during off season, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) has introduced significantly higher tariffs and stringent penalties for organisers who fail to return the five facilities here in good condition after such gatherings.

SAI has five venues in Delhi -- Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Pool Complex, Indira Gandhi Sports Complex, Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (JLN) and Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

The body announced that national and international level sports events organised by the federations and associations recognised by the sports ministry will not have to pay anything to hire the venues except for electricity charges.

The JLN, primarily an athletics and football venue, is among the most popular cities for hosting non-sports events like music concerts and it earlier cost a relatively low ₹ 4.5 lakh to book its main arena by Indian artists.

The revised tariffs, notified on September 18, have hiked the cost of booking to a massive ₹ 25 lakh, which is a relief for international performers who were supposed to pay "around ₹ 50 lakh" earlier.

"The main arena of the JLN Stadium will be given on rent for non-sports events on condition that the event organiser ensures proper protection cover (mats/rugs etc.) of area to be utilised on Field of Play," stated the 66-page SAI notification which is in possession of PTI.

In case there is a failure to ensure a post-event clean-up, SAI said that it would charge a penalty at 10 per cent of per day tariff and would also have the discretion to "blacklist" such organisers from future event bookings.

The introduction of penalties takes note of the poor condition in

which SAI has sometimes received its venues, the most recent case in point being popular Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh's 'Dil-Luminati' concert in JLN at the end of which the stadium was found to be in a messy state.

"We had not increased the rates since 2011 and this is being done to safeguard the sanctity of our facilities and ensure that they are returned to us in good condition. We don't want athletes to be affected by commercial activities," a SAI source told PTI.

Athletes have been raising the issue of garbage-ridden and damaged venues after non-sports events coming in the way of their training routines.

In its revised terms and conditions for the hiring of venues, SAI reiterated that it would be the organiser's responsibility to hand over the venues in a "neat and clean state after the programme."

The Indira Gandhi Sports Complex's main arena, which was earlier available for ₹ 8 lakh for non-sports events like music and fashion shows and film screenings, will now cost ₹ 16 lakh per day for upto five days as per revised tariffs.

The IG Complex has facilities for boxing, gymnastics, wrestling and a cycling velodrome.

As for the Major Dhyani Chand Stadium, which is primarily a hockey venue, SAI has fixed the tariff for main pavilion and spectator gallery at ₹ 5 lakh per day.

The concrete area around the Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Pool Complex, which could earlier be hired for a nominal ₹ 30,000 per day will now be available at ₹ 5 lakh.

The sports events will continue to cost a fraction of these rates with the ones organised by sports ministry, national federations and state bodies pegged at ₹ 40,000 per day at the main arena of JLN Stadium. (PTI)

Defender Jyoti to lead junior India women's hockey team in Australia

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: Defender Jyoti Singh will lead a 23-member Indian junior women's hockey team on a five-match tour of Australia, scheduled at the National Hockey Centre in Canberra from September 26 to October 2. The side will play three matches against the Australia junior women's team, followed by two fixtures against Canberra Chill, a club competing in Australia's Hockey One League.

The tour will serve as crucial preparation for the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2025,

slated to be held in Santiago, Chile, in December.

The squad, featuring a balanced mix of defenders, midfielders and forwards, will be led by Jyoti, who has already broken into the senior team during the FIH Hockey Pro League earlier this year.

Nidhi and Engil Harsha Rani Minz will shoulder the goalkeeping responsibilities, while the defence will comprise Manisha, Jyoti, Lalthantluangi, Mamita Oram, Sakshi Shukla, Puja Sahoo and Nandini. The midfield will be marshalled

Shutting outside noise not easy but you need to listen what's important: Surya

DUBAI, Sept 20: Closing the hotel room door, switching off the cell phone and going off to sleep are good to "shut outside noise" before a crunch game but Indian skipper Suryakumar Yadav knows that some things are "easier said than done" as he geared up for another high-voltage Asia Cup battle against Pakistan on Sunday.

The amiable captain, who anchored the team's successful chase with a 47 not out last Sunday against the same rivals, neither shook hands with opposition skipper Salman Ali Agha at the toss nor at the end of the game after finishing it off with a sixer that day.

His gesture of standing in solidarity with victims of the Pahalgam attack and dedicating the win to the Indian Armed Forces had caused the cross-border neighbours to go into a meltdown ahead of this Asia Cup Super 4s clash.

So what's the process of shutting outside noise?

"Close your room, switch off your phone and sleep. I think that's the best thing. It's easy to say, but sometimes it is difficult because you meet a lot of friends, you go out for dinner and you have a lot of players who like to see all these things so it's very difficult," the straight-talking Mumbaier said on the eve of another tense game.

However, he knows that outside noise can't be shut in its entirety and some good things can be picked using one's discretion.

"...it's on you what you want to listen to, what you want to have in your mind and go on and have a practice session or go on and have a game."



Amid all this, the focus needs to be on the game.

"I have been very clear with all the boys, I think it's very important if we want to do well this tournament and going forward, we will have to shut a lot of noise from outside

and take what is good for you.

"I am not saying shut the noise completely, but take what is good for you and someone can give you a good advice as well which can help you in the game and on the ground."

Gavaskar backs Suryakumar's decision to not bat against Oman

DUBAI, Sept 20: The legendary Sunil Gavaskar backed skipper Suryakumar Yadav's decision to promote his teammates and not come out to bat himself in India's inconsequential group match against Oman.

With India having already sealed a Super Four berth after wins over UAE and Pakistan, Suryakumar reshuffled the batting order to give the lower-order more game time, even pushing himself down to No. 11.

India posted 188 for eight and went on to beat Oman by 12 runs.

"If he had batted for even one over, he could have hit a few fours and sixes and that would have been good for him. But the way he batted against Pakistan, may be does not need batting practice," Gavaskar said in a conversation with former India pacer Irfan Pathan on Sony Sports.

"He may have thought that Kuldeep Yadav's batting could come in handy if India lose quick wickets in one of the matches. Perhaps that's why he may have sent Kuldeep in to bat."

Gavaskar praised Suryakumar for his out-of-the-box thinking. (PTI)

An Indian journalist cheekily asked, "Surya you guys batted well and also did a lot of other things well in the last game. So do you want to continue doing that?"

It was an obvious reference to the 'No Handshake' policy but the veteran of 100 press meets and tricky questions knew how to handle that.

"By other things, you mean we bowled well, isn't it?" he said with a wry smile which never left his face.

On the preparation for the match, he felt that the team is well settled after three games.

"I feel our preparations have been really good leading into the tournament and we had three good games also. So we are actually focusing on what we can do best."

Surya feels that toss won't give any extra edge considering the hot and humid conditions.

"We will have to start well from scratch and whoever plays well will win the game."

When asked if India-Pakistan contests are turning out to be lopsided in terms of cricketer quality, he said that for him, all what matters is to go out and entertain a packed stadium.

"At that time, I don't know, I have never played (laughs), so I can't say, but if we talk about rivalry, I don't know what rivalry you are talking about."

"I just feel that the stadium is full and when the stadium is full, I tell my team and everyone that it's time for entertainment and people have come to watch the match, so you have to entertain and entertain everyone. Let's play some good brand of cricket." (PTI)